

**Bulletin of the Society for Italian Studies**  
*a journal for teachers of Italian in higher education*

Edited by

**Mark Chu**  
**Penny Morris**  
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## Editorial

This edition of the *Bulletin* opens with a commemoration of Francesca Gibson, who died in April 1999 at the age of 39. The obituary by her colleague in Lancaster, Michela Masci, also contains an invitation to members to contribute to the memorial fund set up as a lasting tribute to Francesca.

The *Bulletin*, published – as in the previous two years – on the Internet and in a limited print run, retains its traditional format for the current edition. Four articles address a wide range of topics: Bill Brierley surveys the recent, far-reaching reforms to the Italian university system; Donatella de Ferra contributes an interview with the writer Francesca Duranti conducted in the spring of 1999; Dorothy Glenn's article on Ungaretti examines the treatment of the theme of time in the poet's *Prime*; and finally, Clive Griffiths and Jennifer Martin share their experience of examining and assessing in an ERASMUS exchange programme. Several extensive conference reports attest to research vitality in Italian studies and strong links between Italianists and colleagues in a variety of other disciplines.

Adalgisa Giorgio has once again produced for the *Bulletin* a full list of 'Forthcoming Events'. Inevitably, some of the events have passed in the period between submission and distribution, so we urge all event organizers to send details not only to Adalgisa, but also to Phil Cooke (p.e.cooke@strath.ac.uk) or Brian Richardson (B.F.Richardson@leeds.ac.uk), for inclusion in the online 'Events Diary', which – through Phil's and Brian's good offices – can be updated constantly. We also publish, as a complement to the list of forthcoming events, Howard Moss' call for papers for *Romance Studies*.

Due to changes in the editorial team this year, it was deemed impractical to proceed with the proposed creation of an updateable 'Research and Publications' web page to replace the sections dedicated to 'Staff Research Interests' and 'Works of Italian Interest Published' referred to in Jonathan Dunnage's 1999 Editorial, and these appear separately as in the past, prepared by Simon Gilson and George Ferzoco respectively. It is intended, however, that a revised format for submissions and information retrieval be outlined at the forthcoming AGM.

The question of submissions – or the lack of them – for regular features, such as the Staff List (compiled by Simon Gilson and to be sent in the forthcoming mailing to all members) and the Chronicle, has prompted us to include in this edition deadlines and *recapiti*, in the hope that individual members and departments will let us have all their relevant information in good time for Number 34 (2001). These deadlines will also be circulated in the November mailing.

My thanks go to everyone who has been involved in putting together this edition of the *Bulletin*: to the authors, who have waited patiently and responded promptly; to Adalgisa Giorgio, George Ferzoco, and Phil Cooke and Brian Richardson, who quietly make their enormous annual contributions; to Karen Mulcahy of the Italian Department UCC for administrative assistance; and, of course, to my co-editors, Penny Morris and Simon Gilson for all their hard work. I would also like to thank Katia Pizzi for agreeing to come on board for the next three years.

Finally, I have the pleasure of extending a very warm welcome to Olivia, who joined the editorial team on 14 August 2000 at 7lb 5oz. *Congratulazioni a Penny e Antony!*

**Mark Chu**  
University College Cork

## Obituary

### Francesca Gibson (1960-1999)

Francesca Gibson, née Cerefice, was born and brought up in Rhyl. She was a keen hill-walker, reader, opera-goer and lover of cats, generous in her hospitality and a splendid exponent of Italian cooking. Francesca graduated in Italian and French at Reading University, where, in 1992, she obtained her doctorate for a thesis on the theme of exile in the early novels of Cesare Pavese. After teaching posts at Portsmouth and Reading University, she came to Lancaster University in 1989 as a lecturer in Italian Studies. In 1991 she married the late Dr Ralph Gibson, Reader in French History and principal of County College. Only a few years after nursing her husband, who died of cancer, she too was diagnosed with the disease in June 1998. Despite increasing suffering, she fought the disease for nearly a year, with a mixture of courage, strength and amazing good humour. Sadly Francesca was to lose her battle, and died on 19 April 1999, aged only 39. She was due to be married to her partner Nigel the following day.

Notwithstanding her difficult personal circumstances, Francesca published a number of articles on Pavese and on other post-war Italian writers, including her contribution on 'Moravia, Vittorini, Pavese, Calvino: Fascism, Allegory, Humanism', in *Reconstructing the Past: Representations of the Fascist Era in Post-war European Culture* (Keele University Press, 1996), edited by Graham Bartram, Maurice Slawinski and David Steel. A posthumous article on 'Pavese's Women' has been edited by her colleague at Lancaster, Maurice Slawinski, and appears in the most recent issue of *New Comparison* (n. 26). This is based on a paper she gave to the 1994 SIS conference in Malta. Its transformation into an article had been first interrupted by her husband's illness, and Francesca had only just returned to it when her own cancer was diagnosed.

Francesca's contributions to the University and to Italian Studies were valued immensely by both her colleagues and her students. As her colleagues, we will naturally keep her memory alive, but we would like to make a lasting tribute to her, which will benefit students of Italian for years to come. For this purpose we have started the Francesca Gibson Memorial Fund. We hope to be able to establish a studentship in Francesca's name, in order to help students of Italian purchase books or help with funding a study period in Italy. Should the memorial fund not be sufficient for this, we would consider an alternative memorial, such as buying Italian books for the library, planting a tree or placing a bench on campus.

If you wish to help us remember Francesca, please contact Michela Masci, Italian Studies, DELC, Lonsdale College, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YN; e-mail [m.masci@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:m.masci@lancaster.ac.uk)

**Michela Masci**  
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## Italian University Reform 1996-99

### Introduction

Since the 1960s, the university sector in Italy has grown massively in terms of student numbers, institutions, faculties and courses. Reforms of the organizational structure of the university system have, however, been few, limited in scope and rarely applied. In particular, the educational reforms introduced by education minister Ruberti (1989-92) had only limited effect and failed substantially to transform the system. (1) During the XIII Legislature (from 1996 onwards), however, first under Prime Minister Romano Prodi and education minister Luigi Berlinguer and subsequently under Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema and university minister Ortensio Zecchino and under-secretary Luciano Guerzoni, a more systematic attempt has been made to introduce a number of far-reaching reforms and finally implement the reforms proposed in the legislation passed in 1989-92. The most important of the recent laws and policy documents are law 127/97 (2) and the associated ministry report (Martinotti report, 1997) (3) and the relevant implementation instructions (*Note di indirizzo*, 1998; *Schema di regolamento*, 1999). (4)

In October 1996, a working party was set up by the Education Minister Berlinguer, chaired by Senator (and university professor) Guido Martinotti. The working party reported in October 1997 and the document was issued for consultation. The Martinotti report is in three parts: the first part explains the background to the reform proposals, the second lists the organizational principles according to which reform is to be undertaken, and the third advances a series of specific proposals for change. A review of this report will provide an introduction to the issues which the government is seeking to address. It is also instructive to examine the ways in which some of Martinotti's proposals were subsequently modified in practice.

### The Martinotti report

In the first section, the Martinotti report identifies the main problem with the university system as '*particolarismo universalistico*': in other words, the use of general abstract laws and norms for the pursuit of particular ends. The report cites as examples the misuse of the national appointments procedures, designed to ensure fairness and equality at a national level but subject to corporatist manipulation; or the system of freedom of access to universities, designed to provide equality of opportunity but resulting in massive imbalances and distortions in the student population. The report argues that not everything is wrong with the system and that there have been local examples of innovation and renewal, and in any case, all university systems are facing similar pressures (increasing numbers, declining resources) and there are no universal solutions. The report also recognizes that there are other reforms under way which need to be taken into account, such as the reform of the secondary education system, the needs of post-school vocational education and training, and the continuing learning needs of the adult population at large. The report does not propose a total redesign of the system, firstly because the system is too complex to tackle via legislation alone; secondly because interests are sufficiently well entrenched to be able to resist any attempt at innovation imposed by central government (any proposals for reform being rejected on the grounds that they represent a lowering of quality); and thirdly, because the process of autonomy which has already been set in motion has reduced the capacity to introduce reform from the centre. The report therefore suggests a series of partial reforms, which are nevertheless linked and have clearly defined objectives and time frames for implementation, rather than an organic reform of the system as a whole. Despite Martinotti's reservations about the ability of central government to impose reform, the subsequent implementation instructions issued by the ministry indicate a far

more interventionist stance than perhaps he thought possible, and which to some extent contradicts the supposed ethos of the reforms, which is to enhance university autonomy.

The second section of the Martinotti report outlines the organizational principles which are intended to inform the final proposals. These are:

- a new relationship between students and universities replacing the old passive, quasi fiscal relationship of *iscrizione* (registration) with a more formal (*contrattuale*) relationship seeing universities as communities in which students are active, adult participants and universities provide courses to clearly defined and transparent standards;
- greater diversity of university provision: the report accepts that direct competition among universities is not possible for a variety of social (including familial) reasons, but it does suggest that greater diversification could be achieved to allow students to make better choices of university course based on future occupational objectives, rather than just choosing the local university;
- greater diversity in the modes of study to include part-time study and lifelong learning and to eliminate the problem of students taking longer than the prescribed period to complete their courses (*fuori corso*);
- greater flexibility in the curriculum to facilitate the rapid approval of new course structures and content and provide more varied modes of delivery including the use of new technologies;
- mobility of human resources: the report is scathing in its denunciation of the rigidity of the current system and calls for much greater flexibility and mobility;
- a new system of certification or accreditation of university courses to gradually replace the 'once and for all' *a priori* recognition of the degree title with an *a posteriori* system of accreditation based on criteria such as the social and economic utility of the award title and the adequacy of resources to deliver it;
- adoption of a credit accumulation and transfer system to apply not only to the university sector but also to other forms of higher education and training, including work-based learning;
- greater support for 'bottom up' initiatives to replace 'top down' planning and control;
- a system of external evaluation both of institutions and individuals within the system;
- greater transparency in the management of the system to ensure that it is meeting the government's overall objectives.

The third section of the report details a number of specific proposals related to credit rating of courses, course structures, internal and external monitoring and evaluation, student support and guidance (*orientamento*), cooperation and competition between institutions, links with other European systems, and the collection of data the analysis of which will form the basis for further development of the system.

### *Credit rating*

The credit rating of university courses was already provided for by law no. 341 of 1990 but this has largely remained a dead letter. The Martinotti report now recommends the adoption of the European

Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as a replacement for the current system which divides courses into years (*annualità*) and hours. Martinotti believes the adoption of a credit system will deliver a number of benefits: more transparency in teaching loads and demands, and a shift of emphasis from teaching to learning; greater student mobility between courses and institutions; greater diversity in teaching methods, more appropriately tailored to the needs of a more differentiated student population; a more collegial approach to teaching among staff and between staff and students; more flexible course structures; opportunities for new relationships with public and private sector organizations especially in the provision of traineeships and/or work placements; and better articulation with institutions concerned with post-secondary vocational training. Martinotti also indicates that a credit accumulation system which is flexible enough to recognize learning carried out in professional and vocational contexts is an important constituent of lifelong learning.

### *Course structures*

The award titles allowed by the Italian university system are the *laurea* (undergraduate degree, usually four years long for most disciplines), the *diploma universitario* (university diploma of two or three years duration and often with a more specific vocational orientation, sometimes referred to as the *laurea breve*) and the *dottorato* or research degree. The latter qualifications were introduced by law 341/90 and further modified by law 127/97. These laws also allow for a two-year (120 credits) university certificate (*certificato universitario di base, c.u.b.*) which was intended as a common foundation programme which could stand on its own or be used as preparation for a number of subsequent degree programmes; and also a post-degree or post-diploma qualification with an element of professional specialization, of 60 credits (one year) and equivalent to a Masters degree in the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

The purpose behind the development of these new awards is at least in part to address the enormous wastage of the Italian university system. Sixty-five to seventy per cent of students who register for the first year subsequently fail to graduate and those who drop out are not entitled to any award or certificate. Martinotti proposes that the certificate, diploma and degree should be designed to allow continuity and progression but also exit points at the lower levels and curricula should be designed to allow able and diligent students to complete their course within the specified period. In order to facilitate this, Martinotti suggests that the system should provide tutorial support for students so that they make appropriate choices among a variety of articulated curricular possibilities. In summary, the report suggests a first year of foundation studies, common to a broad curricular area, and forming the basis of study which could lead to either a diploma (after one-two further years) or to a degree (after a further three years) and with a further possible exit point after one year with a university certificate. The degree structures which were finally to emerge as the ministry's preferred structures would be rather different (see below). What is perhaps significant about this part of the report is that there is no discussion of the new qualifications which emerged post-1990 such as the university diploma. The qualification would become redundant if the curriculum ran in series with the existing proposed new degree structure, but the report does not address the issue of those diplomas which run in parallel with the degree, offering a more vocational orientation.

Courses should be described in terms of credits, 60 for each academic year or 30 for each semester, which may be accumulated at a slower rate by part-time students. Universities should also make provision for the recognition and accreditation of prior learning. The report also specifies that intermediate and final assessments should be organized in such a way that students are not required to do more than three in any semester.

Ministerial control over university courses is reduced to that of ensuring that a certain number of criteria are met. These are that the course description should specify: a) the type of cultural and professional education it intends to provide; b) its duration and credit rating; c) its obligatory and

optional components (the obligatory components may not occupy more than half the curriculum, and of the optional components a minimum of 30 credits in a degree course and 20 credits in a diploma course may be chosen from any faculty); and d) any extramural requirements such as work placements.

All of these reforms are to be introduced gradually over a two to four year period but during the transitional period a proportion of the resources allocated to the university sector will be held back and directed towards those universities which have already adopted the reforms. Additional resources will also be allocated to universities which develop ways of ensuring that without lowering standards courses are designed so that students can complete them within the prescribed duration. This of course, begs the key question: how do you get students through the system within the prescribed period if they are not preselected and the school leaving exam is too easy? Martinotti is silent on this, though this is an issue on which the government was forced to take quick action (see below).

### *Monitoring and evaluation*

It is a fundamental principle of the law on university autonomy (no. 537/97) that there can be no autonomy without responsibility and no responsibility without evaluation. The report observes that some ninety percent of universities have evaluation procedures but that these are uneven and that overall the provisions for internal monitoring are unsatisfactory, especially in the areas of student satisfaction and the evaluation of the technical and administrative functions. The report is vague about what internal evaluation procedures and processes should be in place, and also about how these should link with external monitoring, except to say that each university should agree a system with the ministry. The issue of external evaluation is not addressed either in the report or in the subsequent implementation instructions.

### *Student support and guidance*

The report addresses a wide range of issues which relate to the support provided for students before, during and beyond their university studies (*orientamento*) including accurate and useful information to school pupils about alternative post-secondary educational opportunities, academic and personal tutorial support for students at university, general cultural and social awareness and citizenship, development of the student as an autonomous learner, and preparation for the world of work. Again, the report does not propose a blueprint about how this is to be achieved, but rather lists a number of criteria which universities should address in developing their own systems:

- new courses and methods of delivery should take account not only of the demands of the discipline and the research interests of staff but also of the characteristics of the student body (aspirations, motivation, existing knowledge and abilities);
- course design should also take account of input from local, regional and national economic institutions and actors;
- course design should also take account of the needs of students for personal and professional development;
- faculties should define and periodically review their standards of quality and their teaching and educational aims and objectives;
- universities should establish objectives relating to the personal and professional development of students and regularly review the ways in which these objectives are met;

- universities should enhance the transition to the world of work (though this is largely seen as being through the removal of institutional inhibitors rather than the provision of enhanced support);
- universities should introduce self-regulatory codes of practice to avoid or eliminate malpractice in marketing or competition;
- all of these activities imply a significant shift in the definition of the role of the academic staff to include not only the traditional responsibilities of teaching and research but also a much greater involvement in administration (course design, quality assurance and enhancement) and also tutorial support and guidance.

### *Cooperation and competition*

Martinotti affirms that if universities fully embrace the responsibilities and opportunities provided by institutional autonomy this can and must lead to both competitive differentiation and regional cooperation between universities. Competitive differentiation may however not require a radical overhaul of each university's range of courses but simply better information about the current provision and better articulation of university provision with other providers of tertiary education and training. Martinotti also recommends greater regional cooperation between institutions but this need not happen exclusively within the existing regional framework (the Italian regions are responsible for managing some aspects of the right to access to universities (*diritto allo studio*)); the system is to be extended to allow and encourage direct contacts between university vice-chancellors (*rettori*) and/or deans of faculty (*presidi*) on the one hand and representatives of the local (economic) communities on the other. The thrust behind these proposals (though this is not explicit in the report) seems at least in part to be to try to address the problem of overcrowding in some universities: Italy has 46 public universities (with a further thirty-five subsidiary colleges or *sedi distaccate* in other towns) and 1.6 million students but eighty percent of students are concentrated in eight universities. (5)

### *Links with other European systems*

Martinotti reinforces the point that all the reforms being proposed are linked with developments currently taking place in all major systems of higher education not only in Europe but across the world.

### *The further development of the system*

Martinotti calls for the monitoring of a number of system indicators in order that Italy's post-secondary educational provision can be planned to meet the country's employment needs. Employment trends should be monitored so that both overeducation and undereducation can be eliminated. The occupations of students who drop out of the system should be monitored to identify gaps and further training needs. Non-university post-secondary training needs to be developed and should also include continuing vocational training needs and this should also include in-house company training schemes.

### **The university reforms in context**

It is difficult to underestimate the scale of the challenges posed by the Martinotti report and indeed in the process of their implementation a number of modifications have been introduced (rather in the same way that the recommendations of the Dearing Report on the UK university sector were

subsequently modified for implementation by the Labour government). It is instructive to examine the ways in which changes have been introduced.

### *Credit rating*

The difficulties associated with the introduction of a credit-rating system are illustrated by the guidelines (*Nota di indirizzo*) sent by the ministry to the vice chancellors in June 1998 advising them on the implementation of the reforms. One section of the circular advises on the implementation of the credit accumulation and transfer system. Universities are advised that 1 credit is to represent 30 hours of learning, and that one year of a course would equate to 60 credits and 1800 hours of learning. Simple arithmetic tells us that this requires Italian students to spend 36 hours per week for 50 weeks of the year (or 60 hours a week for a more typical 30-week academic year) to accumulate the annual credit target. Universities are further advised that in order to implement the credit system it is sufficient simply to allocate 60 credits per year to existing courses and to divide the total for the year by the number of subjects to be studied to derive the credit weighting of each subject. This is entirely in line with guidance provided by the European Commission on the implementation of ECTS which suggests that 'credits are a relative rather than absolute measure of student workload' and that 'credits should be allocated on a top-down basis. The starting point should be the full programme structure and the normal pattern of courses a student would have to take in an academic year to complete the qualification in the official length of study'. (6) However, this would defeat the prime purpose for introducing credits, which is to reduce the real length of courses to coincide with their legal length. As the figures suggest, this cannot be achieved without first tackling the real problem, which is the apparent overload of the curriculum. The ministry identifies subject groupings (*macro-aree*, of which there will be five: health; science and technology; humanities; law, economics and social science; and engineering and architecture), which will be the subject of further guidelines at a later date. This unfortunately provides precisely the loophole that universities have exploited in the past. Universities will defend the academic content of their courses on the grounds that to reduce it would be inevitably to lower standards – and it would be a brave (or foolhardy) university that was the first to break ranks.

The ministry has in fact already begun to modify its advice to universities on the credit-rating of courses. According to the new regulations issued after consultation with the *Consiglio Universitario Nazionale* (CUN) and the *Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane* (CRUI) in May 1999, (7) the value of one credit is 25 hours of study, or 1500 hours of study for 60 credits (still 50 hours per week over a traditional 30-week academic year). But even here, subject areas are allowed to vary this credit-rating by twenty percent.

If the curriculum is already crowded and to reduce it would be to lower academic standards, this is an equally powerful argument to resist some of the other proposed curricular reforms (the right of students to study electives from outside their main discipline of study, foreign language tuition and IT training for all students etc).

### *Course structures*

The ministry circular also reminds universities of curricular reforms which have been possible since 1990 (law 341/90) but which have not been taken advantage of: the possibility for students to follow a common foundation course as a preparation for a range of degrees across subject areas; the possibility that students who have acquired sufficient credit to graduate before completing the prescribed period of study; allowing students to register for dual awards; the introduction of work placements and also of student support systems. The universities are also reminded that the ministry is committed to announcing its decision on all curriculum reform proposals within sixty days.

The ministry circular anticipates that one obstacle to the introduction of these reforms will be the lack of flexibility in the academic staff but it reminds universities that they have the power (under law 341/90) to require academic staff to engage in teaching innovation, student support and guidance, and diversification of academic programmes as well as their traditional roles in teaching and research. To this end, the universities have the power to set up any managerial or decision-making structures they see fit and are not constrained within traditional structures. It is difficult to see how this could be operationalized, however, given the highly democratic nature of the academic management structure – chairs of boards of studies, deans of faculties and vice-chancellors are all elected to their fixed term positions. It would be impossible for elected officers to introduce the sort of managerial changes which are allowed under the law.

The course structures finally agreed between the ministry and CRUI are a degree (*laurea*) – intended as the basic qualification for entry at a professional level on the labour market – and a specialized degree (*laurea specialistica*) – providing more advanced professional education. Universities may also award diplomas of specialization (*diploma di specializzazione*) and 60-credit Masters degrees, and research doctorates (*dottorato di ricerca*). The degree is three years in length (180 credits), and may be followed by a specialized degree of a further 120 credits. The diploma of specialization requires a further 120-180 credits (depending on the discipline) after the degree. The existing two-year university diploma is to be credit-rated and the credits recognized towards the award of the degree. The university diploma and other experimental degree structures introduced between 1997 and 1999 are effectively discontinued.

The commentary on the implementation guidelines (8) makes it clear that specialist, post-secondary, higher courses are to be limited in future to courses specifically required by the application of Italian or EU law or regulations. Such provision is normally to be made via the post-degree specialization courses. The thrust of these reforms appears to be to separate academic and vocational education in the post-18 sector, leaving the universities to concentrate on the academic provision. The reform of post-secondary vocational training is the subject of further legislation and is outside the scope of this article.

The ministry circular also prescribes the types of activities to be included in all degree courses:

- subjects related to basic (foundation) study;
- subjects related to further (discipline-related) study;
- subjects of an interdisciplinary or contextualizing nature;
- subjects chosen independently by the student;
- preparation for the final exam and (for the degree) a foreign language (the final dissertation is a requirement of the specialized degree, but not of the degree);
- further electives not covered by the previous categories and more specifically vocationally oriented.

No more than 2/3 of the credits may be assigned to compulsory subjects; and such compulsory activities are further constrained: activities (a)-(c) must occupy not less than 10 percent and not more than 50 percent of the curriculum; activities (d)-(f) must occupy not less than 5 percent and not more than 20 percent of the curriculum.

This very tight specification of course structures appears to contradict the notion of university autonomy and also Martinotti's fears about the difficulty of imposing reform from the centre. The

Italian system has always been heavily centralized, and the ministry seems as reluctant to release control as the universities are to embrace autonomy.

### **Numero chiuso, numero aperto**

**There has been considerable debate in Italy in recent years about the capping of student numbers in certain disciplines (the so-called *numero chiuso*) leading to the referral of the matter to the Constitutional Court in December 1998. The decision of the Court was that although it was legal for the government and the ministry to limit access to university places, it could only do so if there existed a legal framework which set out the criteria by which student numbers could be capped – but the government had failed to introduce the necessary legislation to define these criteria. (9) The bill (*disegno di legge*) was finally introduced in May 1999 which allowed the government to control access to courses, especially those which required a period of training (such as medicine, veterinary science, architecture and education), other specialist courses and new courses being offered for the first time. The ministry (and not the individual universities, as was previously the case) will set the number of places open on such courses (*numero aperto*) in relation to the ability of the sector to cope (numbers of academic and support staff, available laboratory space and classrooms, etc.). In determining the criteria, the minister explicitly rejected other criteria suggested by fellow ministers, such as the needs of the labour market (for example for trained personnel in the health service). (10) When finally approved (July 1999), the law also provided an amnesty for students who had registered illegally for such courses and had appealed against the restrictions. (11)**

From 1999/2000, the system of calculating marks for the school leaving certificate (*maturità*) will change. From now onwards, marks will be awarded out of 100 instead of 60, with the pass mark set at 60. Students who obtain 70 or above will be entitled to means-tested grants, subsidized university accommodation and fees exemptions. (12) This is a further modification of the student support system begun in 1997 aimed at increasing student mobility within the system and weakening the links between universities and their local markets.

### **Conclusion**

The objectives for the government, set out by under-secretary Guerzoni at a conference in Bologna in June 1999, (13) are:

- 1) a gradual reduction in the drop-out rate and in the number of students who are unable to complete their studies within the prescribed time limits;
- 2) a fall in the average age of graduates and a rise in the number of graduates;
- 3) improved employability for holders of university qualifications (degrees and diplomas);
- 4) the same opportunities on the domestic and international labour market for young Italians as compared with their contemporaries in other European countries.

The programme of university reforms is far more radical and consistent and the guidance on implementation provided to universities far more detailed than hitherto. Nevertheless, the transition from a highly regulated and centrally-controlled system to a diversified and devolved system is not

one which will occur painlessly or overnight. The government's objectives may be undermined precisely by the institutional autonomy which was intended to engender competition and stimulate the system to bring about reform but which could be used perversely to resist change by claiming to defend standards. The elective nature of senior management positions in universities is a further institutional barrier to reform. In the debate over access, the government has explicitly rejected market needs as one of the criteria for setting student targets and has thereby rejected one of the mechanisms it could have used in encouraging the sector to serve the needs of the economy as a whole.

The target for implementation set by the government implies that the universities will have eighteen months in which to redefine their courses and syllabuses in time for the reform to be enacted in the 2000-2001 academic year. The scale of the university reform is ambitious but each of the perceived weaknesses is addressed systematically, even if there are still some loopholes which reluctant universities could exploit. However, the scope of the reforms and the timescale for their implementation imply a revolution on a scale never before witnessed in the sector and a commitment on the part of the universities to abandon deeply-rooted traditions and working practices. Whether such commitment exists remains to be seen.

#### NOTES

- (1) For a summary of these laws and a fuller discussion of the context see William Brierley, 'Italy: a corporation in control of a system in collapse', in *Managing the Academic Profession: International Perspectives*, edited by David Farnham (Buckingham, Open University Press, 1999), pp. 139-157, especially pp. 147-8.
- (2). Legge 15 maggio 1997, n. 127, Misure urgenti per lo snellimento dell'attività amministrativa e dei procedimenti di decisione e di controllo, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, n. 113, 17 maggio 1997 – supplemento ordinario. Art. 17.
- (3). MURST, Autonomia didattica e innovazione dei corsi di studio di livello universitario e post-universitario, 21/10/97: <http://www.murst.it/progprop/autonomi/auton.htm> [01/01/99].
- (4). MURST, Legge 15 maggio 1997, n. 127, Autonomia Didattica: Nota di indirizzo, 16/6/98: <http://www.murst.it/atti/1998/no0616.htm> [01/01/99]; MURST, Schema della 2<sup>a</sup> nota di indirizzo sull'autonomia didattica, 18/9/98: <http://www.murst.it/atti/1998/no0917b1.htm> [01/01/99]; MURST, Schema di Regolamento in Materia di Autonomia Didattica degli Atenei. Issued 28 May 1999: <http://www.murst.it/regolame/1999/adqart1.htm> [04/08/99].
- (5). Brierley, op. cit., p 141, and CENSIS (Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali), *31<sup>o</sup> Rapporto sulla situazione sociale del paese* (Roma, Franco Angeli, 1997).
- (6). Commission of the European Union, European Credit Transfer System: Users' Guide, 31/3/98, pp. 4-5: <http://www.europa.eu.int/>.
- (7). MURST, Schema di regolamento in materia di autonomia didattica degli atenei. Issued 28 May 1999: <http://www.murst.it/regolame/1999/adqart1.htm> [04/08/99]. CUN is a committee of elected members of the academic community set up by law 341/90 to advise the ministry on university matters. CRUI has broader membership (all vice-chancellors) and a broader remit to discuss all matters of relevance to its members, not simply to advise the ministry.

- (8). MURST, Schema di regolamento in materia di autonomia didattica degli atenei. Relazione. Issued 28 May 1999: <http://www.murst.it/regolame/1999/adqrel1.htm> [04/08/99].
- (9). Sabina Minardi, 'Numero chiuso, scoppia la protesta degli studenti', *La Repubblica*, 3/12/98.
- (10). Claudia Morgoglione, 'Numero chiuso, sì alle nuove norme', *La Repubblica*, 7/5/99.
- (11). Anon, 'Numero chiuso, la Camera approva la sanatoria', *La Repubblica*, 29/7/99.
- (12). Sabina Minardi, 'Diritto allo studio, cambiano i punteggi', *La Repubblica*, 27/4/99.
- (13). Luciano Guerzoni, 'Higher Education Reforms in Italy'. Conference: The European Space for Higher Education, Bologna, June 18-19 1999: <http://www.murst.it/convegni/bologna99/Guerzoni/Guerzonieng.htm> [04/08/99].

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## Intervista con Francesca Duranti

At the University of Hull many subjects have a tradition of offering modules and courses in the areas of Gender Studies and Women's Studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Italian is among them, and while women writers are featured in a variety of modules, two modules currently concentrate exclusively on women and writing in Italy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As the lecturer responsible for the Contemporary Italian Women Writers module, I was very disappointed when Francesca Duranti's *La casa sul lago della luna* (1984), one of the most popular texts on my syllabus, disappeared from the Rizzoli catalogues. (1) By 1998 copies of the novel in Italian had become difficult to obtain. I began to consider the possibility of producing an annotated edition of the text for English speaking students, hoping that while the novel was out of print, and indeed when it was reissued, they would refrain from reading the very good English translation only. (2) In the early spring of 1999, after several contacts with Rizzoli and with the writer's agents, I wrote to Francesca Duranti and asked to meet her to discuss my project. (3) A few weeks later I was her guest at Villa Rossi outside Lucca. The interview took place shortly after I had arrived, while I was still rather awe-stricken by the sheer magnificence of the place, which has been described as 'the most imposing of the sixteenth-century country seats'. (4) I think, in retrospect, that it would have been better to leave the interview until after I had spent some time with Francesca Duranti and had the opportunity to appreciate her exquisite kindness and helpfulness, as well as her delicious cooking. Fortunately, Francesca Duranti is a wonderful speaker. (5) The interview covers some areas which she had previously discussed, such as the influence of Henry James on her own writing; it throws some further light on her attitude to the choice of different life styles; and it uncovers some uncharted territory, in particular concerning her technique in writing.

The conversation carried on into the evening, after I had had a tour of the park and of the estate, accompanied by Francesca and her menagerie of cats and dogs, during which I recognised settings from *La bambina* and *Lieto fine*. The salons of the villa have spectacular frescoes, but I was particularly impressed with the library which houses Paolo Rossi's books and the fullest collection of recordings of Mozart operas I have ever encountered. The high point of my visit came, however, very early the following morning, when I found myself reading *Progetto Burlamacchi* on the wide portico overlooking the sloping gardens which had once belonged to Francesco Burlamacchi, the resident ghost.

I have transcribed the interview as I recorded it, and without later additions. The only omission is the sound of the hedge cutter brandished outside the windows by Francesca's much-praised caretaker.

\* \* \*

Gattaiola, 7 maggio 1999.

Donatella de Ferra: Vorrei cominciare col farLe qualche domanda sull'autobiografia e su come si inserisce nei suoi romanzi. I lettori e, nel caso specifico, le lettrici sono sempre molto avidi di materiale autobiografico, di storie vere. *Ultima stesura* rende chiaro che per Lei il posizionamento è molto importante. Cosa viene prima in ordine d'importanza, e in ordine cronologico, quando scrive un libro?

Francesca Duranti: Il disegno, proprio il disegno, il piano. Il disegno non saprei come definirlo: come diceva Henry James, *the figure in the carpet*, quella cosa che tiene insieme le varie piccole storie che compongono la grande storia, quella è la cosa prima.

DdF: E quello comincia dalla sua vita personale?

FD: Comincia da qualcosa che capita. Mi può capitare anche di vedere un brutto film e da quello immaginare una cosa tutta diversa, ma che mi è stata messa in moto da qualcosa che ho visto lì dentro o da un nome che sento, o da un posto che vedo, o da qualcosa che capita a me, o da qualcosa che è capitata a un amico: non necessariamente autobiografia ma in qualche modo biografia.

DdF: E cosa Le fa scegliere di adottare un particolare punto di vista nella storia?

FD: Quello è molto difficile, tanto è vero che la scelta è faticosa e lunga. Perché la prima stesura di regola la scrivo in prima persona, perché è un bel punto di vista la prima persona ed è generalmente una prima persona di un personaggio non fondamentale nella storia, un osservatore.

DdF: Ha fatto questo anche per *La bambina*, che poi è in terza persona?

FD: No, *La bambina* è andata direttamente in terza persona. *La bambina* è un caso a parte. *La bambina* si è scritto da sé. Io qua sto parlando di professione; *La bambina* non era ancora professione, era una prima cosa. Normalmente scelgo una prima persona e questa prima persona è un personaggio non fondamentale nella storia, un puro osservatore, che è un po' quello che è venuto fuori in *Lieto fine*, in parte, se Lei se lo ricorda. Poi dopo mi accorgo che la prima persona, soprattutto quella di un osservatore un po' estraneo che è molto *chic*, la cosa in sé mi piace molto, però preclude una serie di fatti, perché questi fatti, questa persona non li può vedere. Quello che succede nelle camere da letto lui non lo vede, quello che succede nell'intimo della coscienza di un altro lui non lo vede. Finisce poi che non è possibile, e quindi l'abbandono, vado a finire alla terza persona, o alla prima persona, però del protagonista. Oppure, come nel caso di *Lieto fine*, a una prima persona che ogni tanto sparisce, e si va alla terza persona. Perché quando lui è nella torre e ha la sua funzione di osservatore, allora lui parla in prima persona. Al momento in cui lui si mescola, non è più nella torre, o non c'è, oppure è mescolato agli altri, allora si passa alla terza persona. Perché allora lui non è più sul punto di osservazione, allora non ha più diritto ad essere lui, diciamo, in prima persona. Quindi diciamo che ci arrivo molto faticosamente al punto di vista, perché è sempre qualcosa di fondamentale, sempre qualcosa che dà totalmente l'impronta al libro e quindi è molto delicato, molto difficile per me.

DdF: Visto che stiamo parlando di scrittura ne approfitto per farLe domande su un tema a cui Lei si riferisce spesso e cioè quello dell'opposizione tra la vita e la scrittura, il dilemma della scelta tra vivere e scrivere. È una preoccupazione che troviamo anche in tanti altri autori, in poeti, poeti di cui Lei ha parlato anche, direttamente o indirettamente, come Montale, Gozzano, Henry James di cui ha parlato molto...

FD: Molto, sì. Diciamo che il fatto è questo: che la vita è come la materia prima dello scrivere, l'alimento della scrittura, e tuttavia la vita non significa niente, non fa romanzo, non è romanzo ed ha la necessità di essere manipolata per diventare romanzo. Manipolata, secondo me, freddamente e quindi stando fuori dalla vita. Quindi c'è questa necessità di stare dentro e fuori contemporaneamente che è proprio, secondo me, la condanna dello scrittore che deve imporre a se stesso questa schizofrenia di essere totalmente tuffato dentro e totalmente invece messo fuori.

DdF: Un rapporto molto complesso dunque. Nei suoi romanzi poi si viene a creare un altro rapporto assai complesso, cioè quello tra il lettore e il personaggio che viene presentato dall'interno e dall'esterno. Fabrizio, per esempio, ne *La casa sul lago della luna*, è un personaggio molto irritante sotto certi punti di vista, eppure non si può fare a meno di provare simpatia per lui, proviamo simpatia per le sue insofferenze verso la civiltà contemporanea, per esempio.

FD: Certo, io le condivido oltretutto queste sue insofferenze.

DdF: E non si possono non condividere, ma mi sembra paradossalmente che sia più facile simpatizzare con lui che con Fulvia. Mi sembra che Fulvia sia una donna ideale dal punto di vista delle donne, la donna che forse vorremmo essere...

FD: Forse è vero, e poi soprattutto ha questa specie di invincibile concretezza dalla quale lui è costretto poi a fuggire, perché lo mette in difficoltà, insomma. Diciamo che è vero che le donne così come sono adesso fanno un po' paura agli uomini e che una delle ragioni di questa generale impotenza, impotenza naturalmente non necessariamente fisica, da cui sono presi gli uomini contemporanei, deriva anche un po' da questo: siamo fin troppo forti, ecco. Non lasciamo spazio alla debolezza anche perché l'abbiamo dovuto lasciare per tanti di quei secoli che non ne abbiamo più voglia, quindi siamo meno simpatiche.

DdF: Certo, nell'ambito del romanzo è più facile provare simpatia per Fabrizio. Fabrizio è un personaggio tragico perché non si rende conto di quello che gli sta succedendo. Al contrario di Amleto, che mi sembra abbia una certa chiarezza, che si rende conto che la scelta è tra l'essere e il non essere, Fabrizio invece fino alla fine non lo sa.

FD: Non lo sa perché in realtà quello che sa è soltanto negativo, lui sa solo, e qua mi sembra che si ritorni di nuovo a Montale, lui sa solo quello che non vuole essere, ma non sa quello che vuole essere.

DdF: Montale è un poeta che ritrovo spesso nei Suoi romanzi, ma rappresenta un po' un'eccezione tra gli autori a cui si riferisce in quanto è un poeta italiano. Lei ha parlato diverse volte della Sua cultura letteraria come di una cultura che non è proprio italiana, che non si rifà esclusivamente alla tradizione italiana.

FD: No, io ho imparato il tedesco prima dell'italiano, poi lo ho in qualche modo rifiutato, nel senso che per me il tedesco era proprio la lingua della mia separazione da mia madre. Avevo queste signorine che erano per lo più antipatiche, avevo la certezza che erano state messe lì non tanto perché io imparassi il tedesco quanto perché io non affliggessi la vita di mia madre, come purtroppo i bambini affliggono le vite dei genitori. E quindi c'era da un lato una grande disinvoltura con questa lingua che conoscevo bene, e dall'altro una grande antipatia. Per esempio, io adesso raramente scelgo di leggere un libro in tedesco: ho fatto qualche traduzione ma non ho nessunissimo piacere nel leggere in tedesco, nell'andare a vedere un film tedesco, c'è qualche cosa che non funziona tra noi.

DdF: Fabrizio è immerso nella letteratura tedesca, è un traduttore di libri tedeschi, però mi sembra che legga male, legge senza spirito critico. E al tempo stesso viene influenzato, mi sembra, molto profondamente da quello che legge...

FD: Questo non ci ho mai pensato, se leggeva male. Per esempio, quando lo vede Lei che legge male?

DdF: Certo, quando lo dice lui stesso, quando parla di aver letto Chamisso e riconosce che aveva tradotto, ma non aveva capito che certi patti vanno sempre a finire male.

FD: In un certo senso sì, aveva letto male, o perlomeno non l'aveva riferito a se stesso. Legge male nel senso che rimane nel mondo della letteratura – non, cioè, la letteratura come scuola dei sentimenti, come scuola della vita. Lui invece non la prende in questo modo. Letteratura per lui è qualcosa che sta al di fuori, è una biblioteca della quale lui si circonda, che serve, come nel quadro di San Girolamo, per tenerlo separato dal mondo, non per collegarlo al mondo.

DdF: Mi sembra che sia molto influenzato da questi autori che traduce, ma senza rendersene conto.

FD: Sì, viene influenzato involontariamente, ma viene influenzato tutto teoricamente. Quindi lui non è in contatto con la vita.

DdF: La sua idea sulle donne, su come dovrebbero essere le donne, gli deriva da Fontane? Gli deriva da Doebelin?

FD: No, non credo a queste cose. Credo che gli derivi dalla propria impotenza e debolezza. Per lui una donna deve essere qualcosa di più debole di lui. Qualche cosa a cui lui si può imporre, per lui il rapporto tra lui e la donna è sempre un rapporto vagamente di stupro, c'è poco da fare.

DdF: Per quello gli piacciono le donne con i legacci, con i tiranti.

FD: Certo, le donne che in fondo non vogliono, che sono in condizione d'imbarazzo...

DdF: Quello che lui ammira nella famiglia di Fulvia, non può accettarlo in Fulvia, la capacità di vivere che a lui manca.

FD: Certo, lui si trova davanti a questa famiglia forte, a cui anche lei fa parte di buon diritto, perché anche lei è forte. Lo deprime da un punto di vista sessuale, in un certo senso.

DdF: Signora Duranti, il Suo lettore ideale com'è? Come vuole che leggiamo i suoi romanzi?

FD: Intelligente, paziente, non necessariamente coltissimo, perché se anche non riconosce che c'è una citazione di Amleto non ha nessunissima importanza. Perché tanto la frase va bene lo stesso, anche se non si sa da dove viene; quindi non mi interessa che venga riconosciuta. Però, però sottile, insomma, ecco, con un *esprit de finesse*, ecco.

DdF: E se i lettori interpretano i Suoi romanzi in modo che non aveva anticipato, va bene lo stesso?

FD: Certe volte, anzi, scopro delle cose che mi convincono e che io... non ci avevo pensato per niente.

DdF: Parla anche della difficoltà di essere genitori, forse non tanto ne *La casa sul lago della luna*.

FD: Piuttosto in *Lieto fine*, in altri, sì.

DdF: Ne *La casa sul lago della luna* il personaggio della madre mi sembra l'unico personaggio interamente negativo.

FD: Negativo, sì: egoista, viziata. È un po' l'emblema della donna alto borghese che ormai è andata fuori corso praticamente. In sostanza l'animale più inutile che ci sia sulla terra. Più inutile del proprio compagno, perché il suo compagno faceva i soldi. Non in questo caso il suo compagno particolare, perché il padre di Fabrizio li ha finiti invece i soldi. Ma diciamo, insomma, gli uomini dell'alta borghesia hanno fondato le industrie, hanno fatto lavorare gli operai, eccetera. Le donne del popolo hanno lavato i panni e cucinato le cene. Le donne borghesi non hanno fatto né l'uno né l'altro, si sono limitate a farsi servire.

DdF: Anche verso i figli ha una funzione proprio negativa, è lei che è associata con il glicine, con la pianta volubile che ti strangola.

FD: Certo, lei ha questa funzione sostanzialmente negativa, perché una creatura così vicina come una madre che non rappresenta un modello è negativa anche semplicemente per passività. Non è necessario che sia malvagia, insomma, basta che sia nulla, è già troppo poco.

DdF: Però Lei parla anche, e pensavo ad *Effetti personali*, della difficoltà di essere genitori.

FD: In *Effetti personali* veramente, la madre di Valentina è proprio un caso un po' particolare, nella storia perlomeno dell'Italia, ma credo anche di tutto il mondo occidentale. È quella alla quale tutto in fondo è andato bene, che fino che erano dentro a un matrimonio tradizionale ci stavano abbastanza allegramente perché era quello che pensavano che dovesse essere la vita. Quando la cosa si è rotta, si è rotta al momento giusto per avere attorno a sé la solidarietà di tutto il mondo, di tutte le altre donne e questa specie di grande sollevamento generale delle donne occidentali che hanno imparato a star sole. E le è andato bene anche questo, perché era il momento giusto. Poi in fondo è riuscita anche a trovare un altro compagno che andava bene anche quello, che la venera, che la ama. E questo è un po' quello che una certa generazione di donne ha avuto: cioè la felicità nel matrimonio e la felicità fuori dal matrimonio e la felicità nel successivo matrimonio. Cioè nel primo matrimonio tradizionale, felicità a suo modo, poi grande libertà e grande ritrovamento di se stessa fuori dal matrimonio e finalmente un altro patto diverso che non è più il primo ma una cosa completamente diversa e che in fondo va bene anche quello. Le figlie di questa generazione invece... È difficile per le figlie, perché le figlie non hanno avuto lo stimolo, lo stimolo fisiologico per una persona a crescere, che è l'opposizione ai genitori. Cioè lo stimolo lo hanno avuto, ma quello stimolo fisiologico che è rappresentato dall'opposizione proprio ai genitori, dal fare diverso dai genitori, le ha rimandate indietro; perché di fronte a una madre con la permanente afro, con i gonnelloni zingareschi, che è contenta, felice, che va a fare l'autocoscienza, che brucia il reggipetto, una figlia non può differenziarsi altro che diventando la schiava del marito.

DdF: E quindi c'è questo riflusso.

FD: Quindi c'è questo riflusso, che è terribilmente negativo perché avviene in un periodo in cui non viene più considerato come un destino naturale quello di essere trattata male da un marito. Perché si sa che non è più così, non fosse altro che per un confronto con la madre, e quindi è disastroso. Quindi la generazione di quell'età lì ha avuto delle gatte da pelare non indifferenti.

DdF: Non è quindi colpa delle madri che non hanno saputo parlare alle figlie, o della struttura della nostra società. Lei pensa piuttosto che ogni generazione ha bisogno di ribellarsi.

FD: No, io non credo nelle colpe, sono fatti che sono andati così insomma.

DdF: Nei Suoi libri io trovo sempre una forte opposizione al dualismo, un invito alla tolleranza verso modi di essere diversi. Come si possono educare i giovani alla tolleranza? Mi sembra che il dualismo sia talmente fondamentale nel pensiero occidentale.

FD: È vero: la cosa più difficile è riuscire ad educare, questo è il punto, ad educare alla tolleranza senza scaricare la molla dell'impegno. Quella è la cosa veramente difficile. Mio padre, per esempio, mi ha veramente educata alla tolleranza. Mio padre era un uomo di una generazione in cui gli uomini stavano pochissimo con i loro figli, e quando io ero piccola lui era perseguitato dal fascismo, era ricercato dai tedeschi, spesso stava con i partigiani, quindi proprio lo vedevo anche poco. Però io ricordo benissimo la sua lezione in tante piccole cose, cose minime in cui mi presentava sempre, ogni volta in cui io gli chiedevo di spiegarmi qualcosa, me la presentava sempre

da un lato e poi dall'altro lato, tutte e due le volte parlandone nel modo migliore possibile, secondo l'unica convinzione sua profonda che era quella della logica. C'è questa logica, e poi c'è anche questa logica, tu puoi scegliere, vedi un po'...

DdF: Lei parlava, ricordo, di tutti i libri dei padri della chiesa...

FD: Sì, adesso glieli farò vedere, sono ancora lì. Quindi questa cosa qui, che viene ancora prima della tolleranza – perché la tolleranza vuol dire: io so di aver ragione, però ti lascio sbagliare, senza fare la pulizia etnica, senza mandarti alla forca – è qualcosa di più. È la convinzione che a qualunque decisione e a qualunque scelta ideologica, chiamiamola così, si giunge attraverso un percorso che è in gran parte casuale. E che quindi non esiste il percorso giusto in assoluto. Però il punto è questo: esiste il percorso giusto per noi, per ciascuno di noi. Ed è su quello che si fonda la responsabilità: sul fatto di dire tu hai il tuo percorso e hai la tua idea e va benissimo, io ho il mio percorso e la mia idea è un'altra, io devo agire così. Allora qui viene fuori il *devo*: io devo agire conformemente al mio pensiero, ma devo anche rispettare il tuo. È molto difficile questo.

DdF: Pensavo di nuovo a *La casa sul lago della luna*, dove Fabrizio, verso la fine, forse si rende conto di come stanno le cose, ma è troppo tardi. C'è un'idea del troppo tardi, allora, un punto dopo il quale non si riesce più a tornare indietro?

FD: Oh sì, senz'altro, credo di sì. Io sono molto positiva e anche reagisco moltissimo, anche alla depressione, per esempio, la sento sempre che aleggia, però reagisco fortemente allo scoraggiamento. Però io immagino un individuo che abbia avuto un percorso diverso dal mio, che abbia avuto delle esperienze diverse dalle mie, che a un certo punto possa non farcela più e dire: è troppo tardi, preferisco morire. Io lo capisco questo, lo capisco e non lo faccio.

DdF: L'altro, il doppio che ne *La casa sul lago della luna* sta fuori di Fabrizio, poi mi sembra che in *Sogni mancini* diventi un doppio interno.

FD: È un doppio interno, cioè l'altra possibilità interna, è il possibile se stesso mancino che è lì e che serve quindi proprio a ricordarci che noi siamo quello che siamo *per caso* ma potremmo essere un'altra cosa, potremmo essere il contrario.

DdF: *Sogni mancini* è un bellissimo titolo, un titolo molto seducente! Da dove Le è venuta l'idea di questa specie di caffettiera elettronica?

FD: Questo non me lo ricordo da dove è venuta fuori. Non saprei, forse perché io da poco ero in America quando ho cominciato a scrivere *Sogni mancini* e avevo comprato un nuovo computer, avevo comprato la nuova *answering machine*, ero veramente molto immersa nelle macchine, e poi ero da sola. Qui esiste questa figura meravigliosa dell'omino, quello che sa fare tutto. Qui poi abbiamo un fantastico uomo che si può chiamare un omino nel senso che attacca le tende, fa tutto: l'idraulico, l'elettricista. Questo in America non esiste, tutti sono specializzati, sanno fare male una cosa e tutto il resto non sanno fare niente. Io mi sono trovata in mezzo a tutte queste macchine la *coffee maker* che non andava, provare ad aggiustarla da sola... e quindi ho capito che avevo un

momento di difficoltà con le macchine e quindi può darsi che sia per quello che è venuta fuori questa macchina per i sogni.

DdF: Lei ha parlato del femminismo, ha detto che il femminismo è stata una fase molto importante della cultura italiana, però non si è mai dichiarata femminista. Eppure tante idee del femminismo io le ritrovo nei Suoi libri.

FD: Credo che il femminismo sia una questione politica e come ogni fatto politico non è vero o falso. È opportuno o non è opportuno a seconda dei momenti. Allora ci sono certe cose che a mio parere oggi non sono più opportune: come per esempio questo insistere tanto sullo specifico della scrittura femminile. La scrittura femminile abbiamo dovuto affermare che esisteva e adesso lo sappiamo. In Inghilterra lo si sapeva da sempre che esisteva la scrittura femminile, perché sono esistite da sempre le scrittrici, quindi non è questa gran scoperta. Abbiamo affermato che esisteva, siamo tutti contenti che esiste, le donne scrivono tranquillamente, nessuno glielo impedisce e a questo punto se anche è vero che esiste uno specifico della scrittura femminile, nel senso che certamente c'è un vissuto diverso in un libro scritto da una donna che in un libro scritto da un uomo.... Esistono altri specifici: la scrittura giovanile contrapposta alla scrittura dei vecchi o degli adulti, esiste la scrittura di un credente rispetto alla scrittura di un ateo. Non si fanno queste altre divisioni, non esiste un corso universitario per scrittura anziana o per scrittura giovanile, allora l'insistere su questo specifico della scrittura femminile.... C'è stato un momento in cui poteva essere utile proprio per la causa del femminismo in un primo momento, oggi forse non lo è più. Perché è come dare a noi stesse una specie di pista delle biciclette in cui corriamo tutte quante insieme, io preferisco correre con gli altri nella grande autostrada dove si cerca di andare più forte che si può, si cerca di battere gli uomini se possibile.

DdF: Allora facciamo male a insegnare corsi di letteratura che si occupano di scrittrici contemporanee?

FD: Secondo me lo dovete fare, ma sempre però ricordando questo: dicendo ricordatevi di questa cosa, ricordatevi che le differenze possono essere infinite. Non metteteci tanto la testa su questo perché in realtà potrebbe essere un errore.

DdF: Sbagliamo a incasellare allora perché questo può essere interpretato come 'queste sono scrittrici, valgono meno, le guardiamo lo stesso'.

FD: E secondo me fare un corso su scrittrici donne senza fare un paragone con scrittori non-donne è pericoloso. È come dire noi stiamo tra di noi e basta.

DdF: È ghettizzare.

FD: Sì, è dire: non ci possiamo misurare con quelli che sul serio fanno la letteratura.

## NOTES

- (1) Milan: Rizzoli, 1984. The novel was reprinted by Rizzoli in June 2000.
- (2) *The House on Moonlake*, translated by Stephen Sartarelli (London: Collins, 1987).
- (3) *La casa sul lago della luna*, with an introduction by D. de Ferra (Market Harborough: Troubador, 2000).
- (4) Harold Acton, *The Villas of Tuscany* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 202.
- (5) I wish to express my gratitude to Francesca Duranti for her kind hospitality. I am also thankful to Sharon Wood and Danielle Hipkins for their encouragement.

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## From war to peace? The temporal battlefield of ungaretti's *prime*

The *Prime* texts, dated 1919-1924, mark the transition from the war poetry of Ungaretti's first collection, *L'allegria*, to the peace-time verse of his second collection, *Sentimento del tempo*. The experience is fraught with difficulties for the poet – as for many of his generation – as he attempts to 'ritrovare un ordine', (1) both ideologic and poetic, which will allow him to confront a new set of circumstances for which his war-time experiences have left him totally unprepared. The intensity of war, with its moments of supreme harmony and ineffable poetic vision (ironic products of the trenches) which dictated the *Allegrian* order of things, has been replaced by a dull monotony where such moments are unknown and perhaps unknowable. The poet feels lost and directionless in this uncharted terrain, prey to an inner conflict (ironic product of peace-time) which will necessitate a new order better suited to the realities which now face him. The *Prime* texts are marked by a sense of loss and bewilderment as they lament the passing of an irretrievable 'allegria' while projecting forward into a terrifying future seemingly devoid of all moorings and markings. This article offers a study of these poems – often scantily dealt with by the critics – as they chart the poet's problematic transition from *L'allegria* to the *Sentimento del tempo*, from the atemporal and 'absolute' qualities of the one to the time-ridden and relative characteristics of the other. (2)

Subdivided into two identically named sections, each of seven texts, the *Prime* poems serve as both a conclusion to Ungaretti's first book of poetry and an introduction to his second. In this they indicate an ending and a new beginning which are ambivalently congruent (as implied in their shared heading) and opposite (as suggested in their opposing positional roles in the respective texts). They constitute an obvious link between the collections, straddling the divide and suggesting a certain continuity, (3) yet, at the same time, their own internal division represents the fracture or separation between the two books and the experiences which they embody, thereby marking the trajectory from one to the other as itself essentially an experience of schism. This apparent self-contradiction is very much in keeping with the poet's nascent temporal awareness, for such qualities are the attributes of time itself as that which both creates and destroys, unites and separates, equates and differentiates. (4)

The poems thus assume an ambivalent role as both the conduit between past and future and the marker of their separation. This ambivalence is further perpetuated in the opposing temporal tensions latent within the heading itself: on the one hand, its semantic force directs attention to the future, as does the poet in his gloss to the concluding part of *L'allegria*: 'Sono le poesie che indicano la nuova esperienza, dalla quale sta per nascere il *Sentimento del Tempo*' (*Tutte le poesie*, p. 526); on the other hand, the structure of the text balances this section against the equally paradoxically named first section, *Ultime*, thereby throwing attention towards the past. Both *Ultime* and *Prime* direct the reader to a poetic output beyond the confines of the book in question (of *Ultime* the poet writes 'Le ho intitolate *Ultime* perché sono le poesie dalle quali mi staccavo' (*Tutte le poesie*, p. 518)), yet viewed solely within their *Allegrian* context they appear to enclose the text in a temporal conundrum which moves from last to first, throwing into question the whole notion of chronological progression so precisely mapped out in the datings of the individual poems in the three central sections. (5) In a sense, then, temporal progression is cancelled by what is effectively a contraflow set up in the framework itself. Not only this, but the identification of end with beginning and beginning with end implies a circularity or completeness which means that the very headings which leave the text 'open' at both ends also paradoxically close it by turning it back on itself. (6) The flow of time is thus effectively staunched and the poetic experience becomes atemporal or absolute.

The atemporality which is one of the key distinguishing features of *L'allegria* is thus facilitated by the paradoxical naming of the first and last sections of the book. This is further reinforced in *Il porto sepolto*, arguably the key section of the book, which adopts a similar structural format, as it presents its four framing texts out of chronological sequence thereby leaving beginning and end more or less synchronic. (7) Hence, while ostensibly charting time's movement in the diaristic dating of its poems, the text effectively belies any notion of progression in its structure. The notion of development suggested by a temporal continuum is thus thrown into question, and time presents itself as self-contained, absolute and ultimately non-progressive. This allows attention to be focused on the individual, autonomous moment rather than on pure succession or duration, as time appears less a flow of consciousness or Becoming and more a homogenous medium in which successive states of consciousness exist independently and separately of each other, like the points of a line or like cinematographic images which appear to flow but which are individually static. (8)

The temporal consciousness of *L'allegria*, then, is predominantly a consciousness of the isolated moment – hardly surprising given that most of the texts were written at the front in circumstances where only the present moment counted. The war had brought the poet face to face with the absolute – ‘l'assoluto che era rappresentato dalla morte’ (9) – and his experience is therefore construed in absolute terms, divorced from any notion of ‘before’ or ‘after’ and hence from any concomitant sense of relativity. (10) The single moment becomes the sole measure of the poet's sense of Being and of his poetic vision, its absolute of intensity proportional to the momentariness of its extent: ‘Il poeta [...] ha avuto da costringere [...] nell'attimo d'un oggetto, l'eternità’ (‘Ragioni d'una poesia’ in *Tutte le poesie* p. LXXVII). Imbued with a maximum of poetic charge, the moment becomes the Eliotean moment rich with significance – though not in any religious sense – attaining a fullness and intensity of Being which projects its time into timelessness. (11) The paradox of this infinite moment, whose totality and perfection are entirely at odds with temporal progression and limits, is reflected in the paradox of the circle, self-contained yet infinite, complete yet never-ending. The individual poem appropriately, therefore, often takes on circular form, (12) adopts circular imagery (13) or exudes a phonic rotundity, (14) thereby suggestively harnessing the energy of a time put on hold, so to speak, a transient moment snatched from time's flow.

Much of *L'allegria* is scripted in the present tense, conveying the immediacy of an experience captured in its essence, the result of an intuitive or visionary insight which projects the poet beyond spatial and temporal limitations. Even his memories partake of this immediacy, coming to him with a freshness and spontaneity which presents them, too, as ‘spots of time’ (15) – ‘rottami di memorie’, says Cambon (16) – dislocated from the confines of their innate historicity. Even the more discursive texts, like the celebrated ‘I fiumi’ where Ungaretti retraces the ages of his life as encapsulated in his various rivers, have little by way of ‘spessore temporale’, for their fabric is largely that of the poet's present perception of them: ‘Questi sono i miei fiumi / contati nell'Isonzo’. The ‘io’ is the central consciousness of the text and its present voice, perceiving and modulating reality according to its own variations of Being, so that the objective world exists primarily in terms of the poet's perception of it, and the quality of the moment derives as much from within as from without. (17) The differentiation between the external and the internal seems at times to be overridden in a moment of heightened awareness, which sees the poet achieve union with the cosmos – often portrayed in erotic terms (18) – possessing or being possessed by it in a climax of harmony which provides a positive impulse in an objectively negative world.

All this changes in the immediate post-war climate represented in the *Prime* texts: the absolute gives way to the relative, the present slips into the past, and the ‘io’ itself is de-centred and fragments. The crisis of the war, which had forced the moment ‘to its crisis’, to use Eliot's words, (19) and concentrated it to perfect atomic form, has gone, making way for a new temporal consciousness which brings about its own crisis: that of touching the timeless in the world of time and change, and of attaining a state of Being in the continual flux of Becoming. The perfect circle of *L'allegria*'s timeless moment, poised motionless and transfixed (image of the changeless

Parmenidian universe), mutates to become a cycle of perpetual motion, which finds its only 'order' in its pattern of eternal return. This is already sensed in the *Girovago* poems, written towards the end of the war in 1918, (20) and replayed and further developed in the *Prime* sections in the cycle of days and seasons, (21) and in images of birth, death and re-birth – images which persist in the subsequent *Fine di Crono* and *Sogni e accordi* sections. (22) But the return offers only the illusion of permanence, for the life-death cycle is one where energy is continually being lost and only an 'echo' of the original form is replayed. (23) One cannot step into the same river twice, as Heraclitus points out, for time does not truly return, but merely repeats a similar and ever-weakening pattern. The energy harnessed in the *Allegrian* moment is thus replaced by entropy, as the cycle takes on the form of 'ritornante mortalità' (24) as opposed to the renewal of life in its pristine state. Hence the re-awakenings of 'O notte' are 'Dolorosi risvegli', and the cycle itself is perceived as 'questa tristezza di ritorni' ('Ironia').

Time has thus opened out to involve past and future in a way that the earlier fulminatory moment never could. It has become a continuum in which the poet flounders, 'Perso in questa curva malinconia' ('O notte'), 'perso in queste vane corse' ('Alla noia'), adrift from the past and in fear of the future, (25) so that he could have said with Petrarch: 'le cose presenti, e le passate / mi danno guerra, e le future ancora'. (26) The intensity pin-pointed in *L'allegria's* atemporal moment has now been infinitely diluted in time as extent – 'L'interminabile / tempo' (27) – leaving the poet unable to transcend his contingency through a passionate climax as before. He has been robbed of communion with the mysterious essence of things by the monotonous rhythms of 'la costante misura d'un tempo avaro' ('L'Affricano a Parigi') which transform love from the miracle which can snatch the moment from time – 'attimo che soltanto amore può strappare al tempo, l'amore più forte che non possa essere la morte' (28) – to merely 'una garanzia della specie' ('Lucca'). (29) With such a temporal consciousness the poet can only hope to outlive time through time, 'nell'ordine spirituale mediante la parola, nell'ordine naturale mediante la progenie'. (30)

Hence the absoluteness of the transfixed moment gives way to the relativity of a time on the move, and the sense of belonging (31) to a realization that 'non ci si sta che di passaggio' ('Lucca'). (32) Time has thus mutated, to use Augustine's words, from a present which was 'always present and did not go by into the past' to a present which 'only comes into existence because it is in transition toward the past' – that is, it exists only in the sense that 'it is tending towards non-existence'. (33) Time has thus become a negative experience for the poet, charting a continual process of perishing rather than Becoming, as Chronos consumes his progeny, converting the earlier 'fullness' of time to a corresponding emptiness or absence. Hence, for example, youth has no sooner reached its climax for the poet than he says 'E già sono deserto' ('O notte'); the *Allegrian* moment of 'Mattina' ('Paesaggio'), encapsulated in the circular image of 'una corona di freschi pensieri' (already relegated to the edge of the composition), is eroded in 'il consumarsi senza fine di tutto'; the youthful sensuality of 'seni appena germogliati' quickly fades to leave them 'già sospiroso' ('Le stagioni'); the energies of a sea 'che un giorno germogliò rapace' are dissipated, reducing it to 'solo linea vaporosa' ('Ricordo d'Affrica'). The experience of time is therefore essentially an experience of loss – 'l'ora del distacco' ('O notte'), 'l'ora [...] che disanima', 'l'ora più demente' ('Le stagioni'), 'l'ora che annuvola e smemora' ('Ricordo d'Affrica') – as the present continually self-destructs to make of itself a negativity, often indicated by the use of a negative expression in the text, in particular the temporally significant 'non [...] più'. (34) The present can, therefore, no longer 'contain' as it did in *L'allegria* but merely mark passage; (35) it is the flux of emptiness caught between the 'appena' and the 'già', (36) the empty terrain of the 'prima che' and the 'non ancora' (37) as well as of the already noted 'non [...] più'.

Negation, says Bergson, focuses the subject's attention on the past, on 'le point où il a cessé d'être' for 'la négation [...] ne tient compte que du remplacé et ne s'occupe pas du remplaçant'. (38) This is very much the focus of the *Prime* texts where time is 'un'estesa monotonia di assenze' ('Ritorno'), marked only by the negative imprint of what is not. 'Oggetti assenti' are 'oggetti presenti [...] nella

mente, nel silenzio', (39) present absences, markers of a 'tempo perduto', which etch their shape in the poet's consciousness in the guise of a lost youth, an elusive dream, a siren, a mirage. 'We look before and after / And pine for what is not', wrote Shelley, (40) similarly suffering time as privation – ultimately definable as 'privazione d'eternità'. (41) Ungaretti's 'pining for what is not' takes the form of a nostalgia for *L'allegria* and its Blakean ability to see eternity in an instant, for what Cambon calls the 'corpo ilare della prima felice stagione di Ungaretti poeta'. (42) Alternatively figured as desire and regret it forms the basis of 'Le stagioni' and its off-shoot 'Ti svelerà' (43) where its italicized voice underscores its differentiation from the poet's present. In 'Alla noia' the 'corpo ilare' poses as 'corpo acerbo', a taunting form of memory whose only appearance in the present tense is to chart its withdrawal, leaving the poet's present one of futile pursuit, mathematically measured as neither gain nor loss: 'di quanto m'avanzo s'allontana'. The following poem, 'Sirene', sees the figure mutate to siren-muse, a similarly beguiling creation, beckoning the poet towards an ever-changing illusion, a dream, whose mutations define the nature of his life as 'Felice colpa' ('Danni con fantasia') and leave him damned by a beautiful fantasy. Ungaretti's comment on the nature of his present, written in March 1919, provides a perfect gloss to this section: 'Dattorno a me il presente altro non sia che un riflesso di passato e d'avvenire, di abbandono e d'azzardo, di rimpianti e di desiderio [...]; come se il passato fosse la carne e l'avvenire l'idea, ma fossero tutt'uno nell'immagine viva dattorno a noi'. (44) He thus construes the present as having no reality of its own and hence seeking to fill its void through recourse to the carnality of the past and the dream of the future – a logical impossibility since each is by definition not present but absent.

The registering of the past in *Prime* is more a registering of 'temps perdu' than 'temps retrouvé' and the youth recalled very much a youth 'in absentia'. The present no longer acts as magnetic centre for the poet's consciousness, but in its fragmentation carries away from the centre, leaving the poet's inner world, like the ever-expanding physical universe, without cohesion and without centre. Nor can the 'io' provide a solid 'central image' as was the case in *L'allegria*, for, as Bergson notes, in a temporal continuum one is obliged to abandon this central position. (45) Time is schism, separating time from time and self from self, so that the 'io' takes on the multiple faces of a time at odds with itself, ebbing and flowing in an interweaving of its tenses and temporal tensions. In 'Le stagioni', for example, the centrality of the 'io' is fragmented as it is projected along divergent temporal tracks and typographical registers; self interacts with self but ultimately the irreconcilability of their voices makes of the hour 'l'ora più demente', as they drift into the irretrievable distance and mutual remoteness of the *Passato Remoto*: 'E lontanissimo un giovane coro / S'udì: // Nell'acqua garrula / Vidi riflesso uno stormo di tortore / Allo stellato grigiore s'unirono'. 'Alla noia' interprets the temporal abyss between the poet's present self and his remembered – or absent – self in terms of an unbridgeable distance, the distance between the tenses, the immeasurable measure between presence and absence which is the measure of memory itself. 'Self' is continually converted to 'other' in an alienating and disintegrating process which memory only registers but cannot reverse. Like the 'fiore colto' and 'l'altro donato' of 'Eterno', the terms are separated by a nothing which is everything – in 'Eterno' the 'inesprimibile nulla', here the hiatus of absence – which leaves them paradoxically synonymous yet distinct, like the Leopardian worlds of reality and dream so poignantly identified as same yet other: 'Questo è quel mondo?'. (46) The poet's pursuit in both 'Alla noia' and 'Sirene' is therefore ultimately a pursuit of self, both futile and illusory, a vain attempt to reintegrate what time tears apart, while his longing for the beautiful form of the 'corpo acerbo' ('Alla noia') and the elusive 'meta' ('Sirene') amounts to a narcissistic worship of self and of his own creation.

The *Prime* texts thus represent a carrying away and a fracturing of the wholeness offered by the *Allegrian* absolute. They oppose atemporality with time, stasis with movement and harmony with discord as the post-war climate forces the poet to come face to face with the relative just as the war had brought him face to face with the absolute. His longings are still, however, for a reality which

will transcend time, for as he writes in his 'Note' to *L'allegria*, 'ero un uomo che non voleva altro per sé se non i rapporti con l'assoluto' (*Tutte le poesie*, p. 520). To touch the absolute in a relative world the poet must somehow transcend its relativity, outlive its limited times and integrate its dislocated parts. Time can no longer be burnt up in its own intensity but is here to stay as extent, and any communication with the absolute must necessarily take a temporal consciousness on board. 'Only through time time is conquered', writes Eliot; (47) and through the later sections of the *Sentimento* Ungaretti sets about conquering time through time, converting the relativity of the 'ora' as chronological hour to the mythical absolute of the 'ora costante' and its phonically related 'colline d'oro' ('Dove la luce') (48) – a conversion worked out in the context of 'la memoria' or 'lo smemorare', 'l'amore' or 'la morte', in all of which it finds a partial echo. The process of reintegration is as much a linguistic as an ideological one: hence, for example, the isolated moment, imaged in the spherical perfection of the 'gocciola d'acqua / sull'erba flessuosa' in 'A riposo' (*L'allegria*), but victim of the destructive time of the *Prime* texts, is to be reclaimed as 'una goccia del gran fiume'; (49) the 'io', whole as centre of Being in *L'allegria* but fragmented in the transitional *Prime* texts, is to find an ironic fulfilment in the anonymity and non-Being of 'iddio' (50) in which it is linguistically and symbolically subsumed. The loss of *L'allegria*'s Eden with its mythical harmony and wholeness thus becomes the stimulus for redemption, and the loss of atemporality the impetus for overcoming time, as the poet seeks to reintegrate what time has torn apart and to find again the harmony of the 'Paradise Lost' in a transfigured 'Paradise Regained'. The *Prime* poems bear the burden of responsibility towards the future as much as the weight of remorse towards the past, for the newly acquired temporal consciousness which marks them not only carries away the visionary insights of the past, but creates the conditions for 'altro sogno' ('Sirene'), the poet's ever-shifting goal and creative spur, his elusive and mythical 'terra promessa'.

(1) 'Le mie preoccupazioni in quei primi anni del dopoguerra [...] erano tutte tese a ritrovare un ordine, un ordine anche, essendo il mio mestiere quello della poesia, nel campo dove per vocazione mi trovo più direttamente compromesso', wrote Ungaretti in *Gazzetta del Popolo*, Turin, 13 March 1935 (now included in 'Riflessioni sulla letteratura', in G. Ungaretti, *Vita d'un uomo: Saggi e interventi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), pp. 274-76 (p. 274) and 'Ragioni d'una poesia', in G. Ungaretti, *Vita d'un uomo: Tutte le poesie* (Milan: Mondadori, 1969), pp. LXV-CI (p. LXXI). This quest for order, no doubt a reaction against the disorder of war, was symptomatic of the period with its famous 'rappel à l'ordre'. For Ungaretti this coincided with his collaboration with 'La Ronda' (1919-1923), a journal with well-known classical leanings.

(2) The *Prime* texts are universally acknowledged as marking the transition between *L'allegria* and the *Sentimento del tempo* – 'un ponte e una congiunzione tra l'una e l'altra opera', says Portinari (*Giuseppe Ungaretti* (Turin: Borla, 1967), p. 67); 'a transitional chapter', says Cary (*Three Modern Italian Poets* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), p. 179); 'a transitional phase', says Jones (*Giuseppe Ungaretti: Poet and Critic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977), p. 85). Portinari emphasises the continuity and homogeneity between the two collections – as does Gargiulo in his famous preface to *Sentimento del tempo* (now included in *Tutte le poesie* pp. 423-25) – while Cary and Jones focus rather on their contrasting features, highlighting in particular their differing temporal and memorial consciousnesses. Regardless of how the argument is weighted, the *Prime* sections are clearly crucial; yet the critical tendency is either to trace the transition largely through the poet's self-commentary in his prose writings (see, in particular, Ungaretti's comments on this period in 'Ragioni d'una poesia'), or to consider the development between the collections in more general terms; analyses of selected individual poems rarely focus on their transitional features. This study aims to redress the balance, however, by focusing on some of the key features of the *Prime* sections themselves and their significance in terms of both the lost world of *L'allegria* and the nascent world of the *Sentimento*.

- (3) The continuity between the two *Prime* sections is clearly established in the 1923 edition of *Il porto sepolto* ('Stamperia Apuana', La Spezia) which included six of the seven texts which now form the *Prime* section of the *Sentimento del tempo*.
- (4) Ungaretti often exploits the ambivalence of time in the *Sentimento*, particularly in his treatment of transitional periods such as dawn and dusk, and the beginning and end of the year (see, for example, 'Lago luna alba notte', 'Lido' and 'Leda'). The cycles of time (the phases of the day and of the seasons, for example) allow for the paradox of the return of the same which is each time different.
- (5) The poems in the three central sections, *Il porto sepolto*, *Naufragi* and *Girovago*, unlike those in the introductory and concluding sections, are individually placed and dated. The order of the texts is largely, although not exclusively, chronological.
- (6) The structure thus mirrors the Egyptian symbol of the infinite represented by a serpent eating its tail, of which Ungaretti writes in his 'Nota introduttiva': 'un infinito cerchio, come già gli antichi Egiziani usavano rappresentarlo nel mordersi la coda di un serpente' (*Tutte le poesie*, pp. 497-515 (p. 498)). The image is used in alchemy as symbolic of cosmic wholeness, which is a notable characteristic of *L'allegria*.
- (7) The opening text, 'In memoria', is dated 30 September 1916, immediately preceding in chronological terms the two closing poems, 'Italia' and 'Commiato', dated 1 October 1916 and 2 October 1916 respectively.
- (8) The spatial images are Bergson's, used to represent homogenous time, which he calls 'une quatrième dimension de l'espace', *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), pp. 1-157 (p. 73).
- (9) 'Note' to *Il porto sepolto*, in *Tutte le poesie*, pp. 519-523 (p. 520).
- (10) In this, it is like Eliot's 'intense moment / Isolated, with no before and after' (*Four Quartets*: 'Burnt Norton', V) as opposed to 'the waste sad time / Stretching before and after' (*Four Quartets*: 'East Coker', V).
- (11) See Giuseppe De Robertis, 'Sulla formazione della poesia di Ungaretti' (*Tutte le poesie*, pp. 405-421) for a pivotal study of the poet's quest for an 'absolute' or timelessness of expression as traced through the variants. Note also the frequent use of verbal participles and infinitives in the text, at times without supporting finite form, which capture the ephemeral vibrations of time and project them into infinity.
- (12) Note, for example, the closed grammatical structure of 'Tramonto' or 'Soldati'; the perfect balance of a poem like 'La notte bella'; the echoing of their titles in the closing lines of 'Chiaroscuro', 'Fratelli' and 'In dormiveglia'.
- (13) Examples include: 'ghirlande di lumini' ('Notte di maggio'); 'goccioline d'acqua' ('A riposo'); 'Nel molle giro di un sorriso' ('Fase d'oriente'); 'Nell'occhio / di mill'una notte' ('Fase'); 'un abbraccio di lumi' ('Silenzio'); 'goccioline di stelle' ('Risvegli'); 'una corolla / di tenebre' ('I fiumi'); 'nel globo / del tempo / ammansito' ('Dal viale di valle'). The final poem of the book offers the most perfect circular image of all, 'una limpida e attonita sfera', evoked as the sphere of liberation from the promiscuity of one's 'momento storico'.
- (14) For the most striking examples, see 'La notte bella' ('Ora sono ubriaco / d'universo') and 'Mattina' ('M'illumino / d'immenso').
- (15) W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Part 1 (1799).
- (16) G. Cambon, *Giuseppe Ungaretti* (Turin: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 1976), p. 20.

(17) Note the similar centrality of the 'io' in the system of images adopted by the idealist, as commented by Bergson: 'le monde de la conscience [...] où toutes les images se règlent sur une image centrale, notre corps, dont elles suivent les variations' (*Matière et mémoire* in *Oeuvres*, pp. 159-379 (p. 177)).

(18) The climaxes of 'A riposo' and 'Fase d'Oriente', for example, are registered in terms suggestive of an orgasmic climax, when the individual self is annihilated in an ecstatic union. Likewise, in 'Annientamento' and 'Trasfigurazione' the 'io' reaches a pitch of physicality before succumbing to the kiss of death ('la petite mort'?) in a symbolic merging with the universe.

(19) 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.

(20) For example, Ungaretti writes of the return of the seasons in 'Si porta' ('questo principio / che ogni anno / scatena la terra') and of the 'giro / immortale' in which he is but 'immagine / passeggera' in 'Serenio'.

(21) See the four-part structure of 'Paesaggio' and 'Le stagioni' representing the four phases of the daily cycle and the four seasons respectively.

(22) Dawn and dusk, sunrise and sunset and the rising and setting of the moon are often used as images of a recurrent birth-death-birth cycle. Waxing and waning figures of illusion (note 'Sirene' and 'L'isola' in particular) perpetuate the same pattern.

(23) This concurs with the Platonic doctrine expounded much later by Ungaretti in his 'Note' to *La terra promessa*, where he explains how time's cycles carry man further and further from the 'prima immagine', throwing up only 'reminiscenze, ricordi, echi di idee' (*Tutte le poesie*, pp. 545-67 (p. 561)).

(24) P. Bigongiari, 'Il Sentimento del tempo tra Chronos e Aion' in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale su Giuseppe Ungaretti (Urbino 3-6 Ottobre 1979)* (Urbino: Edizioni 4 venti, 1981), pp. 329-343 (p. 336).

(25) In 'L'Affricano a Parigi' Ungaretti writes of one no longer afraid of death (as during the war), but afraid of time: 'senza scampo scelto a preda dall'assiduo terrore del futuro'.

(26) *Rime* (Milan: Rizzoli Editore, 1976) No. 272.

(27) 'Dolina notturno' (Napoli il 26 dicembre 1916) – written during a period of respite from the front and hence away from the intensity of the war.

(28) 'Note' to *L'allegria*, in *Tutte le poesie*, pp. 517-28 (p. 517).

(29) The predictable monotony of a time bereft of mystery leads the poet to conclude: 'Addio desideri, nostalgie. / So di passato e d'avvenire quanto un uomo può saperne. / Conosco ormai il mio destino, e la mia origine. / Non mi rimane più nulla da profanare, nulla da sognare. / Ho goduto di tutto, e sofferto. / Non mi rimane che rassegnarmi a morire. / Alleverò dunque tranquillamente una prole. / Quando un appetito maligno mi spingeva negli amori mortali, lodavo la vita. / Ora che considero, *anch'io*, l'amore come una garanzia della specie, ho in vista la morte' ('Lucca').

(30) *Tutte le poesie*, p. 526. The poet's desire to supersede his own time gives rise to a developing consciousness of tradition (ethnic, cultural and literary) and of his place within it – 'accettare la tradizione è stato, è ancora, per me, l'avventura più drammatica' (*Tutte le poesie*, p. 526). His collaboration with 'La Ronda' marks his readiness to acknowledge the past as an important constituent in the present and the future – unlike the Futurists – and coincides with his move towards the adoption of more traditional versification (note the variants of 'Preghiera', for example) and his incursion into memory and myth – an order of images that defy death.

(31) Implicit in the verb 'stare', as in 'Sto / con le quattro / capriole / di fumo / del focolare' ('Natale'), and 'Sto / addossato a un tumulo / di fieno bronzato' ('Trasfigurazione'); phonically

echoed in 'Mi desto' ('Mi desto in un bagno / di care cose consuete' ('Risvegli')) and 'Assisto' ('Assisto la notte violentata', ('In dormiveglia')); reiterated in the demonstrative adjective 'questo' and its off-shoots 'stasera', 'stamani' and 'stanotte'.

(32) See a similar undermining of the semantics of the verb in 'Soldati': 'Si sta come / d'autunno / sugli alberi / le foglie'.

(33) St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. by R. Warner (New York: The New American Library, 1963), XI, xiv (17), pp. 167-68.

(34) Note the frequent use of negatives in the *Prime* sections, particularly 'non [...] più' which presents time as a process of self-cancellation. Examples are too numerous to cite, but see 'Ricordo d'Affrica' as a notable case in point.

(35) See Bergson's comments on the nature of the present: 'Le propre du temps est de s'écouler; [...] et nous appelons présent l'instant où il s'écoule' (*Matière et mémoire*, p. 280).

(36) 'Passata è appena l'ora del distacco. // [...] // E già sono deserto' ('O notte'); 'O seni appena germogliati, / Già sospiroso' ('Le stagioni').

(37) 'E già, prima ch'io giunga a qualche meta, / Non ancora deluso / M'avvinci ad altro sogno' ('Sirene').

(38) Bergson, *L'existence et le néant*, in *L'évolution créatrice*, now in *Oeuvres*, pp. 487-809 (p. 743).

(39) Ungaretti, 'Gongora al lume d'oggi', in *Saggi e interventi*, p. 535.

(40) P. B. Shelley, 'To a Skylark'.

(41) Ungaretti cites Plato's maxim: 'Il tempo è privazione d'eternità' in 'L'estetica di Bergson' (1924), *Saggi e interventi*, pp. 79-89 (p. 82).

(42) Cambon, *Giuseppe Ungaretti*, p. 97.

(43) Published in 'Gazzetta del Popolo', Turin, 30 September 1931, as part of 'Le stagioni'.

(44) 'Verso un'arte nuova classica' (Prefazione alla 2a edizione del *Porto sepolto*, in *Saggi e interventi*, pp. 13-16 (p. 14)).

(45) 'Il y a une image privilégiée, son corps, sur laquelle se règlent les autres images. Mais dès qu'il veut rattacher le présent au passé et prévoir l'avenir, il est bien obligé d'abandonner cette position centrale' (*Matière et mémoire*, p. 177).

(46) 'A Silvia'.

(47) Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 'Burnt Norton' II.

(48) Note the subtle shift of emphasis from the *Allegrian* 'ora', which is predominantly adverbial in keeping with the subjective nature of the text, to the external 'ora' (noun) of *Sentimento del tempo* – finally liberated from its temporality as 'l'ora costante' ('Dove la luce'). The transitional *Prime* texts of *L'allegria* have an almost even spread of examples from each perspective, while those of the *Sentimento* are clearly weighted towards the noun, indicating the directional thrust of the text at this point.

(49) Ungaretti, 'L'estetica di Bergson' in *Saggi e interventi*, p. 83.

(50) 'Mi darai il cuore immobile / D'un iddio' ('Inno alla morte'); 'Vorrei di nuovo udirti dire / Che in te finalmente annullate / Le anime s'uniranno / E lassù formeranno, / Eterna umanità, / Il tuo sonno felice' ('La preghiera').

**Dorothy Glenn**

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## **North And South: Reflections On Examining And Assessment In An Erasmus Exchange Programme**

When an ERASMUS student exchange between the Department of Italian Studies in the University of Manchester and the Istituto di Lingue e Letterature Straniere (Inglese - Tedesco - Russo) in the Università degli Studi di Sassari was proposed in 1990, it was also agreed that a comparative study of examining and assessment techniques should be undertaken. Although the study began in the very first year of the exchange, initial progress was slow, since no doubt like colleagues involved in similar exchanges, the two co-ordinators found that they had to confront a broad range of issues relating to the practical operation of the exchange, which inevitably ate into the time they had at their disposal for the study.

The first such issue was that despite the obvious attractions of Sardinia and the negative aspects of life in a large industrial city such as Manchester, it was comparatively easier to get Italian students to come to Manchester than UK students to go to Sassari. In general UK students appeared to know little about Sardinia and seemed unwilling to commit themselves to what they (and sometimes significantly, their parents) perceived as an 'outpost' of Italy. Although this continues to cause some concern, briefings by the Year Abroad tutor, with the involvement of Sassari exchange students and former UK participants, have proved helpful in generating more enthusiasm for the exchange, one of a number available to Manchester students. On the other hand, demand from Italian students has generally been high, with the ratio of applications to places being in the order of 10:1 in some years. Such a demand exists despite the fact that a period of residence abroad is not compulsory and that for Italian students, with their different system of student support, a significant financial contribution is involved. As a consequence of the numbers applying to take part, a system of selection for Sassari students through examination and interview has been introduced, an extra burden on the co-ordinator and her colleagues.

Other practical issues, which soon arose, included the closely linked ones of accommodation and social integration. There have been problems concerning the appropriateness of accommodation both in Manchester and in Sassari, which have on occasions led to some measure of student dissatisfaction, but in recent years these have been entirely resolved by the relevant authorities in both institutions. Yet while both institutions are now doing all they can to promote integration by 'seeding' visiting students, as far as possible, across university accommodation, broadly speaking it appears that UK students manage to integrate more easily in Sassari than Italian students in Manchester. This may be a result of a whole variety of factors, including the lower priority apparently given to academic work *per se* by the Manchester students and the fact that Italian students find themselves somewhat overwhelmed by the size of the city of Manchester in general and the university in particular. A new initiative in Manchester, at least partially aimed at promoting integration for Italian students, has been the introduction in the current session of a TANDEM language learning programme, which pairs visiting Italian students with UK students of Italian and which is credit-rated for both sets of students. (Initial impressions suggest that the scheme is operating well, with social and linguistic benefits on both sides.)

The academic modalities of the exchange evolved fairly quickly and without significant difficulties. Exchange students in both institutions mostly follow modules or course units that are the same as those followed by home students. Although there is some preliminary selection of course units by visiting students, in the main co-ordinators assist students in choosing suitable courses *after* arrival. In the early years of the exchange, there was some slight difficulty in obtaining recognition for Manchester courses by some colleagues in Sassari, but it is now generally accepted that the equivalence of work load and intellectual effort by the student is more important than a close correlation between the syllabus content of particular course units in either Sassari or Manchester. In general, Italian students follow course units equivalent to between 60 and 100 (Manchester) credits, representing half to five sixths of a UK student load. For examinations not specifically testing competence in L2 (eg course units offered by other departments including English, History, Linguistics, Geography, Psychology, Art History etc.), Italian students may seek permission to use bilingual dictionaries (which is normally granted), but are required to write their examination answers in English. However, with the agreement of the relevant tutors, in many instances Italian students are allowed to submit additional coursework instead of taking a UK-style, unseen, timed examination, (1) or to take the UK examination as a 'take-away' exam over two or three days. These practices have increased in recent years, in part as a result of semesterization and modularization at Manchester, which have seen the introduction of examinations in January, at a time when many Italian students have not yet achieved their fullest competence in writing in English to a strict time limit. Additionally, a few Italian students either follow extra non-examined courses in preparation for exams which they are planning to take when they return home, or undertake preliminary research towards their final undergraduate dissertation (*tesi di laurea*).

One of the problems sometimes experienced by Italian students is a lack of familiarity with the UK marking system. What may appear to them an excessively low mark, for example 50%, which if converted mechanically as 15/30 is a fail mark in the Italian system, is in fact a low but acceptable mark in the UK system. A necessary part of the induction process for Italian students by the UK co-ordinator includes information about UK mark scales. Further, since the Manchester marks awarded to Italian students were to be formally incorporated in the profiles which determined their final degree result, a scale for the interpretation of UK percentage marks by Italian colleagues was agreed by the two co-ordinators, as a result of discussions which took place largely before the introduction of ECTS, and this scale has now been formally adopted by Sassari. (See Appendix 1 below.)

UK students in Sassari are required to follow at least three examination courses, and are advised to construct a programme of study comprising about 12 contact hours per week. Students studying another subject as part of a joint honours degree programme (the vast majority) are advised to follow a course in that subject area, but this is not always possible, or practicable. At least two of the courses chosen by students must be examined by Italian-style, oral examination. It soon became clear that UK students do not perform particularly well in this type of examination, even where they were allowed to negotiate a reduced syllabus with their Italian tutor. In consequence, a practice has been developed in Sassari whereby UK students were required to produce an essay in Italian on a topic arising from the course, and this piece of work provided an initial basis for discussion in the examination. Further, Manchester plans to introduce an element of oral examination in selected second-year courses in order to familiarize at least some students with the skills needed for such examinations. However, it remains to be seen whether such measures will achieve the desired objective of improving student achievement, since Manchester students are currently not formally required to pass the examinations taken in Italy, merely to have an 'honest' attempt at them (i.e. to follow the course conscientiously and to present themselves for examination).

Some special or adapted courses are provided for exchange students in both Manchester and Sassari. In Manchester, for example, Italian students have followed part of the final-year honours

language module concentrating on translation into English (L2) and in the final two-hour unseen examination they have been required to translate two passages into English, rather than one into English and one into Italian as the home students are required to do (L1 + L2). However, one of the passages was common to both groups of students and all students were examined at the same time and under the same conditions. In Sassari, UK students benefit from extra tuition in Italian offered by the Italian *lettore* working for the *Centro Linguistico di Ateneo*. They find this especially useful on arrival in October, before the start of the academic year proper while they are still settling in. They sometimes drop out of these classes later, as they find themselves with new ERASMUS students at a lower level (those taking part in short duration exchanges), but it has been noted that those students who attend longest do best in the translation exam at the end of the year. Additionally, UK students follow the same translation courses as Year 3 and Year 4 Italian students of English. They take the same translation exam into Italian (L2 for them) but are allowed an extra hour (four hours instead of three) compared to the Year 3 Sassari students (L1 for them, although it should be noted that a few of the Sassari students do not *habitually* speak Italian at home). For the Italian students this is a pass/fail examination only and is marked accordingly, but for UK students it is marked on the same criteria as the final fourth year translation into L2 for Sassari students. As already indicated, the marks earned by UK students do not formally contribute towards their final degree classification, but they are required to submit themselves for examination as stipulated and failure to do so, without explicit permission from Manchester, might result in the withholding of credits, which would have to be made up by following extra courses upon return to Manchester. If there are genuine reasons why an examination cannot be taken, students are normally required to produce an essay of approximately 2500 words in Italian arising from the syllabus of the course they have been studying.

### Examining and assessment

The comparative study of examining and assessment processes focussed on two particular aspects of the system, the Italian final undergraduate dissertation (*tesi di laurea*) and the comparative practices in the marking of language exams. In 1993 a member of staff of the Department of Italian Studies, having acted as a co-supervisor for a dissertation begun by an Italian student whilst in Manchester, was a member of the *Commissione di esame di laurea* in Sassari. (A member of staff of the Manchester Department of English acted in a similar capacity for another student and took part in a *Commissione* in 1995 and again in 2000.) The following year an English native-speaker member of Sassari staff was appointed honorary external examiner in the Department of Italian Studies and assisted in the marking of a selection of Manchester finals scripts (Translation into English: into L1 for UK students, into L2 for Italian students). In the same and subsequent years, some translation passages (into English) were shared by both departments: the same text in the same language was given as an examination piece to both sets of students, who were, of course, confronted with different issues in addressing it. Finally, in 1999 a member of the Department of Italian Studies sat in on Italian oral exams held in Sassari.

#### 1 *Tesi di laurea*

This compulsory element in the Italian system (which is not usually completed or examined in the target language) is clearly a valuable piece of independent learning. The amount of work undertaken by the student is substantial, and at its best much is original. In this latter respect it might seem more demanding than an undergraduate dissertation (usually the equivalent of a single taught course unit of 20 credits). Examining (by a panel of academics, any of whom might ask the writer to explain or to defend the material) can appear much more rigorous than any equivalent Manchester examination where *vivas* are conducted only rarely. In practice, however, the process of examination appears to be more stress-inducing than testing, and usually candidates are aware of

the kind of questions they are likely to be asked by their principal supervisors. Nonetheless, it is clear that the existence of the *tesi* as a final exercise involving research, evaluative and analytical skills and both written and oral presentation, gives the Italian degree programme a certain distinction. Furthermore it is equally clear that the performance at this level can significantly affect a student's chance of achieving top honours (*110 su 110 e la lode*) either positively or negatively.

## 2 Language examining

Although they are taught in larger groups (up to 60), the students in Sassari benefit from a significant number of contact hours for language tuition (up to 8 hours in Year 4, together with three hours of literature classes often, but not always, conducted through the medium of the target language). In comparison, Manchester students have substantially fewer hours of language instruction (4 hours at Level 1, 3 hours at Levels 2 and 3 and no other tuition through the medium of the target language), but do benefit from the availability of independent learning resources in the Language Centre. Against this background a number of differences of general and detailed assessment practices have been noted during the period of the exchange as a whole and during the experiment in joint marking in particular:

- resit opportunities are limited for UK students and are normally non-existent at Finals, but they are easily available for Italian students at all stages (although changes to this practice in Italy are currently under discussion and reforms limiting resit opportunities may be introduced for the start of the 2001/02 academic year);
- in Sassari, translation exams (L1 in Year 3, L2 in Year 4) comprise two out of the total of eight written language exams taken by students over the course of their degree. Other written exams include grammar tests, essays, dictation and note taking. Passages for translation are of the literary type and for both L1 and L2 translation about the same length (approximately 180 words);
- in Sassari, final (fourth-year) language exams only involve written work into the target language (L2), whereas in Manchester students are also required to undertake exercises involving work into English;
- Italian students are allowed to use dictionaries in translation and essay exams in the target language;
- language coursework is taken into account for UK students (at Manchester currently 25% of the final grade in the language course is achieved by the submission of coursework, and 25% as the result of an oral examination (2)). Assessed coursework may involve a range of exercises besides translation both from and into Italian (which are also tested by examination) including comprehension and free composition, and students receive written and verbal feedback on their work;
- students in Sassari have four hours to complete the exam (Italian-English) with the use of bilingual dictionaries: students in Manchester are not allowed to use dictionaries in any home examinations and have considerably less time to complete the translations (two translations involving L1 and L2 in two hours);
- at Manchester marking was not anonymous at the time of the experiment, although it is now. In Sassari the anonymity is practical rather than formal, given the large numbers of students taking the exams and the fact that assignments done during the year are normally self-corrected and not handed in for correction by teachers;
- marking is performed by a team in Sassari whereas in Manchester individual markers work independently, although two colleagues may sometimes mark different sections of a single paper. In Manchester, all marking is moderated internally (a general clerical check together

with review of borderlines, fails and firsts by a different marker) and is subject to possible further scrutiny by the external examiner (of which there is no equivalent in the Italian system);

- in Sassari, L2 translations were routinely marked section by section right across the set by the team of markers, usually three in number, including at least one native-speaker Italian. The team discusses and forms a view of the gravity of particular errors. Marking is negative and marks are deducted according to the type of mistake. Mis-translations lose a whole mark, grammatical, syntactical and lexical errors lose a part mark, as do stylistic imperfections or mistakes of register. Exceptionally good rendering across a sentence earns a positive mark. The final grade is achieved by adding the positive and negative marks together. The pass mark is not fixed in advance, but good students will usually lose only 1-4 marks, and to pass with 18/30 it is expected that students will lose no more than 12-13 marks. All translations with mark losses in the range of 10-14 are reviewed in order to determine just where the pass/fail boundary should fall in relation to the particular passage. Final marks are subject to scrutiny by the tutor responsible for English in the particular year;
- in Manchester, marking practice varies according to individual markers. There is no departmentally-agreed system. Some markers of L2 work use a negative points score, deducting marks or part marks for mistakes of greater or lesser significance and then mapping the score onto a classification grid in a mechanistic way. Others aim to arrive at an overall assessment of an impressionistic nature, making allowance, for example, for a student's knowledge of the structures of Italian, even if that knowledge is not always accompanied by complete accuracy. However, in all cases, the overall final mark has to reflect a departmentally agreed description of specific levels of achievement, which is communicated to students at the beginning of the year.

With specific reference to the 1994 experiment in parallel marking the following were noted:

- marks awarded at the higher levels appeared similar, but a disparity was noted at lower levels;
- some work considered acceptable in Manchester would have resulted in a fail mark in Sassari. (Amongst the things affecting this, it was noted that Manchester students were not formally penalized on lexical items, since they were not allowed to use dictionaries);
- the availability of resits to students was present in the minds of the markers in Sassari and the absence of such a possibility in those of the markers in Manchester.

The system of marking adopted by Sassari appears to have much to commend it in terms of reliability and equity, and at first sight it may seem that the Manchester system could be considered less satisfactory. However, as far as staff involvement is concerned, it was noted that the Sassari system is highly labour-intensive and time-consuming, even though Italian students are asked to translate significantly less material into the target language. (3) Furthermore, direct comparisons with regard to standards are also not straightforward since Italian students, besides being asked to translate less, have more time to do so than their UK counterparts, and are able to make use of dictionaries which are not allowed to UK students. And finally, the apparent rigour of the assessment in Sassari takes place in the context of the possibility at present of almost unlimited opportunities for re-examination, and the provision of substantially more language contact hours for students.

## Conclusions

Despite the considerable time commitment devoted to both setting up the exchange initially and the effort of keeping it going (now thankfully somewhat eased on both sides by centralized control of

ERASMUS funding and a more active involvement of the Manchester European Office and the Sassari *Ufficio per le relazioni internazionali*) both co-ordinators have been pleased with the way the exchange has developed. Participating students have almost without exception got a great deal from the programme both academically and personally. Two former Italian participants have now embarked on university careers, and one Sassari student transferred to Manchester to complete her degree, obtaining a lower second in English in June 2000, whilst another, who had not participated in the scheme, nonetheless chose to come to Manchester to pursue study at master's level. Additionally, informal links have been established between colleagues in a number of departments outside those principally involved (for example, a member of the Manchester English department has given invited lectures in Sassari, and the Departments of History in both institutions are currently pursuing the idea of their own exchange as a result of being involved in the present one).

On average, our experience shows that Italian students tend to achieve better results at the host institution than their UK exchange partners. Given that by this stage in their academic careers both sets of students are broadly speaking of the same range of ability, having been subject to similar examination hurdles at the end of both their first and second years, the principal reason for the difference in the level of achievement appears to be whether or not there is a formal recognition by the home institution of the grades achieved in examinations in the host institution. For the Italian students the grades count, for the UK students they do not. Although individual UK students perform to very high standards, most students do not appear fully to engage with their academic studies in Sassari. However, besides the knowledge that the grades achieved will not affect their final degree result in a mathematical way, there are a number of other factors, which may also help to explain, we believe, the apparent under-achievement by most UK students:

- the majority of UK students taking part in the exchange are beginners in Italian upon entry to university and a number report difficulties not only in speaking but also in listening skills on arrival in Italy;
- perhaps surprisingly, few UK students have any kind of previous experience of Italy other than family holidays, often in a fairly remote past;
- the work and attendance regulations in the Italian host institution are less clearly defined than in the home institution, and despite the best efforts of the local co-ordinator it is impossible to operate a stricter system for visiting students than for home students;
- the year is compulsory for all UK honours students, it is not seen as an extra privilege which has to be 'earned' either initially or retrospectively through a certain level of achievement;
- although UK students are certainly aware of the cultural and linguistic benefits to be gained from a prolonged period of residence in Italy, they do not generally rate academic achievement in itself as one of their major objectives.

As a result of the knowledge gained of each other's systems over the period of the exchange as a whole and the practical experience of taking part in aspects of each other's examining and assessment processes, those involved have decided that a number of questions merit further attention:

- whether a dissertation, possibly in the target language, ought to be a compulsory element for all language students;
- whether exams involving work into the target language should be marked differently from exams involving work from the target language;
- whether the use of dictionaries should be allowed in examinations;
- whether the number of contact hours for language teaching should be increased/decreased;
- whether greater use of instruction through the target language should be made;
- whether there should be greater provision of facilities for independent language learning;

- whether the possibility of re-examination should be limited.

In a sector as diverse and as rapidly changing as ours, it is realized that many colleagues may find our list of questions either irrelevant or out-of-date. Nonetheless it seems useful at least to offer them for consideration by colleagues in other institutions, together with our other general observations and experiences, arising from an exchange which is now entering its tenth year. Our hope in doing so is to invite responses and comments that will bring out the examples of good practice in relation to these issues and thereby make more effective the ways both in which we manage exchange programmes in general, and in which we examine and assess our students in particular.

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### Appendix 1

UK-Italian Mark equivalence table (officially adopted by the Faculty of Languages in The University of Sassari, February, 1999, after discussions between the local co-ordinators)

UK mark	Italian mark
66+	30 e lode
61-65	30
60	29
56-59	28
51-55	27
50	26
46-49	25
41-45	24
40	23
39	22
38	21
37	20
36	19
35	18
34	fail

1. Unfortunately this sometimes creates administrative problems when collating results since coursework marks are not usually returned to central records and some considerable secretarial time is devoted to chasing up missing marks at the end of the academic year.
2. Although oral competence is not tested as a separate element in Sassari, examinations may begin with a short conversation in English, and *all* third and fourth-year literature examinations are conducted in English.
3. It should also be noted that over the year as a whole more formal examining was taking place in Sassari, although, if allowance were to be made for the formal assessment of up to five items of coursework per student in Manchester, the disparity in work load for teachers is probably not all that great.

## Conference Reports

### Italy in the 1970s: Culture, Politics, Society

#### Department of European Studies and Modern Languages

#### University of Bath, 15-16 October 1999

This two-day conference stemmed from the belief that in literature, film, gender relations, party politics, social structures and institutions, the 1970s were a crucial period for Italy. It aimed to provide an overview of academic research on the development of Italian culture, politics, and society in the years between the student protests of 1968 and the fall of the government of national solidarity in 1979.

The conference brought together researchers from Italy and Britain who presented papers in a variety of areas: 'Politics in the 1970s between Self-Expression and Organicism' (Piero Ignazi, Bologna); 'Listening and Silencing in the 1970s: Between Consciousness-Raising and Terrorism' (Paola Di Cori, Turin); 'A riconquistare la rossa primavera: The Neo-Resistance in the 1970s' (Phil Cooke, Strathclyde); 'Becoming Visible: Women in the Mafia' (Valeria Pizzini-Gambetta, Turin); 'Secrets and Lies: The Red Brigades and the Moro Kidnapping' (Roberto Bartali, Siena); 'Fathers and Sons, the Personal and the Political from *La strategia del ragno* (Bertolucci, 1970) to *Colpire al cuore* (Amelio, 1982) and *Tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* (Bertolucci, 1981)' (Lesley Caldwell, Greenwich); 'The Left and the Construction of Diversity in the 1970s: The Case of Southern Immigrants in Bologna' (Davide Però, Bath); 'The Radicals: Democratic Innovators in a Sclerotic Political System?' (Mark Donovan, Cardiff); 'Political Radicalism and Intellectual Employment in Italy, 1968-1982' (Carl Levy, Goldsmiths College); 'A Leaden Silence? Prose Writers' Responses to the "anni di piombo"' (Jennifer Burns, Warwick); 'Silvia Ballestra's "1974": Re-Thinking the 1970s through the Eyes of a Child' (Claudia Bernardi, Bath); 'Allende, Berlinguer, Pinochet... and Dario Fo' (Tom Behan, Kent); 'Remembering Berlinguer' (Mark Gilbert, Bath).

The papers and the lively concluding round-table brought to light that the decade was characterised by a constant tension between speaking up and silencing of both new and established actors. This tension was visible in the three areas on which the conference focused. The meeting confirmed that it is crucial to re-visit the 1970s. The organisers (Claudia Bernardi, Anna Cento Bull, Adalgisa Giorgio) intend to collect the papers in a volume.

The organisers gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the SIS and ASMI.

**Adalgisa Giorgio**  
University of Bath

### Senses of Humour: the Multifaceted Nature of Laughter in Italian Literature, Art, Media and Film

#### University of Cambridge, March 2000

Inspired by Dryden's observation that 'a thing well said will be wit in all languages', five Cambridge postgraduates hosted this one-day graduate conference on 'Senses of Humour'. Our aims were to help create a greater sense of an Italian studies graduate community, to investigate why the virtually universal existence of humour is frequently considered 'not serious enough' for academia, and to ask what different senses of humour can tell us about national cultures, politics

and identities. Despairing of the standard cultural profiles of the English as incurably melancholic, and of the Italians as irresponsibly light-hearted, we challenged the definition of humour as that which is necessarily untranslatable.

Dr Margaret Rose (Cambridge), whose work on humour has redefined it as a politicised and thoughtful genre, gave the opening guest lecture: 'Postmodern Parody and Humour: from the Ancients to Umberto Eco'. The day was then divided into sessions chaired respectively by the organisers: Catherine O'Rawe, Antonella Gramone, Olivia Santovetti, Lori Di Bon, and Catherine Galloway.

The first, on the 'Inter-comical and Inter-textual', contained two papers on Stefano Benni which pointed to his verbal inventiveness as an aesthetic resistance to mass culture. Monica Boria (Birmingham) traced 'Echoes of Counterculture in Stefano Benni's Humour', highlighting the author's comic exactitude as he plays on words, people, pictures, and places. Carol O'Sullivan (Cambridge), in 'Intercomically Textual: Stefano Benni's *esercizi di stile*', expanded on these intersections with reference to Queneau and Joyce, as well as offering her own experiences of translating Benni into English. The importance of incongruity and mismatch in finding things 'funny' was also central to the discussion of 'Laughter and Wisdom in *The Name of the Rose*': Greg Fried (Cambridge) argued that distance from the subject, as well as its surprising novelty, prompts re-viewing and encourages playful flexibility in thought.

'Wit and Word-playing' continued the theme of laughter as an escape from or subversion of difficult realities. Barbara Anglani (Trieste) looked at 'black' humour in 'I giornali umoristici durante il fascismo: Achille Campanile giornalista', focusing on the vein of melancholy and refined humour which Campanile, as editor of *Il Settebello*, placed against the crass violence of the Racial Laws. John O'Donnell (Oxford), in 'Umberto Eco and Parody', suggested that parody is not merely a parasitical recycling, but rather a part of the creative social commentary, encompassing both high and low culture. Paola Staboli (Brussels) also looked at humour as the articulation of alternatives in 'L'umorismo poetico di Ernesto Ragazzoni', arguing that while for Ragazzoni humour is whimsically utopian, it also has real transformative power for him as a poet and translator.

The third session looked at poetry, and its peculiar difficulty in being humorous. 'Risky Rhyme' contained papers by John Butcher (UCL), on 'Montale's "lauro riseccito": the Satire of Poets and Poetry in *Diario del '71 e del '72* and *Quaderno di quattro anni*', and by Alessandro Montani (Reading) on Jacopone da Todi and 'Sull'uso comico del *topos* dell'*ubi sunt*'. Both poets, it was argued, whilst not generally received as humorous, unsettle their own poetic foundations through satire.

In 'Laughter Lines', speakers centered on irony, and themes of humour as contrast. Ruth Glynn (Leeds), in 'Umorismo and the Italian Historical Novel', examined Pirandello's uses of 'il sentimento del contrario', proposing that in *I vecchi e i giovani* he uses the principles of *umorismo* to unmask History as cycles of dream followed by disillusion, and to answer Manzoni's presentation of idealised progressive time. Charlotte Ross (Oxford) noted that *Se questo è un uomo* and *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* were reviewed together upon publication, and she offered routes to 'Comic Status for Levi and Calvino', authors who share a passion for scientific exactitude and a Pirandellian distrust of the false, and yet also use irony and humour to get closer to the essence of humanity (Levi) and to expand the parameters of the possible (Calvino). Daragh O'Connell (Strathclyde) suggested some amusing reasons behind '*Il sorriso dell'ignoto umorista*: Lack of Humour in Sicilian Fiction': contemporary Sicilian authors seem to battle with complex notions of 'impegno', and a pessimistic world-view where humour is inappropriate, or reserved for the purposes of counterpoint in certain stock characters descended from 'letteratura popolare'.

In the final session, 'Uncomfortable Humour', the conference came full circle with two presentations that argued for an understanding of humour as uniquely able to speak the

unspeakable, and therefore as more challenging than 'serious' approaches. Ed Emery's discussion of Dario Fo, 'The Science of Laughter and Laughter as a Weapon', used Fo's long public monologue as 'San Francesco' to show that the "all-licens'd fool" so feared by Shakespeare's Goneril had lost none of his political astuteness and biting wit in modern Italy. Vittorio Montemaggi (Cambridge) suggested 'Why *La vita è bella* should not be seen as an example of uncomfortable humour': Benigni's paradox, he argued, is that it is the Holocaust that is our uncomfortable truth, and so attempts to celebrate life as beautiful in the face of this history should not be condemned.

The closing round table was chaired by our second guest, Dr Mirna Cicioni (Monash), who drew together and stimulated further discussion on many of the key themes of the day, and finally, on the need for more humour in the Humanities! We are delighted that this last point has been reflected in the Italian module for this year's MPhil in European Literature, with one term of seminars offered on 'Senses of Humour'. The conference was entertaining and illuminating, and we hope it will lead to further graduate collaborations in the future.

**Catherine Galloway**  
**Corpus Christi, Cambridge**

**The Sublime and the City**  
**University College Cork, 28-30 April 2000**

The IX annual conference on Cross-Currents in Literature, Film and the Visual Arts took as its theme 'The Sublime and the City'. A feature of this conference series in general and of this edition in particular is the wide range of disciplines and language areas represented. Several papers addressed 'Italian' topics from ancient Rome to contemporary film and literature: '*IUXTA Morem Romanorum*: (Re)constructing Rome in Anglo-Saxon England' (Jane Hawkes, UCC); 'Rome's Secret Landscapes' (Katherine von Stackelberg, Trinity College Dublin); 'Elizabeth Bowen's Rome' (Eamonn Ó Carragáin, UCC); 'Boccaccio's Naples' (Anne O'Brien, UCC); 'Florence and the Sublime: The Stendhal Syndrome in Literature and Film (Stendhal, Forster, Ivory, Argento)' (Silvia Ross, UCC); 'Achieving the Ornament of Learning under the Rod of a Master: Schools and Schooling in Some Late Medieval Italian Communities' (Christine Meek, TCD); 'The Terrible City: The Ethics of Sublimity in Primo Levi and Roberto Benigni' (Marie Orton, Brigham Young); 'Venice After the Sublime' (Stefano Colangelo, Bologna/Brown); 'The Temporal Relativity of Antonio Tabucchi's Urban Space' (Rita Wilson, Witwatersrand); 'Sublime Chthonic: Paris as False Omphalos in Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*' (Kieran Creedon, UCC).

The full conference programme is available on the Internet at [http://www.ucc.ie/langlit/Sublime\\_programme.html](http://www.ucc.ie/langlit/Sublime_programme.html), while details of the 2001 conference on 'Crime and Punishment' can be found in the 'Forthcoming Events' section.

**Mark Chu**  
**University College Cork**

**Bonæ Litteræ: Current Research on *Studia Humanitatis*****Mansfield College, Oxford, 29 April 2000**

This one-day colloquium, sponsored by the Society for Renaissance Studies and designed to test whether humanist studies in Britain lie moribund or are registering signs of life, happily proved that there is no *corpus delicti*: interest in the tradition of *studia humanitatis* is not just alive but kicking with more panache than an Italian footballer. The organisers could be accused of fixing the fixture, as the participants – like the audience – represented a geographical spread that stretched beyond the British Isles, not only to other parts of Europe but also to the United States. The organisers, however, would prefer to think that this reflected that the *republica litterarum* is now, as in the Renaissance, truly international.

There were seven papers, given by both established scholars and doctoral students, and covering a range of topics: the classical tradition in the quattrocento (David Marsh on Aesop and the Humanists), the careers and thought of late fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century humanists (Ruth Chavasse on M.A. Sabellico; István Bejczy on Juan Luis Vives and his theory of history), the relations between *studia humanitatis* and theology (Scott Amos on the question of theological method from Valla to Melancthon; Stephen Bowd on the relations between ‘Christian Humanism’ and reform in Italy) and, moving further into the sixteenth century, papers on the teaching of classics in Germany in the 1530s (John Flood) and on Georg Fabricius and Epigraphy (Will Stenhouse). The day was completed with a round-table discussion, led by Martin McLaughlin, on humanist studies in the twenty-first century.

All the papers generated lively discussion. The general impression created by the sessions was of an energetic international community carrying forward humanist studies and bringing to bear on the subject various different disciplinary approaches, as well as contrasting concepts of ‘humanism’. Priorities for further research were agreed to be the continuing need for more scholarly editions of crucial works, building on the groundbreaking work of Kristeller and Bertalot. At the same time, studying *studia humanitatis*, it was considered, is entering a new phase with increasing possibilities to reconsider our interpretations of Renaissance humanism through the sources now available. A case, indeed, of much work to be done and – to judge from this colloquium – workers keen to do it.

It is expected that a selection of the papers will be published in a special issue of *Renaissance Studies* next year.

The organisers and the Society would like to thank Christ Church, Oxford for its financial support and Mansfield College, Oxford for hosting the event in such a welcoming fashion.

The success of this occasion has encouraged the organisers to repeat the venture in Oxford next year (see Conferences and Forthcoming Events section).

**Martin McLaughlin and David Rundle**  
**Christ Church, Oxford**

**Postgraduate Day Conference****University College London, 27 May 2000**

The annual SIS Graduate Day Conference was held at the Cruciform Building, University College London on Saturday 27 May 2000. Publicized widely via mailing lists and other electronic sources, we had a wide range of responses which translated into the widest-ranging programme so far. Representatives of 19 institutions were in attendance, with 25 papers presented from as far afield as

Wichita, Delhi and Melbourne. Subject matter covered ranged from literary topics, through feminism, politics, musicology, language teaching, cinema, history and philosophy. Over 75 people attended the conference with opportunities taken for discussion and networking with colleagues from around the world.

Financial support for the Conference was received from the SIS, UCL Graduate School and the Italian Department at UCL.

**Kevin McKenna**  
**University College London**

## **Environmental Values**

### **University College Cork, 23-25 June 2000**

An international interdisciplinary conference entitled 'Environmental Values' was held on 23-25 June 2000 at University College Cork, organized by Silvia Ross (Italian) and Mark Rowlands (Philosophy) and attended by over 70 delegates from Ireland, Great Britain, continental Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Papers ranged from topics as diverse as Environmental Ethics, Animal Rights, Literature, Media and the Environment, Ecofeminism, Ecotourism, Biodiversity, Sustainable Development, Environmental Aesthetics and so on. The conference received sponsorship not only from the Faculty of Arts and the President's Office of UCC but also from the British Council. Three keynote speakers of international standing also presented: Robin Attfield (University College Wales, Cardiff), Holmes Rolston III (Colorado State University) and Greta Gaard (Western Washington University). Papers of particular interest to Italianists include: 'From Enlightenment to Environment: Political Ecology in the Work of Anna Maria Ortese', Sharon Wood (Strathclyde), 'Marcovaldo's White Rabbit: Animals and Nature in Italo Calvino' Silvia Ross (UCC) and 'Landscapes of Desire: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Third World Locations in the Films of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Bernardo Bertolucci', Áine O'Healy (Loyola Marymount University at Los Angeles). The conference organizers intend to publish selected proceedings of the conference.

**Silvia Ross**  
**University College Cork**

### **Incontri di dialettologia** **University of Bristol (1999, 2000)**

Italian dialectology is flourishing, not least because the wealth of linguistic variation found in the dialects of Italy provides an inexhaustible source of data not only for typological and sociolinguistic studies, but also for testing and developing recent advances in linguistic theories such as generative grammar. Outside Italy the most significant concentration of scholars working in the field is here in Britain, as testified by the success of the *Incontro di Dialettologia* held at the University of Bristol in September 1999. The aim of the *Incontro* was to provide a forum for discussion and comparison of data and linguistic theory, as well as to encourage young researchers. Papers included: 'Initial lengthening in Abruzzese' (R. Hastings, Manchester); 'E...pur si muove!' (A. Lombardi, Cambridge); 'Subject clitics and more inflected infinitives in southern Italy' (A. Ledgeway, Cambridge); 'Root allomorphy in the *passato remoto* of the Italian dialects. How on earth did it happen?' (M. Maiden, Oxford); 'Alternation according to person and the evolution of perfective

auxiliaries in Italo-Romance' (D. Bentley and T. Eythórsson, Manchester); 'The personal infinitive in Sardinian revisited' (M. Jones, Essex); 'The role of the Agreement Constraints in the distribution of Subject Clitics in Piedmontese' (C. Gorla, Manchester); 'Object-participle agreement in Friulian: the exception that proves the rule' (J.C. Smith, Oxford).

Thanks to generous financial support from the University of Bristol Alumni Foundation two distinguished Italian scholars were invited as Guest Speakers to the second *Incontro* which has just taken place, 14-15 September 2000. Professor Paola Benincà (Padua) gave a lecture entitled 'Etimologia e grammatica sincronica', while Dr Michela Cennamo spoke on 'Aspects of the passive voice in Old Italian'. Other papers were presented on a range of phonetic, morphological, syntactic and sociolinguistic topics, covering a wide spectrum of Italo-romance varieties: *The development of Sicilian (in)di/nni and the theory of partitive 'ne'* (D. Bentley, Manchester); 'The relative markers *che* and *chi*: an instance of grammaticalization or exaptation?' (R. Middleton, Bristol); 'On wh-demonstratives across the North-Western Italian dialects' (N. Munaro, Padova); 'AgrP or no AgrP?' (S. Paoli, Manchester); 'Italian consonant gemination: phonetic evidence for a fortition continuum' (E. Payne, Cambridge); 'Methodological considerations in the collection of data from speakers/informants' (S. Tufi, Liverpool); 'The Faire-par and Faire-infinitive causative constructions: evidence from the Cosentino imperative' (A. Lombardi, Manchester and A. Ledgeway, Cambridge); 'Piedmontese SCLs in coordination' (C. Gorla, Manchester). The colloquium closed with a lively discussion introduced by Professor Nigel Vincent (Manchester) on the research project into the grammar of early Italian vernaculars which was recently awarded an AHRB Major Research grant of £403,025. The aim of the four-year collaborative project between the Universities of Bristol (Mair Parry) and Manchester (Nigel Vincent and Robert Hastings) is to produce a large reference grammar of the early vernaculars based on a comparative grammatical study. Two Research Assistants, Alessandra Lombardi (Manchester) and Roberta Middleton (Bristol) are employed on the project – to be known as SAVI (Sintassi degli antichi volgari italiani) – and there are two funded AHRB postgraduate studentships to start in October 2001 (the topics relate to modality (Manchester) and deixis (Bristol): further information may be obtained from the Departments of Italian or Linguistics in the relevant university). It is expected that the early vernaculars will constitute the theme of one of the sessions of the next *Incontro*, which will be held at Bristol in September 2001.

**Mair Parry**  
**University of Bristol**

## Other Reports

### Subject Centre For Languages, Linguistics And Area Studies

The following report was received from Prof. Judith Bryce, the SIS representative on the Advisory Board of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.

#### Report For Associations Of The Advisory Board Meeting

The Advisory Board of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies held its first meeting on 26 September 2000 at the Centre for Information on Language Teaching in London. The Board is chaired by Professor Richard Towell of the University of Salford. The Subject Centre is one of 24 such centres covering the range of disciplines taught in Higher Education. Together, these form the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) ([www.ltsn.ac.uk](http://www.ltsn.ac.uk)).

#### Role of Subject Associations

The Chair explained to the Board that the original HEFCE report outlining the proposals for the LTSN had stressed the key role of subject associations in the success of the Subject Centres. The following actions were suggested to strengthen the links between the Subject Centre and the subject associations:

- association journals should contain information about the activities of the Subject Centre;
- subject associations should contribute to CILT's HE bulletin and the Subject Centre newsletter;
- the Subject Centre should appear as an agenda item on AGMs of the associations;
- members of Subject Centre staff could address association conferences;
- Subject Centre mailings could be sent to the Chair and Secretary of associations.

#### Subject Centre Strategy

The Director of the Subject Centre, Professor Michael Kelly of the University of Southampton, explained that the primary function of the Subject Centre is to serve the needs of the higher education teaching community. Students are indirect beneficiaries of the Subject Centre at present though they may be served directly by some of the material on the website.

The Subject Centre will facilitate innovation by identifying funding sources and working in partnership with other organisations both nationally and internationally. Workshops are being organised, details of which can be obtained from the Subject Centre. Information on innovative practice and more specifically on Subject Centre activity will be provided in newsletters and will be available on the website. The Subject Centre will be contacting departments to establish departmental contacts. It was also felt at the meeting that the Subject Centre had a key role to play in facilitating debate between the benchmarking committee and the wider community. This might be done through the Subject Centre website ([www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk](http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk)).

#### Specialist Groups

Specialist Groups for languages, linguistics and area studies have been established. These groups comprise a small number of specialists in the field who advise on the learning and teaching needs of their area. The Specialist Group for Languages will cover all languages and cater for teachers of

both the specialist and non-specialist learners. The Chair of the Specialist Group, Professor David Bickerton, hopes that the activities of the group will be in response to the expressed needs of the teaching community. The Chair of the Linguistics Specialist Group, Dr Keith Brown, reported on the development of the web page. Correspondence groups are being established to help identify needs. Professor Dick Ellis, Chair of the Area Studies Specialist Group highlighted the broad remit of the group. It will aim to raise awareness of Area Studies as a discipline and focus their activity on issues of inter-, multi- and cross- disciplinary. A correspondence group, a website mailbase and an electronic bulletin will be established. A particular concern, shared with other Specialist Groups, is the implications of 'pie-baldity' raised by cross-departmental teaching programmes.

### **Refereed Journal**

The board considered whether the Subject centre should produce a refereed journal on teaching and learning issues. It was felt that there were a number of journals already in existence and that it would be important to identify a niche, which needed to be filled. It was recommended that the LTSN should be asked to raise the issue of the status of pedagogic research in the RAE.

<b>To contact the Subject Centre</b>	<b>Telephone: 023 8059 4814</b>
<b>Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies</b>	<b>Fax: 023 8059 4815</b>
<b>University of Southampton</b>	<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:llas@lang.soton.ac.uk">llas@lang.soton.ac.uk</a>
<b>Highfield</b>	<b>URL:</b> <a href="http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk">www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk</a>
<b>Southampton</b>	
<b>SO17 1BJ</b>	

## Deadlines For Submissions For Number 34 (2001)

In an effort to facilitate the gathering of information for the next issue of the *Bulletin*, we are publishing here the deadlines, preferred format, and addresses for submission of material. *All material may be in Italian or English and, except for articles, should normally be sent in the body of an e-mail message.*

### *Articles*

**Friday, 30 March 2001**

**Dr Mark Chu, Dept of Italian, University College Cork, Ireland; e-mail MChu@italian.ucc.ie**

Articles of an *informative and/or didactic nature* should be submitted in three typescript copies. Please use double spacing and the same font size (at least 12 point) throughout, including footnotes, and leave ample margins (at least 2.5 cm). When an article is accepted for publication, we require a digital copy (MSWord file on diskette or as e-mail attachment) of the definitive version incorporating any revisions. Typescripts and disks should be prepared in accordance with the *MHRA Style Book*, obtainable from Maney Publishing, Hudson Road, Leeds, LS9 7DL, price: UK & EU £5.00; overseas £6.00; US \$12.00.

### *Conference Reports*

**Friday, 31 August 2001**

**Dr Mark Chu, Dept of Italian, University College Cork, Ireland; e-mail MChu@italian.ucc.ie**

Reports of 500-800 words, which may be edited.

### *Chronicle, 2000-2001*

**Friday, 31 August 2001**

**Dr Simon Gilson, Dept of Italian, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL; e-mail s.gilson@warwick.ac.uk**

Information should be submitted under the following headings: Staffing Matters; Awards, Research Activities and Seminars; Degree Schemes and Courses; SOCRATES; Other News.

### *Forthcoming Events, occurring up to and beyond 30 September 2000*

**Dr Phil Cooke, Dept of Modern Languages (Italian Studies), University of Strathclyde, Livingstone Tower, 26 Richmond Street, Glasgow G1 1XH; e-mail p.e.cooke@strath.ac.uk**

*or*, **Prof. Brian Richardson, Dept of Italian, The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT; e-mail B.F.Richardson@leeds.ac.uk**

### *Forthcoming Events, occurring after 1 October 2001*

**Friday, 31 August 2001**

**Dr Adalgisa Giorgio, Dept of European Studies and Modern Languages, University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7AY; e-mail mlsag@bath.ac.uk**

### *Staff List*

**Friday, 31 August 2001**

**Dr Katia Pizzi, Board of Italian Studies, School of European Culture and Languages, Cornwallis Building, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NF; e-mail K.Pizzi@ukc.ac.uk**