

# Annali di Ca' Foscari

Serie occidentale

Vol. 56  
Settembre 2022

e-ISSN 2499-1562



**Edizioni**  
Ca' Foscari



e-ISSN 2499-1562

# **Annali di Ca' Foscari**

## Serie occidentale

Rivista diretta da  
Giuliana Giusti  
Stefania Sbarra  
Michela Vanon Alliata

**Edizioni Ca' Foscari** - Venice University Press  
Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari  
Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venezia  
URL <https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/riviste/annali-di-ca-foscari-serie-occidentale/>

# Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale

Rivista annuale

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**Editore** Edizioni Ca' Foscari | Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari | Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venezia, Italia | ecf@unive.it

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Scientific certification of the works published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari: all essays published in this volume have received a favourable opinion by subject-matter experts, through an anonymous peer review process under the responsibility of the Scientific Committee of the journal. The evaluations were conducted in adherence to the scientific and editorial criteria established by Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

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**Letteratura, cultura, storia**



# Da Enea allo sciamano: *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* e la discesa agli inferi del sogno americano

Enrico Botta

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**Abstract** The article focuses on Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* (1832) and aims at demonstrating how the journey undertaken by his young character Robin constitutes a re-elaboration of the classic theme of the catabasis within the mid-nineteenth century American cultural context. Robin, the protagonist of a tale on the foundation of the United States, is engaged in an epic quest which drives him into the underworld of a society where the values of freedom, equality, and happiness are inter-mingled with corruption, violence and wicked patriotism. At the end of his adventure, Hawthorne's hero joins a violent masquerade that seems to anticipate the 'patriots' attack on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021.

**Keywords** Nathaniel Hawthorne. American epic literature. Catabasis. National foundation. US Capitol Riot.

**Sommario** 1 Una storia (stranamente) epica. – 2 Epos come ideologia e politica. – 3 Una catabasi politica e sociale. – 4 L'epica dell'espansione e l'espansione dell'epica. – 5 Cambio della guardia.



Edizioni  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted 2022-02-15  
Accepted 2022-04-29  
Published 2022-08-31

## Open access

© 2022 Botta | 4.0



**Citation** Botta, E. (2022). "Da Enea allo sciamano: *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* e la discesa agli inferi del sogno americano". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [123-136] 9-22.

## 1 Una storia (stranamente) epica

What if Hawthorne were perceiving that the American Revolution were not, or did not necessarily enfigure itself as, some inevitable rite of national passage? (Michael J. Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales*, 1984)

L'articolo si focalizza sul racconto di Nathaniel Hawthorne *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* e si propone di dimostrare come il viaggio iniziatico del suo giovane protagonista Robin costituisca una rielaborazione in chiave moderna e ideologica del tema epico classico del viaggio agli inferi all'interno del sistema culturale statunitense della metà del XIX secolo.<sup>1</sup> Quella che a un primo livello di lettura può sembrare la cronaca di una giornata qualsiasi durante il periodo appena precedente la Guerra d'indipendenza e la storia di formazione di un ragazzo comune diventa, alla luce del topos della catabasi, una narrazione epica. Robin, infatti, è l'eroe impegnato in una *quest* individuale che s'intreccia con la storia della sua comunità, in quanto egli rappresenta un'intera generazione che visse il passaggio dalla sudditanza imperiale nei confronti della Gran Bretagna all'euforia rivoluzionaria per una nuova identità politica e sociale. In particolare, l'attraversamento del fiume che dalla campagna porta il ragazzo in città cancella la sua innocenza di colono della periferia dell'impero e lo introduce nella parte oscura di una società in cui i valori di libertà, uguaglianza e felicità si mescolano a gesti corrotti, violenti e perversi mascherati di eroismo patriottico.

Pubblicato da Nathaniel Hawthorne nel 1832 e successivamente inserito nella raccolta *The Snow Image, And Other Twice-Told Tales* nel 1852, *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* è un testo di carattere storico incentrato sul giovane Robin. Lasciata la famiglia e la casa in provincia nella Massachusetts Bay negli anni trenta del XVIII secolo, questi si dirige a Boston per incontrare un suo parente e, con il suo aiuto, iniziarsi al mondo. Giunto in città di notte e non sapendo dove andare, Robin si mette alla ricerca del suo familiare, il maggiore Molineux; chiede informazioni a loschi personaggi ma si ritrova in una serie di situazioni ambigue: un anziano minaccia di farlo imprigionare per averlo importunato; un locandiere cerca di raggirarlo, una prostituta lo irretisce presentandosi come la cameriera dello zio, un uomo mascherato da demone - che si saprà in seguito essere il capo di un corteo di rivoltosi contro il potere britannico - lo intimorisce e si prende gioco di lui. Stanco e affamato, ignaro sul da farsi, Robin si addormenta.

<sup>1</sup> La portata epica del testo è già stata notata da Alexander Allison per cui il racconto sarebbe una parodia della letteratura eroica dell'antichità, in linea con le odissee neoclassiche à la Fielding (Allison 1968, 306).

ta sulla scalinata di una chiesa e in sogno vede i volti rassicuranti dei suoi famigliari. Al risveglio, prende atto di come sia difficile inserirsi nella nuova realtà urbana e di come sia ormai impossibile tornare al suo paese. Al massimo dello sconforto, viene raggiunto da un gentiluomo (forse un ministro della chiesa), che lo rassicura e gli fa compagnia, mentre insieme osservano una folla rivoltosa sfilare per le vie della città e umiliare un rappresentante della corona britannica. Robin riconosce nell'uomo ricoperto di pece e piume proprio il maggiore Molineux e si abbandona a una risata liberatoria quando si rende conto di come la sua nuova vita non dipenda più dalla famiglia ma soltanto da sé stesso. Alla fine del racconto, il ragazzo è tentato di tornare a casa ma il gentiluomo con cui ha stretto amicizia lo convince a restare in città perché, grazie alla sua scaltrezza, egli potrà trovare una propria posizione in quella che diventerà una nuova nazione.

## 2 Epos come ideologia e politica

Tra le numerose interpretazioni del testo - da quelle psicoanalitiche a quelle storiche, da quelle allegoriche a quelle religiose -, le letture di carattere più specificamente politico e ideologico sono quelle più utili a inquadrare la relazione che l'opera intreccia tra genere epico e identità nazionale.<sup>2</sup> Per Walter Herbert, *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* racconta la storia di un ragazzo che stravolge le gerarchie di un intero impianto politico e sociale: se in un primo momento il protagonista mantiene le promesse fatte allo zio e arriva in città, egli alla fine si oppone a chi ha predisposto il suo futuro (Herbert 1991, 23). Sulla stessa linea, Roy Harvey Pearce suggerisce che Robin incarna lo stato di transizione tra l'identità britannica del passato e quella americana del futuro; tuttavia, precisa lo studioso, quando le circostanze gli mostrano l'impossibilità di perseguire la via dettata dal parente Torry, egli capisce che è il momento di prendere la drastica, per quanto inevitabile, decisione di rompere ogni legame (Pearce 1954, 327-49).

Sebbene non abbia «nothing whatever to say, or even to think, about politics» e ancorché alla fine sembri aver imparato soltanto «the unreliability of nepotism» (Crews 1989, 73), Robin rappresenta «the new beginning in the American colonies» (Shields 2001, 304).

<sup>2</sup> Sul racconto come testo di formazione incentrato sulla crescita di Robin si vedano Gross 1957, 97-109; Broes 1964, 171-84. La critica psicoanalitica si è focalizzata su come il protagonista, nel corso della sua avventura, incontri ripetutamente diverse declinazioni della figura paterna: in particolare si rimanda a Pearce 1959, 83-90; Abernethy 1976, 5-8; Shaw 1976, 559-76; Nietzsche 1978, 167-75; Reed 1983, 94-103. L'interpretazione storica si concentra, invece, sul rapporto tra Robin e il contesto rivoluzionario delle colonie: si vedano in merito Smith 1970, 115-20; McWilliams 1976, 549-71; Grayson 1982, 545-59; Duban 1983, 271-88; Autrey 1985, 211-21; Grayson 1992, 177-94; Bellis 1995, 97-119.

La decisione di vivere senza l'aiuto di un familiare riproduce, infatti, il tentativo delle colonie di sbarazzarsi delle interferenze britanniche e affermare il proprio diritto a essere libere e indipendenti. In effetti, come aveva già notato Q.D. Leavis, l'umiliazione inferta al maggiore Molineux di venir ricoperto di pece e piume («tar-and-feathering») costituisce il rituale simbolico della deposizione del re e l'emergente desiderio americano di una forma di autogoverno democratico rispetto alla paternalistica oppressione britannica (Leavis 1951).

Questo rapporto tra individualità e collettività è messo in evidenza da Michael Colacurcio per cui lo snodo chiave del racconto sarebbe proprio un'elaborazione della sfera politica intesa sia come autorealizzazione della psiche che come mitizzazione del passato nazionale (Colacurcio 1984, 131).<sup>3</sup> Da questo punto di vista, *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* descrive il processo attraverso il quale Robin diventa un esempio del *self-made man* americano: credendo nella sua nuova guida e nell'alternativa che questi gli propone - «you may rise in the world without the help of your kinsman» (Hawthorne 1982a, 87) -,<sup>4</sup> il ragazzo si configura come un *homo novus americanus* la cui *quest* eroica è finalizzata all'autorealizzazione del suo io.

La convergenza tra l'affermazione individuale dell'eroe e la storizzazione della mitologia nazionale è uno degli elementi principali che caratterizzano in termini epici il racconto. Nel testo, infatti, mentre affronta temi quali l'introspezione psicologica, il rapporto tra individuo, famiglia e religione, la dannazione e il senso del peccato, la solitudine e il sogno come strumento premonitore, Hawthorne descrive la fase fondativa degli Stati Uniti attraverso il rimaneggiamento di alcuni elementi chiave del genere epico. In questo, egli era in linea con il ripensamento sistematico dell'epos che stava avvenendo negli Stati Uniti nella prima metà del XIX secolo e che vedeva autori e critici riprendere e nello stesso tempo criticare gli esperimenti epici realizzati da Timothy Dwight e Joel Barlow nel cinquantennio precedente:<sup>5</sup> di lì a breve, testi quali *Moby-Dick* di Herman Melvil-

**3** Il legame io-noi si palesa già a partire dalla valenza simbolica dei nomi dei protagonisti. Robin, 'pettiorosso', è da un lato l'uccello simbolo del sacrificio di Gesù Cristo sulla Croce, dall'altro l'emblema della guerra (rosso) e del lutto (nero) che da essa deriva. Dal canto suo *kinsman* significa letteralmente 'parente' ma ricorda nella pronuncia *king's man* (uomo del re); Molineux, invece, rimanda a William Molineux (1717-1774), un mercante di Boston che aveva partecipato attivamente al Boston Tea Party del 1773 e a una serie di proteste politiche contro l'impero britannico.

**4** D'ora in avanti, le pagine delle citazioni dal racconto tratte da questa edizione saranno indicate tra parentesi.

**5** Tra i numerosi poemi epici composti a cavallo tra il XVIII e il XIX secolo negli Stati Uniti, *The Conquest of Canaan* (1785) di Timothy Dwight e *The Columbiad* (1807) di Joel Barlow sono quelli che ricevettero maggiore risonanza tra lettori e critici sulle due sponde dell'Atlantico. Sulla circolazione delle due opere si vedano McWilliams 1989 e Botta 2017.

le, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* di Harriet Beecher Stowe e *Leaves of Grass* di Walt Whitman avrebbero raccontato alcune fasi chiave dello sviluppo della civiltà americana attraverso una modalità epica originale, moderna e svincolata dai modelli classici, rinascimentali e neoclassici che avevano contraddistinto l'epica biblica di Dwight e quella secolare di Barlow.

Per gli uomini di cultura americani della metà del XIX secolo, il genere epico della tradizione non sembrava più rispondere alle esigenze artistiche e ideologiche dei Paesi moderni, tanto meno degli Stati Uniti. Qualsiasi tentativo di scrivere un grande epos americano che emulasse quello europeo era divenuto sempre più impensabile e destinato al fallimento in quanto questo avrebbe dovuto considerare culture marziali di cui non si aveva più conoscenza diretta, prevedere l'intervento di esseri soprannaturali a cui nessuno avrebbe creduto, usare una retorica e una prolissità contrarie ai nuovi gusti che preferivano la verosimiglianza e la concisione.<sup>6</sup>

Hawthorne si schierò tra i detrattori del genere e nello sketch *Select Party* del 1844 descrisse in modo ironico l'attesa dello «American Master Genius» che avrebbe dovuto scrivere il primo grande epos americano, plasmato in forma di poema epico oppure in una forma completamente nuova (Hawthorne 1982b, 952). Il protagonista - personificazione di ciò che non è possibile ottenere - incontra nel reame della Fantasia il suo abitante più anziano, il quale, appreso della sua amicizia con Dwight, Barlow e Freneau, i tre poeti maggiormente impegnati nella stesura di un poema epico durante la Prima Repubblica, si allontana sconcolato. Nel 1846 Hawthorne tornò sull'argomento in maniera ancor più incisiva: intimorito che il distico eroico dell'epos tradizionale potesse essere di nuovo utilizzato per cantare la guerra con il Messico, mise in ridicolo gli esperimenti epici dei suoi connazionali, in particolare quello di *The Columbiad* di Barlow:

Is old Joel Barlow yet alive? Unconscionable man! Why, he must have nearly fulfilled his century! And does he meditate an epic on the war between Mexico and Texas, with machinery contrived on the principle of the steam-engine, as being the nearest to celestial agency that our epoch can boast? (Hawthorne 1982c, 1022)

<sup>6</sup> Un critico della rivista *Port Folio* affermò già nel 1812 che «[a]n epic poem seldom succeeds, unless in a barbarous or semi-barbarous age» («Observations on Poetry» 1812, 256-7), mentre John Neal sostenne nel 1824 che la poesia eroica era «entirely done with, in this world - and for ever (we hope)» ([1824] 1937, 77). Su questa linea, un anonimo recensore della *North American Review* dichiarò nel 1839 che «[t]he epic, strictly defined, is an obsolete form of poetic art. It would not be acceptable at the present day» (367), mentre Washington Allston asseriva nel 1850 che «[e]pics are out of fashion; Homer and Virgil would hardly be read in our time» (123).

Per Hawthorne il problema non era tanto legato al valore letterario e alla funzione ideologica del genere epico, quanto piuttosto al fallimento dei poeti patriottici della fine del Settecento di dar vita a un modello eroico nazionale importando e trapiantando nel nuovo mondo i paradigmi della tradizione europea. Se con *The Scarlet Letter* avrebbe egli stesso contribuito in maniera considerevole alla modernizzazione e all'adattamento del genere in America, in *My Kinsman, Major Molineux* sperimentò una costruzione narrativa particolarmente originale, concentrando alcuni degli elementi canonici dell'epos – il viaggio, la ricerca, la guerra e la definizione dell'identità nazionale – nello specifico topos della discesa nell'oltretomba.<sup>7</sup>

Da questo punto di vista, Hawthorne condivideva con gli altri scrittori e intellettuali americani impegnati a confrontarsi con l'epica l'idea secondo la quale la condensazione dei suoi tratti caratteristici in uno specifico elemento tematico avesse le proprie origini nella *Divina commedia*, un testo che negli Stati Uniti era da sempre stato letto in termini epici.<sup>8</sup> In particolare, gli uomini di lettere d'oltreoceano ritenevano che, per usare le parole di Sergio Zatti, «alla base della visione escatologica di Dante [ci fosse] un movimento spirituale di conoscenza che prende la forma materiale del viaggio» (Zatti 2000, 54). L'epica dantesca, in altre parole, si strutturava sul modello dell'*Odissea* e s'incentrava sulla *quest* di un personaggio che, seguendo un processo di purificazione attraverso i tre regni ultraterreni, estendeva la catabasi a impianto centrale dell'intera opera.<sup>9</sup>

Se la discesa di Dante nell'oltretomba permise a Hawthorne di tracciare l'ossatura formale del testo, i modelli classici di catabasi

<sup>7</sup> Per quanto riguarda il rapporto tra una nuova tipologia di epos ottocentesco e il topos della catabasi, *Moby-Dick* è un esempio particolarmente significativo. L'opera di Melville, infatti, riprende e rielabora molte convenzioni del canone – tra cui la proposizione del tema, il catalogo, l'enciclopedismo, le similitudini e le genealogie – che, come nel racconto di Hawthorne, sembrano confluire nel topos della catabasi. Tale concentrazione tematica rende l'inseguimento della balena da parte del capitano Ahab e del Pequod un'estensione della discesa agli inferi da cui l'eroe non farà ritorno.

<sup>8</sup> Anche se a partire da una fase più tarda rispetto alle prime teorizzazioni e produzioni epiche di Dwight e Barlow, negli Stati Uniti la *Divina Commedia* è stata sempre considerata un'opera epica e l'invocazione a Calliope (la musa della poesia epica), presente all'inizio del *Purgatorio*, confermava e legittimava questa idea. Il discorso è stato approfondito da chi scrive con il professor William Spengemann, studioso, tra l'altro, della ricezione della *Commedia* in America.

<sup>9</sup> Sebbene con alcune sostanziali differenze, il racconto di Hawthorne sembra anticipare *The Man of the Crowd* (1840) di Edgar Allan Poe. In esso, il narratore decide di seguire un vecchio «to know more of him» (Poe 1984, 392), ma dopo aver girovagato per ore tra le strade di una Londra infernale rinuncia a sciogliere il mistero che avvolge il personaggio e la folla incontrata perché, in fondo, «[t]here are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told» (388). Poe riprende il topos epico della discesa agli inferi ma, rispetto a Hawthorne, non riattiva lo snodo chiave del genere del ricongiungimento tra la sfera individuale e quella collettiva proposta dall'ideologia democratica e puritana americana. Sul rapporto tra Hawthorne e Poe si rimanda a Downes 2004, 31-5.



si, in particolare quello virgiliano, lo spinsero a considerare il suo racconto come una narrazione teleologica: pur proponendo una sottotraccia ironica della visione dominante dell'establishment,<sup>10</sup> il testo fondava l'identità nazionale americana su radici illustri e la proiettava verso un futuro glorioso. L'obiettivo poteva essere raggiunto attraverso una retorica ideologica marcatamente espansionistica e attraverso un eroe che - vivendo la sua morte e la sua rinascita simboliche in un universo popolato non solo da amici e parenti, ma da europei e (finti) indiani - perfeziona il suo io in funzione dell'intera comunità che rappresenta.

### 3 Una catabasi politica e sociale

Robin inizia la sua avventura con l'attraversamento di un fiume che cancella la sua innocenza e, trasformandolo in un nuovo Enea americano, lo introduce nell'abisso politico e sociale che la *porta inferi* della città in rivolta gli spalanca dinanzi.<sup>11</sup> Come in un incubo, egli arriva di notte e non sa dove dirigersi; cammina attraverso una serie di stradine che si incrociano a formare un labirinto e incontra persone che indossano strani abiti e parlano lingue a lui sconosciute. Il ragazzo è vicino al centro della città, ma questa sembra essere un inferno in terra: le strade che gli si aprono davanti sono tetre e solitarie, i negozi chiusi e quasi tutte le case al buio. La sua attenzione è attratta da un uomo con gli occhi di fuoco e con il viso dipinto di rosso e di nero: «The effect was as if two individual devils, a fiend of fire and a fiend of darkness, had united themselves to form this infernal visage» (78).

L'uomo è a capo di una grottesca parata di ribelli che Robin incontra verso la fine del racconto e che è costituita da «wild figures in the Indian dress, and many fantastic shapes without a model, giving the whole march a visionary air» (84). Secondo John Shields, la riattivazione del tema epico della catabasi nel racconto «proves that its author's knowledge of and admiration for Vergil's *Aeneid*, and especially for its hero's journey through the underworld, determined how Hawthorne constructed this tale» (Shields 2001, 297-8).

Tuttavia, se il critico ha ragione nel rimarcare l'influenza di Virgilio su Hawthorne per quanto concerne la costruzione della trama,

<sup>10</sup> Su come l'ironia storica di Hawthorne complichino le interpretazioni più lineari del testo si veda De Angelis 2004, 116-19. In merito, Alessandro Portelli mette in risalto come l'aspetto drammatico della rivolta venga alla fine decostruito dalla risata che accompagna l'umiliazione pubblica del maggiore Molineux (Portelli 1992, 192).

<sup>11</sup> Robert C. Grayson ipotizza che la «piccola metropoli» in cui è ambientata la storia sia Boston e che gli eventi accadano nel 1730, anno del centenario dell'arrivo di John Winthrop nel nuovo mondo e dell'istituzione di Boston quale capitale della colonia del Massachusetts (Grayson 1982, 546-7).

è altrettanto vero che il testo americano capovolge la finalità ideologica di quello latino. Mentre l'eroe virgiliano attraversa lo Stige nell'Ade e apprende che diventerà il fondatore dell'impero romano, Robin si fa traghettare in città per trovare un parente la cui raccomandazione, in termini molto più individualistici, lo aiuterà a inserirsi in società. A differenza delle anime dei morti che lo circondano, Enea offre al traghettatore Caronte il ramo d'oro, la chiave della conoscenza futura, mentre più prosaicamente Robin riesce a ottenere un passaggio a quell'ora inconsueta promettendo un supplemento sulla tariffa (68). Enea cerca il padre Anchise e, dopo averlo trovato, viene istruito sulla sua missione fondativa; dal canto suo, Robin lascia il padre e la famiglia e, dopo aver individuato il maggiore Molineux, finge di non conoscerlo: quando i rivoltosi avanzano con altezzosità e con urla senza senso (86), l'ufficiale è ormai decaduto dalla sua posizione di potere e viene umiliato dalla folla in quanto rappresentante del dominio britannico. A differenza dell'eroe virgiliano, che dopo la sua esperienza nel mondo degli inferi comprende l'importanza della devozione per gli dei, la famiglia e la comunità, Robin ha perso l'innocenza e, nel momento in cui il suo «companion» (87) si rifiuta di mostrargli la strada per il traghetto, comprende come sia ormai impossibile tornare indietro: entra in una Chiesa ma ha paura di confrontarsi con Dio, così decide di lasciarsi alle spalle il passato e si unisce all'orda rivoluzionaria.

#### 4 L'epica dell'espansione e l'espansione dell'epica

Piuttosto che mettere in luce una semplice parodia del poema latino, il confronto tra il viaggio agli inferi di Enea e quello di Robin fa emergere la strategia attraverso la quale Hawthorne può osservare e narrare un passato che, sebbene rimosso, riaffiora dopo un secolo con inquietanti fantasmi. L'atteggiamento del protagonista sembra rispecchiare quello degli americani che negli anni trenta del Settecento attaccarono i governatori invece del re e, di riflesso, il maggiore Molineux invece del governatore.<sup>12</sup> Robin si relaziona con una società che mira a essere nuova e diversa, ma i cui meccanismi politici non fanno altro che ricalcare quelli del passato. Convinto che

<sup>12</sup> L'ostilità nei confronti della Gran Bretagna iniziò nel 1686, quando gli inglesi designarono Sir Edmund Andros come governatore della Massachusetts Bay Colony. Fino ad allora i coloni si erano governati in modo autonomo, con una limitata intromissione da parte della madrepatria. Riprendendo la *History of Massachusetts Bay* di Thomas Hutchinson, Hawthorne descrisse il periodo storico caratterizzato dalla presenza di sei governatori che nell'arco di quarant'anni furono imposti dalla corte britannica infiammando lo spirito rivoluzionario di un popolo che era ormai geloso di un «exercise of power, which did not emanate from themselves» (68).

la perversione dei valori famigliari, nazionali e religiosi avesse progressivamente macchiato ogni nobile ricerca di libertà e democrazia da parte degli Stati Uniti, Hawthorne criticò gli aspetti più violenti della ribellione coloniale in un testo che solo in parte è un bozzetto politico e satirico. In una fase storica caratterizzata da un forte nazionalismo e dall'espansionismo imperialistico verso Ovest, Valerio Massimo De Angelis sostiene che

Hawthorne si dedica alla storia 'provinciale' della sua 'terra natale' non per monumentalizzare il suo ruolo di 'prefigurazione' del glorioso futuro statunitense, ma viceversa per investigarne i lati più oscuri, che si riverberano anche nell'America del presente. (2014)

Eppure, l'iniziazione di Robin sul modello di Enea rende il racconto la *quest* di un *self-made man* americano che collega in termini epici il carattere imperialistico della democrazia e dell'espansionismo della presidenza di Andrew Jackson (1829-1837) con l'atto fondativo dell'identità nazionale statunitense.

Dopo la vittoria nella guerra contro la Gran Bretagna del 1812-14, l'obiettivo principale dell'establishment politico americano divenne la conquista dell'Ovest, che fu interpretata e descritta in toni altrettanto altisonanti ed eroici di quelli con cui si erano raccontate la fondazione delle colonie a Jamestown e a Plymouth, e le vittorie durante la Guerra d'indipendenza. Come sostiene in merito John P. McWilliams, gli autori impegnati a scrivere un'opera epica erano ormai convinti che «the common American of the 1820s or 1830s was more likely to be moved by the heroism of conquering the land than by more recollections of neoVirgilian gentlemen creating the world's republic in Philadelphia» (McWilliams 1989, 66).

Su questa linea, Gordon S. Wood evidenzia come l'impianto filosofico illuministico della fine del XVIII secolo fosse stato ormai sostituito dalla democrazia espansionistica Jacksoniana e come l'originale repubblica di stampo classico, con i cittadini impegnati a costruire il bene comune, si fosse dissolta in una società nuova e unica in cui lo stato – secondo i dettami dell'eccezionalismo americano – lasciava liberi gli individui di raggiungere i propri obiettivi nel segno del progresso e della prosperità. Dal 1820, continua Wood, la nuova generazione non era più interessata a dar vita a una entità politica forgiata sui valori ereditati dall'Europa (Wood 1971, 22), ma si riconosceva in una virtù eroica che – per usare ancora le parole di McWilliams – «was confined within the ever-expanding borders of the Republic» (McWilliams 1989, 42-3).

All'inizio della sua avventura, Robin non solo è avulso dal contesto politico e sociale che trova al suo arrivo a Boston ma, contando totalmente sull'aiuto del suo parente, si discosta dagli ideali di democrazia e di fiducia in sé stessi che gli avrebbero permesso di farsi stra-

da nel mondo:<sup>13</sup> egli sovverte, così, lo spirito del *self-made man* che secondo Benjamin Franklin definiva l'uomo nuovo americano; inoltre, figlio di un agricoltore e pastore della fede, disconosce le virtù che Thomas Jefferson lodava del mondo rurale.<sup>14</sup> Alla fine della sua esperienza, Robin sembra riallinearsi a questi principi: egli dimostra di poter sopravvivere in un mondo nuovo e, riconoscendosi nei rivoltosi che vedono nel maggiore Molineux l'incarnazione di un passato che la nuova identità politica in formazione deve rigettare, diventa l'eroe rappresentativo dell'ideologia espansionistica della civiltà americana. Proprio come Robin, infatti, gli Stati Uniti hanno visto nel raggiungimento della propria indipendenza il primo passo verso la conquista di nuovi spazi.

Le contrapposizioni tra passato e futuro, e tra sudditanza e conquista si sintetizzano in quello che è probabilmente il passo chiave del racconto. Mentre si trova tra la Province House, simbolo del potere reale britannico, e la Old South Church, emblema delle inclinazioni democratiche dei puritani, Robin vede sfilare il nuovo ordine sociale nelle fattezze dell'infernale corteo e del suo diabolico leader: «The single horseman, clad in a military dress, and bearing a drawn sword, rode onward as the leader, and, by his fierce and variegated countenance, appeared like war personified» (84).

A questo punto della storia, Robin comprende come «a man [has] several voices [...] as well as two complexions» (83) ed esperisce la complessità del suo io e della nuova comunità in cui si trova; egli non ha più dubbi su quale sia il suo posto nel mondo e decide di seguire coloro che gli propongono di «remain with us» (87), guidati da un grottesco cavaliere che, con vestiti diversi e armi più potenti, sembra continuare a marciare attraverso la storia degli Stati Uniti.

## 5 Cambio della guardia

E infatti la storia continua a ripetersi in maniera ineluttabile e nuove insurrezioni si propongono di demolire una nazione già abbastanza indebolita. L'attacco al Campidoglio del 6 gennaio 2021 non solo ha minato le basi politiche e sociali americane, ma ha palesato anche un interessante quanto pericoloso sostrato culturale: uno degli elementi che hanno accomunato i rivoltosi è l'utilizzo di simboli appar-

<sup>13</sup> Il fatto che Robin non sia in grado di riconoscere i pericoli legati ai movimenti rivoluzionari lo avvicina al suo connazionale Amasa Delano che nel racconto di Herman Melville *Benito Cereno* è «incapace per candore democratico di vedere la tenebra dell'odio e del furore degli schiavi neri sottocoperta» (Portelli 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Sulle analogie e differenze tra Robin e Benjamin Franklin si vedano Smith 1965, 550-8 e England 1972, 181-8. Sul rapporto sovversivo del ragazzo rispetto ai principi agrari di Thomas Jefferson si rimanda a Stott 1971, 197-203.

tenenti a culture più o meno lontane nello spazio e nel tempo. Se - come ha scritto Kristina M. Olson - la destra alternativa americana, i nazionalisti e i suprematisti bianchi da sempre hanno cooptato intenzionalmente simboli tardo-antichi e medievali affinché potessero rappresentare la violenza e il razzismo impliciti nella loro presunta superiorità (Olson 2021, 212), la messa in scena che ha avuto luogo a Capitol Hill ha visto, tra i vari interpreti, 'patrioti' indossare maschere da aquila dalla testa bianca, brandire il martello di Thor, sventolare bandiere confederate, mostrare tatuaggi tribali o vestire indumenti ornati da emblemi filonazisti e antisemiti.<sup>15</sup> Tra i protagonisti, Jake Angeli, il cui look, più che riproporre banalmente lo stereotipato abbigliamento dei nativi americani, «evokes the language of violence and treason from Dante's *Inferno*» (Olson 2021, 212). Indecorosa variante postmoderna del Minotauro dantesco, metà uomo e metà bestia, con il volto dipinto a tre colori quasi a richiamare le tre facce di Lucifero, Angeli - *nomen omen* - si proponeva come il degno rappresentante di chi sostiene di combattere a difesa della democrazia e contro la tirannide.

Un nuovo mostro infernale si è imposto sulla scena guidando una parata ancora più grottesca di quella ambientata nella Boston coloniale e raccontata da Hawthorne; questa volta i personaggi sono veri e si muovono in un *setting* reale che, tuttavia, continua a simboleggiare valori di libertà.

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<sup>15</sup> Per un'analisi dei simboli presenti durante l'attacco si veda Mallory, Sidner 2021.

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# “You have a better needle, I know”. Boy Actors on the Early Modern Stage

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**Abstract** In this article I argue that an approach relying on metatheatrical analysis and on Bakhtin's Carnavalesque could account for the apparent subversivism of the boy actor's cross-dressing on the Renaissance stage: stage cross-dressing was rather part of a sanctioned, conservative transgression. Comedy – linked to the carnivalesque features of the Renaissance stage – shares with carnival its conservatively transgressive quality. The frequency of references to boy actors in disguise-plot comedies and their metatheatricality are analysed. Drawing on the Jacobean play *Love's Cure* I will try to show how comic conservatism and metatheatre combine with socially and theatrically conservative outcomes.

**Keywords** Renaissance drama. Boy Actors. Cross-dressing. Cultural Studies. Carnavalesque.

**Summary** 1 Reading Boy Actors. – 2 Bakhtinian Carnival and Renaissance Theatre. – 3 Comedy and Metatheatre. – 4 The Semiotization of the Boy Actor. – 5 Conclusions.



## Peer review

Submitted 2022-04-11  
Accepted 2022-05-24  
Published 2022-09-06

## Open access

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**Citation** Bassan, R.V. (2022). “You have a better needle, I know”. Boy Actors on the Early Modern Stage”. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [177-194] 23-40.

## 1 Reading Boy Actors

In the early nineteenth century, Charles Lamb wondered at the "odd double confusion" of Renaissance<sup>1</sup> audiences in front of boy actors impersonating women (2008, 249). His remark, however, is a rare specimen in the period between the 1660s and the twentieth century. Before 1642, the main commentary on the subject was provided by anti-theatrical writers, who condemned the boy actors' cross-dressing as blasphemous and subversive – remarks later reprised in the *Interregnum* as a *monitus* against the practice. Criticism of the boy actors was one of the main arguments in the attack against the theatre in general as a place of corruption, and those rebuking such accusations would defend the theatre by stressing its apparent artificiality. Works such as Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* (1612) praised theatrical performance precisely because of the craft required to create such a complex illusion, whose main aim was entertainment. To Heywood, the clear artificiality of the theatre makes any ambiguities harmless, and the performance results formative and entertaining – rather than corruptive – for actors and audience alike. In this illusion, boy performers are clearly intended to only 'represent' ladies, which should merely entertain the audience rather than arouse its ungodly homosexual desires. Conversely, author and playwright Lady Mary Wroth defended the theatre but criticised its contemporary form, because the boys' performances made it too evidently artificial and thus unentertaining: only women could render femininity convincingly (Shapiro 1989). Nevertheless, all debates on cross-dressing actors were dismissed with the introduction of actresses in the Restoration. Although some still remembered pre-1642 productions, the novelty soon became the norm and was not questioned further.

Occasionally through the seventeenth and eighteenth century, cross-dressed actors would still interpret certain roles, mainly for grotesque or comic purposes, and child actors of both sexes briefly rose back to popularity in the nineteenth century. All-male or all-female performances became common practice in single-sex schools and colleges and are still quite common in such institutions today. However, all these instances of cross-dressed performance hardly ever raised critical reflections on the Renaissance. Even in the nineteenth century, when Shakespearean child performances attracted both the Romantics and the Victorians, the implications of Elizabethan theatrical cross-dressing were not subject to scholarly scrutiny. When confronted with child actors, the critical focus of these audiences was on contemporary ideas on childhood rather than on perfor-

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<sup>1</sup> Given the pertinence of the topic to both cultural and socio-political aspects, the terms 'Renaissance' and 'early modern' will be used interchangeably.

mance in early modern times (Davis 2006). Only in 1915 would Freeburg address the issue for the first time. In his study on disguise in Elizabethan drama, he identified the female page and the boy bride among the five most frequent disguise plots and briefly mentioned the theatrical effects that this practice allowed for. Yet, since his main aim was to investigate the functions of disguise in general, his treatment of cross-dressing is mostly limited to the play level (i.e., to the characters' disguises as members of the opposite sex). Also, while acknowledging how the audience's awareness of the play as such and of the boy actor underneath the female character could be used for theatrical ends, Freeburg did not develop this idea in relation to the boy actor specifically. After Freeburg's study, the analysis of stage cross-dressing was revived only in the second half of the twentieth century, initially through second-wave feminist studies, and later re-verbated mainly in cultural approaches to literature.

Specific interest for Renaissance cross-dressing arose in the 1980s-1990s, during the "feminist-historicist turn" (Chess 2016, 3). Studies of the time generally consider cross-dressing on the early modern stage to have "upset patriarchal values, assaulted cultural boundaries, and unravelled the sexual separations of ambivalence, androgyny, and eroticism" (Cressy 1996, 439). Today, this is still the most popular interpretation of the practice across disciplines and critical theories. Second-wave feminist scholars focus on the female characters' layered cross-dressing and interpret it as a bold representation of the real-life appropriation of male sexual and social prerogatives by women of different classes (Bunker 2005; Jardine 1983; Levine 1986; Hodgson-Wright 2000; Hotchkiss 2012; Howard 1988; Woodbridge 1984). New historicists show how the erotic ambiguity of the boys' performance mirrored the instability of gender described in contemporary medical theories, and they highlight the fluidity of identity thus represented (Greenblatt 1988; Shapiro 1996). Gender studies stress the implications of the practice in terms of gender performativity as defined by Butler (1999) and link this gender-blurring to modern cross-dressing and transgender issues (Chess 2016; Comensoli, Russell 1999; Garber 1992; Hamamra 2019; Goldberg 1994; Orvis 2014; Pérez Díez 2022). Most studies stress the (homo)erotic allure of these performances. This stage practice is often used as an example within broader discussions on theatrical disguise, gender and/or gender representation, cross-dressing through the ages, social transgression, discourses on *ante litteram* LGBTQ+ issues - i.e., in discussions centred around culture. The boy actor's cross-dressed performance does pertain to all these discourses, but the lack of comprehensive analyses of the subject, and especially of its theatrical implications, makes these studies slightly unbalanced towards modern interpretations of early modern texts and practices.

## 2 Bakhtinian Carnival and Renaissance Theatre

Most literature on Renaissance stage cross-dressing relies on limited primary sources. Shakespeare's plays and Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* (1611) are often the only dramatic sources cited, and they are presented as exceptional within the early modern context. In fact, many other plays relied both on cross-dressing plots and on metatheatrical references to boy actors, something already highlighted by Freeburg but rarely addressed in later studies. Such popularity suggests that Shakespeare's works were compliant with a convention, and that such practices neither shocked audiences away nor sparked social unrest. Also, many scholars tend to read the Renaissance criticism of cross-dressed figures quite literally. Thus, Woodbridge can go so far as to describe a full-on "female transvestite movement" taking over London between the 1570s and 1620s (1984, 157). However, comparisons with contemporary fashion and carnivalesque spaces allow to account for the androgynous monstrosities mentioned in these writings, and to separate these instances from stage cross-dressing. This suggests that female characters cross-dressing on stage were not a bolder version of real-life female cross-dressers appropriating men's clothing and social prerogatives.

The hyperbolic language of early modern polemical texts<sup>2</sup> can overshadow the actual descriptions of garments they provide. Compared with material evidence (e.g., contemporary clothes, portraits), these descriptions indicate that women and men were not cross-dressing at all. In fact, they attest to contemporary fashion trends towards more comfortable, wider clothing and similar hairstyles for both sexes: women's doublets, feathered hats and coiffeurs that made hair look shorter and men's softer doublets, jewellery and longer hair - all imported fashions from France, Italy, and sometimes the Netherlands (Corson 1971; Pendergast, Pendergast 2004). This general trend would culminate in the 1640s, when fashion could look almost unisex, but even in this case, originally male garments were adapted in order to flatter the ideal female figure of the time and vice versa (Jones, Stallybrass 2000). Rather than actual cross-dressers, as previously believed, what moralist and satirical writers feared were the implications of such new trends. To these authors, the increasingly faster changes in fashion symbolised a general moral decline for two main reasons: they altered the "hierarchy of analogies" believed to regulate the entire universe (Foucault 2002, 60) and they required

<sup>2</sup> E.g.: George Gascoigne, *The Steele Glas* (1576); Philip Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583); William Averell, *A Meruailous Combat of Contrarieties* (1588); Richard Niccols, *The Furies* (1614); John William, *Sermon of Apparell* (1619); *Hic Mulier and Haec-Vir* (1620), both published anonymously.

costly imported textiles and the imitation of foreign – mainly Catholic – countries, which made England somewhat dependent, subordinate and backward (Jones, Stallybrass 2000, 61-3).

Tudor monarchs in particular reinforced a neo-feudal view of the universe as a divinely ordered hierarchy, subdivided in minor ones (e.g., angels, humans, plants, animals) wherein each being held a fixed position; each position had an equivalent in all other hierarchies. This cosmos had ontological, gnoseological, representational and political functions: parallels with the natural world "made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them" (Foucault 2002, 19). Consequently, material fabric and social fabric had to resemble one another: sumptuary laws of the time regulated dress meticulously, differentiating by rank and gender (cf. Baldwin 1926). This legislation aimed to maintain an "immediacy of signification" in dress (Kuchta 1993, 236-7), a correspondence between one's appearance and status in the cosmos, although the lack of records and the frequent reiteration of these laws suggest that they attest "more to a social thought about dress than to any actual practice" (Kuchta 1993, 242; cf. Hyland 2011, 28). Nevertheless, misrepresentations of status and gender could be equally disturbing in a culture where such identities consisted of specific sets of cultural encodings and practices (Heise 1992, 371) rather than biological assumptions (cf. Laqueur 1990).

That fashion changes intertwined with social changes further blurred such dress-rank associations (Hazard 2000, 95). Significantly, the main target of those very pamphlets critics use to argue in favour of the cross-dressing fashion are the new rich from the rising trading classes, who subvert social order and set an unpatriotic example with their extravagance, as opposed to a mediaeval social ideal where common people modestly dressed in local sackcloth and wool. Furthermore, the moralists' critique primarily targets men, whose frivolity and effeminacy make them weak representatives of English worth and potentially bad soldiers. Female apparent mannishness is but a sign thereof in these *o tempora, o mores* lamentations. The androgynous hyperboles, then, should not be read too literally: the subordination of female action, speech and desire did not undergo significant changes in the 1570s-1620s period (Fletcher 1995; Hull 1982). It seems unlikely, then, that female cross-dressers on stage could represent proactive versions of real-life female cross-dressers claiming patriarchal power.

And yet, early modern England did sanction cross-dressing, provided it remained limited to prescribed spaces – namely, carnivalesque celebrations. People – men especially – would cross-dress during Shrovetide revels, feasts of Misrule, harvest festivals and summer games such as the May-tide ones or St Stephen's day celebrations, and the traditions of Bessy and the Boy Bishop involved

cross-dressing (Bristol 1983; Cressy 1996; Lucas 1988). Also the charivari often prescribed cross-dressing to ridicule disorderly neighbours publicly (Fletcher 1995; Minois 2000). These instances of travesty are inscribed in the carnivalesque dimension as described by Bakhtin, which allows to exit "the present order of life" by upsetting thegnoseological and political truth established by official ideology (1968, 272): carnivalesque celebrations offered a counterfactual dimension that parodied and subverted the established order. Cross-dressing was one of the forms of this subversion, which parodied conventional meaning and disrupted "the ordinary relationship between signifier and signified" (Bristol 1983, 641). However, the revolutionary charge of carnival is undone by the legitimised space where it occurs: the liberating, participatory transgression can be enjoyed only insofar as the system it parodies is recognised and respected (Eco 1984, 5-7). As a carnivalesque practice, cross-dressing was revolutionary only insofar as it was *not* the norm and remained limited to prescribed areas and times of the year. When cross-dressing was practised outside legitimate spaces, punishment ensued; it was rather mild, but its strictest form was public penance, thus a way to reinforce a clear separation between carnivalesque and ordinary spaces for the benefit of the entire community (Cressy 1996, 462).

There were two other main spaces where cross-dressing was sanctioned. There was prostitution, both male and female (Griffiths 1993), to which trials usually refer infractions of the kind above mentioned. There was also the playhouse, where cross-dressing was a consolidated device: not only female, but also male characters and boy actors would cross-dress on stage. Both realms shared many liminal features with carnivalesque celebrations. The legal and geographical marginality of London entertainment districts is well known, and even when theatres and brothels were located in central neighbourhoods, they still occupied liminal areas associated with crime, such as Whitefriars (cf. Shugg 1977; Salgãdo 1977). In these areas operated the notorious cross-dressing criminal Mary Frith, often mentioned in critical scholarship on early modern cross-dressing. That she would move from a marginal space (crime) to another (the Fortune playhouse) to perform a bawdy song for *The Roaring Girl* première suddenly seems less transgressive than previously believed (cf. Bunker 2005). Concurrently, both prostitution and the theatre occupied liminal times, since both replaced productive labour as forms of festive time, outside work and devotion. The ambiguity of the players' social status was similar to that of prostitutes, but despite these ambivalent positions, the professional competence of both groups was accessible to all social strata, which also intermingled in the entertainment districts. Unsurprisingly, both professions attracted the harsh criticism of moralist writers.

Theatre and prostitution also had in common liminal discourses that share the – eventually conservative – parodical overturn of official ideology of the carnival. As the ultimate sexualised woman, the prostitute represented “the anarchic potential the dominant discourse bears within itself” because it undermined the patriarchal dichotomy of male domination and female subordination (Fouassier-Tate 2014, 74). Likewise, male prostitution undermined the sexual dynamics of male potency and female passivity (cf. Fletcher 1995, 10-11). Cross-dressing in prostitution, then, could subvert the sexual binarism and power dynamics at the core of Renaissance society, but within the legitimate carnivalesque-like liminality of the trade: prostitution was *de facto* tolerated and regulated in early modern England (Griffiths 1993; Shugg 1977). Its anarchic potential was “far from threatening” because the condemnation of such forces was a tool to reinforce established social structures (Fouassier-Tate 2014, 74). Thus, cross-dressing in this environment would not seem as revolutionary as others have claimed (e.g., Kelly 1990).

Similarly, the English theatre has been described as “an institutionalized and professionalized form of Carnival” (Bristol 1983, 637). English playhouses were a liminal space also in terms of dress regulations: the players could wear precious garments otherwise forbidden to them as liveried servants, and disguise devices adopted on stage probably resulted in a visual mixture of different class elements (Hyland 2011; MacIntyre 1991). This did not happen in contemporary Spain, where costumes were regulated by sumptuary laws to prevent any class-blurring visuals (Heise 1992). Furthermore, English players could appropriate not only the clothes, but also the linguistic identity of others, so that theatrical language and visibility were dialogically high and popular (Bristol 1983, 649). Renaissance drama mixes kings and clowns (650): the embodiment of social order faces its parody, and the king himself is actually and only a player in the *theatrum mundi*. This heteroglossia derives from the popular and learned traditions that converged into the professional theatre of the Renaissance (e.g., Weimann 1978), so much so that the “mixed decorum of tragical mirth and solemn travesty” is one of the distinctive features of early modern English drama (Bristol 1983, 652). The playhouse also allowed carnival-like participatory moments, grounded in the collective integrity and rough equality of the participants (cf. Bakhtin 1968, 7): the groundling could influence the king’s self-representation, and both were invested by this production of meaning within a mixed social space. The players’ impersonations and the audience’s active interaction thus constituted a carnivalesque collective ritual. Theatre could comment on contemporary reality by radically subverting its fundamental principle of semantic immediacy, but this transgression was sanctioned because of its carnivalesque nature. In this legitimate transgressive space, boys in drag were

agreed to be less problematic than the public exposure of acting women (Heise 1992, 361).

All these elements suggest that the transgressiveness of the boy actor's travesty was not as disruptive as assumed thus far. Contrary to previous claims (e.g., Garber 1995; McLuskie 1983; Rackin 1987), moralist criticism of stage cross-dressing practices and of the theatre should not be read merely as the sign of a generalised cultural anxiety. Of course, the theatrical performance sanctions social subversion (e.g., female agency, mixtures of visual class-signifiers) and the material debasement of the ideal (e.g., eroticism, venality), but only as long as this process is limited to the carnivalesque-like space of the playhouse. The theatre as "the great Other" can be at once "a threat and a refuge" for society (Orgel 1996, 12) because it is a legitimate - and thus comforting - transgression that builds a counterfactual dimension, where women can be assertive and proactive, cross-dressing is allowed, class-blurring can occur. This legitimisation is inherent in the carnivalesque 'as-if' principle at the basis of theatrical representation (cf. Elam 1980).

### 3 Comedy and Metatheatre

These carnivalesque mechanisms find immediate correspondence in comedy, genre where cross-dressing plots were most common and popular in the Renaissance (Freeburg 1915; Hyland 2011). Comedy was originally part of life renewal rites and seasonal festivities, and from these it derived its hyperbolic and typified events and characters. Specifically, comedy shares with carnival the structure of conservative subversion. Whereas tragedy describes the violation of a rule and restates this rule, comedy relies on the assumption that "the broken frame must be *presupposed* but *never spelled out*" for the comic element to work (Eco 1984, 4; emphasis in the original). In other words, comedy subverts implicit norms, but it can work only as long as these norms are valid. For this reason, comedy is "an instrument of social control" and can hardly represent a form of revolutionary social criticism, which brings it particularly close to carnival (Eco 1984, 7). As does carnival, comedy creates a legitimised transgression, a *monde renversé* where parody allows a temporary form of social justice. Tragedy, on the contrary, unravels the inescapable pervasiveness of the norm (Eco 1984, 4). Also, Renaissance comedy maintained close ties with ancient comedy, whose explicit carnivalesque elements (disguise, animal-like characters, trenchant ridicule, romance plots) remain essential to the genre also in early modern works (Galbraith 2004). Further, the usually mundane subject-matter of comedy intensifies its carnivalesque parodic element, as it facilitates the audience's identification with characters and sit-



uations. While familiarity draws transgression closer to everyday experience, thus increasing the enjoyment, it also provides negative *ex-empla*: by presenting familiar behaviours or situations as ridiculous, comedy elicits the desire to distance oneself from them, and thus to return to the rule (Eco 1984, 2). Such ambivalent relief must have been quite popular in Renaissance England: comedy soon developed many specific subgenres.

Early modern comedy also features elements that frame metatheatrical references to boy actors in a broader awareness of the play as such, especially in disguise plots. These plots could heighten dramatic irony with both comic and tragic effects (Hyland 2011). Asides, soliloquies and similar devices explaining or anticipating disguises showed to the audience the gaps between assumed rule and stage action. In comedy, doing so in advance ensured the success of the following jokes (Lopez 2003, 64) and enabled theatregoers to enjoy the transgression on stage consciously. On the other hand, disguise plots can add pathos to tragic irony and further stress the characters' involuntary violation of the norm. In a context where generic boundaries were often blurred, these devices seem to invite the audience to interpret events by relying on its knowledge of each genre. This, of course, presupposes that early modern audiences were aware of the response expected from them within a certain generic framework (Lopez 2003; Weimann, Bruster 2008), which would provide the interpretive key for devices, situations and narratives, even if they originally belonged to an unrelated genre (Lopez 2003, 131). The use of these solutions indicates that audiences were attentive to nuances and that playwrights attempted to meet their expectations. For instance, audiences expected costumes to be readable to the point of transparency: costume had to convey social identity (e.g., rank, trade, age) and disguise, albeit simple or unlikely, had to be impenetrable in the play-world but transparent to the audience, duly informed in advance (Hyland 2011, 42). For this reason, surprise revelation plots were not welcomed at their first appearances in London (62-4).

Such shared awareness allowed for the kind of narrative freedom that marks Renaissance comedy in particular (Lopez 2003, 126) and stems from the knowledge of how the play will - must - end. This knowledge governs the audience's experience of the comic plot, however disjointed or episodic: the adherence to predictable generic prerequisites made a convincing ending possible even for improbable, hyperbolic plots (170). Such freedom enabled playwrights to comment on the audience's favourite devices and their improbability, even as they used these solutions to carry the plot forward. This meant that the audience too was at once inside and outside the performance: it participated in the action and made its representation possible, but was also aware of its artificiality and capable of appreci-

ating its craft. Such "dual awareness", as Bethell called it (1944, 47), produced a drama where convention and narratives move towards a "merely theatrical" state until they become, "rather than the subject of representation, sites for admiring the act of representation itself" (Lopez 2003, 128). This kind of metatheatrical play is rarely carried out in tragedy. Maintaining the dramatic illusion is essential for the structure and aims of the tragic genre to be effective, and even references to the *theatrum mundi* seem to reinforce the solemn validity of the tragic experience as mirror to life and vice versa. Conversely, comic metatheatre stresses the improbability of dramatic solutions to highlight the game of art and craft in which both playwright and audience participate. Further, the same conventions that granted comedy its freedom could be parodied in a metatheatrical game of cross-references. Thus, carnivalesque subversion could include comic forms as well.

Even when this happened, however, the parodied trope and the conventional order were eventually restored. This mechanism could direct the audience's attention to theatre itself as a legitimised space of transgression outside ordinary life experience. Also, the pervasiveness of metatheatrical breaks in comedy (e.g., direct addresses to the audience, references to the actors' performance or the playhouse space) suggests that such a disruptive approach to the dramatic illusion could be a convention in itself. This is coherent with the idea of carnivalesque subversion inherent in the genre, and it works as a form of negation of the performance that eventually reaffirms its transgressive value. This implies that the unsettling potential of the boy actor's androgyny and the use of this potential are but conventional aspects of early modern comedy, rather than cultural subversions.

#### 4 The Semiotization of the Boy Actor

Carnavalesque mechanisms influence the metatheatrical significance of references to the boy actors. Renaissance comedies include more or less explicit commentary on social performativity, on how to publicly convey one's suitability to one's social role. To this aim, they mostly rely on negative examples, providing repertoires of transgressions related to material concerns (mainly sex and money/power). Double entendre, metatheatrical or otherwise, is particularly pervasive. A metatheatrical spotlight on the performance of gender, then, would seem the cornerstone of a broader critique: social conventions, like theatrical conventions, are contingent and artificial, merely a performance. Such highlights on performativity recall Butler's theory of gender, often associated with boy actors in critical studies.

Butler argues that bodily acts indicating a single gendered identity are performative because such identity is a fabrication, produced

and sustained through corporeal signs and discursive means; this suggests that gendered identity itself is an illusion, built through the repetition of the acts that constitute its reality (Butler 1999, 173-8). References to the boy actor's sex, then, are subversive because they expose the contingency of such acts: the boy actor's performance questions the conventional associations between gestures, discursive practices and gender (Hamamra 2019). Also, the layering of cross-dressed performances in the boy actor underlines the performativity of gender identity and performativity itself, by referring to the ambivalent reality where the performance occurs. Carnival shows and subverts the contingency of established social norms, their aleatory nature and premises; in the same way, this form of theatrical subversion overturns assumptions on gender and gendered qualities before the community that sustains them (i.e. the Renaissance audience). Nevertheless, the context in which such overturn occurs affects its subversive potential: as carnival is sanctioned by the same order it questions, so does the boy player's performance subvert social constructs only within a conservative generic framework (comedy) and in a sanctioned carnivalesque space. That this practice was a convention on the early modern English stage further stresses this aspect.

This mechanism can be illustrated by relying on one of the many non-Shakespearean examples<sup>3</sup> of these dynamics: Beaumont and Fletcher's *Love's Cure* (1605).<sup>4</sup> Originally intended for a children's company,<sup>5</sup> the play tells the story of siblings Clara and Lucio, whose father has been exiled from Spain. Their parents decide to protect them from the enemies of their family by raising Clara as Lucio and vice versa. However, when their father is pardoned by the King, the family reunites in Seville, and the siblings must return to their prescribed gender roles. Although they initially refuse to change, falling in love will help them assume their expected roles: Clara will marry Vitelli, her father's enemy; Lucio, Vitelli's sister. In the play-world of this pièce, cross-dressing is perceived as transgressive: the siblings must abandon their monstrous ambiguity, as often stressed by other characters, and accept their legitimate roles in society. At the same time, cross-dressing becomes the primary instrument of metatheatrical transgression. Metatheatrical references to this stage practice disrupt the suspension of disbelief and show the play for what it is.

<sup>3</sup> Some studies apply carnivalesque notions to Shakespearean plays (cf. Knowles 1998), but they focus on specific aspects (e.g., language, life-renewal dynamics) of specific plays, at the expense of broader considerations on boy actors or early modern metatheatre and genre conventions.

<sup>4</sup> The play was extensively revised and reworked by Philip Massinger around 1625 (Williams 1976; cf. also Pérez Díez 2022).

<sup>5</sup> The original text was probably performed by the Children of St Paul's (Williams 1976, 11).

The two levels intertwine early in the play, when Lucio is introduced dressed and behaving like a woman (act 1, scene 2). His identity is revealed only after many references to the codpiece he should be wearing instead of a petticoat, so that the audience's double awareness is aroused first in connection with appearances (the petticoat/codpiece issue seems initially referred to the actor); it is also kept alert throughout the play through constant references to gendered clothing. Specifically, the siblings' experience with their uncomfortable new clothes (act 2, scene 2) ties the characters' difficulties to social gender performance and to the players' acting. The siblings' refusal to change is problematic because it resists the assumption that gender roles in society are natural. In the play, this is part of a broader commentary on social performativity, since the siblings' rejection of their gender roles coincides with that of their appropriate roles in society. Concerns with social performativity (how to be honourable lords and ladies) encompass all behaviours in the play, from public conduct to table manners. All characters voice their preoccupations with their own performances of gender and social roles, to the point they often need a play-world audience to approve of their performance and take great pains in justifying potential flaws. The play, then, provides a repertoire of behavioural transgressions, more or less intense, and reflects on how to perform correctly, both on stage and in life. It invites the audience to evaluate the characters' as well as its own performance, and this comic process contributes to the reinforcement of social norms also outside the play.

Indeed, as the title suggests, there is a 'cure'. The play frames transgressions by restoring order on two levels, within and without the play-world. At play-level, love restores order in the community: the siblings accept their new roles through love and consolidate them through marriage, which also resolves conflict. At the same time, metatheatre restores order in the real world. By pointing out its own theatricality, the play displays its own transgressive nature. While this underlines the playwright and players' valuable craft and ability, it also stresses the illusory nature of theatricality: the play's construction of an 'as-if' dimension is shown to be only a temporary transgression from ordinary time and space. This reinforces the idea that the play's licences are sanctioned because they are artificial and that the behaviours therein displayed are not part of ordinary life experience. Metatheatrical references to boy actors are especially effective because the boy actor's female performance was perhaps the most densely semiotized element in early modern theatre. His body, voice, gestures, clothing all came to signify not only age or foreignness or status, but also another gender - and this effect would have been reverberated in a children's company (cf. Foakes 2003). Pointing out the boy actor's identity, then, would be the most direct way of putting on show the very process of semiotization of the perfor-

mance: the actor is singled out as the "opaque vehicle" for the signified he stands for (Elam 1980, 7). In such comedies, where everything centres around performativity, the boy actor playing a female character summarises the meaning-making struggle of the whole performance. He is the primary blank canvas of theatrical illusion, whose own sex is redefined through the performance (Kimbrough 1982). Concurrently, these illusion breaks highlight the relationship between the stage and the social reality of the audience, where meanings are made. If comedy moves from the "unnatural and artificial" to the "natural" (Frye 1964, 7), these comedies realise this movement in two ways. They move towards the natural - towards renovated social order - within the play-world, but they also move from the artificiality of transgressive performance to ordered real life. The artifice is pointed out as such, but this further reinforces the regulative frame of comedy. In other words, the theatrical performance disrupts the ordinary relationship between appearance and reality, but plays such as *Love's Cure* expose this process primarily through the boy actor; by doing so, they reinforce the value of ordinary reality as a regulative background.

## 5 Conclusions

Although the boy actor's cross-dressing can still provide valid insight also in relation to our contemporaneity, the transgressive features identifiable in this figure could be, rather than a sign of cultural crisis, a form of cultural regulation in early modern England. Differentiating between the cross-dressing spaces in Renaissance England allows to identify carnival as an effective tool in this analysis of theatre. Also, the association between carnival and comedy, where most references to boy-actors occur, suggests that genre could further frame the transgressions represented on stage. Early modern comedy transgresses not only social norms, but theatricality itself: it shows its own artificiality and comments on it in the same way it shows the contingency of social norms and provides temporary escape from them. In this context, metatheatrical references to boy actors come to symbolise this very process. Stage cross-dressing disrupts the conventional associations between signifier and signified within the performance, and metatheatrical references to boy actors disrupt the audience's conventional acceptance of this transgression. These references highlight the semiotization process of theatre and transgress the conventional rules of performance, which underlines the carnivalesque quality of this space: the collective meaning-making ritual is reabsorbed into ordinary space and time, just as carnival is limited to sanctioned spaces and times of the year. The implications of this process seem to - partially - undermine interpretations relying on female assertive-

ness or homoerotic safety in the theatrical space. Whereas such instances are given representation in these plays, the breaking of the illusion also stresses their transgressive connotation. At the same time, the counterfactual connotation of the boy player's performance puts interpretations stressing female transgressive behaviour and homoerotic transgression into a different perspective. Similarly, the stress on social and gender/ed performativity, on the conventional nature of speech, gestures, behaviour is only as revolutionary as carnival is. Such elements can be represented and undermined on stage because they are *not* the rule, in the same way that the fool can become king only for as long as misrule is allowed. This kind of complex metatheatrical play undoubtedly deserves more consideration, especially in relation to the non-Shakespearean canon. The frequency of certain patterns among contemporary authors – rather than in Shakespeare alone – could show generalised tendencies in Renaissance drama that would give new insight into our understanding of the early modern theatrical experience.

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# Tre lettori di Pound nell'Italia di oggi: Agamben, Montesano, Magris

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**Abstract** Ezra Pound (1885-1972) is one of the most influential and most controversial American poets of the twentieth century. His multidimensional career and uncompromising life encapsulate crucial questions about the role of the writer in society: What is the relationship between experimental art and extreme political views? Can art survive what Walter Benjamin called the “sickness of tradition”? What is the future of poetry in a world dominated by technology and economic rationalism? This essay explores these questions by focusing on the reception of Pound in contemporary Italy. More specifically, three texts written by some of the most perceptive Italian readers of Pound will be examined: Giorgio Agamben’s introduction to the Italian translation of Pound’s *Selected Prose: 1909-1965* (2016), Giuseppe Montesano’s new introduction to *Cantos scelti* (2017), and an article on Pound by Claudio Magris published in the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* in October 2018.

**Keywords** Ezra Pound. Giorgio Agamben. Claudio Magris. Giuseppe Montesano.

**Sommario** 1 Introduzione: Pound – ieri, oggi, domani. – 2 Agamben: *Dal naufragio di Europa*. – 3 Montesano: il lettore selvaggio. – 4 Magris: sguardi.



**Edizioni**  
Ca Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted 2022-05-09  
Accepted 2022-06-12  
Published 2022-08-31

## Open access

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**Citation** Della Marca, M. (2022). “Tre lettori di Pound nell'Italia di oggi: Agamben, Montesano, Magris”. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [159-176] 41-58.

Un uomo che cerca il bene,  
e fa il male. (Ezra Pound, canto CXV)

## 1 Introduzione: Pound – ieri, oggi, domani

Quest'anno, un po' nel silenzio generale, ricorre il cinquantenario della morte di Ezra Pound (1885-1972), una delle figure più importanti e controverse del modernismo novecentesco. Purtroppo, nel dibattito pubblico degli ultimi anni, soprattutto nei media, il nome di Pound, quando è stato evocato, è apparso con inesorabile e sconcertante frequenza quasi sempre nella stessa collocazione: accanto alla parola 'Casa', nel composto 'CasaPound'. Sarebbe senz'altro affascinante dissertare con qualche linguista se questo furbo ed efficace neologismo sia da considerarsi un composto nominale esocentrico o endocentrico, ma la discussione, temo, non cambierebbe di molto il fatto che, nell'immaginario di molti italiani, CasaPound (il movimento politico di estrema destra) sembra ormai aver quasi completamente scalzato Ezra Pound (il poeta, l'intellettuale, la sua opera). Non c'è dubbio che la tragica infatuazione di Pound per alcune idee del fascismo e vari passaggi dei suoi scritti e discorsi radiofonici da cui traspare un «antisemitismo che non [è] razzista»<sup>1</sup> (l'espressione, elegante ma problematica, è di Claudio Magris) siano aspetti che non possono e non devono essere in alcun modo minimizzati o ignorati, come forse è stato fatto in passato da alcuni critici. Fatto fermo questo punto, imprescindibile premessa per qualsiasi discorso critico che non voglia correre il rischio di essere in qualche modo connivente con la propaganda neofascista, ritengo sia profondamente sbagliato lasciare che la narrazione pubblica intorno a uno dei maggiori poeti del Novecento sia in larga parte subalterna alla lettura che ne dà un movimento di estrema destra. A riprova di quanto appena detto, vorrei portare un esempio che, credo, dovrebbe far riflettere.

Nell'inarrestabile processo di 'googlizzazione' del sapere a cui tutti prendiamo parte, Wikipedia costituisce sempre più spesso per un ampio numero di studenti, semplici appassionati e anche per molti

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Magris 2018, 43. Per gli articoli scritti da Pound fra il 1939 e il 1943 per il settimanale letterario *Il Meridiano di Roma*, organo della stampa fascista, si veda Pound 1991. Per una selezione in lingua italiana dei 'radiodiscorsi' tenuti fra il 1941 e il 1943 da Pound per Radio Roma, si veda Pound 1998; 2005. Si ricorda che il regime fascista iniziò a introdurre le tristemente note leggi razziali a partire dal 1938. Per quanto doloroso pensare che uno dei maggiori poeti del Novecento sia stato capace di scrivere certe frasi, si riporta di seguito un passaggio da un articolo di Pound intitolato «Per una biblioteca fascista», pubblicato sul *Meridiano di Roma* il 5 aprile del 1942: «Nessun conoscitore di Henry James è mai stato infettato di ammirazione per quell'ebreuccio pederastico-snob Marcel Proust» (Pound 1991, 121). Purtroppo, non è l'unico passaggio poundiano di questo tenore. Sul rapporto fra Pound e il fascismo italiano, si vedano Zapponi 1976; Casillo 1988; Redman 1991; Surette 1999; Feldman 2013; Paul 2016.

accademici il punto di partenza delle proprie ricerche. Proprio per questo, quando all'interno di un seminario affronto con i miei studenti universitari un nuovo autore o argomento, una delle prime attività che propongo è una 'lettura critica' della voce Wikipedia relativa all'autore o al tema che stiamo discutendo. Nel caso della voce Wikipedia dedicata a Ezra Pound in italiano, vale la pena di osservare che - nel momento in cui scrivo (marzo 2022) - la monografia più recente elencata nella sezione 'bibliografia in italiano' sia *Ezra fa Surf* di Adriano Scianca (2013).<sup>2</sup> Ora, si dà il caso che Scianca, oltre a essere l'attuale direttore del quotidiano sovranista online *Il Primato*, abbia ricoperto per oltre un decennio l'incarico di responsabile nazionale per la cultura di CasaPound. La sezione bibliografica della voce dedicata a Pound e il libro di Scianca sono a mio avviso spie di un problema più ampio, e dovrebbero invitare a una riflessione su cosa abbia determinato la quasi totale incapacità dell'establishment culturale italiano di mettere in campo, negli ultimi venti anni, letture alternative a quelle offerte da chi si dichiara, orgogliosamente, 'fascista del terzo millennio'. Lo stato non troppo incoraggiante degli studi poundiani nel nostro Paese sembra trovare conferma nelle parole di Massimo Bacigalupo, uno dei massimi esperti italiani e mondiali di Pound, il quale recentemente notava con un certo sconforto che «in Italia scarseggiano gli studi approfonditi su Ezra Pound» (2019, 519). Allora, forse, bisognerebbe prendere spunto dalle parole di uno studioso tanto autorevole per interrogarsi su quali siano le cause che hanno portato a questa situazione, perché se è vero che le scelte editoriali giocano sicuramente un ruolo importante nel promuovere un autore o un critico, andrebbe però anche portata avanti una discussione più ampia sulle dinamiche che determinano la produzione e la diffusione del sapere all'interno del sistema culturale e universitario italiano.

Sullo sfondo del quadro che ho appena descritto, e per provare a restituire un'immagine del poeta americano meno unidimensionale rispetto a quella offerta dall'ultradestra, credo possa essere non solo interessante, ma necessario, rivolgere lo sguardo a quello che recentemente hanno scritto tre attenti lettori italiani di Pound: Giorgio Agamben, Giuseppe Montesano e Claudio Magris - gli autori dei tre testi discussi nelle prossime pagine. Si tratta di letture che, sebbene pongano l'attenzione su aspetti a volte anche molto diversi dell'opera poundiana, hanno alcune caratteristiche in comune. Da un punto di vista cronologico, sono testi che, essendo apparsi tra il 2016 e il

<sup>2</sup> Del libro è uscita anche una seconda edizione ampliata: cf. Scianca 2019. Per una bibliografia commentata dei contributi su Pound scritti da studiosi italiani, si può consultare la sezione «Online Bibliography of Italian Pound Studies» sul sito della Ezra Pound Society (cf. Sansone, Bacigalupo, Preda s.d.). Questa importante risorsa, al momento aggiornata al 2018, è stata compilata da vari specialisti secondo criteri accademici.

2018, potremmo definire contemporanei. Poi, trattandosi di due prefazioni ad antologie di opere poundiane (Agamben e Montesano) e di un articolo pubblicato su uno dei più importanti giornali italiani (Magris), sono contributi relativamente brevi e, almeno in teoria, rivolti non solo a un pubblico di specialisti o addetti ai lavori, ma anche a quelli che nel linguaggio della sociologia della letteratura - non senza un certo snobismo intellettuale - vengono chiamati 'lettori non professionali'. C'è, infine, un ulteriore elemento che va evidenziato, e che accomuna Agamben, Montesano e Magris: per tutti e tre, l'insegnamento e la scrittura costituiscono, o hanno costituito, esperienze centrali all'interno delle rispettive traiettorie professionali ed esistenziali. (Ri)leggere con questi tre lettori/scrittori/insegnanti le opere di Pound offrirà non solo l'occasione per riflettere sulla ricezione nell'Italia di oggi di uno dei poeti più controversi del XX secolo, ma permetterà anche di riesaminare alcune domande fondamentali riguardo al ruolo dell'artista nelle società di massa moderne: che rapporto c'è fra arte sperimentale e forme di pensiero radicale? Come affrontare quella che Agamben (2016, 12), sulla scorta di Benjamin, chiama la «malattia della tradizione»? Quale futuro può esserci per la poesia in un «regno in cui la Tecnica è la nuova *religio*, e la psiche è stata deformata dall'Economico?»; ma soprattutto, «cosa resta di Pound?» (Montesano 2017, xxvii).

## 2 Agamben: Dal naufragio di Europa

*Dal naufragio di Europa. Scritti scelti 1909-1965* è l'efficace titolo scelto dall'editore Neri Pozza per presentare per la prima volta in italiano la graffiante e variegata raccolta di saggi poundiani originariamente pubblicati in inglese, nel 1973, con il titolo *Selected Prose*.<sup>3</sup> Il titolo utilizzato per l'edizione italiana rimanda a un celebre verso del canto LXXVI, il terzo dei *Canti pisani*: «As a lone ant from a broken ant-hill | from the wreckage of Europe, ego scriptor» (Formica solitaria da un formicaio distrutto | dalle rovine d'Europa, ego scriptor; Pound 2017, 175). È interessante notare come la scelta editoriale di rendere con 'naufragio' il termine *wreckage*, riprendendo una versione montaliana,<sup>4</sup> si scosti dalla soluzione adottata nelle traduzioni italiane dei *Pisani* attualmente in circolazione (nelle quali «from the

<sup>3</sup> Per una recensione del volume, nella quale sono inclusi anche alcuni commenti all'introduzione di Agamben, si veda Ricciardi 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Si veda la traduzione del verso offerta da Montale in «Lo zio Ez», l'articolo apparso sulle pagine del *Corriere della Sera* il 19 novembre del 1953 in occasione della pubblicazione in Italia dei *Canti pisani* (nell'allora pionieristica traduzione curata per l'editore Guanda da Alfredo Rizzardi), ora in Montale 2021. Per ulteriori dettagli, si veda Scarpa 2013, 75-6.

wreckage of Europe» è solitamente reso con 'dalle rovine d'Europa').<sup>5</sup> Probabilmente si tratta di una scelta dettata dalla volontà di enfatizzare il concetto di 'naufragio' della tradizione occidentale, sul quale Agamben, nella breve ma densissima introduzione al volume, intitolata «Situazione di Ezra Pound», costruisce la sua intrigante lettura. Nonostante seguire il pensiero di Agamben nel suo costituirsi sulla pagina non sia sempre impresa facile, vale però sicuramente la pena porsi all'ascolto di quello che uno dei maggiori filosofi contemporanei italiani ha da dire su Pound, anche perché si tratta di un momento a suo modo unico nella vasta produzione agambeniana.

La premessa da cui parte Agamben è che «non si comprende l'opera di Pound se non la si colloca nel suo contesto proprio» (2016, 9). Questo contesto, continua Agamben, «coincide con una frattura senza precedenti nella tradizione dell'Occidente», una frattura che si è venuta a determinare nella cultura europea ed occidentale in seguito alla Prima guerra mondiale, e di cui proprio i poeti e gli artisti sono stati i primi a rendersi conto, poiché «è ad essi che incombe in ogni tempo la trasmissione di ciò che vi è di più prezioso: la lingua e i sensi» (2016, 9). D'altronde, è proprio Ezra Pound, come sottolinea puntualmente Agamben, a sostenere in uno dei saggi raccolti nel volume che «gli artisti sono le antenne della razza [umana]» (Pound 2016, 324).

Nella lettura agambeniana, quello che accomuna il *Waste Land* (1921) di T.S. Eliot, il *Finnegans Wake* (1939) di James Joyce, gli *Anathemata* (1951) di David Jones e l'opera di Pound è

il compito paradossale che i poeti qui si propongono. La tradizione religiosa, filosofica e poetica non è qui convocata, com'era avvenuto fin allora, nella sua capacità di nutrire e orientare la vita e la parola degli uomini, ma, al contrario, proprio in quanto sembra aver perduto questa capacità. Ciò che viene esibito è precisamente questa perdita. (Agamben 2016, 11)

È proprio la «diagnosi di questa situazione epocale», prosegue Agamben, che è possibile ritrovare in alcuni passaggi dell'intenso scambio epistolare fra Gerschom Scholem e Walter Benjamin (Agamben 2016, 11). Si tratta di una serie di lettere scritte fra il 1934 e il 1938, nelle quali i due amici discutono il ruolo della legge nell'opera di Kafka (legge, e questo è un punto fondamentale della lettura agambeniana, da intendersi nel senso più ampio del termine, come intero testo della tradizione occidentale). A questo punto, Agamben ci ricorda come Scholem - commentando in una lettera del 20 settembre 1934 la prima versione di un saggio su Kafka che Benjamin gli aveva invia-

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Pound 2011a, 67; 2017, 175.

to - parli di una tradizione/legge che per i personaggi kafkiani «vige ma non significa» (Benjamin, Scholem 2019, 203). Ritornando sull'argomento alcuni anni dopo, Benjamin avrebbe puntualizzato che quello descritto nell'opera di Kafka altro non è che «l'ammalarsi della tradizione», di una tradizione che ha perso il suo rapporto con la verità (314). In questa situazione, la genialità di Kafka consisterebbe nell'aver tentato «qualcosa di radicalmente nuovo: [rinunciare] alla verità per attenersi alla trasmissibilità» (314).

Mi sono soffermato su questo momento dell'introduzione di Agamben perché si tratta di uno snodo cruciale per comprendere il passaggio successivo della proposta interpretativa agambeniana, che potrebbe essere riassunta come il tentativo di (ri)leggere l'intera opera di Pound attraverso la nozione di 'malattia della tradizione' che è al centro dello scambio di lettere fra Benjamin e Scholem.<sup>6</sup> Ecco allora che, secondo Agamben:

Pound procede come un filologo [...] che, nella crisi irrevocabile della tradizione, prova a trasmettere senza note a piè di pagina la stessa impossibilità della trasmissione. Nella frase del canto LXXVI, in cui Pound evoca se stesso di fronte al naufragio dell'Europa (*From the wreckage of Europe, ego scriptor*) *scriptor* sarà ovviamente da intendere 'scriba', non scrittore. Di fronte alla distruzione della tradizione, egli [...] mima ancora, come *scriptor*, un atto felice di trasmissione. (2016, 13)

Lo *scriptor*-Pound e i suoi lettori, sembra suggerire Agamben, si trovano in una condizione simile a quella evocata nello scambio epistolare fra Benjamin e Scholem: abitanti di un universo poetico ed esistenziale in cui la tradizione «vige, ma non significa. Quando la ricchezza dei significati svanisce e ciò che appare, ridotto come al punto zero del proprio contenuto, tuttavia non scompare» (Benjamin, Scholem 2019, 203).

In che misura l'opera di Pound diventi «intellegibile» (il termine è di Agamben) attraverso questo tipo di (ri)lettura è una questione a cui non è facile dare una risposta definitiva. Da un punto di vista metodologico, il testo di Agamben è senz'altro un provocante esempio delle possibilità interpretative che scaturiscono dall'incontro fra riflessione filosofica e critica letteraria; anche per questo, costituisce a suo modo un *unicum* nel panorama degli studi poundiani. Per gli studiosi di Agamben, sarà poi senz'altro interessante indagare come vengano qui riprese e rielaborate alcune osservazioni inizialmente contenute nel saggio agambeniano «Il Messia e il sovrano. Il

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Agamben 2016, 12.



problema della legge in W. Benjamin»;<sup>7</sup> si tratta di idee poi parzialmente confluite nel capitolo «Forma di legge» del volume *Homo sacer. Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (2005a, 57-71).<sup>8</sup>

C'è, infine, un ulteriore elemento che viene richiamato nell'introduzione agambeniana, e che forse rischia di passare in secondo piano, ma che invece va evidenziato perché costituisce un tratto cruciale della meritoria operazione portata avanti da Agamben: l'invito a non sottovalutare l'importanza che gli scritti in prosa ricoprono all'interno del percorso di sperimentazione artistica intrapreso da Pound. Proprio una rinnovata attenzione da parte della critica a questa dimensione della produzione poundiana – magari anche attraverso contributi di studiosi italiani rivolti ad un pubblico non solo accademico – credo possa offrire un efficace antidoto al riduzionismo neofascista che nel panorama culturale italiano contemporaneo rischia di dominare la discussione pubblica intorno a Pound e alla ricezione della sua opera. Come già ricordava Montale (2021), una delle più importanti scoperte di Pound fu che «la poesia nasce dalla prosa».

### 3 Montesano: il lettore selvaggio

Per quanto sia auspicabile un recupero della produzione in prosa di Pound, il testo poundiano che a oggi il lettore italiano ha più probabilità di incontrare in una libreria rimane quello dei *Cantos scelti*, nella collana «Oscar Moderni» di Mondadori. Si tratta di una *paperback* che raccoglie una selezione dei *Cantos* preparata nel 1966 (sembrebberbe) dallo stesso Pound, e che a partire dall'edizione del 2017 include un'introduzione di Giuseppe Montesano.<sup>9</sup> Certo, in circolazione ci sono anche i *XXX Cantos* e i *Canti postumi* (nelle edizioni curate da Massimo

<sup>7</sup> Il saggio si basa su una conferenza tenuta da Agamben alla Hebrew University di Gerusalemme nel luglio 1992 ed è ora disponibile in Agamben 2005b, 251-70.

<sup>8</sup> Si potrebbe obiettare che un aspetto problematico della provocante rilettura che di Pound offre Agamben sia il modo in cui nel testo dell'introduzione, il concetto di 'legge' e quello di 'rivelazione' vengano – a mio avviso, un po' forzatamente – fatti corrispondere con quello di 'tradizione', ma devo rimandare a un'altra occasione ulteriori approfondimenti su questo specifico punto, tutto sommato marginale, e la cui discussione trascenderebbe i limiti di questo saggio dedicato invece alla ricezione di Pound. Sul ruolo svolto dal concetto di 'tradizione' nel contesto della poetica poundiana, oltre alla lettura offerta da Agamben, è molto utile ed articolato il contributo di Tagliaciferri (1991, 272-6). Sul complesso rapporto fra modernismo, tradizione e intertestualità, si veda Gozzi 1991, 291-3.

<sup>9</sup> Come segnala Mary de Rachewiltz nella «Nota» in appendice al volume, ci sono alcune differenze fra l'edizione italiana e quelle in lingua inglese, soprattutto per quanto riguarda la scelta dei canti inclusi nelle rispettive edizioni: cf. Pound 2017, 264-5. Secondo Bacigalupo, «vanno ritenute sostanzialmente apocriefe tanto la scelta dei *Selected Cantos*» quanto «la relativa introduzione (dove P., che sempre detestò la psicanalisi, cita Jung!)» (1981, 527 nota 5).

Bacigalupo), e la ristampa dei *Canti pisani* (riproposti da Garzanti nella traduzione di Rizzardi del 1953 e prefati da Giovanni Raboni), ma sono libri che non è sempre facile trovare sugli scaffali delle librerie. Per quanto riguarda poi i due «Meridiani» Mondadori su Pound curati da Mary de Rachewiltz (la figlia del poeta) si tratta di edizioni che, anche per la fascia di prezzo in cui si collocano, sono più che altro rivolte agli specialisti, o a lettori che magari già conoscono l'autore ma cercano volumi rilegati con cura e provvisti di apparati curati nei minimi dettagli. Ecco allora che «Un rumoroso borbottio. Appunti sui *Cantos* di Ezra Pound», questo il titolo del saggio introduttivo firmato da Montesano, svolge una funzione importante nel presentare la figura e l'opera di Pound al lettore italiano, configurandosi come un interessante (peri)testo che – lungi dall'essere una mera appendice testuale – andrà indagato non solo attraverso le lenti della sociologia della letteratura ma anche per le sollecitazioni che offre rispetto all'interpretazione dei testi poetici poundiani raccolti nei *Cantos scelti*.

Montesano è un romanziere, critico letterario, traduttore (sua la curatela, insieme a Giovanni Raboni, del «Meridiano» Mondadori dedicato a Baudelaire) e scrive per *Il Mattino* di Napoli, la città dove è nato nel 1959. Laureato in Lettere, è anche insegnante di filosofia al liceo. Tutte queste esperienze si riversano nella sua scrittura, conferendo al suo stile un carattere unico. Per esempio, ecco come descrive l'esperienza di leggere i *Cantos*:

mentre ogni cosa dovrebbe connettersi, accade che non si forma mai niente di definitivo, tutto rimanda a qualcos'altro che rimanda a qualcos'altro ancora [...] e cosa mai sarebbe più moderno di questo accendere connessioni brevi e singultanti? Il sistema con cui funzionano oggi i vagabondaggi di *everyman*, i viaggi nel regno della nube digitale cercando il centro e allontanandosi sempre più da quel centro, è un'esperienza psico-fisica non troppo lontana dal continuo accendere e spegnere contatti dei *Cantos*. (Montesano 2017, xii)

«Nube digitale»? «Esperienza psico-fisica»? Sono espressioni che non si incontrano spesso in un testo sui *Cantos* (forse solo Marshall McLuhan ha tentato accostamenti verbali così spericolati scrivendo di Pound).<sup>10</sup> In effetti, sembra di leggere un saggio di Alessandro Ba-

**10** Lo studioso canadese, prima di trasformarsi in 'oracolo dei nuovi media', era stato anche lui discepolo di Pound, con il quale intrattene un fitto scambio epistolare durante il periodo del suo internamento al St. Elizabeths di Washington, l'ospedale psichiatrico giudiziario nel quale il poeta americano trascorse più di dodici anni. In una lettera del 12 giugno 1951, McLuhan paragona la poesia di Pound a una «valvola termoisolante» (McLuhan 1990, 130). Sul complesso rapporto fra Pound e McLuhan, si vedano Tremblay 1998 e Lamberti 2000, 54-60. Sull'argomento, rinvio anche al mio saggio «Pound e/o McLuhan: ideogrammi e mosaici per l'età elettrica» (in corso di stampa).

ricco (*I barbari*, o, meglio ancora, *The Game*, dove il linguaggio è ancora più futuristicamente iperbolico). Però, pensandoci bene, anche Pasolini (2014) immaginava che leggere il canto LXXVI potesse avere un effetto paragonabile «[al]la più potente e meravigliosa delle droghe». E allora, forse, sotto la patina di un linguaggio che alcuni potranno trovare irritante, altri accattivante, si nasconde una precisa strategia comunicativa: la volontà di scrivere un testo capace di risultare fruibile anche dai lettori appartenenti a quella generazione di 'nativi digitali' che Montesano ha imparato a conoscere bene attraverso la sua attività di insegnante fra i banchi delle scuole. Forse anche per questo in molte pagine della sua introduzione si avverte una forte tensione etica e un chiaro intento pedagogico. Siamo di fronte a un autore/lettore che si mette completamente in gioco, con passione, e che ci invita a diventare, come lui, «lettori selvaggi [...] trasformandoci attraverso gli urti e le reazioni con ciò che ha energia» (Montesano 2016): è un'idea di lettura, e del lettore, che sicuramente sarebbe piaciuta a Pound, il quale proclamava con entusiasmo che «we should read for power» (1970, 55). Nel testo di Montesano ci sono molte osservazioni che meriterebbero di essere commentate e discusse a fondo, ma mi soffermerò qui su due momenti in particolare.

Il primo è quello in cui Montesano scrive che «una lettura continua dei *Cantos* genera un effetto che per noi contemporanei è straniante e familiare» (Montesano 2017, xii). È istruttivo giustapporre questa affermazione a un passaggio dall'introduzione di Agamben citata sopra, nella quale il filosofo mette in risalto «l'effetto di estraneazione e frantumazione [...] caratteristico del procedimento delle avanguardie» (2016, 11). Se Agamben pone giustamente l'accento sull'aspetto straniante delle poetiche avanguardistiche, Montesano va oltre questa disamina e prova a spiegarci il motivo per cui un testo come quello del poema poundiano provochi nel lettore contemporaneo un effetto che è sì «straniante», ma anche «familiare». Una familiarità che, per Montesano, sarebbe una diretta conseguenza del fatto che «nel loro continuo accendere e spegnere contatti» i *Cantos* si configurano come un medium che induce «un'esperienza psico-fisica» molto simile a quella delle nostre quotidiane interazioni con l'universo digitale. (Montesano 2017, xii). Si tratta di un'analisi molto acuta, e che – in maniera più o meno consapevole – suggerisce la possibilità che l'opera di Pound possa essere letta non solo ricorrendo agli strumenti della critica letteraria, ma anche attraverso la prospettiva dell'ecologia dei media. Se si segue questa intuizione, i *Cantos* non solo vanno considerati come un testo fondamentale nella storia del modernismo anglo-americano e della letteratura occidentale, ma andranno studiati anche come un momento importante in termini di storia dei media, poiché quello a cui si assiste altro non è che il tentativo da parte di Pound di spingere il medium scrit-

tura al limite delle sue possibilità tecnologiche.<sup>11</sup> Non è un caso che Sanguineti (2010), sicuramente uno dei più acuti lettori italiani di Pound, evocasse proprio l'immagine del «dictafono» per descrivere l'atmosfera dei *Pisani*.<sup>12</sup>

Il secondo momento dell'introduzione che vorrei riprendere è quello in cui Montesano pone sé stesso e i suoi lettori di fronte a una duplice domanda: quale è il futuro della poesia in un «regno in cui la Tecnica è la nuova *religio*, e la psiche è stata deformata dall'Economico?». Ma soprattutto, «cosa resta di Pound?» (Montesano 2017, xxvii). La risposta che viene offerta al lettore si sviluppa su due livelli.

Per quanto riguarda il futuro della poesia, apparentemente resta solo la possibilità, già in parte annunciata dalla poetica poundiana, di «una poesia della disgregazione» che, per Montesano, «cerca la forma solo per disgregarla ancora» (2017, xxvii); sicché, come diagnosticato anche da Agamben, «di fronte alla distruzione della tradizione [Pound] trasforma la distruzione in un metodo poetico» (Agamben 2016, 13).

Delle «idee e dei desideri di Pound», poi, secondo Montesano, «non resta quasi nulla, meno che pula nel vento: e il poeta contraddice l'ideologo che fantasticava di non essere un ideologo» (2017, xxvii). Non so fino a che punto sia possibile condividere questa affermazione nella sua interezza, ma il dato che mi interessa cogliere è il richiamo fatto da Montesano alla tensione dialettica fra poesia e ideologia, un aspetto che può essere messo maggiormente a fuoco riprendendo un commento di Franco Moretti a proposito del rapporto fra i *Cantos* e il suo autore: «L'uomo era debole, ma la forma era forte» (1994, 215). In altre parole, sarebbe proprio la forma stessa dei *Cantos* a porre un argine alla «tentazione totalitaria» che attraversa varie «opere mondo» del modernismo: «culturalmente impure, transnazionali» e «innamorate delle bizzarrie e degli esperimenti»; è difficile, continua Moretti, «fare opere reazionarie, con questi ingredienti. Difficile, soprattutto, farle con dei frammenti» (214).

**11** Christopher Bush (2010, 3), discutendo il 'metodo ideogrammatico', avanza l'ipotesi che la sperimentazione poundiana andrebbe vista non tanto come il tentativo di creare un nuovo metodo, ma bensì come il tentativo di inventare un nuovo medium. Lo stesso Pound, in alcuni passaggi della sua vastissima corrispondenza, sembra suggerire un parallelismo fra le tecniche poetiche da lui utilizzate nei *Cantos* e il medium radiofonico: in particolare, si veda la lettera del 31 marzo 1940 indirizzata al poeta Ronald Duncan (Pound 1971, 343), ma anche la missiva inviata da Pound a suo padre il 29 novembre 1924 (Pound 2011b, 548). Per un approfondimento su questo argomento, si vedano Tiffany 1995, 280 e Campbell 2006, 100.

**12** Si veda l'intervento di Sanguineti intitolato «I Canti Pisani» apparso originariamente il 22 luglio 1954 sulle pagine della rivista *aut aut*, ora in Sanguineti 2010. Già prima di Sanguineti, in una lettera a Pound del 16 giugno 1948, McLuhan scriveva: «I suoi *Cantos*, a mio avviso, costituiscono il primo e l'unico uso serio delle grandi possibilità tecniche del cinematografo. [...] Flashback che conferiscono percezioni simultanee» (McLuhan 1990, 111).

Ora, per quanto possa essere interessante da analizzare e spiegare sul piano della teoria letteraria (come fa magistralmente Moretti), la dissonanza fra il Pound poeta e il Pound ideologo evocata da Montesano nel paragrafo finale della sua introduzione pone però un interrogativo più profondo: come è possibile che in un testo che presumibilmente si prefigge di introdurre il lettore italiano all'opera di un personaggio così complesso e controverso come Pound, il tema delle sue inclinazioni politiche sia liquidato così sbrigativamente? Non è singolare che in ventitré pagine ci sia una sola frase in cui il nome di Pound compare insieme alla parola 'fascismo'?<sup>13</sup> Se si esclude che ci sia stato un qualche tipo di pressione da parte dell'editore o degli eredi di Pound per minimizzare questo aspetto (come invece accaduto in passato nel caso del testo di una prefazione di Gianni Riotta a un'edizione dei *Canti pisani* che doveva uscire nella collana «La grande poesia» del *Corriere della Sera*),<sup>14</sup> non rimane che rammarricarsi per quella che a mio avviso sarebbe stata un'occasione preziosa per riflettere più a fondo sul tragico destino che nel corso del Novecento ha segnato il rapporto fra arte e politica, e di cui i *Cantos* sono una testimonianza unica e commovente. Al netto di queste considerazioni, il testo di Montesano rimane un interessante esempio di come affrontare una figura complessa come quella di Pound senza banalizzazioni e attraverso un linguaggio capace di trasmettere sulle frequenze dei lettori contemporanei.

**13** Per essere più precisi, nella frase in questione viene usato il plurale: «fascismi» (cf. Montesano 2017, x). Nel promuovere una concezione depoliticizzata dell'arte, l'approccio di Montesano, magari involontariamente, sembra a tratti suggerire una prospettiva critica per certi versi simile a quella di alcuni esponenti del *New Criticism* americano e di Hugh Kenner, lo studioso che più di ogni altro ha contribuito con le sue opere a plasmare le prime fasi degli studi poundiani (cf. Kenner 1951, 1971). Per una discussione dei meriti (e dei limiti) degli studi di Kenner, si veda Coyle, Preda 2018, 47-8, 95-9.

**14** Il volume dei *Canti pisani* (nella traduzione di Rizzardi) uscì, ma senza la prefazione di Riotta, della quale invece venne pubblicato uno stralcio sulle pagine del *Corriere della Sera* del 30 agosto 2004, con il titolo «Pound, canti di dolore alle soglie dell'inferno» (cf. Riotta 2004). Nella nota che accompagna il pezzo, Riotta afferma di essere stato «censurato» in seguito a pressioni esercitate dagli eredi di Pound. In mancanza di una versione alternativa o di una smentita ufficiale, credo si debba dare credito a quanto dichiarato da uno dei più autorevoli giornalisti italiani. La dolorosa elaborazione dell'appartenenza, più o meno convinta, di padri e nonni al fascismo è qualcosa che la maggior parte delle famiglie italiane ha avuto il privilegio di affrontare senza doverne dare conto in pubblico: se sul piano umano è comprensibile che gli eredi del poeta non vogliano che vengano riaperte vecchie ferite, come studioso e cittadino trovo molto problematica la modalità con cui il *Corriere della Sera* ha gestito la vicenda.

#### 4 Magris: sguardi

Che Pound, nel bene e nel male, sia ancora in grado di catalizzare gli animi e conquistarsi uno spazio sulle pagine dei giornali – cosa che di questi tempi non riesce a molti poeti – è dimostrato dall'articolo di Claudio Magris (2018) «Poesia oltre le idee. Giù le mani da Ezra Pound». Si tratta di un pezzo pubblicato sul *Corriere della Sera* e scritto nell'imminenza di una manifestazione organizzata a Trieste da CasaPound. Magris, come chi ha letto i suoi libri sa bene, non è solo un grande conoscitore e studioso della cultura mitteleuropea, ma è anche un raffinato narratore:

uno sguardo perduto in se stesso e in chissà quali lontananze, capelli bianchi da profeta o da pastore errante. In stridulo contrasto con la solitudine e la bontà di quel volto, il 3 novembre prossimo è annunciata una manifestazione a Trieste di CasaPound [...]. È difficile e insieme doloroso abbinare il nome del grande poeta – e il suo volto di Edipo cieco e veggente, perseguitato dal fato – e un'associazione che propugna un regime totalitario al quale è intrinseca la violenza. (Magris 2018)

Lo sguardo di Pound è un tratto della sua persona rimasto impresso a molti di coloro che hanno incontrato il poeta sia quando era giovane, sia nella parte finale della sua vita. Indro Montanelli, sempre sulle pagine del *Corriere della Sera*, ricordando una cena a casa di amici con il vecchio Pound nel 1971, oltre al suo (intermittente) mutismo, menziona di essere rimasto colpito dai suoi occhi: «non ne avevo mai visti di eguali, una cascata di luce blu» (Pound 2021, 200). Lo 'sguardo di Pound' svolge una funzione importante anche nel caso del poster affisso dai militanti di CasaPound qualche anno fa nelle vie di Roma per pubblicizzare il lancio del libro di Adriano Scianca *Ezra fa surf* [fig. 1].

La domanda sulla quale a mio avviso vale la pena soffermarsi è la seguente: quale inconscio visivo opera dietro lo sguardo di Pound evocato da Magris, e quale invece dietro a quello del Pound rappresentato nell'immagine ritoccata digitalmente del poster di CasaPound?<sup>15</sup>

Secondo Lacan, il *soggetto* della visione è l'*effetto* dello sguardo dell'Altro (cf. Pagliardini 2014, 66, 70).<sup>16</sup> Il Pound che ci guarda dal

<sup>15</sup> Il poster riproduce l'immagine utilizzata per la copertina della prima edizione del libro di Scianca, *Ezra fa Surf* (2013): si tratta di una rielaborazione di una foto in bianco e nero scattata nel 1918 dal fotografo tedesco Emile Otto Hoppé (1878-1972). L'originale è visibile sul sito della E.O. Hoppé Estate Collection: <https://www.eohoppe.com> (numero di catalogo: 14469-E.TIF).

<sup>16</sup> Per Lacan, la visione, più che essere un atto del soggetto della percezione, è l'effetto del modo in cui questo viene interpellato dall'oggetto della visione. Come spiega Pagliardini, «[i]l *percipiens*, colui che percepisce, è una funzione del percepito, è determinato dalla struttura del *perceptum*» (2014, 66).



Figura 1

Poster CasaPound. 2013.  
Roma, quartiere Esquilino.  
Foto dell'Autore

poster è un Pound giovane. Il poeta un po' giascone del periodo londinese, che di lì a qualche anno dedicherà quattro canti al condottiero rinascimentale Sigismondo Malatesta, un personaggio che era un «romagnolo come il romagnolissimo Mussolini», e che viene presentato nei canti malatestiani dei primi anni Venti come un «esteta armato», grande amatore di donne e amante delle arti (Bacigalupo 2018). Insomma, una sorta di d'Annunzio rinascimentale che, secondo i manoscritti originali dell'epoca consultati da Pound, alla vigilia di una battaglia con le truppe papali avrebbe dichiarato spavaldamente: «Loro sono più gente assai che noi semo, | ma noi semo più homini» (Pound 2012, 125).<sup>17</sup> Lo stesso arditismo riaffiorerà nei canti che Pound scrisse in italiano durante gli ultimi mesi della Repubbli-

<sup>17</sup> La citazione è dall'edizione dei *XXX Cantos*, curata da Massimo Bacigalupo, con testo originale a fronte (Pound 2012). Una delle particolarità di questa edizione è che, per quanto riguarda i testi rinascimentali, i versi poundiani non vengono 'ritradotti' dall'inglese, ma invece (quando possibile) nella 'traduzione' italiana vengono riportate le fonti originali che Pound aveva avuto modo di consultare scartabellando in varie biblioteche in giro per l'Italia. I versi che ho riportato in citazione, come racconta lo stesso Bacigalupo (2018), sono «un reperto» di cui va molto fiero. La resa in inglese di Pound perde molto dell'immediatezza della versione italiana originale: «They've got a bigger army, | but there are more men in this camp».

ca di Salò; anche se questa volta a essere celebrata sarà l'ultima disperata resistenza fascista dei «ragazzi» e delle «ragazze» che «nel settentrion [...] portan' il nero» (Pound 1985, 835)<sup>18</sup> – intanto Pound aveva anche fatto in tempo a scrivere il celebre canto XLV contro l'usura. È questa galassia di suggestioni che si cristallizza nello sguardo di sfida del Pound del poster, che diviene il mezzo attraverso cui il *soggetto* della visione viene sedotto da una favola ideologica che fonde ribellismo e critica del capitalismo finanziario. Una «macchina mitologica», per riprendere un concetto di Furio Jesi,<sup>19</sup> che restituisce un Pound appetibile non solo alla nuova destra, ma che ne mette in luce anche aspetti non privi di *appeal* per la cultura di sinistra. Si pensi a Sanguineti (2006), secondo il quale «se vogliamo sapere cosa sia il capitalismo è meglio leggersi Pound o Céline che Baudrillard». Ma viene in mente anche Pasolini (2014), che di Pound sottoscriveva «anche politicamente, tutti i versi conservatori [...] dedicati ad esaltare (con nostalgia furente) le leggi del mondo contadino».<sup>20</sup>

E il Pound di Magris? È un vecchio canuto. Sarà pure «un profeta», ma lo «sguardo è perduto in sé stesso». Un po' come nella foto che accompagna l'articolo – scattata nel 1964 e nella quale il poeta è ritratto seduto e con un bastone –,<sup>21</sup> il Pound che ci viene proposto da Magris è un poeta in pensione, un personaggio che non ha quasi più nulla del vitalismo e dello spirito futurista che sprigiona dalla grafica ribelle del manifesto di CasaPound. Nel tentativo di smacchiare il fascismo di Pound, Magris spiega anche che «Pound è stato fascista» e «il fascismo va condannato senza remore», ma si affretta anche a sottolineare che il supporto di Pound per il regime era probabilmente il frutto di «una grande ingenuità politica», e che in fondo «il suo antisemitismo non era razzista e si fondava su un'ossessiva fissazione sul ruolo che storicamente molti ebrei avevano avuto nel sistema bancario» (2018). Non vorrei fornire qui una rappresentazione ingiusta dell'articolo, che anzi invito a leggere per come prova ad affrontare con equilibrio un tema molto scivoloso e complesso, ma il punto che mi interessa sottolineare è la struttura profonda che sorregge la presentazione che di Pound viene fatta: tutta sulla difensiva, quasi mirata a suscitare un sentimento di *pietas*; l'opposto della *hybris*

**18** I versi poundiani, dalla chiusa del canto LXXIII, sono ripresi e commentati da Marco Cuzzi nella sua prefazione al libro di Elia Rosati, *CasaPound Italia. Fascisti del terzo millennio* (2018).

**19** Cf. Jesi 2012. Si veda in particolare l'«Introduzione».

**20** Sul rapporto Sanguineti-Pound, si vedano Lorenzini 2007 e Bacigalupo 2012. Come segnala Bacigalupo, Sanguineti non è solo interessato al «profetismo» poundiano, ma anche allo sperimentalismo formale di Pound e al suo recupero della lezione dantesca. Sul rapporto Pasolini-Pound, si veda Mark 2022.

**21** Nella foto, Pound è seduto sui gradini alla base della Colonna di San Todoro, a Venezia (a pochi passi dalla Biblioteca Marciana).



che si legge negli occhi del Pound del poster. Certo, sul *Corriere della Sera* non si può usare lo stesso stile comunicativo di un movimento di estrema destra, ma a mio avviso in gioco c'è molto più di questo. È come se Magris, per sottrarre la figura di Pound alla destra, fosse quasi costretto a restituirci la figura di un Pound vecchio, ormai innocuo, depotenziato, 'disattivato'. È un prezzo alto da pagare, che lascia gran parte della carica utopica dell'opera e della figura di Pound alle letture di estrema destra.

Nella parte finale dell'articolo, poi, viene reintrodotta la distinzione fra «esternazioni ideologiche» e «arte», un passaggio necessario per preparare, poche righe dopo, la stoccata finale contro CasaPound: «giù le mani dai poeti» (Magris 2018). Come prevedibile, la replica di Marcello Veneziani (2018) dalle pagine del *Tempo* non si fece attendere, e fu più o meno la seguente: ma come, prima ci avete detto che Pound era fascista, poi ora che lo reclamano i fascisti ci raccontate che appartiene alla poesia! Purtroppo, è difficile dargli torto.

E allora, come se ne esce? Dante creò la donna dello schermo, la cultura italiana ha creato la domanda dello schermo. Dante fingeva di amare un'altra donna per coprire il suo vero amore per Beatrice, noi continuiamo a chiederci se Pound fosse fascista o no per coprire la nostra paura di affrontare una domanda più complessa: cosa fare con un grande poeta fascista e con la sua opera in una società democratica? In un passaggio a mio avviso di esemplare lucidità, Alessandro Portelli, sicuramente un intellettuale e un americanista appartenente a un'area culturale all'opposto di quella di chi va in giro ad appendere i poster di CasaPound, scrive:

La maggior parte dei protagonisti del modernismo - Eliot, Yeats, Conrad, Faulkner, Pound - [...] sono grandi e necessari non *nonostante* l'ideologia conservatrice o persino reazionaria, ma proprio *grazie* ad essa: la visione desolata della storia e dell'umanità genera una critica metapolitica totale, senza compromessi, allo stato delle cose, a tutte le idee ricevute e ai luoghi comuni, uno svelamento spietato della logica e delle icone del potere mondano. (Portelli 2018, 140-1; corsivo nell'originale)

Credo che dovremmo (ri)partire da qui. Dobbiamo ritrovare il coraggio di andare a sfidare CasaPound e i nuovi tecnofascismi del terzo millennio sul terreno della cultura, attraverso la cultura. Dobbiamo tornare a leggere libri scomodi con i nostri studenti - nelle aule universitarie, ma non solo. Dobbiamo aprire con loro i *Cantos*, e spiegare loro che quando Pound in uno degli ultimi canti scrive di «un uomo che cerca il bene, | e fa il male», sta sì parlando di sé stesso, ma anche delle scelte tragiche dei nostri nonni o bisnonni - e soprattutto sta parlando a loro, gli *zoomer* della gen Z, delle scelte che nelle loro vite saranno chiamati a fare. Perché quel giovane del poster è (anche)

il vecchio trafitto dalla storia, seduto da qualche parte ad aspettare, per raccontare, a chi vorrà ascoltarlo, dell'inizio della fine del mondo, dell'inferno e del paradiso, dei «terrazzi color di stelle» e del dolore e delle tragedie che a volte anche il più bello dei sogni può causare.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Pound 1985, 1481, 839. L'immagine del poeta «fermo ad aspettare» è anche quella evocata nella celebre conclusione del whitmaniano *Canto di me stesso*: «Se non mi trovi subito non scoraggiarti, | Se non mi trovi in un posto cerca in un altro, | Da qualche parte starò fermo ad aspettare te» (Whitman 2010, 237).

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# La corrispondenza come 'ritratto d'autore' Trascrizione di un manoscritto inedito di Charles Palissot de Montenoy

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**Abstract** The unpublished manuscript of Charles Palissot de Montenoy (1730-1814), of which a transcription is offered here, was owned by the Forteguerriana Library in Pistoia. This manuscript constitutes a significant piece in the historical-literary reconstruction of the events linked to the affirmation, in France, of Enlightenment ideals. Entitled *Quelques-unes de mes lettres*, it contains mostly unpublished letters addressed by Palissot to various personalities such as Voltaire, D'Alembert, François de Neufchâteau, l'abbé Aubert, Madame de Bellecour, and Fréron. Drafted in 1784, the manuscript may be seen as a substantially positive portrait of the author in the context of controversies that raged around his works.

**Keywords** Palissot de Montenoy. Letters. France. Enlightenment. Theatre.

**Sommario** 1 Un polemista dai mille volti. – 2 *Quelques-unes de mes lettres* (1784): un manoscritto inedito. – 3 Trascrizione del manoscritto.



#### Peer review

Submitted 2022-05-23  
Accepted 2022-07-07  
Published 2022-09-22

#### Open access

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**Citation** Innocenti, B. (2022). "La corrispondenza come 'ritratto d'autore'. Trascrizione di un manoscritto inedito di Charles Palissot de Montenoy". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [221-260] 59-98.

## 1 Un polemista dai mille volti

Un uomo cattivo, pericoloso e caratterizzato da molteplici difetti morali e fisici: è così che Charles Palissot de Montenoy (1730-1814) è descritto nei *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de notre littérature depuis François premier jusqu'à nos jours*, di cui lui stesso era autore:<sup>1</sup>

Palissot (Charles de Montenoy), né à Nancy en 1730, auteur de la comédie des *Philosophes*, de quelques autres pièces de théâtre et du poème de la *Dunciade*. Ses amis prétendent qu'en lisant ses ouvrages, on s'aperçoit qu'il a fait une étude assez heureuse d'Aristophane, de Lucien, de Molière, de Boileau et en général des bons modèles. Mais ses ennemis assurent que c'est un homme sans foi, sans probité, sans religion, sans mœurs; une âme sombre et dévorée de fiel; un banqueroutier, un voleur, un ingrat, un fourbe, un traître, un méchant, un flatteur, un envieux, un calomniateur, un hypocrite, un scélérat, etc., etc., etc.; et ils en donnent pour preuves la comédie des *Philosophes* représentée, de l'aveu du Gouvernement, en 1760, et son poème de la *Dunciade*, dans lequel, témérairement et malicieusement, il a osé se moquer des vers et de la prose de plusieurs beaux esprits [...]. La nature, ayant épuisé son pouvoir à forger un monstre moral tel que M. Palissot, il est de la plus grande probabilité, qu'elle en a fait, en même temps, un monstre physique. C'est pourquoi nous assurons, avec un degré de certitude qui approche de l'évidence, que cet auteur, selon toutes les lois de l'analogie, est infailliblement louche, borgne, bossu, boiteux; qu'il a d'ailleurs des griffes de tigres, des défenses de sanglier, des ailes de chauve-souris, la physionomie d'un oiseau de proie, et qu'on doit lui trouver, à l'extrémité du coccis, une queue de singe, qui dénote visiblement son origine infernale: ce qu'il fallait démontrer. On imagine bien qu'un tel homme (si pourtant c'en est un) ne sera jamais de l'Académie Française.<sup>2</sup> (Palissot 1771, 198-200)

<sup>1</sup> Si tratta di un'opera in cui Charles Palissot passa in rassegna i meriti e i demeriti di alcuni autori del suo tempo e del passato e nella quale è presente anche una voce dedicata a lui stesso. I *Mémoires* furono pubblicati nel 1771 come supplemento alla *Dunciade*, un poema satirico che aveva suscitato un notevole scalpore: «L'ouvrage [i *Mémoires*] avait un double objet: supplément explicatif d'un poème, il devait être, en même temps, une sorte de Dictionnaire littéraire où la biographie et les anecdotes céderaient la place aux jugements critiques et qui mériterait d'être consulté par les gens de lettres, les gens du monde, les jeunes personnes des deux sexes» (Delafarge 1912, 341). La redazione della voce «Palissot», attribuita agli editori in una nota al testo pubblicato nel 1771, era stata verosimilmente redatta da Palissot stesso, come ulteriore autoritratto a fini difensivi nel tribunale dell'opinione.

<sup>2</sup> In questa trascrizione e in quelle che seguono nel testo e nelle note nonché nella trascrizione del manoscritto la grafia settecentesca e la punteggiatura sono state di norma uniformate all'uso odierno.

Il ritratto dai toni sarcastici<sup>3</sup> che Palissot propone di sé stesso ai lettori dei suoi *Mémoires* si inseriva nel contesto di quelle aspre polemiche che lo avevano investito a partire dal 1755, anno in cui era stata rappresentata per la prima volta la commedia *Le Cercle ou les originaux*. In questa *pièce*, ponendosi apertamente sulla scia di Molière,<sup>4</sup> il drammaturgo

y mettrait en scène des originaux de plus d'une sorte: on y voyait des figures de poètes, un financier, un médecin, des beaux esprits, une femme auteur avec son entourage et enfin un philosophe. Les premiers personnages étaient de pure fantaisie: mais celui du philosophe représentait un écrivain vivant et déjà célèbre: c'était Jean-Jacques Rousseau. (Meaume 1864, 11-12)

La satira di cui era stato oggetto il filosofo di Ginevra aveva finito per irritare gli enciclopedisti e in particolare D'Alembert, il quale reclamò nei confronti di Palissot una severa punizione, che quest'ultimo riuscì a evitare grazie all'intervento dello stesso Jean-Jacques Rousseau.<sup>5</sup> Per niente intimorito dalle reazioni degli enciclopedisti, il drammaturgo fece rappresentare nel 1760 *Les Philosophes*, com-

**3** Tale ritratto richiama quello delineato nell'*Homme dangereux*, commedia del 1770 in cui Palissot è trasfigurato nei panni di un uomo pericoloso e cattivo. La *pièce*, scritta dal drammaturgo a fini satirici, era stata concepita per confondere i *philosophes*: «L'auteur avait composé cette pièce dans le plus grand secret. On avait osé le peindre, dans une foule de libelles, comme un homme très noir, et ce fut d'après cette idée injurieuse qu'il en traça le principal caractère. Il eut soin de faire répandre ensuite que cette pièce était une satire violente contre lui et d'en paraître vivement affecté. À cette nouvelle la joie des philosophes fut inexprimable. Tous portaient d'avance l'ouvrage aux nues, et il se félicitaient de sa représentation prochaine. On imagine aisément qu'elle eût été leur confusion lorsque l'auteur se serait fait connaître: ce moment allait devenir, pour le public, une comédie plus piquante que la pièce même. [...] Malheureusement, aux répétitions de la pièce, un comédien crut reconnaître le style de l'auteur et divulga ses soupçons. Le secret, jusqu'alors bien gardé, se trouva compromis. Effrayés à la fois du danger qu'ils avaient couru et du ridicule qui les menaçait, les ennemis se réunirent tous et la pièce fut défendue le jour même où elle devait être représentée» (Palissot 1809b, 3-5).

**4** Molière costituì un riferimento costante per Palissot, il quale assunse le opere del drammaturgo seicentesco a modello di quell'idea di *bonne comédie* dalla quale molti autori settecenteschi si erano, a suo dire, allontanati, contribuendo alla corruzione del gusto (di cui era da ritenersi responsabile, in primis, il dramma diderotiano). Nei già citati *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de notre littérature* (1775) Palissot definisce Molière «le premier des poètes comiques, anciens et modernes» (167) ma anche «le plus grand philosophe dont la Nation ait à s'enorgueillir» (179). Palissot aveva progettato nel 1768 di portare a termine un'edizione del teatro di Molière, che tuttavia non fu mai realizzata: «Il avait pensé, en 1768, à se transformer en éditeur et à publier le théâtre de Molière avec un commentaire de sa façon, mais ce projet échoua, ayant été combattu par une compagnie de libraires qu'alléguait en sa faveur un droit de priorité et de propriété» (Delafarge 1912, 297).

**5** Per la ricostruzione degli eventi cf. Meaume 1864; Delafarge 1912; Ferret 2007; Connors 2012.

media che fu all'origine di un'aspra polemica sostenuta da numerosi pamphlet,<sup>6</sup> nel contesto della quale Voltaire rivestì un ruolo ambiguo.

Palissot finì per essere considerato da molti suoi contemporanei come il campione degli *anti-philosophes*<sup>7</sup> anche se, di fatto, come ricorda uno dei suoi primi biografi, ne condivideva molti ideali:

On se tromperait gravement si, après avoir lu Les Originaux, Les Philosophes et La Dunciade, on en concluait que Palissot fut l'ennemi de l'esprit philosophique qui régna despotiquement pendant la plus grande partie du dix-huitième siècle. Il ne combattit que la secte encyclopédique mais il eut toujours soin d'excepter de ses attaques Voltaire, Helvétius et le chevalier de Jaucourt. [...] En réalité il était voltairien; mais il combattit les amis et les disciples de Voltaire. Cette contradiction dura plus d'un siècle: sous le Directoire et sous le Consulat le voltairien Palissot n'avait pu se soustraire aux haines excitées contre lui par les comédies jouées à Nancy en 1755 et à Paris en 1760. (Meaume 1864, 80-7)

Ammiratore entusiasta di Voltaire, che ebbe modo di incontrare per la prima volta alle Délices nel 1755 e con il quale intrattenne una lunga corrispondenza,<sup>8</sup> Palissot lottò a lungo e invano per affrancarsi dall'epiteto di *anti-philosophe* che si era in realtà guadagnato sul campo. Le diverse edizioni delle sue opere complete (che furono costantemente arricchite dalla pubblicazione di nuove prefazioni, documenti, corri-

<sup>6</sup> La commedia è stata oggetto di un'edizione critica di Ferret (2002), che include anche l'integralità degli scritti relativi alla *querelle* originata dalla rappresentazione alla Comédie Française e dalla pubblicazione della prima *Préface*, che Charles-Simon Favart (1760) definì più insultante della stessa pièce: cf. *Le censeur hebdomadaire*, 3, 312.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. ad esempio la lettera inviata a La Harpe il 18 maggio 1778: «Quand il serait vrai, Monsieur, que le hasard, qui a tant de part à tout, nous eût jetés réellement tous deux dans des parties opposés, je ne me sentirais pas moins de répugnance pour le titre de Général de l'Armée Anti-Philosophique que vous venez de me donner, un peu gratuitement, dans le dernier ordinaire de votre journal» (Palissot 1779, 55-6).

<sup>8</sup> «L'arrivée des deux jeunes gens [Palissot et Patu] avait été annoncée au Patriarce par son ami d'Argental (lettre de Voltaire du 29 octobre 1755). Ils furent, pendant plusieurs jours, les hôtes du souverain littéraire [...]. Cette visite avait plu à Voltaire. Il remercia le comte de Choiseul de lui avoir envoyé Palissot (lettre du 29 octobre). Il rendit compte à son ami Thieriot de la visite des deux pèlerins (lettre du 8 novembre 1755). Enfin il fit parvenir à Palissot lui-même les témoignages les plus sympathiques à l'occasion d'une maladie qu'il venait d'éprouver (lettre du 1er décembre 1755)». (Meaume 1864, 60). La visita fu all'origine di una corrispondenza ventennale fra i due. Palissot rese pubbliche a più riprese le lettere indirizzate al Patriarca nonché quelle da lui ricevute, suscitando le proteste di Voltaire, come nel caso dell'edizione delle *Lettres de M. de Voltaire à M. Palissot avec les réponses à l'occasion de la comédie des Philosophes*, funzionale a rivelare a tutti che il Patriarca, pur rimproverandolo per i suoi attacchi agli enciclopedisti, continuava a conservargli la sua stima.



spondenza, ecc.)<sup>9</sup> furono concepite dallo stesso Palissot non solo come un mezzo per diffondere le proprie opere ma anche come strumento per veicolare ai lettori e alle parti in causa nelle polemiche che lo avevano riguardato le sue ragioni ed il suo 'vero volto': quello di un profondo ammiratore di Voltaire<sup>10</sup> che non aveva tuttavia esitato a mettere alla berlina coloro che erano da reputarsi non solo dei falsi *philosophes* ma anche degli autori privi di merito.<sup>11</sup> La pubblicazione di alcune lettere da lui inviate o ricevute da varie personalità era particolarmente funzionale al ristabilimento della verità: in quanto comunicazione privata, la lettera si faceva infatti garante di una maggiore trasparenza del cuore e del pensiero di colui che l'aveva scritta ed era quindi da reputarsi un documento probatorio fondamentale.<sup>12</sup> La pubblicazione della corrispondenza assume quindi, per Palissot, un'importanza capitale non solo perché in grado di contribuire alla conoscenza della veridicità dei fatti che sono oggetto delle lettere, ma anche perché egli reputava che queste ultime potessero restituire al lettore un ritratto d'autore che fosse il più possibile 'trasparente', come si evince anche da quanto egli afferma nell'incipit del manoscritto da noi rinvenuto e trascritto integralmente in questa sede:

**9** Nel corso della sua vita Palissot curò personalmente cinque edizioni delle proprie opere complete, le quali restituiscono, di volta in volta, un differente 'ritratto' dello scrittore. Come ricorda Delafarge (1912), alla prima edizione del 1763, nella quale «il *avait partiellement refait la tragédie de Zarès, devenue Ninus II et la comédie des Tuteurs*» (271) era seguita la grande edizione di Liège («la plus complète qu'il ait donnée et la seule qui soit illustrée», 385), che presentava numerose modifiche. A quest'ultima era seguita l'edizione Bastien («contenant les mêmes matières que celle de Liège, mais autrement disposées», 406) e in seguito quella pubblicata dall'editore Moutard, che tendeva a presentare al pubblico un Palissot molto meno polemico: «À la fin de 1788, le libraire Moutard mis en vente une nouvelle édition de ses œuvres en quatre volumes in -8° et l'avis préliminaire ne contenait guère que des pensées de modération, de sagesse et de paix. Les dures batailles s'éloignaient dans le passé [...] et la sincérité de son humeur pacifique nous est garantie non seulement par les déclarations de la Préface mais aussi par les suppressions opérées dans le texte de 1778: ce sont surtout les mémoires justificatifs, les pièces et les lettres polémiques que Palissot a fait disparaître» (439-40). L'ultima edizione, che fu curata dal drammaturgo alla soglia dei suoi ottant'anni, fu ugualmente caratterizzata da importanti modifiche rispetto alle precedenti: «[Elle] comprenait six volumes in -8°, édités par Léopold Collin [...]. Les matières étaient incontestablement mieux ordonnées dans cette édition que dans celle de Liège [...]. Cette édition ne reproduisait tout ce qui figurait dans les collections antérieures» (530).

**10** Palissot esternò costantemente la sua ammirazione per Voltaire, «un homme tels que les siècles précédents n'en avaient point encore vu et tel que les siècles postérieurs n'en verront peut-être jamais» (Palissot 1778, 4) nonché «le plus beau génie qui existe en Europe» (Palissot 1775, 322).

**11** Le critiche di Palissot erano rivolte soprattutto verso Diderot e Marmontel. Cf. ad esempio quanto egli scrive ne *La Dunciade*, poema composto nel 1764 a imitazione di *The Dunciad* di Pope, di cui erano uscite tre versioni negli anni 1728-42.

**12** Cf. Ferret 2002 e Rubin-Detlev 2015 a proposito della pubblicazione dello scambio epistolare tra Palissot e Voltaire in occasione delle polemiche generatesi intorno alla rappresentazione dei *Philosophes*.

Beaucoup des gens aiment les lettres: c'est le genre où le caractère et l'esprit d'un auteur se montrent le plus naïvement et, pour ainsi dire, en déshabillé.

Se l'utilizzo pubblico della corrispondenza privata era dunque, per Palissot, da considerarsi lecito, non lo era tuttavia il suo abuso. Particolarmente interessante, da questo punto di vista, appare la sua posizione nei confronti dell'edizione curata da Beaumarchais delle opere complete di Voltaire.<sup>13</sup> Palissot, che portò a termine a sua volta una pubblicazione in più tomi degli scritti del Patriarca di Ferney,<sup>14</sup> criticò gli editori di Kehl per aver incluso nei loro volumi alcune lettere di Voltaire che erano da considerarsi del tutto insignificanti:

Cette correspondance ne devait pas s'étendre à une foule de lettres oiseuses et insignifiantes, qui ne renfermaient que des ordres donnés à ses gens d'affaires, ou de vains compliments, plus dérisoires que sincères, prodigués à des hommes obscurs [...] Il eût été trop sévère sans doute d'exclure de cette collection un petit nombre de lettres de pur agrément. On peut se plaire à voir un grand homme se livrer, dans une attitude familière, au commerce de sa société, [...] mais le simple bon sens aurait dû faire sentir qu'il ne fallait pas en porter le recueil à dix-huit volumes. Nous en avons donné beaucoup moins, et nous craignons encore d'en avoir donné beaucoup trop. (Palissot 1806, 295-7, 303)

Respingendo ogni accusa di censura,<sup>15</sup> nel *Prospectus* della sua edizione delle opere di Voltaire, Palissot portava avanti l'idea che non tutte le epistole di un autore, per quanto celebre, fossero degne di essere pubblicate. Alcune di esse potevano pericolosamente contribuire a incrinare il Monumento:

Nous nous étendrons peu, dans la crainte de fatiguer le public, sur l'abus qu'on a fait de la correspondance de Voltaire, en publiant des lettres qu'il avait évidemment condamnées à l'oubli et qui détruiraient l'idée qu'on doit avoir de son caractère moral, si l'on était assez injuste pour le juger d'après ces élans rapides d'une âme passionnée. Ceux qui l'ont bien connu n'ignorent pas combien il était facile d'exciter cette âme ardente des premiers mouvements qu'il

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**13** Il riferimento è qui alla celebre edizione di Kehl pubblicata tra il 1784 e il 1789. Cf. Bessire 2000; Gil 2011.

**14** L'edizione, uscita per i tipi di Stoupe e Servièrè negli anni 1792-98, era composta da 55 volumi in 8°.

**15** «Il fallait du moins une fois couvrir de quelque confusion ceux qui, feignant de regretter sérieusement de pareilles pauvretés, nous reprochent d'en avoir purgé notre édition» (Palissot 1806, 302-3).

se reprochait ensuite avec amertume. Des amis vraiment dignes de sa confiance n'auraient pas ainsi trafiqué de ses secrets et révélé des faiblesses que leur premier devoir eût été de cacher. En écartant de cette correspondance une foule de lettres purement oiseuses [...], en sacrifiant enfin tout ce que l'intérêt de sa gloire ou même un sentiment de bienséance ordonnaient de supprimer, on en eût fait un recueil de choix qui pouvait honorer le goût de ses éditeurs et présenter un des plus beaux modèles du style épistolaire. (Palissot 1806, 11-12)

A patto di rimanere saldamente entro i confini di una *décence* che imponeva l'accantonamento di lettere tendenti a rivelare le debolezze squisitamente umane degli scriventi, la resa pubblica della corrispondenza privata poteva quindi, secondo Palissot, efficacemente contribuire a ricostruire un ritratto d'autore per quanto possibile «véritable». Come accennato, Palissot stesso non esitò a pubblicare nei volumi delle varie edizioni delle proprie opere complete la trascrizione di lettere ricevute o inviate a vari corrispondenti, inserendole per lo più nella documentazione relativa alla ricostruzione storico-letteraria delle polemiche che lo avevano colpito. Non mancano tuttavia sezioni di *Lettres de l'auteur*,<sup>16</sup> costituite da una miscellanea di missive inviate da Palissot a varie personalità, sezioni funzionali a veicolare al lettore un preciso ritratto di sé.

## 2 **Quelques-unes de mes lettres (1784): un manoscritto inedito**

Conservato nella Raccolta Autografi Ferdinando Martini<sup>17</sup> della Biblioteca Forteguerriana di Pistoia, il manoscritto intitolato *Quelques-unes de mes lettres* contiene la trascrizione, effettuata dallo stesso Palissot, di 8 lettere da lui indirizzate, a varie altezze cronologiche, a diverse personalità nonché di una lettera redatta da mittente sconosciuto. Le missive sono collocate una di seguito all'altra e intervallate da alcune considerazioni dello stesso Palissot. Il manoscritto, rilegato a opuscolo in mezzo marocchino rosso e agata rossa, è composto da 16 pagine recto-verso e presenta la seguente successione:

1. Au jeune François [François de Neufchâteau], 1774
2. Au jeune François de Neufchâteau, 1768

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. ad esempio il *Tome sixième contenant divers mélanges* dell'edizione di Liège (Palissot 1778).

<sup>17</sup> Sulla costituzione della Raccolta Autografi Ferdinando Martini, conservata presso la Biblioteca comunale Forteguerriana di Pistoia, ci permettiamo di rimandare il lettore a Innocenti 2009.

3. À Monsieur de Voltaire, 1771
4. À Fréron père, 1775
5. À D'Alembert, 1782
6. À Monsieur François de Neufchâteau, 1783
7. Lettre de M. de B\*\*\*, 1783
8. À M. l'abbé Aubert, s.d.
9. À Madame de Bellecour [cancellata]

Redatto nel 1784, il manoscritto contiene lettere inedite (fa eccezione quella indirizzata a Voltaire, che fu pubblicata successivamente alla redazione del manoscritto). È difficile stabilire se l'esemplare fosse stato pensato in preparazione di una futura pubblicazione;<sup>18</sup> quello che è certo è che viene redatto in un periodo particolarmente turbolento per l'ormai cinquantaduenne scrittore e drammaturgo, reduce dalle nuove polemiche sollevate dalla ripresa, alla *Comédie Française*, di alcune sue commedie già oggetto di scandalo anni prima: fra queste i *Philosophes*, che fu rimessa in scena a distanza di venti anni con notevoli cambiamenti, i quali tuttavia non furono sufficienti per evitare il riaccendersi degli animi intorno alla pièce.<sup>19</sup>

Le lettere che compongono il manoscritto (alcune delle quali incentrate proprio sulle polemiche sviluppatesi nel tempo a proposito dei *Philosophes*) possono essere considerate alla stregua di tasselli di un mosaico che vanno a comporre il ritratto di un Palissot coraggioso, trasparente, coerente e fermo nei propri convincimenti; un ritratto che contrasta invece con l'opacità e la duplicità (che traspaiono dal contenuto delle missive) di alcuni dei destinatari, che furono legati a vario titolo allo scrittore: Voltaire, D'Alembert, Fréron, l'abbé Aubert, ma anche François de Neufchâteau, che Palissot considerò sempre generalmente come un proprio allievo ma che in queste lettere appare generalmente in una luce negativa. Al futuro deputato dell'Assemblea Nazionale (che divenne in seguito Ministro dell'Interno durante il Direttorio)<sup>20</sup> lo scrittore rimprovera non solo una certa

<sup>18</sup> Sono anni, questi, in cui Palissot si dedica particolarmente all'attività di giornalista e in cui comincia a progettare l'edizione delle opere complete di Voltaire: «À mesure qu'il avançait en âge, le travail de l'éditeur et du critique ou du journaliste avait pour lui un attrait particulier et qui croissait chaque jour. La librairie Moutard publia en 1784 une belle édition in-8° de la *Henriade*, précédée d'un portrait de Voltaire gravé d'après Largillière par Bertony: Palissot y avait joint des remarques. Et, dans sa pensée, cette édition n'était qu'une pierre d'attente: il comptait bien pouvoir élever un jour à la gloire du grand homme le vaste monument de ses *Œuvres complètes*, enrichies d'un commentaire soigné» (Delafarge 1912, 431).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Delafarge 1912, 412-24.

<sup>20</sup> Sulla biografia di Nicolas-Louis François de Neufchâteau (1750-1828), scrittore, drammaturgo e uomo politico che rivestì un ruolo importante durante gli anni della Rivoluzione francese e dell'Impero napoleonico, cf. Margairaz 2005; Michaud 1856; Connelier 1829; Silvestre 1828.

ambiguità e ipocrisia (rivelando di essere in possesso di alcune lettere in cui il giovane François criticava apertamente i *philosophes* e si prendeva gioco di Voltaire, che solo qualche tempo dopo avrebbe pubblicamente elogiato)<sup>21</sup> ma anche una sorta di codardia (cf. lettere del 1768 e del 1774). L'immagine di Neufchâteau viene parzialmente riabilitata nella lettera del 1783, la quale appare tuttavia particolarmente funzionale alla messa in rilievo delle caratteristiche positive di Palissot. L'«instabilità» della personalità dell'allievo, più volte rimarcata nelle lettere precedenti, contrasta ad esempio con la fermezza, la generosità e la lungimiranza del maestro:

Vous savez, mon ami, que dans tous les temps personne n'a rendu plus de justice que moi à votre esprit, à vos talents, à votre séduisante facilité. Je suis charmé de la confiance qui vous ramène à moi et qui vous engage à me demander des conseils. Ils vous prouveront qu'au fond de mon cœur mes sentiments pour vous n'ont jamais varié malgré vos petites inconstances.

La scelta, da parte di Palissot, di inserire nell'esemplare manoscritto la trascrizione delle due lettere inviate a D'Alembert e a Voltaire sembra essere stata dettata una volta di più dalla medesima volontà di tracciare un ritratto favorevole di sé stesso. Se nella prima missiva lo scrittore si scaglia con fermezza contro l'enciclopedista, accusandolo di aver scritto un articolo ingiurioso contro l'*abbé* de La Porte,<sup>22</sup> all'epoca deceduto, nella lettera a Voltaire, pur ribadendo la sua ammirazione per il Patriarca, Palissot non esita a redarguirlo apertamente, mettendo l'accento sull'atteggiamento ingiusto e duplice assunto dal *philosophe* nei suoi confronti. Il contrasto fra la personalità del mittente e quella del destinatario appare anche in questo caso particolarmente sottolineato:

J'espérais, il est vrai, qu'en homme supérieur à tous les partis, vous n'en épouseriez aucun. Je croyais que vous vous deviez ce respect à vous-même, et qu'au fond du cœur vous distingueriez toujours l'homme libre et ferme qui n'était que votre ami, et qui n'avait jamais été votre adulateur, de cette espèce de parasites littéraires qui ne mendiaient vos suffrages que par le sentiment

**21** «François passa à Lyon l'hiver de 1766, il fut à Ferney, où Voltaire voulait le retenir pour être son secrétaire: cette place eût comblé l'ambition du jeune poète; mais M. le bailli d'Alsace l'arracha de ce séjour enchanté pour lui. On a relu les vers élégants que le jeune élève adressa à Voltaire, en lui envoyant les premiers essais de sa muse, et la réponse flatteuse dans laquelle le grand poète proclame François son héritier. Il adressa ensuite à Voltaire diverses pièces de vers, parmi lesquelles on a remarqué surtout l'*Épître sur le mois d'Auguste*» (Silvestre 1828, 6).

**22** Sulla figura dell'*abbé* de La Porte cf. Chouillet 1999.

de leur bassesse. Vous savez, Monsieur, combien mes espérances furent trompées. Permettez-moi de vous le demander, vous êtes-vous conduit comme l'en exige le sentiment de votre gloire si vous en eussiez été fortement pénétré? En m'assurant de votre estime par toutes vos lettres, vous me laissez à la dérobee des traits satyriques dans quelques brochures. (Palissot ms., *Lettre à Monsieur de Voltaire*, 1771)

Concorrono alla realizzazione di un ritratto d'autore in chiave sostanzialmente a lui favorevole la lettera all'*abbé* Aubert<sup>23</sup> e quella redatta da Monsieur de B\*\*\*,<sup>24</sup> nonché la missiva indirizzata a Fréron.<sup>25</sup> L'inserimento nel manoscritto della trascrizione della lettera inviata nel 1775 all'acerrimo nemico di Voltaire e degli enciclopedisti rispondeva probabilmente all'esigenza di provare a indebolire ulteriormente le accuse di coloro che dichiaravano apertamente che Palissot si fosse convintamente schierato nel campo degli anti-illuministi; accuse dalle quali il drammaturgo non riuscì mai completamente a smarcarsi, nonostante gli sforzi compiuti. Il suo, come afferma Delafarge, fu un destino strano:

Étrange destinée que celle de Palissot. On l'a souvent représenté comme un antiphilophe et comme un ennemi de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Ennemi de Rousseau, il ne le fut que durant quelques années de sa vie, et son hostilité s'enveloppa de respect. Antiphilophe, il ne le fut jamais, au sens que ce mot a pour nous. [...] On pourrait voir en lui plutôt un philosophe indépendant que la fatalité des événements entraîna hors de sa voie. Mais les légendes sont tenaces. Il eut beau dire et redire à ses contemporains que le Crispin de la comédie n'était pas Jean-Jacques Rousseau et qu'il n'avait pas attaqué cette vraie philosophie qui faisait la gloire de son siècle; beaucoup d'entre eux demeurèrent incrédules. Et cette fausse interprétation, se propageant jusqu'à nous, lui a valu une célébrité spéciale qu'il ne mérite pas. [...] L'opinion s'était irrévocablement prononcée. On pourrait presque intituler notre essai: Palissot ou l'antiphilophe malgré lui. (Delafarge 1912, 554)

**23** Jean-Louis Aubert (1731-1814).

**24** Le due lettere (quella indirizzata all'*abbé* Aubert e quella scritta dal non meglio identificato M. de B\*\*\*) sono incentrate sul cambiamento operato nel finale dei *Philosophes* in occasione della ripresa della rappresentazione della pièce alla Comédie Française nel 1783. In entrambe le missive viene messa in risalto la maestria dimostrata dal drammaturgo nell'elaborazione di un nuovo finale, pensato per mettere a tacere le polemiche suscitate da quello originario.

**25** Élie-Catherine Fréron (1718-1776). Sull'attività giornalistica di Fréron cf. Balcou 1975.

Le lettere trascritte nell'esemplare conservato presso la Biblioteca Forteguerriana tendono, in definitiva, a tracciare un preciso ritratto d'autore, rispondente, nei suoi elementi salienti, a quello delineato nei *Mémoires de la vie de l'auteur composé par lui même* che aprono il primo volume dell'edizione parigina delle opere complete del 1809 e nei quali Palissot si ritrae in maniera sostanzialmente positiva.<sup>26</sup> Ai *Mémoires* fa eco la *Notice sur la nouvelle édition des «Euvres complètes» de M. Palissot*, compilata da Nicolas Gobet, il quale pone l'attenzione proprio sulla corrispondenza quale prova del carattere franco dello scrittore:

M. Palissot lui [à Voltaire] a toujours solennellement rendu le tribute d'admiration que réclament ses prodigieux talents et ses immortels ouvrages; mais on ne l'aperçut jamais parmi cette foule d'adulateurs qui, prosternés en quelque sorte aux pieds de l'Apollon de Ferney, l'enivraient d'un encens grossier et le fatiguaient de leur culte, pour ainsi dire asiatique. [...] Il eut le courage, comme il dit plaisamment lui-même, de battre sa livrée; il eut le courage plus rare encore de signaler par des vérités sévères, mais toujours décemment énoncées, les taches qu'il voyait dans ce colosse littéraire du 18ème siècle: et ce qui fait d'autant d'honneur à Voltaire qu'à M. Palissot, c'est que la franchise du dernier, ainsi que le prouve leur correspondance mutuelle, en refroidissant l'amitié de Voltaire, ne fit en quelque sorte qu'affermir son estime. Ce dédain de M. Palissot pour toutes les factions contemporaines, ce soin constant de marcher dans une route indépendante, prouvent certainement, abstraction faite des autres mérites, un jugement sain, un caractère ferme, une âme forte. (Gobet 1809, 5)

Significativo ai fini della ricostruzione storico-letteraria delle vicende legate all'affermazione, in Francia, delle idee illuministe, il manoscritto di seguito trascritto ci offre ulteriori tasselli per avvicinarci alla conoscenza di un autore «qui absorba pendant plusieurs mois l'attention de la capitale de la France» (Meaume 1864, 6) «et dont le nom et les ouvrages se rattachent à l'un des points le plus curieux de l'histoire littéraire du dix-huitième siècle» (1864, 91).

**26** «Mon goût pour les plaisirs simples de la nature et pour la campagne où j'ai vécu longtemps, prouve mieux que tout ce que je pourrais dire, combien mon caractère ressemble peu à celui que mes ennemis m'ont attribué. Le théâtre d'un méchant serait Paris. C'est là qu'à chaque instant il peut s'enivrer du plaisir d'être craint et de l'empressement avec lequel on a pourtant la faiblesse de le rechercher. Le tourbillon du monde lui est aussi nécessaire que l'élément dans lequel il respire; il languirait dans la tranquillité de la solitude, et tout ce qui ne présenterait à son esprit que des images douces ou des sentiments paisibles, lui paraîtrait d'un mortel ennui» (Palissot 1809, xvii-xviii).

### 3 Trascrizione del manoscritto

#### *Quelques-unes de mes lettres. 1784*

On pourrait en trouver, dans le nombre, qui mériteraient d'être données au public. Beaucoup des gens aiment les lettres: c'est le genre où le caractère et l'esprit d'un auteur se montrent le plus naïvement et, pour ainsi dire, en déshabillé.

Au jeune François,<sup>27</sup> à l'occasion d'une de ses rechûtes d'instabilité. 1774<sup>28</sup>

«Est-ce à votre cocher, Monsieur, ou bien à votre cuisinier que vous voulez parler?»<sup>29</sup> disait judicieusement Maître Jacques au bon homme Harpagon. Vous auriez bien dû m'indiquer aussi, mon cher Prothée, à qui j'ai précisément à répondre. Est-ce au jeune poète que j'ai connu?<sup>30</sup> Est-ce au professeur?<sup>31</sup> Est-ce à l'abbé? Est-ce à l'avocat? Est-ce enfin au procureur fiscal?<sup>32</sup> Car vous avez été tout cela. Je me souviens

**27** Nicolas-Louis François de Neufchâteau (1750-1828).

**28** Palissot inserì la trascrizione di due lettere da lui indirizzate a François de Neufchâteau nel sesto volume delle opere complete pubblicate a Liegi (Palissot 1777, 98-100 e 138-40): la prima relativa a *L'homme dangereux* mentre la seconda, datata 1766, in risposta alla prima missiva, estremamente elogiativa, ricevuta dal giovane: «Je n'ai point, Monsieur, de maison, comme Boileau, à Auteuil, où vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'adresser votre lettre [...]. Il est singulier, Monsieur, que je puisse vous dire que je vous connaissais de reputation il y a longtemps...».

**29** Molière, *L'Avare*, III, 5.

**30** «Nicolas François de Neufchâteau est né à Saffais, et le jeune François acquit dans la maison paternelle un tel degré d'instruction; les rares qualités qu'il tenait de la nature y reçurent un tel développement, que, lorsqu'il vint à Neufchâteau en 1764 pour faire sa seconde, son portefeuille était déjà garni de pièces de vers dignes d'éloges; il ne trouva pas de rival parmi ses condisciples. Dans un concours général entre les élèves du collège de Neufchâteau, M. d'Alsace d'Henin-Liétard, bailli, grand-croix de l'ordre de Malte, frappé des dispositions précoces du jeune François, voulut se charger de son sort: François adressa à son protecteur un remerciement en vers, qui annonçait une âme sensible, une grande facilité, et une connaissance judicieuse des meilleurs poètes latins. Il avait déjà fait des épîtres en vers, des imitations d'Anacréon, d'Horace, de Virgile, d'Ovide et quelques fables; ces productions d'un auteur de 13 ans furent imprimées dans le temps et eurent un grand succès: l'année suivante, un recueil plus considérable parut sous le nom de François de Neufchâteau, âgé de 14 ans, associé des Académies de Dijon, de Marseille, de Lyon et de Nancy» (Silvestre 1828, 4-5).

**31** «En 1770 il lut, à la distribution des prix du collège de St. Claude à Toul, une ode qui reçut des vifs applaudissements, et qui lui valut une chaire d'éloquence et de poésie que M. Drouas, évêque de Toul, s'empessa de lui offrir. Mais il n'occupa que peu de temps ce poste. On l'accusa de déisme, d'encyclopédisme, et le prélat se crut obligé de lui retirer sa confiance» (Michaud 1856, 8).

**32** «François de Neufchâteau sentit bientôt la nécessité d'avoir un état, et de ne devoir son sort qu'à lui-même; il se décida pour le barreau [...]. Licencié et docteur en



aussi que vous aviez été mon ami, et voilà que vous m'apprenez *que vous avez pris les traits de Baculard*.<sup>33</sup> Vous êtes bien le maître de prendre encore ceux dont il fut le Virgile et l'Homère,<sup>34</sup> sans que je m'avise d'y trouver à redire: mais vous pouvez juger, par les éternelles variations de votre conduite, de la nature des sentiments que j'ai pu conserver pour vous. Eh! Que me fais à moi, mon cher Gaspard, pour me servir de votre expression, que vous ayez fait votre paix avec d'Arnaud? J'aime bien autant, je vous le jure, que vous soyez son ami que le mien. Soyez encore celui de Fréron,<sup>35</sup> si vous le voulez, et ne me dites plus que pour m'aimer il faudrait haïr tout le monde: il n'y a point d'amitié dans cette phrase-là.

Je ne répondrai pas à votre lettre plus sérieusement que vous ne l'avez écrite. Il est trop plaisant, par exemple, que vous me reprochiez de ne vous avoir point donné de mes nouvelles, tandis que je ne

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droit avec dispense d'âge en 1770, avocat du Roi au baillage de Vésélise en 1771, lieutenant-général au Présidial de Mirecourt en 1776, subdélégué de l'Intendance de Lorraine dans la même ville en 1778, il se fit remarquer dans l'ordre financier et dans l'ordre administratif [...]» (Michaud 1856, 8).

**33** Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

[N.d.A.] Allusion à un passage des anciennes éditions de la *Dunciade*: «A-t-elle pris les traits de Baculard?».

[N.d.C.] La citazione è tratta dal primo canto (*La lorgnette*) de la *Dunciade*. François-Thomas Marie de Baculard d'Arnaud (1718-1805) è tra coloro che nel poema assumono i tratti della *déesse Stupidité*. Il giudizio di Palissot nei confronti di Baculard fu in generale negativo. Si legga in particolare quanto affermò nei suoi *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de notre littérature* (1775): «Il s'est dévoué à un genre sombre et lugubre dont il est flatté qu'on le regarde comme l'inventeur. Ses essais, en ce genre, sont les tragédies du Comte de Comminges et d'Euphémie, qui n'ont jamais été représentées. Il n'a pas pris garde que, dans ces pièces singulières, il substituait l'horreur au pathétique. [...] L'éloquente douleur de Phèdre, un seul vers d'Iphigénie porte dans l'âme des spectateurs un saissement bien plus terrible que tout cet attirail de fossoyeurs, trop sérieux pour une parade et trop ridicule pour une tragédie» (21-2).

**34** [N.d.A.] M. Baculard, par une dénomination bien digne de lui, s'en est appelé lui-même: le Virgile et l'Homère qui chanta le cul de Manon.

[N.d.C.] L'appellativo è riportato anche nei seguenti versi della *Dunciade*, in cui Palissot si prende costantemente gioco di Baculard: «Le seul griffon, sortant d'apprentissage, l Se proposa d'embellir le Salon l de la déesse et d'illustrer son nom l par un tableau digne de son suffrage l et qu'il crut fait pour passer d'âge en âge, l du cû divin, du beau cû de Manon, l Il entreprit la séduisante image l Et Bac-l-rd conduisait son crayon». L'edizione del 1773 della *Dunciade* contiene la seguente nota redatta dallo stesso Palissot: «Ces vers avaient pour objet de jeter un peu de ridicule sur la bizarre faintaisie d'un poète qui s'est avisé d'adresser une *Épître au cû de Manon*. Il y a longtemps qu'on ne parlerait plus de ce caprice de sa jeunesse si lui même n'eût fait plusieurs pièces pour en conserver la mémoire» (Palissot 1773, 205-6). Il testo del poema di Baculard è trascritto in Monselet 1857, 160.

**35** A quest'altezza cronologica si era già consumata la rottura con Fréron, di cui un tempo Palissot era stato amico e collaboratore. Fréron appare particolarmente preso di mira nella *Dunciade*: al giornalista, nel poema, vengono attribuite delle ali messe al contrario. Palissot non esita inoltre ad attribuirgli il titolo di *comtesse*, specificando in una nota al testo quanto segue: «M. Fréron, qui a été jésuite, puis sous-lieutenant d'infanterie, puis abbé, puis marié, a été aussi comtesse. Son premier journal s'appelait *Lettres de la Comtesse...*» (Palissot 1773, 89).

sais que par le pur hasard que vous êtes à Paris, et que depuis environ deux ans, vous n'avez pas daigné m'informer de votre adresse.

Il n'est guère moins singulier que vous me fassiez un crime, au bout de quatre ans, de la publicité que j'ai donnée à une Epître<sup>36</sup> que, pourtant, je n'ai fait imprimer que de votre aveu. J'en ai la preuve de votre main, mon cher Prothée. Vous ne vous ressouvenez pas, je le vois bien, de tout ce que vous m'avez écrit: mais je relie quelquefois vos lettres comme un morceau d'histoire naturelle assez curieux, et je compte bien les relire encore pour m'amuser du contraste de vos sentiments passés avec ceux que vous me témoignez actuellement par vos nouveaux amis. Savez-vous qu'alors vous étiez plein de verve? Quel torrent d'épigrammes contre les D'Alembert, les Diderot, les Marmontel, les Saint Lambert et même (ce que je ne vous ai jamais pardonné) contre ce vieillard respectable que vous appeliez le Gibou de Ferney!<sup>37</sup> Combien alors vous étiez loin d'apercevoir votre cher ami d'Arnaud! Je l'avouerai franchement, loin de vous regarder comme un futur Thersite, je vous prenais pour un nouvel Ajax qui voulait consoler la Grèce du repos d'Achille. Vous ne vous souvenez donc pas que non seulement alors vous consentiez à passer ouvertement pour un de mes Gaspards, mais qu'à votre zèle on vous aurait pris même pour un de mes complices. Ah! vous avez oublié, puisque vous me reprochez votre Epître, avec quelle ardeur vous me sollicitiez, et de vive voix, et par écrit, de faire imprimer quelques autres ouvrages de votre façon, infiniment plus forts que cette épître et remplis d'adulation pour moi. Vous avez oublié que, soit par modestie, soit par vanité, je m'y suis constamment refusé. J'ai cru seulement devoir en garder les minutes.

**36** Si tratta, come affermò Palissot stesso in una nota successiva a questa stessa lettera manoscritta, della *Requête de plusieurs Grands Hommes à Monseigneur le Chancelier contre la nouvelle édition de la "Dunciade"*, par M. François de Neufchâteau, attualmente Professeur de poésie, d'éloquence et d'histoire au Collège Royal de Toul (Palissot 1771, 253-9).

**37** Si leggano invece i versi che furono indirizzati da Voltaire al giovane e riportati da Palissot nella voce dedicata a François de Neufchâteau nei suoi *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de notre littérature* (1775), nella quale Neufchâteau è presentato in maniera favorevole: «François (Louis) né à Neufchâteau en Lorraine en 1752. Il était déjà célèbre et de plusieurs académies en 1765, année dans laquelle M. de Voltaire lui adressa ces vers, bien capables de l'encourager: "Si vous brillez à votre Aurore | Quand je m'éteins à mon couchant; | Si dans votre fertile champ | Tant de fleurs s'empresment d'éclore, | Lorsque mon terrain languissant | Est dégarni des dons de Flore; | Si votre voix jeune et sonore | Prélude d'un ton si touchant | Quand je fredonne à peine encore | Les restes d'un lugubre chant; | Si des Grâces qu'en vain j'implore | Vous venez l'heureux amant, | Et si ma vieillesse deplore | La perte de cet art charmant | Dont les Dieu des vers vous honore; | Tout cela peut m'humilier, | Mais je n'y vois point de remède. | Il faut bien qu'on m'y succède | Et j'aime en vous mon héritier". Nous ne pouvons prédire la carrière de M. François. On a vu des prodiges se démentir; mais nous n'avons vu aucun jeune homme qui joignît à plus de talents une plus singulière étendue de connaissances, et ce qui est plus rare encore, un goût plus sûr et plus épuré».

Quand on change de parti, mon cher Prothée, il faudrait du moins se piquer d'avoir de la mémoire; et quand on veut conserver quelque apparence d'honnêteté, il ne faut jamais faire semblant de chercher des torts à ses amis, pour se disculper d'en avoir eu de très graves avec eux. Cette conduite peut indigner, révolter même une âme fière et sensible, qui n'est plus faite pour être dupe après avoir été désabusé.

Vous me dites que mon amitié vous a nui, et c'est de votre part une rechute un peu dure. Vous m'aviez écrit la même chose le 13 février 1769, et depuis vous aviez jugé à propos de m'en demander pardon: pourquoi donc répéter cette sottise? Trouvez bon que je prenne mon sérieux pour vous dire qu'en effet vous n'êtes pas digne de mon amitié, si vous n'avez pas toujours senti qu'elle ne pouvait que vous honorer.

Vous m'assurez que vous ne dites jamais aucun mal de moi. Vraiment vous me faites bien de la grâce. Il est étonnant qu'après tout le bien que j'ai tâché de vous faire, et qu'après ces lettres de vous écrites avec la reconnaissance respectueuse d'un fils pour son père, vous portiez à mon égard la considération jusqu'à m'épargner. Je vous fais mon compliment, mon cher Prothée, de ce qu'il ne vous prend pas fantaisie, dans vos métamorphoses, de devenir couleuvre ou vipère. Soyez persuadé que je sens tout le prix de vos ménagements. Vous me demandez la paix et la suppression de votre Epître.<sup>38</sup> Cette pauvre Epître, qui n'est pas néanmoins ce que vous avez fait de plus mauvais, vous tient donc furieusement au cœur? Ce n'est pas cependant celui de tous vos ouvrages qui, dans les circonstances présentes, pourrait vous causer le plus d'inquiétude: car, au fond, cette Epître n'est qu'une [ill.] sur de très petits objets. Quoi qu'il en soit, je veux bien, mon cher Prothée, vous promettre et la paix et cette suppression. Je compte même, par surabondance de grâce, d'effacer votre nom de mes *Mémoires littéraires*. Je ne veux pas attirer des pierres contre votre maison de verre, ni vous compromettre avec la foule de mes détracteurs, qui paraît vous causer tant d'inquiétude et dont je m'inquiète si peu que je me propose de retourner incessamment à Paris; j'ai le bonheur d'y conserver quelques amis puissants et d'un courage plus éprouvé que le vôtre. Je ne connais que les gens sans caractère qui ayant le<sup>39</sup>

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**38** [N.d.A.] C'est la requête de plusieurs grands hommes à M. le Chancelier, contre la nouvelle édition de la *Dunciade*. Cette requête est imprimée parmi les pièces relatives à ce poème.

**39** La trascrizione della lettera da parte di Palissot si interrompe a questo punto.

Au jeune François de Neufchâteau  
1768

Vous me dites, Monsieur, de ne pas craindre que vous deveniez jamais mon ennemi; je vous remercie du soin que vous prenez de me tranquilliser; mais je vous assure que j'étais sans crainte. Vous avez paru rechercher mon amitié sans que j'eusse fait aucune démarche pour mériter la vôtre; j'ai répondu à votre empressement pour tous les petits services qui ont pu dépendre de moi, et peu s'en faut que vous ne me les reprochiez: cela n'est pas honnête. Je vous le dis en vous protestant que je ne suis *ni prévenu ni irrité contre vous*.<sup>40</sup>

Vous avez pu entendre dire dans les cafés que j'avais beaucoup d'ennemis, et vous n'aviez pas besoin de faire le voyage de Paris pour vous en douter. Vous n'ignoriez pas que j'étais l'auteur des *Philosophes* et de la *Dunciade*; vous m'en aviez fait de si grands éloges dans vos lettres que j'ai encore sous les yeux. Mais vous aviez pu remarquer qu'il me restait encore quelques amis, puisqu'enfin je vous avais inséré dans beaucoup de maisons respectables où vous aviez été très accueilli à ma seule recommandation. Vous savez que je me proposais encore de vous donner d'autres connaissances, et je vous assure que l'on s'occupait déjà sérieusement des moyens de vous rendre service: je ne vois donc pas en quoi mon amitié vous avait été si funeste. Ce n'est pas ma faute si vous avez pris dans les cafés des terreurs paniques: mais il me semble que vous n'aviez jamais eu le courage d'être l'ami ni de Molière, ni de Boileau: car enfin ces grands hommes, qui m'étaient si supérieurs en mérite, devaient par cette raison-là même, avoir beaucoup plus d'ennemis que moi. Il ne vous était pas difficile cependant de reconnaître, au seul ton de ma maison, que j'avais peut-être de quoi me moquer un peu de tous ces ennemis qui vous ont paru si redoutables, et qui ne m'ont jamais causé la moindre inquiétude. La raison en est, Monsieur, que si j'ai réellement des ennemis, je ne les dois qu'à mes ouvrages au lieu que j'ai toujours tâché de ne devoir mes amis qu'à ma conduite.

C'était à vous, avant de rechercher ma connaissance, de bien sonder votre cœur, et de juger si vous aviez en vous-même ce sentiment de force qui nous rend supérieurs aux injustices, et qui nous ferait préférer l'amitié d'un homme de mérite persécuté à celle d'un sot en faveur. Les gens qui ont véritablement un peu de vigueur dans l'esprit ont toujours ce courage-là. S'il vous a manqué, j'ai de quoi vous apprécier beaucoup plus sûrement que par vos essais littéraires. Mais soyez tranquille, Monsieur. Je ne parlerai plus de vous dans aucun papier public. Si j'avais reçu votre lettre plus tôt, je vous aurais épargné la petite douleur de voir qu'il fut encore question de vous et de

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40 Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

moi dans un des derniers Mercure. Je conçois que ma première lettre n'avait déjà fait que trop d'offre<sup>41</sup> car elle m'avait mis à portée d'apprendre que les *impromptus*<sup>42</sup> que vous aviez paru faire chez moi avec une facilité si merveilleuse en ma confiance si intrépide, étaient un peu plus anciens que la date de nos liaisons. Je venais de vous donner la comédie sur mon petit théâtre, c'est un plaisir qu'apparemment vous avez voulu me rendre; je vous félicite, Monsieur, de vos rares talents et j'ai l'honneur d'être etc., etc.

Ps: Au reste, il me paraît que vos nouveaux amis vous ont ramené à bon port à Neufchâteau, où je vous souhaite bien sincèrement tout le bonheur que vous méritez.

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Il parut se repentir, demanda grâce et l'obtint; mais la versatilité de son caractère l'exposa souvent à des rechutes.

À Monsieur de Voltaire  
C'est la seule de mes *lettres à cet homme célèbre*  
qui n'ait point été imprimée.<sup>43</sup> 1771

J'étais à Genève depuis cinq ou six semaines, Monsieur, lorsque M. le Résident de France me fit l'honneur de m'inviter de votre part d'aller à Ferney. Il m'assura même que non seulement c'était votre désir, mais que vous aviez bien voulu le lui témoigner avec un empressement très flatteur pour moi.

<sup>41</sup> Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

<sup>42</sup> Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

<sup>43</sup> Pubblicata in realtà dopo la stesura di questo manoscritto, con alcuni cambiamenti, in Palissot 1778, 420-5 e successivamente in Voltaire 1792. La data indicata sulla lettera in quest'ultima edizione è il 28 ottobre 1770, mentre il manoscritto riporta l'anno 1771. La lettera compare anche nel terzo volume dell'edizione parigina del 1809, senza alcuna indicazione di data. Le difformità tra la versione qui riportata e quelle pubblicate sono particolarmente evidenti nel confronto con l'edizione del 1778, con la quale proponiamo un confronto in Appendice. Meaume (1864) segnala nel suo saggio altri casi di errori o varianti nelle lettere editate da Palissot: «On a imputé à Palissot d'avoir changé le texte de ces lettres [*Lettres de M. de Voltaire à M. Palissot avec les réponses à l'occasion de la comédie des Philosophes*, 1760] dans plusieurs passages, mais M. Beauchot reconnaît lui-même que "c'est fort peu de chose" (*Œuvres de Voltaire*, t. 59, p. 52). Les altérations de Palissot ne sont, à vrai dire, que des erreurs de copiste. C'est ainsi qu'il persiste, en 1809, à donner à une lettre la date du 24 novembre 1760 tandis que l'original, qui a été possédé par M. Renousard, porte la date du 24 septembre. Ce qui est le plus surprenant c'est que cette même lettre ait été publiée par plusieurs éditeurs sous la rubrique d'octobre, d'après une copie écrite de la main du secrétaire de Voltaire. Ici les différences sont tellement considérables que M. Beauchot a publié les deux versions» (264).

Je fus en effet charmé d'apprendre que vous vous rappeliez encore avec quelque intérêt un homme qui avait fait quinze ans auparavant le voyage de Genève, uniquement pour dire comme Ovide: *Virgilium vidi* mais je ne veux rien vous dissimuler. Je ne sentis ni la même ardeur, ni la même confiance qui m'avait amené autrefois de si loin pour vous rendre hommage.<sup>44</sup> M. Vernes,<sup>45</sup> mon ami, me pressa vivement mais en vain de prendre un jour avec lui pour vous aller voir. Je veux vous expliquer ma conduite, Monsieur, et vous faire lire dans mon cœur du moins une dernière fois.

Mon admiration pour vous est à quelques égards un préjugé de mon enfance. Je n'exagère point en vous disant que j'ai appris à lire dans la *Henriade*, et que c'est elle qui m'a inspiré mes premiers vers. L'amitié la plus tendre se joignit à mon admiration dans un âge heureux qui méconnaît la crainte, dans un âge des illusions qui nous persuade qu'un beau génie est toujours accompagné d'une âme sublime. Ce sentiment me conduisit à Genève il y a quinze ans, et il ne se démentit pas lorsque, pour me venger d'une persécution très odieuse, je crus devoir donner la comédie des *Philosophes*, et battre votre livrée, comme le dit alors un homme de beaucoup d'esprit.<sup>46</sup> Peut-être, Monsieur, n'avez vous reçu de personne une preuve d'attachement plus forte que celle que je vous donnai dans cette occasion. On m'excitait de toutes parts, on employait toutes les séductions pour me déterminer à vous confondre avec ces philosophes, dont on affectait de vous nommer *l'Oracle*. Le clergé me faisait entrevoir des pensions, des honneurs, que sais-je? une place même à l'Académie, si je voulais, seulement paraître abjurer mon attachement pour vous. On alla jusqu'à m'accuser d'un sentiment de crainte, qui n'est pas dans mon caractère, pour m'en faire rougir, s'il était possible, et pour me piquer davantage. Je fus inflexible, et je vous sacrifiais, Monsieur, mon propre parti.

J'espérais, il est vrai, qu'en homme supérieur à tous les partis, vous n'en épouseriez aucun. Je croyais que vous vous deviez ce res-

**44** I mutati sentimenti di Palissot nei confronti di Voltaire sono attribuiti da Delafarge alla scoperta, da parte del primo, dell'atteggiamento ambiguo tenuto dal Patriarca nei suoi confronti: «Des sentiments qui le transportaient autrefois, quand il se rendait aux Délices pour y saluer Voltaire, l'admiration seule avait subsisté: il avait vu son maître en 1760 et depuis 1764 jouer à son égard un double jeu et leur correspondance s'était arrêtée. Sans doute aussi le maréchal de Richelieu lui avait fait lire les deux lettres où Voltaire le grondait amicalement pour la protection qu'il venait d'accorder à l'auteur de *l'Homme dangereux*. Dernière cause de froissement qui ravivait les anciennes. [...] Voltaire invita donc Palissot. L'invitation lui fut transmise par le résident de France et Vernes le pria vivement d'accepter, mais il en avait trop sur le cœur, il résista. Quelle pouvait être son attitude en face du grand homme, après tout ce qu'il avait appris?» (Delafarge 1912, 332).

**45** Jacob Vernes (1728-1791).

**46** [N.d.A.] Favier, homme très connu du corps diplomatique, et qui a mérité de l'être. [N.d.C.] Jean-Louis Favier (1711-1784).

pect à vous même, et qu'au fond du cœur vous distingueriez toujours l'homme libre et ferme qui n'était que votre ami, et qui n'avait jamais été votre adulateur, de cette espèce de parasites littéraires qui ne mendiaient vos suffrages que par le sentiment de leur bassesse. Vous savez, Monsieur, combien mes espérances furent trompées.

Permettez-moi de vous le demander, vous êtes-vous conduit comme l'en exige le sentiment de votre gloire si vous en eussiez été fortement pénétré? En m'assurant de votre estime par toutes vos lettres, vous me laissiez à la dérobée des traits satyriques dans quelques brochures. Vous, Monsieur de Voltaire, vous vous faisiez l'éditeur des libelles que vos philosophes avaient semés contre moi; vous compiliz leurs injures sous le titre de *Facéties Parisiennes*. Vous écriviez à M. le Maréchal de Richelieu pour lui reprocher l'intérêt qu'il avait pris à ma comédie de *l'Homme dangereux*. Vous en aviez écrit autant à Monsieur le duc de Choiseul, et voilà comme vous me récompensiez de ces hommages si purs que j'étais allé vous porter à Genève, et dont vous paraissez aujourd'hui vouloir vous ressouvenir en m'invitant à me rendre à Ferney. Que je vous plains, au milieu de votre gloire, si vous ne sentez pas combien cette conduite est au dessous de vous! Serait-il donc bien vrai que vous n'eussiez d'élévation que dans vos écrits? Eh! que font auprès de vous tous ces prétendus philosophes auxquels vous semblez donner tant d'importance! Votre renommée a-t-elle besoin de toutes ces trompettes malhonnêtes? Etes-vous donc fait pour n'en dédaigner aucune!

La vivacité de mes reproches, vous prouvera, Monsieur, que je vous aime encore, et que j'ai pu, comme vous, m'en avoir souvent prié par vos lettres, sentir votre embarras, en vous pardonnant ce que vous appeliez vous-même vos mauvaises plaisanteries. Vous jugerez par un article de mes *Mémoires sur notre littérature* que peut-être j'irai vous lire,<sup>47</sup> vous jugerez, dis-je, combien je suis capable encore de vous sacrifier mes ressentiments: mais c'est à condition que vous repoussiez loin de vous l'idée offensante qu'on a tâché de vous donner de mon caractère. On a voulu, je le sais, vous persuader que je

<sup>47</sup> [N.d.A.] J'allai chez le grand homme, comme un amant va chez sa maîtresse après avoir juré de ne le plus revoir. Je lui lus trois chants de la *Dunciade*, celui, entre autres, où l'on trouve ces vers: «O de Ferney sublime solitaire, etc.» et il me les fit répéter deux fois. Il me parut que le ton de ma lettre l'avait étonné. Il me dit en riant que je ressemblais à un jeune tigre qui venait relancer un vieux lion sur sa litière. Pour lui prouver que je n'étais pas un tigre, je lui lus son article dans mes *Mémoires littéraires* que je faisais alors imprimer à Genève. Il fut véritablement sous le charme; il me pressa beaucoup de demeurer quelques jours à Ferney: mais je tins ferme sur la résistance et je n'acceptai que son dîner. Je vis clairement qu'il se croyait engagé par honneur à tenir toujours à la secte philosophique, quoi qu'au fond du cœur il la méprisât; mais il avait la faiblesse de la croire nécessaire à sa réputation. Je vis que par ménagement pour elle, il conserverait toujours avec moi la même conduite, et je conçus en sortant de chez lui l'idée du huitième chant de la *Dunciade*.

vous craignais, et peut-être vous m'avez fait l'injure de le croire. Ne me réduisez pas, je vous en supplie, à vous désabuser. Je n'imiterai point vos lâches ennemis, je saurai me respecter moi-même en vous prouvant que je suis incapable de crainte.<sup>48</sup> Pardon, grand homme, ne prenez point ceci pour une menace mais pour une preuve de ma sensibilité. Laissez-moi la satisfaction de finir comme j'ai commencé et de n'ouvrir les yeux qu'à ce que vous avez véritablement d'admirable. Je ne suis guère qu'à la moitié de ma carrière et selon toute apparence il me reste un avantage précieux, celui de parler encore longtemps. Laissez-moi l'employer à me moquer de mes sots ennemis, et à vous donner de nouvelles preuves d'un attachement qui a prévalu sur toutes vos petites injustices.

J'ai l'honneur d' être, etc.

A Fréron père<sup>49</sup>

C'est la dernière lettre qu'il ait reçue de moi. 1775.

Je ne m'attendais plus, Monsieur, à trouver mon nom dans aucune de vos feuilles. Je vous croyais même intéressé à l'oublier tout-à-la fois. Je m'explique.

Il est certain que vous avez actuellement vos raisons pour vous repentir de toutes les louanges que vous m'avez prodiguées pendant plus de dix ans. Il n'est pas douteux aussi que vous n'ayez à vous reprocher l'inconséquence que vous avez eu de changer tout-à-coup de style, lorsque j'y pensais le moins, et sans que je vous en eusse donné aucun prétexte.<sup>50</sup> Il me semble d'après cela que vous

**48** [N.d.A.] Ce fut pour lui prouver à la fois que je respecterais toujours sa gloire, mais que j'étais véritablement incapable de crainte, enfin, dis-je, pour ce motif, ou pour me venger un peu de sa conduite équivoque, que je fis ce huitième chant, intitulé *L'Ambassade*, et dans lequel je lui donnai cette plaisante livrée tirée de ses propres ouvrages. Il entendit raillerie, comme on peut le voir dans les dernières remarques de ce même chant et je suis certainement le seul homme qui la lui ait fait entendre à ce point-là. Je le vis deux fois à Paris avant sa mort, et il m'avait écrit de sa propre main à son arrivée. Dans le fond, il m'aimait, parce qu'il était persuadé avec raison que je l'aimais; mais ce n'était qu'avec les restrictions de son caractère: c'est-à-dire qu'il ne m'aimait qu'autant qu'il pouvait aimer.

**49** Élie-Catherine Fréron, qui definito con l'appellativo di *père* per distinguerlo dal figlio, Louis-Marie- Stanislas Fréron (1754-1802), che rivestì vari ruoli politici durante la Rivoluzione francese.

**50** Le cause della rottura con Fréron sono esplicitate in una lettera scritta da Palissot a l'*abbé M\*\*\** e pubblicate nel terzo tomo dell'edizione parigina del 1809: «C'est à lui-même, mon ami, que vous pourriez demander ce qui nous a brouillés. Je l'aimais, sans estimer la profession périlleuse à laquelle il s'est imprudemment dévoué. [...] Je ne saurais vous dire ce qui s'est passé dans son cœur à mon égard; mais voici ce que j'ai cru



devriez en effet vous épargner des souvenirs qui ne peuvent avoir rien d'agréable pour vous.

Louanges et critiques sont, comme l'on sait, des choses très égales de votre part. Tout homme qui se contredit sans prudence, qui flatte aujourd'hui jusqu'à la bassesse, pour insulter demain jusqu'à l'impudence, doit s'attendre à n'inspirer qu'un sentiment plus froid que l'indignation, et moins honnête que l'indifférence.

Je souffrais de vos éloges, lorsqu'en même temps je vous voyais outrager ce que nous avons de plus respectable. Vous savez que j'ai pris souvent la liberté de vous le dire: mais je vous croyais bon homme, et je sacrifiais ma répugnance pour vos louanges à l'attachement sincère que vous paraissiez me témoigner.

Vos hostilités me mirent plus à mon aise. Mon amour propre fut flatté de voir qu'enfin vous me donniez une part des injures que vous aviez dites à tant d'hommes célèbres: aussi je n'aurais jamais fait la *Dunciade* pour les venger et pour vous mortifier un peu, si je n'avais appris que vous vous déchaîniez contre moi dans vos propos, plus ouvertement encore que dans votre journal. Cette conduite me fit enfin soupçonner que vous étiez méchant. Pour achever cependant de mettre de mon côté tous les procédés, je crus devoir vous prévenir que j'étais instruit. Vous me répondîtes par une défense mais qui me parut trop légère et trop vague pour balancer des avis qui me venaient de tous côtés. Quelques-uns de vos amis étaient eux-mêmes choqués des imprudentes sorties que vous vous permettiez sur mon compte dans vos propos de table, et je vous avoue que je m'affligeai un moment d'avoir été la dupe non de vos éloges, mais de votre prétendue amitié. Je m'affligeai d'avoir contribué plusieurs fois à vous faire vendre vos feuilles; je pris ensuite le parti de rire, comme vous le savez, et je vis en effet que c'était le meilleur parti.

Je vous écris encore une dernière fois, Monsieur, et je vous invite par égard pour vous-même, à ne plus parler de moi, ni en bien, ni en mal, dans votre hebdomadaire.<sup>51</sup> Il m'arrive quelquefois de la par-

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deviner d'après les faits. On venait de jouer la comédie des *Philosophes*, qui avait produit sur le public cette impression si vive, si attestée par Fréron lui-même, et il arriva malheureusement qu'on repré-senta, quelques semaines après, la comédie de *l'Écos-saise*. Cette dernière pièce me fit d'autant plus de peine qu'à bien des égards je ne pouvais me dissimuler que ce journaliste ne se fût attiré cette vengeance. C'est ce que je ne lui avais jamais caché. [...] Quoi qu'il en soit, je ne tardai pas à m'apercevoir qu'intérieurement Fréron était trop frappé du contraste de la petite gloire que j'avais acquise et de la disgrâce qu'il venait d'essuyer. Ce sentiment, que peut-être il se déguisait à lui-même, prenait chaque jour de nouvelles forces. Bientôt les marques d'intimité disparurent; quelques visites rares et froides y succédèrent; enfin, il ne me resta plus, de notre ancienne amitié, d'autre trace que le présent de ses feuilles que Fréron continuait de me faire et qu'il s'avisait tout-à-coup d'interrompre de la manière la plus propre à m'annoncer qu'il ne voulait plus garder de ménagement avec moi» (383-4).

**51** *L'Année littéraire*, creato dallo stesso Fréron nel 1754.

courir par l'habitude où je suis de tout lire, et depuis quelque temps, j'y remarque une affectation assez singulière, assez comique même. À peine un homme célèbre est-il mort, que vous saisissez avec empressement cette occasion de vous vanter de la tendre amitié qu'il avait pour vous. C'est ce que vous avez osé dire du vieux Crébillon, dont vous avez tant outragé le fils; du musicien Rameau et (qui le croirait?) de M. D'Argenson lui-même. Ce charlatanisme pourrait, tout au plus, en imposer à quelques provinces: mais à Paris! Vous êtes bien de ceux qui ont recherché la célébrité humiliante des grandes inimitiés: mais à qui ferez-vous croire que de grands hommes vous ont honoré de leur amitié? Non, Monsieur Fréron !

Quand je ne serais pas un peu connaisseur en ridicules, n'ai-je pas d'ailleurs, de votre propre main, un témoignage qui apprendrait, au besoin, à tout le public, avec quelle légèreté vous croyez pouvoir traiter les morts ? Si vous me poussiez à bout, si faute de garder le prudent silence que je vous demande, vous me forciez encore une fois à parler, de quelle confusion ne vous couvrirais-je pas ! J'en appelle à vous-même, Monsieur, et pour vous prouver que j'ai véritablement sous les yeux ce témoignage original, je vais transcrire ici vos propres paroles. Rappelez-vous seulement le plus bizarre château en Espagne que dans le délire de l'ivresse et de l'orgueil vous ayez jamais bâti. Souvenez-vous du grand projet de politique dont vous vous occupiez lors de la conclusion du Traité de Vienne. Il s'agissait d'engager l'Impératrice Reine de Hongrie à *demander au Roi de France de tenir avec elle l'infâme dont Madame Fréron était grosse*.<sup>52</sup> Vous ne craigniez d'autre obstacle à ce grand projet que l'inimitié de M. le cardinal de Bernis. Voici du moins ce que vous m'en écriviez et ce qui, je crois, serait plaisant en toute langue: «Il faudrait que M. le comte de Strinville<sup>53</sup> prît la peine d'écrire à Madame de Pompadour et à l'abbé de Bernis, comme Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, que sa Majesté impériale *demande*<sup>54</sup> de tenir avec le Roi l'enfant *dont Mme Fréron est grosse*.<sup>55</sup> Vous devez craindre, ainsi que moi, que l'abbé de Bernis ne s'oppose à la réussite de cette affaire; *il s'agit donc de le gagner*,<sup>56</sup> et rien de plus aisé, selon moi, je crois vous avoir déjà dit, mais je vous répète ici que l'article qui parut contre lui dans mes anciennes feuilles n'était pas de moi. Ce fut ce coquin de poète Roy que j'avais chargé de revoir mes épreuves pendant que j'étais à la campagne, qui, trouvant des pages blanches, parce que je n'avais pas laissé assez de copie, les remplit de cette horreur. Je fus mis à Vincennes et

<sup>52</sup> Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

<sup>53</sup> [N.d.A.] Aujourd'hui M. le duc de Choiseul.

<sup>54</sup> Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

<sup>55</sup> Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

<sup>56</sup> Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

exilé. J'eus la discrétion, et, j'ose dire, *la grandeur d'âme*<sup>57</sup> de ne point compromettre le poète Roy; j'ai en main la preuve sans réplique de tout ce que je vous marque, *et j'attends que Roy soit mort pour la produire*.<sup>58</sup> Etc., etc., etc.».

Oh! Monsieur Fréron, quelle preuve sans réplique, en effet, lorsqu'un homme est mort! Quelle divertissante vision que de donner à Madame Fréron une impératrice pour commère! J'abandonnerai ce quelques autres anecdotes du même genre à vos réflexions. Je vous préviens, comme vous le voyez, et je garde l'original de votre fameuse lettre *ne varietur*. Prenez garde que vous ne pourriez pas vous plaindre d'un abus de confiance 1° parce que vous ne m'avez jamais demandé le secret, 2° parce que l'excès du ridicule ne saurait être l'objet d'une confiance sérieuse, 3° enfin, parce que la loi du talion sera toujours juste à votre égard. Songez aussi que je ne vous demande, pour garder le silence, que la promesse de vous taire. Traitez-moi comme le poète Roy. Attendez que je sois mort pour parler, et je m'engage de mon côté à m'en tenir scrupuleusement aux ailes que je vous ai donnée dans la *Dunciade*.<sup>59</sup>

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Fréron fit promettre qu'il se tairait, et il tint parole, car il mourut.

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Ci-contre l'original de cette lettre à jamais mémorable.

A D'Alembert.

A l'occasion d'un article injurieux inséré dans le *Mercure de France* contre l'abbé de la Porte. 1782.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

<sup>58</sup> Sottolineato nel manoscritto.

<sup>59</sup> Il riferimento è ai seguenti versi della *Dunciade*: «Stupidité, qui fait tout de travers l'avait placé les ailes à l'envers: l Si que Fréron, loin de feindre les airs, l Était porté, par un effort étrange, l Non vers le ciel, mais toujours vers la fange» (Palissot 1764, 63).

<sup>60</sup> L'articolo a cui Palissot fa riferimento era uscito, in forma anonima, sul *Mercure de France* del 15 gennaio 1780 ma era verosimilmente stato redatto da D'Alembert. Palissot replicò pochi giorni dopo dalle colonne dell'*Année Littéraire* (Palissot 1780, 107-12). È quindi probabile che il riferimento alla data del 1782 che compare nel manoscritto sia errato in quanto la lettera sembra essere stata scritta al momento dell'inferire della polemica.

J'ai lieu de croire, Monsieur, que vous prenez quelque intérêt au *Mercur de France*. J'y viens d'y lire avec surprise une invective sanglante contre la mémoire de M. l'abbé de la Porte, que j'aimais,<sup>61</sup> et qui avait pour vous un attachement très sincère. Je vous avoue, Monsieur, que cette inhumanité d'outrager les morts m'a toujours paru révoltante, et qu'elle me semble plus odieuse encore envers un homme dont la cendre est à peine refroidie.

Si quelque papier public devait des ménagements à sa mémoire, c'était assurément le *Mercur*. Il avait l'honneur d'en être pensionnaire; il y avait travaillé près de vingt ans; il lui avait même rendu service à l'époque où ce journal passa de la régie de M. Lutton, dans les mains de M. Lacombe. D'ailleurs le *Mercur* est rarement injurieux qu'on ne devine pas trop le motif de cette amère diatribe. Quoique bien écrite, elle a choqué tout le monde; elle paraît trop évidemment dictée par la haine, et, contre l'intention de l'auteur, elle n'en fera que moins d'impression: car jamais on ne se passionne sans cause, et lorsque la médiocrité d'un homme est bien méritée, il ne saurait être un objet de colère.

Il est vrai, Monsieur, comme on le reproche à notre pauvre abbé, qu'il n'a guère travaillé qu'à des compilations, et que ce genre facile pourrait devenir nuisible si l'on continuait d'en abuser. Mais il faut observer que l'abbé de la Porte avait passé sa jeunesse chez les jésuites; qu'il n'était entré dans le monde que fort tard, et qu'il n'avait, pour exister, d'autre ressource que ce même travail dont on fait un crime à sa mémoire. Sans cette loi impérieuse de la nécessité, je crois qu'il eut été très capable de mieux faire. Du moins n'ai-je connu personne qui eut un jugement plus sain, et qui fut moins la dupe de certaines réputations exaltées qui ont fait de nos jours beaucoup de bruit, et qui ne tarderont pas à baisser plus rapidement encore qu'elles ne s'étaient élevées. Après M. de Voltaire, ce nom il ne comptait en littérature que très peu de noms vraiment célèbres, et le charlatanisme du siècle ne lui en avait point du tout imposé.

L'auteur de l'invective dont je me plains<sup>62</sup> paraît craindre que son exemple ne devienne contagieux, et que nous ne soyons bientôt accablés d'un déluge de compilations.<sup>63</sup> Je l'invite à se rassurer. Le peu de

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Palissot 1768.

<sup>62</sup> Nella replica pubblicata su *L'Année littéraire* Palissot si era limitato ad affermare di aver intuito chi fosse l'anonimo compilatore dell'articolo: «C'est un de ces Golia de la philosophie, qui craignant de rencontrer quelque David, a choisi le *Mercur* pour son arène, parce que là il peut s'écriter tout seul et sans se compromettre, le discret manufacturier s'étant engagé de couvrir officieusement du voile de l'anonymat les attaques sourdes et les turpitudes cachées de ses héros» (Palissot 1780, 112).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. D'Alembert 1780, 141: «Cet exemple ne peut avoir que de funestes influences: un tel secret de s'enrichir par les ouvrages les plus faciles à composer, entraînera dans la carrière des Lettres un grand nombre des jeunes gens qui, dénués d'esprit et plus avides d'or que de gloire, multiplieront les livres sans rien ajouter aux connaissances humaines. Leur principal talent consistera surtout à en imposer par les titres fastueux

gloire que procure ce genre de travail (et M. l'abbé de la Porte ne se l'exagérait pas) ne permettra jamais qu'il s'étend trop loin. Ceux qui ont véritablement du génie ou du talent ne s'y livreront pas. Ceux qui ne sont appelés aux Lettres que par des prétentions, ne s'y livreront guère davantage. Leur vanité croirait déroger en s'abaissant au métier de compilateur, métier plus honnête pourtant que celui d'écrire des sottises de son propre fond.

On rappelle au public que l'abbé de la Porte a été le coopérateur de Fréron:<sup>64</sup> mais on ne dit point, et c'est une justice que je dois lui rendre, qu'il ne parlait jamais de cette époque de sa vie qu'avec douleur. Quoique l'état de journaliste ne fut pas alors parvenu à ce degré d'avilissement où nous le voyons, cependant il regardait son association avec Fréron comme un des plus durs sacrifices qu'il ait fait à sa mauvaise fortune. On veut faire entendre malignement qu'ils ne s'étaient brouillés qu'en apparence, mais personne ne sait mieux que moi combien la querelle fut sérieuse, et les reproches très graves que l'abbé de la Porte était en droit de faire à son infidèle associé. On lui accorde généralement dans le *Mercur* 10.000 l. de rente.<sup>65</sup> Il n'en avait pas la moitié; et s'il est vrai qu'il en dût une partie à ses compilations, il devait le reste à un esprit d'ordre et d'économie très louable, et à une sorte d'élévation de caractère qui ne lui permit jamais de mendier la protection de personne. Enfin on lui attribue une foule de compilations qui ne sont pas de lui, et que lui-même a désavouées dans la *France littéraire*: telles que les *Pensées de Massillon*, *L'esprit de Bourdaloue*, celui du P. Castel, de

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de leurs rapsodies, par le charlatanisme de leurs Prospectus et par les éloges qu'ils obtiendront de quelques journalistes associés à leur brigandage, ou trop ignorants pour distinguer les compilations d'un scribe d'avec celles d'un homme de lettres.

**64** «Admis dans l'atelier de Fréron, il coopéra au travail des quarante premiers volumes de ses feuilles et ne quitta son maître, ou son camarade, que pour devenir lui-même chef d'un ouvrage périodique qu'il intitula *l'Observateur littéraire*. On prétend qu'à cette époque ces deux apôtres du goût et de la vérité se brouillèrent: d'autres assurent que, pour donner de la vogue à ses feuilles, ils convinrent de se dire mutuellement des injures et de critiquer chacun en sens contraire, de manière que tout livre décrié par l'un serait exalté de l'autre» (D'Alembert 1780, 139). Palissot attribua la critique mosse à l'abbé de la Porte proprio al fatto che era stato un tempo amico di Fréron ed aveva sindacato insieme a lui gli enciclopedisti: «Je ne reprocherai pas à M. l'abbé de la Porte ses injustices envers M. Fréron. Le voile de la mort les eût dérobées à mes yeux, quand bien même la réparation authentique qu'il en a faite ne les eût pas expiées. Mais personne ne le connaît mieux que le ténébreux calomniateur; si l'abbé de la Porte ne les avait pas rétractées dans ses derniers moments, vous l'eussiez vu célébré après sa mort par le même homme qu'il a tant caressé pendant sa vie, et qui veut deshonoré aujourd'hui sa mémoire; cette même main qui va déchirer le cadavre encore fumant de son ami, eût répandu des fleurs sur son tombeau et ce *Mercur* souillé par la satire du mort en eût fait le plus beau panégyrique» (Palissot 1780, 107).

**65** «Cet abbé de la Porte vint à bout de se faire dix mille livres de rente avec l'esprit d'autrui» (D'Alembert 1780, 141).

l'abbé Desfontaines, de J.-J. Rousseau, etc., etc.<sup>66</sup> Vous savez, Monsieur, que l'abbé de la Porte avait un trop bon esprit pour faire un si grand nombre de sottises, si mal à propos décorées du nom *d'esprit*: mais il conseillait quelquefois à des gens qui n'en avaient guères, et qui voulaient compiler pour vivre, de faire ce métier de scribes, plutôt que de troubler la société, ou de déshonorer la littérature par des productions plus condamnables. Ce qu'on aurait pu dire de lui avec plus de justice, c'est que véritablement il avait bien mérité des Lettres par beaucoup d'éditions très correctes et très soignées. On lui doit la dernière qui ait paru du théâtre de Crébillon: la collection complète de Saint Foix, et surtout la belle édition de Pope. Son *Histoire littéraire des femmes françaises*, ses recherches sur nos pièces dramatiques, depuis la renaissance des Lettres jusqu'à nos jours, ne sont pas des ouvrages à dédaigner. Les bibliographes seront souvent obligés de consulter la *France littéraire*. Enfin son *Voyageur Français* lui fera toujours honneur.<sup>67</sup> On ne peut lui refuser le titre d'écrivain laborieux et utile, et le mérite infiniment plus rare d'avoir été un très honnête homme.

Pardonnez-moi, Monsieur, ces longs détails sur notre pauvre abbé, en faveur des sentiments qu'il avait pour vous. Si vous pouviez contribuer à lui faire rendre plus de justice dans un autre *Mercur*, vous ne feriez qu'ajouter à l'opinion avantageuse qu'il m'avait donnée de votre caractère.<sup>68</sup> Vos attentions pour lui ne s'étant point démenties tant qu'il a vécu, j'ose espérer qu'elles ne se démentiront pas pour sa mémoire. Je finis par les vœux d'usage au renouvellement de l'année. Je n'ai pas oublié que l'année dernière vous voulûtes bien, à peu près dans ce même temps, m'envoyer pour étrennes le volume de vos *Éloges*. Je vous en fais, Monsieur, de nouveaux remerciements.

**66** «Rassemblant les ouvrages de notre littérature qu'il croyait les plus estimés, ils les remit à l'alambic pour en exprimer la plus précieuse substance et tout à coup on vit éclore les *Pensées de Massillon*, les *Pensées de l'abbé Prévost*, l'*Esprit de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, l'*Esprit de l'abbé Desfontaines*, l'*Esprit du Père Castel*, l'*Esprit de Bourdaloue*, l'*Esprit des Monarques Philosophiques*, etc.» (D'Alembert 1780, 141).

**67** «De toutes les ouvrages de ce compilateur, nous ne connaissons que le *Voyageur français* qui ait conservé quelque réputation: encore est-il fort douteux qu'elle puisse longtemps se soutenir, parce que cette histoire, indépendamment du remplissage, offre sans cesse un ton de roman qui affadit le lecteur: partout on y découvre un écrivain sans vigueur, sans imagination, sans phisionomie; un homme qui n'étant jamais rempli de la matière, défigure ses personnages, tronque ses principaux objets, n'en rapproche aucun, ne combine rien, se hâte d'écrire, ou plutôt de transcrire, regarde la méditation comme un temps perdu et ne paraît avoir en vue que le produit pécuniaire de son travail» (D'Alembert 1780, 141-2).

**68** L'opinione espressa da Palissot nei confronti di D'Alembert non fu mai del tutto negativa. Si legga ad esempio la voce a lui dedicata nei *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de notre littérature* (1775) in cui è definito «un des plus fameux géomètres de l'Europe [...] qui mérite d'être mis au rang des écrivains distingués qui soutiennent encore la réputation de notre littérature» (15, 17).

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Je ne fus pas content de la réponse de D'Alembert. Il nia qu'il eut de l'influence sur le *Mercur*. Il se défendit d'avoir eu des liaisons particulières avec l'abbé de la Porte, quoiqu'il convint que ce dernier lui avait donné des marques d'estime dont il lui devait de la reconnaissance. On prétend que cette indifférence pour sa mémoire venait de ce que l'abbé, qui était prêtre, n'était pas mort en philosophe.

A M. François de Neufchâteau, 1783.

Vous savez, mon ami, que dans tous les temps personne n'a rendu plus de justice que moi à votre esprit, à vos talents, à votre séduisante facilité. Je suis charmé de la confiance qui vous ramène à moi et qui vous engage à me demander des conseils. Ils vous prouveront qu'au fond du cœur mes sentiments pour vous n'ont jamais varié malgré vos petites inconstances. Faites, mon ami, ce dont vous sollicitent les Muses; donnez-nous cet Arioste,<sup>69</sup> que je vous ai demandé le premier; mais souvenez-vous qu'il doit être le principal appui de votre réputation. Ne vous contentez pas des équivalents, *des à peu-près*. Rendez-vous le maître de votre original de manière à oser lutter contre lui, au lieu de vous borner servilement à le traduire. Défiez-vous de votre facilité en vous y livrant; en un mot, soyez vous-même votre juge le plus sévère. Ce que je vous recommande surtout, mon ami, c'est de ne plus vous prostituer ni dans les journaux ni dans l'*Almanach des Muses*, ni dans ces insipides recueils réservés à la seule médiocrité. Cette petite célébrité fugitive et bourgeoise est à coup sûr l'ennemie mortelle des grandes réputations. Croyez-moi, rien de tout cela ne mène à la gloire, et j'ai toujours cru que vous étiez né pour elle. Loué dans un journal, c'est-à-dire célébré par une des trompettes malhonnêtes de la renommée, il arrive qu'un autre journal vous déchire, et le tort que vous fait ce dernier est sans comparaison plus grand que la jouissance éphémère à laquelle vous aviez eu la faiblesse d'atta-

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**69** Palissot allude alla traduzione dell'*Orlando furioso* intrapresa da François de Neufchâteau: «Il arriva à Saint-Domingue en 1783: il se livra alors, malgré le climat, à d'immenses travaux; il provoqua d'utiles améliorations dans la jurisprudence et dans l'administration de la colonie [...]; il compléta la traduction du *Roland furieux* de l'Arioste. Il obtint en 1787 un congé pour repasser en France. Il s'embarqua avec tout ce qu'il possédait sur une frégate, qui échoua pendant la seconde nuit sur les récifs de Mogane; François se sauva [...] sur un radeau et vit engloutir dans la mer sa fortune et ses effets: il regretta surtout les portefeuilles qui contenaient ses observations sur l'administration de la colonie, ainsi que le manuscrit de sa traduction en quarante mille vers du *Roland furieux*. Quelques fragments de ce grand travail, restés dans sa mémoire, ont été imprimés depuis, et font sentir plus vivement la perte d'un ouvrage aussi considérable et d'une exécution si difficile» (Silvestre 1828, 8-9).

cher quelque importance. J'ai vu, par exemple, avec indignation, que dans le journal *soit disant de Monsieur*, fait par un pédant, nommé l'abbé Royou,<sup>70</sup> on outrage d'avance un Arioste que je vous exhorte à continuer. Eh ! D'où vient, mon ami, cet odieux acharnement si non de votre imprudente familiarité avec quelques-uns de ces écrivains à la semaine, qui n'étaient pas dignes de la correspondance dont vous les avez honorés. Fuyez, mon ami, fuyez, je vous le répète ces ignominies, et ces petits trophées dorés dont vous avez été trop avide. Achevez votre Arioste en silence, et quand il sera fini, ne le confiez qu'à des amis dignes de vous entendre. Alors ces amis vous serviront avec zèle. Ils vous procureront ce succès précurseur d'un plus grand succès, et ils vous mettront à portée de faire à la fois d'un ouvrage principalement exécuté pour votre gloire, une entreprise utile à votre fortune. Je vous promets, lorsqu'il en sera temps, non seulement tous mes services, mais tous ceux des personnes qui veulent bien m'honorer de quelque confiance. Je n'ose, mon ami, me proposer pour exemple. Vous m'avez vu cependant acquérir quelque gloire en dépit de tous ces charlatans des réputations. Savez-vous que c'est une consolation bien douce que de pouvoir se rendre intérieurement cette justice? Savez-vous qu'une réputation acquise ainsi promet bien plus de durée que ces petites célébrités de sotterie auxquelles on pourrait donner pour devise: *gustavi paulum mellis, ac ecce morior*.

Descendez au fond de votre cœur, mon ami, plus vous vous sentirez disposé à suivre ces conseils, plus vous devez vous regarder comme celui de nos jeunes gens qui les méritait en préférence. Permettez que maintenant je me félicite avec vous des petits avantages de fortune que vous semble vous promettre votre nom et établissement. Croyez que vous ne serez jamais aussi heureux que je ne le désire.

N'exigez pas que je vous parle de mes ouvrages. J'aurai peine à vous exprimer le découragement que me fait éprouver l'humiliante dégradation de notre littérature. Il est en vérité bien dur, mon cher ami, de survivre à la gloire des arts qu'on avait aimés avec passion, et de ne plus voir autour de soi que des barbares. De tous nos jeunes écrivains, vous êtes celui de qui j'espérais le plus, avant de mourir, la satisfaction de voir renaître quelques-uns de ces beaux jours qui avaient séduit mes premières années. Je le sens au plaisir que je goûte à vous écrire, et à vous renouveler les assurances de ma tendre amitié.

Adieu.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas-Marie Royou (1743-1792).



Lettre de M. de B\*\*\*<sup>71</sup> sur le nouveau dénouement de la comédie  
des *Philosophes*, 1783.

Je n'ai pu voir qu'avant hier, Messieurs, le changement que M. Palissot a cru devoir faire au dénouement de sa comédie des *Philosophes*, et je commence par vous dire que personne ne regrette plus que moi la piquante originalité du premier. Il me semble que l'auteur ayant voulu prouver que l'abus de la philosophie conduit au délire, n'avait pu rien imaginer de plus heureux que ce Crispin philosophe, marchant à quatre pattes, situation fortement comique, et dont le mérite n'était point échappé à M. Voltaire lui-même. Mais puisqu'enfin le public n'a pu s'aventurer à voir, dans cette situation, le fameux Dugazon remplacer l'inimitable Préville; puisqu'une cabale d'ailleurs, visiblement apostée, a paru se soulever contre ce même dénouement si généralement applaudi en 1760, il me semble qu'on ne pouvait guère accueillir avec trop de faveur un changement que M. Palissot a fait malgré lui, et qui termine la pièce, si non d'une manière aussi piquante, du moins assez heureusement encore pour ne laisser que peu de regrets à ceux qui l'on vue dans tout son éclat.<sup>72</sup> Il me semble, surtout, que c'est une preuve d'un talent bien rare et bien fertile en ressources que d'avoir su, dans une pareille circonstance, enrichir son sujet d'un nouveau trait de vérité et qui est toujours l'ornement le plus essentiel d'une comédie de caractère.

Vous savez, Messieurs, que si l'on a fait un reproche fondé à la fausse philosophie de nos jours, c'est d'avoir, en abusant du nom respectable d'*humanité*, osé jeter du ridicule sur la bravoure, et par conséquence sur l'honneur. Ce délire ne tendait pas à moins qu'à dénaturer, à pervertir même le caractère de la Nation, et devait rendre surtout cette étrange philosophie impardonnable à des yeux français.

C'était ce trait de vérité que l'auteur me paraît avoir saisi de la manière la plus heureuse dans cette réponse de *Valère* à *Damis*:

J'entends, vous me voulez proposer un combat:  
Mais aux emportements de votre jalousie  
J'oppose le sang froid de la philosophie.  
Si je respectais moins la majesté des loix  
Si de l'humanité j'écoutais mieux la voix  
Je pourrais adopter le préjugé barbare  
Qui veut que par un crime un affront se répare.  
Mais nous détestons trop ces coupables excès.

<sup>71</sup> Una lettera indirizzata da Palissot a M. de B\*\*\*, datata 18 marzo 1770, è pubblicata nelle *Pièces relatives à la Dunciade* del terzo tomo dell'edizione Bastien (1779, 339-47).

<sup>72</sup> Sul nuovo epilogo dei *Philosophes* e la ripresa, nel 1782, della pièce alla Comédie Française cf. Delafarge 1912, 412-24.

Il était impossible, à mon avis, de mieux caractériser ce nouveau genre de lâcheté philosophique qu'on a essayé de mettre à la mode par tant d'impertinentes déclamations, et qui amène ce trait encore plus heureux où le ridicule me paraît porté à son comble:

Je vois ce que veut dire un sage... en bon français.

Je ne connais pas d'exemple d'une expression en même temps plus voilée et plus forte. L'auteur a trouvé le moyen de dire ce qu'il eut osé faire entendre, et un exemple seul prouverait, ce me semble, qu'il n'est pas de difficulté dans notre langue qui ne puisse être surmontée par un heureux choix de mots mis à leur place, comme le disait Boileau.

On a objecté, il est vrai, que par ce dernier trait de caractère l'auteur rendait les charlatans de philosophie plus méprisables, mais ce n'est pas, sans doute, pour les rendre intéressants qu'il a cru devoir les exposer au ridicule du théâtre. Cette objection ne me paraît pas étrange que si l'on reprochait à Molière d'avoir rendu les faux dévots trop odieux en représentant le Tartuffe accompagnant lui-même l'exempt qu'il croit chargé d'un ordre pour arrêter Orgon. Je vous avoue, Messieurs, que les faux philosophes, c'est-à-dire les hypocrites des mœurs, ne me paraissent pas mériter plus de ménagement que les hypocrites de religion, et en invitant l'auteur à laisser toujours subsister de préférence, dans ses éditions, l'ancien dénouement de sa comédie, comme un des traits par lequel il s'était le plus rapproché de la physionomie d'Aristophane, je n'en remercie pas moins que s'il m'était possible d'oublier sa première manière; je n'aurais pas désiré de meilleur dénouement que celui qu'il vient d'y substituer. J'ajouterai même que ce dernier coup de pinceau, qui peut être remarqué à la pièce dans sa nouveauté, me semblerait préférable, dans une comédie de caractère, telle que la sienne, à tous les efforts d'imagination qu'il aurait pu faire pour y trouver un dénouement combiné avec plus d'art. Je crois, en effet, avoir observé, Messieurs, que le public, beaucoup plus sévère avec raison pour les comédies de pure intrigue, exige infiniment moins du poète dans les pièces de caractère. Il arrive même presque toujours qu'aux meilleurs ouvrages de ce genre, il se dispense d'écouter les derniers vers. Que le portrait soit achevé, que surtout il soit bien ressemblant, c'est tout ce que les connaisseurs paraissent désirer du peintre.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, etc.

On peut voir, pour la lettre suivante, combien M. de B\*\*\* était entré dans les idées de l'auteur. Il était difficile de montrer plus de goût et d'être à la fois plus judicieux et plus vrai. Cependant un M. Sautreau de Marsy,<sup>73</sup> rédacteur de *l'Almanach des Muses*, et dont M. Palissot c'est un peu moqué dans la *Dunciade*, et ailleurs, eut le crédit d'empêcher que cette lettre ne fût insérée dans le *Journal de Paris*. Ce crédit de Sautreau pourrait étonner ceux qui ne sauraient pas qu'il est un des principaux coopérateurs de cette feuille de tous les jours, et bien digne de servir en offre d'aliment quotidien à sa sottise.

A M. l'abbé Aubert,<sup>74</sup> sur le même sujet.

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer, Monsieur, le nouveau dénouement de la comédie des *Philosophes*. Vous savez ce qui m'a forcé de changer l'ancien, et ce qui, peut-être, n'avait pas encore eu d'exemples. Vous conviendrez, je crois, Monsieur, qu'en faisant un pareil changement malgré moi, ce n'était pas la chose du monde la plus aisée que de trouver un nouveau moyen de finir la pièce. Vous sentirez toute cette difficulté, et les droits qu'elle me donne à l'indulgence publique. J'espère que vous ne remarquerez pas sans quelque surprise la manière dont je me suis tiré d'embarras en donnant à mes philosophes un dernier coup de pinceau qui me paraît enrichir l'ouvrage. J'ose vous avouer que je crois ainsi, malgré la ferme résolution où je suis de conserver toujours, dans mes œuvres, l'ancien dénouement, et malgré l'espérance que me donnent tous les gens de goût de le voir un jour se rétablir, de lui-même, au théâtre. En effet, Monsieur, personne ne sait mieux que vous que, dans une comédie de caractère, un trait de vérité quelconque, heureusement saisi, est infiniment préférable à tous les dénouements du monde. Je me garderais bien d'en dire autant d'une comédie d'intrigue, mais j'ai toujours pensé que le mérite essentiel d'une comédie de caractère était de peindre avec la plus grande fidé-

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**73** Claude-Sixte Sautreau de Marsy (1740-1815).

**74** Jean-Louis Aubert (1731-1814). Palissot descrive nel modo seguente l'abbé Aubert nei suoi *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de notre littérature*: «Né à Paris en 1731. Il a donné un volume de *Fables*, dans lequel on en trouve plusieurs qu'on peut lire avec plaisir [...]. Il a mis en vers, d'après le roman de la Fontaine, les aventures de Psyché. Cet ouvrage lui fait honneur, quoiqu'il y ait dans le roman des détails bien supérieurs aux meilleurs endroits du poème. On ne peut disconvenir que cet écrivain ne soit facile, naturel, pur et correct, qualités d'autant plus estimables qu'elles sont devenues plus rares. Nous pensons que M. l'abbé Aubert devrait enfin quitter le personnage d'imitateur, qui ne donne jamais l'avantage d'être imité soi-même. Il pourrait essayer ses propres forces, et ne plus s'appuyer sur un modèle avec qui toute comparaison ne saurait être que dangereuse» (Palissot 1775, 19-20).

lité. La plupart des dénouements de Molière semblent prouver que lui-même n'en avait pas d'autre idée, et si vous prenez garde que presque toujours le public se lève avant les vers qui amènent la conclusion de nos meilleures pièces, vous jugerez, Monsieur, que ce qui a d'abord l'apparence d'un paradoxe, devient une véritable démonstration. Tout est dit pour l'auteur lorsque le public a reconnu qu'il avait rempli le but officiel de l'art, exprimé dans ces vers d'Horace: [ill.]

J'ai l'honneur d'être, etc.

[lettera cancellata]<sup>75</sup>

A Mme Bellecour<sup>76</sup>

Plus je croyais avoir lieu, Madame, de compter sur votre ancienne amitié, plus je suis étonné, je vous l'avoue, d'apprendre que personne, à la Comédie, ne s'oppose plus que vous à tout ce qui pourrait m'être agréable. On a proposé de remettre mes *Tuteurs*, avec les changements que j'ai cru devoir faire à cette pièce depuis son succès, et vous avez [ill.] d'une nouvelle lecture. Comment, Madame, vous êtes-vous permis cette plaisanterie si déplorée à l'égard d'un homme qui s'est acquis quelque gloire à votre théâtre? Vous auriez pu vous souvenir que tout récemment la Comédie, dans une occasion bien plus remarquable, m'avait donné une preuve de considération que je n'oublierai jamais et qui était sans exemple. Elle n'exigea point de nouvelle lecture des *Courtisannes* et vous savez que sa confiance ne fut pas trompée.

Je ne vous rappelle qu'à regret cette pièce, puisqu'elle est devenue la cause de l'injuste humeur que vous avez prise contre moi. Je voudrais pouvoir oublier pour votre gloire, Madame, qu'après m'avoir refusé, pendant plus de quinze jours, une explication que mon amitié ne se rebutait pas de vous demander, vous me fîtes enfin l'aveu que vous me traitiez avec cette rigueur que parce que, selon vous, j'avais négligé de rendre hommage à vos talents, et à la manière supérieure dont vous aviez joué le rôle de Marton dans cette comédie. Vous savez avec quelle bonne foi je vous témoignai ma surprise. J'étais loin de soupçonner qu'un talent, aussi constaté que le vôtre, put être jaloux de ces vains compliments qui ne flattent plus personne à force d'avoir été prodigués. Je ne vous ai jamais dit, Madame, les inutiles efforts que je fis pour vous dédommager d'un silence dont vous paraissiez si vivement affectée. Au défaut des réparations que j'avais ten-

<sup>75</sup> La lettera a Madame Bellecour appare cancellata, nel manoscritto, da tre righe verticali e risulta illeggibile in vari punti oltre che essere incompleta.

<sup>76</sup> Rose Perrine le Roy de la Corbinaye, nota come Madame Bellecour (1730-1799). Attrice alla Comédie Française, si distinse soprattutto nelle parti di *soubrette*.

te de vous faire dans tous les papiers publics, et sur lesquelles je fus arrêté par les obstacles les plus bizarres, je m'étais flatté du moins de consoler votre amour propre à force de me répandre en protestations d'attachement et d'admiration pour vous. J'ose vous assurer, Madame, qu'elles étaient sincères: cependant elles vous parurent indifférentes. Je vous en atteste vous-même, que pouvais-je faire de plus! Et par quelle fatalité vous obstinez-vous à détruire les sentiments que je croyais vous devoir depuis plus de trente ans, et qui s'étaient si naturellement réveillés dans mon cœur et par notre rencontre imprévue à [ill.] et par les services réels que vous m'aviez rendu à la Comédie? Je me plaisais à les publier, j'aime encore à vous en parler, mais les sentiments les plus doux demandent à être ménagés, et l'amitié se rebute enfin lorsqu'elle s'aperçoit que non seulement on ne la distingue plus mais qu'on a l'air de la [ill].<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Il manoscritto si interrompe in questo punto.

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## Appendice

### Manoscritto

**Œuvres de M. Palissot, lecteur de S.A.S. Mgr. le duc d'Orléans, nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée, tome quatrième, à Paris, de l'Imprimerie de Monsieur, 1788, p. 420.**

A Monsieur de Voltaire

Lettre de l'auteur au même  
Cette lettre n'avait point encore paru

C'est la seule de mes **lettres à cette homme célèbre** qui n'ait point été imprimée. **1771**

J'étais à Genève **depuis cinq ou six** semaines, Monsieur, lorsque M. le Résident de France me fit l'honneur de m'inviter de votre part d'aller à Ferney. **Il m'assura même que non seulement c'était votre désir, mais que vous aviez bien voulu le lui témoigner avec un empressement très flatteur pour moi.**

J'étais à Geneve depuis **quelques** semaines, Monsieur, lorsque M. le résident de France me fit l'honneur de m'inviter de votre part, d'une manière très pressante, d'aller à Ferney.

Je fus en effet charmé d'apprendre que vous vous rappeliez **encore avec quelque intérêt** un homme qui avait fait quinze ans auparavant le voyage de Genève, uniquement pour dire comme Ovide: *Virgilium vidi*, mais je ne veux rien vous dissimuler. Je ne sentis ni la même ardeur, ni la même confiance qui m'avait amené autrefois de si loin pour vous rendre hommage. M. Vernes, **mon** ami, me pressa vivement mais en vain de prendre un jour avec lui pour vous aller voir. Je veux vous expliquer ma conduite, Monsieur, et vous faire lire dans mon cœur du moins une dernière fois.

Je fus charmé d'apprendre que vous vous rappeliez **encore le sentiment qui me conduisit à Genève**, il y a plus de quinze ans, uniquement pour dire comme Ovide: *Virgilium vidi* mais je ne veux rien vous dissimuler; je ne me trouvais plus la même ardeur, ni la même confiance qui m'avait amené autrefois de si loin pour vous rendre hommage. M. Vernes, **notre** ami, me pressa vivement, mais en vain, de prendre un jour avec lui pour vous aller voir: je veux vous expliquer, Monsieur, **les causes de ce changement**, et vous ouvrir mon cœur une dernière fois.

Mon admiration pour vous est à quelques égards un préjugé de mon enfance. Je n'exagère point en vous disant que j'ai appris à lire dans la *Henriade*, et que c'est elle qui m'a inspiré mes premiers vers. **L'amitié** la plus tendre se joignit à mon admiration dans un âge heureux qui meconnaît la crainte, dans un âge des illusions qui nous persuade qu'un beau génie est toujours accompagné d'une âme sublime. Ce sentiment me conduisit à Genève il y a quinze ans, **et il ne se démentit pas** lorsque, pour me venger d'une persécution **très odieuse, je crus devoir donner la comédie des Philosophes, et battre votre Livrée, comme le dit alors un homme de beaucoup d'esprit.\***

Mon admiration pour vous est à quelques égards un préjugé de mon enfance. Je n'exagère point en vous disant que j'ai appris à lire dans la *Henriade*, et que c'est elle qui m'a inspiré mes premiers vers. **Le sentiment** le plus tendre se joignit à mon admiration dans cet **âge heureux qui méconnaît la crainte**, dans cet âge de l'inexpérience et des illusions, qui nous porte à croire qu'un beau génie est toujours accompagné d'une âme sublime. Tel était, je vous l'avoue, le sentiment qui m'avait conduit à Genève, **et que je conservais dans toute sa pureté**, lorsque, pour me venger d'une persécution **très injuste**, je crus devoir donner cette comédie des *Philosophes*, **dans laquelle je m'étais permis de maltraiter un peu votre livrée.**



Peut-être, Monsieur, n'avez-vous reçu de personne une preuve d'attachement plus forte que celle que je vous donnai dans cette occasion. On m'excitait de toutes parts, on employait toutes les séductions pour me déterminer à vous confondre avec ces philosophes, dont on affectait de vous nommer **l'Oracle. Le clergé** me faisait entrevoir des pensions, des honneurs, que sais-je? **une place même à l'Académie**, si je voulais seulement paraître abjurer mon attachement pour vous. On alla jusqu'à m'accuser d'un sentiment de crainte, qui n'est pas dans mon caractère, **pour m'en faire rougir, s'il était possible, et pour me piquer davantage**. Je fus inflexible, et je vous sacrifiais, Monsieur, mon propre parti.

J'espérais, il est vrai, qu'en homme supérieur à tous les partis, vous n'en épouseriez aucun. Je croyais que vous vous deviez ce respect à vous-même, et qu'au fond du cœur vous distingueriez toujours l'homme libre et ferme qui n'était que votre ami, et qui n'avait jamais été votre adulateur, **de cette espèce de parasites littéraires qui ne mendiaient vos suffrages que par le sentiment de leur bassesse**. Vous savez, Monsieur, combien mes espérances furent trompées.

Permettez-moi de vous le demander, vous êtes-vous conduit comme l'en exige le sentiment de votre gloire **si vous en eussiez été fortement pénétré ?** En m'assurant de votre estime par toutes vos lettres, vous me laissiez à la dérobée des traits satyriques dans quelques brochures. Vous, Monsieur de Voltaire, vous vous faisiez l'éditeur des libelles que vos philosophes **avaient semés contre moi**; vous compiliez leurs injures sous le titre de *Facéties Parisiennes*. Vous écriviez à M. le Maréchal de Richelieu pour lui reprocher l'intérêt qu'il avait pris à ma comédie de *l'Homme dangereux*. Vous en aviez écrit autant à Monsieur le duc de Choiseul, et voilà comme vous me récompensiez de ces **hommages si purs** que j'étais allé vous porter à Genève, **et dont vous paraissez aujourd'hui vouloir vous ressouvenir en m'invitant à me rendre à Ferney**. Que je vous plains, au milieu de votre gloire, si vous ne sentez pas combien cette conduite est au-dessous de vous! **Serait-il donc bien vrai que vous n'eussiez d'élévation que dans vos écrits ? Eh ! que font auprès de vous tous ces prétendus philosophes auxquels vous semblez donner tant d'importance ! Votre renommée a-t-elle besoin de toutes ces trompettes malhonnêtes ? Êtes-vous donc fait pour n'en dédaigner aucune !**

Peut-être n'avez-vous reçu de personne une preuve d'attachement plus forte que celle que je vous donnais dans cette circonstance même. On m'excitait de toutes parts, on employait toutes les séductions pour m'engager à vous confondre avec ces philosophes, dont on affectait de vous nommer l'oracle. **On** me faisait entrevoir des pensions, des honneurs, que sais-je? **un brevet de bel esprit à votre académie**, si je voulais seulement paraître abjurer mon attachement pour vous. **Afin de m'exciter mieux**, on alla jusqu'à m'accuser d'un sentiment de crainte, qui n'est pas dans mon caractère: je fus inflexible, et je ne balançai pas à vous sacrifier mon propre parti.

J'espérais, il est vrai, qu'en homme supérieur à tous ces partis, vous n'en épouseriez aucun, que vous auriez ce respect pour vous-même, et qu'au fond du cœur vous distingueriez l'homme libre et courageux qui n'avait jamais été votre adulateur, **de tous ces parasites littéraires qui ne se rangeaient si respectueusement sous votre pavillon, que par le sentiment de leur nullité**: vous savez, monsieur, combien je fus trompé dans mon espérance.

Permettez-moi de vous le demander **avec franchise, vous êtes-vous conduit comme votre gloire semblait vous le prescrire ?** En m'assurant de votre estime par toutes vos lettres, vous me laissiez à la dérobée, **pour complaire à vos philosophes**, des traits satyriques dans quelques brochures. Vous vous faisiez, vous, Monsieur de Voltaire ! l'éditeur des libelles que vos philosophes **avaient semés dans le public!** Vous compiliez leurs injures sous le titre de *Facéties Parisiennes* ! Vous écriviez à M. le Maréchal de Richelieu pour lui reprocher l'intérêt qu'il avait pris à la comédie de *l'Homme dangereux* ! Vous faisiez à peu-près les mêmes reproches à M. le duc de Choiseul; et voilà comme vous me récompensiez de ces **hommages si tendres** que j'étais allé vous porter à Genève!

Que je vous plains, au milieu de votre gloire, si vous ne sentez pas combien cette conduite est au-dessous de vous!

La vivacité de mes reproches, vous prouvera, Monsieur, que je vous aime encore, et que j'ai pu, comme vous, m'en avez souvent prié par vos lettres, sentir votre embarras, en vous pardonnant ce que vous appeliez vous-même vos mauvaises plaisanteries. Vous jugerez par un article de mes *Mémoires sur notre littérature* que peut-être j'irai vous lire,\*\* vous jugerez, dis-je, combien je suis capable encore de vous sacrifier mes ressentiments: **mais c'est à condition que vous repoussiez loin de vous l'idée offensante qu'on a tâché de vous donner de mon caractère. On a voulu, je le sais, vous persuader que je vous craignais, et peut-être vous m'avez fait l'injure de le croire. Ne me réduisez pas, je vous en supplie, à vous désabuser. Je n'imiterai point vos lâches ennemis, je saurai me respecter moi-même en vous prouvant que je suis incapable de crainte.\*\*\* Pardon, grand homme, ne prenez point ceci pour une menace mais pour une preuve de ma sensibilité. Laissez-moi la satisfaction de finir comme j'ai commencé et de n'ouvrir les yeux qu'à ce que vous avez véritablement d'admirable. Je ne suis guère qu'à la moitié de ma carrière et selon toute apparence il me reste un avantage précieux, celui de parler encore longtemps. Laissez-moi l'employer à me moquer de mes sots ennemis, et à vous donner de nouvelles preuves d'un attachement qui a prévalu sur toutes vos petites injustices.**

J'ai l'honneur d'être, etc.

La vivacité de mes reproches, vous prouvera que je vous aime encore, et que j'ai pu, comme vous m'en avez souvent prié par vos lettres, sentir votre embarras, et vous pardonner ce que vous appeliez vous-même vos mauvaises plaisanteries. Vous jugerez par un article qui vous regarde,  **dans un de mes nouveaux ouvrages, et que peut-être, j'irai vous lire,\*** vous jugerez, dis-je, combien mon attachement pour vous l'emporte encore sur mes ressentiments:  **mais ne laissez jamais entrevoir que l'idée injurieuse qu'on a voulu vous donner de mon caractère, ait pris sur vous quelque crédit. Je sais, Monsieur, qu'on a osé vous dire que je feignais de vous être attaché que par crainte: ne me réduisez pas, je vous en supplie, à vous désabuser.**

J'imagine que ma sensibilité ne peut vous déplaire, et qu'au fond vous n'y verrez que les regrets de l'amitié blessée. Laissez-moi conserver l'illusion où j'étais; laissez-moi croire qu'il peut exister un grand homme sans alliage. Concevez-vous même combien il me serait pénible de renoncer à mes sentiments pour vous, puisqu'ils ont prévalu jusqu'à présent sur votre conduite inégale et variable à mon égard, et sur vos petites injustices dont, peut-être, vous ne soupçonniez pas que j'étais si bien instruit.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, etc.

\* [N.d.A.] Favier, homme très connu du corps diplomatique, et qui a mérité de l'être.

\*\* [N.d.A.] J'allai chez le grand homme, comme un amant va chez sa maîtresse après avoir juré de ne la plus revoir. Je lui lus trois chants de la *Dunciade*, celui, entre autres, où l'on trouve ces vers

O de Ferney sublime solitaire, etc.

et il me les fit répéter deux fois. Il me parut que le ton de ma lettre l'avait étonné. Il me dit en riant que je ressemblais à un jeune tigre qui venait relancer un vieux lion sur sa litière. Pour lui prouver que je n'étais pas un tigre, je lui lus son article dans mes *Mémoires littéraires* que je faisais alors imprimer à Genève. Il fut véritablement sous le charme; il me pressa beaucoup de demeurer quelques jours à Ferney: mais je tins ferme sur la résistance et je n'acceptai que son dîner.

\* [N.d.A.] M. de Voltaire ne répondit pas directement à cette lettre; mais le 30 novembre 1770, c'est-à-dire environ un mois après, il écrivit à M. Vernes le billet que voici:

« Le vieux malade, à qui M. Vernes a fait la faveur d'écrire, est actuellement dans un état déplorable. Dès qu'il sera un peu mieux, il suppliera M. Vernes de vouloir bien ne pas oublier de le venir voir avec son ami M. Palissot. Il présente ses respects à l'un et à l'autre. V. »

L'auteur ne résista plus à cette nouvelle invitation, et ce fut la dernière fois qu'il vit M. de Voltaire dans sa retraite; il lui lut deux chants de la *Dunciade*, celui, entre autres, où se trouvent ces vers:

O de Ferney sublime solitaire!, etc.

et M. de Voltaire les lui fit répéter deux fois de suite. Il n'eut avec lui aucune explication sur la lettre qu'on vient de

Je vis clairement qu'il se croyait engagé par honneur à tenir toujours à la secte philosophique, quoi qu'au fond du cœur il la méprisât; mais il avait la faiblesse de la croire nécessaire à sa réputation. Je vis que par ménagement pour elle, il conserverait toujours avec moi la même conduite, et je conçus en sortant de chez lui l'idée du huitième chant de la *Dunciade*.

\*\*\* [N.d.A.] Ce fut pour lui prouver à la fois que je respecterais toujours sa gloire, mais que j'étais véritablement incapable de crainte, enfin, dis-je, pour ce motif, ou pour me venger un peu de sa conduite équivoque, que je fis ce huitième chant, intitulé *l'Ambassade*, et dans lequel je lui donnai cette plaisante livrée tirée de ses propres ouvrages. Il entendit raillerie, comme on peut le voir dans les dernières remarques de ce même chant et je suis certainement le seul homme qui la lui ait fait entendre à ce point-là. Je le vis deux fois à Paris avant sa mort, et il m'avait écrit de sa propre main à son arrivée. Dans le fond, il m'aimait, parce qu'il était persuadé avec raison que je l'aimais; mais ce n'était qu'avec les restrictions de son caractère: c'est-à-dire qu'il ne m'aimait qu'autant qu'il pouvait aimer.

lire. Seulement il parut y faire quelque allusion en disant à Palissot qu'il ressemblait à un jeune tigre qui venait relancer un vieux lion sur sa litière. Pour lui prouver qu'il n'était pas un tigre, Palissot lui lu son article dans mes Mémoires littéraires qu'on imprimait alors à Genève. M. de Voltaire parut l'entendre avec une émotion qu'il eut peine à contenir. Il finit par embrasser le lecteur, en le pressant beaucoup de passer quelques jours à Ferney; mais Palissot partit aussitôt après dîner.

Ce qui déterminait sa résistance, c'est qu'il vit clairement que Voltaire se croyait engagé par honneur à tenir toujours à ces philosophes, quoique, dans le vrai, il ne les estimât guère, mais il avait la faiblesse de les croire nécessaires à sa réputation. Palissot sentit que par ménagement pour eux, Voltaire n'aurait jamais avec lui qu'une conduite très équivoque. Alors même il conçut l'idée du huitième chant de la *Dunciade*, et ce chant ne tarda pas à paraître. Il dut achever de prouver à Voltaire que Palissot était également incapable et de le ménager par crainte, et d'être injuste envers sa gloire. Quelque ombrageux que fût ce grand poète, il parut prendre très bien la plaisanterie. Voyez les notes de ce même chant.



# Latines en *La Araucana* (o cómo leyó Ercilla *La Eneida* y *La Farsalia*)

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**Abstract** There is no doubt that *The Aeneid* and *The Pharsalia* were very important sources in the composition of *La Araucana*. However, we do not know for sure whether Ercilla read Virgil and Lucan in their original version or in translation. This work attempts to resolve this question. In order to do so, the passages of *La Araucana* are compared with the Latin versions of the works of both poets, as well as with their Spanish translations. The work concludes that Ercilla used the Castilian texts, although in some cases he may have referred to the Latin text of *The Aeneid*.

**Keywords** La Araucana. The Aeneid. Pharsalia. Alonso de Ercilla. Virgil. Lucan. Latin. Translation.

**Sumario** 1 Introducción. – 2 Trazas virgilianas. – 3 Los rastros de Lucano. – 4 En suma.



Edizioni  
Ca' Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted 2022-04-05  
Accepted 2022-04-26  
Published 2022-09-22

## Open access

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**Citation** Gómez Canseco, L. (2022). "Latines en *La Araucana* (o cómo leyó Ercilla *La Eneida* y *La Farsalia*)". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [261-278] 99-116.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOc/2499-1562/2022/10/013

## 1 Introducción

Por más que Ercilla afirmara en el prólogo de *La Araucana* que «se hizo en la misma guerra y en los mismos pasos y sitios, escribiendo muchas veces en cuero, por falta de papel, y en pedazos de cartas» (Gómez Canseco 2022, 13),<sup>1</sup> lo cierto es que la mayor parte del poema se compuso a lo largo de casi treinta años, sobre la mesa de un escritorio y con un buen número de libros y documentos a la mano. Así lo atestiguan las fuentes que el poeta usó para la composición de no pocos pasajes, muchas de las cuales se siguen casi a la letra en un mero ejercicio de versificación.<sup>2</sup>

Desde bien pronto, la crítica ercillana coincidió en la importancia que *La Eneida* de Virgilio y *La Farsalia* de Lucano tuvieron no solo en la concepción general de la obra, sino también en la elaboración de algunos episodios concretos y en la escritura de ciertos pasajes en los que se imita muy de cerca a ambos poetas latinos. Nada cabe discutir al respecto, pues, a la luz de los datos que durante años se han ido acumulando, resulta un hecho incontrovertible y evidente.

La influencia virgiliana comienza por la misma concepción política del poema, aunque se materializa de manera visible en las profecías que realiza el mago Fitón por medio de su poma, en la descripción de la tormenta marítima que cierra la primera parte, en los catálogos de los héroes araucanos, la relación de los juegos deportivos y muy especialmente en la extensa digresión en torno a Dido que se insertó en la tercera parte. Se añaden a ello comparaciones con animales, fórmulas retóricas, versos, imágenes o adjetivos concretos que tienen un antecedente inequívoco en *La Eneida*.<sup>3</sup>

Por su parte, el prestigio que Lucano alcanzó entre los españoles, debido en gran medida a su origen cordobés, dejó una impronta decisiva en el texto de Ercilla. Esa influencia se percibe en la atención a la historia contemporánea como material épico, en la voluntad de prescindir de un héroe central o en la complejidad del comportamiento moral de sus personajes, con frecuencia poco heroico. Se añade a ello el gusto por lo espantoso y lo truculento a la hora de referir batallas y encuentros navales. Esa imitación se hace transparentemente visible e inmediata en el canto XXIII, cuando se des-

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Este trabajo forma parte de los proyectos *Vida y escritura II* [PID2019-104069GB-I00], *Épica y política en el Siglo de Oro* [P20-00037] y *La Araucana: del texto a la identidad* [UHU-1241597].

**1** A partir de aquí las citas de *La Araucana* remiten al número de canto y verso.

**2** Véanse como ejemplo Gómez Canseco 2020a; 2020b; 2021a; 2021b.

**3** En torno a la influencia de Virgilio sobre *La Araucana*, véase Cristóbal 1995; Nicolopulos 2000; Vilà 2001; Kallendorf 2003; Lupher 2003; Kallendorf 2007.

cribe la estancia subterránea de Fitón, y en el XXIV con la relación de la batalla de Lepanto.<sup>4</sup>

No cabe duda de que tanto Virgilio como Lucano fueron lecturas esenciales para Ercilla, que las entrecruzó en una suerte de imitación compuesta a la hora de diseñar y escribir su propia obra. La cuestión está en saber cuándo y cómo las leyó, asunto que resulta determinante para entender su modo de trabajo y el manejo que hizo de las fuentes, ya que pudo servirse de los originales latinos, de fácil acceso para cualquier persona letrada, o de las traducciones que por entonces circulaban de ambos poetas. Para leer a Lucano, disponía de *La historia que escribió en latín el poeta Lucano trasladada en castellano por Martín Laso de Oropesa*, estampada por primera vez en 1540 y varias veces reimpresa a lo largo del siglo XVI. El caso de Virgilio es algo más incierto, ya que la única traducción completa que Ercilla pudo leer fue *Los doce libros de la Eneida de Virgilio, príncipe de los poetas latinos traducida en octava rima y verso castellano*, debida a Gregorio Hernández de Velasco, que se publicó por primera vez en 1555, precisamente el mismo año en que embarcó hacia Indias.<sup>5</sup> Esta impresión, salida de las prensas toledanas de Juan de Ayala, no ofrece indicio alguno del mes en que pudo ponerse a la venta. Sabemos, por otro lado, que el poeta embarcó en Sanlúcar de Barrameda a mediados de octubre, aunque una tormenta obligó a la flota a regresar a puerto, no volviendo a zarpar hasta principios de diciembre. En esta situación, resulta imposible afirmar si se hizo con ejemplar del libro antes de iniciar el viaje o si, en su caso, pudo conocerlo estando ya en el virreinato del Perú.

Tampoco tenemos certeza alguna respecto a la lengua en que Ercilla hizo ambas lecturas. José Toribio Medina afirma que conoció de primera mano tanto a Lucano como a Virgilio, aunque apostilla, sin dar razón alguna, que ello «no implica que los leyera en su original latino» (1916, 13-14). No obstante, la crítica posterior ha sostenido que manejó ambos poemas en lengua latina, asintiendo con lo que Dieter Janik afirmaba sobre Lucano: «Apenas si es posible creer que él [Ercilla], que durante tanto tiempo leyó la *Farsalia*, se contentó con una traducción» (1969, 99).<sup>6</sup> El principal argumento que se esgrime es la instrucción que habría recibido durante sus años como paje en la corte de Felipe II, tal como lo ha apuntado Aude Plagnard:

<sup>4</sup> Sobre la presencia de Lucano en Ercilla, véase Ducamin 1900, LXXIX-LXXXIV; Menéndez Pelayo 1948, 226-7; McManamon 1955; Janik 1969; Davies 1979; Quint 1993, 131-209; Lerner 1994; Nicolopoulos 2000; Vilà 2001, 557-63; Plagnard 2019; Welge 2020, 3-37.

<sup>5</sup> Véase Caruso 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Véanse además los pareceres en el mismo sentido de Ducamin 1900, LXXXIII; Hightet 1947, 331; Davies 1979, 405; Quint 1993; Nicolopoulos 2000, 273-81; Kallendorf 2003; Moore 2003, 27-8; Blanco 2012, 147.

Ercilla avait été forme à l'école royale des jeunes pages de Philippe II, de l'humaniste Juan Calvete de Estrella, recevant ainsi, bien que tardivement, un enseignement fondé sur l'apprentissage du latin et une culture nobiliaire qu'il sut mobiliser à son retour a Madrid. (2019, 58)

En efecto, Calvete de Estrella, discípulo nada menos que del Comendador Griego, era una figura señalada en las letras hispánicas, que llegó a ocupar plaza como cronista real y compuso un buen número de obras en latín.<sup>7</sup> Poco sabemos de su labor como maestro de pajes, pero consta que, durante los años que Ercilla pasó bajo su tutela, la corte vivió en un continuo ir y venir por Europa que pudo estorbar un estudio ordenado y sistemático. Ello no impide que el joven paje recibiera una instrucción adecuada a su rango, con rudimentos de la lengua latina y ciertos conocimientos de retórica, historia y poesía. Aun así, buena parte de los estudiosos ha entendido que ese breve y agitado período de formación tuvo una importancia enorme para la posterior escritura de *La Araucana*, especialmente en lo referido al conocimiento de las lenguas clásicas. Así lo apuntó Joan Corominas: «Es casi seguro que Ercilla sabía latín [...]. No sería extraño que con el latín hubiese tenido algunos conocimientos de griego» (1980, 67). El propio Corominas esgrime como prueba la mención que se hace en *La Araucana* del *De rebus Indicis* de Calvete:

El coronista Estrella escribe al justo  
de Chile y del Pirú en latín la historia  
con tanta erudición que será justo  
que dure eternamente su memoria. (IV, 553-6)

Lo cierto, no obstante, es que se trata de un mero gesto de cortesía y reconocimiento hacia el que había sido su maestro, ya que Ercilla en ningún momento manejó esta crónica. Su fuente principal –y casi única– para los sucesos y personajes históricos en los que basó el poema fue la *Crónica y relación copiosa y verdadera de los reinos de Chile* que Jerónimo de Vivar había compuesto en 1558 y que el poeta leyó manuscrita.<sup>8</sup> Pero es ya hora de volver sobre Lucano y a Virgilio para comprobar a partir de los propios textos cuál fue el cauce que siguió Alonso de Ercilla en su imitación de *La Eneida* y *La Farsalia*. Comenzaremos por el poeta nacido en Mantua.

<sup>7</sup> Sobre Calvete, véase Díaz Gito 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Jerónimo de Vivar fue secretario de Valdivia y su crónica permaneció inédita. Sobre su uso en Ercilla, véase Plagnard 2019, 90-1, así como Blanco 2019, 20.



## 2 Trazas virgilianas

El único modo que tenemos para poner en pie cuál fue la fuente de la que Ercilla se sirvió en su escritura es la revisión detallada de aquellos pasajes en los que hizo una imitación fehaciente de Virgilio y el cotejo simultáneo del original latino con la traducción publicada por Hernández de Velasco en 1555. Para hacerlo seguiremos el orden mismo de *La Araucana*, deteniéndonos en aquellos pasajes que puedan ilustrar nuestra pesquisa.

La indagación comenzará por el canto II, 235-6: «¿Contra vuestras entrañas tenéis manos | y no contra el tirano en resistillo?», donde Ercilla reescribió los versos de la *Eneida* VI, 832-3: «ne, pueri, ne tanta animis adsuescite bella | neu patriae ualidas in uiscera uertite uiris». El término 'entrañas', que corresponde al *uiscera* latino, es precisamente la voz a la que acudió Hernández de Velasco en su traducción: «¿Por qué de vuestra Roma el valor fuerte | a sus entrañas propias se convierte?» (235).<sup>9</sup> En el canto IV, 693-6 las mujeres de Penco salen a despedir a los soldados que marchan al combate a partir de la *Eneida* VIII, 592: «Stant pavidae in muris matres oculisque sequentur». De nuevo la materialidad textual de Ercilla –«Las mujeres por torres y tejados | con fijos ojos tiernos los seguían» (IV, 693-6)– coincide con la del traductor castellano: «Las madres [...] desde los muros los están mirando, | y con los ojos fijos van siguiendo» (310).

La famosa comparación que hace Virgilio de los troyanos preparando sus naves para zarpar con hormigas atareadas en su faena, conforme a la *Eneida* IV, 402-7, fue reutilizada por Ercilla para describir el saqueo de Concepción por parte de los araucanos (VII, 417-24). Hernández de Velasco hizo un ejercicio de reescritura y ampliación a partir de los versos virgilianos que alcanzó asimismo a *La Araucana*. Las simples *formicae* de Virgilio se convierten en «próvidas hormigas» para el traductor y en «guardosas hormigas» para el poeta; el *tecto* latino, donde los insectos guardan sus alimentos, aparece en Velasco como «su troj» y en Ercilla como «la abundante troje», concurrendo ambos en el uso de una palabra singular y hondamente castellana. Pero más significativa aún es la presencia en Ercilla de una idea introducida por el traductor en su paráfrasis en torno al paso prioritario que tienen las hormigas que van cargadas. En Virgilio tan solo se leía: «pars grandia trudunt | obnixae frumenta umeris, pars agmina cogunt», pero Velasco añadió: «la carga impelen y el pesado grano, | parte a las que cargadas van aguijan» (134). Ercilla se atuvo inequívocamente a tal imagen: «no se impiden, estorban, ni detienen, | dan las vacías el paso a las cargadas».

<sup>9</sup> Las citas de Hernández de Velasco remiten a la página de su edición de 1982. La citas latinas proceden de la edición de Mynors (1985).

Son varios los lugares del canto X, consagrado a la descripción de unos juegos deportivos entre los jefes araucanos, que guardan una deuda directa con el libro V de la *Eneida*, donde los compañeros de Eneas celebran otras competiciones en la playa. Entre los premios que Virgilio señala están: «armaque et ostro | perfusae uestes, argenti auri que talenta» (*Eneida* V, 111-12), que Hernández de Velasco transformó en «ricos arneses, armas y vestidos | con grana recamados y talentos | de muy cendrada plata y oro puro» (155). Ercilla adoptó esa versión y repitió varios términos en la descripción de uno de sus premios: «Y de cendrada plata una celada [...] | de un cerco de oro puro rodeada» (X, 121-3). La disputa que mantienen Gayeguano y Torquín, así como la de Talco y Rengo, en ese mismo canto X remedan en gran medida la de Entelo y Dares en el libro V de la *Eneida*. Donde Virgilio refiere el golpe fallido de Entelo: «Entellus uiris in uentum effudit et ultro | ipse grauis grauiterque ad terram ponderuasto | concidit» (V, 446-8), que Hernández de Velasco interpretó: «Entelo echando el golpe y su gran fuerza | en el vano aire, de su propio peso | llevado, sin que nadie le impeliese, | cayó con pesadumbre extraña en tierra» (172). Ercilla tomó varias voces y expresiones de la traducción, que aquí se marcan en cursiva: «y el cuerpo de Torquín, quedando *en vano*, | *del mismo peso* y fuerza que traía | a los pies enemigos se tendía» (X, 278-80). Lo mismo sucede con la descripción de Dares, cuando se desnuda para la lucha: «et magnos membrorum artus, magna ossa lacertosque | exuit» (V, 422-3). Hernández de Velasco transformó el *magnos* latino en «fornidos» y Ercilla también le siguió en esto, así como en la disposición bimembre del verso y en la fórmula «persona corpulenta»:

Tras este, el fuerte Rengo se presenta,  
el cual, lanzando fuera los vestidos  
descubre la persona corpulenta,  
brazos robustos, músculos fornidos.  
Ercilla (X, 281-4)

haciendo muestra de sus grandes  
miembros,  
fornidos huesos y nervosos brazos,  
y así con su persona corpulenta  
en medio se presenta de la arena.  
H. de Velasco (171)

En esa misma escena, Virgilio encarece la agilidad de Dares afirmando: «ille pedum melior motu» (V, 430), vertido en castellano como «Dares en ligereza excede a Entelo» (171), voz que se apropió Ercilla para referirse a Rengo: «En esto, *con estraña ligereza*» (X, 333), sin referencia alguna al movimiento de pies que se señala en el original. Ya en el canto XIV, Ercilla quiso subrayar la importancia de la muerte de Lautaro apropiándose de los versos finales de la *Eneida*, en los que se describe la de Turno: «uitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras» (XII, 952). Velasco transformó el *sub umbras* en una alusión a los infiernos: «la ánima indignada | huye gimiendo al infernal abismo» (490); y Ercilla se apropió de tal imagen: «la al-

ma, del mortal cuerpo desatada, | bajó furiosa a la infernal morada» (XIV, 143-4). También durante el ataque al fuerte de Lautaro, Diego Cano atraviesa con su espada al araucano Picol, hecho que el poeta describe sirviéndose del verbo 'barrenar': «haciendo atrás la rigurosa mano, | el pecho le barrena de una punta» (XIV, 227-8). La escena procede de la muerte de Lauso en el libro X de la *Eneida*, donde Virgilio había usado el verbo *recondit*: «per medium Aeneas iuuenem totumque recondit» (X, 816), pero es en Hernández de Velasco donde se encuentra la misma voz que usara Ercilla: «por el pecho | hasta la mano la valiente espada, | barrenando» (399). La descripción de una tormenta en el canto XV de *La Araucana* procede directamente de Virgilio. En concreto, en el libro IX, 671 alude a las «caua nubi-la», que Velasco convirtió en «cóncavos nublados» (350) y Ercilla, siguiendo su estela, en «cóncavos cerrados» (XV, 468).

Ya en la segunda parte de *La Araucana*, donde se retoma la tempestad iniciada al final de la primera, la voz de Ercilla como narrador inquiere a Dios sobre el aciago destino de su flota: «¿Qué es esto, eterno Padre poderoso?» (XVI, 69). La pregunta corresponde a la que Palinuro, piloto de Eneas, hace a Neptuno en circunstancias parejas: «quidue, pater Neptune, paras?» (V, 14). En este caso, la interrogación coincide con Velasco: «¿Qué es esto?» (150), pero el vocativo que alude a la divinidad como 'padre' responde al original latino. No sucede así en el siguiente ejemplo, cuya referencia última es el libro I de la *Eneida*. Tras otra tempestad, Eneas y sus compañeros llegan a tierra y se organizan para hacer pan con el trigo humedecido: «Tum Cererem corruptam undis [...] | frugesque receptas | et torrere parant flammis» (I, 177-9). La imitación de Ercilla vuelve aquí a coincidir muy de cerca con la traducción castellana:

quién fuego enciende y [...] tuesta el húmido trigo mareado.  
Ercilla (XVI, 247-8)

Sacan tras esto el trigo mareado [...], ordenan de tostar al fuego el trigo.  
H. de Velasco (13)

En el canto XIX, Ercilla hizo alusión a la muerte de una paloma por parte del troyano Euricio, tal como se narra en la *Eneida* V, 505-6: «micuitque exterrita pennis | ales», que en Velasco se lee como «y revoló la mísera paloma | medrosa» (175). El poeta se ajustó de nuevo al traductor, subrayando el miedo de la paloma y repitiendo el verbo 'revolar': «la tímida paloma por el cielo [...] | y revolando [...] | vino al suelo» (XIX, 98-101). En ese mismo canto y como parte de uno de esos símiles característicos de la épica grecolatina, se compara a Tucapel con un león, en términos parejos a los que Virgilio utiliza para describir a Turno: «Poenorum qualis in aruis | [...] leo, [...] excutiens ceruice toros» (XII, 4-7). No obstante, la solución de Ercilla resulta por completo próxima a la de Hernández de Velasco, pues este escribe: «cual

el feroz león en las campañas | de Libia [...] | eriza y juega el vedijoso cuello» y el poeta, alejándose del original latino, repite la referencia a Libia y el adjetivo 'vedijoso': «Como el león de Libia vedijoso» (X, 245).

En el canto VII, Virgilio describe la entrada de Lauso en el palacio real vestido con una piel de león que le cubre la cabeza: «tegimen torquens immane leonis, | terribili impexum saeta cum dentibus albis | indutus capiti» (VII, 666-8). El traductor castellano amplificó el cuadro, deteniéndose en la boca del león muerto, que cubría la cabeza del guerrero: «vestido de una horrenda | piel de un león [...], | cuyos agudos y muy blancos dientes | le abrazaban la frente y las quijadas» (273). Así se repite casi a la letra en *La Araucana* para detallar el atuendo del araucano Tulcomara, cambiando el león por un tigre, pero manteniendo la referencia a la «frente» y las «quijadas», así como a los dientes «agudos» y «blancos»:

...traía  
la piel de un fiero tigre que matara,  
cuya espantosa boca le ceñía  
por la frente y quijadas la ancha cara,  
con dos espesas órdenes de dientes  
blancos, agudos, lisos y lucientes». (XXI, 235-40)

Hay dos momentos en la *Eneida* en los que, para encarecer el número de los ejércitos, se acude a la imagen de la tierra retumbando por los pies de los soldados. El primero de ellos es en el libro VII, 722: «pulsuque pedum conterrita tellus»; el segundo -en términos muy parejos- en el XII, 445: «pulsuque pedum tremit excita tellus». Hernández de Velasco tradujo ambos pasajes de manera similar y amplificada: «la tierra sacudida y golpeada | con pies de tantos, tiembla y se estremece» (275) y «Tiembla y gime la tierra por gran trecho | con fuertes y ligeros pies batida» (468). Ercilla, que adoptó esa imagen en el canto XXI de su poema, lo hizo a partir de Velasco, repitiendo literalmente términos como «tiembla», «se estremece», «golpeada» o «batida»: «tiembla en torno la tierra y se estremece | de tantos pies batida y golpeada» (XXI, 395-6). También siguió Ercilla muy de cerca la traducción castellana para la invocación a la Musas que se hace en el canto XXIV: «Abridme, ¡oh, sacras musas!, vuestra fuente» (XXIV, 9), pues Virgilio se limitó a mencionar a las *deae* sin otro calificativo: «Pandite nunc Helicon, deae» (VII, 641), mientras que Hernández de Velasco las calificó como «sacrosantas»: «Abridme agora, ¡oh sacrosantas Musas!, | vuestro Helicón» (271).

Un caso singular es el del canto XXIV, en el que se describe la batalla de Lepanto a partir de la profecía del libro VIII de la *Eneida* en la que se augura la batalla naval de Accio. Virgilio aludió de manera específica al reflejo de las armas en el mar: «totumque instructo Marte uideres | feruere Leucaten auroque effulgere fluctus» (VIII,

676-7), y Velasco lo tradujo poniendo énfasis en el verbo ‘reverberar’, que también se repite en los versos paralelos de *La Araucana*:

Las cicaladas armas relucían  
en el inquieto mar reverberando.  
Ercilla (XXIV, 45-6)

Hervía con el bélico aparato  
el mar cabe Leucate y en las olas  
reverberaba el oro de las armas.  
H. de Velasco (314)

En estos versos llama la atención el uso del adjetivo ‘cicaladas’, que no vuelve a registrarse en toda la obra.<sup>10</sup> Aun cuando se trate de una mera conjetura, cabe apuntar que pudo influir sobre Ercilla la atracción –consciente o no– de las islas Cícladas, mencionadas en ese mismo pasaje de Virgilio que estaba reescribiendo: «pelago credas innare reulsas | Cycladas» (VIII, 691-2), y que reza así traducido al castellano: «Súbense en alta mar las dos armadas; | creyera el que lo viera que las Cícladas | habían dejado su nativo asiento» (315).

Muy palmaria resulta en cuanto a la fuente la descripción de la entrada de Rengo y Tucapel al campo en el que han de dirimir su combate singular. Se recuerda allí un lugar virgiliano en el que se describe a Orión armado de oro: «armatumque auro [...] Oriona» (III, 517). Hernández de Velasco adornó esa imagen precisando el armamento y el lugar donde lo llevaba: «con su dorado y corvo alfanje al lado» (105). El «alfanje» no era en absoluto un arma propia de los araucanos y, sin embargo, Ercilla no tuvo inconveniente en asignársela a la estela de su modelo: «y, al lado izquierdo cada cual ceñido, | un corvo y ancho alfanje guarnecido» (XXIX, 199-200). Y aún queda un último ejemplo de esta imitación correspondiente a la tercera parte de *La Araucana*, en el que Ercilla atribuyó a Dido unas palabras que Eneas dirigía a sus compañeros en el libro I de la *Eneida*: «O socii, neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum» (I, 198-9). Como puede comprobarse a continuación, Velasco adornó la simplicidad original y Ercilla siguió casi a la letra su pauta:

Amigos caros, que a los hados [...] y en los grandes peligros esforzados.  
Ercilla (XXXIII, 217-24)

Oh, mis amigos caros y leales,  
en más graves peligros ya probados.  
H. de Velasco (14)

A la luz de este repaso, resulta evidente que, mientras escribía *La Araucana*, Ercilla tuvo sobre la mesa *Los doce libros de la Eneida de Virgilio* que Gregorio Hernández de Velasco había dado a la imprenta en 1555. Dada la importancia que tenía en la enseñanza de la latinidad, no es en absoluto improbable que también contara con un ejem-

<sup>10</sup> Entiéndase que «cicaladas» en el texto de Ercilla, significa ‘acicaladas, pulidas’.

plar latino de *La Eneida*. Si así fue, no le dio demasiado uso, pues solo en una ocasión, entre todas las que hemos estudiado, parece que pudo tener en cuenta el original virgiliano y, a decir verdad, el ejemplo no resulta en absoluto concluyente.

### 3 Los rastros de Lucano

Respecto a *La Farsalia* la cuestión viene a ser pareja, y se añade el hecho de que la presencia de Lucano en la enseñanza de la época fuera significativamente menor que la de Virgilio. En este caso, además, hay que esperar hasta el canto XXIII de *La Araucana* para encontrar el primer indicio claro en torno al texto que Ercilla tuvo en cuenta para su imitación. Entre los ingredientes que atesora la maga Ericto, Lucano enumera «spuma canum quibus unda timori est» (VI, 671), que Martín Laso de Oropesa tradujo en *La historia que escribió en latín el poeta Lucano* como «y también espumajo de aquellos perros que temen del agua» (123),<sup>11</sup> con una fórmula que Ercilla repitió en su literalidad: «espumajos de perros que rabiosos | van huyendo del agua» (XXIII, 390-1).

Son varios más los elementos mágicos que Ericto utiliza para sus pócimas y que reaparecen en *La Araucana* como parte del arsenal que Fitón, el hechicero araucano, destina a sus conjuros. Veamos aquellos en los que la fuente resulta incuestionable. Las «durae nodus hyaenae» (VI, 672) fueron vertidas por Oropesa como «la coyuntura de la dura hiena» (123) y reproducidas sin más en nuestro poema: «También en otra parte parecía | la coyuntura de la dura hiena» (XXIII, 393-4). Está asimismo la carne de recién nacidos arrancados del vientre materno: «uolnere sic uentris, non qua natura uocabat, | extrahitur partus calidis» (VI, 558-9). Los versos fueron trasladados al castellano como «abre el vientre preñado y la saca no por la parte que natura la suele llamar» (120) y usados luego por Ercilla en términos similares: «carne de niña por nacer sacada | no por donde la llama la natura» (XXIII, 403-4). Los ejemplos se suceden para confirmar el vínculo con la versión de Laso de Oropesa:

Lucano «spinaque uagi torquente cerastae» (IX, 716)

Laso de Oropesa «y la cerastas, con la espina del lomo tan descoyuntada» (198)

Ercilla «y la espina también descoyuntada | de la sierpe cerastas» (XXIII, 405-6)

<sup>11</sup> Las citas de Laso de Oropesa remiten a su edición de 1540. Los textos latinos de proceden de la edición de Herrero Llorente (1967-81).

La presencia de voces derivadas de ‘monstruo’ y del verbo ‘producir’ junto con el término ‘natura’, tomado directamente del original, avala de nuevo el vínculo entre Laso, que traduce: «Y allí mezcló de toda especie criada que natura monstrosamente produjo» (123), y Ercilla, cuando escribe: «cuantos monstruos prodigiosos | la superflua natura ha producido» (XXIII, 409-10), frente al texto de Lucano: «huc quidquid fetu genuit natura sinistro» (VI, 670). Lo mismo ocurre poco más adelante, pues tanto el traductor como el poeta identifican al echenéis como pez, se sirven de la construcción ‘que en’ para introducir su medio acuático y sustituyen del «Euro» original por el «viento» con carácter genérico:

Lucano: «non puppem retinens Euro tendente rudentis | in mediis echenais aquis» (VI, 674-5)

Laso de Oropesa: «y el pece echenéis que en medio de las aguas detiene la nao por pandas que vayan con viento las velas» (123)

Ercilla: «y el pescado echinéis, que en mar airado | al curso de las naves contraviene | y a pesar de los vientos las detiene» (XXIII, 422-4)

Aún más transparente es el verso «quaeque sonant feta tepefacta sub alite saxa» (VI, 676), traducido al castellano como «ni faltaron las piedras del águila que suenan como preñadas» (123) y adaptado muy de cerca por Ercilla: «y las piedras del águila preñadas» (XXIII, 428). También Lucano encarece la satisfacción que a Ericto le produce la noticia de su nombradía: «Inpia laetatur uulgato nomine famae» (VI, 604), sentimiento que se repite en la figura de Fitón: «Holgó el mago de oír cuán estendida | por aquella región su fama andaba» (XXIII, 497-8), pero aquí con la mediación léxica y sintáctica de Laso de Oropesa: «Holgose la malina tesálica de ver su fama y artes tan divulgadas» (122).

Hay dos casos especialmente llamativos en ese mismo elenco de sustancias prodigiosas. El primero de ellos se refiere al áspid, del que Ercilla escribe: «y la cola del áspide revuelta, | que da la muerte en dulce sueño envuelta» (XXIII, 400). El pasaje correspondiente se encuentra en *La Farsalia* IX, 701: «aspida somnífera tumida ceruice leuauit», que Oropesa tradujo sin más: «la soñolienta áspide fue que levantó su hinchado cuello». Pero la explicación no está en el texto, sino en las notas marginales con las que el traductor lo ilustró, y donde puede leerse una glosa que explica los versos de *La Araucana*: «Los mordidos del áspide mueren durmiendo» (198). El segundo se encuentra en una relación de reptiles presentes en las estanterías del mago. Ercilla menciona entre ellas «las dos alas del jáculo temido» (XXIII, 412). En el poema latino se elude el nombre ‘jáculo’ por medio de una perífrasis: «Arabum uolucer serpens» (VI, 677); sin embargo, fue Laso de Oropesa quien lo incorporó por cuenta propia: «aquella serpiente jáculo arábica, que de un salto se mete por los cuerpos» (123-4).

En ese mismo canto XXIII, la invocación que Fitón hace está basada en la de Ericto, según aparece en *La Farsalia* VI, 695-749. El modelo dejó por ello rastros visibles en diversos lugares. Donde Lucano optó por 'pálido' para calificar al Orco: «primo pallentis hiatu | haeret adhuc Orcoi» (VI, 714-15), Laso de Oropesa se inclinó por otro adjetivo: «amarillo Orco» (124), que reaparece en *La Araucana*: «¡Orco amarillo!» (XXIII, 633). En la exhortación inicial del original latino en ningún momento se menciona a Plutón; sin embargo Oropesa lo incluyó por cuenta propia: «y tú, Plutón, rector de la tierra estigia» (124), siendo pauta para los versos de Ercilla: «¡Oh, gran Plutón, retor del bajo infierno!» (XXIII, 634). Tampoco aparece el Demogorgon en la alocución de Ericto, al que se alude indirectamente por sus atributos:

...an ille  
compellendus erit, quo numquam terra vocato  
non concussa tremit, qui Gorgona cernit apertam  
uerberibusque suis trepidam castigat Erinyn,  
indespecta tenet vobis qui Tartara, cuius  
vos estis superi, Stygias qui perierat undas? (VI, 744-7)

El pasaje se tradujo en 1540 de este modo:

¿Tengo de llamar a aquel que nunca fue llamado que no temblase la tierra; el cual puede ver a la clara a la Gorgona, y con sus azotes hace temer y castiga a Erimnis y habita en las partes tartáreas tan hondas que vosotros no veis, en respeto de cuya morada sois vosotros soberanos, y puede perjurar por las aguas estigias? (125)

No obstante, la explicación y la fuente de los versos ercillanos se encuentra de nuevo en uno de los ladillos que añadió Laso de Oropesa, donde ofrece la explicación que refleja *La Araucana*:

Por este entiende a Demogorgon, que es padre de todos los dioses y está en lo más bajo del infierno. Laso de Oropesa (125)	¡Oh, Demogorgon, tú, que lo postrero habitas del tartáreo reino eterno! Ercilla (XIII, 637-8)
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En ese mismo pasaje, Fitón apela a las Furias, aludiendo a sus «frentes de víboras crinadas» (XXIII, 644). La imagen está tomada de la propia Ericto, a la que Lucano comparó con las Euménides y que adereza su cabello con víboras: «uoltusque aperitur crine remoto, | et coma uipereis substringitur horrida seros» (VI, 655-6), que en la versión castellana viene a ser: «echando los cabellos atrás, todos erizados los apaña con una guirnalda de víboras» (123). Cabe pensar que, en este caso, la voz «crinadas» quizás pudiera relacionarse con el *crine* del original latino.



Ercilla consagró el canto XXIV de *La Araucana* a la visión profética de la batalla de Lepanto, siguiendo en buena medida la relación que Lucano hizo de la batalla naval de Marsella. Veámoslo. Para encarecer la proximidad entre las naves, se lee en *La Farsalia*: «Iam non excussis torquentur tela lacertis | nec longinqua cadunt iaculato uolnera ferro, | miscenturque manus» (III, 567-9), y otro tanto se apunta en el poema de Arauco: «cerrándose tan juntas que a pie quedo | pueden con las espadas golpearse» (XXIV, 379-80). Resulta evidente que Ercilla lo hizo ateniéndose al vocabulario del traductor castellano: «peleaban a pie quedo, el mar cubierto de naos, que ya ningún tiro hería de lejos, sino a manteniendo usaban principalmente del espada» (55).

Según se lee en Lucano, algunos combatientes tragan, al ahogarse, el agua mezclada con sangre: «Semianimes alii uastum subiere profundum | hauseruntque suo permixtum sanguine pontum» (III, 576-7). Lo mismo les ocurre a los turcos en Lepanto: «Cuáles, su propia sangre resorbiendo, | andan agonizando sobreaguados» (XXIV, 441-2). El uso que Ercilla hace del verbo ‘resorber’ desvela inequívocamente que manejaba la traducción de Laso de Oropesa, donde se lee: «Algunos cayeron medio muertos en el mar y andaban resorbiendo su propia sangre a vuelta del agua» (55). Más adelante, el poeta alaba el esfuerzo de los que morían empeñados en mantener la lucha hasta el último aliento: «cuáles, hacer más daño no pudiendo, | a los menos heridos abrazados, | se dejan ir al fondo forcejando, | contentos con morir allí matando» (XXIV, 445-8). Lo volvió a repetir unos versos más adelante casi con las mismas palabras: «procuraban matando, como digo, | morir en el bajel del enemigo» (XXIV, 503-4). La idea procede, claro está, de Lucano:

Saeuus conplectitur hostem  
 hostis, et implicitis gaudent subsidere membris  
 mergentesque mori. Pugna fuit unus in illa [...].  
 Non perdere letum | maxima cura fuit. (III, 694-707)

Sin embargo, la materialidad de las palabras se atiene punto por punto a la traducción castellana de Oropesa: «y cuando tiros les faltaban, aprovechábanse del lugar donde se vian, abrazando fuertemente a su contrario y revueltos holgaban de zambullirse y morir matando» (58). En esa misma pugna final, recuerda Lucano que los que habían caído al agua recogían las flechas para seguir peleando: «tela legunt deiecta mari» (III, 691). Por su parte, Oropesa transformó el *tela* latino en «lanzas y tiros»: «cogían *las lanzas y tiros* que estaban por el agua» (58), en una lectura que sería luego modelo para *La Araucana*: «los tiros y las lanzas apañando» (XXIV, 468).

Son solo dos los lugares de la tercera parte en los que la imitación de Lucano permite atisbar con certeza la fuente que Ercilla manejó.

El primero de ellos se encuentra en el canto XXXII, como parte de la descripción del ataque final de los araucanos contra el fuerte español: «el rumor de las armas y alaridos | hinchén el aire y cóncavo del cielo» (XXXII, 107-8). La imagen corresponde a otro verso de Lucano: «extremique fragor conuexa inrumpit Olympi» (VII, 478), aunque no sin la mediación de Laso de Oropesa, que había transformado el *Olimpo* en «cielo» y su condición *conuexa* en «cóncava»: «con tanto estruendo que lo ponían hasta la concavidad del cielo» (142).

Por último, las palabras de Caupolicán a Reinoso en el canto XXXIV recuperan las que Afranio dirige a César en *La Farsalia*: «Si me degeneri strauissent fata sub hoste, | non derat fortis rapiendo dextera leto» (IV, 344-5). Ercilla hizo una amplificación del original, aunque parece de nuevo indudable que lo hizo a partir de la traducción castellana, como indica la mutación del *degeneri hoste* original en «vil capitán» primero y luego en «capitán indino»:

Si los hados me hubieran derrocado  
debajo de algún vil capitán, no faltaban  
fuerzas ni esfuerzo a mi diestra para  
tomar la muerte.  
Laso de Oropesa (70)

Si a vergonzoso estado reducido  
me hubiera el duro y áspero destino,  
y si esta mi caída hubiera sido  
debajo de hombre y capitán indino,  
no tuve el brazo así desfallecido  
que no abriera a la muerte yo camino.  
Ercilla (XXXIV, 33-8)

El recuento sucesivo de lugares y ejemplos demuestra a las claras que Ercilla no partió para su imitación del texto latino de Lucano, sino de la versión castellana que Martín Laso de Oropesa había publicado en 1540. Como prueba inequívoca está el hecho de que, en varios pasajes de *La Araucana*, se incluyan voces, frases o noticias ajenas por completo al original e insertas a su albur por el traductor. El poeta incluso empleó para componer sus versos la información y la literalidad de las notas marginales con que Laso de Oropesa dejó algunos puntos que consideraba oscuros para sus lectores. Don Alonso entre ellos.

#### 4 En suma

Acabamos de ver que el cotejo sistemático de los textos latinos de *La Eneida* y *La Farsalia* con las únicas traducciones castellanas que Alonso de Ercilla pudo manejar resulta concluyente. Sin el menor margen de duda, se puede afirmar que, para la composición de su poema, Ercilla tuvo a mano sendos ejemplares de *Los doce libros de la Eneida de Vergilio* traducidos por Gregorio Fernández de Velasco y de *La historia que escribió en latín el poeta Lucano trasladada en castellano por Martín Laso de Oropesa*. No puede descartarse por comple-

to la posibilidad de que también consultara los textos originales, pero sus fuentes directas fueron desde luego las versiones castellanas.

Los estudios que realizara bajo la tutela del maestro Calvete pudieron surtir al joven Alonso de Ercilla de cierto trato con la latinidad, pero, si fue así, el uso que años más tarde habría de dar a ese conocimiento en su imitación de Virgilio y Lucano fue más bien escaso. El tiempo y las circunstancias que condicionaron sus años como paje en la corte de Carlos I parece que no fueron los más propicios para que recibiera una formación humanística sólida y ordenada. Bien es verdad que no parece que fuera un mero romancista, como entonces se llamaba a los que no leían ni hablaban en latín, pero desde luego tampoco alcanzó a ser un humanista. Y es que con frecuencia atribuimos a los escritores del Siglo de Oro lecturas y conocimientos que difícilmente tuvieron o pudieron tener.

Tenemos en un extremo a autores como fray Luis de León, que se manejaba con seguridad de especialista en latín, griego o hebreo; en el otro está Cervantes, de cuya formación apenas nos han llegado noticias. Entre ambos hay grados muy diversos. Valgan como punto de referencia un Francisco de Quevedo que mostró facetas de humanista en el *Anacreón castellano* o en las *Lágrimas de Jeremías*, o un Lope de Vega, que, si bien se sirvió de la lengua latina con cierta facilidad, no precisó de demasiada erudición en la materia.<sup>12</sup> Un caso próximo al de Ercilla, aunque bien diverso, sería el de Garcilaso de la Vega, poeta circunstancial en latín y cada vez más próximo al mundo clásico, gracias a su paso por Italia.<sup>13</sup> Aun cuando Ercilla fuera primero, como el toledano, cortesano en la corte de los Austrias y luego también soldado, nunca llegaría a poner en práctica el conocimiento de los latines que pudo haber aprendido en su juventud.

Cuando se decidió a imitar a los poetas clásicos en su epopeya, lo hizo a partir de traducciones, que se convirtieron, a medida que avanzaba el siglo, en el modo común de acceso a los autores tanto griegos como latinos. Y no solo para esos romancistas de los que antes hablábamos, sino también para personas con rudimentos en la latinidad, pero que carecían del tiempo o la instrucción suficientes para bregar con los originales. De ahí la proliferación de textos instrumentales como la versión castellana que de Virgilio hizo Hernández de Velasco en 1555, el *Quinto Horacio Flacco poeta lírico latino. Sus obras con la declaración magistral en lengua castellana*, que Juan Villén de Biedma publicó en 1599, o *Las obras de Publio Virgilio Marón, traducido en prosa castellana con comento y anotaciones*, estampadas por Diego López en 1601 y que se reimprimieron no menos de diez veces

<sup>12</sup> Véase al respecto Sánchez Laílla 2008, 41.

<sup>13</sup> Sobre ese conocimiento ahonda Fosalba 2019.

a lo largo el siglo XVII.<sup>14</sup> Ercilla fue uno de esos lectores de traducciones castellanas, al menos en lo que *La Eneida* y *La Farsalia* se refiere. El examen de esas lecturas y la confirmación de las huellas que dejaron en su poema vienen a confirmar el buen sentido con que Diego de Saavedra Fajardo sentenció en su *República literaria*:

Don Alonso de Ercilla, aunque por la ocupación de las armas no pudo acaudalar la erudición que para estos estudios se requiere, con todo este, en *La Araucana*, mostró un gran natural y espíritu con fecunda y clara facilidad. (Díez de Revenga 2008, 92)

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<sup>14</sup> En torno a estos textos, véase Castellano López 2022.

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# Mysticisme de Gérard de Nerval : une analyse mystico-symbolique

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**Abstract** In the seven sonnets that form the section *Mysticisme* included in the volume *Petits Châteaux de Bohême* (1852), Gérard de Nerval possibly deals for the first time with a spiritual theme in an organic and structured way. It is a poetic project that anticipates the depth of the *Chimères*, as well as the fascination of the *Filles du feu* and *Aurélia*. The analysis of this sonnet sequence allows us to address the foundational themes and spiritual inspirations informing Nerval's subsequent works. Through a 'geometric conjecture' based on three symbols – the cross, the circle, and the triangle – this article aims at providing a personal interpretation of *Mysticisme*.

**Keywords** Nerval. Mysticism. Literature and spirituality. Esoterism. Romanticism. Symbolism.

**Sommaire** 1 Introduction. – 2 Relire Nerval au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle : vers une analyse mystico-symbolique de l'œuvre. – 3 Mysticisme de Gérard de Nerval. – 4 Vagabondages. – 5 *Le Christ aux Oliviers* : la croix. – 6 *Daphné* : le cercle. – 7 *Vers dorés* : le triangle. – 8 Poésie et mystique.



Edizioni  
Ca Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted 2022-06-01  
Accepted 2022-08-29  
Published 2022-09-28

## Open access

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**Citation** Raimondo, R. (2022). "Mysticisme de Gérard de Nerval : une analyse mystico-symbolique". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [279-302] 117-140.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOc/2499-1562/2022/10/014

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## 1 Introduction

Si le titre de cette étude suggère tout de suite l'analyse d'un recueil de Gérard de Nerval, il veut aussi, avec le mot 'mysticisme' gardé en romain, faire allusion à un thème central de la poétique nervalienne et, de plus, à une certaine approche de la lecture de son œuvre. Nous nous interrogerons sur le signifié de ce terme ainsi que sur le cheminement spirituel à travers lequel l'auteur a voulu faire référence aux aspects mystiques de la pensée. Nous chercherons également à mettre ce terme dans une perspective historique tout en situant l'œuvre nervalienne par rapport à l'histoire du Romantisme. C'est l'auteur lui-même qui nous prend à partie : il nous invite à sonder ses motivations et à employer ce mot. Pour cette raison, nous réfléchirons particulièrement au mysticisme qui a marqué l'inspiration nervalienne pendant ses premières expériences poétiques. Ce sera dès lors le fil directeur de notre analyse de ces poésies que Nerval a regroupées sous le titre de *Mysticisme* dans les *Petits Châteaux de Bohême* en 1852, après les avoir publiés dans la revue *L'Artiste*, respectivement : *Le Christ aux Oliviers* le 31 mars 1844 ; *Vers dorés* le 16 mars 1845 (sous le titre de *Pensée antique*) ; *Delfica* le 28 décembre 1845 (sous le titre de *Vers dorés*) ; il reparut dans les *Petits Châteaux* sous le titre *Daphné*, tandis que le titre *Vers dorés* passait dans le même recueil au sonnet du 16 mars ; enfin, il reparut en 1854 dans *Les Chimères* sous le titre définitif de *Delfica*.<sup>1</sup> Cependant, nous désignerons ici *Delfica* par le titre de *Daphné*, sous lequel le sonnet est paru dans les *Petits Châteaux*. On remarquera aussi que la série *Mysticisme* précède trois poésies regroupées sous le titre de *Lyrisme*, les deux florilèges composant le « Troisième château » de *Bohême*. Ce n'est pas ici le contexte pour nous attarder sur les quatre poésies de *Lyrisme* ni sur la composition et la chronologique controversée du « Troisième château », mais on rappellera néanmoins qu'on peut lire dans l'introduction de Nerval à « ce château de cartes » (Nerval 1993, 3: 438) une véritable déclaration de poétique qui n'est pas sans conséquences : « telles sont les premières stations à parcourir pour tout poète » (438).

Si dans l'introduction au « Troisième château » Nerval fait référence à certains textes écrits durant son internement en 1841, ces vers « conçus dans la fièvre et dans l'insomnie » (438) ne relèvent pas seulement d'une expérience pathologique. La folie nervalienne constitue ici, pourrait-on dire, le noyau autour duquel s'organisent les deux éléments fondateurs de la poésie selon Nerval, les deux « stations à parcourir » pour tout poète : la spiritualité et le lyrisme.

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 841844.

<sup>1</sup> Pour reparcourir l'histoire éditoriale de ce recueil, voir entre autres Bénichou 2004, 2: 1795-805.



Cette conception de la poésie semble d'ailleurs dialoguer avec les réflexions d'Antoine Fabre d'Olivet dans son long essai « De l'essence et la forme de la poésie » inclus dans *Les vers dorés de Pythagore...* (1813, 1-175) – une édition que Nerval avait lue et sur laquelle nous reviendrons dans cet article. Deux extraits éclairent cette hypothèse sur laquelle nous ne pouvons pas nous attarder dans ce contexte :

[La véritable Poésie] dépend des idées primordiales que le génie du poète, dans son exaltation, a saisies dans la nature intellectuelle, et que son talent a manifestées ensuite dans la nature élémentaire, pliant ainsi les simulacres des choses physiques au mouvement inspiré de son âme, au lieu de soumettre ce mouvement à ces simulacres mêmes, comme font ceux qui écrivent l'histoire. (7-8)

J'ai déjà dit qu'il y avait dans la célébration secrète des mystères, de véritables représentations dramatiques. Ces cérémonies mystiques, copiées sur celles qui avaient lieu dans la célébration des mystères égyptiens, avaient été apportées en Egypte par les prêtres indiens à l'époque très reculée où l'empire de l'Indostan s'étendait sur cette contrée. [...] Une coïncidence singulière qui n'échappera point, MESSIEURS, à votre sagacité, c'est que l'art dramatique [dont la poésie dérive], dont l'origine se perd aux Indes dans la nuit des temps, y a pris également naissance dans les mystères de la Religion. (75-6)

L'intérêt de *Mysticisme* réside ainsi dans la possibilité d'aborder des thèmes et des réflexions qui ont participé à la genèse de l'inspiration poétique nervalienne et qui seront ultérieurement développés dans les œuvres postérieures. On pourrait affirmer que *Mysticisme* est probablement le premier florilège où l'auteur traite un thème spirituel de manière organique, raisonnée et ordonnée. C'est un véritable projet poétique qui anticipe les profondeurs des *Chimères*, ainsi que les réflexions et les fascinations des *Filles du feu* et d'*Aurélia*. Qui plus est, il nous semble opportun d'introduire nos réflexions en décrivant notre approche critique, sur les ormes de Jean Richer et Yves Vadé, tout en la distinguant et en la définissant par rapport à d'autres, surtout vis-à-vis d'Umberto Eco. En effet, nous gardons la conviction que les recherches nervaliennes ne permettent pas toutes d'accéder aux raisons profondes de l'œuvre, voire que certaines négligent des thèmes fondateurs – ce qui devient particulièrement évident quand on traite un argument comme le mysticisme.

Dans ce contexte, nous offrirons aux lecteurs une analyse personnelle et spéculative de *Mysticisme* à travers trois symboles géométriques (la croix pour *Le Christ aux Oliviers*, le cercle pour *Daphné* et le triangle pour les *Vers dorés*), tout en considérant ces poésies comme étant une phase enfantine et embryonnaire des *Chimères*. Les

figures géométriques choisies sont des formes archétypales de la représentation symbolique et ont été suggérées par les thèmes philosophiques et spirituels traités dans ces sonnets nervaliens.

## 2 Relire Nerval au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle : vers une analyse mystico-symbolique de l'œuvre

Akio Wada, entre autres, a récemment fait remarquer comment les études nervaliennes s'articulaient, à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, autour de deux courants principaux : d'une part, les études pathologiques, de l'autre les critiques symbolistes qui voyaient dans la « mysticité » de Nerval une anticipation de leur esthétique (Wada 2022). Les approches les plus célèbres de l'œuvre de Nerval sont surtout liées, aujourd'hui, à la narratologie, à la psychocritique et à leurs nombreuses déclinaisons. Par exemple, Eco (2008) a accordé beaucoup d'attention à l'étude narratologique de l'œuvre nervalienne, en se concentrant notamment sur le thème du Double (Nerval/Labrunie). Il a réfléchi à la façon dont ce thème, en tant que dispositif narratif, fonctionne comme un mécanisme « ordinateur ». La méthode d'Eco, fondée sur la théorie du Lecteur Imaginaire et du Lecteur Réel (Eco 1979), s'inscrit volontiers dans la perspective d'une lecture psychanalytique (voir, entre autres, Ferro 1998, X). Eco lui-même, dans son édition italienne de *Sylvie* (Nerval 1999), cite certaines œuvres qui l'ont aidé à comprendre Nerval et qui s'apparentent à une lecture psychanalytique, comme l'œuvre de Michel Jeanneret (1978) qui ne manque pas d'analyser les *moments* cliniques et littéraires de la pathologie mentale. Dans le même sillon, les œuvres de Charles Mauron ou de Laure Murat, bien que non citées par Eco, sont dignes du plus grand intérêt. Le livre *La maison du docteur Blanche* de Murat constitue un témoignage précieux des méthodes thérapeutiques expérimentées par le Dr Blanche dans le centre de soins où Nerval subit plusieurs hospitalisations (Mancia 2007). Dans la même ligne de pensée, Eugenio Borgna écrit : « Il n'y aurait pas eu *Aurélia* si Nerval n'avait pas eu ces expériences psychotiques indéniables » (2009, 151).<sup>2</sup> En guise de prototype de toute lecture psychanalytique contemporaine, on pourrait citer les analyses de Charles Mauron. À travers sa psychocritique, Mauron a voulu démontrer comment

le processus inconscient a déjà été dénudé, et l'a été avec une aisance relative, parce que son autonomie et sa forme intrusive sont beaucoup plus marquées chez un Nerval prépsychotique que chez des écrivains normalement résistants. (1995, 65 ; voir aussi Mauron 2000, 31)

<sup>2</sup> Sauf indication contraire, toutes les traductions sont de l'Auteur.

À la base de cette approche, on retrouve des précurseurs occasionnels, par exemple Marcel Proust qui reconnaît dans la *folie* nervalienne « une sorte de subjectivisme excessif » tourné vers « la qualité personnelle de la sensation » (1954, 234).

Richer défend des positions opposées à l'orientation psychanalytique et fait remarquer comment Nerval

a cherché à faire passer sa folie tantôt pour une forme de fantaisie, tantôt pour la preuve de ses connaissances ésotériques, tantôt même [...] pour une manifestation de l'esprit divin, une forme de mysticisme. (1987, 29)

Nous faisons ouvertement nôtre son postulat, en lisant l'œuvre de Nerval à travers une approche qu'on pourrait qualifier de « mythopoétique » (pour ce terme, voir Brunel 2008) et de « mystico-symbolique » dans le sillon, entre autres, de Pietro Latino (2020). Dans cette perspective, bien que parfois philologiquement peu exactes, les études de Richer nous intéressent dans la mesure où elles nous offrent une vaste cartographie pour une lecture symbolique de l'œuvre.

Richer a analysé ce qu'il appelle les « idées mystiques » (Richer 1987, 27) de Nerval, et il a décrit le rôle qu'elles jouent dans la genèse créative de l'œuvre, en étudiant notamment les modes par lesquels la pensée de l'auteur tend à s'organiser autour de concepts, de thèmes et de formes symboliques, dans des systèmes de signification cohérents et organiques (27). Le texte nervalien, en suivant cette approche, se présenterait comme un grand tissu de géométries symboliques dont toutes les parties du tissage se correspondent et permettent de créer cette magie suggestive que Proust a interprétée, par exemple – concernant « la couleur de rêve de Sylvie » – comme un « souvenir 'à demi rêvé' » (1954, 237), et qu'Eco a appelée « *effetto brume* » (*effetto-nebbia*) (Eco in Nerval 1999, 99; italique dans l'original). Le texte nervalien demeure en tout cas plus profond qu'en apparence, comme l'a remarqué par exemple Vito Carofiglio (1987, 57), qui a consacré une étude remarquable à la psycho-stylistique nervalienne. Bien sûr, malgré des tentatives de décrire un « système nervalien » cohérent, il existe une *ambiguïté* dans la poétique de Nerval, on ne peut pas le nier ; c'est-à-dire une certaine tension entre ordre et désordre ou, mieux, entre une vision « ordonnante » et une autre chaotique. Toutefois, cette « frénésie visionnaire » semble tendre à devenir un « désordre organisé » (Carofiglio 1987, 57), autrement dit une « expérience vécue des arcanes [...] dans un ordre signifiant » (Richer 1987, 28).

C'est par ce préambule que nous voulons soutenir l'approche de Richer, en cultivant l'idée selon laquelle chaque discours sur la littérature doit rester très centré sur les intentions de l'auteur, sans pourtant dénier au texte une certaine indépendance. En effet, Ri-

cher tend à souligner la *conscience* de l'auteur dans la rédaction de l'œuvre, ses intentions et ses opinions, ses études et sa formation (Richer 1987, ch. III, 92 *et passim*).<sup>3</sup> Nous pourrions bien expliquer cette *conscience*, selon une expression de Jean-Luc Steinmetz, comme l'« extrême attention qu'il porta au réel » (2008, 51-6).

Il nous intéresse ici de montrer comment une certaine *règle* – autrement dit une certaine *logique* – participe à la création et à l'organisation des géométries profondes de l'écriture nervalienne. Par conséquent, nous nous trouvons en opposition avec Eco, qui parvient par exemple à la conclusion que le mystère de *Sylvie* ne résiderait que dans « l'usage des temps verbaux, dans le jeu – apparemment désordonné – des souvenirs, dans les effets de brume qu'il sait créer. *Ce* mystère est suffisant » (Nerval 1999, 106). Si Eco, selon une perspective narratologique, considère l'approche de Richer comme une « lecture délirante » (Eco in Nerval 1999, 106), nous voulons suivre ce dernier et sonder les *idées mystiques* de Nerval, autrement dit les « racines de la signification symbolique » de l'œuvre nervalienne, selon une expression de Giovanni Cacciavillani (1992, 301).

Dans le cadre de ces réflexions, une analyse du recueil *Mysticisme* sera significative, en ce que l'auteur lui-même semble suggérer, dès le titre, un indice autorisant à déchiffrer son projet littéraire. On considérera donc ce recueil comme un véritable discours spirituel encadré à l'intérieur d'une recherche existentielle. Mais, avant d'aborder l'analyse des poésies, il est indispensable de s'interroger sur la nature de ce mot, *mysticisme*, et sur la façon dont il a été saisi, compris, et utilisé par le poète.

### 3 Mysticisme de Gérard de Nerval

Qu'entendons-nous par le terme 'mystique' ? Laissons répondre Benoît Beyer de Ryke, dont on partage les réflexions.

[I]l convient de préciser davantage ce que l'on entend par ce terme de « mystique », qui est un mot-valise dans lequel on met souvent tout et n'importe quoi. Ainsi parle-t-on de mystique de l'art, de mystique politique ou révolutionnaire, de mystique écologiste, etc. De plus, par le terme de mystique on entend souvent aujourd'hui une forme de sentimentalité intuitive et irrationnelle. Et l'on a vo-

<sup>3</sup> Par exemple, Richer (1987) cite au chapitre III une série de textes qui ont pu contribuer à la formation de Nerval : *Œdipus Aegyptiacus* de Kircher (1652), *Séthos* de l'abbé Terrason (1728), *Monde primitif* de Court de Gébelin (1775-88), *Antiquité dévoilée* de N.-A. Boulanger (1766), *Origine de tous les cultes* de Ch. Dupuis (1794), les œuvres d'Alexandre Lenoir, et en particulier *Nouvelle explication des hiéroglyphes* (4 vols, 1809-21), *Franche-maçonnerie rendue à sa véritable origine, ou l'Antiquité de la Franche-maçonnerie* (1814).

lontiers en tête des images saint-sulpiciennes de femmes (le plus souvent) et d'hommes confits en dévotion. Pourtant, la mystique entretient des liens plus nourris qu'on ne pourrait le penser de prime abord avec la philosophie. Et si le but est bien de dépasser la raison, la mystique – quand elle est spéculative – s'appuie fortement sur la rationalité. Aussi convient-il de bien définir le sens du mot mystique et le type de mystique envisagée. Sur un plan très général, et forcément schématique, on pourrait définir la mystique comme la volonté d'établir un rapport direct, immédiat entre l'homme et Dieu, l'Un ou la Totalité, selon les mots dont on aura envie d'user à ce propos [...] le terme mystique vient du grec *muô*, « se fermer, se taire ». Dans l'Antiquité grecque, l'adjectif *mustikos* qualifie l'initiation aux « mystères ». Au temps des Pères de l'Église, le terme renvoie au sens caché, visé par le Christ, dans le récit biblique, de même qu'au sens caché des sacrements, et plus tard, à l'expérience du Dieu caché. Le « mystère chrétien » dans cette perspective, c'est le Christ, jadis caché dans les allégories de l'Ancien Testament qui l'annonçaient de façon voilée, et à présent manifesté par le salut du monde. Le mot a donc connu une profonde évolution sémantique depuis l'Antiquité grecque et chrétienne (où le terme évoque les *mysteria* et le *sacramenta*) jusqu'au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle (où le mot exprime une expérience religieuse individuelle). C'est en effet au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle qu'apparaît le substantif pour évoquer une autre sorte d'initiation : l'union à Dieu moyennant un dépouillement radical des images, des sentiments et des pensées. Toutefois, si le sens moderne du terme date du XVII<sup>e</sup>, l'expérience, elle, est plus ancienne. Pour la tradition occidentale, l'origine de la mystique est à chercher principalement dans le courant néoplatonicien dont la finalité est l'union à l'Un, courant qui sera christianisé par saint Augustin et surtout par le Pseudo-Denys. (Beyer de Ryke 2005, 10-11)

Concernant l'inspiration de Nerval, on considérera plutôt le dernier statut du mot *mysticisme*, c'est-à-dire l'idée d'une relation individuelle avec le Divin « moyennant un dépouillement radical des images, des sentiments et des pensées », au-delà des religions traditionnelles. Le thème du mysticisme chez Nerval concernerait, de surcroît, l'un de plus passionnants champs de recherche au sein des études contemporaines examinant les relations entre littérature et spiritualité : l'identification des expériences mystiques et d'un parler mystique à l'époque moderne (Raimondo 2016 ; Arama, Raimondo, Jouanneau-Damance 2021). L'expérience nervalienne relèverait notamment d'une adhésion au 'mysticisme révolutionnaire' et ésotérique dans la ligne de Simon Ganneau et d'Éliphas Lévi (Raimondo 2016, 128).

Les thèmes récurrents de la poétique nervalienne, et qui renvoient directement à la dimension mystique, sont l'expérience de l'amour, de

la folie, et la dimension du souvenir. C'est à travers ces expériences que Nerval se pose la question d'un « aliment objectif » pour la pensée, du choix de se consacrer définitivement à la recherche spirituelle. À ce propos, la période historique que nous avons considérée ici fut pour lui un moment crucial. Comme l'a écrit Benichou,

[l]'expérience de l'Amour et celle de la Folie guident la quête de Nerval. Plus tard s'y ajoutera le Souvenir. Mais sa pensée, en même temps qu'elle puisait à ces sources intimes, cherchait hors du moi un aliment objectif dans les créations et les croyances de l'humanité. Pendant les années 1840, Nerval n'a pas cessé de poursuivre la solution d'un problème universel de foi et de salut, dont toute la pensée contemporaine était obsédée. Quelles croyances pouvaient s'offrir à l'humanité pour remplacer la foi traditionnelle ébranlée ? Dans la mesure où il a essayé, comme tant d'autres de ses contemporains, de répondre à cette question, Nerval a été, comme eux, un penseur laïque, à la recherche d'une foi nouvelle. (Benichou 1992, 353)

La *foi nouvelle*, dont parle Benichou, concerne toutes ces traditions occultes qui renvoient à ce « mysticisme révolutionnaire, dans la ligne de Ganneau et de l'abbé Constant », ainsi décrit par Auguste Viatte (1963, 81), en traversant aussi les traditions franc-maçonniques, ou encore en touchant des milieux héritiers de certains ordres ésotériques, comme en témoigne une « lettre délirante du 17 octobre 1854, qui parle au Dr Blanche de son affiliation à l'Ordre des Mopses » (79). Nerval lui-même, de nombreuses années plus tard, dessinera un croquis rapide de cette époque, dans *Sylvie* :

Ce n'était plus la galanterie héroïque comme sous la fronde, le vice élégant et paré comme sous la régence, le scepticisme et les folles orgies du directoire ; c'était un mélange d'activité, d'hésitation et de paresse, d'utopies brillantes, d'aspirations philosophiques ou religieuses, d'enthousiasmes vagues, mêlés de certains instincts de renaissance ; d'ennuis des discordes passées, d'espoirs incertains, - quelque chose comme l'époque de Pérégrinus et d'Apulée. (Nerval 1993, 3: 538)

Nerval nous parle aussi d'une certaine *aspiration mystique*, quand il écrit toujours dans *Sylvie* :

L'homme matériel aspirait au bouquet de roses qui devait le régénérer par les mains de la belle Isis ; la déesse éternellement jeune et pure nous apparaissait dans les nuits, et nous faisait honte de nos heures de jour perdues. (538)

Les significations, les images, les inspirations qu'il emprunte à l'héritage ésotérique sont dignes de toute notre attention et représentent, comme l'a bien démontré Richer, des outils essentiels pour l'analyse de l'œuvre. Toutefois, il serait inutile de vouloir nous livrer à une lecture systématique, cohérente et organique de cette constellation symbolique : « ce serait faire tort à la poésie de Nerval que de la réduire à un cryptogramme [...] [s]on charme tient en grande partie à ce qu'elle renferme d'ineffable » (Viatte 1963, 85). Il serait hardi, en plus, de décrire son cheminement spirituel tel qu'un parcours linéaire. Comme l'a bien remarqué Vadé (1977, 11),

malgré son goût pour l'illuminisme et les religions du passé, Nerval était bien loin d'adhérer à un système mythique cohérent, quel qu'il fût, et il ne le pouvait pas. C'est cette impossibilité fondamentale qui, à sa date, fait l'importance du drame spirituel de Nerval et lui donne sa signification historique ; c'est par là qu'il rejoint l'intuition du jeune Flaubert. Jean Richer en donne, dès les premières pages de sa thèse, une explication qui peut être transférée du plan de la psychologie personnelle au plan collectif que nous essayons de baliser : « Gérard a imaginé un univers d'archétypes qui sont en même temps des εἰδωλα, des figures de rêve qui se fondent les unes dans les autres, s'amalgament, fusionnent, ou au contraire, dans leur mobilité, se dédoublent, se multiplient, prolifèrent » [Jean Richer, *Nerval, expérience et création*, 15].

Ces εἰδωλα, selon Vadé, ne sont rien d'autre que « des chimères : images nées et entretenues dans cet état de rêverie » (11). Elles sont, de même, une

source de jouissance lorsqu'elles compensent l'absence d'une réalité tangible, source de déception lorsqu'elles s'exercent sur une réalité présente, qu'elles transforment et rendent dès lors inaccessible. (11)

En réfléchissant à ces aspects, Vadé arrive à tracer une ligne censée distinguer - comme nous avons essayé de le faire dans la deuxième partie de cet article - une approche psychanalytique d'une approche que nous avons déjà qualifiée de *mystico-symbolique*. Comme l'écrit Vadé,

les deux épithètes qui qualifient la chimère à la fin d'*Aurélia* expriment parfaitement ce double aspect : « Je résolu de fixer le rêve et d'en connaître le secret [...] N'est-il pas possible de dompter cette chimère attrayante et redoutable, d'imposer une règle à ces esprits des nuits qui se jouent de notre raison ? » [*Aurélia*, Pléiade, I, 412]. Certaines expressions de cette page capitale (« do-

miner mes sensations au lieu de les subir ») peuvent faire songer à l'entreprise qui sera celle d'Hervey de Saint-Denys une vingtaine d'années plus tard, ou même laisser pressentir le projet psychanalytique. Mais d'autres expressions montrent bien qu'en même temps Gérard attend du rêve une sorte de révélation sur l'au-delà, d'initiation aux ultimes secrets : « Pourquoi, me dis-je, ne point enfin forcer ces portes mystiques [...] Après un engourdissement de quelques minutes, une vie nouvelle commence, affranchie des conditions du temps et de l'espace, et pareille sans doute à celle qui nous attend après la mort. Qui sait s'il n'existe pas un lien entre ces deux existences et s'il n'est pas possible à l'âme de le nouer dès à présent ? » [*Aurélia*, Pléiade, I, 412]. Persuadé que « l'imagination humaine n'a rien inventé qui ne soit vrai, dans ce monde ou dans les autres », Nerval va donc demander à la « chimère » de lui apporter un savoir et de donner un sens à sa destinée. (12)

Notre analyse conjecturale de *Mysticisme* (fondée sur trois symboles géométriques : la croix, le cercle et le triangle) tentera d'offrir aux lecteurs une lecture organique du florilège dans le but de reconstruire la structure poétique et épistémologique, les thèmes et les fascinations qui inspireront les *Chimères*. Les *petites chimères* de *Mysticisme* seraient, de ce point de vue, les premiers pas vers la tentative nervalienne « d'imposer une règle à ces esprits des nuits qui se jouent de notre raison » (Nerval 1993, 3: *Aurélia*, VI, 749). Il est aussi vrai que de nombreux éléments qu'on trouve dans les *Petits châteaux de Bohême* avaient déjà été anticipés dans la *Bohême galante* ou ailleurs, mais, comme le remarque Steinmetz, « la composition des *Petits châteaux de Bohême* leur confère une nouvelle perspective, en dessine plus nettement la réalité » (notice in Nerval 1993, 3: 1146). Les *Chimères* développent de manière comparable les thèmes de *Mysticisme* tout en confirmant l'usage d'un procédé évolutif qui, dans la poétique nervalienne, semble tracer des parcours spiraliformes : une « chanson d'amour, qui toujours recommence ! » (*Daphné*, v. 4).

#### 4 Vagabondages

L'un des aspects surprenants de l'écriture de Nerval tient sûrement à sa capacité à alterner entre poésie, prose, dramaturgie et écriture musicale (c'est-à-dire l'écriture de chansons). Certaines de ses œuvres, comme la *Bohême galante* ou comme les *Petits châteaux de Bohême* – où sont utilisées transversalement toutes les techniques d'écriture – témoignent de cette hybridation des genres. Nerval, homme de théâtre, mais aussi critique musical, est bien habitué à naviguer sur les mers de l'inspiration à travers une écriture métamorphique, un « vagabondage poétique » (Nerval 1993, 3: *La Bohême galante*, 309).



C'est une aspiration corsaire que cette nervalienne qui relève aussi d'un certain *modus vivendi*, c'est-à-dire d'une condition où le parcours poétique et l'expérience personnelle se mélangent et s'interpénètrent. La même image poétique du *château de bohème* rend très bien l'idée d'un style à la fois protéiforme et vagabond, tout en étant bâti d'une matière solide. L'idée du *château de bohème* constitue

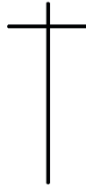
une contradiction symptomatique, puisque le château est un édifice stable, alors que la bohème implique un style de vie désordonné, proche du vagabondage. Nerval lui-même fut cet instable sans domicile fixe. (Steinmetz, notice in Nerval 1993, 3: 1144)

C'est une métaphore que cette du *château de bohème* qui peut enfin beaucoup nous éclairer sur le cheminement spirituel de Nerval. Peut-être est-ce la marque de sa foi : une inconsolable recherche d'équilibre entre raison et irrationalité, géométrie et passion, réalité et rêverie. Guy Michaud parle d'une « technique du rêve, féconde et dangereuse à la fois, puisqu'elle amènera Gérard aux *Chimères* et à la folie » (1966, 29). Cette exploration du rêve, ayant pour but de « relier ses songes d'une nuit à l'autre, de les rendre 'logiques' et de rattacher positivement au monde de la veille le monde du sommeil » (29), devient symboliquement une exploration de la nuit et des enfers :

C'est dans la nuit en effet que Nerval va chercher la lumière ; et c'est en s'avançant de plus en plus dans les régions obscures de l'âme qu'il accomplira cette « descente aux enfers » qui fera de lui véritablement le premier des « aventuriers » modernes, et dont *Aurélia*, née aux confins de la folie, retracera à la veille de sa mort les étapes subséquentes. (29)

La nuit et le silence, l'obscurité et le vide, la mort et le Néant : voilà la chaîne métaphorique qui ouvre la première partie de *Mysticisme*, une première étape symbolisée par l'image de la croix.

## 5 Le Christ aux Oliviers : la croix



La première partie intitulée *Le Christ aux Oliviers* (Nerval 1993, 3: 439-41) représente une véritable exploration de la nuit, susceptible de rappeler certaines méditations de Saint-Jean de la Croix. Il s'agit d'une « *laisse* de cinq sonnets formant un long poème métaphysique, tout à la fois épique, lyrique et dramatique » (Illouz in Nerval 2022, 195; italique dans l'original). Nerval semble interroger le lecteur sur deux points en particulier : le commencement de l'Univers et la position qu'y occupe l'être humain. Cette méditation se rapporte, de plus, à un lieu et un moment emblématiques : l'épisode du Christ aux Oliviers.

Le Jésus romantique, rendu à son humanité désemparée, rejoignait les dieux morts. Ainsi dans *Le Christ aux Oliviers* de Nerval, groupe de cinq sonnets surgi en 1844, où la nuit de Gethsémani, thème presque inévitable de la méditation romantique, est évoquée sur le mode purement négatif et funèbre. Non seulement Jésus, abandonné des hommes et voué à une mort prochaine, constate, selon la tradition évangélique, que ses disciples sont endormis, mais *la nouvelle* qu'il leur annonce est aux antipodes de l'Évangile, de la Bonne Nouvelle chrétienne de l'imminence du royaume de Dieu : il crie que « Dieu n'existe pas ! ». (Bénichou 1992, 354)

À l'origine de la création, il n'y aurait « qu'un orbite | Vaste, noir et sans fond ; d'où la nuit qui l'habite | Rayonne sur le monde et s'épaissit toujours » (II, vv. 9-11), un « ancien chaos dont le néant est l'ombre » (II, v. 13). Comme l'a remarqué Richer, l'image de l'orbite a connu une grande fortune dans les

nombreux livres d'emblèmes, dérivés des *Hiéroglyphica* d'Horapollon, comme aussi dans *Le Songe de Poliphile*. L'œil en est venu à désigner la divinité, en s'identifiant au soleil qui en est le reflet visible. Ce hiéroglyphe est lié à une théologie du feu et de la lumière. C'est pourquoi on le rencontre chez les divers auteurs néoplatonisants que Nerval lisait et, en particulier, dans les œuvres de Marsil Ficin et de Jacob Bøehme. (1962, 72)

L'orbite - en tant que représentation d'un témoin qui observe, contemple, médite - est le symbole, enfin, d'un mysticisme de la *vue* et de la *vision* : le regard contemplatif qui cherche la vérité au-delà des apparences et des dualités. L'orbite est à la fois « l'image du divin visible à l'homme et de l'absence de Dieu » (72). L'être humain prendrait alors conscience de la réalité divine à travers l'expérience de son *absence* dont surgit le Désespoir ; le prophète se rapprocherait de la connaissance de la lumière par l'obscurité, de la Parole par le silence, du soleil par la nuit. C'est ainsi qu'est tracé le commencement du cheminement apophasique de chaque théologie dite négative : connaître le plein par le vide, toute chose par son contraire.

Jésus a exploré l'univers, et n'y a trouvé que la mort, engloutissante universelle [...] L'absence de Dieu est pour lui une dévitalisation universelle. Quand la foi en la divinité s'éteint dans le cœur de l'homme, elle cesse d'animer le monde, et l'homme lui-même subit l'extinction de la vie : à quoi il est difficile de remédier si l'on suppose que Dieu n'existe que par la foi que l'homme lui porte. Tel est le cercle vicieux du Désenchantement [...] Ce mal hante dès l'origine le romantisme, qui le combat de sa foi, de son espérance, de sa religion de l'amour. La tragédie du désenchantement le fait reparaître dans sa force et prend pour symbole central le Rédempteur désormais sans vertu, réduit lui-même à la condition d'homme et de victime du Destin. (72)

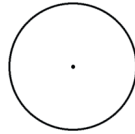
Au passage, cette orbite est aussi le moment d'intersection entre les deux droites de la Croix. À travers l'expérience du Néant, l'être humain trouve son Centre, et deux nouvelles dimensions s'ouvrent à nos yeux : celle immanente de l'horizontalité (« Ce Phaéton perdu sous la foudre des dieux », V, v. 3), et celle transcendante de la verticalité (« Cet Icare oublié qui remontait les cieux », V, v. 2). Nerval fait écho, avec ce poème, au dernier cri *humain* du Christ sur la Croix ; il tente peut-être une réponse au désespoir de *Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabactani*, dont l'intertexte biblique dialogue avec une citation attribuée à Jean Paul (1763-1825) en épigraphe du poème nervalien : « Dieu est mort ! le ciel est vide... | Pleurez ! enfants, vous n'avez plus de père ! ». Enfin, ce qui au début pouvait apparaître comme un chant de déception devient l'occasion de tracer de nouvelles routes sur le chemin de la foi. L'expérience de la Passion du Christ n'est pas reniée (« Quel est ce nouveau dieu qu'on impose à la terre ? [...] Un seul pouvait au monde expliquer ce mystère », V, vv. 10 et 13). Cependant elle est réinterprétée sous l'optique d'un nouveau syncrétisme qui considère le Christ comme étant

le dernier d'une lignée de personnages mythiques incarnant un désastre de la condition mortelle : Icare, Phaéton, symboles appro-

priés d'un romantisme catastrophique [...] Jésus, en continuant le lignage d'Atys, reproduit un parcours de mort et de résurrection. (Richer 1962, 356-7)

L'abîme et l'obscurité seraient ainsi exorcisés : Nerval semble lire les Évangiles par une interprétation gnostique qui voit dans le Christ le dernier de toute une série de dieux, héros ou *démons* solaires. La réalité de la foi est cachée, est un mystère, et ses seuils sont ceux du Temple, ses routes celles de l'initiation. C'est là que se situe la deuxième partie de *Mysticisme* : au pied du sycamore et du Temple de Daphné.

## 6 *Daphné* : le cercle



Le sonnet *Daphné* (Nerval 1993, 3: 441-2) constitue la deuxième partie de *Mysticisme* et s'ouvre avec une épigraphe, la première moitié du sixième vers de la IV<sup>e</sup> *Églogue* (« *Jam verdit et virgo* »), dont la seconde moitié (« *redeunt Saturnia regna* »), comme l'a remarqué Mizuno, est citée dans *Quintus Aucler* (Nerval 1989, 2: 1135-62). Ainsi, « la chanson de l'éternel retour est doublement couronnée par le principe féminin incarné dans la vierge Astrée et la fille aimée d'Apollon » (Mizuno 2013, 61). La torche de l'éternel féminin éclaire les symboles circulaires de la Nature, et en développe certains aspects.

C'est la seule poésie de la section *Mysticisme* qui met en scène une chimère, en l'occurrence le dragon (« Et la grotte, fatale aux hôtes imprudents, | Oû du dragon vaincu dort l'antique semence », vv. 7-8) : comme l'a remarqué Bertrand Marchal, « il thématise en fait sa propre identité poétique » (Marchal 2005, 134). Le monstre symbolise ainsi une expérience successive de la réalité et évolue sous toutes les nuances d'une allégorie *duale* et *circulaire*.

De la même façon que la chimère est un monstre double, un dragon moitié-lion, moitié-chèvre, le mot lui-même de « chimère » à une réalité double : au sens propre, il désigne le monstre mythologique ; au sens figuré, il est un autre nom de l'illusion ou un euphémisme de la folie, en tant que la folie est le démon de l'imagination. [*en note* : Le mot chimère, du grec *chimaira* qui signifie proprement *chèvre*, est en quelque sorte le doublet de caprice, du latin *capra*.]. (134)

Le poème *Le Christ aux Oliviers* nous avait interrogé relativement à la dimension cosmologique, celle de l'Absolu : l'être et le non-être, le jour et la nuit, Dieu et le Néant. En revanche, dans *Daphné*, on explore la dimension de la dualité, de la mobilité, de la fluctuation et de la multiplicité. C'est le symbolisme de l'eau et de la Lune, emprunté à la déesse Daphné ; et celui du cercle, emprunté à l'*ouoroboros*, le dragon alchimique qui se mord la queue *in æternum*. Le cercle est un autre symbole opératif pour pénétrer certains mystères de la réalité. La circularité nous suggère en plus une analogie entre les sphères célestes et le globe terrestre, mais aussi entre la rotation périodique des planètes et le déroulement de la vie humaine. C'est un ordre éternel qui se révèle à travers ces mystères (« Le temps va ramener l'ordre des anciens jours », v. 10).

Cette reprise de thèmes païens pourrait faire penser à une redécouverte de la religion gréco-latine « endormie sous l'arc de Constantin » (v. 13), posée comme une adversaire de la religion chrétienne. En revanche, comme on l'a déjà remarqué par rapport au *Christ aux Oliviers*, Nerval s'attache surtout à intégrer le Christianisme avec « une chaîne non interrompue de cultes spiritualistes » (Mizuno 2006, 111). Il décrit un symbolisme syncrétique, en mélangeant les traditions les plus différentes, à travers un procédé mythopoïétique que nous avons voulu définir comme *mystico-symbolique*.

Il faut ainsi que la Croix, tracée, méditée et intériorisée, fasse face à l'évanescence du monde ; il faut que la linéarité s'unisse à la circularité, la croix au cercle, l'universel au particulier, autrement dit le *cosmos* à la *psyché*. Le poème nervalien « tient donc ensemble ces deux dimensions mythico-cosmique et psychique » et l'on sait que « cette conjonction du psychique et du cosmique s'appelle aussi, dans le vocabulaire poético-mystique du romantisme, correspondance » (Mizuno 2006, 135).

Là, où le désespoir avait tué tout *dieu*, on se retrouve encore à recommencer « cette chanson d'amour », sous l'olivier des méditations, « au pied du sycamore » (v. 2), aux seuils du Temple, à l'intérieur d'un Temps circulaire. À ce propos, Mizuno a proposé l'hypothèse selon laquelle la progression de « connais-tu » (v. 1) à « reconnais-tu » (v. 5) ne serait pas fortuite...

La vieille romance revient régulièrement dans les contrées suggérées par les quatre arbres : le sycamore, les mûriers, l'olivier et les saules. En l'écoutant, Daphné, transformée en laurier pour fuir les poursuites d'Apollon, se souvient des lieux et des choses qu'elle a connus dans une autre existence. La chanson d'amour a pour effet de convoquer une mémoire ancienne. (2013, 49)

Le Temple « immense » (v. 5) pourrait être une métaphore de la nature, ou de l'Univers-même. C'est, de toute façon, le lieu consacré à l'accès à la connaissance, symbolisée par « l'antique semence » du « dragon vaincu » (v. 8).

Selon le dictionnaire de Bescherelle le mot *semence* a parmi d'autres la signification de « tout ce qui se sème par la main de l'homme ou naturellement, grains, graines, noyaux, pépins » et contient l'idée de germination. En associant l'idée de la renaissance à celle de l'échec, le poète suggère la palingénésie, basée sur le temps cyclique. Le verbe dormir souligne que le retour des choses disparues reste en suspens, alors que la rime qui associe la vieille romance à la vieille semence renchérit sur l'idée du commencement éternel. (2013, 49)

La poésie devient elle-même langage de connaissance, parole qui réunit les mots terrestres aux géométries célestes, puissance créatrice qui dévoile les correspondances entre les choses. La poésie-chimère

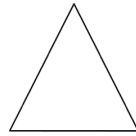
se retourne en figure positive, comme, en termes coleridgiens, le démon de l'imagination (*fancy*) se retourne en imagination créatrice (*imagination*). Ce monstre composite devient en effet l'emblème d'une poésie qui est toujours composition ou recombinaison d'éléments préexistants - ceux légués par la tradition littéraire -, dissous et recomposés, *soluta et coagulata*, pour reprendre la formule de Jean Starobinski. (2013, 139)

Les correspondances ouvrent une perception plus profonde de la réalité et, de même, toute une nouvelle série d'argumentations sur la nature humaine et divine. Enfin, si - en suivant notre conjecture géométrique - on lisait le symbolisme de *Daphné* en l'unifiant avec celui du *Christ aux Oliviers*, on obtiendrait virtuellement un *cercle croisé*.

Le symbolisme du cercle croisé s'achemine vers l'accomplissement de l'humain et du divin : l'expérience d'un Univers cyclique est complétée par la vision transcendantale de la Croix. Le cercle croisé exprime l'idée que l'initié est bien centré par rapport à lui-même (le centre du cercle), à la nature (l'horizontalité et la circularité), et au ciel et à la terre (la verticalité) ; l'initié étend aussi ses facultés de perception, en captant un certain *ordre* entre et au-dessus de toute chose. Cependant, cette expérience n'a pas encore la capacité de devenir, pourrait-on dire, *système de correspondances*. Ce qui manque encore est la profondeur nécessaire à créer une triangulation Humain-Création-Créateur, alors qu'à l'intérieur du cercle la relation concerne simplement l'Humain et la Création. Ce qui manque serait une cosmologie holistique. Pour l'accomplir, il faut introduire l'élément de la correspondance entre les éléments de la création. Autrement dit, le ciel et la terre, le cos-

mos et la psyché, la nature et l'être humain ne seraient pas seulement dans une relation d'*analogie*, mais aussi de 'dialogie', en vertu d'une valeur plus haute. Dans ce sens, ils se correspondent, ils dialoguent, ils se compénètrent. Le vers est la langue de ce dialogue, la langue des prophètes et des dieux. Le vers brille, pour Nerval, d'une véritable lumière divine. Il révèle, il rend palpable, il manifeste ce qui était caché : « Tout est sensible ! » (*Vers dorés*, épigraphe et v. 8). C'est ainsi que dans la troisième partie Nerval aborde la doctrine d'un système de correspondances, tout en s'inspirant de la sagesse pythagoricienne.

## 7 *Vers dorés* : le triangle



La troisième partie intitulée *Vers dorés* (Nerval 1993, 3: 442) est « une réponse radicale à l'obsession du néant » (Bénichou 2004, 2: 1801), grâce à une vision solaire : la troisième étape du cheminement spirituel que nous tentons d'illustrer. Ce dernier sonnet de *Mysticisme* relève ouvertement d'une inspiration pythagoricienne dont les principales sources nervaliennes seraient la *Philosophie de la nature* (1777) de Jean-Baptiste Claude Delisle de Sales (1739-1816) et *Les vers dorés de Pythagore...* d'Antoine Fabre d'Olivet (1813) - d'après, entre autres, Georges Le Breton (1958) et Hamidou Richer (2017). Sans nous attarder sur le parallélisme entre les sources pythagoriciennes et le sonnet nervalien - déjà traité par Richer (2017) - remarquons quelques traits de la pensée pythagoricienne afin d'approfondir notre conjecture géométrique autour du parcours tracé par la section *Mysticisme*.

Pythagore considérait l'Univers comme un Tout animé dont les Intelligences divines, rangées chacune selon ses perfections dans sa sphère propre, étaient les membres. Ce fut lui qui désigna le premier le Tout par le mot *Kosmos*, pour exprimer la beauté, l'ordre, la régularité qui y règnent ; les Latins traduisirent ce mot par *Mundus*, duquel nous avons fait le mot français Monde. C'est de l'Unité considérée comme principe du monde que dérive le nom d'Univers que nous lui donnons. Pythagore posait l'Unité pour principe de toute chose, et disait que de cette Unité sortit une Duité infinie. L'essence de cette Unité et la manière dont la Duité qui en émanait y était enfin ramenée, étaient les mystères les plus profonds de sa doctrine, les objets sacrés de la foi de ses disciples, les points fondamentaux qu'il leur était défendu de révéler. (D'Olivet 1813, 197)

De la première partie à la troisième, on peut ainsi imaginer ce cheminement initiatique : d'une véritable *vision* tragique et chaotique de la réalité à une intuition *solaire* du Monde ordonné en *kosmos* et organisé en vertu d'un principe absolu et unitaire : le *cercle croisé* est finalement inscrit dans un *système* (le triangle). On pourrait dire, en suivant une réflexion d'Albert Béguin à propos de Saint-Jean de la Croix, qu'il y a

deux voies mystiques : descente en soi, et contemplation de l'Unité dans le multiple. La seconde ne saurait se confondre avec une marche procédant de l'inconnu au connu, comme celle du poète : pour un Saint-Jean de la Croix, il ne s'agit pas de *trouver Dieu dans les choses*, mais, au contraire, de partir de l'intuition massive de l'Unité, seule *connue* par une connaissance véritablement première, antérieure à tout chemin et à tout progrès ; et ensuite seulement, au terme et au retour de l'expérience, de retrouver les choses qu'il avait fallu d'abord nier et rejeter au néant. *Trouver les choses en Dieu*, les saisir en cet instant où « elles cessent d'être des apparences isolées pour s'absorber dans l'Être » et pour en recevoir l'existence, tel est le mouvement de « retour » qui est la véritable relation du mystique avec la beauté du monde. (Béguin 1936, 119-20)

De même, il fallait renier Dieu dans *Le Christ aux Oliviers* pour le retrouver, *ressuscité*, dans les *Vers dorés* :

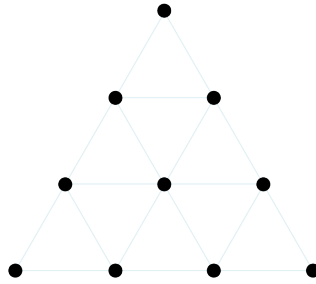
Si Dieu est mort à travers la figure du Christ, comment ne pas voir dans le pythagorisme nervalien une sorte de rénovation néopaienne de la religion ? (Richer 2017, 33)

Peut-être pourrait-on lire les trois parties de *Mysticisme* comme la description d'un mouvement qui va de la Passion d'un *démon* solaire jusqu'à sa résurrection. D'ailleurs, une légende affirme que Pythagore lui-même est ressuscité trois jours après sa mort.

Nous avons choisi le triangle, car il joue un rôle fondamental dans la symbolique des nombres pythagoricienne, étant une parfaite métaphore géométrique de la doctrine de la τετρακτύς (tétrade). La *tétrade* pythagoricienne est formée par la série 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 qui donne comme résultat le chiffre 10 (Δ, ΔΕΚΑ, δέκα, *déka*). Elle est représentée par un triangle équilatéral formé par neuf triangles équilatéraux. De plus, la symbolique de la tétrade dialogue aussi avec celle du chiffre 12, qui renvoie à l'ordre universel de la création. Comme l'écrivit D'Olivet,

[Pythagore] désignait Dieu par 1, et la matière par 2, il exprimait l'Univers par le nombre 12, qui résulte de la réunion des





deux autres. Ce nombre se formait par la multiplication de 3 par 4 : c'est-à-dire que ce philosophe concevait le Monde universel comme composé de trois mondes particuliers, qui, s'enchaînant l'un à l'autre au moyen des quatre modifications élémentaires, se développaient en douze sphères concentriques. L'Être ineffable qui remplissait ces douze sphères, sans être saisi par aucune, était Dieu. Les intelligences qui peuplaient les trois mondes étaient, premièrement, les Dieux immortels proprement dits ; secondement, les Héros glorifiés ; troisièmement, les Démonstrations terrestres. (1813, 199)

Si l'on lisait à rebours les autres parties de *Mysticisme* à la lumière de ces dernières considérations, on pourrait tracer un cheminement idéal qui répond à une certaine cohérence gnostique et sapientiale. Le démon solaire du *Christ aux Oliviers* surgit de cette tradition : ce « courant néoplatonicien dont la finalité est l'union à l'Un, courant qui sera christianisé par saint Augustin et surtout par le Pseudo-Denys » (Beyer de Ryke 2005, 10-11), dont on a déjà remarqué certains traits. Le néo-pythagorisme de Nerval rejoint ainsi « le courant de l'alexandrinisme et du néo-platonisme, il aboutit à une mythologie du feu et à une religion astrale » (Richer 1987, 143). Une sorte de synthèse

d'ailleurs fragile, incomplète, toute poétique, de ces diverses notions, se fit très progressivement dans l'esprit du poète, au hasard de ses lectures et suivant la pente ordinaire de ses rêveries. (143)

Il faut que la connaissance, apprise pendant les deux premières étapes (la croix et le cercle), s'appuie, dans la troisième, sur un système qui embrasse tous les domaines de la création et qui puisse tout contenir.

C'est probablement la notion de religion pythagoricienne et astrale qui donne aux poèmes [des *Chimères*] leur unité profonde ; elle a pour corollaire l'idée de fatalité et retour cyclique. Ce fil d'Ariane

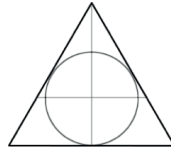
relie « *Le Christ aux oliviers* » (inspiré de Jean-Paul, 1844), et « *Vers dorés* » aux autres poèmes. L'ensemble baigne dans une atmosphère d'inéluctable qui aboutit à des affirmations solennelles. Afin de sortir à jamais des nombres et des êtres l'homme doit rejoindre la source divine et se perdre en elle. (339)

En substitution à l'incarnation du Christ, il y aurait le panpsychisme de Pythagore qui, à travers ses spéculations philosophiques et mathématiques, fonde une doctrine qui est capable de contempler et synthétiser, en même temps, l'abstrait et le naturel (« à la matière même un verbe est attaché », v. 10), l'absolu et l'immanent, le divin et la création. L'être humain y occupe une place centrale, presque chrétienne, en perpétuelle tension entre destin et liberté (« des forces que tu tiens ta liberté dispose », v. 3) :

Tout dans l'univers meurt et renaît, chaque être, du métal à l'astre, cherche à s'élever dans l'échelle, à changer de règne. Et l'homme, abrégé de l'univers, en même temps responsable du monde créé, doit agir comme médiateur entre les diverses parties du Tout. (342)

Les *vers dorés* auraient ainsi la visée de célébrer l'absolu dans le particulier, de respecter « dans la bête un esprit agissant » (v. 5) et « un mystère d'amour dans le métal » (v. 7). Voilà le signifié de la sentence « Tout est sensible ! » (épigraphe et v. 8). Le divin est, de même que la nature, *sensible* et perceptible alors qu'il reste souvent « caché » sous les formes les plus variées comme « un pur esprit [qui] s'accroît sous l'écorce des pierres » (v. 14). Pour le mystique c'est un geste capital et même fondateur : « la négation du multiple et l'affirmation de l'Un. Le chemin de perfection consiste à s'arracher au monde des apparences » (Béguin 1936, 113). Si le Christ lui-même ne parvenait plus à reconnaître Dieu dans son œil, « n'est-ce pas que l'œil de Dieu (ou plutôt ce qui prend place dans son orbite) s'était déplacé dans la nature ? » (Richer 2017, 33).

## 8 Poésie et mystique



Nous avons voulu lire *Mysticisme* comme un parcours, un « chemin de perfection », en suivant l'expression de Béguin. L'idée d'un cheminement est par ailleurs déjà présente dans la conception de Nerval qui – comme on l'a rappelé en introduction – définit le « Troisième château » comme « les premières stations à parcourir pour tout poète » (Nerval 1993, 3: 438).

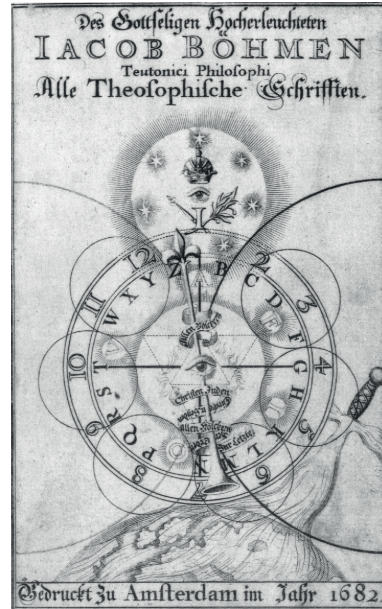
Certainement, les thèmes et les symboles que nous avons traités sont bien connus de nombreuses traditions spirituelles qui se sont posé le problème de décrire un enseignement par étapes. Le symbole résultant de notre conjecture géométrique est un véritable archétype à partir duquel procèdent un grand nombre d'autres symboles et métaphores visant à représenter une doctrine occulte sous la forme d'une composition figurative : un Grand Œuvre spirituel, un processus alchimique ou bien une description allégorique de l'univers.

C'est le cas, par exemple, de certains frontispices des traités de Jacob Böhme, un philosophe « dont le regard audacieux a pénétré jusque dans le sanctuaire divin » (D'Olivet 1813, 560) et dont Nerval était un lecteur. À titre d'exemple, dans l'image que nous proposons ici (d'après la couverture de *Alle Theosophische Schriften*, 1682) [fig. 1], le centre de l'horloge cosmique est à la fois la pupille d'un œil inscrit dans le triangle divin et la rencontre des deux droites perpendiculaires.

Il ne s'agit évidemment pas de proposer une méthode 'géométrique' rigoureuse pour l'analyse de l'œuvre nervalienne, mais de montrer comment on pourrait lire la poésie de Nerval à travers un certain développement d'images, de symboles, d'*idées mystiques*, auxquels l'auteur était forcément accoutumé par ses études et ses fascinations.

Cette lecture est un essai de pratique ouverte, une conjecture que nous avons prise au sérieux pour en mesurer les implications et les résultats. Tel aurait dû être aussi l'esprit d'un libre penseur romantique comme Nerval qui s'approchait de la réalité des symboles : la réinterprétation personnelle d'un héritage archaïque et universel.

Selon Kurt Schärer, les figures et les thèmes à l'intérieur de *Mysticisme* et de *Les Chimères* viseraient à « l'union totale des mythologies ». Elles s'appuieraient pour cela sur toutes sortes de « doctrines synchrétiques », au point que le poète irait « jusqu'à emprunter ses paroles et ses symboles aux rêves les plus aberrants que l'imagina-



**Figure 1** Jacob Böhme, *Des Gottseligen Hoherleuchteten Iacob Böhmen Teutonici Philosophi Alle Theosophische Schriften*. Amsterdam, 1682

tion humaine ait conçu en vue de l'union [avec le Divin] » (1981, 27). L'inspiration poétique se nourrit ainsi de visions et d'intuitions mystiques ; le sentiment spirituel, la recherche d'une foi nouvelle, les spéculations théologiques signent profondément l'œuvre poétique.

Poésie et mystique, deux *arts* différents qui se croisent parfois sur le même chemin. Et si « le mystique recourt à l'expression lyrique pour décrire approximativement l'expérience cruciale » (Béguin 1936, 118-19), on peut également entendre, dans l'œuvre du poète, les échos du combat spirituel, les signes d'un drame profond. Ces signes s'accompliront, beaucoup d'années plus tard, dans la grandeur d'une véritable « épopée métaphysique » (Béguin 1936, 51), *Aurélia*.

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# Linguistica





# The Functional Structure of Infinitive Relatives in Romance Consequences for the Cartographic Approach

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**Abstract** In this article, we will show that the modal properties of infinitive relative clauses are a direct consequence of their defective functional periphery, namely that they just project a FinP in the case of prepositional relatives, but up to ForceP in *wh*-relatives. While this truncation analysis helps us explain the special properties of infinitive relatives, it offers new insights into the standard analysis of in situ focus as covert movement to FocP and of right-dislocation as left-dislocation plus remnant movement of TP.

**Keywords** Infinitive relatives. Left periphery. Truncation. Modal adverbs. Topic. Focus.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Infinitive Relatives. – 3 The Size of Infinitive Clauses. – 4 Consequences for Cartographic Approaches. – 5 Conclusions.



## Peer review

Submitted 2022-04-01  
Accepted 2022-05-13  
Published 2022-08-31

## Open access

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**Citation** Villalba, X. (2022). "The Functional Structure of Infinitive Relatives in Romance. Consequences for the Cartographic Approach". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [137-158] 143-164.

## 1 Introduction

Relative clauses have been a major concern in syntax, semantics, acquisition, and processing studies, however, the focus has been placed, for obvious reasons, on finite prototypical cases. In this paper, we are moving to a less explored terrain, infinitive relatives, with three main goals in mind. First, we will provide a description of left periphery of infinitival relatives in Romance, which is structurally defective in different degrees. Second, we will argue that the truncated left periphery of infinitival relatives in Romance helps us explain certain interpretive properties, namely their particular modal readings. Finally, we will discuss the consequences that our analysis of infinitive relatives has for cartographic analyses involving remnant movement to a rich left periphery.

## 2 Infinitive Relatives

In this section we present a description of the basic properties of infinitive relatives. First, we show the two main constructions: *wh*- and prepositional relatives (§ 2.1). Then we contrast them with other constructions with a similar pattern, but which they are not to be confused with. Then, in subsection 2.3, we describe the defective left periphery of infinitive relatives, and in 2.4, we show their modal properties.

### 2.1 Main Properties

Infinitive relatives are a major feature of Romance languages (cf. Germanic languages, Bhatt 2008; Sabel 2014; 2015). On the one hand, we have infinitive *wh*-relatives, as in (1), where the clause is headed by a relative pronoun (Giurgea, Soare 2010; Napoli 1976; Táboas 1995; Villalba 2017; 2019):<sup>1</sup>

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Previous versions of this article were presented at: the workshop “The Meaning of Functional Categories in the Verbal/Sentential Domain” (UAB, 17-18 June 2021), the “III Encontro de Gramática Gerativa. Homenagem a Sonia Cyrino e Eugênia Duarte” (Salvador de Bahia, 1-3 September 2021), the “International Workshop on Syntactic Cartography” (Beijing, 29 October-1 November 2021), and the Seminar of the Center for Linguistic Theory (UAB, 26 November 2021), where I benefitted from the comments and suggestions by Adriana Belletti, Valentina Bianchi, Sonia Cyrino, M. Teresa Espinal, M. Lluïsa Hernanz, and Adam Ledgeway. Thanks are also due to two anonymous reviewers, who helped me to improve the final version. Finally, I acknowledge financial support from the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (PID2020-112801GB-I00) and the Generalitat de Catalunya (2017SGR634).

**1** We follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules. Besides, languages are abbreviated as follows: Ca.=Catalan, EP=European Portuguese, It.=Italian, Fr.=French, Ge.=German, Ro.=Romanian, Sa.=Sardinian, Sp.=Spanish.

- (1) a. Cerca una ragazza con cui uscire.  
seek.3SG a girl with whom go.out.INF  
'He is looking for a girl to have a date with.' It. (Cinque 1988, 455)
- b. No tenim ni un tronc en què reposar.  
not have.1PL neither a log on what rest.INF  
'We don't even have a log to rest on.' Ca. (Alsina 2002, § 20.2.4.2)
- c. Necesita (a) un hombre en quien confiar.  
need.3SG DOM a man on who rely.INF  
'(S)he needs a man to rely on.' Sp. (Hernanz 1999, ex. 349)
- d. Kirco una pinta kin sa cale iscríere una líttera.  
seek.1SG a pen with the which write.INF a letter  
'I am looking for a pen with which to write a letter.' Sa. (Jones 2005, 298)

On the other hand, we also have infinitive relatives headed by a preposition-like element (Bianchi 1991; Cinque 2020; Duarte et al. 2015; Morales Carmona 1994; Napoli 1976; Schmitt Jensen 1973; Villalba, Planas-Morales 2020), as in the following examples:

- (2) a. Les livres **à lire** sont sur la  
the books to read.INF be.3PL on the  
'The books to read are on the table.' Fr. (Giurgea, Soare 2010, 192)
- b. Cărtile **de citit** sînt pe măsa.  
books-the by read.INF be.3PL on table  
'The books to read are on the table.' Ro. (Giurgea, Soare 2010, 192)
- c. Cerco un libro **da leggere.**  
seek.1SG a book by read.INF  
'I am looking for a book to read.' It. (Cinque 1988, ex. 28a)
- d. Appo fattu tottu sas cosas **de fákere.**  
have.3PL made all the things by make.INF  
'They have done all the things to do.' Sa. (Jones 2005, 298)

While the former class is identified straightforwardly, the latter can be easily confused with causal or final prepositional structures. Hence, some methodological caveats are necessary.

## 2.2 Methodological Caveats

When dealing with prepositional infinitival relatives, we must carefully distinguish them from causal or final adjunct PPs, which is not an easy matter sometimes. Consider the following case, provided by one anonymous reviewer:

- (3) Los niños buscan libretas para pintar. Sp.  
the children seek.3PL notebooks to paint.INF  
'The children are looking for notebooks to paint.'

The infinitival sentence *para pintar* can be analysed either as a relative clause modifying *libretas* 'notebooks' ('notebooks that can be painted') or as an adverbial final clause ('with the intention of painting them'). When we separate the prepositional clause from the noun, the only surviving reading is that of a final adjunct:

- (4) Para pintar los niños buscan libretas. Sp.  
for paint.INF the children seek.3PL notebooks  
'For painting, the children are looking for notebooks.'

In contrast, when the prepositional clause follows a preverbal subject, we can only get the relative reading:

- (5) Las libretas para pintar son caras. Sp.  
the notebooks for paint.INF be.3PL expensive  
'The notebooks to paint are expensive.'

A second difference concerns the availability of a resumptive pronoun. While infinitive relatives do not allow a pronoun, since its function is already carried out by a null operator, adjunct infinitive clauses do not have such restriction:

- (6) a. En Castilla hay muchas tierras por sembrar>(\*las).  
in Castille have.3SG.LOC many lands by sow.INF-them.F  
'In Castille there are many lands to be sown.' Sp.  
b. Se queman las tierras para mantener\*(las) fértiles.  
REFL burn.3PL the lands for maintain.INF-them.F fertile  
'Lands are burnt to have them fertile.'

A third important test concerns the presence of a possessive pronoun. As a rule, the antecedent of a relative clause cannot be modified by a possessive:

- (7) Nos enseñó los/\*sus libros que se había comprado Sp.  
to.us showed the/her books that REFL had bought  
'She showed us the/his books that she had bought.'

When we apply this test, we can find a clear contrast:

- (8) a. \*Avergonzada, escondió sus libros por leer Sp.  
ashamed.F hid.3SG her books by read.INF  
'Ashamed, she hid her books to read.'
- b. Avergonzada, escondió sus libros por no discutir.  
ashamed.F hid.3SG her books by not argue.INF  
'Ashamed, she hid her books to avoid an argument.'

We see that prepositional relatives are incompatible with a possessive modifier, as relatives in general, but adverbial PP are unaffected by the presence of a possessive.

A second source of confusion is predicative clauses, like the one in (9), which Hernanz (1999, 2299) includes in the class of prepositional infinitive relatives:

- (9) Se encontró la casa sin fregar, las camas por hacer  
REFL found.3SG the house without scrub.INF the beds by make.INF  
y el vestido a medio planchar. Sp.  
and the dress to half iron.INF  
'The house was found unwashed, the beds unmade, and the dress half ironed.'

Typical constituency tests like independent pronominalisation or word order change show us that we are dealing with a subject-predicate small clause, rather than with a noun plus relative construction:

- (10) a. La casa se la encontró sin fregar. Sp.  
the.F house REFL her found.3SG without scrub.INF  
'The house, (s)he found unwashed.'
- b. Se encontró sin fregar la casa. Sp.  
REFL found.3SG without scrub.INF the house  
'She found the house unwashed.'
- (11) a. \*Las tierras es difícil venderlas por sembrar. Sp.  
the lands be.3SG difficult sell.INF-them by sow  
'It is difficult to sell the lands to be sown.'
- b. \*Es difícil vender por sembrar las tierras. Sp.  
be.3SG difficult sell.INF by sow.INF the lands  
'It is difficult to sell the lands to be sown.'

Moreover, as expected, these constructions admit possessives, unlike relatives:

- (12) a. Se      encontró   su   casa      sin      fregar.      Sp.  
 REFL    found.3SG   her   house    without   scrub.INF  
 ‘(S)he found his house unwashed.’
- b. \*Es      difícil      vender   sus      tierras    por    sembrar.    Sp.  
 be.3SG   difficult    sell.INF   her    lands    by    sow.INF  
 ‘It is difficult to sell her lands to be sown.’

Therefore, these constructions are not nominal modifiers, but second-ary predicates, so they fall out of the scope of our research.

Yet, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, this does not mean that these prepositional sentences cannot be found in the typical context of prepositional infinitive relatives, as for example after a pre-verbal subject:

- (13) Las      camisas    sin      planchar    están      allí.      Sp.  
 the    shirts    without   iron.INF    stay.3PL    there  
 ‘The shirts without ironing are there.’

However, it is unclear whether we are dealing with wholesale relative clauses. While the resumptive pronoun is not allowed, it is possible to use a possessive modifier, and the clause can be separated from the noun:

- (14) a. \*Las    camisas    sin      plancharlas    están      allí.      Sp.  
 the    shirts    without   iron.INF-them.F    stay.3PL    there
- b. Mis    camisas    sin      planchar      están      allí.      Sp.  
 my    shirts    without   iron.INF      stay.3PL    there  
 ‘My shirts without ironing are there.’
- c. Las    camisas    están      allí      sin      planchar.    Sp.  
 the    shirts    stay.3PL    there    without   iron.INF  
 ‘The shirts are there without ironing.’

Besides, these infinitival clauses, unlike relative infinitive clauses, lack a modal reading and have a perfective value: what we understand is not that the shirts must or can be ironed, but only that they have not been ironed. As we will see in section 2.4, prototypical infinitive relatives have an inherent modal reading and a prospective temporal interpretation.

Finally, we must bear in mind that the whole gamut of infinitive relatives in Romance is richer and more complex than the picture we are offering. To illustrate the point, consider *a* ‘to’ and *para* ‘for’ relatives in European Portuguese (Duarte, Santos, Alexandre 2015). Relatives headed by *a* behave like the examples we have just seen:

they display enclisis, lack an overt subject and involve an uninflected infinitive.

- (15) a. O livro a lerlhes está na prateleira. EP  
the book to read.INF.to-them stay.3SG on.the shelf  
'The book to read to them is on the shelf.'
- b. Os potros a alimentar(\*em) amanhã são de raça lusitana.  
the colts to feed.INF (3PL) tomorrow be.3PL of race Portuguese  
'The colts to feed tomorrow are of Portuguese breed.'

In contrast, *para* relatives show proclisis, and allow overt preverbal subjects and inflected infinitives, which suggests they involve a different, richer clausal structure.

- (16) a. O livro para eu/ele lhes ler está na prateleira. EP  
the book for I/he to-them read.INF stay.3SG on.the shelf  
'The book which I/he will read to them is on the shelf.'
- b. Os atletas para correr(em) na maratona chegaram ontem. EP  
the athletes for run.INF (3PL) on.the marathon arrived.3PL yesterday  
'The athletes who will run the marathon arrived yesterday.'

What we are proposing will be valid for prototypical infinitive prepositional and *wh*-relatives, but surely not for cases like those in (16).

### 2.3 Defective Left Periphery

As a rule, Romance infinitive clauses do not easily allow for clitic left-dislocation (CLLD), as we can appreciate in the following Spanish examples from Hernanz (2011):<sup>2</sup>

- (17) a. \*Juan niega a María haberle dado el premio. Sp.  
John deny.3SG to Mary have.INF-to.her given the prize  
'John denies having given the prize to Mary.'
- b. \*Pepe no se acordaba de esta novela haberla ya leído. Sp.  
Pepe not REFL reminded.3SG of this novel have.INF-her already read.PTPC  
'Pepe did not remind having already read this novel.'

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<sup>2</sup> As for the cases of CLLD in infinitives discussed in Fernández-Sánchez (2016), we will follow the suggestion by Hernanz (2011) that they should be considered parentheticals, rather than true cases of CLLD.

The same behaviour is found with infinitive relatives, either prepositional or *wh*-:<sup>3</sup>

- (18) a. \*Las cosas por/para **a Juana** decirle son numerosas. Sp.  
the things by/for to Joan say.INF.to-herbe.3PL numerous
- b. \*Els llibres per **a col·legi** portar-hi són aquí. Ca.  
the books by to school bring.INF-LOC be.3PL here
- c. \*Cerco un uomo da **domani** presentare a Maria. It.  
seek.1SG a man by tomorrow introduce.INF to Mary  
(Rizzi 1982, 103)
- d. ?\*Cerco qualcosa **a voi** da regalare per Natale. It.  
seek.1SG something to you by give.INF for Xmas  
(Cinque 2020, 198)
- (19) a. \*Necessitem una causa per la qual **als carrers** lluitar-hi. Ca.  
need.1PL a cause for the which at-the streets fight.INF-LOC
- b. \*Busca un amigo a quien **sus secretos** confiarlos. Sp.  
seek.3SG a friend to whom his/her secrets trust.INF-them
- c. \*Sto cercando una persona con cui **questa proposta** discuterla. It.  
be.1SG seeking a person with who this proposal discuss.INF-her  
(Bianchi 1991, 119)

This restriction on CLLD is not found in finite relatives, as the following examples show:

- (20) a. Tinc un amic amb el qual d'aquests temes  
have.1SG a friend with the which of-these subjects  
no en parlem mai.  
not PART talk-1PL never  
'I have a friend with whom we never talk about these matters.' Ca.  
(Villalba 2000, ex. 26c)
- b. Busca un socio que **estos asuntos** los solucione bien. Sp.  
seek.3SG a partner that these matters them solve.3SG well  
'(S)he is looking for a partner that solves these matters well.'
- c. Un uomo a cui, il premio Nobel, lo daranno senz'altro.  
a man to whom, the prize Nobel it give.FUT.3PL without.other  
'A man to whom, the Nobel Prize, they will give it undoubtedly.' It.  
(Rizzi 1997, ex. 12a)

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<sup>3</sup> Against most of the literature, Cinque (2020, 198) suggests that CLLD is indeed possible with Italian *wh*-infinitive relatives, and offers the following example:

(i) Cerco un argomento di cui/del quale **a voi** poter parlare con calma.  
'I am looking for some topic I can talk to you about calmly.'



When it comes to focalisation, neither prepositional nor *wh*- infinitive relatives allow fronted foci (even though, as we will see in § 4, *in situ* focus is possible):

- (21) a. \*Las tierras por **solo en verano** sembrar están en Soria. Sp.  
the lands by only in summer sow.INF stay.3PL in Soria  
b. \*Els llibres per **només a col·legi** llegir són aquí. Ca.  
the books by only at school read.INF be.3PL here
- (22) a. \*Las tierras en las que **solo en verano** sembrar están en Soria. Sp.  
the lands in thethat only in **summersow**.INF stay.3PL in Soria  
b. \*Els llibres amb què **només a col·legi** treballar són aquí. Ca.  
the books with what only atschool work.INF be.3PLhere

The same paradigm reproduces with negative fronting:

- (23) a. \*Las tierras por **nunca jamás** sembrar están en Soria. Sp.  
the lands by never ever sow.INF stay.3PL in Soria  
b. \*Els llibres per **mai de la vida** llegir són aquí. Ca.  
the books by never of the life read.INF be.3PL here
- (24) a. \*Las tierras en las **que nunca jamás** sembrar están en Soria. Sp.  
the lands in the that never never sow.INF stay.3PL in Soria  
b. \*Els llibres amb què **mai de la vida** treballar són aquí. Ca.  
the books with what never of the life work.INF be.3PL here

Again, the restriction is not found in finite relatives:

- (25) a. Las tierras en las que solo en **verano se puede** sembrar  
the lands in the that only in summer REFL can.2SG sow.INF  
están en Soria. Sp.  
stay.3PL in Soria  
b. Els llibres amb què **mai de la vida** has de treballar  
the books with what never of the life have.2SG to work.INF  
són aquí. Ca.  
be.3PL here

The emerging pattern is very clear: none of the constructions standardly associated with the higher left periphery of the sentence (TopicP and FocusP in standard cartographic approaches, and PolarityP or SigmaP in other proposals) are allowed in infinitive relatives. In section 3, we will suggest this occurs because of their impoverished functional clausal structure.

## 2.4 Restricted Modal Readings

Infinitive relatives are commonly described as inherently modal constructions (Kjellmer 1975; Napoli 1976; Bianchi 1991; Hernanz 1999; Giurgea, Soare 2010). See the following examples from French by Berthelot (2017):

- (26) a. Je lui ai présenté une personne à qui confier  
I to.her have.1SG presented a person to whom leave.INF  
ses enfants. Fr.  
her children  
'I have introduced her a person to baby-sit.'
- b. Elle lui a donné la liste des choses à faire  
she to.her have.3SG given the list of things to do.INF  
avant de partir. Fr.  
before of leave.INF  
'She gave her the to-do list before leaving.'

As the author remarks, infinitival relative clauses involve a modal interpretation lacking in their tensed variants: a deontic modality of possibility in (26a) and one of necessity in (26b).

Sticking to prepositional infinitive relatives, Bianchi (1991, 121; 2007, fn. 7) argues that the modal reading must be deontic, as in the following case:

- (27) Un cane da addestrare ha morsicato l'istruttore.  
a dog by train.INF have.3SG bitten the-instructor  
'A dog to be trained bit the instructor.'

This description is pervasive in the literature (Morales Carmona 1994; Hernanz 1999; Bhatt 2008; Giurgea, Soare 2010; Cinque 2020). Indeed, Cinque (2020, 200) offers examples with *potere* 'can', and *dovere* 'must' auxiliaries:

- (28) a. Ho trovato un libro da poter leggere in vacanza.  
have.1SG find.PCTP a book by can.INF read.INF on holiday  
'I have found a book I can read during my holidays.'
- b. C'è solo una cosa da dover fare per domani.  
loc-be.3SG only one thing by need.INF do.INF for tomorrow  
'There's only one thing we must do by tomorrow.'

Interestingly, they point out that "only those restructuring predicates which are lower than *potere/dovere* are possible. All higher ones (ac-

ording to Cinque’s 2006 hierarchy) are impossible”. Among the higher ones are epistemic modals, namely those involving alethic necessity and possibility (Palmer 1986 subsumes them under *propositional* modality). This traces a clear distinction in the expression of modality in prepositional infinitive relatives: root modals are possible, but epistemic ones are excluded. Moreover, this contrast may follow from the structural deficiency of the construction.

Yet, the evidence provided by modal auxiliaries is quite scarce. A search in the Spanish CORPES XXI corpus (Real Academia Española, s.d.) only returns examples with *poder* ‘can’, as in the following example:

- (29) **El dinero para poder hacer esto** no salió  
 the money for can.INF do.INF this not came.out.3SG  
 de la billetera de Kiyosaki.  
 of the wallet of Kiyosaki  
 ‘The money to be able to do this didn’t come from Kiyosaki’s wallet.’

The corpus offers no examples with epistemic modals, as expected, but occurrences with root modals of deontic necessity are not found either, and Catalan and Spanish speakers systematically reject them, for unclear reasons.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, since the availability of modal auxiliaries is severely limited in infinitive relatives, we can find more reliable evidence in modal adverbs.

As a rule, root modal adverbs are always possible:

- (30) a. Os potros a alimentar **necesariamente** amanhã  
 the colts to feed.INF necessarily tomorrow  
 são de raça lusitana.  
 be.3PL of breed Portuguese  
 ‘The colts to necessarily feed tomorrow are of Portuguese breed.’ EP  
 (Duarte, Santos, Alexandre 2015)

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**4** An anonymous reviewer suggests that the impossibility of epistemic auxiliary modals in cases like (i) follows from the syntactic impossibility of combining *ser posible* ‘be possible’ with an infinitive, unlike what happens with *poder* ‘can’.

- (i) \*No quedan sitios para/por ser posible ir.  
 not remain.3PL places for/by be.INF possible go.INF

Yet, if this were the explanation of the ill-formedness of (i), we would expect the following sentence to be grammatical:

- (i) \*No quedan sitios para/por ser posible que yo vaya.  
 not remain.3PL places for/by be.INF possible that I go.SBJV.1SG

Here we don’t find the presumed infinitive incompatibility, but the result is equally bad.

- b. Els llibres per llegir **obligatòriament** demà són aquí.  
the books to read.INF obligatorily tomorrow be.3PL here  
'The books to obligatorily read tomorrow are here.' Ca.

In contrast, epistemic adverbs are totally excluded in prepositional infinitive relatives either in postverbal or preverbal position in Catalan (28) and Spanish (29):

- (31) a. \*Els llibres per llegir **possiblement** són aquí. Ca.  
the books to read.INF possibly be.3PL here  
b. \*Els llibres per **possiblement** llegir són aquí. Ca.  
the books by possibly/maybe read.INF be.3PL here
- (32) a. \*Los resúmenes por revisar **quizás** están aquí. Sp.  
the abstracts by review.INF maybe stay.3PL here  
b. \*Los resúmenes por **quizás** revisar están aquí. Sp.  
the abstracts by maybe review.INF stay.3PL here

We can conclude that prepositional infinitive relatives clearly reject epistemic modal adverbs in Catalan and Spanish.

In contrast, things are less clear for *wh*-relatives. In Spanish and Catalan, we find the same restrictions on epistemic modal adverbs (not a single corpus example is found), but a contrast is perceived regarding the position of the adverb: native speakers consulted found the examples with a preverbal epistemic adverb much better than the ones with a postverbal adverb.

- (33) a. ?La Maria és una persona  
the Mary be.3SG a person  
en qui **possiblement** confiar. Ca.  
in which possibly rely.INF  
'Mary is a person on which to maybe/possibly rely.'
- b. \*La Maria és una persona  
the Mary be.3SG a person  
en qui confiar **possiblement**. Ca.  
in which rely.INF possibly
- (34) a. ??Las empresas en las que **quizás** invertir  
the companies in the that maybe invest.INF  
son escasas. Sp.  
be.3PL scarce  
'The companies to maybe invest on are scarce.'

- b. \*Las empresas en las que invertir **quizás**  
 the companies in the that invest **maybe**  
 son escasas. Sp.  
 be.3PL scarce

A clearer pattern is found in Italian, where epistemic modal adverbs are reported to be possible in preverbal position, suggesting that the slight contrast we have reported for Catalan and Spanish might be real:

- (35) a. Cerco un uomo al quale **possibilmente** /**se possibile**  
 seek.1SG a man to-the which probably /if possible  
 /**forse** presentare Maria.  
 /maybe introduce.INF Mary  
 'I am looking for a man to whom probably/if possible/maybe to introduce Mary.' It.  
 (Rizzi 1982, 103)
- b. Ho trovato qualcuno a cui **probabilmente** /**evidentemente**  
 have.1SG found somebody to whom probably /evidently  
 affidare questo tipo di incarico.  
 assign.INF this kind of duty  
 'I found somebody to whom probably/evidently to assign this kind of duty.' It.  
 (Belletti 2009, 60-1)
- c. \*?Ho trovato qualcuno a cui affidare **probabilmente**  
 have.1SG found somebody to whom assign.INF probably  
 questo tipo di incarico.  
 this kind of duty  
 It. (Belletti 2009, 60-1)

To sum up, the availability of epistemic modal adverbs is not excluded by the non-finite nature of the clause: they are not possible in prepositional relatives, but they are in *wh*-relatives. Moreover, the position of epistemic adverbs clearly contrasts with that of root adverbs in *wh*-relatives: the former must precede the infinitive, while the latter must follow it. This pattern suggests itself a solution in terms of the availability of the different structural positions hosting these adverbs, which we are developing in the next section.

### 3 The Size of Infinitive Clauses

We have seen that infinitive relative clauses have severe limitations in the expression of material standardly encoded in the left periphery of the sentence proposed by Rizzi 1997, which is reproduced in (33) (see also Poletto, Bocci 2016; Rizzi 2001; Rizzi, Bocci 2017 for refinements):





The PP *al quale uomo* moves to the specifier of FinP, and then to the specifier of ForceP across the position of *forse* in the specifier of Mod-EpisP. Finally, the noun *uomo* is fronted to the specifier of the PP, and the determiner is merged.

To sum up, the resultant picture involves different clausal sizes for prepositional and *wh*-relatives. Moreover, it offers us an interesting playground for testing analyses of phenomena involving a rich left periphery, as we will see in the next section.

#### 4 Consequences for Cartographic Approaches

We have seen that infinitive relatives do not project a full left periphery, and particularly, they do not project either TopP or FocP. This fact has interesting consequences for standard cartographic analyses making crucial use of these projections.

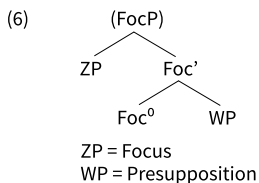
One interesting case is the mainstream analysis of *in situ* focus, as involving covert movement to the FocusP in the left-periphery. In this regard, an influential proposal was made by Rizzi (1997, 287) and a similar idea is suggested by Rizzi and Bocci (2017, fn. 6):

Here too Italian seems to possess a lower focalization, involving focal stress (possibly contrastive, but not necessarily so) on an element *in situ* (see Antinucci, Cinque 1977; Belletti, Shlonsky 1995; Calabrese 1982; Cinque 1993):

- (7) Ho letto IL TUO LIBRO (, non il suo)  
“I read YOUR BOOK, not his”

But it is conceivable that at LF (7) will have a representation involving (6) if the focal element must be moved to a peripheral position, as Chomsky’s (1976) classical analysis of Weak Cross-over implies.

The representation mentioned in the previous citation is the following:



The prediction that follows from this analysis is that contrastive or corrective focus *in situ* should be impossible in infinitive relatives, for



there is no place for the focus constituent to move to at LF. Yet, this prediction is incorrect: while infinitive relatives don't allow fronting focus (see section 2.3 above), they do admit contrastive and corrective focus *in situ*. Witness the following Catalan examples:

- (42) a. Els llibres per llegir **només demà** són aquí.  
 the books by read.INF only tomorrow be.3PL here  
 'The books to be read only tomorrow are here.' Ca.
- b. Els llibres per llegir **a classe**, i  
 the books to read.INF in class and  
 no pas a casa, són aquí.  
 not NEG at home be.3PL here  
 'The books to be read in class, not at home, are here.' Ca.
- c. Les persones amb qui parlar **només d'això**  
 the persons with who talk.INF only of-this  
 són difícils de trobar. Ca.  
 be.3PL difficult of find.INF  
 'The persons to talk to about this are difficult to find.'

These are clear examples of *in situ* contrastive or corrective focus, but since we lack any left-peripheral FocusP, Rizzi's analysis involving a left peripheral criterial head plus LF-movement cannot be sustained. Therefore, infinitive relatives give support to alternative analyses involving a lower FocP in the vP periphery (Villalba 2000; Belletti 2004) or to true *in situ* focus (Samek-Lodovici 2005; Samek-Lodovici 2015; Szendrői 2004).

A similar problem arises when we consider analyses of (clitic) right-dislocation (CLRD). While some authors claim that CLRD is placed in a low vP periphery, plus remnant movement of the VP (Villalba 2000; Villalba 2009; López 2009), other authors propose that it involves movement to a left peripheral TopP plus remnant movement of the TP (Cardinaletti 2002; Cardinaletti 2016; Samek-Lodovici 2006). Again, infinitive relatives offer us a playground for testing these two hypotheses. Since infinitive relatives don't allow CLLD altogether, the analysis involving a low TopP will predict that CLRD would be possible; on the contrary, the analysis involving a higher TopP in the left periphery will predict that CLRD would be impossible altogether. The behaviour of CLRD in Catalan seems to support the latter hypothesis, for CLRD is refused by all consulted speakers, unless a parenthetical reading is enforced:

- (43) A col·legi necessiten llibres. Ca.  
'They need books at school.'
- a. \*Precisament, els llibres per portar-hi,  
precisely the books by bring.INF-LOC  
a col·legi, són aquí.  
to school be.3PL here
- b. \*Precisament, els llibres amb què anar-hi,  
precisely the books with what go.INF-LOC  
a col·legi, són aquí.  
to school be.3PL here

This behaviour is expected if CLRD necessarily involves movement to a left peripheral TopicP.

Finally, let us consider infinitive *wh*-interrogatives, which have been suggested to allow CLLD by several authors:

- (44) a. No sé, d'aquest pernil, on comprar-ne.  
not know.1SG of-this ham where buy.INF-of.it  
'I don't know where to buy some of this ham.' Ca. (Villalba 2009)
- b. No saben al governador cuándo destituirlo.  
not know.3PL DOM-the governor when depose.INF-him  
'They don't know when to remove the governor.' Sp. (Hernanz 2011)

While Villalba (2019) argues that the selected nature of interrogative clauses involves ForceP necessarily, hence allowing for a higher TopP, and hence for CLLD, some Catalan speakers consulted suggest that a parenthetical intonation is necessary to admit (41a). Besides, similar sentences are systematically rejected by all Italian speakers consulted. Moreover, the proposal by this author did not consider modal adverbs. When we place them on the picture, we obtain a different perspective. On the one hand, root modal adverbs are possible, as expected:

- (45) No sé quins llibres llegir **obligatòriament /necessàriament.**  
not know.1SG which books read.INF obligatorily /necessarily  
'I don't know which books to obligatorily/necessarily read.' Ca.

On the other hand, epistemic modal adverbs are not allowed in post-verbal position, but they must appear in preverbal position:

- (46) a. \*No sé quins llibres llegir **possiblement**. Ca.  
 not know.1SG which books read.INF possibly
- b. ?No sé quins llibres **possiblement** llegir. Ca.  
 not know.1SG which books possibly read.INF  
 'I don't know which books to possibly/maybe read.'

This suggests that interrogative infinitives might have a defective left periphery similar to that of their *wh*-relatives counterparts, namely one including a ModEpisP and ForceP. Such a parallelism seems strong if we consider the evidence from Germanic languages, where infinite *wh*-relatives and *wh*-interrogatives go hand in hand. For example, whereas English allows both, German and Scandinavian languages reject both (examples from Sabel 2014):

- (47) a. This is a topic about which to argue.  
 b. Lisa has decided who to visit.
- (48) a. \*Lisa sucht das Messer mit dem Käse zu schneiden. Ge.  
 Lisa seek.3SG the.ACC knife with the.DAT cheese to cut.INF  
 'Lisa seeks the knife with which to cut the cheese.'
- b. \*Lisa hat entschieden was Tom zu sagen. Ge.  
 Lisa have.3SG decided what Tom to say.INF  
 'Lisa has decided what to say to Tom.'

All in all, this regular behaviour suggests that our common proposal for *wh*-relatives and *wh*-interrogatives might be on the right track, even though a more detailed description is required of the exact left periphery of infinitive interrogatives, considering the finer-grained proposals by Rizzi and Bocci (2017) or Shlonsky and Soare (2011).

## 5 Conclusions

In this article, we have offered an analysis of infinitive relatives, which crucially involves truncation of part of the functional left periphery of the clause. The resultant defective structure helps us explain the lack of material typically hosted at FocusP and TopicP (fronted focus, CLLD, negative inversion). Furthermore, our proposal offers us a principled explanation of the availability of certain modal readings: while root modal adverbs are always possible, epistemic modals can only appear with *wh*-relatives and in preverbal position. This led us to suggest different clausal sizes: a truncated one for prepositional relatives (just FinP), and a bigger structure for *wh*-relatives (and, tentatively, for *wh*-interrogatives). Besides the success of our descrip-

tion of infinitive relatives, we have also shown that these reduced clauses can be a fruitful playground for testing cartographic analyses of phenomena involving a rich left periphery.

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# Note su infiniti flessi in chianino: un approccio cartografico

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**Abstract** In this article, we investigate a morpho-syntactic phenomenon in Chianino similar to the inflected infinitive discussed for Romance. Chianino is an Italo-Romance variety spoken in the southeast of the province of Siena. The analysed structures involve pairs of inflected verbs merged together. The candidates for the higher verb of the pair are (i) the root of the modal *dové* 'must' and (ii) the subjunctive form of *avé* 'to have'. The second element of the pair can only be a non-suppletive inflected infinitive form of the verb *èsse* 'to be', as in the cases of the second person singular *dev-ess-i* 'you must be' and *abbi-ess-i* 'you have to be' (meaning: 'you should be'). From a pragmatic point of view, the double inflected forms *avé* + *èsse* can only have epistemic readings, while *dové* + *èsse* can also have a jussive connotation. After having briefly introduced the variety under investigation, we will discuss observational and introspective data. We will then proceed to a formal analysis. Adopting a cartographic approach, we consider the second element of the pair as a head located in a dedicated functional projection within the syntactic architecture.

**Keywords** Cartography. Chianino. Inflected infinitives.

**Sommario** 1 Introduzione. – 2 La sintassi delle costruzioni flesse. – 3 Costruzioni flesse in chianino. – 3.1 Note sul chianino. – 3.2 Strutture flesse in chianino. – 3.3 Alcune osservazioni. – 4 Un approccio cartografico. – 5 Conclusioni.



Edizioni  
Ca Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted 2021-08-01  
Accepted 2021-11-10  
Published 2022-03-31

## Open access

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**Citation** Samo, G.; Canuti, M. (2022). "Note su infiniti flessi in chianino: un approccio cartografico". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [1-18] 165-182.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOc/2499-1562/2022/10/001

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## 1 Introduzione

Ben ricca è la letteratura riguardante analisi in termini cartografici (Cinque, Rizzi 2010; Rizzi, Cinque 2016) delle descrizioni delle strutture sintattiche delle varietà italo-romanze (Poletto 2000; Paoli 2007; Di Domenico 2012; Ledgeway 2010; Cardinaletti, Giusti 2015; Bonan 2019 *inter alia*; per un diverso approccio generativo vedere anche Manzini, Savoia 2005; per aspetti diacronici cf. Salvi, Renzi 2010; Ledgeway 2012).

Poco rilievo hanno però assunto un insieme di varietà toscane ad esclusione della cartografia del fiorentino (Cocchi, Poletto 2002; Botteri 2018). Questa mancanza è dovuta, molto probabilmente, a un'eccessiva somiglianza delle strutture sintattiche di alcuni tipi di toscano con l'italiano standard che è stato d'altro canto ben analizzato e descritto dagli albori dell'approccio cartografico (Rizzi 1997; Cinque 1999). In questo lavoro cercheremo di arricchire le varietà toscane studiate utilizzando il quadro formale cartografico per una descrizione ed un'analisi di un determinato fenomeno osservato in chianino, parlato nella porzione sud-orientale della provincia di Siena (una descrizione della varietà è reperibile in § 3.1).

Le strutture in (1a), come analizzate in questo articolo, rappresentano un fenomeno simile all'infinito flesso descritto da Loporcaro (1986, 231) per la varietà pugliese dell'altamurano in (1b) e, parzialmente, sia all'infinito flesso (Ledgeway 1998; Groothuis 2015) che si può trovare, tra gli altri, in sardo (1c), sia a costruzioni con accordo multiplo/pseudo-coordinate (Cardinaletti, Giusti 2003; Di Caro 2019a) discusse in alcune varietà del siciliano (1d).

(1) a. *Chianino (Toscana)*

C'	abbi	esse-no	i cacciatori?
Ci	avere.congiuntivo	essere-3pl	i cacciatori

'Ci saranno cacciatori?'

b. *Altamurano (Puglia)*

pot	éssə-nə
potere	essere-3pl

'Loro possono essere'

(Loporcaro 1986, 231)

c. *Logudorese-Nuorese (Sardegna)*

Non	keljo	a	cantares	tue.
Non	voglio	a	cantare-2sg	tu

'Non voglio che tu canti'

(Jones 1992, 297 da Groothuis 2015, 40, 98)



d. *Deliano (Sicilia)*

Ora      accuminciu    a bbiu      cchi      puizzu      fari.  
adesso    inizio.1sg      a vedere.1sg    cosa      posso.1sg    fare  
'Adesso inizio a vedere cosa posso fare'

(Di Caro, Giusti 2015, 403-4)

Come verrà evidenziato in questo lavoro, tratteremo il fenomeno osservato in chianino non come una struttura bifrasale come gli infiniti flessi del sardo, bensì come un'architettura monofrasale come proposto per le costruzioni in (1d). Per ovviare al problema terminologico (cf. Vincent 1996, 398; Groothuis 2015, 43-5) per i casi in (1b), useremo il termine ombrello 'costruzioni fesse', prendendo spunto dall'etichetta con cui Cardinaletti e Giusti (2003) hanno descritto le costruzioni con accordo multiplo/pseudo-coordinate.

Le costruzioni fesse analizzate in questo lavoro, sono composte da una struttura particolare in cui il primo elemento verbale è flesso in termini di modo (ad esempio, in congiuntivo in (1a)), mentre il secondo verbo mostra flessione per tratti di persona e numero. Inoltre, queste strutture codificano un limitato insieme di letture (epistemica, iussiva) dal punto di vista pragmatico.

Descriveremo le proprietà salienti delle strutture analizzate e presenteremo sinteticamente una panoramica sulla letteratura delle forme affini nella sezione 2. Nella sezione 3, dopo aver presentato la varietà analizzata, discuteremo le forme contestualizzate delle costruzioni fesse in chianino. Nella sezione 4, quindi, si procederà ad un'analisi formale attraverso l'adozione di un approccio cartografico. La sezione 5 riassumerà e concluderà.

## 2 La sintassi delle costruzioni fesse

La letteratura sulle costruzioni fesse è eterogenea e variegata. Tra i fenomeni rilevanti, con variazioni, nell'universo romanzo, troviamo l'infinito flesso. Queste strutture sono state ben studiate nel panorama romanzo, con particolare riferimento al portoghese europeo (si prenda visione di Raposo 1987; Madeira, 1994; per una panoramica del fenomeno si veda Groothuis 2015, 3-42). Come si può evincere dall'esempio in (2a) tratto dal portoghese europeo, l'infinito del verbo *aprovar* 'approvare' viene flesso per persona e numero. Dal punto di vista strutturale, la presenza di un complementatore (2b), rende la struttura non grammaticale.

- (2) a. Será difícil os deputados aprovar-em a proposta.  
Sarà difficile i deputati approvare-3pl la proposta  
'Sarà difficile per i deputati approvare la proposta'  
(Raposo 1987, 86 da Groothuis 2015, 5; 3a)
- b. \*Será difícil que os deputados aprovar-em a proposta.  
Sarà difficile che i deputati approvare-3pl. la proposta  
(Raposo 1987: 86 da Groothuis 2015, 5; 3b)

Esempi di questa tipologia, con elementi di microvariazione, si possono trovare anche in sardo (come esemplificato in (1c), cf. Jones 1992) e napoletano antico (Ledgeway 1998). Dal punto di vista strutturale, gli infiniti flessi vengono analizzati come una struttura bifrasale e con un movimento dell'infinito flesso in una posizione del complementatore.

Altri fenomeni di interesse per questo studio sono le tipologie di strutture che vanno il sotto nome di costruzioni con accordo multiplo/pseudo-coordinazione, come nell'esempio di indicativo in (1d) e di imperativo in (3) dal Deliano, discusse, per esempio, in siciliano (Cardinaletti, Giusti 2003; Di Caro, Giusti 2015; Di Caro 2019a; 2019b), ma strutture simili, con dimensioni di microvariazioni, si possono osservare nel resto della penisola (cf. Manzini, Lorusso, Savoia 2017 e referenze ivi contenute che circoscrivono il fenomeno a Puglia e Sicilia, con alcune appendici intermedie).

- (3) Va piglia li carti ca su' ddra intra nni lu casciani.  
va.2sg prendere.imp.2sg le carte che sono qui dentro in il cassetto  
'Prendi le carte da gioco che sono nel cassetto'  
(Di Caro 2019a, 146, 152a)

I lavori su alcune varietà del siciliano (Cardinaletti, Giusti 2002; 2003; Cruschina 2013; Di Caro, Giusti 2015; Di Caro 2019a; 2019b) hanno mostrato che queste costruzioni sembrano costituite da un solo elemento frasale, poiché superano le diagnostiche di monofrasalità discusse in Cardinaletti e Giusti (2001, 385-91), ma si veda anche Manzini, Savoia (2005; 2011) per argomenti sulla bifrasalità. Come notato da Di Caro (2019b, 237), il verbo matrice della struttura possiede paradigmi difettivi (in termini di persona e numero) e può appartenere a un insieme limitato di verbi.

Il terzo e ultimo fenomeno, e il più comparabile al fenomeno osservabile in chianino in (1a), sono le strutture descritte come infiniti flessi in (1b) riportate per il dialetto di Altamura (Loporcaro 1986) in Puglia, in ambito ligure (Cuneo 1997) e in alcune varietà del toscano (Cresti

1994, 35).<sup>1</sup> Groothuis (2015, 43-5), sulle linee di Vincent (1996, 398), tratta questi elementi in maniera differente rispetto agli esempi in (2).

In queste varietà, un morfema flessivo della terza persona plurale può essere aggiunto all'infinito del verbo *essere* preceduto da un verbo modale con una morfologia ridotta. Le strutture in altamurano in (4) mostrano che l'elemento flessivo può essere fuso sia con l'ausiliare (come in italiano standard), sia con il verbo *essere*.

- (4) a. pótə̀nə        iess  
Potere-3pl    essere  
(Loporcaro 1986, 231 da Groothuis 2015, 44, 110a)
- b. pot              éssə̀-nə  
potere          essere-3pl  
(Loporcaro 1986, 231 da Groothuis 2015, 44, 110b)

Di particolare interesse per il nostro studio è ciò che è osservabile anche nella varietà toscana di San Gimignano, parlata nella parte nord-occidentale della provincia di Siena. Si prenda ad esempio la frase: *Sicché quando vanno in libera uscita, deve èssano in divisa di libera uscita* (Cresti 1994, 45), in cui possiamo trovare un elemento modale come *dovere* e un verbo *essere* flesso alla terza persona plurale. Le uniche dimensioni di variazione riguardano la realizzazione della flessione (*-no* e *-ro*).

Cresti considera queste costruzioni come forme isolate, poiché vengono osservate principalmente alla terza persona plurale, e, in linea con Cuneo (1997), come formanti un unico costrutto verbale complesso. Cresti in particolare descrive il fenomeno come un tipico caso di ristrutturazione nello spirito di Rizzi (1976), nonostante nel toscano di San Gimignano queste strutture non siano possibili con tutti i modali.

Ciò che è nuovo in questo articolo, rispetto ai dati del toscano di San Gimignano, è che le costruzioni flesse in chianino presentano altre forme oltre la terza plurale, la presenza del verbo avere al congiuntivo come primo elemento della sequenza e la non-grammaticalità della costruzione flessa con il modale *potere*. Inoltre, proveremo a stabilire una mappatura in termini di sintassi cartografica.

Presenteremo brevemente alcune note sul chianino nella sezione 3.1 per poi passare ai dati empirici nella sezione 3.2 e ad alcune osservazioni nella sezione 3.3.

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**1** Cresti considera le forme infinitive flesse in senso lato includendovi anche gli infiniti con soggetto senza una specifica desinenza personale. Il caso studiato qui risulta invece molto più peculiare, non solo per la presenza di desinenze personali nell'infinito, ma soprattutto a causa dell'incorporazione di questo nell'ausiliare/modale.

### 3 Costruzioni fesse in chianino

#### 3.1 Note sul chianino

Il chianino è una varietà italo-romanza toscana parlata nella parte sud-orientale della provincia di Siena (Giannelli 2000). La varietà, sebbene fortemente influenzata da altre varietà centro-italiane, come ad esempio l'umbro, fa parte del sistema toscano. Dal punto di vista sociolinguistico (Giannelli 2000), vi è una forte dicotomia tra le grammatiche di parlanti di generazioni più anziane e quella della popolazione di parlanti in aree urbane fortemente influenzate dall'italiano standard. Gli informatori di questo lavoro appartengono alla prima categoria (numero 3, età che va dai 50 ai 76 anni).

L'inventario fonemico è lo stesso dell'italiano, questa è la ragione per cui non si è ritenuto opportuno procedere alla trascrizione IPA. Tra i fenomeni fonetici caratterizzanti l'area chianina si ricorda il passaggio abbastanza diffuso in tutta l'area ed oltre della laterale palatale a semiconsonante palatale per cui *gli* si pronuncia [ji], mentre caratteristico di Piazze-Cetona, fenomeno che sta scomparendo, è la pronuncia non dittongata di alcuni nessi vocalici come in *Daniëla*. La morfologia rispecchia quella italiana, nell'ambito verbale, tra i fenomeni più macroscopici si noverano la prima persona plurale del presente indicativo in *-a/e/imo* insidiata da quella analitica 'pantoscana' *si vede* per *vediamo*. Il chianino presenta alcune peculiarità interessanti nella sintassi dei clitici, ad esempio, nella seguente frase negativa osserviamo che il clitico *lo* precede l'elemento verbale: *fa finta di 'un lo sapé'* 'fa le viste di non saperlo'. Fenomeno questo presente nell'italiano quattrocentesco del Pulci: *io tornerò, per non t'esser molesto* (*Morgante* I, VII 80, 3).

I dati relativi a questo studio sono stati prevalentemente reperiti nei comuni di Chiusi e Cetona, località Piazze (Piazze-Cetona). La varietà di Cetona si caratterizza rispetto al chianino vero e proprio per la presenza di tratti più spiccatamente mediani (Giannelli 2000, 103).

Nella prossima sottosezione analizzeremo i tratti salienti delle costruzioni fesse in chianino.

#### 3.2 Strutture fesse in chianino

A differenza delle forme non chianine discusse nella sezione 2, ci rendiamo subito conto che l'inventario è estremamente ridotto, a differenza del caso toscano discusso da Cresti (1994), vi è una maggiore ricchezza flessiva per persona e numero.

Gli unici candidati per il primo verbo della sequenza sono (i) una forma congiuntiva del verbo *avé'* 'avere' e (ii) una radice flessa del modale *dové'* 'dovere'. In entrambi i casi si unisce al primo elemen-

to verbale una forma infinitiva non suppletiva del verbo *èsse'* 'essere' flessa per persona e numero.

### 3.2.1 *Avé' + èsse'*

Partiremo dalla forma *avé' + èsse'*, esemplificata in (5). Questa struttura complessa può solo codificare una lettura epistemica. I nostri informatori, negli eventi che abbiamo potuto analizzare in conversazione spontanea e successiva consultazione con i parlanti, utilizzano una particolare prosodia interrogativa (riportata in 5 con l'elemento ?). Le forme possono essere opzionalmente precedute da un complementatore *che*. Si veda l'esempio in (5), il cui contesto è la presenza di rumori in un bosco circostante: questo contesto porta alla produzione di frasi con la costruzione flessa *avé' + èsse'*, che possono ricorrere sia con elementi nominali singolari (5a) sia, soprattutto, plurali (5b).

(5) Contesto: rumori nel bosco circostante.

- |    |                                       |    |                    |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|--------------------|
| a. | (che) C' abbi-esse                    | 'l | serperegolo?       |
|    | (che) Ci avere.congiuntivo-essere     | il | animale-fantastico |
| b. | (che) c' abbi-esse-no                 | i  | cacciatori?        |
|    | (che) ci avere.congiuntivo-essere-3pl | i  | cacciatori         |
|    | 'Che ci siano i cacciatori?'          |    |                    |

La negazione è compatibile con queste strutture. Si veda, a tal proposito, l'esempio in (6).

(6) Nun/un c'abbi-esse-no i cacciatori?

Per quanto riguarda la natura del soggetto, postverbale, questi può anche essere un elemento pronominale (7c), quando il contesto lo permette.

- (7) a. c' abbi-esseno loro?  
C'. avere-cong.-esse loro
- c. C'abbi-esse lui?  
C'avere-cong.-esse lui

Questa struttura permette anche di avere un participio passato, nonostante questi sembrino ristretti ad un insieme limitato di verbi di moto che prendono come ausiliare essere. Un esempio è riportato in (8), in cui il clitico *ci* funge come clitico di ripresa del PP a *Chianciano*.

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(8)	(C')	abbi-esse-no	iti/ite	a Chianciano?
	(Ci)	avere.congiuntivo-essere-3pl	andati/e	a Chianciano

La struttura è possibile con quasi tutte le persone come evidenziato in (9), nei contesti rilevanti. Ad esempio, un esistenziale con la prima persona singolare funziona, ma solo con una dimensione particolarmente ironica/sarcastica. Si veda nell'esempio (9a) tratto da una frase rilevata in contesti naturali, in cui il soggetto sottolineava un'azione che lo stesso non aveva fatto. Come per le terze persone, il soggetto pronominale è postverbale e obbligatorio suggerendo una funzione topicale dello stesso. Questa topicalità ci porta a localizzare i soggetti in una proiezione funzionale della periferia bassa dell'IP proposta da Belletti (2004). Negli esempi in (9c) e (9d) però si nota un degradamento con le persone plurali: la strutture sono considerate ancora grammaticali, decisamente più marginali (?, ??).<sup>2</sup>

- (9) a. 1sg C' abbi-ess-i ito/ita io alla stazione?  
b. 2sg C' abbi-ess-i ito/ita te alla stazione?  
c. 1pl ?C'abbi-ess-imo iti/ite noi alla stazione?  
d. 2pl ??C'abbi-ess-ivo iti/ite voi alla stazione?

Inoltre, le forme di prima e seconda persona singolare sono al congiuntivo come la base verbale di *avere* (si veda § 3.3, paradigma 15), fattore che ci suggerisce che non ci troviamo di fronte ad un infinito flessio, bensì davanti ad un unico elemento verbale complesso flessio per persona e numero.

Riassumendo gli elementi discussi in questa sottosezione, possiamo trattare la forma *avé' + esse'* come avente i seguenti tratti:

- (i) la forma di *avé'* è al congiuntivo;
- (ii) l'elemento complesso funziona solo come esistenziale;
- (iii) questo elemento codifica solo una lettura epistemica;
- (iv) il soggetto deve essere postverbale (DP, pronominale);
- (v) la forma è compatibile con negazione;
- (vi) la forma è compatibile con un sottoinsieme di participi passati di verbi di moto;
- (vii) la presenza del complementatore *che* è opzionale;
- (viii) la costruzione è possibile in tutte le persone, decisamente marginale con prima e seconda persona plurale.

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<sup>2</sup> La maggiore sicurezza di attestazione riscontrata nelle forme di terza persona rispetto a quelle di prima e seconda, come già notato in Loporcaro 1986, 178, è derivato da una maggiore frequenza di impiego delle terze persone rispetto alle altre due, come d'altro canto era stato già notato dagli approcci tipologici di Greenberg ([1966] 2005, 45).

Nella sezione 3.2.1 descriveremo invece la costruzione, simile a quella discussa da Cresti (1994) di *dové' + èsse'*.

### 3.2.2 *Dové' + èsse'*

La seconda forma analizzata è composta dal modale *dové' + èsse'*. Queste costruzioni differiscono dalle forme trattate da Cresti (1994, 45; 1996, 373-4) per un maggiore inventario di persone per la flessione. Come però per i casi di Cresti (1994), in chianino troviamo la possibilità di entrambi i morfemi *-no* e *-ro* per le terze persone plurali.

Come per i casi discussi in 3.2.1, abbiamo una lettura epistemica. Inoltre, le costruzioni flesse con *dové' + èsse'* permettono anche una funzione iussiva, come riportato negli esempi in (10).

- |         |         |                      |                          |
|---------|---------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| (10) a. | dev     | ess-eno/deve-esse-ro | all'entrone (epistemica) |
|         | Deve    | esse-3pl             | all'androne              |
|         | b. Dev  | esse-no/deve-esse-ro | n'tre (epistemica)       |
|         | Deve    | esse-3pl             | in tre                   |
|         | c. deve | esse-no/deve-esse-ro | più attenti (iussiva)    |

Come per la forma in 3.2.1, le prime e seconde persone singolari sono considerate totalmente accettabili, mentre quelle plurali decisamente più marginali.

- (11) a. (io) devess-i più furbo  
b. (te) devess-i più furbo  
c. ?noi devess-imo più furbi  
d. ?? voi devessivo più boni.

Queste strutture possono essere negate. A titolo esemplificativo mostriamo, in (12), una struttura con negazione alla seconda persona singolare.

- (12) a. Nun/un dev-ess-i cattivo/a!

Per quanto riguarda altri elementi appartenenti alla periferia sinistra, come soggetti focalizzati (Bianchi, Bocci, Cruschina 2015 e lavori successivi) questi possono solo precedere la forma verbale. La situazione è chiarissima per i parlanti in entrambi i contesti correttivi.

- (13). a. (i carabinieri) dev-ess-ero (\*i carabinieri) all'entrone (mica 'ladri)  
b. (loro) deve-esseno (\*loro) più attenti (mica noi) (iussiva)

Riassumendo, possiamo descrivere la forma *devé' + èsse'* come avvenute i seguenti tratti:

- (i) Due possibili letture (epistemica e iussiva);
- (ii) La lettura epistemica si comporta come un esistenziale;
- (iii) La forma è compatibile con la negazione;
- (iv) Se il soggetto è focalizzato, questi precede la costruzione verbale flessa.

Prima di procedere all'analisi formale, riporteremo alcune osservazioni nella sottosezione 3.3.

### 3.3 Alcune osservazioni

Possiamo procedere con alcune osservazioni in margine alle due forme.

Nelle forme con *avé'* 'avere' abbiamo forme epistemiche che denotano supposizione. Questa valenza è veicolata dalla base verbale al congiuntivo dell'ausiliare ribadita dai morfemi di persona/numero anch'essi al congiuntivo. La forma iussiva con *dové'* 'dovere' è invece realizzata dalla base che è la stessa dell'imperativo oltre che del presente. Da queste forme è possibile costruire un paradigma come presentato in (14), che, come mostrato da Loporcaro (1986, 173-4) può risultare parzialmente incompleto con dimensioni di marginalità.

(14)	Persona	Numero	"avé + èsse"	"devé + èsse"
	1	sing	abbi-essi/e <sup>3</sup>	dev-essi
	2	sing	abbi-essi/e	dev-essi
	3	sing	abbi-esse	dev-esse
	1	plurale	?abbi-essimo	??dev-essimo
	2	plurale	??abbi-essivo	??dev-essivo
	3	plurale	abbi-esseno	dev-esseno/devessero

*Èsse* presenta le medesime forme del congiuntivo imperfetto, che potremmo definire 'semplificato', di *avé'* (*avé'* [b] in (15), in contrapposizione con una forma *avé'* [a], che potremmo definire 'piena'). Na-

**3** Una delle proprietà che caratterizzano la varietà particolare di chianino parlata a Piazze-Cetona è una sostanziale tendenza fonetica a i>e in fine di parola, secondo un uso abbastanza diffuso anche nell'italiano antico, di cui non è possibile discorrere qui. Comunque nelle forme qui riportate può verificarsi un'oscillazione in fine parola tra i ed e.



turalmente la coincidenza è puramente formale, non di significato, trattandosi in un caso del verbo 'essere' e nell'altro del verbo 'avere'.

(15) Paradigma congiuntivo imperfetto di *avé'*

Persona	Numero	<i>avé'</i> [a]	<i>avé'</i> [b]	avere [italiano]
1	sing	avessi	essi	avessi
2	sing	avessi	essi	avessi
3	sing	avesse	èsse	avesse
1	plurale	avessimo	essimo	avessimo
2	plurale	avessivo	essivo	aveste
3	plurale	avèsseno	esseno	avessero

La costruzione flessa in chianino ricalca grosso modo quanto affermato in (Groothuis. 2015, 43-4) per le forme toscane e liguri: coalescenza di due forme verbali, flessione del solo infinito di *essere*. A differenza del toscano di San Gimignano, nel chianino abbiamo una forma con il verbo modale *dovere*, ma non con *potere*. Questo, naturalmente, sembra non avvenire a caso, in quanto in *possum* latino è trasparente la formazione da due elementi il secondo dei quali è proprio il verbo essere: *pot* (*potis*) + *sum*. Inoltre, oltre al verbo modale, abbiamo anche la presenza dell'ausiliare *avere* come base della costruzione flessa.

Dagli esempi sopra riportati, potremmo parzialmente descrivere la flessione della costruzione in chianino come derivante dall'agglutinazione di forme pronominali all'infinito.<sup>4</sup> La prova più chiara risiede nella seconda persona plurale in *-vo* che è non solo nell'infinito flesso, ma si trova anche nel congiuntivo imperfetto chianino come in *chiudessi-vo* 'chiudeste'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In Loporcaro 1986, 185-7, nota 18 si spiega molto chiaramente con bibliografia precedente, per il portoghese, come tali forme provengano dall'agglutinazione dei pronomi personali, rispetto alla possibilità che si tratti di una continuazione del congiuntivo imperfetto latino.

<sup>5</sup> Tuttavia l'incorporazione delle due basi verbali non ha la sistematicità e soprattutto la complessità caratteristica delle lingue polisintetiche. A titolo di esempio si può riportare una frase del mohawk tratta da Baker (1996, 30), in (i).

(i) Mohawk (Baker 1996, 30, es. num. 33)  
Ra - 'wáhr-a- k- s- kwe  
Sogg. s. masc.-carne-Ø-mangiare-abit.-pass.  
Era solito mangiare carne

La differenza sostanziale tra gli esempi chianini e quello amerindiano è l'incorporazione di un complemento oggetto non pronominale, cosicché gli esempi chianini, conformemente alla natura non polisintetica della lingua, sembrano ripercorrere la formazione di forme sintetiche da forme perifrastiche, come è già avvenuto, ad esempio, nel futuro italiano (generato dalla fusione di un infinito latino più il verbo ausiliare *avere*, Cornagliotti 1972, 59; per una descrizione in termini generativi. cf. Roberts, Roussou 2003). Nel nostro caso invece l'infinito non è nella prima posizione, ma nella seconda e così gli vengo-

Nella sezione 4, presenteremo una mappatura in termini di sintassi cartografica.

#### 4 Un approccio cartografico

Dalla descrizione nella sezione 3, sulle linee di Cresti (1994) e Cuneo (1997), possiamo affermare che ci troviamo di fronte a una forma verbale complessa composta lessicalmente dal modale e dal verbo essere.

Gli elementi verbali analizzati vengono plausibilmente estratti già composti dal lessico e aggiunti alla derivazione (cf. Rizzi 2015; 2016; 2017) in una posizione dedicata agli ausiliari, quindi in una posizione relativamente medio-alta nell'*Inflectional Phrase* (IP).<sup>6</sup>

Partiremo dalla forma *avé' + èsse'*, massimizzando il concetto di sintaticizzazione delle proprietà di discorso (Cinque, Rizzi 2010; Si 2011; Rizzi 2013). Infatti, adottando la gerarchia di Si (2005; 2018; 2020) sulla cartografia della creazione di elementi *essere/avere* (Si la definisce una cartografia *zoom-in*),<sup>7</sup> il tratto [+<sub>esistenziale</sub>] (in una ben più ricca tipologia di tratti) rimane come elemento funzionale estremo. *Abbièsse* quindi può essere formato come una serie di movimenti all'interno di questo livello (attivando, tra gli altri, un tratto di, per esempio, [+<sub>congiuntivo</sub>] e il tratto [+<sub>esistenziale</sub>]) e poi può essere integrato alla struttura della frase in una posizione di ausiliare.

Riprendiamo la frase in (1a) ripetuta in (16).

(16)	C'	abbi-esse-no	i cacciatori?
	Ci	avere.congiuntivo-essere-3pl	i cacciatori
		'Ci saranno cacciatori?'	

La derivazione è data in (17). Il complementatore opzionale può essere generato nella posizione di complementatore dedicata (che al momento chiameremo semplicemente *Complementizer Phrase*, CP). L'espletivo dovrebbe essere generato in una posizione dedicata nella cartografia di soggetti di Cardinaletti (2004) come EppP, mentre l'elemento che funge da soggetto 'i cacciatori' può muoversi verso una posizione all'interno della periferia bassa discussa da Belletti (2004), LowIP. L'elemento *abbi-esse-no* nato nella struttura in una posizione

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no attribuite i morfemi di persona/numero. Un'analisi del percorso peculiare di alternanza tra forme sintetiche ed analitiche nelle varietà toscane è reperibile in Canuti 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Naturalmente, vi è l'opportunità di un'analisi più dettagliata in un quadro di *Distributed Morphology*, nello spirito di recenti lavori come, ad esempio, Cruschina e Calabrese 2021. Questo tipo di analisi potrà essere integrata in lavori futuri.

<sup>7</sup> Lo spirito della cartografia *zoom-in* ricorda in certi aspetti elementi di nanosintassi (cf. Baunaz et al. 2018 per una panoramica sulla nanosintassi).

dedicata agli ausiliari/modali che etichettiamo come AuxP, si muove poi in una posizione funzionale dedicata o selezionata alla lettura epistemica (Cinque 1999) come MoodEpistemicP nel dominio alto dell'IP. Non escludiamo anche un movimento più alto nella periferia sinistra, come descritto per le letture epistemiche del complementatore tedesco *weil* 'perché' discusso per il tedesco da Jivanyan e Samo (2017), ma non abbiamo ancora diagnostiche sintattiche chiare come il movimento del verbo o del complementatore nelle lingue germaniche (Samo 2019a). Data la lettura interrogativa, immaginiamo ci sia un'attivazione (nel senso di *merge* e *search* in Rizzi 2017; Samo 2019b) marcato come  $\emptyset$  per indicare la testa non pronunciata nella derivazione di una posizione del CP, come IntP. Data la natura epistemica contenuta nei tratti (siano essi estratti dal lessico, siano essi presi nella formazione nel livello *essere/avere* discusso in Si 2020), è permessa quindi solo la singola lettura che viene soddisfatta nella architettura sintattica, escludendo ulteriori movimenti. La forma verbale complessa si flette per numero e persona all'interno delle posizioni dedicate, come NumP o PersonP come discusse in Shlonsky (2013).

(17) Avé + èsse

$[_{\text{ForceP}}(\text{che})[_{\text{IntP}}\emptyset[_{\text{SubjP}}[_{\text{EppP}}\text{c}'[_{\text{MoodEpistemicP}}\text{abbiesse}]_{\text{PersonP/NumP}}\text{<abbiesse-eno->}[_{\text{AuxP}}\text{<abbiesse->}[_{\text{LowIP}}\text{i cacciatori}]]]]]]]]]]$

Per quanto riguarda *dové' + èsse'*, la situazione è molto più chiara e la costruzione flessa può mostrare ulteriori movimenti. La lettura epistemica può essere data dal movimento verso la posizione dedicata come in (18), ma l'estrazione dal lessico (o la costruzione nel livello *essere/avere*) non garantisce tratti epistemiche. Di conseguenza, l'elemento può sia muoversi nelle posizioni dedicate per una lettura epistemica, sia muoversi più in alto per una lettura iussiva (utilizzate anche in questo caso una testa CP).

Riportiamo in (18a) l'esempio in (10a), e l'esempio (13b) in (18b).

- (18) a. dev-ess-eno/deve-esse-ro all'entrone (epistemica)  
 b. (loro) deve-esseno (\*loro) più attenti (mica noi)

Le derivazioni sono proposte rispettivamente in (19a) e (19b). In (19a), il soggetto nullo è segnalato dal simbolo  $\emptyset$  e il locativo è inserito in una posizione di complemento locativo (LocP), seguendo la gerarchia di complementi di Schweikert (2005). In (19b) possiamo notare che il soggetto è focalizzato correttamente in una posizione della periferia sinistra.

- (19) a. *Dové' + èsse'* (lettura epistemica)  
[<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>SUBJP</sub> ∅ [<sub>MoodEpistemic</sub> *devesse-no/ro* [<sub>PersonP/NumP</sub> <*devèsse-no/ro*> [<sub>AuxP</sub> <*devèsse*-> [<sub>LocP</sub> all'entrone]]]]]]]]
- b. *Dové' + èsse'* (iussiva)  
[<sub>FOCUSP</sub> Loro [<sub>C</sub> *devesse-no* [<sub>SUBJP</sub> <loro> [<sub>PersonP/NumP</sub> <*devèsse-eno*> [<sub>AuxP</sub> <*devèsse*-> [... [più furbi]]]]]]]]]]

Una mappatura in termini cartografici ha permesso di analizzare e di descrivere in dettaglio queste costruzioni in chianino. Prima di concludere, vorremo brevemente notare due aspetti.

Il primo aspetto riguarda la complessità/rarità in termini di frequenza dei contesti che possono far generare queste costruzioni. Queste condizioni, infatti, possono far degradare, parzialmente, il giudizio sulle forme più marginali, come la prima e seconda persona plurale, che i nostri informatori considerano comunque grammaticali.

Il secondo aspetto riguarda le possibili domande di ricerca che possono seguire da questo lavoro. Ad esempio, la possibilità di ritradurre in termini cartografici, esplorando, per esempio, con la cartografia di proiezioni funzionali di Si (2005; 2020), di elementi come la ristrutturazione proposta da Rizzi (1976).

## 5 Conclusioni

In questo lavoro, abbiamo presentato nuovi dati e portato un'analisi cartografica di particolari costruzioni flesse che si possono trovare in chianino, con informatori dei comuni di Chiusi e di Cetona. Queste strutture differiscono da altre strutture affini, come gli infiniti flessi del sardo, dell'altamurano e dalle costruzioni ad accordo multiplo/pseudo-coordinate. Rispetto alle varietà di toscano discusse nella letteratura, il chianino offre, oltre all' accordo con terze persone, evidenza per l'accordo con la prima e seconda persona singolare, con decisa marginalità per quelle plurali.

Abbiamo poi proposto delle derivazioni cartografiche, nello spirito della sintaticizzazione delle varie letture (epistemica, iussiva). Abbiamo analizzato le costruzioni flesse del chianino come forme verbali complesse che entrano nella struttura (possibilmente, con tratti specifici già assegnati) da una posizione alta dell'IP per poi muoversi nelle posizioni dedicate.

Lavori futuri devono esplorare aspetti teorici che i dati del chianino possono apportare ad altre costruzioni flesse e investigare se vi possano essere ulteriori variabili che, in qualche modo, caratterizzano in maniera più completa il fenomeno.

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# Historical \*/s/ in Preconsonantal Position in the German Minority Language of Sauris/Zahre in North-Eastern Italy

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**Abstract** In this paper aspects of the sibilant system in the variety spoken in the Germanic language island Sauris/Zahre in north-eastern Italy are presented. I investigate whether an intermediate, postalveolar “shibilant” (from Protogermanic \*/s/) in preconsonantal position is preserved from Middle High German as observed in other German minority languages in northern Italy. In Sauris/Zahre, in preconsonantal position a postalveolar realization is sometimes mentioned in literature, while in Modern Standard German and most related varieties in this position historical, postalveolar \*/s/ is retracted to palatoalveolar /ʃ/.

**Keywords** Sibilants. S-retraction. Language contact. Language change.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Germanic Language Island Sauris/Zahre in the Carnic Alps. – 3 Diachronic Development of the Sibilant Systems in Germanic Varieties. – 4 Preconsonantal Sibilants in the Variety of Sauris/Zahre – Descriptions in the Literature and in (Acoustic) Atlases. – 5 Sibilants in Carnic Friulian. – 6 Production Study. – 6.1 Consultants and Data Collection. – 6.2 Methods. – 7 Results. – 7.1 Auditory Analysis. – 7.2 Acoustic Analysis. – 8 Discussion.



## Peer review

Submitted 2021-07-30  
Accepted 2021-11-10  
Published 2022-04-12

## Open access

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**Citation** Vogt, B.M. (2022). “Historical \*/s/ in Preconsonantal Position in the German Minority Language of Sauris/Zahre in North-Eastern Italy”. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [19-42] 183-206.

## 1 Introduction

In this contribution, I examine phonological change in the German minority language of Sauris/Zahre located in the Carnic Alps in north-eastern Italy using data elicited from four native speakers. I specifically investigate sibilants occurring in preconsonantal position. In this context, Proto-Germanic (PG) \*/s/ has undergone a sound change: the intermediate postalveolar articulation that was still present in Middle High German (MHG) has merged with palatoalveolar /ʃ/ in Modern Standard German (MSG) and most related varieties (but perhaps not in Sauris/Zahre, see the timeline in (3) in section 3).

Compare, e.g.:

(1)	MSG	MHG		gloss
a	[ʃ]ne	snē	*/s/ <sup>1</sup>	'snow'
b	[ʃ]tein	stein	*/s/	'stone'

This sound change is called 's-retraction' and can be formulated as follows. Benware (1996, 265) gives the following description:

(2) \*/s/ > /ʃ/ / # \_\_\_\_ C

S-retraction in word-initial preconsonantal position is currently a productive phonological process in MSG (Alber et al. 2021; Benware 1996) and most related varieties (see below).

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I present the Germanic language island Sauris/Zahre. Section 3 provides a broad overview of the evolution of the sibilant system in MSG starting from Old High German (OHG)/MHG. Section 4 presents a review of the available data from historical phonology and dialect atlases on the variety in question (Sauris/Zahre). Denison and Grassegger's (2007) dictionary and the work of the dialectologist Kranzmayer (1956) in particular are referred to and compared. In section 5, I present Carnic Friulian, the surrounding Romance variety, as this dialect is reported to also feature preconsonantal s-retraction. In section 6, I present my own data collected in Sauris/Zahre, and in section 7 the results of acoustic and auditory analyses. It turns out that in the Sauris/Zahre dialect historical \*/s/ in preconsonantal position is retracted to voice-

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This research was supported by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) funding a two-month research stay at the University of Bamberg in 2019.

**1** The PoA (place of articulation) of the sibilant is postalveolar; see section 3.

less [ʃ], as in MSG and related varieties. In the discussion in section 8, I show that language contact is not necessarily responsible for preconsonantal s-retraction in Sauris/Zahre, as sometimes claimed in the past, but that changes can be explained as internally motivated.

## 2 The Germanic Language Island Sauris/Zahre in the Carnic Alps

Sauris/Zahre is a German language island in the north-eastern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, which shares borders with Austria and Slovenia. Due in part to the presence of a Slovenian-speaking minority, the region is one of five in Italy with autonomous status. The language island is part of the historically and culturally defined area of Friuli, which has more than 600,000 speakers of Friulian, one of the three Western Romance languages spoken in the Alps (besides Ladin and Romansh).

According to available documents, the mountain village of Sauris/Zahre was founded in the 13th century by Southern Bavarian-speaking settlers from Carinthia and East Tyrol. For centuries, the settlers led very isolated lives, but from the 16th century onwards there was increased contact with the surrounding Romance-speaking communities.<sup>2</sup> The community in the language enclave has been bi- or trilingual since the 19th century: besides the local German dialect, the inhabitants of Sauris/Zahre spoke Carnic Friulian (a variety of Friulian) as a lingua franca, while standard Italian was their official language as a consequence of compulsory schooling.<sup>3</sup> The picture changes in the second post-war period: following Angeli (2003), parents then stopped gradually talking to their children in the *Zahrar Sproch*, so the number of speakers of the local dialect is declining, and among the younger generations only a few people still use it (Geyer 2018). According to the *Sprachinselvein*, just 200 people – about half the population of the village – still speak or use the Sauris/Zahre dialect.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Wiesinger 1983; Baum 1983; Wurzer 1973.

<sup>3</sup> See the detailed description of the trilingual community in Denison 1968.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sprachinselvein.at/home.html>, see also Costantini 2019.

### 3 Diachronic Development of the Sibilant Systems in Germanic Varieties

Language islands sometimes preserve features from earlier stages of language development. In some of the Germanic language islands in northern Italy, a contrast in the place of articulation between post-alveolar ‘shibilants’ and alveolar sibilants is still attested (see, e.g., Alber, Rabanus 2018; Alber 2014). These sibilants and the palatoalveolar [ʃ] form the 3-sibilant system based on PoA attested in MHG.

In the following, I use the symbols [ś, ź] to designate the articulatory position intermediate between alveolar and palatoalveolar without specifying further phonetic parameters, such as apical, retroflex etc. (see, e.g., Cercignani 1979; Joos 1952; Penzl 1968 for discussion), instead concentrating on the 3-way PoA distinction. The intermediate articulatory position will be labelled postalveolar, and I will also use the term ‘shibilant’ (blend of *esh*+sibilant). This terminology and the symbols have been used in recent publications (e.g., Alber et al. 2021; Alber, Rabanus 2018) and are also found in traditional dialectology.

While the postalveolar shibilant continues PG historical \*/s/, the alveolar sibilant [s] entered the system with the Old High German (OHG)<sup>5</sup> consonant shift from PG \*/t/ to [s] in postvocalic position. Palatoalveolar [ʃ] arose in late OHG through the merging of /sk/ into [ʃ] and paved the way for a phonemic split, namely the division of the “shibilants” into palatoalveolar /ʃ/ (in preconsonantal position) and the alveolar sibilants /s/ and /z/ (other contexts), i.e. the sibilant inventory of MSG (see Paul [1881] 2007, 170; Cercignani 1979, 73-86; Joos 1952; Penzl 1968; Szulc 2002).

Historical \*/s/ was a fortis sound: [ś] (Lessiak 1933; Cercignani 1979, 73-82); during the *Althochdeutsche Frikativenschwächung* (OHG-FL, around 750 AD), a lenis allophone arose ([ź]). In dialectological and historical linguistics the fortis vs. lenis distinction, referring (broadly speaking) to the realization of the fricatives with relatively greater or lesser energy, is used and applied to the two series of sibilants [s], [ś] and [ʃ], vs. [z] and [ź] in OHG/MHG. I use this distinction in what follows, without attempting an exact phonetic description, as it is a useful way to refer to the two distinct classes of fricatives in OHG/MHG. The lenis allophone of historical \*/s/ was realized with voicing in a voicing context in MHG. The feature [+voice] was then phonemized in MSG resulting in intervocalic position in a ‘new’ contrast (/z/ vs /s/) based on the feature [+/-voice], cf. in MSG: *reisen* /z/ ‘to travel’ (< PG \*/s/) and *reißen* /s/ ‘to tear’ (< PG \*/t/). That is, in the transition from [ź] to [z], the feature [+voice] is preserved and be-

<sup>5</sup> OHG was spoken from the 6th century to 1050 AD, MHG from 1050-1350 AD; Mettke 2000.

came distinctive. Compared to the preconsonantal context – in which historical \*/s/ was retracted, not fronted – it is important to bear in mind that in prevocalic and intervocalic contexts change from [ʒ] to alveolar [z] affected PoA, while voicing is preserved.

Kranzmayer (1956, 89) assumes that in the Central Bavarian dialects the lenis shibilant [ʒ] became a voiced alveolar [z] in word-initial prevocalic position first (before 1200), while the change to a palatoalveolar articulation in preconsonantal position began later. According to Moser (1951, 222), s-retraction began in the second half of the 13th century throughout the High German region. The Southern Bavarian speakers who settled in Sauris/Zahre during the 13th century may have left the inland variety before or during this change and therefore preserved \*/s/ in preconsonantal position. The following timeline can be drawn:

- (3) Timeline of important changes in the sibilant system before/during settlement in Sauris/Zahre:
- |                 |              |                            |                             |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 750             | 11th century | before 1200                | 13th century                |
| -----           |              |                            |                             |
| OHG-FL          | OHG /sk/>[ʃ] | [ʒ]>[z] (initial position) | preconsonantal s-retraction |
| (*s/ => [ś, ʒ]) |              |                            | settlement in Sauris/Zahre  |

In MSG and most related varieties, the sound change /s/ > /ʃ/ before consonants is today a synchronically active phonological process as also evidenced by adaption of recent loanwords like e.g. *spaghetti* [ʃpa'ɡeti]. It occurs word initially, but is also attested in word-medial or word final coda position in some dialects of German, as e.g. in [ʃ]we[ʃ]ter 'sister' or *fā*[ʃ]t 'almost' in southwestern dialects, but [ʃ]we[s]ter 'sister' or *fā*[s]t in MSG (König 2011, 150; Stevens et al. 2015).

As mentioned above, historical \*/s/ was a voiceless fortis sound (Lessiak 1933), while lenis [ʒ] entered the system during the OHG-FL. According to descriptions in historical grammars and in diachronic phonology, in MHG the shibilant [ś] realized in preconsonantal position before a voiceless consonant (/p, t/) was a fortis sound. Before the sonorants /m, n, l, w/ a lenis [ʒ] is sometimes assumed (Szulc 2002, 117; Paul [1881] 2007).

In the language islands Sappada/Plodn and Timau/Tischelbong (in close proximity to Sauris/Zahre), a voiced palatoalveolar articulation [ʒl-], [ʒn-], [ʒm-], [ʒb-], which in Timau is also signaled in the official spelling (cf. <sghl->, <sghn-> etc., Geyer 2018), is reported. This might reflect the lenis character hypothesized in MHG for \*/s/ before sonorants (see above): in word initial prevocalic and in intersonorant position, lenis [ʒ] is continued in MSG with voiced, fronted (alveolar) [z]. In an analogous manner, if in MHG before the sonorants /m, n, l, w/ lenis [ʒ] was realized with voicing (Szulc 2002, 117; Paul

[1881] 2007), the feature [+voice] might have been preserved resulting in a voiced allophone of /ʃ/.

By contrast, in MSG and in most German dialects, the former shibilant has merged with voiceless palatoalveolar [ʃ] in preconsonantal position (see the examples in (1)).

#### 4 Preconsonantal Sibilants in the Variety of Sauris/Zahre – Descriptions in the Literature and in (Acoustic) Atlases

The literature does not, unfortunately, contain any clear, consistent descriptions of the phonemic and phonetic properties of the sibilants in preconsonantal position in the system of the Sauris/Zahre dialect. Kranzmayer (1956, 89), who gives detailed descriptions of the Germanic language islands in northern Italy, holds that the postalveolar shibilant resisted change where it preceded a voiceless stop, which would mean that the contemporary dialect of Sauris/Zahre should preserve to some degree the MHG articulatory distinction between [s] (< PG \*/t/), [ʃ]/[z] (< PG \*/s/) and [ʃ] (< OHG /sk/). Consider the description in Kranzmayer 1956:

- (4) Postalveolar PoA in the Sauris/Zahre dialect according to Kranzmayer (1956)<sup>6</sup>
- | Sauris/Zahre      | PoA                      | MSG      | gloss      |
|-------------------|--------------------------|----------|------------|
| a. <i>Speck</i>   | [ʒ] <sub>voiceless</sub> | [ʃ]peck  | 'bacon'    |
| b. <i>huasten</i> | [ʃ]                      | hu[s]ten | 'to cough' |

In the dictionary compiled by Denison and Grassegger (2007), however, in word-initial or word-medial preconsonantal position before stops we mostly find the voiceless palatoalveolar fricative, the same sibilant that is found in MSG word initially: [ʃ]tan (MSG: [ʃ]tehen 'to stand'), [ʃ]peck (MSG: [ʃ]peck 'bacon'); word medially: mi[ʃ]t (MSG: Mi[s]t 'dung'), hue[ʃ]tn<sup>7</sup> (MSG: 'to cough'); and also before <p>: be-[ʃ]pl (MSG: We[s]pe 'wasp'). In contrast to Kranzmayer (1956), therefore, Denison and Grassegger (2007) no longer (50 years later) find the intermediate PoA in the contemporary dialect of Sauris/Zahre.

<sup>6</sup> Kranzmayer distinguishes graphically between three postalveolar shibilants (< PG \*/s/): a fortis [ʒ], a voiceless lenis [ʃ], and a voiced lenis [z]. Compare, e.g., Kranzmayer's notations of a. hua[ʒ]tn 'to cough', b. [ʃ]peck 'bacon' (preconsonantal position before voiceless stops), c. [z]nadar 'tailor' (this last in Cimbrian in preconsonantal position before voiced stops and sonorants). As mentioned in section 3, a fortis fricative is assumed in context b. in MHG by, e.g., Paul [1881] 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Kranzmayer (1956) and Denison and Grassegger (2007) describe the diphthong differently.

In preconsonantal position before voiced stops and sonorants, Kranzmayer (1956) transcribes a voiced palatoalveolar [ʒ]: [ʒ]naider (MSG: [ʃ]neider 'tailor'); the same voiced sibilant is also reported in the neighboring Sappada/Plodn and Timau/Tischelbong language islands (see § 3).

Denison and Grassegger's (2007) dictionary reports the voiced fricative [ʒ] in only a few items in the contemporary Sauris/Zahre system. In most contexts, the voiceless palatoalveolar sibilant is transcribed, even in word-initial position before sonorants, e.g. [ʃ]naidar 'tailor'. The dictionary only contains six entries with initial preconsonantal [ʒ], mainly proper names borrowed from other languages and before /w/, e.g. [ʒ]walt Ital. 'Osvaldo') or [ʒ]wan 'John' (cf. Germ. *Hans, Johannes*, Ital. *Giovanni*).

A further source for the spoken language of Sauris/Zahre - and other Germanic minority languages, like Cimbrian - is the VIVALDI multi-media atlas of Italian dialects and minority languages in Italy.<sup>8</sup> The atlas contains lists of stimuli grouped according to linguistic criteria along with IPA transcriptions and sound recordings. The focus is on dialects of Italian, which is reflected in the choice of stimuli, although individual items from the Germanic minority languages are also featured. Here, too, a voiceless (prepalatal/palatoalveolar) fricative in preconsonantal position, including before sonorants, is transcribed, e.g., [ʃ]nea 'snow', [ʃ]mit 'blacksmith'.

To summarize, when describing the current sibilant system in the Sauris/Zahre dialect, the literature and dictionaries are not wholly in agreement with regard to the PoA of preconsonantal /s/. Before voiceless consonants, sometimes a postalveolar articulation is assumed to be preserved (e.g. [ʃ]tan 'to stand'), and before voiced consonants sometimes a voiced palatoalveolar sound [ʒ] is transcribed.

Table 1 provides an overview of the descriptions given in linguistic atlases and dictionaries and in the literature in the contexts under investigation (D&G = Denison and Grassegger, K = Kranzmayer).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www2.hu-berlin.de/vivaldi/index.php>.

**Table 1** Descriptions in the literature of sibilants in preconsonantal contexts in the Sauris/Zahre dialect

context	Sauris/Zahre	example	MSG	gloss
initial position, #/s/+C <sub>VOICELESS</sub>	[ʃ]	[ʃ]/[š]tan (D&G/K)	[ʃ]tehen	to stand
initial position #/s/+C <sub>VOICED</sub>	[ʃ]/[ʒ]	[ʃ]/[ʒ]naidar (D&G/K) [ʒ]walt (D&G)	[ʃ]neider O[s]wald	Tailor (proper name) Oswald
word-medial position <sup>9</sup> /s/+C <sub>VOICELESS</sub>	[ʃ]/[š]	be[ʃ]pl (D&G) mi[ʃ]/[š]t (D&G/K)	We[s]pe, Mi[s]t	wasp dung

The hypothetical existence of a voiced palatoalveolar sibilant [ʒ] in the inventory of the Sauris/Zahre dialect is explained by Kranzmayer (1956) as related to language contact: postalveolar fricatives are not found in the inventory of the surrounding Friulian dialect, so the Germanic variety adapts to the Friulian system by eliminating the intermediate category of sibilants taking a voiced [ʒ] before voiced consonants (Kranzmayer 1956, 89). In order to verify the hypothetical influence of language contact, in the following section I present a short description of the sibilant system in Carnic Friulian based on current information.

## 5 Sibilants in Carnic Friulian

The sibilant system in (Standard) Friulian contains only alveolar [s] and [z] (Carrozzo 2000). The sibilant is inherited from Latin /s/ (also with retracted, postalveolar articulation; see Lessiak 1933, 93-113). Intervocally, Latin /s/ tended to become voiced, and this weakening favored the phonemization of voiced [z] in Friulian (compare minimal pairs such as *mu[s]e* Ital. *asina* ‘jenny’ vs. *mu[z]e* Ital. *faccia* ‘face’; see Frau 1984, 52-3; Rizzolatti 1981).

Francescato (1970, 102-4) classified the northern varieties surrounding the Sauris/Zahre language island as the most “conservative” (zone A). In these dialects, voiceless palatoalveolar /ʃ/ (the outcome of Latin <ce, ci>) in word-final position contrasts with /s/, so both are considered to belong to the phoneme inventory (Frau 1984, 18). Furthermore, in these conservative varieties, Lat. <ce, ci, cj> often evolved into [ʒ] in intervocalic position; see Francescato 1970,

<sup>9</sup> /s/+sonorant in word-medial position was not investigated and is therefore omitted from table 1. In Denison and Grassegger’s dictionary (2007), nearly all the items with these sound combinations contain a morphological boundary, e.g. *los+n* ‘to let’ and *aus+mochn* ‘to turn out’, which means that s-retraction, which normally does not apply across morphological boundaries, cannot be checked.



113-14; Frau 1984, 55; and recent studies on the phoneme /ʒ/ in northern Friulian: Carrozzo 2000, Miotti 2007; Roseano 2013.

Also in these conservative varieties, alveolar /s/ is often retracted to /ʃ/ before consonants, as in [ʃ]crivere ‘to write’, and word-medially, as in avo[ʃ]t ‘August’. This s-retraction is also reflected in the spelling rules:<sup>10</sup> regarding the palatoalveolar fricatives in the Carnic variety, the digraph <sj> and the trigraph <ssj> transcribe the palatal consonants, e.g. <sjemenâ> [ʃ]emenâ ‘to sow’ (Ital. [s]eminare) or <pussjibil> pu[ʃ]ibil ‘possible’ (Ital. possibile). However, these graphs are not used in preconsonantal position to avoid confusing the reader who – following German spelling rules – would without graphic signaling give them a palatal pronunciation: *cjastine* > *cja[ʃ]tine* ‘chestnut’.

The following table presents examples from the Forni Avoltri variety for the relevant contexts taken from the VIVALDI multi-media atlas.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 2** Examples of sibilants in Friulian (Forni Avoltri variety) taken from the VIVALDI multi-media atlas of Italian dialects and minority languages in Italy

context	Carnic Friulian Forni Avoltri	Italian	gloss
initial, prevocalic position	[s]otil [s]ak	[s]ottile [s]acco	thin bag
initial, preconsonantal position	[ʃ]krivi [ʃ]telo	[s]crivere [s]tella	(to) write star
word internal, intervocalic position	tʃəri[ʒ]iə tʃame[ʒ]o se[ʒ]olo	cilie[dʒ]e cami[tʃ]a fal[tʃ]e	cherry shirt scythe
word-medial, preconsonantal position	ve[ʃ]kom ra[ʃ]tyel avo[ʃ]t	ve[s]covo ra[s]trello ago[s]to	bishop rake August
word-final, post-vocalic position	di[ʃ] kruo[ʃ] grues[s] lor[s]	di[tʃ]e cro[tʃ]e gro[s]o or[s]o	(s/he) says cross huge, big bear

**10** The official spelling rules of standard Friulian are laid down in a regional law of 1996, while symbols for the ‘special sounds’ in Friulian language varieties were added later (2013). This more recent supplement mentions the sounds being examined here, namely the voiceless and voiced palatoalveolars (/ʃ/, /ʒ/).

**11** The phonetic transcriptions in the VIVALDI corpus are very detailed and distinguish six PoAs for sibilants. Here, only three PoAs are distinguished: alveolar [s]/[z] (also including dental and dental-alveolar), postalveolar [ʃ]/[ʒ], and palatoalveolar [ʃ]/[ʒ] (including prepalatal [ʃ]). I listened to and verified the following items, all of which are transcribed with a voiceless palatoalveolar [ʃ] before a voiced consonant: [ʃ]novl ‘beak’, [ʃ]mit ‘blacksmith’, [ʃ]nea ‘snow’, [ʃ]naibm ‘to snow’, [ʃ]be[ʃ]ter ‘sister’.

The data show that the Germanic dialect spoken in Sauris/Zahre is in contact with a variety of Friulian (Carnic Friulian) that has a 2-sibilant PoA inventory (alveolar and palatoalveolar). The fricative in preconsonantal position is the outcome of Lat. /s/, while the palatoalveolar /ʃ/ is the outcome of a previous sound change. In preconsonantal position, s-retraction applies, while in intersonorant contexts a voiced palatoalveolar [ʒ] is found.<sup>12</sup>

In the following production study, I will address the following questions:

- A. Does the system in the Sauris/Zahre dialect still preserve a postalveolar articulation ([ʃ], [ʒ]) in the preconsonantal position, as hypothesized by Kranzmayer (1956) and as attested for Cimbrian and Mòcheno, for instance (see Alber et al. 2021; Alber, Rabanus 2018), thus representing an intermediate stage in the development from a 3-sibilant system in MHG to a 2-sibilant system in MSG?
- B. Do we find a voiced allophone of /ʃ/ in the pre-sonorant/pre-voiced stop contexts, as described by Kranzmayer (1956) and as attested in other language islands in the Carnic Alps (Sapada/Plodn and Timau/Tischelbong)?

## 6 Production Study

### 6.1 Consultants and Data Collection

As mentioned in section 3, I specifically target the preconsonantal context in this study. Acoustic and auditory analyses were carried out to investigate whether the system in the Sauris/Zahre dialect still preserves a postalveolar articulation ([ʃ], [ʒ]) in preconsonantal position, and whether there is a voiced palatoalveolar articulation in the preconsonantal context. Two or three items for each context were taken from Denison and Grassegger's (2007) dictionary. Four native speakers of the Sauris/Zahre language were recorded producing 187 items. The recordings were annotated manually by the author using Praat. The Sauris/Zahre data were elicited through the following procedure: the author presented the items orally in Italian and asked the informants to translate them into their German dialect. If they were unable to recall the relevant item, it was first

<sup>12</sup> I found no examples in the VIVALDI corpus of [ʒ] in word-initial prevocalic position in the Forni Avoltri variety, although the phoneme /ʒ/ is assumed in this position in northern Friulian (see, e.g., Carrozzo 2000, 47; cf. [ʒ]ave <'sjave' 'toad'. <https://www2.hu-berlin.de/vivaldi/index.php>).

paraphrased in Italian, and then if necessary the German equivalent was suggested. This was (in the following analysis) the case with the items *bešpl* (two speakers), *burštle* and *šlös* (one speaker each). Table 3 shows the tested items.

**Table 3** Sibilants in preconsonantal position with their expected realizations in the Sauris/Zahre dialect

context	Zahre*	expected sibilants	MSG	gloss
initial position #/s/+C <sub>VL</sub>	špeckh špeitar	[ʃ]/[š]	[ʃ]peck [ʃ]päter	bacon later
initial position #/s/+sonorant	šnea šlisl šlös	[ʃ]/[ʒ]	[ʃ]nee [ʃ]lüssel[ [ʃ]loss	snow key lock
word-medial position /s/+C <sub>VL</sub>	bešpl raštn** burštle	[ʃ]/[s]	We[s]pe, ra[s]ten Wur[s]t	wasp (to) rest sausage

\* Transcription follows Denison, Grassegger 2007.

\*\* This item is not found in the D&G dictionary.

The recordings were made on an Olympus LS-14 (sampling frequency 48 kHz, 16 bit) with the informant about 25 cm from the microphone, and were conducted in February 2019, either in the homes of the participants or at the “Haus van der Zahre” ethnographic center, so the sound quality is not optimal.

The Sauris/Zahre informants were two women and two men, aged 66-77. They were native speakers of the dialect which was the only language they used to speak until they went to school at the age of six and started learning Italian. They also had active and passive knowledge of Friulian as the colloquial oral language they mainly used at work with people who did not speak the German dialect. One of the two women was a housewife and had only a passive knowledge of Friulian, since she had no need to speak it for work purposes.

## 6.2 Methods

### 6.2.1 Auditory Analysis

The data were analyzed auditorily and acoustically. For the auditory analysis, four linguists classified the data as voiced vs. voiceless. Evaluation sheets, one per speaker, each containing a list of 29 items were given to the linguists to rate. Only those items with sibilants in preconsonantal contexts and two items with final, post-vocalic [ʃ] are analyzed here, not the postvocalic realizations (except in word-final contexts for control) as they are not under investigation

in this study. The relevant fricatives were indicated on the evaluation sheets with the neutral symbol <S> (see Appendix) in order to avoid a writing bias. Otherwise, the items were transcribed following Denison and Grassegger (2007). Along with the evaluation sheets, the linguists were given the audio recordings of the items (each pronounced twice) listed in table 4.

**Table 4** Items and contexts subjected to acoustic and auditory analyses

context	examples	glosses
word-initial: s+C <sub>VOICELESS</sub>	Speckh, Spaitar	bacon, later
word-initial: s+C <sub>VOICED</sub>	Snea, Slisl, Slös	snow, key, lock
word-medial: s+C <sub>VOICELESS</sub>	beSpl, raStn, бүrStl	wasp, (to) rest, sausage
word-final, postvocalic	vlaiS, viS	meat, fish

### 6.2.2 Acoustic Analysis

For the acoustic analysis, the author labeled the audio files using Praat.<sup>13</sup> The visual representation of the sound and the audio signal were both referred to in annotating the fricatives. Visually, the aperiodicity of the waveform in the oscillogram clearly shows the beginning and end of the fricative; in the spectrogram, the beginning and end of the fricative are shown by a dark pattern signaling the frication noise.

Spectral moments are used to classify the PoA of fricatives. Fricative noise moves towards lower frequencies as the place of articulation moves further back (as the length of the cavity in front of the main constriction becomes longer). Center of gravity (CoG), which will be used in the following analysis, is a measure of the average height of the frequencies in the spectrum over the frequency domain weighted by the amplitude. The CoG value will be higher for sounds with greater high frequency energy (see Kiss 2013). Current research gives a value of about 5000/6000 Hz for alveolar fricatives [s/z], and only 2500/3000 Hz for palatoalveolar fricatives [ʃ] (see Jongman 2000, 1253). Zygis (2010) investigated the 3-sibilant inventory in Polish (/s/ʃ/ç/) and reported the following values: alveolar /s/: 6000 Hz, alveolar palatalized /ç/: 4000 Hz, postalveolar /ʃ/ (transcribed as retroflex): 3000 Hz.

A word of caution is needed here. Since the recordings were not carried out in soundproof spaces, the analysis may well be affected by background noise and vowel echoes. Moreover, measurements

<sup>13</sup> Praat: doing phonetics by computer (version 5.3.56). <http://www.praat.org/>.

can be influenced by casual acoustic variability within the frication noise. Lastly, CoG values vary depending on the speaker and the context (for example, the preceding and following vowels).

## 7 Results

### 7.1 Auditory Analysis

The auditory analysis shows that the sibilant in preconsonantal position was classified as voiceless in all but one case (word-medially), and this was confirmed by the author's auditory judgement and by visual analysis (no clearly visible voice bar, no pitch curve, no visible formant structures in the spectrogram). This would not be surprising before a voiceless consonant, but is less expected before a voiced consonant. The auditory analysis therefore shows that in preconsonantal, word-initial contexts the system in the Sauris/Zahre variety has the same distribution as MSG, i.e. all sibilants are neutralized to voiceless, which is also confirmed by the transcriptions of the items in Denison and Grassegger (2007) and in the VIVALDI multi-media atlas.

**Table 5** Auditory evaluation with regard to voicing and place of articulation

context	items	VD	VL <sup>14</sup>
#/s/+C <sub>VL</sub>	Speckh, Spaitar	0	18*
#/s/+C <sub>VD</sub>	Slisl, Snea, Slös	0	27*
word-medial: s+C <sub>VL</sub>	beSpl, bürStl, raStn,	1	22**
V+/s/# (<OHG /sk/)	vlaisch, visch	0	18*

\* One rater made no choice between voiced and voiceless in this context on two evaluation sheets.  
 \*\* Three evaluation sheets did not contain the relevant items (hence only 8 evaluations); the item *raStn* was not rated on one evaluation sheet.

**14** There were 11 evaluation sheets; where there were 3 items to rate in a given group (e.g., *glos*, *haus*, *hols*) a total of 33 evaluations were made, where the group contained only two items, 22 evaluations were made.

## 7.2 Acoustic Analysis

The acoustic analysis was carried out with a script (Elvira-García 2014)<sup>15</sup> that generates an FFT spectrum over the whole fricative (minus 1ms at the edges); frequencies below 1000 Hz were filtered out.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 6** Acoustic analysis of /s/ in preconsonantal (< PG \*/s/) and word-final (< OHG /sk/) contexts; script: Elvira-García 2014

context	items	CoG	standard deviation	max. freq	mean intensity	interval duration	no. of tokens
#/s/+C <sub>VL</sub>	Speckh Spaitar	2489.84	1980.35	2511.06	55.62	68.5	16
#/s/+C <sub>VD</sub>	Slisl Snea Slös	2886.08	1987.42	2752.52	53.56	105.13	23
word-medial: s+C <sub>VL</sub>	beSpl bürStl raStn	2585.76	2560.74	3421.9	62.4	94.85	20*
final (OHG / sk/)	viS, vlaiS	2961.32	2130.51	3063.62	60.87	194.19	16

\* In this context, one female speaker (G., aged 66) was replaced by another (R., aged 49) because the first speaker failed to produce the items requested.

Table 6 shows that the sibilants in question have very similar values. Focusing specifically on CoG, there was a small difference between /s/+C<sub>VD</sub> with a value of about 2900 Hz, and word-medial and word-initial /s/+C<sub>VL</sub> with values around 2500 Hz. Preservation of an intermediate postalveolar ‘shibilant’ in word-initial preconsonantal position, which has been suggested in the literature, could not be confirmed. In all contexts, the CoG was within the 2500-3000 Hz range previously reported for palatoalveolar articulation (Jongman 2000, 1253; Zygis 2010).

The differences of about 400-500 Hz found between, for example, the values for [ʃ] (< OHG /sk/) in word-final position and the values for /s/+C<sub>VL</sub> in word-initial position, were too small to confirm a distinct, contrastive PoA. If these CoGs are taken as relational values,

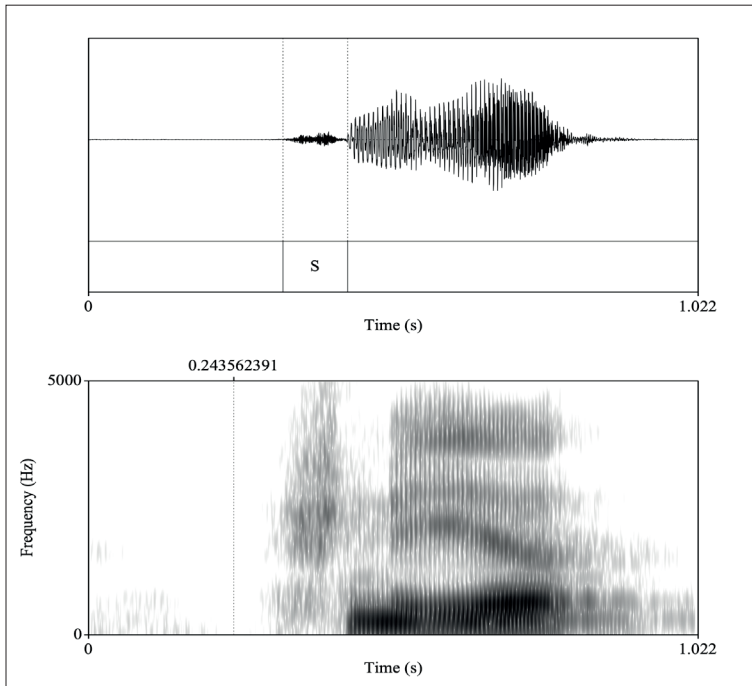
<sup>15</sup> <http://stel.ub.edu/labfon/sites/default/files/zero-crossing-and-spectral-moments13.praat>. The script calculates the following parameters: duration of the interval, zero crossing in the first 30 ms of the interval, number of crosses in the whole interval, zero crosses in the interval\*10/duration of the interval, intensity, center of gravity, skewness, kurtosis, standard deviation, central moment.

<sup>16</sup> In order to reduce the background noise in the spectrum settings the dynamic range was changed to 60 dB.

this would point at most to the articulation of #/s/+C<sub>VL</sub> being more retracted than [ʃ] (< OHG /sk/) in final position. As in most Germanic dialects, historical \*/s/ and the new phoneme [ʃ] (< OHG /sk/) in preconsonantal position merge with regard to both PoA and voicing, regardless of the hypothetical lenis character of MHG [ʒ] before a voiced consonant.

Graph 1 below shows a voiceless palatoalveolar sibilant realized by a male speaker of the Sauris/Zahre dialect. The oscillations are irregular and no voice bar is visible in the spectrogram, while the frequencies of the energy concentration of the fricative are fairly low (about 2000-3000 Hz), and the formant structure is only faintly visible.

Graph 1 N\_Snea\_1 'snow' (Sauris/Zahre)



## 8 Discussion

This contribution presents an acoustic and auditory analysis of one aspect of the sibilant system of the dialect of the Germanic language island Sauris/Zahre. Specifically, sibilants in preconsonantal position were investigated and compared with the sibilant systems in MSG and the surrounding Romance variety, Carnic Friulian. The following questions were raised (see § 5) and are reiterated here:

- A. Does the system in the Sauris/Zahre dialect still preserve a postalveolar articulation in this context, which represents an intermediate stage in the development from a 3-sibilant inventory in MHG to a 2-sibilant system in MSG?
- B. Do we find a voiced allophone of /ʃ/ in the pre-sonorant/pre-voiced stop contexts, as described e.g. by Kranzmayer (1956), Lessiak (1933; 1959) and as attested in other language islands in the Carnic Alps (Sappada/Plodn and Timau/Tischelbong)?

### Question A

Acoustic analysis shows that in the Sauris/Zahre variety a postalveolar articulation ([ʃ, ʒ] < PG \*/s/) is no longer evident in word-initial preconsonantal position. That is, the reorganization from a 3-sibilant inventory to a 2-sibilant inventory based on PoA is complete, and historical \*/s/, the only sibilant realized in preconsonantal position, is realized consistently as a voiceless palatoalveolar [ʃ] in word-initial position (and frequently word medially before /p/, /t/). Therefore, as far as the preconsonantal position is concerned, the Sauris/Zahre dialect follows the same development as most varieties on which MSG is based as well as MSG itself,<sup>17</sup> while in other Germanic varieties in northern Italy, e.g., Cimbrian spoken in Lusérn (Alber, Rabanus 2018) a postalveolar realization is still detectable in some contexts.

Recent studies have drawn attention to the process of s-retraction observed in Germanic and Romance varieties in northern Italy and have raised the question if language contact could have played a role (Alber et al. 2021; Schmid 1956). The language islands in this area provide important insights into the discussion about contact related change and therefore I will briefly analyze the results of the production study in Sauris/Zahre against the background of contact linguistics.

As claimed by e.g. Schmid (1956), contact may have played a role in the implementation of s-retraction in the German based minority lan-

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<sup>17</sup> The same development is observed in prevocalic, intersonorant and final contexts, see Vogt 2000.



guages in the northern Alps, i.e. also in the Sauris/Zahre variety: between the 11th and 13th centuries, s-retraction was an active process in northern Italy (see the Lombard language in the Alps: [ʃ]tela ‘star’, [ʃ]piga ‘spike’ [ʃ]kur ‘dark’ (Pfister 1984)), and might therefore have triggered s-retraction also in the Germanic minority languages in Italy. Schmid (1956, 50) concludes that in the areas of Romance-Germanic language contact (Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Eastern Switzerland), the Germanic dialects borrowed s-retraction, and the process then spread to the north. One of Schmid’s arguments is that the two centers of s-retraction, Romansh and Ladin – in close contact, respectively, with Tyrol and Western Upper Kärnten – pattern with Swabian and Alemannic (s-retraction also word-internally). Sauris/Zahre would therefore represent the eastern edge of the area reached by this Germanic-Romance language contact phenomenon.

On the other hand, also contact independent motivations for s-retraction are discussed in literature. From a phonetic point of view, there is experimental evidence for a general lowering effect of /s/ in preconsonantal position, that is, /s/ is observed to have a lower centroid frequency and therefore to be more /ʃ/-like when followed by /p, t, k/ (Phillips 2020; Stuart-Smith et al. 2019; Stevens, Harrington 2016; Stevens et al. 2015). Besides this phonetic bias, there is evidence that a three-way articulatory contrast is difficult to maintain. Typologically, such systems are rare, reflecting the fact that the intermediate category presents articulatory and acoustic instability. Polish is one of the comparatively few languages with a 3-way articulatory contrast (dental, retroflex and alveopalatal sibilants). Regarding the intermediate sibilant, retroflex [ʂ], Bukmaier & Harrington (2016) provide evidence for the relative weakness of acoustic cues for PoA, and for low perceptual salience. They also point to data that suggest that retroflex [ʂ] is acquired relatively late by children. Reorganization of the sibilant system through removal of the intermediate category may therefore be interpreted as a kind of optimization of the sibilant system. The motivation for the ‘direction’ of the intermediate category towards retraction rather than towards fronting in the varieties with s-retraction could be the above-mentioned phonetic bias (/s/ more /ʃ/-like before voiceless stops). The extension to all consonants in MHG is accounted for by Benware (1996) as phonetic analogy induced by acoustic-auditory similarity: /ʃr/ triggered the following diachronic scale: [l > n > m > w].<sup>18</sup>

Realignment of the system after change is recognized by Alber et al. (2021) as the driving force behind preconsonantal s-retraction. The authors analyze Germanic and Romance varieties and identify the in-

<sup>18</sup> The position of the stops [p, t] in the diachronic scale was not investigated by Benware (1996).

roduction of a new phoneme, namely palatoalveolar [ʃ], into the sibilant system as the common denominator in all the language groups involved in the process of preconsonantal s-retraction – with subsequent reorganization from a 3-sibilant inventory (in Germanic varieties) or 1-sibilant inventory (in Romance varieties) to a 2-sibilant one. Both types of reorganization share the characteristic that only the historical sibilant is found in preconsonantal position,<sup>19</sup> so it could merge with the ‘new’ palatoalveolar sibilant /ʃ/ without a loss of distinction in this position. Both dialects discussed here, the Germanic Sauris/Zahre variety and the Romance Forni Avoltri variety, fit this pattern and can therefore count as further examples illustrating this language contact independent trajectory. To conclude, the latter arguments provides an internal motivation for the change in Sauris/Zahre.

## Question B

Lessiak (1933; 1959) and Kranzmayer (1956, 89) claim that in the pre-sonorant/pre-voiced stop contexts, the voiced palatoalveolar sibilant [ʒ] is realized in the Sauris language. In their view, lenited [ʒ] evolved into voiced [ʒ] in the Sauris/Zahre dialect by adapting to the inventory of the surrounding varieties Carnic Friulian and Slovenian (Neweklowski 1990) (see § 4). Thus, the existence of the voiced palatoalveolar [ʒ] in the German minority language is ascribed to language contact, too. However, auditory analysis shows that (more than 50 years later) we do not find a voiced realization of the palatoalveolar sibilant, which is also confirmed by the transcriptions of the items in Denison and Grassegger (2007) and in the VIVALDI multi-media atlas. By consequence, in this context and regarding the feature [+/-voice] no language contact influence is observable. A voiced palatoalveolar articulation [ʒl-], [ʒn-], [ʒm-], [ʒb-] is reported in the varieties of the neighboring language islands Sappada/Plodn and Timau/Tischelbong (Geyer 2018). This might reflect the lenis character hypothesized in MHG for \*/s/ in this context, but in Sauris/Zahre a voiced allophone of /ʃ/ as remnant of OHG-FL is not observable in preconsonantal position.

Taking the different pieces of evidence together, we can say that preconsonantal s-retraction in the Sauris/Zahre dialect is no different from the development observed in MSG and related varieties: it is part of the reorganization of the sibilant systems (elimination of the intermediate articulatory category), is grounded in phonetics (has a perceptual and articulatory trigger). Hypothesized language contact influence in Sauris/Zahre is explainable by internal motiva-

<sup>19</sup> Before /r/ only /ʃ/ is found, e.g. *schríben* ‘to write’ (Paul [2007] 1881, 171).

tions (preconsonantal s-retraction) or is not attested (the borrowing of a voiced allophone of /ʃ/ from the neighboring Romance variety is not observed).

Turning back to the discussion regarding sound change in contact settings and the dichotomy between contact-induced and internally motivated change it is important to note that external motivation for sound change has recently been viewed with more caution, especially by theoretically-orientated linguists (see Lucas 2015; Hickey 2010; Muysken 2010 for overviews). Strictly speaking, in the presence of an internal motivation, it is difficult to demonstrate the real influence of an external motivation like contact. Even where certain features resulting from change are present in neighboring varieties, we cannot exclude that the features may have arisen independently of contact, but rather from internal motivations only; see e.g. Alber, Rabanus, Tomaselli (2012) for this narrow definition of language contact-induced change. The authors state also that contact *independent* change is even more likely if the same change is also observed in varieties outside the contact situation and if it gives rise to unmarked features. This is the case with s-retraction which is not confined only to situations of language contact as, for instance, it is also found in many Southern Italian dialects and in other Romance varieties; Rohlf's (1949), cit. Alber et al. (2021). Other varieties of Portuguese, Catalan, Persian, Slovenian and Spanish are mentioned in the literature (Kümmel 2007; Stevens et al. 2015; Phillips 2020), so it is unlikely that the phenomenon is the result of language contact alone.

Many scholars agree that assuming a strict dichotomy between internal and external motivations is inappropriate (Romaine 1995; Dorian 1993; Hickey 2010). It is often pointed out that in contact settings contact may catalyze and transmit a phenomenon which has emerged through internal motivation. According to these “integrative” accounts, internal and external motivations are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, also in Sauris/Zahre change might have been underpinned and heightened by language contact.

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## Appendix (questionnaire)

	VD	VL
Test person:		
1. aiSn		
2. beiSn		
3. beSpl*		
4. бүrStl*		
5. eiSl		
6. epaS		
7. gieSn		
8. gloS		
9. groaS		
10. hauS		
11. hoIS		
12. leSn		
13. paiSe		
14. raSten*		
15. Salvia		
16. Sedano		
17. Slisl*		
18. Slös*		
19. Snea*		
20. Snur		
21. Sörge		
22. spaiSn		
23. Spaitar*		
24. Spekh*		
25. Sune		
26. veinSter		
27. viS*		
28. vlaiS*		
29. vueS		

\* The preconsonantal and final sibilants investigated here are signaled by the asterisk.





# ***A mme e tte*: An Associative Plural of the First Person Pronoun in Abruzzese**

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**Abstract** In Abruzzese, the structure *a mme e X* is used to convey the notion that the speaker and someone closely related to them act jointly. The order of conjuncts is fixed: the first one is always a first person pronoun, while the second one, usually a second person pronoun, strictly denotes a close acquaintance of the speaker. The present article argues that this construction is an associative plural of the first person pronoun, something that has not been previously identified in Romance. On top of providing new empirical data, the evidence presented here bears on whether there is a formal difference between associative plural pronouns and regular plural pronouns, a question that has been debated in the literature for quite some time.

**Keywords** Associative plural pronouns. First-person pronouns. Typology of pronouns. Italo-Romance morpho-syntax. Abruzzese.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Syntactic Characteristics. – 3 Associative Plurals and Plural Pronouns. – 4 More on the Crosslinguistic Picture. – 5 Conclusions.



## **Peer review**

Submitted 2021-08-01  
Accepted 2021-11-10  
Published 2022-07-05

## **Open access**

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**Citation** Cuonzo, C. (2022). "*A mme e tte*: An Associative Plural of the First Person Pronoun in Abruzzese". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [105-122] 207-224.

## 1 Introduction

In Abruzzese, an upper-Southern Italo-Romance language, the semi-fixed construction *a mme e X* (in italics in (1)) is used to convey the meaning that a speaker and a close associate of theirs act together.

- (1) Parləmə      a mme e      tte.  
 talk.IMP.1PL to me and you  
 ‘Let’s talk, me and you.’

The data in (1) have not been previously described in the literature, and constitute an interesting puzzle for their peculiar syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics. First of all, the structure *a mme e X* constitutes the subject of the sentence in which it occurs but it is not in nominative case. Secondly, the second conjunct in the structure, the *X*, always denotes a close acquaintance of the speaker. Thirdly, this structure is used to convey intimacy between the speaker and one of its closest friends/relatives, and the fact that they act jointly. Building on work by Ackema and Neeleman (2018), I argue that this structure is an associative plural of the first person pronoun, showing that this kind of pronoun is attested in Romance. Indeed, the *a mme e X* construction in Abruzzese fits Ackema and Neeleman’s (2018) prediction on associative plural pronouns. They maintain that if a language has associative plurals of the first and second person pronouns, denoting the speaker or the addressee and their *permanent* associates, they will always be formally distinct from regular plural pronouns. The data from Abruzzese confirm their prediction: *a mme e X* is used to refer to the speaker and a close friend or family member of theirs, while the regular plural *nu* ‘we’ is used to denote a set made up of the speaker and any other individual salient in the context. More specifically, I argue that Abruzzese resorts to Differential Subject Marking to distinguish between associative plurals and the regular plural of the first person.

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I am indebted to Ad Neeleman for initially pointing out to me the similarity between the *a mme and X* construction in Abruzzese and associative plural pronouns in Dutch. My gratitude also goes to Valentine Hacquard, Adam Ledgeway, Juan Uriagereka, Alexander Williams as well as to Silvio Cruschina, Bob Frank, Maria Kouneli, Michele Loporcaro, Silvia Terenghi, Matthew Tyler, Jim Wood, Raffella Zanuttini, audiences at the 13th Newcastle Postgraduate Conference in Linguistics, 14th Cambridge Italian Dialect Syntax-Morphology Meeting and Yale Syntax Reading Group and various anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions on various (oral and written) versions of the present work. I would also like to thank Gigi Andriani, for being an unending source of information and references on Italo-Romance. My deepest gratitude goes to my informants: Antonio, Lina, Claudio, Luigi and Manuela, without whom this work could not have been possible.

The paper is structured as follows: in section 2, I review empirical data from Abruzzese, providing a description of the syntactic and semantic characteristics of the *a mme e X* construction. In section 3, I briefly review the literature on plurals of first and second person pronouns: I follow Ackema and Neeleman (2018) in arguing that they refer only to contextual associates of the speaker and the hearer, and that they are formally distinct from associative plurals of the first and second pronouns. Section 4 highlights (dis)similarities between associative plural pronouns in Abruzzese and other phenomena marking close familiarity with the speaker that have been identified in the typological literature. Section 5 concludes the paper, pointing out some of the questions that remain open, and hinting at future directions of research.

## 2 Syntactic Characteristics

Abruzzese is an upper-Southern Italo-Romance language spoken in the Italian region of Abruzzo.<sup>1</sup> It is mainly an oral language, and shows a huge degree of microvariation even among towns and villages that are relatively close to each other. Therefore, even though I use the term ‘Abruzzese’ in this essay, I actually bring data from Adriatic Eastern Abruzzese (Loporcaro 2009, 68-9) and, more specifically, from Lancianese, the variety spoken in the town of Lanciano. It is worth pointing out that there are no monolingual speakers of Abruzzese (and more generally of Italo-Romance languages) anymore, and all of them also speak Italian (or, more precisely, a regional variety of Italian), which inevitably influences their Abruzzese.

The *a mme e X* construction is used in Abruzzese to convey the idea that the speaker and a close acquaintance of theirs act jointly. It is found with verbs of any kind of thematic structure. In (1) there was an unergative verb, while in (2) and (3) we can see an unaccusative and a transitive respectively.

- (2) lemæcə                      a mme e        tte.<sup>2</sup>  
 go.IMP.1PL-CL.loc to me and you  
 ‘Let’s go together, me and you.’

<sup>1</sup> Italo-Romance languages are sometimes referred to as ‘Italian dialects’. However, they are not local varieties of Italian, but Romance languages that originated from Latin *independently* of Italian. Therefore, the use of the term ‘dialect’ in this context may be misleading, especially for readers not acquainted with the complex socio-linguistic situation of Italy. Thus, in what follows, I refer to Abruzzese as either ‘language’ or ‘variety’, and not as ‘dialect’.

<sup>2</sup> There are no fixed writing conventions for the written rendering of Abruzzese. Therefore, following previous literature (e.g., D’Alessandro 2014; Garzonio, Poletto 2013, a.o.), I use Italian orthographic rules to write Abruzzese. However, I also make use of the IPA symbol schwa /ə/ since this phoneme is present in Abruzzese but not in Italian. Finally, I overtly mark *raddoppiamento fonosintattico* (gemination of the ini-

- (3) I            lə        magnəmə a mme e        tte.  
 CL.refl.1PL CL.it eat.1PL to me and you  
 ‘You and I will eat that (thing) together.’

As shown by (1) and (2), the main context of occurrence of this construction is with hortatives, but at least some speakers allow it in other moods and tenses, as in (3) and (4).

- (4) *Emə*        itə        a mme e        essə.  
 have.1PL gone to me and him/her  
 ‘S/he and I went (together).’

The main syntactic characteristics of associative plural of the first person in Abruzzese can be deduced from the previous examples. First, the main verb or auxiliary shows first person plural agreement (signalled in italics in (4)), and the subject is constituted by a conjoined structure, in this case *a mme e essə* ‘s/he and I’. The fact that this is actually the subject of this sentence is shown by the ungrammaticality of (5) where another overt subject is present.<sup>3</sup>

- (5) \**Nu emə*        itə        a mme e        essə.  
 we have.1PL gone to me and him/her  
 (intended) ‘S/he and I went (together).’

The conjoined structure that characterised all of the examples can be schematised as in (6).

- (6) a mme e X

The first element in the structure is the preposition *a* ‘to’, which I will argue is a differential case marker of the subject (see § 3). It is also homophonous with the accusative marker of the differential object marking, and it engenders *raddoppiamento fonosintattico*, i.e., gemination of the initial consonant, on the following word (see Fanciullo 1997; Loporcaro 1997, a.o.). The second element in the structure,

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tial consonant of a word in specific phono-syntactic contexts; see Borrelli 2002; Fanciullo 1997; Loporcaro 1997; Napoli, Nespor 1979, a.o.) with a reduplicated consonant in word-initial position.

<sup>3</sup> Abruzzese is a pro-drop language, and the restrictions on the realisation of an overt subject are pragmatically similar to that of other pro-drop languages, such as Italian and Spanish.

i.e., the first conjunct, is *mme*, the first person pronoun in the oblique case. Then, there is the conjunction, *e*, which also engenders *raddoppiamento fonosintattico* on the following word. Finally, we have the second conjunct, marked as *X* in (6). The great majority of speakers allow only a second person pronoun in this position, but some speakers also allow a third person singular pronoun (as in (4)), and a personal name or a full DP as in (7). Despite intraspeaker differences, the *X* always denotes a close acquaintance of the speaker, either a family member or a close friend of theirs, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (8). The second conjunct too is in oblique case, but this is overtly marked only on the second person pronoun.<sup>4</sup>

- (7) a. C'emə            itə    a mme e    fijəmə.  
 CL.loc-have.1PL gone to me and my-son/daughter  
 'My son/daughter and I went there (together).'
- b. C'emə            itə    a mme e    lu citilə.  
 CL.loc-have.1PL gone to me and the baby  
 'Me and my (little) baby went there (together).'
- (8) \*C'emə            itə    a mme e    lu    prufessorə.  
 CL.loc-have.1PL gone to me and the.M teacher.M  
 (intended) 'The professor and I went there (together).'

Moreover, it is not possible to have a non-human DP as the second conjunct, as clearly shown by the ungrammaticality of (9).

- (9) \*C'emə            itə    a mme e    lu cane.  
 CL.loc-have.1PL gone to me and the dog  
 (intended) 'Me and my dog went there (together).'

It is clear from this data that only DPs that are found high in the Animacy Hierarchy (Silverstein 1976) can occur as the second conjunct in this structure.

- (10) addressee > 3rd person > kin > human > animate > inanimate

Moreover, as we have seen, some speakers only accept a second person singular pronoun as the second conjunct. Interestingly, the speakers who accept a third person singular pronoun or a DP as the

<sup>4</sup> In Abruzzese, the morphological distinction between nominative case and oblique case is visible only on the first and second person singular pronouns (*I* 'I.NOM' vs *me* 'me.OBL' and *tu* 'you.NOM' vs *te* 'you.OBL').

second conjunct always also accept a second person singular pronoun in the same position. In other words, there is an implicational relation that allows the occurrence of third person pronoun/kin terms in the second conjunct only when the second person is already allowed. This behaviour is expected given that crosslinguistically many linguistic phenomena, such as for instance Differential Object Marking (DOM) in many languages (Silverstein 1976; Dixon 1979, among many others) or morphological marking of the dual in Arapesh (Corbett 2000, 91), do not apply to the whole range of DPs, but only to DPs high in the Animacy Hierarchy.<sup>5</sup>

The *a mme e X* construction is strictly dual, i.e., both of the conjuncts need to be singular, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (11). Moreover, it is not possible to have more than two conjuncts in this structure, as visible from the ungrammaticality of (12).

- (11) \*C'emə            itə    a    mme e    li    fretəmə.<sup>6</sup>  
 CL.LOC-have.1PL gone to me and the brothers-my  
 (intended) 'My brothers and I went there together.'

- (12) \*C'emə            itə    a mme, te            e    Mmarijə.<sup>7</sup>  
 CL.LOC-have.1PL gone to me, you.SING and Mary  
 (intended) 'Me, you and Mary went there together.'

Finally, even though the *a mme e X* construction is usually found postverbally, it can occur preverbally, as in (13).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> There are however other accounts of DOM that analyse it as a reflex of definiteness (Lyons 1999; Aissen 2003), or specificity and topicality (de Swart, de Hoop 2007; Leonetti 2008).

<sup>6</sup> In Abruzzese, inherent possession is marked through the use of enclitic possessives, *mə* and *tə*, instead of the regular tonic possessives, i.e., *mé* and *té* (see D'Alessandro, Migliori 2017; Cardinaletti, Giusti 2019, a.o.).

<sup>7</sup> It is possible to convey the meaning of this sentence, but simply not with this construction. One needs to revert to the normal nominative subject:

- (i) C'emə            itə    ìe    li    fretəmə.  
 CL.LOC-have.1PL gone I and the brothers-my  
 'My brothers and I went there together.'
- (ii) C'emə            itə    ì, tu            e    Mmarijə.  
 CL.LOC-have.1PL gone I, you.SING and Mary  
 'Me, you and Mary went there together.'

<sup>8</sup> It would be necessary to investigate further where *a mme e X* is in the clausal structure when it occurs postverbally, and whether it occupies the same position with all kinds of verbs. It might be that the subject stays in situ or moves to some other low position. However, it seems implausible that *a mme e X* is right dislocated since it is not de-accented nor pronounced with a comma intonation.

- (13) A mme e sorəmə n'i parlemə cchiù.  
 to me and sister-my not-CL.REFL speak.1PL any-more.  
 'My sister and I don't speak to each other anymore.'

Summarising, we have seen that *a mme e X* has a fixed structure, is the syntactic subject of the sentence in which it occurs and triggers first person plural agreement on the verb. It can be used with verbs of any thematic structure as long as they denote actions that are performed jointly, and it usually surfaces postverbally.

### 3 Associative Plurals and Plural Pronouns

In the typological literature, a distinction is drawn between additive plurals on the one hand and associative plurals on the other. Additive plurals denote homogenous sets. Regular plurals of R-expressions are additive plurals: indeed, the plural 'girls' denotes a set in which every member is a girl (cf. Barulin 1980). On the other hand, associative plurals are defined as plurals that refer to an individual and their closest associates, i.e., relatives, friends and more in general close acquaintances of an individual (Corbett 2000, 101). Associative plurals are found in many different languages, such as Hungarian, Central Pomo (Pomoan family, Northern California), Central Alaskan Yup'ik (Eskimo Aleut), Sanskrit, Old Egyptian, Basque (Corbett 2000, 101-10). For instance, Hungarian has two different plural endings, one for regular plurals and one for associative plurals, as clear from (14).

- (14) a. János-ok  
 John-PL  
 'Johns' (more than one person called John)  
 b. János-ék  
 John-ASSOC.PL  
 'John and associates', 'John and his group', 'John 'n' them'  
 (Hungarian; Corbett, Mithun 1996, 5)

(14a) is an example of an 'additive plural' since *Jánosok* denotes a homogenous set, i.e., a set made up of people called John (cf. Barulin 1980). On the other hand, associative plurals denote a heterogenous set, which, in the case of (14b), is made up of John and his associates (Daniel, Moravcsik 2013).

At least *prima facie*, there are similarities between associative plurals of R-expressions and plural pronouns of the first and second person, in that they both denote heterogenous sets. Moravcsik

(1994) argues that first and second plural pronouns are associative plurals, denoting sets made up of the speaker and the addressee and their permanent associates. However, Daniel (2020, 4) notes that even though plural pronouns denote heterogeneous sets, they do not impose restrictions on the other members of the set. In other words, the plural pronoun ‘we’ denotes a set made up by the speaker and some other individual salient in the context, but there is no requirement for these individuals to be close associates of the speaker. Indeed, in a sentence like (15), ‘we’ refers to the speaker and someone that the speaker has just met, surely not someone they have a close relation to.

- (15) A: Who is that girl?  
B: I don't know. *We* met in the shop and started talking.

Obviously, ‘we’ can also be used to refer to a group made up of the speaker and their close associates, but, differently from associatives, it does *not* have to. In other words, first and second plural pronouns are non-homogenous plurals, but they do not impose any restrictions on the other elements of the set which are not the speaker and the hearer. Clearly then, first and second plural pronouns are neither additive plurals (they do not denote a set containing many instances of the speaker or of the hearer) nor associative plurals (they do not denote a set which necessarily refers to the closest associates of the speaker or of the hearer).

On top of the semantic reasons we have just seen, there are also morpho-syntactic reasons to doubt that first and second plural pronouns are associative plurals (*pace* Moravcsik 1994). Ackema and Neeleman (2018, 88-98) analyse a few languages (Hungarian, Talitsk Russian, Turkish, Central Askan Yup'ik) that have associative plurals and that mark them in various morphological and syntactic ways. In none of these languages, the morphological or syntactic strategy used to mark associativity on R-expressions is employed to create regular plural pronouns. Thus, Ackema and Neeleman (2018, 96) predict that if a language has associative plurals of pronouns, these will be ‘formally distinct’ from regular plural pronouns, and will be used only to denote groups made up by the speaker/hearer and their permanent associates, i.e., their close acquaintances.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the associative connotation of these plurals must be overtly marked in order to distinguish them from regular plural pronouns (which, as we have seen, denote a set of the speaker/hearer and any other individual salient in the context). There are indeed languages that mark associativ-

<sup>9</sup> By ‘permanent’ Ackema and Neeleman (2018) do not necessarily entail life-long or ever-lasting bond: they use this term to refer to some amount of time long enough to establish a stable and strong relationship.



ity on plural pronouns. For instance, Dutch has a regular first person pronoun as in (16a) and one referring only to the speaker and their family or other permanent associates (Ackema, Neeleman 2018, 96-7). The latter is exemplified in (16b), and it is made up of two conjuncts: the first is a first person pronoun or a personal name and the second consists of a definite determiner and possessive.

- (16) a. Wij *Regular plural*  
       ‘We’  
       b. Iken de mijnen<sup>10</sup> *Associative plural*  
       I and the mine.PL  
       ‘My family and I.’

(Dutch; Ackema, Neeleman 2018, 96)

Thus, Dutch employs a syntactic strategy to distinguish associative plurals of pronouns, while other languages resort to morphological differentiation. Indeed, in Haruai, a Piawi language of New Guinea, the regular first plural pronoun is *an* and triggers plural agreement on the verb, as in (17a). However, when the singular first person pronoun occurs with plural agreement on the verb, the sentence acquires an associative reading as in (17b).<sup>11</sup>

- (17) a. An hön pay-n- η- a.  
       we pig hit- FUT-1PL-DECL  
       ‘We will hit the pig.’  
           (Haruai, Comrie 1998, 146 quoted in Ackema, Neeleman 2018, 98)  
       b. N dy-n- η- a.  
       I go-FUT-1PL-DECL  
       ‘I and some others will go’. (with associative reading)<sup>12</sup>  
           (Haruai, Corbett 2000, 192 quoted in Ackema, Neeleman 2018, 98)

Now that we have a better understanding of the crosslinguistic picture on associative plurals and associative plural pronouns, let’s return to the Abruzzese data. The regular plural of the first person pronoun in Abruzzese is just *nu*, in italics in (18).

<sup>10</sup> Obviously, English ‘you and yours’ closely resembles the Dutch data in (17b), but it is attested only in the second person, while in Dutch it is much more productive.

<sup>11</sup> This strategy is used to mark associativity on R-expressions in other languages. For instance, in Talitsk Russian, lack of number marking on a noun and plural agreement on the verb engenders an associative reading.

<sup>12</sup> As pointed out by Ackema and Neeleman (2018, 98), Comrie’s (2000) translation of (17b) does not make the associative reading salient, but in the surrounding text he comments that the other people who take part in the action must be permanent associates of the speaker.

- (18) Ci iemə nu. *Regular plural*  
 CL.LOC go.PRES.1PL we.FOC  
 ‘WE will go there.’<sup>13</sup>

However, as we have seen, Abruzzese has also a different plural of the first person, as in (19).

- (19) Ci iemə a mme e tte. *Associative plural*  
 CL.LOC go.PRES.1PL to me.OBL and you.OBL  
 ‘We will go there (together), you and I.’

This second plural, what I have called the *a mme and X* construction throughout the paper, is really just an associative plural of the first person pronoun. This is in line with Ackema and Neeleman’s (2018) prediction that if a language has associative plural pronouns, these will be formally distinct from regular plural pronouns. Analysing the *a mme and X* construction as an associative plural allows us to explain two empirical facts: first of all, why there are restrictions on the second conjunct (as we have seen, it can only be a close acquaintance of the speaker) and, secondly, why these pronouns do not bear nominative case despite being the subjects of the sentence. Indeed, oblique case is the way in which Abruzzese marks the distinction between regular plural pronouns and associative plural pronouns.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Abruzzese resembles Dutch in using a conjunction structure to mark associativity, but, on top of conjunction, it also resorts to Differential Subject Marking (DSM) to highlight the distinction between regular and associative plural pronouns. Indeed, subjects in Abruzzese usually receive nominative case, as visible from (20).

- (20) Ci vajə ì.  
 CL.LOC go.PRES.1SING I.NOM  
 ‘I will go there.’

<sup>13</sup> Central and Southern Italo-Romance languages, among which Abruzzese, do not have a synthetic form for the future and rely on present indicative or deontic modals to encode futurity (Rohlf’s 1968, 333; Schwegler 1990, § 5.3.2; La Fauci 2006; Ledgeway 2012, § 4.3.1.5; Ledgeway 2016).

<sup>14</sup> The fact that the distinction between the associative and the standard plural of pronoun is present only on subjects might therefore be due to a morphological accident: subjects, usually marked in nominative case, bear oblique case when they are associative plurals, but direct and indirect objects would anyway receive oblique case and so there is no morphological way to distinguish between the associative and the standard plural on them.

Thus, the occurrence of the case marker *a* and of the oblique form of pronouns in the *a mme e X* construction is unexpected, and constitutes a case of DSM. According to Woolford:

a language may be said to have Differential Subject Marking (DSM) if some subjects have a *different Case*, agree differently, or occur in a different position than others[:] [...] such differences are thought of as DSM effects only if they depend on the *features of the subject* in some way. (2008, 17; emphasis added).

Here, what triggers the DSM is precisely the associative nature of this plural pronoun, that needs to be distinguished from the regular plural.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the Abruzzese data conform to the general crosslinguistic picture in distinguishing between regular and associative plural pronouns, and do so by differentially marking the subject. The fact that the distinction between the associative and the standard plural of pronoun is present only on subjects might be due to a morphological accident: subjects, usually marked in nominative case, bear oblique case when they are associative plurals, but direct and indirect objects would anyway receive oblique case and so there is no morphological way to distinguish between the associative and the standard plural on them.

#### 4 More on the Crosslinguistic Picture

As we have seen, the data from Abruzzese can be easily explained when adopting a framework à la Ackema and Neeleman (2018) who argue that regular plural pronouns are not associative plurals (*pacc* Moravcsik 1994) and that associative plural pronouns need to be formally distinguished from the regular plural pronouns. This section will be devoted to reviewing other typological data on how languages encode associativity and related phenomena. In the typological literature, the existence of *inclusory pronominals* has been reported for various languages (see Bril 2010 for a recent overview, but also previous works by Lichtenberk 1983; Schwartz 1988; Aissen 1989; Haspelmath 2004, 25-6, a.o.).<sup>16</sup> Inclusory pronominals are (a family of) construc-

<sup>15</sup> As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, in Abruzzese (differently from Duchth) the syntactic form '1st person pronoun & X' is not enough to distinguish the associative plural from the regular 1st person plural pronoun, and DSM is also required. Synchronically, there is no reason why this should be the case, but the DSM could be a relic of previous stages of the language in which *a mme e X* was just a PP and then got reanalysed as the subject of the sentences in which it occurred therefore acquiring its associative meaning.

<sup>16</sup> For a formal analysis of inclusory pronominal in Icelandic instead, see Sigurðsson, Wood 2020.

tions denoting groups. More specifically, in these constructions both the whole set and one of the members of the group are overtly specified. They are called ‘inclusory’ precisely because of this double reference to the whole group and some of its members. An example of inclusory pronominals, coming from Dan-Gweetaa of the Mande family, is provided in (20). In this example, the pronoun *yāā* ‘we’ refers to the whole set, while *Gbàtò* is overtly specifying one of the participants.

- (21) *yāā Gbàtò yá nū.*  
 we Gbato we.AUX come  
 ‘Gbato and I, we have come.’ (lit.: ‘we [including] Gbato have come’)  
 Dan-Gweetaa (Vydrin 2010, 165 as quoted in Khachatryan 2019, 87)

In the typological literature, ‘inclusory pronominals’ is used as an umbrella term to characterise a wide array of constructions, including the Italian data in (22), which are ambiguous between an ‘I-and-Mary’ reading and ‘we-and-Mary’ reading.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, in (22) the overt pronoun *noi* ‘we’ is not overtly realised, but is entailed by the first person plural agreement on the verb.

- (22) *Ci siamo andati con Maria.*  
 CL.LOC are.1PL gone with Mary  
 ‘I went there with Mary.’/ ‘We went there with Mary.’

The Abruzzese data we have analysed in previous sections cannot be analysed as inclusory pronominals since the *a mme e X* construction is not ‘inclusory’: indeed, in this construction the first person pronoun is singular and so it does not refer to the whole set of participants. However, there are similarities between *a mme and X* and inclusory pronominals: first, the fact that they are used only with human DPs, but also the fact that they refer to sets of close acquaintances (Bril 2010, 362). Indeed, although inclusory pronominals are not examined in Ackema and Neeleman (2018), it may well be that (at least some instances of) inclusory pronominals are an instantiation of associative plural pronouns. However, in order to be able to argue this with certainty, it would be necessary to determine whether inclusory pronouns *always and only* refer to permanent associates of the speaker and addressee.

Another interesting comparison could be drawn between the Abruzzese *a mme and X* construction and what Daniel (2020, 4) calls “kin

<sup>17</sup> Inclusory pronominals of this kind are attested in Chilean Spanish (Schwartz 1988), Yiddish (Yuasa, Sadock 2002) and French (Hacquard, p.c.) among other languages.

pronominal plurals”, i.e., pronouns referring to a speaker and their family. According to Daniel (2020, 4), examples of kin pronominal plurals are found in Sursurunga. In Sursurunga, a South New Ireland/West Solomonian language of the bigger Austronesian family, the trial/lesser paucal denotes small groups, or nuclear families (Corbett 2000, 27). On the other hand, the quadral/greater paucal is used to denote groups of four or more people (Corbett 2000, 26-9 building on Hutchisson 1986 and p.c. to Corbett).<sup>18</sup> However, there are two additional uses of the greater paucal: it is used when expressing kinship pairs (such as uncle/nephew-niece relationships), but also for hortatory discourse (Corbett 2000, 26-7). In particular, first person inclusive greater paucal can be used to entail joint action with the speaker (2000, 27). In another Austronesian language, Marshellese the quadral/paucal is similarly employed to express ‘intimacy’ (Corbett 2000, 29-30 quoting Bender 1969, 159). What seems to be happening in these languages is that the use of quadral/paucal conveys notions of joint action and close relation with the speaker (irrespective of group size).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the hortatory use of the Sursurunga greater paucal is intriguingly similar to hortative use of the Abruzzese *a mme e X* construction. More generally, it appears that languages employ various strategies to familiarity with the speaker, but differ in the ways they mark these notions.

## 5 Conclusions

The main aim of this paper was to describe the characteristics of the *a mme e X* construction in Abruzzese, which has not been previously discussed in the literature. In particular, we have seen that *a mme e X* has a fixed structure, made up of the first person singular pronoun in oblique case and a second conjunct, which is usually the second person singular pronoun in oblique case. Importantly, the second conjunct in the structure, the *X*, always denotes a close

<sup>18</sup> Sursurunga’s number system was originally analysed as having a five-way distinction: singular, dual, trial, quadral and plural (Hutchisson 1986). However, Corbett (2000, 26-9) argues that the trial and the quadral are respectively a paucal and a greater paucal since they do not denote sets of precisely 3 or 4 members, but more generally to small(-ish) groups of people. Moreover, the quadral/greater paucal is available only for pronouns.

<sup>19</sup> As noted by an anonymous reviewer, these two notions, joint action and closeness to the speaker, are distinct and it’s not clear why they should constitute a natural class. However, it might be that they tend to co-occur in many pragmatic contexts, i.e., groups of close relatives/friends tend to act together. This pattern is indeed attested crosslinguistically, for instance Turkish associative plurals only allow collective readings (Ackema, Neeleman 2018, 93-4).

acquaintance of the speaker. This conjoined structure is the syntactic subject of the sentence in which it occurs and triggers first person plural agreement on the verb. It can be used with verbs of any thematic structure as long as they denote actions that can be performed jointly, and it is usually used in hortative contexts. Indeed, as we have seen, the *a mme e X* construction is used to convey intimacy between the speaker and one of its closest associates, and the fact that they act jointly. Following Ackema and Neeleman's (2018) distinction of regular plural pronouns and associative ones, I argued that this structure is an associative plural of the first person pronoun used to refer to the speaker and their close associates. In particular, I showed that Abruzzese differentially marks this associative plural. In the last section of this paper, I briefly reviewed the typological literature on inclusory pronominals and kin pronominals, pointing out (dis)similarities between the *a mme e X* construction in Abruzzese and other morpho-syntactic strategies to mark familiarity with the speaker. Two lines of research are left for future investigation. First, it would be useful to investigate the *a mme e X* construction further to understand better its full characterisation and secondly to determine whether similar data are attested in other closely-related Italo-Romance varieties. In this respect, a survey of historical texts would be necessary to determine the historical development that brought to the birth of this phenomenon. Secondly, it would be necessary to have a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which familiarity with the speaker are marked crosslinguistically, and whether it is possible to formalise this wide range of phenomena under a single formal account.

## List of abbreviations

ASSOC	associative
AUX	auxiliary
CL	clitic
DEC	declarative
FUT	future
IMP	imperative
LOC	locative
NOM	nominative
OBL	oblique
PRES	present
PL	plural
SING	singular

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# The Syntax of Polish *jeden* ‘One’ as an Indefinite Determiner

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**Abstract** The current literature on Polish *jeden* ‘one’ focuses on its numeral status, though there is evidence that it is grammaticalizing into an indefinite determiner. This article provides a syntactic analysis of *jeden* in its different functions, trying to account for its grammaticalization process. Quantificational/adjectival *jeden* is hosted in the specifier of a DP-internal NumP projection. Indefinite specific *jeden* is inserted in SpecDP for referential reasons. Moreover, some occurrences of nonspecific *jeden* may suggest a reanalysis of SpecDP into the head D. These structural changes are in line with other processes of grammaticalization and follow the same Economy principles. This model also builds parallels with Italian and Italo-Romance indefinite determiners.

**Keywords** Determiner phrase. Indefinite determiner. Jeden. Numeral ‘one’. Polish.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 1.1 The Numeral *jeden* ‘One’ in Polish. – 1.2 Aim and Structure of the Paper. – 2 Evaluating the Grammaticalization of Polish *jeden*. – 2.1 The Path of Grammaticalization of the Numeral ‘One’. – 2.2 The Stage of Polish *jeden*. – 3 The Theoretical Framework. – 3.1 The Numeral *jeden* in Polish. – 3.2 The Realization of the Indefinite Determiners in Romance. – 4 Towards the Syntax of *jeden*. – 4.1 Cardinal/Adjectival *jeden*. – 4.2 Indefinite *jeden*. – 4.2.1 Specific *jeden* in SpecDP. – 4.2.2 Is There a Nonspecific *jeden*? – 4.3 The Path of Linguistic Cycles. – 4.4 Possible Theoretical Advantages. – 5 Conclusions.



Edizioni  
Ca Foscari

## Peer review

Submitted 2021-07-30  
Accepted 2022-02-19  
Published 2022-04-21

## Open access

© 2022 Molinari | 4.0



**Citation** Molinari, L. (2022). “The Syntax of Polish *jeden* ‘One’ as an Indefinite Determiner”. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [63-84] 225-246.

DOI 10.30687/AnnOc/2499-1562/2022/10/004

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Numeral *jeden* 'One' in Polish

In the present literature, there is no satisfactory and complete account for the syntactic status of the Polish numeral *jeden* 'one'. Indeed, most of the attention was devoted to the puzzling behavior of Polish numerals, as the internal structure of quantified nominals seems to depend on the external syntactic environment they are surrounded by (cf. Rappaport 2003 and references therein). Traditionally, Polish numerals are divided into three different classes, based on their ability to assign case or agree with the noun they quantify (Rutkowski 2002a; 2002b; 2007a). In this analysis, the numerals up to 'four' (excluding 'zero') are labeled 'adjectival numerals', i.e., those which display agreement for case and gender with the head noun. Taking this fact as evidence for its adjectival nature, *jeden* has been analyzed as occupying the specifier of a dedicated Q[unatifier] P[hrase] projection which is internal to the extended nominal projection (cf. Rutkowski 2002b; 2002a; 2007a).

As already noticed by Givón (1981), the numeral 'one' seems to undergo a cross-linguistically consistent tendency to become a marker for indefinite singular nouns. Typical examples are Italian and Spanish *uno*, German *ein*, Swedish *en*, and Turkish *bir*. This tendency is found in Slavic as well: instances of indefinite marker 'one' are Bulgarian *edin* (Geist 2013), Upper Sorbian *jen* and Lower Sorbian *jan*, as well as Czech *jeden* (Heine, Kuteva 2006). Polish is not an exception to this common pattern: there is evidence that *jeden* has acquired some properties which are typical of indefinite determiners (cf. Hwaszcz, Kędzierska 2018). Therefore, a syntactic analysis of *jeden* occupying the specifier of the QP inside the extended nominal projection is not able to capture all the functions it can carry out. A richer analysis which would account for its indefinite determiner functions is needed.

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My gratitude goes to Paweł Rutkowski for his precious help and to the two anonymous reviewers, whose comments allowed to improve the analysis reported here. Special thanks go to the colleagues and friends, native speakers of Polish, who commented on some of the examples: Emilian Mucha, Filip Wójcik, Marianna Hała, Michał Górnik, Sara Kruszona, Stanisław Barełkowski, Katarzyna Żák-Caplot and other three who prefer to remain anonymous. I also want to thank the anonymous Polish students at the University of Warsaw for their acceptability judgments.

## 1.2 Aim and Structure of the Paper

Although the use of *jeden* as an indefinite determiner has been recognized, a syntactic analysis of this numeral as an indefinite marker is still lacking. Aim of this modest piece of work is to sketch a complete analysis of the syntax underlying *jeden* in its different functions.<sup>1</sup> The theoretical approach which accounts for the syntax of *jeden* hinges on Rutkowski's (2007a) analysis of Polish numerals, and on Cardinaletti and Giusti's (2018) model for the realization of indefinite determiners in Italian and Italo-Romance,<sup>2</sup> which is built along the line of inquiry of nominal expressions put forth by Giusti (1995 and subsequent works). The present paper sketches a first analysis which is far from being complete and that will be further explored and deepened by future research.

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 introduces the grammaticalization path the numeral 'one' undergoes cross-linguistically, individuating the stage of *jeden*. Section 3 provides a brief overview of the theoretical framework adopted here. Section 4 proposes a syntactic analysis for *jeden* in its different functions. Section 5 draws the conclusion and addresses further research questions.

## 2 Evaluating the Grammaticalization of Polish *jeden*

This section is divided as follows. Subsection 2.1 briefly introduces Heine's (1997) general model of grammaticalization of the numeral 'one'. Subsection 2.2 presents Hwaszcz and Kędzierska's (2018) evaluation of the stage of grammaticalization of Polish *jeden*.

### 2.1 The Path of Grammaticalization of the Numeral 'One'

The path of grammaticalization of the numeral 'one' is articulated in different stages which are consistent cross-linguistically. It is characterized by a process of semantic bleaching, through which it progressively loses its quantificational nature and assumes the functions of an indefiniteness marker, ultimately becoming an indefinite article

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<sup>1</sup> Here only the singular forms of the numeral *jeden* will be considered (masculine *jeden*, feminine *jedna* and neuter *jedno*). Polish additionally displays the plural virile *jedni* and the plural non-virile *jedne*. The latter has a cardinal reading only with *pluralia tantum* nouns (e.g., *jedne okulary* 'a pair of glasses'). In occurrence with plural count nouns plural 'one' is instead used as an indefinite determiner in the meaning of *some* (Sadowska 2012, 492). Due to space limitations, these forms will not be discussed here.

<sup>2</sup> Cardinaletti and Giusti's (2018) proposal crucially makes no prediction about Slavic languages.

(cf. Givón 1981). Heine (1997, 72 ff.) offers a detailed picture of this diachronic change, subdividing it into five different stages, reported in (1):

- (1) Stages of grammaticalization of the numeral 'one':
  - I. The numeral: 'one' only has a quantitative function.
  - II. The presentative marker: the numeral is used to introduce in the discourse a new salient referent (i.e. expected to be taken as definite in subsequent discourse), assumed to be unknown to the hearer.
  - III. The specific marker: the determiner is used to denote referents which are known to the speaker, but presumed to be unknown to the hearer, independently of their saliency.
  - IV. The nonspecific marker: 'one' introduces a referent whose reference is not important. It does not mark specific reference anymore and is only used to introduce singular count nouns. An example is "Draw a dog!" (Heine 1997, 73).
  - V. The generalized article: the article can occur with almost all nominal classes and its insertion is justified by mere syntactic reasons.

Heine describes this process as monodirectional and implicational: it proceeds from stage I to stage V, and the more advanced stages imply the acquisition of the functions of the preceding ones.<sup>3</sup> However, there is always a certain degree of overlap among adjacent stages. The monodirectionality and linearity of this process make it possible to evaluate the advancement on the scale of the numeral 'one' in a given language. Following Heine's model, Hwaszcz and Kędzierska (2018) (henceforth H&K) evaluate the stage of Polish *jeden* based on the functions this element can carry out.

## 2.2 The Stage of Polish *jeden*

H&K estimate the advancement of grammaticalization of Polish *jeden* on the basis of grammaticality judgments collected from 53 Polish native speakers through an online questionnaire.<sup>4</sup>

*Jeden* commonly has a cardinal reading, as in (2). It can be used as a presentative marker as well: considering the contrast between (3a) and (3b), H&K argue that in the former the use of the marker *jedną* 'one<sub>F.ACC</sub>' is justified by the referent being picked up in subsequent discourse (H&K, 110).

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<sup>3</sup> Note however that there are counterexamples to the monodirectionality of grammaticalization in other domains (cf. Joseph 2011, who reports several examples).

<sup>4</sup> All the examples in this subsection are taken from H&K, hence only page number will be indicated.

- (2) Na wykładzie było niewielu studentów.  
 at lecture was few students  
 Przyszła jedna dziewczyna i dwóch chłopaków. (108)  
 came one<sub>F,NOM</sub> girl<sub>F,NOM</sub> and two boys<sup>5</sup>  
 'There were few students at the lecture. One girl and two boys came.'
- (3) a. Byłam akurat w mieście, więc odwiedziłam jedną koleżankę.  
 [I]was exactly in city so [I]visited one<sub>F,ACC</sub> friend<sub>F,ACC</sub>  
 Okazało się, że przeżyła niedawno ciekawą przygodę...  
 [it]turned.out that [she]experienced recently interesting adventure  
 'I was in the city centre so I visited one friend. It turned out that she had recently had a very interesting adventure.'
- b. Byłam akurat w mieście, więc odwiedziłam ?jedną koleżankę,  
 [I]was exactly in city so [I]visited one<sub>F,ACC</sub> friend<sub>F,ACC</sub>  
 poszłam też na pocztę i do parku... (111)  
 [I]went also at post.office and to park  
 'I was in the city centre so I visited ?one friend, went to the post office and to the park.'

In stage III, 'one' functions as a specific marker: H&K report the sentence in (4), obtaining divergent results. In their pool, 18.9% of speakers accepted the interpretation in which the friend is known to the speaker. 3.8% interpreted the referent as being known to both the utterer and the interlocutor, while 88.7% accepted the interpretation in which the friend is unknown to both (H&K, 112).

- (4) Jedna przyjaciółka mnie odwiedziła. (111)  
 one<sub>F,NOM</sub> friend<sub>F,NOM</sub> me visited  
 'A friend visited me.'

As for stage IV, there is no strong agreement among the speakers as to whether *jeden* can be used as a nonspecific marker.<sup>6</sup> H&K report that, for sentence (5), 69.8% of the subjects accepts the existential interpretation, which may be paraphrased as "there is a man who is getting married now". Similarly, (6) has two possible readings: in the first one, *jeden* quantifies over the pens that need to be given. In the second reading, *jeden* is an indefinite determiner, whose interpretation is 'a pen or other': this was accepted by 32.1% of speakers (H&K, 112).

<sup>5</sup> The glosses of the examples taken from H&K are not the original ones. They have been modified to show only the features that are relevant to the present discussion.

<sup>6</sup> The adjective 'nonspecific' here is used in Heine's terms, in contrast to the use of 'nonspecific' in H&K, which refers to the generic use of the indefinite article.

- (5) Jeden człowiek bierze teraz ślub. (113)  
 one<sub>M,NOM</sub> man<sub>M,NOM</sub> takes now wedding  
 'A/One man is getting married now.'
- (6) Podaj mi jeden długopis. (114)  
 give me one<sub>M,INANIM,ACC</sub> pen<sub>M,ACC</sub>  
 'Give me a/one pen.'

H&K point out that *jeden* seems to be commonly interpreted nonspecifically, while in production instances of nonspecific *jeden* are quite rare, as it is rather substituted by the indefinite pronoun *jakiś* 'some'. This indicates that the process of grammaticalization of *jeden* is still *in fieri*, and that there is some overlapping between stages III and IV.

In stage V 'one' should have ambiguous scope properties in intentional contexts, should be allowed in generic sentences and in predicative position. Polish *jeden* does not meet these requirements: in intentional contexts it always takes wide scope (7) and it cannot be interpreted as being kind-referring (8). It can occur in predicative position (see §4.2.2) triggering predicate intensification (H&K, 116).

- (7) Kasia pragnie poślubić jednego hydraulika. (115)  
 Kate wants to.marry one<sub>M,ANIM,ACC</sub> plumber<sub>M,ACC</sub>  
 'Kate wants to marry a (specific) plumber.'
- (8) (\*Jedna) kobieta ma zawsze rację. (116)  
 one<sub>F,NOM</sub> woman<sub>F,NOM</sub> has always right  
 'A woman is always right.'

The authors conclude that *jeden* in Polish has reached at least stage III, with some functions typical of stage IV, mainly concerning its interpretation. The function of specific and nonspecific marker is however not fully developed, as there is a certain degree of overlap between stage III and IV.

### 3 The Theoretical Framework

This section introduces the theoretical framework which constitutes the base for the syntactic analysis of the numeral 'one' in Polish. Subsection 3.1 briefly illustrates the analysis of low numerals in Polish, while subsection 3.2 presents the proposal for the realization of indefinite determiners in Italian and Italo-Romance.



### 3.1 The Numeral *jeden* in Polish

According to Rutkowski's (2002a; 2002b; 2007a) classification, numerals in Polish are divided into three classes, according to their properties of case assignment and their ability to agree with the head noun. In this division, low numerals (which include *jeden* 'one', *dwa* 'two', *trzy* 'three', and *cztery* 'four') are labeled *A-numerals* (adjectival numerals). The attribute 'adjectival' is justified by the fact that they behave like adjectives: they never assign case (contrary to the other classes of numerals) but always agree for nominal features with the noun they quantify. Given their peculiar adjectival behavior, they are argued to be base generated in the specifier of a dedicated special projection, labeled QP, which is found between the NP and the DP.<sup>7</sup> Their maximal projection status in the specifier of a functional projection guarantees that they agree with the head noun via spec-head agreement with the functional head.

### 3.2 The Realization of the Indefinite Determiners in Romance

Cardinaletti and Giusti's (2018) account for the realization of the indefinite determiners in Italian and Italo-Romance is grounded in the line of inquiry of nominal expressions put forth by Giusti (1995 and subsequent works). In this framework, the lexical noun reprojects as many times as necessary to satisfy its Selection and Modification requirements. For each reprojection, the functional features of the noun are copied onto the new head. The DP is the highest reprojected of the noun. Its specifier may host demonstratives, possessive adjectives, personal pronouns and proper names (cf. Giusti 2002), while the head D is the *locus* either of the definite article (taken to be the overt realization of nominal functional features, i.e. number, gender, and case) or, in languages lacking articles, of morphological case.

Cardinaletti and Giusti (2018) elegantly account for the realization of the four indefinite determiners that are found in Italian and Italo-Romance varieties by resorting to an interplay between the (non-) overt realization of both the head D and the specifier of the DP. The latter hosts either a silent (zero) determiner or the indefinite determiner *di* 'of', mainly found in Italo-Romance varieties. These may combine with the overt or covert realization of D, spelled out as definite article morphology, giving rise to the four different indefinite determiners found in Italian and Italo-Romance.

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<sup>7</sup> The fact that Polish nominal expressions project a D[eterminer]P[hrase] layer has been largely argued for in the literature (cf. Rappaport 2001; Rutkowski 2002a; 2006; 2007b among many others).

Adopting the basic assumptions and the theoretical framework presented above, the next section will turn to sketch the analysis of the syntax of *jeden* in Polish.

## 4 Towards the Syntax of *jeden*

This section will put forth the idea that the different functions that *jeden* carries out may be the superficial manifestation of possibly different syntactic positions this item can occupy in the structure. In detail, section 4.1 deals with the adjectival interpretation of *jeden*, argued to be an instance of the cardinal number. Section 4.2 argues that indefinite *jeden* occupies different positions in the DP-layer. Section 4.3 shows how the resulting analysis corresponds to a linguistic cycle, and the theoretical advantages of this model are exposed in section 4.4.

### 4.1 Cardinal/Adjectival *jeden*

As pointed out above, the numeral *jeden* is primarily a quantifier, as in (9), taken from the National Corpus of Polish Language.<sup>8</sup>

- (9) Dostawałam też pełen koszyk pomidorów do domu,  
[I]took also full basket tomatoes to home  
kilka ogórków i jeden lub dwa kalafioiry.  
few cucumbers and one<sup>M.INANIM.ACC</sup> or two cauliflowers  
'I also got a full basket of tomatoes to take home, a few cucumbers and one  
or two cauliflowers.'  
(PWN\_200200000130)<sup>9</sup>

This numeral, however, does not always seem to have a quantificational reading. H&K argue that in some instances *jeden* may be used as an adjective, meaning 'alone' (10), 'uniform' (11), or 'identical, the same' (12) (H&K, 109), always appearing in a high position and preceding the other adjectives. Following Rutkowski (2002a; 2002b; 2007a), I take this numeral to head a QP inserted in the specifier of a functional projection which I label Num[ber]P[hrase] following Cinque's (2010) hierarchy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The National Corpus of Polish Language (*Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego* - NKJP) is available at the address <http://nkjp.pl/>.

<sup>9</sup> The code reported in brackets is a sentence identifier in the NKJP.

<sup>10</sup> NumP here corresponds to Rutkowski's QP. I avoid this latter label not to create confusion between the QP headed by *jeden* and the functional nominal projection.

- (10) Nikt nie był przygotowany. Jedna Maria zrobiła  
nobody neg was prepared one.<sub>F.NOM</sub> Mary did  
zadanie domowe.  
homework  
'Nobody was prepared. Only Mary did her homework.'
- (11) Z kuchni dochodził jeden przeraźliwy harmider.  
from kitchen came one.<sub>M.NOM</sub> appalling.<sub>M.NOM</sub> noise.<sub>M.NOM</sub>  
'A uniform, appalling noise was audible in the kitchen.'
- (12) Mieszkaliśmy pod jednym dachem.  
[we]lived under one.<sub>M.INSTRUM</sub> roof.<sub>M.INSTRUM</sub>  
'We lived under the same roof.'

In (10)-(12), *jeden* seems not to be quantitative. H&K (108) argue for its adjectival semantics underlying the possibility of substituting it in the previous examples with adjectives such as *samotny* 'alone', *jednolity* 'uniform', and *identyczny* 'identical'. They notice (108 fn. 8), however, that these occurrences of *jeden* can be considered 'meta-predicative' in Danielewiczowa's (2007) terms, i.e., they cannot be stressed or modified by adverbials, and cannot be used predicatively.

What looks like an instance of non-quantificational *jeden* may in fact be an instance of the numeral. This is particularly evident in sentence (12), which further supports the maximal projection status of *jeden*. Indeed, in Polish this numeral may be used in constructions in which its semantics appears not to be quantificational but purely adjectival. These structures feature the numeral *jeden* linked by the conjunction *i* 'and' to a proximal demonstrative followed by the adjective *sam* 'same', resulting in a coordination of two maximal projections.<sup>11</sup> The peculiarity of this construction is that this second construal may be omitted, as in (13), which provides a schematic representation of the underlying structure.

<sup>11</sup> Crucially, this kind of coordination is impossible with higher numerals.

- (13) Albowiem - jak rzeki zmierzają do *jednego* oceanu, tak  
 for as rivers flow into one<sub>M,GEN</sub> ocean so  
 religie są drogami do [<sub>NumP</sub> [<sub>&P</sub> [<sub>QP</sub> *jednego*]] i [<sub>DP</sub> tego  
 religions are paths to one<sub>M,GEN</sub> and this<sub>M,GEN</sub>  
 samego]]] Boga  
 same<sub>M,GEN</sub> God<sub>M,GEN</sub>  
 'For, as rivers flow into the same ocean, so religions are paths to one and the  
 same God.'  
 (Sketch Engine, "Polish Web 2019", 522239)<sup>12</sup>

As observable in the example (13), there are two instances of *jeden*, both with the same non-quantificational semantics. In the second occurrence the full structure is spelled out (*jeden i ten sam* 'one and the same'), while in the first instance only the numeral is overtly realized. This means that in these instances the semantics of the whole construction hinges on the presence of the adjective (either overtly or covertly realized).

The other cases of "adjectival *jeden*" (i.e., examples (10)-(11)) can be analyzed in a similar way, supposing the presence of silent elements which may provide a different semantics to the structure.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, when preceded by a demonstrative, its quantificational nature is interpreted as expressing the singularity of the referent rather than the cardinality of 'one' (14).

- (14) Nie wiadomo, co będzie z nami jutro – szeptał Wacław.  
 not known what will.be with us tomorrow – whispered Wacław  
 – Może została nam tylko ta jedna noc.  
 maybe remained to.us only this<sub>F,NOM</sub> one<sub>F,NOM</sub> night<sub>F,NOM</sub>  
 '– What will happen to us tomorrow is unknowns – whispered Wacław. – Maybe  
 we only have this (single) night left.'  
 (PWN\_2002000000159)

Assuming that *jeden* heads a maximal projection inserted in the specifier of a *Mittelfeld* projection NumP, its 'meta-predicative' behavior may be derived from its QP status, which is different in nature from the other classes of adjectives.

<sup>12</sup> Kilgarriff et al. 2004, 2014. Link to Sketch Engine: <http://www.sketchengine.eu>.

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Kayne (2019) similarly proposes that the numeral *one* in English is accompanied by a silent adjective (indicated in capital letters) which distinguishes its quantificational reading (i) from other readings (ii):

- i. John has two brothers and one SINGLE sister.  
 ii. Mary has just written one (\*SINGLE) hell of a paper. (adapted from Kayne 2019, 343)

## 4.2 Indefinite *jeden*

H&K show that *jeden* can be used as a specific marker,<sup>14</sup> with some attested occurrences as nonspecific marker (in the sense of Heine 1997) in the interpretation of the sentences. Heine (1997) uses the term 'specific' when the speaker has a particular referent in mind. Although this is an umbrella term for various semantic and pragmatic contrasts (cf. Von Heusinger 2019), here I will use it in Heine's terms.

The specificity of *jeden* seems to obey a *noteworthiness* condition (cf. Ionin 2006), i.e., the speaker does not need to be able to individuate the referent as in (15),<sup>15</sup> but it must be familiar with some *noteworthy* property of the referent itself, as the example (16) shows.

- (15) Wczoraj wydarzyło się coś niesamowitego! Jaden lekarz  
yesterday happened part something incredible one<sub>M</sub> doctor<sub>M</sub>  
powiedział mi, że nie ma czegoś takiego jak  
told to.me that not has something such as  
koronawirus. Wiesz, kto mia to powiedział? Doktor Kowalski.<sup>16</sup>  
coronavirus [you]know who to.me this said doctor Kowalski  
'Yesterday something incredible happened! A doctor told me, that coronavirus  
doesn't exist. Do you know who told me that? Doctor Kowalski.'

- (16) Podobno jeden lekarz w telewizji zaprzeczył istnieniu  
apparently one<sub>M</sub> doctor in TV denied existence  
koronawirusa. Ciekawe, kto to był.<sup>17</sup>  
of-coronavirus interesting who that was  
'It seems that a doctor on TV denied the existence of the coronavirus. I wonder  
who that was.'

A narrow scope interpretation of *jeden*NP, as in (17), is instead judged degraded but not completely agrammatical.

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<sup>14</sup> The function of 'presentative marker' is considered here as an instance of specific *jeden*.

<sup>15</sup> The signaled examples are taken from a pilot questionnaire submitted to 13 anonymous students (native speakers of Polish) at the University of Warsaw. The sentences were rated with the Likert scale task ranging from 1 (totally ungrammatical) to 7 (perfectly grammatical). The sentences which scored below 4 are marked with '\*', while those in the span 4-5 '?'. Sentences above 5 are considered grammatical. Since this is not the focus of the paper, and because of the space limit, the questionnaire won't be discussed in detail. However, the list of items and fillers and the sheet containing the results can be found at the following DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/KDFGZ>.

<sup>16</sup> The mean acceptability rating of (15) is 6.15.

<sup>17</sup> The mean acceptability rating of (16) is 6.08.

- (17) ?Mąż Kasi ma COVID. Ona jest zaniepokojona i  
 husband Kasia<sub>GEN</sub> has COVID she is worried and  
 chce porozmawiać z jednym lekarzem, ale jeszcze go  
 wants to-talk with one<sub>INSTR</sub> doctor<sub>INSTR</sub> but still cl<sub>M,ACC</sub>  
 nie znalazła.<sup>18</sup>  
 not found  
 'Kasia's husband has COVID. She is worried and wants to talk to a doctor,  
 but she hasn't found one yet.'

This supports the claim made by H&K, i.e., nonspecific *jeden* has not fully developed yet. Let us turn to the analysis of the position of indefinite *jeden*, which may have interesting implications for the theory.

#### 4.2.1 Specific *jeden* in SpecDP

In line with Cardinaletti and Giusti's (2018) proposal, the account advanced here is that indefinite (specific and nonspecific) *jeden* occupies the DP-layer, just like some indefinite determiners found in Italian and Italo-Romance. Moreover, it results from an interplay of (non-)realization of the head and specifier of the DP. The analysis, apart from the parallelism with Romance languages, may be motivated by other theoretical and empirical reasons.

Let us first start considering specific *jeden* (corresponding to stage III in Heine's scale). As seen above, it introduces a referent which is either identifiable or to a certain extent known (because of some noteworthy property) by the speaker. Von Heusinger (2019) argues that *specificity* can indicate different semantic/pragmatic phenomena, whose underlying core concept is *referential anchoring*. This mechanism was already proposed by Geist (2010) to give a semantic analysis of the Russian indefinite marker *odin* 'one', which is used when the speaker can either identify the referent denoted by the NP or has a particular referent in mind (Ionin 2010).

Referential anchoring (cf. Onea, Geist unpublished) is a mechanism which narrows down the domain of the indefinite to a singleton. This function is carried out by the referential anchoring operator, which establishes a link between the discourse referent denoted by the indefinite and a discourse individual (in this case, the speaker) which is its anchor. Geist (2010) argues that the referential anchoring requirement is part of the lexical entry of Russian *odin*. This requirement is responsible for the referential reading associated with this marker. Following this line of reasoning, it could be argued

<sup>18</sup> The mean acceptability rating of (17) is 4.69.

that the anchoring function is present in the lexical entry of specific *jeden* as well.

Given its semantics, specific *jeden* is referential, in that it links the referent to the speaker (i.e., the speaker 'has a particular referent in mind'). Consequently, it competes with other referential elements for the same position, i.e., SpecDP. Typical examples of occupants of the left edge of the nominal expression are demonstratives and pronouns (cf. Migdalski 2001; Brugé 2002; Giusti 2002), which check their referential features either overtly or covertly) in that position to be then interpreted at LF. It is actually the case that *jeden* can be substituted by another indefinite pronoun (18a),<sup>19</sup> but the two cannot co-occur (18b), as pointed out by the informants.

- (18) a. Kasia przeczytała wszystkie książki, które polecił  
 Kate [she]read all books that [he]recommended  
 jej jeden / jakiś nauczyciel. (adapted from H&K, 116)  
 to-her one some teacher  
 'Kate read every book that a teacher has recommended to her.'
- b. Kasia przeczytała wszystkie książki, które polecił jej jakiś (\*jeden) nauczyciel.  
 'Kate read every book that some teacher (or other) has recommended to her.'

Moreover, if *jeden* co-occurs with a demonstrative (as in (14) above), it cannot get a specific reading, as SpecDP is already occupied by the demonstrative. The referential features are checked by the demonstrative, while *jeden* reinforces the uniqueness of the referent (carrying out the cardinal function and indicating a set composed by a single element) in contrast to other possible referents of the same kind. An example is reported in (19), as was pointed out by four informants.

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**19** An interesting piece of evidence for a higher position available to *jeden* in the nominal structure comes from the possible co-occurrence of the plural form for 'one' and another numeral, as in (i).

- (i) Twój syn złamał jeszcze jedno dwa zęby frontowe  
 your son broke also one.PL two teeth front  
 grając na hokeju z lodu  
 playing at hockey from ice  
 'Your son also broke two front teeth playing ice hockey.'  
 (Sketch Engine, "Polish Web 2019", 669979330)

Since plural 'one' modifying plural count nouns is to be taken as an indefinite determiner, it is reasonable to think that in the case in (i) *jedne* occurs in SpecDP while the numeral appears in its base position in NumP. In this context *jedne* may be said to be anchored to the speaker, who displays some degree of knowledge of the referent. Given space limitations, this kind of evidence will be more deeply analyzed in future work.

- (19) Ten jeden student mnie denerwuje.  
this<sub>M,NOM</sub> one<sub>M,NOM</sub> student<sub>M,NOM</sub> me irritates  
'This (particular) student irritates me.'

The native speakers who commented the sentence confirmed that one can dispense with *jeden* in this case, but its insertion gives more emphasis to the utterance, underlying the fact that “only this particular student” is irritating the speaker.

Adopting this notion of specificity as anchoring to the speaker, what H&K call “nonspecific *jeden*” in the interpretation of the sentences in (5)-(6) above actually are instances of specific *jeden*. In the existential interpretation of (5), even if the speaker cannot identify the person who is getting married, it infers his/her existence because of some external factor (e.g., there are a lot of people shouting cheerfully at the entrance of a church).<sup>20</sup> In such a way, the speaker displays knowledge of some noteworthy property of the referent. As for (6), H&K point out that some speakers admit a narrow scope interpretation of the *jeden*NP (i.e., ‘give me a pen of any kind’). Even in this case, the interpretation cannot be compared to Heine’s (1997, 73) example ‘Draw a dog!’ reported for stage IV of grammaticalization. In the Polish example, this narrow interpretation can only be triggered in a situation in which there is a set of pens known by the speaker (hence, involving anchoring to the speaker).<sup>21</sup> In Heine’s example, instead, the referent is taken from the set of all the referents included in the denotation of the NP.

Basing on the analysis sketched so far it is possible to claim that *jeden* reached stage III of the grammaticalization scale, as some of the instances presented by H&K as nonspecific *jeden* have been analyzed as specific. Are there reasons to suppose that this marker has already entered stage IV? In the next subsection I will elaborate on some observations which may indicate that *jeden* has taken a small step into stage IV, however refraining from making any strong claim. These are to be taken as a tentative and preliminary analysis, mainly theory-driven, which may have some interesting theoretical implications.

#### 4.2.2 Is There a Nonspecific *jeden*?

There may be some evidence supporting the claim that *jeden* may have taken a little step beyond stage III, appearing with nonspecific interpretation. H&K notice that *jeden* may appear in some contexts

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<sup>20</sup> Thanks to Paweł Rutkowski (p.c.) for the remark.

<sup>21</sup> Thanks to Paweł Rutkowski (p.c.) and other informants for the remark.



which are traditionally associated to higher stages of grammaticalization, namely the occurrence in predicative position (20) (cf. Givón 1981) and in combination with a universal quantifier without triggering a non-scalar reading (21) (cf. Runić 2019).

- (20) Głupiek jeden / ekspert jeden (H&K, 116)  
 stupid one expert one  
 'Ajerk' (ironic) 'An expert'
- (21) Dziś w każdym domu jest jeden telewizor. (H&K, 117)  
 today in every house is one<sub>M,NOM</sub> TV-set<sub>M,NOM</sub>  
 'Today, there is one TV set in every house.'

The examples in (20) are instances of the *intensifying function* of 'one', which Geist (2013) considers a kind of predicative use. The intensification produced by 'one' is a cross-linguistically consistent phenomenon associated to languages which developed (something like) an indefinite article which may occur in generic contexts, e.g., Bulgarian, German and Greek (Gorishneva 2009, 49). Polish seems to be an exception in this respect, as *jeden* cannot appear in generic sentences with taxonomic reference (cf. (8) above).<sup>22</sup>

In (21), *jeden* has a non-scalar reading, i.e., the sentence is true even in the case in which there is more than one TV in each house (H&K, 117). This is reconducted to the behavior of true indefinites and is a function which may be carried out by indefinite articles (Runić 2019, 299). Under a strict numeral reading the sentence would be true iff there is *exactly* one TV in each house.<sup>23</sup>

These occurrences witness that the grammaticalization of *jeden* is still *in fieri*, allowing it to carry out some functions typical of more grammaticalized markers. Since in these cases *jeden* is not anchored to the speaker and does not seem to have a purely cardinal meaning, it may be the case that it is interpreted in a position different from SpecDP. A possible interesting explanation (which would need to be corroborated by more evidence) is provided in the next section.

<sup>22</sup> This may be link to the postnominal position of intensifying *jeden*, which may be the consequence of the noun moving to a peripheral position for pragmatic reasons (these expressions involve some personal judgment/evaluation by the speaker which may trigger this movement).

<sup>23</sup> One may conclude that in this case there is a covert adverbial AT LEAST (see §4.1) accompanying the numeral. It must however be noticed that in languages in which the grammaticalization of 'one' is not that advanced, as in Slovenian (which reached stage III), (24) may only be interpreted in a strictly scalar way (Runić 2019, 301).

### 4.3 The Path of Linguistic Cycles

Grammaticalization processes follow a cyclic path mainly driven by Economy Principles (cf. van Gelderen 2011 for several examples of linguistic cycles). Let us consider those in (22)-(23) argued for by van Gelderen (2011, 13-14).

- (22) Late Merge Principle (LMP)  
Merge as late as possible.
- (23) Head Preference Principle (HPP)  
Be a head, rather than a phrase.

The path obtained from the application of these principles is represented in (24), from van Gelderen (2011, 20).

- (24) Adjunct > Specifier > Head > 0  
semantic [iF] [uF] --

Let us start assuming that the movement of *jeden* from position of the numeral to SpecDP is motivated by its need to check its referential features. Moreover, assume (following Geist 2010) that *jeden* is endowed with the referential anchoring operator (cf. § 4.2.1), which is responsible for its specific interpretation. I further propose that this anchoring operator is activated under a specific condition, stated in (25).

- (25) Referential anchoring is active only if the item specified for the anchoring function is found in the left edge of the nominal expression, i.e. SpecDP, the position in which it can be bound by its (local) anchor.

*Jeden* starts out as a QP in SpecNumP, endowed with an interpretable [Quant(ificational)] feature and with the referential anchoring operator.<sup>24</sup> The principle in (25) causes the numeral to move to SpecDP, in order for its anchoring operator to be 'activated', i.e., to be bound by the speaker. This shift, corresponding to the passage from stage I to stage II/III of the grammaticalization path, is driven by the application of LMP, as *jeden* starts being merged directly higher in the structure.<sup>25</sup> The process complies with economy principles which

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<sup>24</sup> Givón (1981, 51) in fact argues that quantifying expressions imply referentiality, although they do not require prior familiarity with the referent.

<sup>25</sup> I am proposing that this movement is the result of a diachronic process, thus I do not assume a synchronic movement of *jeden* in syntax.

aim at reducing the number of interpretable features in favor of the (more economical) uninterpretable ones: in fact, at this point of the process the quantificational feature [iQuant] of the numeral is lost.

The prototypical path in (24) continues with the application of the HPP, through which “semantic features are reanalyzed in the specifier position as interpretable and in the head as uninterpretable features” (van Gelderen 2013, 246). Applying this reasoning to the alleged ‘stage IV’ of *jeden*, one should assume that the lack of specificity is a consequence of the fact that *jeden* is not in a configuration which allows the anchoring to the speaker (according to (25)), as it has been reanalyzed as sitting in D.<sup>26</sup> A hypothetical development is displayed in (26).

(26)    QP in SpecNumP    >    SpecDP    >    ?(D°)  
          [iQuant], [uRef]<sup>27</sup>            [iRef]?            ([uRef])

This supposition is tentative and only theory-driven. It is thus necessary to dig deeper into this issue to find data which may support this last stage or prove this intuition wrong. However, if this were the state of affairs, this model could lead to some theoretical advantages that are exposed in the next section.

#### 4.4 Possible Theoretical Advantages

A first advantage is the parallel with Cardinaletti and Giusti’s (2018) model for Italian and Italo-Romance. In comparative perspective, this analysis argues for a mapping of the positions inside the DP which is consistent cross-linguistically. In Italian and Italo-Romance the indefinite determiner in SpecDP combines with the overt or covert realization of the head D, which spells out the definite article morphology. Polish cannot be straightforwardly treated like Italian and Italo-Romance, in that the realization of the two positions inside the DP cannot be simultaneous. This can be easily reconducted to parametric variation concerning the *Doubly Filled XP Filter* (Dimitrova-Vulchanova, Giusti 1998, 158) reported in (27).

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**26** Assuming Giusti’s (2002) proposal that D realizes the functional features of the head noun, *jeden* would be a good candidate for this position. In fact, in cases like (21), it is just a dummy not adding any semantic import but just spelling out gender, number, and case of the head noun.

**27** With [uRef] I refer to the fact that the referential anchoring function is present, but it is not active due to the syntactic position of the item.

- (27) A functional projection must be visible at all levels of representation by either
- a. making the specifier visible, and/or
  - b. making the head visible.

In Italian and Italo-Romance the application of the filter is conjunct, i.e., both SpecDP and D can be filled simultaneously. Polish instead applies the filter disjointly: this means that when specific *jeden* occupies SpecDP, the head cannot be overtly realized. If the occurrence of nonspecific *jeden* in D would be supported by future research, then it would not be possible to have elements in the specifier. The coexistence of *jeden* potentially occupying the specifier and the head of DP would also parallel the coexistence of the same form of the reduced Latin demonstrative [IL]LE during its grammaticalization into an indefinite article. The demonstrative in SpecDP started being analyzed as the head of the DP (cf. Giusti 2001). However, since the two positions are adjacent and there is no lexical material intervening, the two constructions may have coexisted for several generations (Giusti 2001, 197).

A second advantage of this is the parallel between the role of the DP layer in nominal expressions and that of the Complementizer Phrase (CP) in clauses (corroborating the correspondence already noticed by Abney 1987 *inter alia*). The function of checking the referential anchoring to the speaker, which is assumed to be carried out in SpecDP, finds an interesting parallel with Giorgi's (2012) theory on the representation of the speaker's coordinates in the left periphery of the clause. Giorgi (2012, *inter alia*) argues that the speaker's space-temporal coordinates are represented in syntax as a deictic element pointing at the utterer, realized in the highest layer above Rizzi's (1997) ForceP. Thus, the highest projection of the left periphery of the clause is the locus where the tense of the utterance is "anchored" to the speaker. By analogy, since nominal expressions lack tense (cf. Giusti 2006), their left edge checks those features which have to do with the speaker in the nominal domain, i.e. referentiality (and spatial deixis). This analysis also corroborates Longobardi's (1994) assumption that the DP layer is needed for referentiality requirements.

## 5 Conclusions

Capitalizing on Cardinaletti and Giusti's (2018) proposal on the analysis of nominal expressions, and on Rutkowski's (2007a) analysis of Polish numerals, this article has tried to sketch a complete analysis of *jeden* in Polish, keeping into account its different positions relative to its grammaticalization process.

The claim supported here is that an analysis of *jeden* as only occupying the specifier of a QP position found between DP and NP is

reductive and cannot account for the functions it is acquiring in its grammaticalization path. *Jeden* may function as a quantifier – with some instances in which it is interpreted as a non-quantificational adjective – and as an indefinite determiner.

The numeral *jeden* heads a QP and is indeed merged in the specifier of a functional projection NumP (corresponding to Rutkowski's (2007a) QP), between DP and NP. It is endowed with an interpretable quantificational feature and an anchoring operator, which is however not active in its base position. The 'non-quantificational' adjectival semantics can be reconducted to instances of the numeral, whose interpretation may be due to some covert material (as in the case of *jeden [i ten sam]* 'one [and the same]').

Indefinite specific *jeden* is argued to occupy the specifier of the DP. The movement to SpecDP is necessary to activate the referential operator, making it possible to anchor the indefinite introduced by *jeden* to the speaker. This instance corresponds to a diachronically more advanced stage of grammaticalization of the numeral, due to the application of the Late Merge Principle (causing the item to be directly merged higher in the structure), which goes hand in hand with the loss of the quantificational feature. In SpecDP specific *jeden* is in complementary distribution with demonstratives and other pronouns.

As grammaticalization processes are driven by Economy principles and follow similar stages (cf. van Gelderen 2011), the prediction is that SpecDP may be reanalyzed as D in further stages.<sup>28</sup> Some instances of *jeden*, which is interpreted nonspecifically, may suggest that the grammaticalization process is proceeding and that it has just entered stage IV. If this turns out to be the case, *jeden* may have been reanalyzed (according to the Head Preference Principle) as D, 'escaping' the anchoring (which takes place only in SpecDP).

If the analysis is on the right track, it would contribute to the understanding of the process of grammaticalization of the numeral 'one' into an indefinite determiner. Moreover, this approach would further argue in support of (i) a cross-linguistic consistency in the realization and mapping of the positions inside the DP (in relation with Italian and Italo-Romance varieties) and (ii) a one-to-one mapping between syntax and semantics.

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**28** I acknowledge that the grammaticalization of *jeden* (and of the numeral 'one' in general) cannot be straightforwardly assimilated to other grammaticalization processes such as the negative cycle (cf. Jespersen 1917). In fact, in the latter case the grammaticalized element substitutes the original one. In the case of 'one' the numeral is not lost, and the process ends up creating new items in the lexicon (this is particularly evident in those languages which developed an indefinite article whose form is different from that of the numeral, e.g. *one* vs. *a(n)* in English). Nevertheless, a model which individuates similarities between these two processes is a welcome result.

The presented model opens up new paths for future research. The first one is a detailed study aimed at collecting empirical evidence which may support or discard the idea of a possible instance of non-specific *jeden* in D. If this intuition is corroborated by the data, it may be relevant for the understanding of the process of grammaticalization of 'one' which may be extended to other languages. A second path consists in a thorough description of the contexts *jeden* specializes for (in competition with other indefinite markers like *jakis/pewien* 'some'). Furthermore, the presented model would benefit from a fine-grained investigation of the syntax of the plural forms *jedni/jedne* 'one<sub>PL</sub>', whose functions does not exactly overlap with those of its single counterpart. This model of grammaticalization also raises an issue regarding the representation of *jeden* in the lexicon. Whether there is only one lexical representation of *jeden* or whether there are several homophonous copies for each function is an issue that will be left for future investigation.

This modest piece of work attempted to cast some light on syntax underlying the grammaticalization of the peculiar numeral 'one' in Polish. The issues left open here will hopefully be taken up and disentangled by future research.

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# Teaching Italian as an L2/FL Through Contemporary Italian Literature by Women Writers of Migrant Origin A Conversation with Sumaya Abdel Qader About *Quello che abbiamo in testa*

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**Abstract** Literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin have been analysed in several literary and comparative studies, but still scarcely investigated from a teaching perspective. This article explores their linguistic and intercultural potentialities, taking Sumaya Abdel Qader's *Quello che abbiamo in testa* (2019) as a case study. Following is an interview with the author about women's writing and representation in contemporary Italian literature. Both the teaching considerations and the key aspects of the interview support the use of literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin to teach Italian as an L2/FL.

**Keywords** Italian as an L2/FL. Women writers. Migrant origin. Sumaya Abdel Qader.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Teaching Potentialities of Literary Works by Italian Women Writers of Migrant Origin. – 2.1 Linguistic Potentialities. – 2.2 Intercultural Potentialities. – 3 A Case Study: *Quello che abbiamo in testa* by Sumaya Abdel Qader. – 3.1 Linguistic Level. – 3.2 Intercultural Level. – 4 An Interview with Sumaya Abdel Qader. – 5 Conclusions.



#### Peer review

Submitted 2021-07-31  
Accepted 2021-11-17  
Published 2022-04-26

#### Open access

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**Citation** Spaliviero, C. (2022). "Teaching Italian as an L2/FL Through Contemporary Italian Literature by Women Writers of Migrant Origin. A Conversation with Sumaya Abdel Qader About *Quello che abbiamo in testa*". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [85-104] 247-266.

## 1 Introduction

Several literary and comparative studies have examined literary works by immigrant and Italian women writers of migrant origin, focusing on the gender dimension (Carroli 2010; Curti 2011; Paynter 2017) and including interviews with the authors (Comberiati 2009; Camilotti, Zangrando 2010; Miceli 2019). Nevertheless, the didactic use of these literary productions has been scarcely researched for the teaching of Italian as a Second and Foreign Language (henceforth L2 and FL). Although investigations have dealt with the pedagogical potentialities of migration literature (Cuconato 2017), a reduced number of textbooks of Italian as an L2/FL includes them (Borri, Bertini 2016; Di Filippo, Di Florio 2017; Bertolio 2021), and empirical research is just partially developed in the L2 perspective (Camilotti, Civali 2018; Zannoni, Sirotti 2019).

This article contributes to promoting the use of literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin to teach Italian as an L2/FL. To do so, it will explore their linguistic and intercultural potentialities by considering Sumaya Abdel Qader's novel *Quello che abbiamo in testa*<sup>1</sup> (2019) as a case study. These topics will be further developed throughout the interview with the author. The goal is to provide both theoretical reflections and didactic suggestions to design and implement pedagogical practices in Second Language Acquisition (henceforth SLA).

## 2 The Teaching Potentialities of Literary Works by Italian Women Writers of Migrant Origin

Using literature in the L2/FL classroom brings several benefits to SLA (Carroli 2008; Paran 2008; Parkinson, Reid Thomas 2010; Di Martino, Di Sabato 2014; Tsang, Paran, Lau 2020). It enhances the development of linguistic and communicative competence, fosters historical-cultural enrichment, and encourages the development of intercultural reflections (Gonçalves Matos 2012; 2020; Spaliviero 2020; Ballester, Spaliviero 2021).

Employing women writers' literary works provides the added value of drawing attention to gender issues. Besides the possibility of reflecting on female representations, it fosters the acquisition of the critical tools needed to observe the present reality and to question the current social system (Sapegno 2014).

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I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Sumaya Abdel Qader for the generosity of her time and words.

<sup>1</sup> 'What we wear on our Heads' (transl. by the Author).

The further selection of Italian women writers of migrant origin's productions promotes SLA and gender education from an intercultural perspective. Within the contexts of foreign immigration to Italy (L2 perspective) and of Italian emigration abroad (FL perspective), these texts increase the awareness of the intersections between gender issues and discrimination, marginalisation, and exclusion processes caused by different linguistic and cultural traditions, and religious beliefs (Coppola, Sabelli 2014).

The combination of SLA, gender education, and the analysis of the multilingual and multicultural identities of Italian women writers of migrant origin, as well as those of their characters, aims to challenge stereotypes and prejudices, demonstrate women's social role in fostering the intercultural dialogue, and envision inclusive cities.

## 2.1 Linguistic Potentialities

The acquisition of communicative competence in an L2/FL should include the development of the capacity of reading literary works, since literature fosters the improvement of linguistic abilities and provides evidence of the close connection between language and culture (Carroli 2008; Paran 2008; Di Martino, Di Sabato 2014; Tsang, Paran, Lau 2020).

Literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin reveal their multilingual background, which contributes to enriching the Italian language, fostering characters' realistic representations, and portraying the linguistic heterogeneity of contemporary Italy. The influence of the first language of writers' parents is evident in the insertion of non-Italian lexemes connected to cultural-specific elements of the family's country of origin (religion, food, clothes, etc.) (Ferrari 2020). Moreover, the reference to the parents' mother tongue deals with the use of phraseological expressions, cultural-specific formulas, social rituals (such as the act of greetings), and involves the development of metalinguistic reflections. These inclusions show both the absence of equivalent words in Italian and the linguistic and cultural heritage of non-Italian speech communities. Thus, literary multilingualism reflects the co-existence of diverse social habits and cultural traditions within the same national territory. Finally, the insertion of Italian incorrect word and sentence structures caused by the interference of the non-native Italian characters' mother tongue is less present than the previous immigrant writers' productions since for most literary figures Italian is no longer an L2 but an L1.

Moreover, the language of these literary productions is often integrated by Italian linguistic varieties and other foreign languages, that both reinforce the multilingual nature of these texts and reveal

the linguistic diversity of the peninsula. At a diachronic level, these texts include regional varieties, popular words and phrases belonging to family registers, and dialect expressions. At a diatopic level, the insertion of regional Italian varieties deals with specific lexical and syntactical choices. In turn, the introduction of regional and local dialects is associated with the expression of emotively loaded concepts, exclamations, and interjections (Kiemle 2011). These discourse markers are often transferred through the code-switching phenomena from standard Italian to the diatopic varieties of the characters' regional contexts. The additional presence of other foreign language terms and idioms confirms the existence of a global communicative reality, marked by linguistic contacts and loanwords through mass media (Serianni, Antonelli 2011), and is connected to a more in-depth knowledge of foreign languages by the younger generation, that also appear as literary figures. Young characters' dialogues reproduce a simulated orality thanks to the combined use of both slang words and foreign language terms, that define their affiliation with a specific generation. At a diaphasic level, this literature involves the whole range of Italian linguistic registers. Depending on the communicative situation, the Italian literary language varies from a formal to an informal register, up to a daily and colourful colloquial one. At a diastratic level, literary figures' characterisation is as realistic as their ways of expression reflect their membership to a certain social stratum.

On this basis, in the L2/FL classroom, literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin expose students to the multilingual and multicultural features of contemporary Italian language, while contributing to renewing it. Besides supporting the acquisition of standard Italian, these texts allow the students both to focus on linguistic phenomena and to reflect on their cultural implications, enhancing the development of sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural competences. The linguistic potentialities of using these literary productions consist in the opportunity to train:

- a. receptive language skills: by developing reading strategies dealing with both literal and inferential understanding, expanding the vocabulary, recognising diverse linguistic registers, and reinforcing listening abilities by teachers' and writers' reading aloud;
- b. productive language skills: by students' reading aloud, engaging in monologue activities, and experimenting with creative writing.

In addition, employing these literary productions gives the students the possibility of learning about women writers' cultural backgrounds and gaining intercultural awareness of their multiple world perceptions that stand behind the use of certain words or expres-

sions. Multilingualism fosters both the analysis of the Italian sociolinguistic and pragmatic rules that establish the appropriateness and the efficacy of a communicative act within specific social events, and the reflection on the use of the above-mentioned linguistic variants according to temporal, spatial, social, and contextual variables (Danesi, Diadori, Semplici 2018). This aspect is particularly useful in the FL perspective, where the linguistic input is generally correct thanks to teachers' mediation and the adoption of textbooks, but also inauthentic. Concurrently, it is also suitable for the L2 perspective, where the linguistic input is authentic thanks to its availability within the environment, but often incorrect unless its carefully analysed at linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic levels (Balboni 2014).

The teaching techniques to train students' linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural competences correspond to activities before, during, and after reading a selected excerpt.

The teaching techniques to employ before approaching the text include open questions on students' experiences connected to the main literary topics; brainstorming on literary key words; combinations of images and words taken from the excerpt; and predictions on the literary content based on the paratext (cover, title, author of the book, etc.). Students can be asked to think about their previous experiences with either multilingual contexts or the first language of writer's family; to write/say all the known Italian words and expressions associated with a specific linguistic register or youth language; and to combine images and popular words in regional and dialect varieties.

The teaching techniques to use during and after reading aim at verifying the global and the analytical comprehension. They evolve from general activities, such as hypothesis testing, filling out grids and tables, answering closed and open questions, to targeted exercises, like identifying specific terms and idioms in the text, groupings, and matching words and definitions. In order to test the understanding of specific lexical and cultural items, students can be asked to underline all the terms in the mother tongue of the writers' family, Italian linguistics varieties, or youth languages; to highlight diverse varieties of Italian linguistic registers; to group the multilingual words and expressions into different homogeneous sets; to match words in the same language or variety with their standard Italian translations.

The teaching techniques to use after reading comprise students' reading aloud, elaborating monologues, and experimenting with creative writing. Students can be asked to produce a correct, appropriate, and effective discourse by re-utilising the previously analysed words and expressions; and to re-write the excerpt varying some elements, such as the linguistic registers (from informal to formal), and varieties (from youth language slang to standard Italian).

## 2.2 Intercultural Potentialities

Literature enhances the development of contextualisation and relational abilities, that form part of the acquisition of communicative competence in an L2/FL (Gonçalves Matos 2012; 2020; Spaliviero 2020; Ballester, Spaliviero 2021). Contextualising literary works permits an in-depth understanding of their original meanings with respect to the historical and cultural reference framework, and to the author's biography. Literature also fosters the opportunity to discuss stereotypes and prejudices using relational abilities in order to overcome such superficial visions.

Literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin are characterised by a multicultural essence that contributes to combining gender and intercultural dimensions, overcoming the anachronistic perception of national identities, and stimulating reflections on Italian multiethnic society. They foster the development of an empathetic attitude towards a socio-cultural group (represented by both the writers and their characters) which lives a double condition of disadvantage, for being women and of migrant origin, that exposes them to gender and racial discriminations. Concurrently, they are an empowerment tool, since they draw attention to the high number of Italian women of migrant origin writers, and contrast to the widespread ethnocentric and prejudicial visions of foreign women (Camilotti, Zangrando 2010).

Furthermore, they promote an in depth debate on the so-called 'second generations', who represent a fully-fledged part of the Italian society. While supporting the re-consideration of the 'Italianness' concept, they turn the spotlight on the political, legal, and administrative situation that Italian people born from immigrant families have to face in daily life (Coppola, Sabelli 2014).

The combination of gender and intercultural dimensions promotes the use of an intersectional perspective to analyse literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin that connects gender topics to other categories, such as social status, religious belief, and ethnic background (Coppola, Sabelli 2014). As a result, multicultural characters are interpreted through their double role of product and producer of relationships within an authentic consideration of Italian socio-cultural dynamics (Camilotti, Crivelli 2017).

In this scenario, in the L2/FL classroom literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin reflect the multicultural features of the contemporary Italian society, while questioning and reshaping its national identity. Despite their fictional nature, these texts foster the development of students' cognitive and emotional skills aimed at critically understanding the real world, at considering diversity as an intrinsic Italian socio-cultural feature, and at overcoming the cultural differences that are not so easily addressed in daily life. The in-

tercultural potentialities of using these literary works afford the opportunity to reinforce:

- a. contextualisation skills: by situating the texts within the cultural context of production, relating them to the author's biography, and interpreting them through the identification of the writer's messages;
- b. relational skills: by interacting with the classmates, interpreting the texts from the present perspective, and developing a deeper awareness of oneself and of the Italian multicultural reality.

The interaction with these literary productions and other students facilitates the improvement of integrated language skills of an interactive type, by developing argumentative capacities and relational competences during classroom discussions, and of a manipulative type, by summarising and paraphrasing peers' ideas in pair and group activities. The connection between the use of linguistic, contextualisation, and relational skills takes place when students become aware of the historical and cultural position from which they read the texts; establish a dialogue to explain their reasons and listen to their classmates' opinions; accept the existence of different interpretations of the same text; use emotional resources to empathise with the writers, the characters, and their classmates; and build a common discourse in which the cultural implications that may compromise communication are clarified. These potentialities are beneficial in the FL perspective, where the cultural input is filtered by the proposals of the teacher and of textbooks, but also partial and outdated. Moreover, they are useful in the L2 perspective, where students can (re) think the reference models of the country in which they are living.

The teaching techniques aimed at reinforcing students' contextualisation and relational skills should be based on the hermeneutic approach and on social mediation methods (Spaliviero 2020).

The teaching techniques that support the development of contextualisation skills focus on the comprehension of the historical and cultural coordinates of literary productions, for example by answering to closed and open questions, and of Italian women writers of migrant origin's biographies, for instance by summarising the stages of their lives. Moreover, they deal with the interpretation of the past meanings from writers' perspectives, for example by identifying specific elements in the text, groupings, and matching words and definitions regarding textual significances.

The teaching techniques that enhance the acquisition of relational skills explore the intersections between literary productions and contemporary life, the interpretation of the present meanings from students' perspectives, and pair and group interaction aimed at training students to defend opinions, respect other students' ideas, and build

common discourses through the negotiation of meanings. Through the use of social mediation methods (such as peer tutoring and cooperative learning), students can be asked to discuss relevant and personal episodes dealing with the intercultural topics of the literary works; re-write the excerpt varying some elements, such as the historical context (from present to future time); discuss the current textual significances; and take notes on peers' current interpretations. The proposals of cognitive decentralisation activities, both inside and outside literary works, valorise students' points of view and promote the evolution from an ethnocentric view to an open thinking that assimilates the multiple representations of reality without denying one's own linguistic and cultural identity.

### 3 **A Case Study: *Quello che abbiamo in testa* by Sumaya Abdel Qader**

*Quello che abbiamo in testa* represents the opportunity of analysing the gender dimension from an intercultural perspective and on multiple levels, since women are both the subject and the object of the novel.

On the one hand, Sumaya Abdel Qader is an Italian woman of migrant origin, as she was born in Italy into a Jordanian-Palestinian family. Besides being a writer, she graduated in Biology, Linguistic Mediation, and Sociology. She collaborates with voluntary organisations that support Muslim women victims of discrimination, and in 2016 she became the first Muslim municipal councillor of Milan.

On the other hand, the protagonist is Horra, an Italian woman of migrant origin who was born in a Muslim Jordanian family and lives in Milan with her family. She works as a secretary in a law firm, she is finishing her university studies in law, she does voluntary service in an association that helps foreign discriminated women, she cultivates her faith by attending mosque, she is a wife and a mother, and she goes out with her heterogeneous group of friends. After reading an article on the oppressive function of the Islamic headscarf and assisting the umpteenth Muslim woman fired for wearing the veil, she reacts against the generalised idea according to which all Muslim women are submissive human beings, and she reflects on female roles and representations within a realistic contemporary Italian society. From that moment onwards, she starts challenging stereotypes, prejudices, and generalisations in order to feel finally free to be an Italian Muslim woman of migrant origin who is completely aware of the time and the space she is living in.



### 3.1 Linguistic Level

*Quello che abbiamo in testa* represents a glimpse into the contemporary Italian language. Its linguistic features include the Arabic language, Italian linguistic varieties, and other foreign languages.

The novel is rich in Arabic words and expressions, that is the mother tongue of the protagonist's parents. Non-Italian lexemes are often associated with cultural-specific elements of Horra's country of origin, such as *haram* and *burkini*. As regards the concept of *haram* (sin), she describes the evolution of her parents' attitude from a strict to a flexible interpretation of the religious precepts, that still safeguards their identity without the bad influence of a distorted human interpretation of the divine will. On the occasion of her daughter's swimming course, Horra compares the adult people's judgmental attitude, while observing her wearing the *burkini* at the beach, with the enthusiastic response of her daughter's classmates, and expresses her admiration and hope for the younger generation. Moreover, Arabic phraseological expressions depict different cultural views on the world, like *bel gharb wel ghorba* (in the West, in the diaspora), that stands for the migratory experience of Horra's parents. The insertion of Arabic formulas in certain speech acts reveals specific cultural conventions. By referring to her adolescent requests to go out, Horra recalls her parents answering *InshaAllah* (Allah willing) for the impossibility of using the future tense in the Arabic culture, since future predictions are just in the hands of God. In addition, within the novel there are metalinguistic references to the characteristics of the Arabic language. Horra clarifies some Arabic lexical and phonetic features by explaining that God has ninety-nine names in Islam, and by reproducing the sound of the initial *h* of her name. She establishes a parallel between the Arabic *shu esmo* and the Italian *coso* (both mean 'thing'). She scolds her daughters for not employing proper Italian terms, but she also fondly remembers the corresponding Arabic expression that her grandparents used. She comments on her little knowledge of Arabic in contrast with the stereotypes of her proficiency level and non-Italian nationality due to her parents' origin. Within the novel there are some examples of Italian incorrect pronunciation by a Moroccan character, Fatima, because of her mother tongue interference. The phonetic errors are made 'visible' and 'audible' through the reproduction of a dialogue and the incorrect transcriptions of the words, such as *nienti*, *rigolarminte*, and *piligrinaggio* (instead of *niente* 'nothing', *regolarmente* 'regularly', *pellegrinaggio* 'pilgrimage').

Moreover, the novel combines a range of words and expressions that reflects Italian linguistic varieties and foreign languages. The code-switching phenomena from standard Italian to the diatopic variety of the Milanese dialect takes place frequently. While Horra is

thinking about her daughter and receives a phone call from her, she recalls her mother saying that this means that Zena is blessed by the angels, and comments to herself: *sperèmm* (standard Italian: *speriamo*, 'hopefully'). Also colloquial and popular words associated with family registers appear frequently. To show her disapproval at buying her daughter a pair of trousers because of the status they represent, Horra uses a colloquial register to ironically describe the act of paying: *sgancio un "deca" dopo l'altro* (standard Italian: *pago una banconota da dieci euro dopo l'altra*, 'I drop a ten euro banknote after another').

The foreign language words and expressions are employed both by Horra and her daughters, who study English and German at school. The protagonist often employs English terms and idioms that belong to mass media and labour market semantic fields (such as *post* and *mobbing*), or that have gradually entered the Italian language as loanwords. She she tries to *sembrare cool* (to look cool) when signing for her daughter's release from her swimming course. In turn, Horra's daughters replace Italian words and expressions by using the German and English translations. Zena says *es gefällt mir nicht* (I don't like it) and *what about my privacy?!* to respectively communicate her dislike for her mother's veil, and after seeing Horra taking a photo of her at the clothing store. Moreover, they combine English terms with slang expressions that belong to their youth language. Zena explains that she invited her mother to go shopping because *mi serviva il cash, i money* (I need cash, money), and when speaking about music with her peers they comment *è per sfigati raga - be', meglio dei tuoi trapper* (it's for losers - well, it's better than your trappers).

Finally, Horra's oral speech comprises Italian formal, informal, and colloquial registers, depending on the communicative event and on the dialogue partners. When meeting clients at the law firm, she uses a refined formal register, employing courtesy forms (*Lei* instead of *tu* for the second person singular). On the contrary, while reflecting on what to write in a Facebook post, she wonders who will read *tutta 'sta roba* (standard Italian: *tutta questa cosa*, 'all this stuff'). Finally, she uses a colloquial register, defined by metaphoric vocabulary and colourful idioms, to describe the scene in which she arrives at work *in straritardo* (super late), imagines saying to her boss, who asks her to come urgently to his office, *Senti, non capisco che diavolo vuoi, quindi se vuoi cazziarmi fallo* (Listen, I don't know what the hell do you want, so if you want to yell at me, then do it), and hears him replying *Brava, è una bomba!* (Well done, it's a bomb!) regarding her Facebook post.

### 3.2 Intercultural Level

*Quello che abbiamo in testa* describes some representative traits of the multiethnic Italian society through a realistic portrayal of an Italian Muslim woman of migrant origin within an authentic Milanese urban space. At the same time, it reproduces the most widespread stereotypes and prejudices regarding immigrant and Italian of migrant origin women, with the aim of analysing and denying these simplified ethnocentric visions.

The novel addresses the issue of the multicultural identity of Italian women of migrant origin through the description of the protagonist's backgrounds and daily life. The meaning of her Arabic first name is literally translated as 'free' and accurately explained in order to introduce the theme of Italian women of migrant origin's freedom and self-determination. Horra reflects on the inherent limitations of the 'freedom' concept, that especially characterise Italian of migrant origin women's lives, who simultaneously contain multiple identities that are difficult to 'label' within fixed classification schemes. In fact, throughout the novel she constantly swings over the border of the Occidental and the Oriental worlds feeling often excluded by both dimensions. This condition of cultural suspension is shared by other figures. When presenting her two daughters, Horra points out their main differences, explaining that they have both been educated to respect religious traditions but developed diverse attitudes towards the veil with the result that just one of them wears it. While illustrating the story of her family, she underlines the different perception of 'home' from her parents' and siblings' perspectives that initially causes the feeling of living in limbo. According to her father and mother, 'home' is their country of origin and is situated in the *hara*.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, they haven't bought either the Italian house where they have been living for fifteen years or a single piece of furniture. On the contrary, for Horra and her siblings 'home' is in Italy, that is the country where they were born, have grown up, and want to become adults.

Moreover, the novel details the relationship between Horra and the social and cultural environment of Milan. She narrates how people's glances at her differ depending on the diverse locations of the city. When she enters the metro, she usually notices the surrounding people's negative impressions because of her veil, in spite of the freedom that defines both her name and her choices. Instead, while she passes through *via Padova*, defined as one of the most multiethnic streets of Milan, she perceives that her veil goes almost unno-

<sup>2</sup> The middle class neighbourhood in Jordan where Horra's grandparents reside and also her parents want to live.

ticed among the objects and clothes that people of various religions and cultural traditions wear.

In addition, the novel presents a series of common stereotypes and prejudices regarding immigrant and Italian of migrant origin women, and in particular those who are Muslim and wear the veil. While doing voluntary service, Horra comes into contact with several cases of discriminated women who can't find a job because of their foreign origins, or are hired only to do menial jobs, work as cleaners, and take care of the elderly, regardless of their qualifications. Then, she describes the difficulty of renting a house after showing up in person to the owners, who frequently change their mind after seeing her veil. She refers to the typical comments on her veil depending on the season: during the summer people ask whether she is dying of the heat, whereas during the winter they are envious for not keeping as warm as they think she is. When introducing a blond-haired, clear-skinned, and blue-eyed Muslim friend of hers, Horra reports people's incredulous reactions and their difficulty in accepting that Muslim women are not only dark-haired and Arab. After hearing a man calling her and her friends 'talibans', they speak about the faulty generalisations on Muslim women who wear the veil by recognising that oppressed Muslim women do exist, but they don't represent the entire category. On the contrary, Horra symbolises a different model of the Italian Muslim woman of migrant origin, who disputes to these ethnocentric visions by considering that wearing the veil is a rebellious and feminist act. On reading the article on the submissive function of the Islamic headscarf, she acknowledges that wearing the veil is not always the result of a conscious decision, but she also reflects on the freedom of many Muslim women's spiritual journeys by remembering her choice to start wearing the veil.

#### 4 An Interview with Sumaya Abdel Qader

I interviewed Sumaya Abdel Qader in order to know her opinions regarding the role that literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin, and in particular *Quello che abbiamo in testa*, play in fostering SLA, gender education, and the intercultural dialogue.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the interview is to connect the previous teaching considerations to the ideas of the author, who both lives and narrates the multilingual and multicultural identities. As written in the novel, the facts are inspired by true stories.

[C.S.] In your opinion, what contribution can the works of contemporary Italian literature regarding women and written by Italian women writers of migrant origin make within the current Italian, multilingual, and multicultural educational system? I am speaking about all the age groups, from the middle school onwards, including the courses of Italian as an L2 and FL for adult learners.

[S.A.Q.] The contribution that works of contemporary Italian literature regarding women, and written by Italian women writers of migrant origin, can make is extremely important because there is still little awareness of what the story of a migrant is. In addition, the woman's point of view is particular and can give an added value to the narration. In spite of this, I often collaborate with schools and I have noticed that the reading of works by writers of migrant origin is near zero. At least, it has never happened to me to see a teacher suggesting this kind of reading to their students. On the other hand, works by migrants' sons and daughters have started to circulate, and to date several works by Italian women writers of migrant origin have been published. Just think, for example, of Igiaba Scego's works. I have also seen some extracts of my works in middle and upper secondary school textbooks. Moreover, I noticed that also some university courses have also begun to include them. Despite this, we are still considered as migrant authors. In the libraries I have often found my works under the label of 'migrant writers'. Instead, I am an Italian writer with a migrant background, since my parents lived a migratory experience. I have never lived such an experience and so I have no idea of what it means, except for the stories that my family and other acquaintances told me. Therefore, having a voice in this sense is very useful to furthering understanding of who some of the students attending the current Italian school system are, since there

<sup>3</sup> The interview took place on Skype, on January 20, 2021, and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Both the Italian transcription and the English translation of the interview have been read and approved by the author.

are more and more pupils who have lived a migratory experience, or were born from people who had lived it. Actually, these students are either considered as 'normalised' pupils, that is, exactly like their classmates who were born within Italian families and cultural traditions, or as 'migrant' students, whose stories often fail to emerge, as if their personal migratory experience or their parents' one were like a halo - present, but not so visible. What else is a problem? The Italian publishing system doesn't have much of a choice. In other countries people read a lot and the literary production by writers of migrant origin is bigger. Maybe in Italy the situation is different because of the general diffidence of the average Italian towards reading and writing. Besides, people continue talking about recent immigration, whereas the threshold of forty years of migration has almost been reached and so in Italy the migratory experience doesn't represent a recent phenomenon anymore. To sum up, I definitely consider the reading of Italian writers of migrant origin and especially of women - since the female approach is always distinctive - very fruitful.

[C.S.] How does your identity as a woman writer, but also as a sociologist and a politician, influence your writing?

[S.A.Q.] This is a problem [laughing]. Let me explain. Except for a contribution in a book, I generally don't write scientific papers. I write novels using simple, popular language. Nevertheless, since in my mind I have complex concepts and categories, and I do think in a structured and scientific language, translating these schemes into a simple story and language, comprehensible to all, is really hard. In other words, to express the complexity of which one is deeply aware in a novel, is a tough proposition. I would like to write a million things but I can't, I would like to develop thinking but I already know that it won't be possible to cover it all. I mean, the Muslim woman who plays the main character in my novel can't represent *all* Muslim women. And this concerns also my involvement in the screenplay of *Skam Italia*.<sup>4</sup> People said that my characters don't represent all Muslim women. Of course they can't! My stories just show a little piece of the world. Thus, all the stories I have written can be combined in order to depict complementary nuances about the same topic. To conclude, my identity is both complicated, because it makes it difficult for me to develop complex themes in a popular and accessible language, and useful, since it allows me to have an articulated vision of the world as well as to recognize and to deepen its various dimensions.

<sup>4</sup> *Skam Italia* is a webseries on Generation Z and consists of four seasons. The protagonist of the fourth season is Sana, an Italian Muslim girl of migrant origin.

[C.S.] In your latest novel, *Quello che abbiamo in testa*, there are several Arabic words and expressions. For example, the concept of *haram*, the significance of greetings, the meaning and the perception of *Allah Akbar*. In your opinion, what educational opportunities would these words and expressions offer during their reading within the school context?

[S.A.Q.] First of all, there must be an effort to restore dignity to words. They are often inappropriately used as well as constantly loaded with more and more political connotations. Just think of the word 'immigrant', which has acquired an increasingly negative political charge. Once it was differently perceived, and a 'migrant' was almost a poetical figure. Today, the 'immigrant' is a figure associated to horrible concepts and to somebody who invades our country. Second, in my latest novel I decided to insert Arabic words because they belong to my linguistic identity. Strictly speaking, Arabic is my mother tongue, since I spent the first three years of my life at home, with my family, where I just listened to and spoke Arabic. Even if I was born and raised in Italy, Italian was introduced later, at the kindergarten, when it became my first language. As a result, I don't have the same linguistic and communicative competence in Arabic as I have in Italian. Hence, in *Quello che abbiamo in testa* I didn't choose random Arabic words to insert. On the contrary, I selected specific Arabic words whose original meanings are usually distorted by the common imagination, in order to restore their dignity and importance. I explained it in the novel: for a Muslim, the expression *Allah Akbar* is imbued with spirituality. Despite this, it has become one of the most hated expressions. Even Muslim kids don't want to hear it, because it has been associated with terrorism, horror, closure, and it has ended with evoking ISIS, Al Qaeda, and a negative semantic field in general. Thus, I consider that the effort to give due weight and to restore dignity to words is fundamental. I personally try to do it as much as I can, weighing the words a lot. I never write a post in five seconds, instead I can spend a whole hour on selecting the more appropriate terms. And when I employ some words and expressions that are normally associated with other concepts, instead of being used with their original meanings, I always try to explain them. I have consciously set myself this goal. Therefore, when I collaborate with schools and I meet the students, I constantly try to pursue it.

[C.S.] Which relationship did you want to develop between the protagonist of the novel, an Italian woman who was born from Jordan Muslim parents, and the urban, social, and cultural environment of Milan?

[S.A.Q.] I wanted to bring out the story of an Italian Muslim woman who lives in her time and space. On the one hand, I made the ef-

fort to describe Milanese roads, spaces, and locations. On the other, my aim was to narrate the existence of a Muslim woman, who is always seen as a foreign person – a foreign body – but actually socializes and even commits herself to doing useful actions. Generally, nobody notices women doing voluntary services, except for the narrow circle of people who collaborate with them, because these are perceived as invisible actions. As a result, according to the common perception there aren't any Muslim women involved in voluntary work. Instead, there are plenty of them! Just think of the current pandemic situation: women, more than men, are doing voluntary service by packing, delivering, accompanying the elderly, etc. To sum up, in my latest novel I have definitely tried to give a complete vision of the protagonist's life, even if I would have liked to develop it more – maybe in my next work this aspect will be examined in depth.

[C.S.] The protagonist of your novel considers the choice of wearing the veil as a sign of emancipation. What stereotypes and prejudices did you want to bring out and deconstruct? What role can this story play in the development of a more conscious, inclusive, and plural vision of women in Italy?

[S.A.Q.] I'll start by answering the latest question: what role does the story play? Indeed, it is aimed at deconstructing a certain common imagination and proposing a valid alternative. However, which is the problem connected to the deconstruction of specific stereotypes and prejudices regarding Muslim women, in particular? They aren't all stereotypes and prejudices! I mean, it can't be denied that submissive and oppressed Muslim women, on whom the veil is imposed, and who are victims of the patriarchal society's violence, do exist. The problem is that people generalise. As a result, this image becomes the representation of *all* Muslim women, and a general expression of Islam. But that isn't true! And this is the central point that I'm trying to deconstruct and to clarify in the novel. On the one hand, this kind of problem exists, in fact there are some characters that represent it. On the other, there are figures who try to oppose and to solve it on behalf of a different religious vision. Thus, which is the correct religious and interpretative dimension? It's the one that does good for mankind – I think it is natural to support this. The readers of my novel will certainly support Horra instead of siding with the 'uptight' characters or the man who beats his wife. In this way, they will be stimulated to realise that different types of Muslim people do exist. My purpose was exactly to short-circuit the 'certainties' that people have about Muslim men and, in particular, about Muslim women. Therefore, the assumption that wearing the veil is a rebellious and feminist act was born of a provocation. What does it mean? It means that there



actually are many Muslim women who can freely choose, without any obligation, to wear the veil as a part of their spiritual journey. And they do it also as a rebellious act against a more general standpoint that would like women to have different attitudes, or against the trend that obliges them to have perfect bodies to exhibit and to show off. I do believe in the feminist principle according to which women must be free to self-determine and to emancipate themselves. And self-determination and emancipation have a spiritual dimension as well. I can decide to deprive myself of something as an act of faith and a spiritual exercise. For example, during Ramadan I deprive myself of food after sunrise and before sunset by considering it as an exercise of will. Religions propose this often, since training our souls builds stronger personalities - of course when these choices are free! And I think that everybody has the right to decide independently, in order to search for their balance.

[C.S.] At the beginning of the novel you quoted the following sentence by Tina Anselmi: “Una donna che riesce, riesce per tutte le altre”.<sup>5</sup> What are your wishes for the future of the Italian literary production by women writers?

[S.A.Q.] I hope that Italian literary production by women writers will be more and more influential and that the perception regarding their works will evolve positively. It seems that women can only write for a female audience, and actually their works are often more read by women than men. Indeed, their works convey a different, additional contribution of sensibility. Actually, there are many Italian women writers but it seems that they are numerically inferior to their male colleagues, and so their works are definitely less famous. Moreover, it looks as if women writers must only ever develop certain topics. But that isn't true: women can write about everything! So, I hope that they will become more and more flexible and transversal as regards content issues, since there are plenty of works dedicated to gender, feminism, political reflections regarding women participation in positions of responsibility, etc. Therefore, I really would like people to change their outlook on the literary production by women writers, since it is still considered ‘peculiar’, ‘special’, and almost not worthy of male reading, despite women authors’ increasingly intense activity. Generally speaking, I wish that women could become more and more an integral part of the different dimensions (political, social, economical, etc.) that constitute our country without having to pay constant attention to quotas. I do really hope that their expertise will win, that is, that women will just be defined by their merits and capacities in doing something.

5 ‘A woman who succeeds, succeeds for all the others’ (transl. by the Author).

## 5 Conclusions

Both the teaching considerations and the key aspects of the interview support the use of literary works by Italian women writers of migrant origin for the teaching of Italian as an L2/FL.

Their multilingual and multicultural features foster the reconsideration of a frequently anachronistic, monolingual, and mono-cultural didactic proposal in favour of a more updated and intercultural one. Instead of representing languages and cultures as fixed systems, based on binary relationships of domination, these texts narrate linguistic and cultural evolution and mutual influence. As a result, they not only exhibit the coexistence between diverse traditions within the same country, providing the tools to understand the current Italian reality, but also invite participation in the construction of new intercultural communities.

These reflections fit into the wider issue of the literary canon, and advocate the inclusion of Italian literature by women writers of migrant origin for the teaching of Italian as an L2/FL in order both to introduce a gender insight into literary didactic proposals, and to reflect the dynamism of today's Italian socio-cultural system.

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# Is it only about *only*? A Study on Focus Particle Placement Acceptability in L2 English Learners and English Monolinguals

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**Abstract** The placement of adverbs has been widely studied over the last few decades, both in first (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition. While traditional grammars teach that the preferred order in English is (S)ubject, (A)dverb, and (V)erb, adverbs which introduce focus receive less attention. Focus particles take scope over the constituents they precede, making their placement and interpretation in a sentence variable. In this study I investigate the acceptability of Focus particle (*only, even, also*) placement when used as adverbs in 96 participants: 48 Italian L2 English learners and 48 English monolinguals.

**Keywords** Second Language Acquisition. Adverbs. Focus particles. Foreign Language Learning.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Present Study. – 2.1 Participants. – 2.2 Design and Materials. – 2.3 Procedure. – 2.4 Scoring and Data Analyses. – 2.5 Results. – 3 Discussion and Conclusion.



#### Peer review

Submitted 2021-08-04  
Accepted 2021-11-10  
Published 2022-04-12

#### Open access

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**Citation** Vann, M.M. (2022). "Is it only about *only*? A Study on Focus Particle Placement Acceptability in L2 English Learners and English Monolinguals". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [43-62] 267-286.

## 1 Introduction

Why are certain aspects of a foreign language difficult to acquire? One goal of second language acquisition is to investigate why some errors are more common than others, and why some are more persistent even at higher levels of proficiency. In second language acquisition (SLA), errors can be the product of overgeneralisation of learned grammar rules, interference of a speaker's first language (L1), a lack of knowledge of the second language (L2), or issues in execution during language production.

Specific properties of a language can be difficult to acquire past the critical period of language acquisition (Chomsky 1986; see Stringer 2013 for adult SLA) and interference may occur when certain properties of a specific language are absent in either the L1 or the L2. Determining the cause of non-target grammatical representations is fundamental in understanding learning trajectories and can greatly inform L2 language acquisition.

One theory argues that an L2 learner's grammar begins where the L1 grammar ends, which then allows for transfer of certain parameters of the L1 to the L2. This is known as the Full Access/Full Transfer Theory (Schwarz, Sprouse 1996) and is part of the interlanguage stage that L2 language learners transition through as they become more competent language users. As L2 language users become more competent, they are guided by a failure-driven process that guides the readjustment of the L2 parameters (Schwartz, Sprouse 1994; Formisano 2013). This process can account for word order errors when L2 learners are in the process of acquiring a new language.

Focus Adverbs (FAs) in English, like all categories of adverbs, have the strict word order of SAV when used as an adverbial (i.e., modifying the verb phrase (VP)), as they share certain characteristics in terms of their behavior and positioning in the sentence (König 1991). This deviates from Italian, which allows for two possibilities of placement, either pre-verbally or post-verbally. However, there can be exceptions for both Italian and English considering that adverb position depends on a complex combination of semantic, syntactic, and prosodic information.

For the L2 learner, interpreting the meaning of an adverb may be difficult, especially with FAs. A speaker can express different ideas using one structure if prosody is implemented correctly. However, in other languages such as Italian, the position of adverbs, including FAs, can entirely change the semantics of the sentence. Word order variation in Italian allows for speakers to shift focus from an event, i.e., the verb, to the object, by moving the element that introduces focus. Interestingly, in English, as FAs modify a VP, they take scope over the entire event and object, and therefore can be interpreted two ways (König 1991). This is outlined below in (1a) and (1b):

- (1) John only bought the flowers.
- a. John only [bought the flowers<sub>F</sub>] – he did not do anything else.
  - b. John only bought the [flowers<sub>F</sub>] – he did not buy anything else.

In (1) *only* scopes over both the VP and the object in the surface form. The two explanations of the example in (1) demonstrate the differences in interpretation that can arise from prosody. In (1a) we find the FA associates with the event, therefore no other events can have occurred, while in (1b) we see the interpretation in which the FA associates with the object, implying no other objects were involved during the event (Rooth 1992; for a review of the semantics of *only* see Alxatib 2020).

This subtle but important difference in the variability of adverb association makes it more difficult for L2 speakers of English to learn than other word categories such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives (Firsten, Killian 1994; Solís Hernández 2006). White (1991) proposes that core grammatical elements and their parameters are so embedded in the speaker's syntactic system that the probability of them interfering with the L2 grammar is very high.

One explanation for the difficulties that may arise from the similarities and differences between English and Italian is *the verb-raising parameter* (Emonds 1978, 1985; Chomsky 1989; Pollock 1989). It accounts for a number of differences in many languages, including adverb placement. In Italian it requires all finite verbs to raise to Inflection (I), however, this does not happen in English, which the exception of *be* and *have*.

In an experimental study using an acceptability judgment task, Solís Hernández (2006) found that both L2 English students and instructors failed to identify sentences with incorrect adverb placement, especially in more syntactically complex sentences with the auxiliary *be*. In another study investigating adverb placement, Formisano (2013) investigated adolescents in Italy, replicating White's (1991; 1989a; 1989b) findings that explicit and form-focus teaching strategies are overall more effective than traditional descriptive forms. Formisano (2013) successfully used the teaching of syntactic verb movement from a crosslinguistic perspective with the goal of resetting the parameters of adverb placement.

The aims of this study were twofold. The first aim was to provide evidence for a word order preference for Focus Adverbs (FAs) in native speakers of English, which was assumed to be (S)ubject, (A)dverb and (V)erb. The second aim was to investigate the acceptability of these same sentences featuring FAs in a homogenous group of English language learners to shed light on word order preferences and better understand what factors may drive them.

## 2 The Present Study

An acceptability judgment task was designed to investigate the nature of the placement of FAs first in native speakers of English and subsequently in a homogenous group of Italian L2 learners of English. The goal of these two experiments was to examine the grammaticality of a complex subcategory of adverbs, FAs, in these two groups of English users. In Experiment 1, native speakers of English were asked to judge sentences to verify that the word order preference was indeed SAV. In Experiment 2, highly proficient L2 English learners were recruited to participate to compare the results with those of Experiment 1. More specifically, it was designed to be able to examine whether advanced and highly proficient English learners differed in their mastery of the understanding of Focus Adverb placement when compared to native speakers. It was assumed that native speakers of English have a strict grammatical word order for adverbs and therefore would not accept SVA structures when confronted with grammaticality judgement tasks, while Italian English L2 learners would struggle with identifying ungrammatical FA placement, accepting both SAV and SVA as grammatical.

### 2.1 Participants

There was a total of 96 participants. 48 monolingual English speakers and 48 Italian learners of English were recruited via different social media platforms and took part in Experiment 1 and 2, respectively. The English monolinguals had all grown up in the US and had never lived outside of the country for a significant amount of time, nor did any of them speak another language fluently. 20 of the monolingual English speakers had not obtained a college degree, while the other 28 had at least a bachelor's degree or higher. The Italian participants attested to having at least a B2 or higher level of English according to the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001), however, the majority of Italian participants had a B2 or C1 level of English. Most of the Italian participants had a college degree ( $N = 38$ ), while few did not ( $N = 10$ ).

Participation in the study was completely voluntary and the participants were informed that they would not be compensated in any form and could leave the survey at any time. The participants were all between the ages of 18 and 35 and were nearly 50% female and 50% male.



## 2.2 Design and Materials

The design of the grammaticality judgment task included 24 experimental items investigating the acceptability of FAs either pre- or post-verbally. The design was a  $2 \times 3$  design that manipulated adverb type (*only*, *even*, *also*) and placement (pre-verbal or post-verbal). There were 48 filler sentences, for a total of 72 total sentences that participants were asked to rate using a Likert scale from 1 (unacceptable) to 5 (completely acceptable). Because we wanted to facilitate more natural judgments from participants without having them overthink the sentences, the questionnaire's scale was labelled "no one would say this" for 1 and "this is perfect" for 5. The numbers in between were left blank, allowing more freedom for participants to give judgments without much external pressure.

There were 6 conditions for each item, therefore participants saw a total of 24 experimental sentences which varied the 3 different FAs and the word order positions. The goal was to create experimental items that highlighted the true adverbial form and interpretation of the Focus Particles. Surprisingly, in a few sentences it was found to be considered otherwise, which will be discussed in the results.

Both Experiment 1 and 2 consisted of a grammaticality judgement task administered through Google Forms. Participants were first asked to give their consent by filling in a form on Google Forms prior to beginning the experiment. Participants were not told that the experiment was investigating adverb placement, however they were aware of the fact they were giving acceptability judgements for certain linguistic elements. They were confronted with 72 sentences and asked to give each one a single rating. The sentences included different types of adverbs, Focus Adverbs: *only*, *even* and *also*, and a number of frequency and manner adverbs in the two different word orders of SAV and SVA.

There was a total of 6 experimental lists, which were randomised and then reversed to create a total of 12 lists. This was done to verify that the lists were fully counterbalanced and ensured that only eight participants saw each list. The 12 experimental lists were then assigned to the participants, each containing 24 experimental items, based on 6 conditions, as listed below.

24 experimental questions:

- 4 with *only*, SAV word order  
Example: She *only* found a book.
- 4 with *only*, SVA word order  
Example: Sarah asked *only* a question.
- 4 with *even*, SAV word order  
Example: He *even* knew Mary.

- 4 with even, SVA word order  
Example: She played even soccer.
- 4 with also, SAV word order  
Example: Sofia also needed a pen.
- 4 with also, SVA word order  
Example: Robert painted also some pictures.
- 24 adverbs of frequency filler questions:
  - 12 with SAV word order  
Example: He often found a solution.
  - 12 with SVA word order  
Example: She asked seldom a question.
- 24 adverbs of manner filler questions:
  - 12 with SAV word order  
Example: She calmly found a seat.
  - 12 with SVA word order  
Example: Mark asked anxiously a question.

Each participant was assigned to one of the 12 lists, for a total of 4 people per questionnaire. Each experimental item occurred in one of the six conditions across the experimental lists to elicit a grammatical/ungrammatical judgement from the participants. The same verbs were used in each subcategory of the list; therefore, each verb was used 3 times during the experiment, however with different types of adverbs and different word orders. The verbs were taken from an English textbook to ensure that they were, indeed, among the most frequent verbs used in the language for English language learners. This was done to ensure the participants in Experiment 2 would know the verbs.<sup>1</sup> To balance the sentences as well as to see if there were any effects determiners could have on the placement of Focus Adverbs, the verbs were organised as follows: each verb was paired with a proper noun, no article, some + plural noun, definite article + singular noun, definite article + plural noun, an indefinite article. This organisation was carried into the filler questions as well, therefore the same verbs are used with the same determiners throughout the test.

All sentences were presented in the past simple tense for ease of construction of logical sentences and consistent word order. The experimental items were pseudo-randomised to ensure that no more than two consecutive experimental sentences shared any of the variables under investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> The verbs used were: *set, feel, bring, lose, find, ask, need, have, know, see, ignore, invite, play, talk, eat, tutor, paint, keep, want, take, help, write, like, need.*

### 2.3 Procedure

Using Google Forms, participants consented to participate in the study and were then electronically presented with sentences and were asked to rate them on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. Once this phase was finished, they were asked to fill out a short questionnaire that asked them biographical questions. The entire task took about 10 minutes to complete.

### 2.4 Scoring and Data Analyses

The data were downloaded from Google Forms using Excel spreadsheets and was then coded for the purposes of conducting linear mixed model analyses in R. Responses were coded accordingly: a rating of a 4 or higher was considered grammatical and was therefore binarised as '1', whereas responses of a 3 or lower were considered 'unsure' or 'ungrammatical' and binarised as '0' for the analyses.

### 2.5 Results

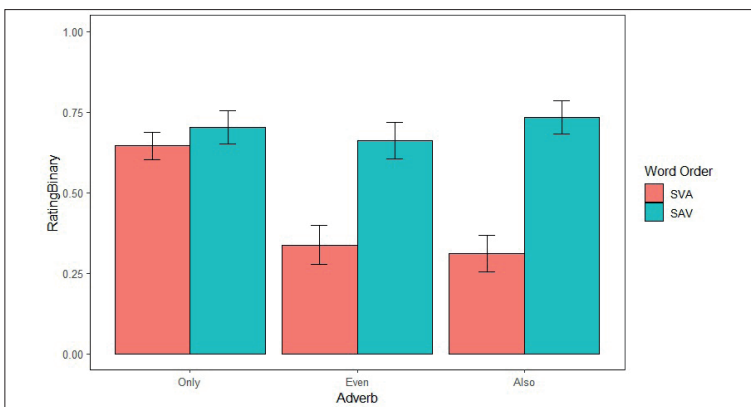
Overall, all participants provided responses to all items for a total of 6,912 responses. Of the 2,304 experimental items, participants judged 899 as ungrammatical and 1,405 as grammatical. Table 1 shows the breakdown of these responses by adverb type, order, and speaker type.

**Table 1** Numbers and proportions of Grammatical and Ungrammatical Ratings over each experimental condition for both Monolinguals and English L2 Learners

<b>Monolinguals</b>		
<b>Condition (Adverb and Word Order)</b>	<b>Grammatical</b>	<b>Ungrammatical</b>
Also SAV	141 (73%)	51 (27%)
Even SAV	127 (66%)	65 (34%)
Only SAV	135 (70%)	57 (30%)
Also SVA	60 (31%)	132 (69%)
Even SVA	65 (34%)	127 (66%)
Only SVA	124 (65%)	68 (35%)
<b>English L2 Learners</b>		
<b>Condition (Adverb and Word Order)</b>	<b>Grammatical</b>	<b>Ungrammatical</b>
Also SAV	143 (74%)	49 (26%)
Even SAV	128 (67%)	64 (33%)
Only SAV	130 (68%)	62 (32%)
Also SVA	117 (61%)	75 (39%)
Even SVA	103 (54%)	89 (46%)
Only SVA	132 (69%)	60 (31%)

Note: each condition had a total of 192 responses per experiment.

These proportions are better outlined in figure 1 for the English monolinguals and figure 2 for the English L2 learners. Figures 1 and 2 plot the proportion of acceptable ratings for Monolinguals and L2 English learners, respectively. Figure 1 shows that English monolinguals clearly prefer the SAV order, except in the case of the FA *only*.



**Figure 1** English Monolinguals' Proportions of Acceptable Ratings for word order condition and adverb type

Figure 2 shows the proportions of acceptable rating in L2 English learners, who, on average, show no clear word order preference.

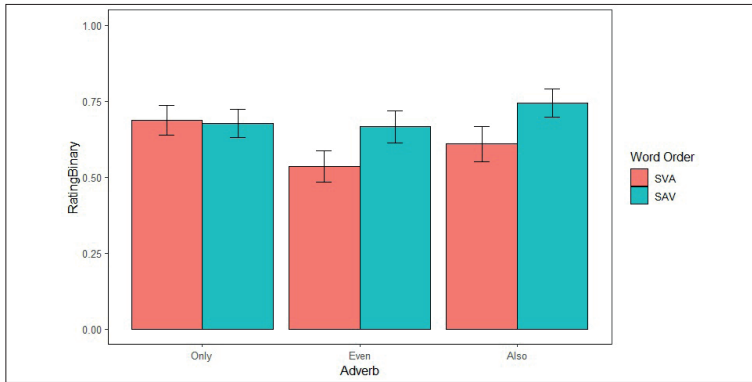


Figure 2 Italian L2 English learners' Proportions of Acceptable Ratings for word order condition and adverb type

We examined the effects of word order and adverb for each group and then compared the two groups by analysing them together. All three sets of analyses fitted the data with binomial mixed logit models using the lme4 package in R<sup>2</sup> which predicts the logit-transformed likelihood of rating (log odds for grammatical rating). All analyses used the maximal random effects structure appropriate for our experimental design (Barr et al. 2013), however, that model did not converge. The final model included random intercepts for participants and items and random slopes for order for participants and items for all three sets of analyses. We performed stepwise forward model comparisons using likelihood-ratio tests (ANOVA function in R) to determine the significance of our fixed effects. Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the stepwise forward model comparisons for each of the analyses.

Table 2 Stepwise forward model comparisons for fixed effects for Monolinguals

Fixed Effect Term	AIC ( $\Delta$ AIC)	df ( $\Delta$ df)	$\chi^2$	$p =$
Base model: Random intercepts for participant and item + random slope for Order within participants and items	1166.4 (-)	7 (-)	-	-
+ Order	1158.8 (-7.51)	8 (1)	9.51	<0.001
+ Adverb	1112.3 (-46.55)	10 (2)	50.55	<0.000
+ Order x Adverb	1075.0 (-37.48)	12 (2)	41.33	<0.000

2 lme4: Mixed-effects modeling with R. <http://lme4.r-forge.r-project.org/book/>.

**Table 3** Stepwise forward model comparisons for fixed effects for Italians

Fixed Effect Term	AIC ( $\Delta$ AIC)	df ( $\Delta$ df)	$\chi^2$	p=
Base model: Random intercepts for participant and item + random slope for Order within participants and items	1288.4 (-)	7 (-)	-	-
+ Order	1289.2 (0.81)	8 (1)	1.19	n.s.
+ Adverb	1283.4 (-5.79)	10 (2)	9.79	<0.01
+ Order x Adverb	1278.7 (-4.71)	12 (2)	8.71	<0.05

**Table 4** Stepwise forward model comparisons for fixed effects for both groups

Fixed Effect Term	AIC ( $\Delta$ AIC)	df ( $\Delta$ df)	$\chi^2$	p=
Base model: Random intercepts for participant and item + random slope for Order within participants and items	2454.7 (-)	7 (-)	-	-
+ Order	2449.3 (-5.30)	8 (1)	7.29	<0.01
+ Group	2449.2 (-0.17)	9 (1)	2.18	n.s.
+ Order * Group	2448.2 (-37.48)	10 (1)	2.97	=.08
+ Adverb	2411.4 (-36.75)	12 (2)	40.75	<0.000
+ Adverb * Order	2371.8 (-39.62)	14 (2)	43.62	<0.000
+ Adverb * Group	2362.4 (-9.39)	16 (2)	13.39	<0.001
Order * Adverb * Group	2357.4 (-5.05)	18 (2)	9.05	<0.05

## Experiment 1: Monolingual Analyses

The best fit model for the analysis is shown in table 5. As predicted, Experiment 1 shows significant main effects for a preference towards the SAV word order, indicating that, on average, English monolinguals rated the SAV word order items with FAs as more grammatical than with the SVA word order (70%, STDEV = 0.31, ci = 0.09 vs. 43%, STDEV = 0.32, ci = 0.09). Planned pairwise comparisons revealed that overall, there was no effect for the comparison of adverbs *also* and *even* ( $\beta = 0.18$ (SE 0.22),  $z = 0.82$   $p = 0.70$ ), however, there was an effect when comparing *only* to *also* ( $\beta = -1.10$ (SE = 0.23),  $z = -4.88$   $p = <.0001$ ) and *only* to *even* ( $\beta = -1.27$ (SE = 0.22),  $z = -5.89$ ,  $p = <.0001$ ). This pattern was similar in the simple interaction of order x adverb. The interaction between order and adverb (*also* + *even* vs. *only*) was the only significant interaction in the model.

**Table 5** Best fit model for Experiment 1 for Monolinguals (log odds)

Fixed Effects	Estimate	SE	z value	95% CI	p-value
Intercept	0.59	0.17	3.43	0.25 to 0.93	<0.001
Order	0.87	0.31	2.77	0.25 to 1.48	< 0.001
Adverb Comparison 1 - Also vs. Even	-0.09	0.11	-0.82	-0.30 to 0.12	n.s.
Adverb Comparison 2 - Also + Even vs. Only	0.40	0.06	6.19	0.27 to 0.52	<0.001
Order × Adverb Comp. 1 (Also vs. Even)	-0.21	0.11	-1.92	-0.43 to -0.005	=0.06
Order × Adverb Comp. 2 (Also + Even vs. Only)	-0.38	0.06	-6.02	-0.51 to -0.26	<0.001

## Experiment 2: Italian L2 English Learner Analyses

The best fit model for the analysis [tab. 6] revealed that there were no main effects for order or adverb type for the Italian English L2 learners. English L2 learners rated the SAV word order items with FAs as similar to those with the SVA word order (70%, STDEV = 0.25, ci = 0.03 vs. 61%, STDEV = 0.31, ci = 0.04). There was, however, an interaction between order and adverb (*also + even vs. only*), indicating that, on average, sentences with *only* were rated differently than those with *even* and *also* which interacted with order. Planned pairwise comparisons showed that Italian L2 participants rated *also* and *even* differently ( $\beta = 0.49$ (SE=0.18),  $z = 2.70$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) while *also* compared to *only* was not ( $\beta -0.05$ (SE = 0.18),  $z = -0.25$ ,  $p = \text{n.s.}$ ) and *even vs. only* ( $\beta = -0.53$ (SE 0.18),  $z = -2.95$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ).

**Table 6** Best fit model for Experiment 2 - Italian English L2 learners (log odds)

Fixed Effects	Estimate	SE	z value	95% CI	p-value
Intercept	0.91	0.17	5.26	0.57 to 1.25	<0.001
Order	0.20	0.19	1.06	-0.17 to 0.57	n.s.
Adverb 1 (Also vs. Even)	-0.24	0.09	-2.70	-0.42 to -0.07	<0.01
Adverb 2 (Also + Even vs. Only)	0.10	0.05	1.83	-0.01 to 0.20	=0.07
Order × Adverb 1 (Also vs. Even)	-0.006	0.09	-0.07	-0.18 to 0.17	n.s.
Order × Adverb 2 (Also + Even vs. Only)	-0.16	0.05	-3.00	-0.26 to -0.05	<0.01

## Combined Analyses

For the analyses that included participants from both experiments, another factor was added (speaker type). In the combined analysis there was a main effect of word order, as all participants combined rated the SAV word order more grammatical than the SVA order (70%, STDEV = 0.29, ci = 0.06 vs. 52%, STDEV = 0.33, ci = 0.07). There was an effect of adverb type (*also + even* vs. *only*). There was a significant main effect of speaker type, indicating that L2 English learners, on average, give higher ratings than Monolinguals. The results are shown in table 7.

There was a simple interaction between word order and adverb (*also + even* vs. *only*), as well as a significant simple interaction between order and speaker type. There was a significant interaction between adverb (*also + even* vs. *only*) and speaker type. Finally, there was a three-way interaction between word order, adverb (*also + even* vs. *only*), and speaker type.

**Table 7** Best fit model comparing English monolinguals and L2 English learners (log odds)

Fixed Effects	Estimate	SE	z value	95% CI	p-value
Intercept	0.74	0.11	6.33	-0.80 to -0.02	<0.000
Order	0.51	0.18	2.81	0.29 to 1.19	<0.01
Adverb 1 (Also vs. Even)	-0.17	0.07	-2.46	-0.37 to 0.22	<0.05
Adverb 2 (Also + Even vs. Only)	0.24	0.04	5.92	0.03 to 0.30	<0.000



Fixed Effects	Estimate	SE	z value	95% CI	p-value
Speaker Type	0.20	0.11	1.76	0.07 to 0.61	=.08
Order × Adverb 1	-0.20	0.07	-1.51	-0.41 to 0.32	n.s.
Order × Adverb 2	-0.26	0.04	-6.59	-0.51 to -0.19	<0.000
Order × Speaker Type	-0.31	0.17	-1.77	-0.87 to -0.02	=.08
Adverb 1 × Speaker Type	-0.08	0.06	-1.13	-0.36 to 0.14	n.s.
Adverb 2 × Speaker Type	-0.14	0.04	-3.64	-0.29 to -0.07	<0.000
Order × Adverb 1 × Speaker Type	0.10	0.07	1.41	-0.09 to 0.37	n.s.
Order × Adverb 2 × Speaker Type	0.11	0.04	2.68	0.01 to 0.28	<0.01

To better understand the relationship between speaker type and word order preference, figure 3 plots the proportion of acceptable ratings given for each word order condition, broken down by FA. While English L2 speakers and Monolinguals both rate the SAV word order equally, there is a significant difference between how these groups rate the SVA word order. Interestingly, only two of the FAs in the SVA word order condition are clearly unacceptable for the English monolinguals, *even* and *also*. *Only* in the SVA condition, while slightly less acceptable than its SAV counterparts, is still quite acceptable for this group, an unexpected finding.

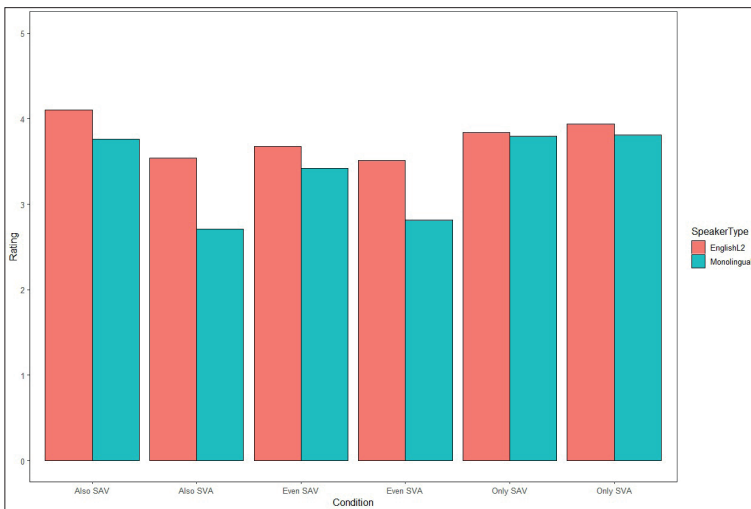


Figure 3 Proportion of Acceptable Responses for each condition (interaction) by speaker type

## Further Analyses of Monolinguals

To better understand the driving force behind the overall acceptability of the FA *only* in both pre- and post-verbal positions, we further examined the data. Only English monolinguals were used in the analyses, as well as the FA *only*.

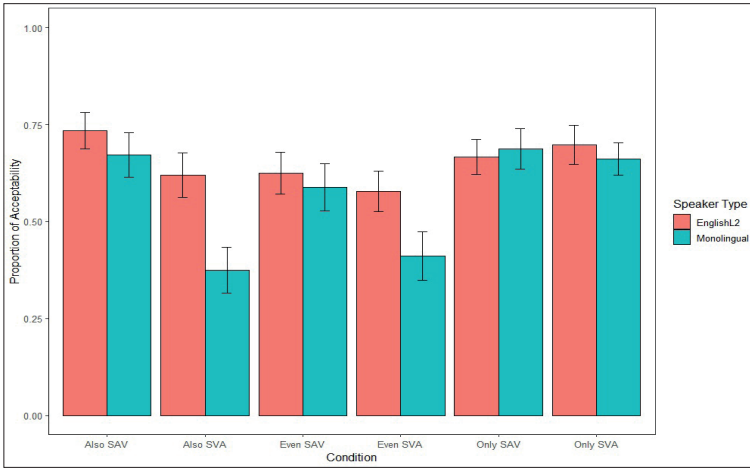
The analyses were again analysed in R using the `lme4` package, with random intercepts for both Subjects and Items, and random slopes for order for both Subjects and Items. One of the nested variables in the sentence conditions was Noun + Determiner type, therefore we used this factor, in addition to order, to predict the logit-transformed likelihood (log odds) of grammatical ratings in the English monolinguals. Education level was also investigated separately. We performed stepwise forward model comparisons using likelihood-ratio tests (ANOVA function in R) to determine the significance of our fixed effects.

The results in table 8 show that there is no main effect of word order, meaning that participants rated sentences with *only* as grammatical regardless of the word order. There was a significant effect for sentences containing prepositional phrases or no determiner (e.g., *Sarah ate only salad.*), which indicates that these sentences were rated significantly more grammatical than others with other determiner/noun combinations. There was an interaction between order and sentences with a definite article and singular noun, however, showing the opposite; these sentences were rated as less acceptable in

the SVA word order than the SAV. There was a similar marginal effect for the interaction between order and indefinite article and singular noun, indicating that monolinguals rated sentences in the SVA order with indefinite articles and singular nouns less acceptable than in the SAV order.

**Table 8** Best fit model for only using Noun and determiner types for Monolinguals (in log odds)

<b>Fixed effects</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>z value</b>	<b>95% CI</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Intercept	0.93	0.42	2.21	0.10 to 1.76	<0.05
Order	0.05	0.44	0.13	-0.80 to 0.91	n.s.
Proper Noun	0.15	0.54	0.28	-0.91 to 1.20	n.s.
Definite Article & Singular Noun	0.85	0.57	1.51	-0.25 to 1.96	n.s.
Indefinite Article & Singular Noun	0.32	0.58	0.54	-0.83 to 1.46	n.s.
Prepositional Phrase or No Article	1.31	0.61	2.15	0.12 to 2.50	<0.05
Some & Plural Noun	-0.25	0.56	-0.45	-1.35 to 0.85	n.s.
Order × Proper Noun	0.05	0.52	0.09	-0.97 to 1.07	n.s.
Order × Definite Article & Singular Noun	-1.34	0.55	-2.54	-2.48 to -0.32	<0.05
Order × Indefinite Article & Singular Noun	-1.00	0.56	-1.78	-2.11 to 0.10	=0.07
Order × Prepositional Phrase or No Article	-0.35	0.59	-0.60	-1.51 to 0.80	n.s.
Order × Some & Plural Noun	-0.69	0.53	-1.29	-1.74 to 0.36	n.s.



**Figure 4** Proportion of acceptable ratings of sentences with *only* in each word order condition and each determiner and noun type for Monolinguals

Finally, another analysis was done to investigate another potential driving force behind word order acceptability in monolinguals: education level. Two more analyses were conducted. The first included the dataset included the sentences with *only* and added the factor Education level. Table 9 shows the results of this analysis. There showed to be a significant interaction between word order and education in the English monolinguals (SAV College Degree: 78%, STDEV = 0.34, ci = 0.06 vs. SAV No College Degree: 60%, STDEV = 0.35, ci = 0.08; SVA College Degree: 59%, STDEV = 0.25, ci = 0.05 vs. SVA No College Degree: 71%, STDEV = 0.35, ci = 0.08). This demonstrates that overall, people with college degrees rate the SAV word order all together higher and the SVA lower than those with no college degree.

**Table 9** Best fit model for Monolinguals and Education level (sentences with *only*)

Fixed effects	Estimate	SE	z value	95% CI	p-value
Intercept	1.23	0.30	4.07	0.10 to 1.76	<0.000
Order	-0.41	0.32	-1.29	-1.05 to 0.22	n.s.
Education Level (College Degree vs. No College)	0.29	0.25	1.15	-0.20 to 0.78	n.s.
Order × Education Level	-0.60	0.28	-2.11	-1.15 to -0.04	<0.05

The same analysis as shown in table 9 was also conducted using all the data to understand if this phenomenon was a result of the FA *only*, or if the same pattern persisted using all FAs. Table 10 shows this to be true, even though the main effect of order is weaker, and the interaction of order and education level is marginally significant (SAV College Degree: 76%, STDEV = 0.29, ci = 0.06 vs. SAV No College Degree: 62%, STDEV = 0.34, ci = 0.08; SVA College Degree: 37%, STDEV = 0.27, ci = 0.05 vs. SVA No College Degree: 51%, STDEV = 0.37, ci = 0.08).

**Table 10** Best fit model for Monolinguals for all data by Education level

Fixed effects	Estimate	SE	z value	5% CI	p-value
Intercept	0.60	0.14	4.16	0.32 to 0.88	< 0.000
Order	0.76	0.28	2.68	0.20 to 1.31	< 0.001
Education Level (College Degree vs. No College)	0.01	0.13	0.07	-0.25 to 0.27	n.s.
Order × Education Level	0.45	0.27	1.68	-0.08 to 0.98	= 0.09

Figure 6 plots the interaction of word order and education level for monolingual English speakers, which shows an inversion of word order preference depending on participants' level of education. On average, participants with a college degree accept the SVA word order more than those without a degree. On the other hand, those without college degrees rate SVA sentences higher than those with a degree.

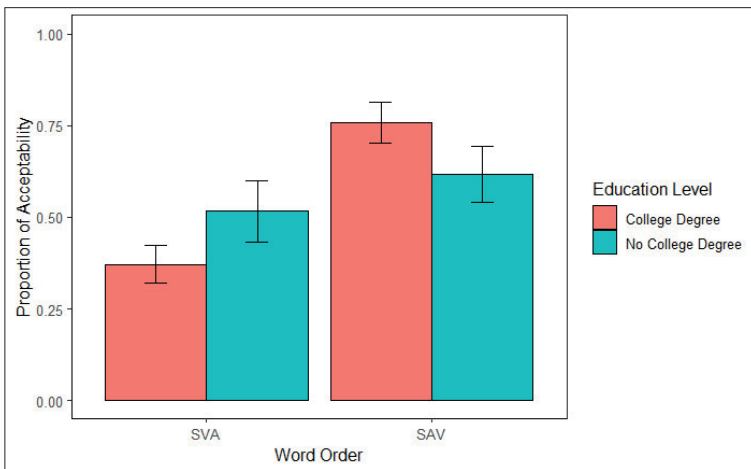


Figure 5 Proportion of Grammatical Ratings for word order preference as a function of education level (English Monolinguals)

### 3 Discussion and Conclusion

This paper addresses the issue of word order acceptability for FAs in English. Two groups of speakers were examined in the study, and we found that there is a significant difference in the acceptability of word order between groups. On average, monolingual English speakers prefer the SAV word order to the SVA word order during an acceptability judgment task, while the Italian English language learners show that both word orders are, on average, acceptable, despite the fact they are highly proficient English learners. The Italian participants showed slight sensitivity to word order when it interacted with adverbs, rating sentences with *also* and *even* in the SVA word order condition lower than sentences with *only*. This was similar to the results of the monolingual English speakers.

All things considered, the discrepancy in the responses from the English learners in comparison with their English monolingual peers suggests that Focus Adverbs are still troublesome for highly proficient English learners. It is very likely that interference from their L1 may be at fault and that they are unable to fully reject the SVA word order due to the active verb-raising parameter, following the FT/FA hypothesis (Schwartz, Sprouse 1996).

Considering previous studies have used explicit teaching techniques or negative evidence to attempt to reset parameters in the L2 classroom (e.g., Formisano 2013), one potential follow-up to this study includes adapting those experiments to include Focus Adverbs. An-

other possibility includes developing a structural priming experiment (e.g., Bock 1986) to investigate the use of structural priming with adverbs, and more importantly FAs, as a form of implicit learning.

The surprising result in this study is that of the acceptability of SVA *only* among English monolinguals at such high rates. There are two possible explanations for this, although they should be individually and experimentally examined. First, *only* may be under reanalysis as it is highly acceptable when there is no article or when there is a prepositional phrase. In other words, its perceived function may be that of an adjective and not an adverb. One possible way to control for this is to modify the experiment to include audio, therefore forcing a semantic interpretation onto the sentence.

Another possibility is that during acceptability judgement tasks, monolingual readers with higher levels of education are more focused on form and more attuned to grammar than those with lower levels of education, who may have more willingness to rate non-standard or traditionally ungrammatical sentences as acceptable.

In conclusion, Focus Adverbs have been found to be more acceptable in the SAV word order by native speakers and acceptable in both word orders by L2 English learners. This is true even after having reached proficient levels of English. This result suggests that Focus Adverbs can be used as a function of near-native fluency. Further study is needed to find out if errors are committed in production tasks, as well. Efficient methods of increasing L2 learners' accuracy in identifying more nativelike placement for Focus Adverbs also merit further research.

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# A Linguistic Perspective on Feminisation and Gender-Inclusive Language How Partitive Constructions Can Be Used to Uncover Implicit Gender Bias in Italian

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**Abstract** This article reports the results of a study on the perception of feminisation and gender mismatches in Italian. The study probes the intuition of native Italian speakers through tasks that highlight their linguistic habits. The results point to two separate but interrelated reflections. First, they show that semantic gender can override grammatical gender in partitives. Second, they reveal that the acceptance of feminine profession nouns is not widespread, especially for those nouns that refer to prestigious professions. The work presented here stems from an Italian adaptation of a study originally designed for French and German.

**Keywords** Partitive constructions. Gender-fair language. Gender agreement. Feminisation. Gender mismatch.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Background. – 2.1 Gender Agreement in Romance Languages. – 2.2 The Debate Around Feminisation and Inclusive Language. – 3 Related Work. – 3.1 A Note on Terminology. – 3.2 Gender Mismatches in Partitive Constructions. – 4 Research Questions and Design. – 4.1 Research Questions. – 4.2 Research Design. – 4.3 Data Collection. – 5 Results and Discussion. – 5.1 Analysis and Discussion of Data – Part 1 of the Questionnaire. – 5.2 Analysis and Discussion of Data – Part 2 of the Questionnaire. – 5.3 Analysis and Discussion of Data - Part 3 of the Questionnaire. – 6 Conclusions.



## Peer review

Submitted 2021-08-01  
Accepted 2022-07-08  
Published 2022-09-19

## Open access

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**Citation** Zanoli, E. (2022). "A Linguistic Perspective on Feminisation and Gender-Inclusive Language: How Partitive Constructions Can Be Used to Uncover Implicit Gender Bias in Italian". *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 56, [195-220] 287-312.

## 1 Introduction

The debate around feminisation<sup>1</sup> and gender-inclusive language is not new in Italy, and yet it is still as lively as ever. Every so often, a new sensationalist headline stirs public opinion, as was the case, for example, when an orchestra conductor announced that she wants to be addressed with the masculine form of the noun denoting her profession,<sup>2</sup> or when a similar request was brought forward by the first female referee in Italy's top soccer league.<sup>3</sup> Over the years, a lot has been said on the topic, various problems have been highlighted, and some solutions have been suggested. The aim of this article is to provide a picture of the phenomena under discussion that is informed by notions of linguistics, with the help of data collected through a quantitative study involving native speakers of Italian.

Romance languages make grammatical gender distinctions (namely between masculine or feminine) for both animate and inanimate nouns. This holds true both for Italian, which is the focus language of this study, and French, which we will use as a point of reference. While gender is completely arbitrary for inanimate nouns, animate nouns tend to have a grammatical gender that corresponds to the biological sex of the referent, though not always.

In Italian, there is a lack of an inclusive or neutral gender, and thus the masculine gender is sometimes used ambiguously to refer to both feminine and masculine things: in particular, the masculine plural is considered inclusive of all genders. This is true not only for inanimate nouns, but for animate nouns as well. Additionally, certain profession nouns tend to be used only in their masculine form, even when they refer to female professionals. This gives rise to grammatical anomalies such as *Il ministro è arrivata*<sup>4</sup> 'the.M minister.M has arrived.F'. Some claim that such forms are 'neutral' or 'inclusive' and there is therefore no need for feminine nouns to describe women in those professions.

On one hand, Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016) show that this "inclusive masculine plural" is not allowed in quantified partitive constructions: e.g. *\*una dei bambini* 'one.F of the.M children.M'. On the other hand, Sleeman and Ihsane (2016) present the results of empirical research that reveals that superlative partitives are less restric-

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1 The formation of feminine forms of occupational nouns.

2 "Sanremo, Beatrice Veneti: 'Direttore, non direttrice'. E i social si spaccano sulla scelta". *La Repubblica*, 6 March 2021. <https://bit.ly/3B6wC2A>.

3 De Santis, M., "Maria Sole Ferrieri Caputi primo arbitro donna in Serie A: 'Ma non chiamatemi arbitra'". *Fanpage.it*, 25 May 2022. <https://bit.ly/3cZcM1e>. Such pieces of news usually spark lively debates on social media, see e.g. the post [https://www.instagram.com/p/CeA5DNCs7M\\_/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CeA5DNCs7M_/) and its comments.

4 "Il ministro Boschi testimone di nozze del fratello ad Arezzo". *RAI News*, 29 June 2014. <https://bit.ly/3cZQMDo>.

tive and can sometimes allow mismatches between a feminine determiner and a masculine plural: e.g. *la plus intelligente de mes gentils professeurs* ‘the.F most intelligent.F of my.PL. kind.M.PL. professors. PL.’. The authors report that such mismatches are not always accepted by their informants (native French speakers): to account for the observed differences, they categorise animate nouns into different noun classes, and they use this framework to outline a feature checking analysis of gender agreement. In their conclusions they suggest future research with a larger sample, more test nouns, and possibly more languages. Westveer, Sleeman and Aboh (2021) develop a more elaborate study to take on that challenge.

The work presented here stems from an adaptation into Italian of the study carried out by Westveer, Sleeman and Aboh. The main goal is to probe Italian native speakers’ intuitions in order to find out whether there are any peculiarities in the way they behave when it comes to feminisation and gender-inclusive language. Importantly, we do not simply wish to collect their opinions on the matter; rather, we want to highlight their linguistic habits and uncover any hidden gender bias, if present. To do so, we will take a close look at partitive constructions: since they are not strictly regulated from the point of view of stylistic prescription, they are very suitable for grasping speakers’ competence while abstracting away from normative or ideological attitudes.

This contribution is organised as follows. Section 2 contextualises some key background notions. Section 3 reviews the literature that informed our study. Section 4 presents our research questions, design, and data collection procedures. Section 5 reports the most relevant results, making some points of discussion. Section 6 then concludes this contribution with some final reflections.

## 2 Background

The aim of this section is to contextualise two key background notions: a) gender agreement in Romance languages and b) the debate around feminisation and inclusive language.

### 2.1 Gender Agreement in Romance Languages

In Romance languages, there are gender distinctions for both inanimate and animate nouns (the former consisting in those nouns that refer to inanimate objects/entities, the latter consisting in those nouns that refer to people and other living beings). In Italian and French, the two languages that we will be using as an example, the gender distinction is a dichotomy between a feminine and a mascu-

line gender. For inanimate nouns, gender is completely arbitrary: cf. Italian *il fiore* ‘the.M flower’ versus French *la fleur* ‘the.F flower’. Animate nouns, on the other hand, tend to have a grammatical gender that corresponds to the biological sex of the referent, though not always: cf. *Il maestro si chiama Enrico* ‘The.M teacher.M’s name is Henry’ (grammatical gender = biological sex of the referent) vs. *La sentinella si chiama Marco* ‘The.F sentinel.F’s name is Mark’ (grammatical gender ≠ biological sex of the referent). In our work, we will adopt the terminology of ‘semantic gender’ (following Corbett 1991) to refer to the biological sex of the referent.

Another important characteristic of Romance languages is agreement, which involves matching the value of some grammatical category between and within the different constituents of a sentence. Some categories that commonly trigger grammatical agreement are person, number, and gender. In Italian and French, gender is expressed not only on the noun itself, but also on the determiner and on the adjectives, if present: e.g. *Uno splendido sole è sorto questa mattina* ‘A.M splendid.M sun.M has risen.M this morning’.

## 2.2 The Debate Around Feminisation and Inclusive Language

As we have briefly outlined, modern Romance languages feature a pervasive use of gender specifications, consisting in a dichotomy between feminine and masculine grammatical gender. Since these languages lack an ‘inclusive’ or ‘neutral’ gender, the masculine gender has traditionally been considered the ‘default’ or ‘inclusive’ option, used mainly in two contexts (as shown in the following examples):

- (1) a. *Anna e Marco sono arrivati in ritardo.*  
‘Anna and Marco arrived.M.PL. late’
- b. *Un bravo politico dovrebbe dare voce ai cittadini.*  
‘A.M good.M politician.M should give citizens a voice’

In (1a) we see an example of the ‘inclusive masculine plural’: when referring to mixed groups, the masculine form is used to include everyone. In (1b) we see an example of the ‘default’ or ‘generic’ masculine: the sentence does not refer to any specific politician but is rather to be intended as a maxim or generic statement.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> To be clear, the ‘inclusive masculine plural’ and the ‘default masculine’ are two separate issues. Indeed, one reviewer suggests that the former seems to be hardcoded in Italian grammar, whereas the latter less so. In truth, debates on inclusive language in Italian tend to problematise both, so we abstain from drawing such a clear distinction between the two.

These two use cases were already declared problematic by some in the 1980s (Sabatini 1987), but it is only in recent years that a lively debate on the topic has reached wider audiences (for a comprehensive review, see Robustelli 2022). Some have suggested that the so-called ‘default’ or ‘neutral’ masculine results in the exclusion of the feminine gender rather than its inclusion (e.g. Cassese 1993)<sup>6</sup> and several studies support this claim (see i.a. Moulton et al. 1978; Brauer, Landry 2008; Gygax et al. 2012; Gygax et al. 2019). Profession names have received wide coverage as a prototypical example of this exclusionary effect.<sup>7</sup> This point deserves special attention and will be addressed in the following paragraph.

Following societal changes, professions that were traditionally dominated by men are now open to women, triggering the need for feminine profession nouns. The debate on the topic goes back at least to the 70’s (see i.a. Lakoff 1976 for English; Boel 1976 for French; Trömel-Plötz 1978 for German; Hellinger 1985 for an international perspective; Cardinaletti, Giusti 1991 for Italian) and is still widely discussed today (see i.a. Gabriel, Gygax 2016; Diewald, Steinhauer 2017; Latos 2018; Dister, Moureau 2020). In Italy, the question of how to refer to a female professional is not always met with an easy answer, especially when it comes to prestigious professions (Merkel et al. 2012; Voghera, Vena 2016). Many Italian native speakers, for example, would prefer the use of *ingegnere* ‘engineer.M’ to refer to female engineers, instead of the feminine form *ingegnera* ‘engineer.F’. A similarly built noun that refers to a less prestigious profession, on the other hand, is commonly used: *infermiera* ‘nurse.F’ (Robustelli 2013). While the phenomenon of using masculine profession nouns to refer to both men and women is largely acknowledged in the Italian speaking community, some speakers find it problematic and others do not. The process of ‘feminisation’ (i.e. the formation of feminine forms of occupational nouns) is met with some resistance by Italian native speakers, as highlighted in Latos (2017) and Cignarella et al. (2021) among others. We will see how our study contributes to the discussion on the matter of feminisation by not only asking native speakers about their opinions, but also by having them complete some linguistic tasks that highlight their linguistic habits.

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<sup>6</sup> In Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri 1993.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Giusti, G. (2019). “Linguaggio, identità di genere e lingua italiana”. *Eduopen*. [https://learn.eduopen.org/eduopen2/course\\_details.php?courseid=314](https://learn.eduopen.org/eduopen2/course_details.php?courseid=314).

### 3 Related Work

This section presents the work that informs this research, as well as a note on the terminology we will be using.

#### 3.1 A Note on Terminology

We have already introduced the notion of ‘inclusive masculine plural’ in Italian. Given this, we could reasonably expect that extracting a feminine subset out of a masculine partitive set would not be problematic, since any grammatically masculine set is supposed to include feminine items. Cardinaletti and Giusti (2006), however, show that this is not the case:

- (2) \**Conoscevo una dei ragazzi che erano alla festa.*  
 [I] had met one.F of-the.M.PL. boys.M.PL. who were at the party.

In (2) we see a quantified partitive construction where the quantifier subset (*una*) must agree in gender with the partitive set (*dei ragazzi*) for the sentence to be acceptable. Suppose, however, that a kindergarten teacher is faced with a heterogeneous group of male and female children, and he wants to single out the youngest kid in the class, a girl named Anna. He may be faced with two choices:

- (3) a. *Il più giovane dei bambini è Anna.*  
 The.M.SG. most young.SG. of-the.M.PL. kids.M.PL. is Anna.  
 b. *La più giovane dei bambini è Anna.*  
 The.F.SG. most young.SG. of-the.M.PL. kids.M.PL. is Anna.

If the teacher went for option (3a), he would not be violating the rules on gender agreement between a set (*dei bambini*) and its subset (*il più giovane*), but he would be using a masculine form to refer to a female. Alternatively, if he went for option (3b), there would be a mismatch between the feminine gender on the subset (*la più giovane*) and the masculine gender of the set (*dei bambini*). Throughout this work we will make the following distinction:

- a. (3a) is a case of grammatical agreement: there is a match in gender between the partitive set and subset, as predicted by their formal grammatical properties.
- b. (3b) is a case of semantic agreement: there is a mismatch in gender between the partitive set and subset because the subset’s gender agrees with the referent’s sex.

In keeping with the original design and terminology of the study we reproduce (Westveer 2021), we will only be using the term ‘gen-

der mismatch' to refer to mismatch *within* the partitive, although both technically contain a gender mismatch. In sum:

**Table 1** A note on terminology

example	subset	set	referent	agreement type	mismatch
(3a)	M	M	F	grammatical	no mismatch
(3b)	F	M	F	semantic	gender mismatch

We stipulate that a preference for one over the other may reflect one's implicit views on the relationship between grammar and the world.

### 3.2 Gender Mismatches in Partitive Constructions

Ihsane and Sleeman (2016) distinguish between the different ways in which animate and inanimate nouns behave with regards to their gender feature: inanimate nouns only have grammatical gender, whereas animate nouns have both a grammatical and a semantic gender. These two do not necessarily match, as they show with the example of *sentinelle*: though it has a feminine grammatical gender, it can be used to refer to men.

- (4) *La sentinelle arriva. Elle/\*Il avait une longue barbe.*  
 the.F sentinel arrived. She/\*He had a long beard  
 "The sentinel arrived. She/He had a long beard."

In (4), although the referent is male, the feminine grammatical gender prevails over the masculine semantic gender. This, however, is not always the case:<sup>8</sup>

- (5) *Mon ancien professeur de français était toujours contente de mon travail.*<sup>9</sup>  
 my.M former.M professor of French was always satisfied.F of my work.  
*Elle vient de partir à la retraite.*  
 She just of leave in the retirement.  
 "My former French teacher was always satisfied with my work. She just retired."

<sup>8</sup> The same is true in Italian, see Andorno 2006.

<sup>9</sup> One reviewer suggests that this sentence may not feel natural for most modern French speakers. The example is taken from Ihsane, Sleeman 2016, where its acceptability is not questioned. We therefore report it as it is, but we acknowledge that its acceptability might have changed in the years that have since passed.

In (5) we see that there is a mismatch between the masculine gender feature that appears on the adjectives accompanying the noun *professeur* (*mon* 'my.M', *ancien* 'former.M') and the feminine gender feature that appears on the verb and the pronoun (*contente* 'satisfied.F', *elle* 'she').

To account for these differences, Ihsane and Sleeman focus on a) the nouns involved and b) the structures/contexts that allow these mismatches.

As for the nouns involved, they propose the following categorisation for animate nouns in French:<sup>10</sup>

- a. Class A - *Suppletive forms*: sex differences are expressed with two different forms, e.g. *une fille* 'a girl' (feminine and female) and *un garçon* 'a boy' (masculine and male);
- b. Class B - *Stem change*: sex differences are expressed by related forms, i.e. the same stem with two different suffixes, e.g. *le directeur* 'the director.M' (masculine and male) and *la directrice* 'the director.F' (feminine and female);
- c. Class C - *Fixed forms with article change*: sex differences are expressed by the determiner, while the noun itself is the same for male and female, e.g. *un/une enfant* 'an.M/F infant';
- d. Class D - *Forms with a fixed article*: these are nouns with a fixed grammatical gender used to refer to both males and females, e.g. *la sentinelle* 'the sentinel' is a feminine noun that can refer to both men and women.

As for the structures that allow mismatches like the one in (5), the authors notice that they are allowed outside of the strict determiner phrase (DP).

Later that same year, Sleeman and Ihsane published another article (2016) which partly overlapped with the one we have just reviewed, but which also introduced some key new aspects. Since Ihsane and Sleeman (2016) had previously shown that gender agreement is less strict in the partitive DP, the focus of this article is on partitive constructions, whose structure can be studied to better understand the nature of gender mismatches.

Sleeman and Ihsane (2016) remark that the partitive constructions discussed in the literature are usually introduced by a quantifier, but there are also other types of partitives, like superlative partitives (e.g. 'the best of his books'). They contribute to the discussion on the distinction between different partitive constructions by comparing superlative and quantified partitive constructions: on one hand, building on previous analyses (Zamparelli 1998; Cardinaletti, Gius-

<sup>10</sup> A fifth category, labelled "Class E - *Default masculine forms*" was originally proposed, but it was eliminated in later work.



ti 2006), they argue that “both canonical superlative partitive constructions (in opposition to superlative partitives with an ‘among’-phrase or a preposed ‘of’-phrase) and canonical quantified partitive constructions contain an unpronounced copy of the noun”. On the other hand, they show that “whereas superlative partitive constructions allow internal gender mismatches, canonical quantified partitives do not or only marginally do so”. They reach these conclusions with the help of data from a small-scale empirical study, whose aim was to find out whether native speakers of French accepted gender mismatches in superlative partitive constructions with animate nouns. The participants were shown a few sentences and they were asked to comment on their acceptability. The sample consisted of 10 (Swiss) French informants. Following their noun classification (see above), the authors tested sentences containing a few nouns from classes B and C. Their results showed that gender mismatches in superlative constructions were generally accepted with nouns of class C, whereas there was less homogeneity for nouns of class B: mismatches in this case were considered acceptable only by some informants.

Westveer, Sleeman and Aboh (2021) point out the limitations of the aforementioned research: its small sample of informants and the limited number of nouns it tested. They therefore set out to replicate it in a more systematic way. Their aim was to investigate both quantified and superlative partitive constructions to find out whether grammatical gender could be overridden and, if so, in what cases. They carried out a grammaticality judgment task with a sample of 62 native French speakers. In the analysis of their results, they focus on superlative partitives, reporting that the perceived acceptance of gender mismatches depends on the type of animate noun: mismatches are generally accepted with class C nouns (7) and to a lesser extent also with class B nouns (6), while they are generally not accepted with class D nouns (8).

- (6) Class B: *le chanteur* (M), *la chanteuse* (F)  
*La plus jeune des chanteurs présents est Françoise Hardy.*  
 The.F.SG. most young.F.SG. of the.PL. singers.M.PL. present.M.PL. is Françoise Hardy.
- (7) Class C: *le* (M) / *la* (F) *collègue*  
*La plus gentille de mes vieux collègues s'appelle Isabelle.*  
 The.F.SG. most nice.F.SG. of my.PL. old.M.PL. colleagues.M.PL. is called Isabelle.
- (8) Class D: *la victime* (F)  
*Le plus jeune des nombreuses victimes est Monsieur Dupont.*  
 The.M.SG. most young.M.SG. of the.PL. numerous.F.PL. victims.F.PL. is Mr. Dupont.

The authors note, however, that the results show variation among different nouns of the same class and among different participants.

## 4 Research Questions and Design

The work presented here follows from a study initially developed for French, which we adapted into Italian. Although our research questions differ slightly, we did not alter the original research design. This section will present both in turn.

### 4.1 Research Questions

Our study wishes to address the following research questions:

- Do speakers of Italian accept gender mismatches in partitive constructions? Is this in line with previous findings?
- Do participants accept feminisation? What factors influence their judgments?

While the first question pertains to notions of (morpho)syntax, the second may reveal interesting correlations to the socio-cultural factors that influence language use.

### 4.2 Research Design

To probe the intuitions of native speakers, Westveer (2021) designed a questionnaire divided into three parts:

1. Grammaticality judgment task on gender mismatches in partitive constructions
2. Gap filling task on the feminisation of profession nouns
3. Background information

Adapting the questionnaire posed several grammatical and cultural challenges; a few changes were necessary for the tasks to correctly probe the intuition of Italian speakers. The adaptation was done in collaboration with Westveer and Sleeman. A full description of the adaptation process lies beyond the scope of this contribution: in the following, we only present the Italian questionnaire.

**Part 1** The grammaticality judgment task featured 80 sentences containing a partitive construction, whose acceptability was to be judged on a 5-point scale. The sentences contained 13 different nouns, representing the classes established by Sleeman and Ihsane (2016). For each noun there was a sentence pair (one with, one without gender mismatch) for both superlative and quantified partitives. Some nouns

also featured control sentences where no gender mismatch was present (because of a full match, either in the masculine or in the feminine) – 28 sentences were constructed this way.

**Table 2** Test nouns for the Italian grammaticality judgment task; by noun class type<sup>11</sup>

Class B	Class C	Class D
		il genio
l'attore / l'attrice	il/la vigile	il personaggio
l'infermiere / l'infermiera	l'/la assistente	la persona
il poliziotto / la poliziotta	il/la giudice	la sentinella
il rettore / la rettrice	l'/la insegnante	la vittima

It is important to note that classes B and C each included one noun that indicates a prestigious profession: *rettore* 'rector.M'<sup>12</sup> and *giudice* 'judge.M', respectively.

For clarity, let the noun *attore/attrice* ('actor.M/F') exemplify the different configurations being tested:<sup>13</sup>

- (9) Quantified partitives
- Uno degli attori presenti è Elisabetta Tucci.* (grammatical agreement)  
One.M.SG. of the.M.PL. present.M.PL. actors.M.PL. is Elizabeth Tucci.
  - Una degli attori presenti è Elisabetta Tucci.* (semantic agreement)  
One.F.SG. of the.M.PL. present.M.PL. actors.M.PL. is Elizabeth Tucci.
- (10) Superlative partitives
- Il più giovane degli attori presenti è Elisabetta Tucci.* (grammatical agreement)  
The.M.SG. youngest of the present.M.PL. actors.M.PL. is Elizabeth Tucci.
  - La più giovane degli attori presenti è Elisabetta Tucci.* (semantic agreement)  
The.F.SG. youngest of the present.M.PL. actors.M.PL. is Elizabeth Tucci.
- (11) Quantified partitives – control sentences
- Uno degli attori presenti è Alfonso Perri.* (masculine control sentence)  
One.M.SG. of the.M.PL. present.PL. actors.M.PL. is Alfonso Perri.
  - Una delle attrici presenti è Elisabetta Tucci.* (feminine control sentence)  
One.F.SG. of the.F.PL. present.PL. actresses.F.PL. is Elizabeth Tucci.

<sup>11</sup> Class A nouns are not included because they never give rise to gender mismatches.

<sup>12</sup> The term does not translate well. It represents the highest-ranking official of an academic institution, who is sometimes known as 'president' (US) or 'chancellor' (UK) in the English-speaking world.

<sup>13</sup> To identify the sex of the referents we leveraged names that would explicitly appear gendered to a general audience of Italian speakers, i.e. typically female vs. male names.

- (12) Superlative partitives – control sentences
- a. *Il più giovane degli attori presenti è Alfonso Perri.* (masculine control sentence)  
The.M.SG. youngest of the present.M.PL. actors.M.PL. is Alfonso Perri.
  - b. *La più giovane delle attrici presenti è Elisabetta Tucci.* (feminine control sentence)  
The.F.SG. youngest of the present.F.PL. actresses.F.PL. is Elizabeth Tucci.

**Part 2** The gap filling task tested the feminisation of profession nouns. For each of the 15 nouns being tested, participants had to complete a sentence that was lacking a profession noun in a predicative position. One example with a possible response is provided in (13):

- (13) a. Carla Piazza è ..... competente. (professore)  
Carla Piazza is ..... competent. (professor)
- b. Carla Piazza è *una professoressa* competente.  
Carla Piazza is a.F. professor.F competent.

This was meant to highlight the linguistic habits of participants, who were given the chance to use the term they most found fitting for the given contexts. The test nouns were *attore, direttore, guida, ingegnere, marinaio, medico, ministro, poliziotto, pompiere, professore, rettore, scrittore, sentinella, testimone, vittima*.

**Part 3** The third part was meant to collect background information, featuring questions about personal details (i.a. sex, age, geographical origin) and opinions on language-related issues (i.a. “What is your opinion on the feminisation of profession names and on inclusive language?”).

The common thread that ties the different parts of this questionnaire together is the issue of how speakers behave in the face of possible incongruities between grammar and the world. This is addressed from different angles:

- Part 1: Do participants favour a match between grammatical gender and biological sex of the referent (i.e. semantic agreement)?
- Part 2: Do participants use masculine profession nouns to refer to women?
- Part 3: What opinions do participants express on the matter?

### 4.3 Data Collection

Our study was administered through a Google Forms questionnaire. We circulated it via social media and direct messages, inviting people to fill it out online. The data was collected anonymously, and the participants provided informed consent about the use of their data for research purposes.

We collected data over a period of one month between April and May 2019. We recorded 298 contributions, but we eliminated the contributions of those who did not give their consent and of those who declared not to be native speakers of Italian, leaving us with a sample of 285 participants.

Our sample is made up of those who willingly took the time to complete the task; for this reason, some statistical factors could not be controlled, especially pertaining to the participants' gender: 70% women vs. 30% men.<sup>14</sup>

## 5 Results and Discussion

This section will present the results of our questionnaire, discussing the key findings that emerged from each of its parts.

### 5.1 Analysis and Discussion of Data – Part 1 of the Questionnaire

Part 1 of the questionnaire consisted of a grammaticality judgment task. Because of the great number of sentences that were tested and of variables that were kept in check, the results could be presented in various ways. This section will display a select number of tables and figures, the purpose of which is to provide answers to our research questions.

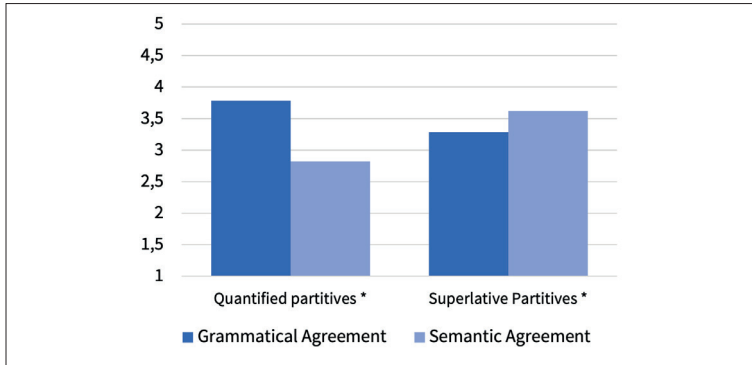
One of our goals was to find out how native speakers feel about gender mismatches, more specifically whether there was a preference for grammatical agreement or semantic agreement in partitives. This was experimentally investigated in the following way. Prior to this analysis, we made the informed assumption (based on previous findings, see section 3 “Related Work”) that the results would show some differences between quantified and superlative partitives, so we checked the two independently. Firstly, two different cumulative scores were obtained by adding all the responses for grammatical agreement in quantified partitives (dark blue in the figure) and all the responses for semantic agreement in quantified partitives (light

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<sup>14</sup> A third option was provided, labelled ‘other’, but no one picked it.

blue in the figure) in each participant. Secondly, mean values for the whole sample were compared and are presented in the graph, reported in a 1 to 5 scale to facilitate interpretation. The same process was repeated for superlative partitives. Figure 1 shows the results of this analysis.

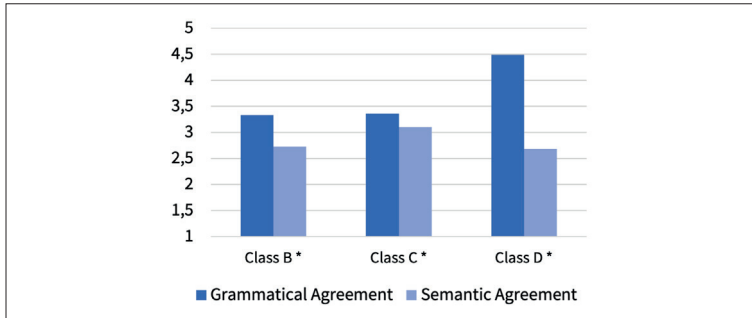
**Figura 1** Grammatical vs. Semantic Agreement. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for related samples was used. \* indicates statistical significance,  $p < 0.005$ .



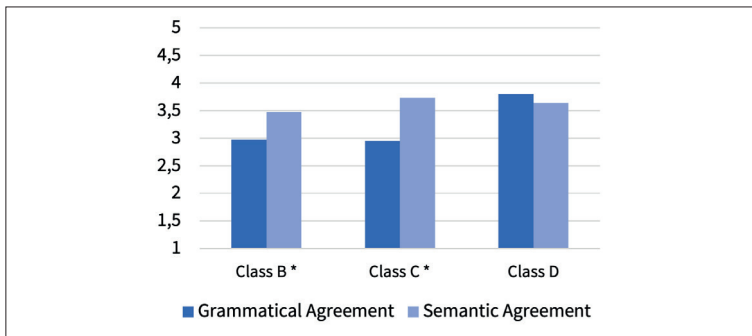
The data revealed statistically significant differences. As we can see, grammatical agreement was preferred for quantified partitives, whereas semantic agreement was preferred for superlative partitives. In other words, gender mismatches seem to be acceptable in superlative partitive constructions. This is in line with what was already reported by Sleeman and Ihsane (2016) and Westveer (2021).

We then checked whether, within each type of partitive, the specific noun class made a difference in the acceptability of grammatical vs. semantic agreement. To investigate this statistically, 6 different cumulative scores were obtained by adding (separately for Class B, C and D nouns) all the responses for grammatical agreement in quantified partitives (dark blue) and all the responses for semantic agreement in quantified partitives (light blue) in each participant. Mean values for the whole sample were then compared and are presented in the graph, reported in a 1 to 5 scale to facilitate interpretation. The same process was repeated for superlative partitives. Results of this analysis are shown in figure 2 and in figure 3 respectively.

**Figure 2** Quantified partitives. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for related samples was used. \* indicates statistical significance. Class B:  $p < 0.005$ . Class C:  $p < 0.005$ . Class D:  $p < 0.197$



**Figure 3** Superlative partitives. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for related samples was used. \* indicates statistical significance. Class B:  $p < 0.005$ . Class C:  $p < 0.021$ . Class D:  $p < 0.005$



All differences shown above were statistically significant, except for Class D nouns in superlative partitives, which showed no statistically significant difference between semantic and grammatical agreement.<sup>15</sup>

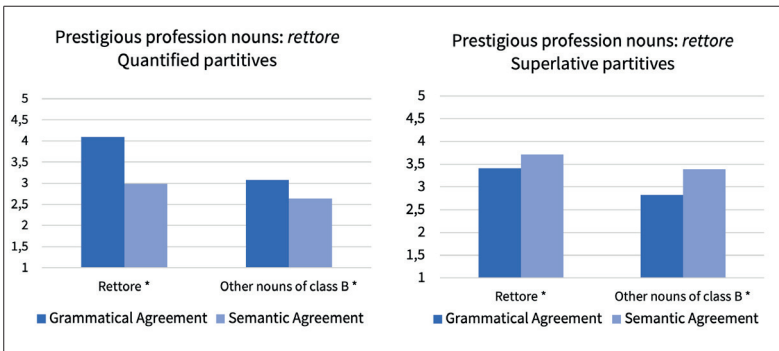
As we can see, class B and class C nouns behaved somewhat similarly, whereas class D nouns displayed different patterns. However, upon further investigation, we found out that there were differences within the same noun class as well. It was interesting to note that the noun which showed the greatest difference, when compared to the others, was *rettore*, the one we specifically picked out as a prestigious noun.

We therefore set out to investigate whether prestigious profession nouns displayed patterns which were significantly different from the

<sup>15</sup> The general expectation would have been for class D nouns to clearly favour grammatical agreement across all conditions, since they have a fixed grammatical gender. A potential explanation may be found in Falco, Zamparelli 2019, who suggest that Italian might be more permissive towards semantic agreement with class D nouns like *sentinella* or *genio*.

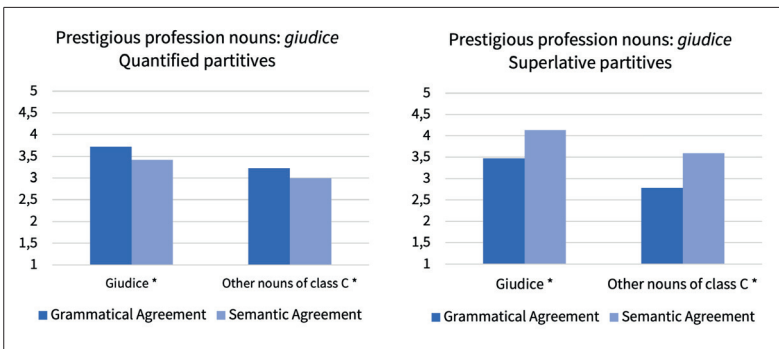
other nouns of the same classes. We did this in the following way. Values of the response for the noun *rettore* were compared with the cumulative mean score obtained from all the responses in the other Class B nouns: this was done separately for grammatical agreement in quantified partitives (dark blue) and for semantic agreement in quantified partitives (light blue) in each participant. Mean values for the whole sample are presented in the graph, reported in a 1 to 5 scale to facilitate interpretation. The same process was repeated for superlative partitives. Results are shown in figure 4.

**Figure 4** *Rettore* vs. Class B nouns – quantitative and superlative partitives. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for related samples was used. \* indicates statistical significance,  $p < 0.05$



We repeated the same analysis for *giudice* compared to other class C nouns, as shown in figure 5.

**Figure 5** *Giudice* vs. Class C nouns – Quantified and superlative partitives. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for related samples was used. \* indicates statistical significance,  $p < 0.05$





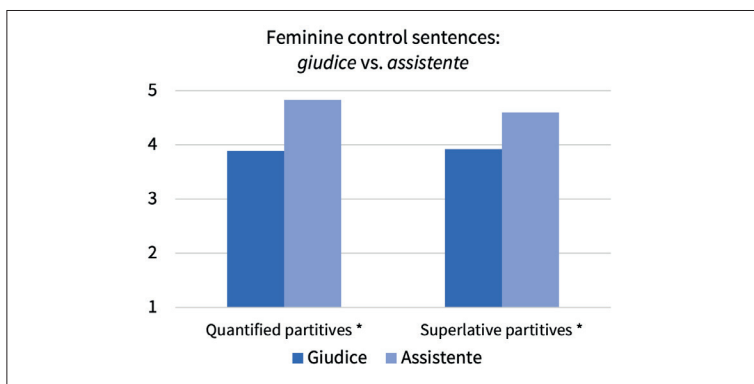
These analyses confirmed that the observed differences between prestigious nouns and other nouns of the same class are statistically significant.

Another factor that further proves this point is observed in the results of the control sentences. By definition and design, those sentences are meant to be unproblematic and receive high scores across all conditions. That was indeed the case (they all received a score of at least 4.6 out of 5), with only one exception: the feminine control sentences for the prestigious noun *giudice*.<sup>16</sup> We report them in (14) and we compare their ratings with those of another class C noun [fig. 6].

- (14) a. *giudice* - feminine control sentence (quantified partitives)  
*Una delle nuove giudici è Giulia Guarini.*  
 One.F of-the.PL.F new.PL.F judges.PL is Giulia Guarini.
- b. *giudice* - feminine control sentence (superlative partitives)  
*La più intelligente delle nuove giudici è Giulia Guarini.*  
 The.F most intelligent.F of-the.PL.F new.PL.F judges.PL is Giulia Guarini.

**Figure 6** Control sentence for *giudice* vs. control sentence for *assistente*. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for related samples was used.

\* indicates statistical significance,  $p < 0.005$



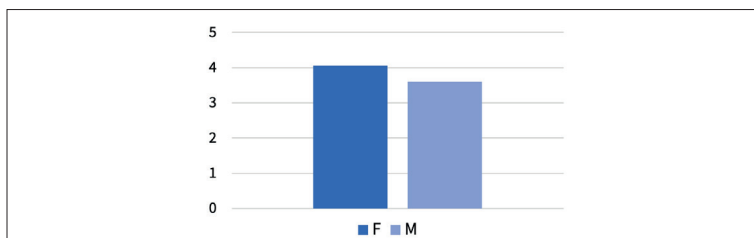
Let us remark once more that these control sentences contained no gender mismatch. To account for the observed drop in perceived acceptability, we can only conclude that a significant number of participants did not find *la giudice* 'the.F judge.F' to be acceptable.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, our test did not include control sentences for the other prestigious noun (*rettore*) because they were not present in the original French experimental design.

<sup>17</sup> For a broader discussion see Zarra, G. "La giudice o il giudice? Una lettrice scrive, Treccani risponde". *Treccani. L'Enciclopedia italiana*, 30 June 2022. [https://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua\\_italiana/articoli/scritto\\_e\\_parlato/Giudice.html](https://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/articoli/scritto_e_parlato/Giudice.html).

A quick additional analysis revealed that the acceptance of the *giudice* superlative partitive control sentence was slightly higher in female participants [fig. 7].

**Figure 7** Giudice control sentence \* sex. Mann-Whitney U Test was used. The difference is statistically significant,  $p < 0.028$



## 5.2 Analysis and Discussion of Data – Part 2 of the Questionnaire

Part 2 tested 15 nouns in total. The results showed the following patterns:

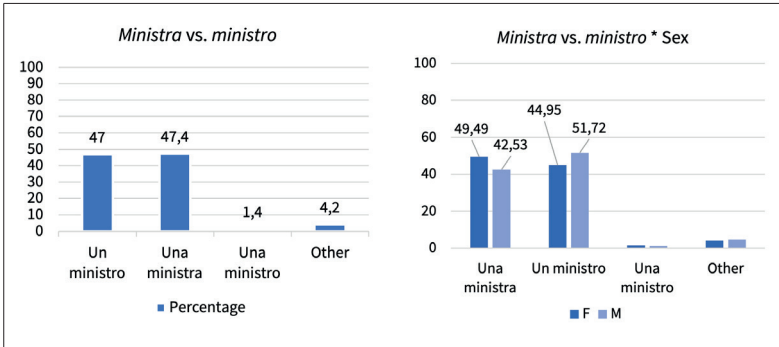
- Great preference for the feminine form: *testimone*, *vittima*, *sentinella*, *guida*, *scrittrice*, *professoressa*, *attrice*, *infermiera*, *diruttrice*, *poliziotta*.
- Great preference for the masculine form: *medico*.
- Balanced results between the choice of the feminine and masculine forms: *ministra/ministro*, *marinaia/marinaio*, *rettrice/retto*.

The noun *ingegnera/ingegnere* showed peculiarities. A slight majority of people preferred the masculine form, about 25% of the participants used the feminine form, but there were also many people who decided to use the masculine form with a feminine determiner (a choice that, though attested, wasn't as frequent with the other nouns).<sup>18</sup>

We checked whether there was any correlation between participants' answers in this part of the questionnaire and their personal details. We focused on the prestigious nouns that received a split acceptability rating between those who preferred the feminine and the masculine form (*ministra* vs. *ministro*, *rettrice* vs. *retto*). Two interesting trends emerged: one related to the participants' sex and one to their age.

<sup>18</sup> It must be noted, however, that *un ingegnere* 'an.M engineer.M' and *un'ingegnere* 'an.F engineer.M' are quite similar, and some participants might have used the wrong determiner by accident. If that were the case, then the masculine form was preferred by the vast majority, as for *medico*.

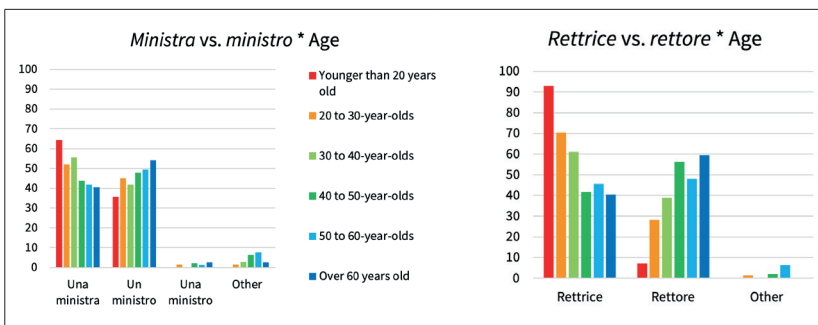
**Figure 8** (a) *Ministra vs. ministro* and (b) *ministra vs. ministro* \* Sex. For 8b Chi Squared Test was used. The observable differences are not statistically significant



In figure 8b we see that the feminine version *ministra* was favoured by a slightly higher percentage of female participants, whereas *ministro* was the preferred choice of a higher percentage of male participants. The difference, however, is not statistically significant. A similar analysis for *rettrice* revealed an even slimmer difference (55.6% F vs. 52.9% M) and this, too, is not statistically significant.

As for age, we can observe that the younger the participants were, the more likely they were to use the feminine *ministra* and *rettrice* as opposed to the masculine *ministro* and *rettore* (as shown in figure 9a and 9b, respectively), although this trend is not statistically significant.

**Figure 9** (a) *ministra vs. ministro* \* Age and (b) *rettrice vs. rettore* \* Age. Chi Squared Test was used. The observable differences are not statistically significant

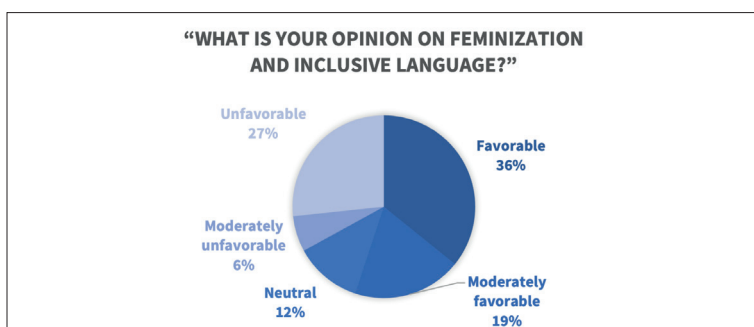


### 5.3 Analysis and Discussion of Data - Part 3 of the Questionnaire

Part 3 of the questionnaire was meant to collect some background information. Most interestingly, participants answered the following question: “What is your opinion on the feminisation of profession nouns and on inclusive language?”.

Each answer was unique and different. Nonetheless, we tried to categorise them based on a more or less favourable answer. The results of such simplifications are shown in figure 10. For the most part, participants were in favour of feminisation and inclusive language.

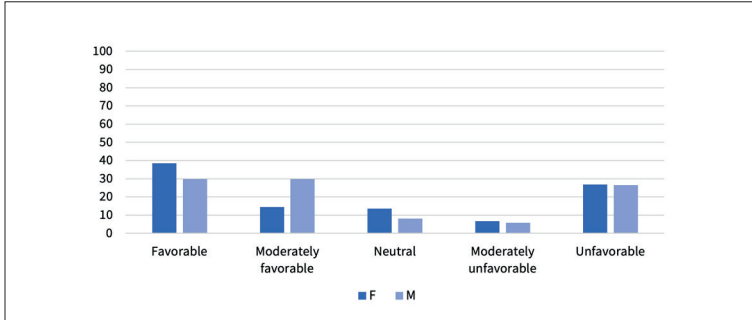
Figure 10 Opinions on feminisation and inclusive language



We checked whether there was any correlation between the opinions participants expressed in this section and their preference for semantic agreement in partitives. This analysis revealed a statistically significant correlation, suggesting that both tasks were useful proxies of speakers' underlying intuitions about the relationship between grammar and the world.

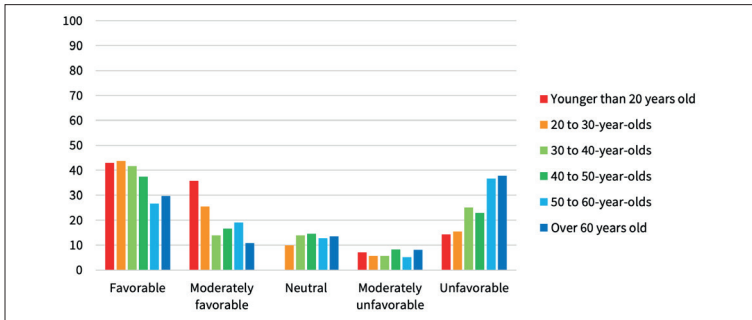
We also checked whether the sex, age or birthplace of the participants had any correlation with the opinions they expressed. Only one statistically significant trend emerged from these analyses, related to the sex of the participants [fig. 11].

**Figure 11** Opinions on feminisation and inclusive language \* sex  
Chi Squared Test was used. The differences are statistically significant,  $p < 0.038$



As for the participants' age, although a general trend can be spotted, the differences are not statistically significant [fig. 12].

**Figure 12** Opinions on feminisation and inclusive language \* age  
Chi Squared Test was used. The observable differences are not statistically significant



In keeping with what we showed in figure 9, one could spot a general trend (the younger the participants, the more favourable their opinion on feminisation and inclusive language), but the correlation is not perfectly linear.

As a final note, let us point out that a full comparison between the French and Italian results is beyond the scope of this contribution; the interested reader may refer to Westveer et al. 2022 and Giusti, Zanoli 2022, where both sets of results are reported and analysed.

## 6 Conclusions

Now that we have presented and discussed our results, we want to make some final remarks that pertain to two separate but interrelated reflections.

The first point to note pertains to gender agreement in partitives: grammatical agreement is preferred in quantified partitives (due to linguistic constraints on agreement within the strict DP), whereas semantic gender can override grammatical gender in superlative partitives. In other words, when permitted by the grammar, Italian speakers prefer a match between grammatical gender and biological sex of the referent. This also implies that speakers generally do not consider the masculine forms (of the quantifier or the superlative) to be gender neutral, which is coherent with the male bias in referent perception reported by psycholinguistic and cognitive studies (Brauer, Landry 2008; Gabriel et al. 2008; Sato et al. 2013; Alvanoudi 2014). Our results are in line with previous findings (Sleeman, Ihsane 2016; Westveer, Sleeman, Aboh 2021). In addition to partitive type, the perceived acceptability of gender mismatches in partitive constructions shows significant variation also depending on noun class and the noun itself. However, arguably the greatest difference seems to be made by those nouns that were specifically picked as nouns denoting prestigious professions. We speculate that this might be due to cultural and societal influences on language, which leads to a second, broader reflection.

The broader implication of our results is that native speakers of Italian show some resistance in accepting the feminine form of certain nouns denoting prestigious professions. As shown in the literature (see for example Cardinaletti, Giusti 1991; Giusti, Regazzoni 2011, 84 ff.), in Italian there is an asymmetric use of (some) prestigious profession names, i.e. the masculine form of the noun is used to refer to both male and female referents. Some claim that this usage is 'neutral' or 'inclusive', but our findings suggest otherwise. This choice is culturally connoted: even though the Italian language has the means to express feminine gender specifications (Burr 1995), native speakers seem to oppose the use of feminised nouns for prestigious professions.<sup>19</sup> This view is also held by several women in those professions, who report that they'd rather be addressed with a masculine form (cf. opening paragraph). We believe that this attitude is bringing about a linguistic mutation that creates new noun classes: as our data has shown, prestigious profession names behave differently compared to other nouns of the same class.

<sup>19</sup> The small size of our sample calls for some caution: the opinions of our 285 participants cannot possibly provide an extensive account of the views held by more than 67 million native speakers of Italian. However, given the general linguistic orientation of the mailing lists and groups in which our plea for participation circulated, we suspect that, compared to the general population, our sample may have been skewed in favour of feminisation, if anything. We are also not the first to point this out, see i.a. Giusti, Azzalini 2020; Cignarelli et al. 2021. All things considered, we believe these claims to be warranted at the time of writing.

We want to point out one limitation of this study: we tested gender mismatches in terms of a binary opposition between masculine and feminine forms. As such, our study can be said to properly investigate feminisation, but not inclusive language. One could argue, and this author agrees, that truly inclusive language would look beyond this dichotomy to include all gender identities. It follows that some of the assumptions and design choices of this study could be questioned. Instead, we propose to see them as aspects that future work could expand and improve upon.

## Acknowledgments

This contribution builds upon earlier works. Thom Westveer is to be credited for the original experimental design, which he developed for his PhD research project under the supervision of Prof. Enoch Aboh and Prof. Petra Sleeman (Westveer 2021). All researchers generously agreed to share the resources necessary to adapt the original French questionnaire into Italian; this adaptation constituted the basis for the research this author carried out for her bachelor's thesis, under the supervision of Prof. Giuliana Giusti.<sup>20</sup> The French and Italian results were presented on two occasions in 2019: separately in Paris (Symposium *Entre Masculin et Féminin*) and jointly in Leiden (Conference *Going Romance*). The Italian results were first published, in Italian, as part of the Symposium's proceedings (Giusti, Zanoli 2022). This publication constitutes the first time the results are published in English. Additionally, compared to Giusti and Zanoli (2022), the following key differences are to be highlighted: the background and related work are presented in a substantially different manner; the statistical analysis of the results has been expanded; the overall argumentative structure has been adapted to the goals of this publication. My gratitude goes out to Giuliana Giusti for her continued support and her significant contribution to this study, and to Thom Westveer and Petra Sleeman for the collaboration that made this research possible. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for insightful comments on an earlier version of this contribution. Any remaining errors are my own.

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**20** Zanoli, E. (2019). *How Society Shapes Language: A Study of Gender Mismatches in Partitive Constructions in Italian* [unpublished BA Thesis]. Venice: Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

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