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SOCIETY FOR ITALIAN STUDIES

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FOREWORD

The Bulletin of the Society for Italian Studies appears this year in a new, leaner format. As in previous years, however, it provides information on conference and research activities; news on departmental appointments, promotions and retirements; distinctions achieved by members of departments and grants and awards received. It also seeks to provide news of department-based seminars, workshops, lecture series and other local research-related activities in addition to bringing together reports of Italian studies conferences and interdisciplinary conferences of interest to Italianists. Reports or notices of collaborative ventures and Italian-related events from departments and other sources are also welcome.

CHRONICLE

Staffing Matters

It was with great sadness and regret that colleagues in Italian at the University of Cardiff reported the death of Remo Catani, within just one year of his retirement. An obituary by Vanna Motta will appear in the Spring 2006 issue of *Italian Studies* (vol. 61, no. 1).

The University of Leeds made a number of new appointments in 2004-05: in the area of twentieth-century culture, Alan O'Leary has filled a post left vacant by Peter Fuller's retirement in 2004; Gigliola Sulis is also due to join the department in January 2006. A three-year post in the area of medieval and renaissance studies has been filled by Matthew Treherne.

Also in medieval studies, Catherine Keen has joined the staff of University College London, while Alessia Ronchetti has been appointed to a three-year post at University College Cork.

At the University of Durham, Monica Francioso has taken up a one-year post and Ita McCarthy is acting head of department. Senior Lecturer, Carla Singh, has retired. The department has begun the process of appointing a Chair in Italian, and is also due to advertise a lectureship in early 2006.

Awards

In June 2005, the Italian Ambassador to Ireland, Alberto Schepisi, in the name of the President of the Italian Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, conferred on University College Cork's Professor Eduardo Saccone the prestigious title of *Commendatore dell'Ordine della Stella della Solidarietà Italiana* for his special contribution to the promotion of Italian culture in the world.

At the University of Leeds, Brian Richardson has been awarded a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship from 2005 to 2008. His research project examines the circulation of literature in Renaissance society in manuscript, in print, and through the spoken or sung word.

Other News

2004-05 saw two long-established departments of Italian, at the Universities of Exeter and Wales, Bangor, threatened by closure. Letters of protest were sent by the Society and its members, as well as by students of both institutions, with the result that the decisions were reversed and Italian will continue to be taught to degree level at both universities.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

The Society for Italian Studies Biennial Conference Salford, 7-10 July 2005

The organizers of SIS 2005 – Salford, Manchester, and Manchester Metropolitan universities – were delighted to welcome over a hundred delegates to the University of Salford and its sun-drenched, verdant, and almost bucolic Peel Park campus. The schedule of sessions and papers remained in a state of flux until the eve of the event itself, a situation that was further conditioned by the tragic events in London on the opening morning of the conference. However, the admirable determination of a great many delegates to attend the conference despite the logistical problems caused by the terrorist attacks typified the sense of camaraderie that emerged during the event. Accordingly, the SIS 2005 organizers were more than happy to reshuffle a number of sessions in order to accommodate delegates who eventually managed to travel up from the London area. SIS 2005 featured three Plenary sessions covering a diverse range of themes; Zyg Barański's informative and well-received seminar on Petrarch, Dante, and Cavalcanti was followed on the Friday by Michael Caesar's incisive examination of the concept of World Literature, and the role of Franco Moretti in fuelling the debate surrounding this often controversial issue. Luciano Cheles' illustrated presentation, focusing on the influence of Piero della Francesca on contemporary visual culture, rounded off the Plenary sessions in fine style.

Four Open Sessions were also included within the conference schedule to provide delegates with an opportunity to engage in unstructured debate in the context of their respective research fields. This appeared to be a successful innovation, since all four sessions – focusing on Renaissance studies, 20th/21st Century literature, contemporary film, and the discipline of Italian Studies itself – were very well attended, and could have continued well beyond their sixty-minute slots. The conference's themed sessions and individual papers gave a number of indications regarding the changing landscape of Italian Studies. The disciplines of contemporary literature and film were particularly well represented this year, with themes including 'Women Writing the 'Home'', 'Narrating the Po Valley in Contemporary Italian Fiction and Cinema', 'Queer Identities', and 'Reconfiguring Sicily: Sicily on Film'. The sessions focusing on Renaissance studies, pre-20th-Century literature, and Italian language, though fewer in number, were nevertheless characterized by a range of innovative perspectives and impressive standards of research.

Aside from the conference sessions themselves, many delegates also attended the Commemoration of the life and work of Maggie Günsberg which was held on the Thursday evening. Maggie was one of the most outstanding and versatile scholars of her generation, and Zyg Barański's tribute to her was followed by a musical recital the different elements of which were chosen to reflect the historical and cultural diversity that inspired Maggie and her work. Delegates also took the opportunity to peruse an exhibition of paintings by the conference's artist-in-residence, Doug Thompson, together with book displays organized by Maney and Troubador. The conference dinner was held at the San Carlo restaurant in the centre of Manchester, and it was very pleasing to see an excellent turnout among conference participants for the event. Both from an academic and a social perspective, SIS 2005 appeared to have been a fulfilling experience for many of the participants who were kind enough to contact the organizers in the days following the event, offering a range of positive comments. As academic initiatives go, conference organization undoubtedly tends to elicit more than its fair share of occupational hazards; fortunately SIS 2005 ran relatively smoothly, and we wish the organizers of SIS 2007 similar good fortune in due course.

William Hope and Gillian Ania,
University of Salford

La violenza illustrata: The Rhetoric and Representation of Political Violence in Italy from 1968 to the Present Day
CRASSH, University of Cambridge, 19-20 November, 2004

The aim of the conference was to offer the first interdisciplinary overview of the representational production of post-'68 Italy in the context of the violence of the period and the attempts to deal with its memory. In the event, most papers dealt with the period known as the *anni di piombo* or its legacies in a wide range of media and disciplines, among which: literature, cinema, historiography, juridical discourse, cultural studies, anthropology, social and intellectual history. The conference was structured along thematic lines in order to further encourage interdisciplinary discussion.

The opening session, on 'The Meaning of Violence', included an introduction to issues around the conference theme by Pierpaolo Antonello (Cambridge), which provoked an animated debate on the use of the term 'terrorism'. This was followed by Anton Blok's (Amsterdam) provocative anthropological perspective on the phenomenon of violence, which asserted that, rather than radical difference, it is proximity and the experience of asymmetrical relationships in the 'narcissism of minor differences' that generates conflict. Lisa Gerusa (Bologna) posited a crucial distinction between the strategy of the avant-garde and that of the *casamatta* or ghetto, typical of terrorist groups like the Red Brigades, as two different modalities of violent social upheaval.

The second session, 'From Rhetoric to Praxis' saw Alison Jamieson (independent scholar and security consultant) contrast the characterisation of violence by left-wing terrorist groups and the mafia; Antonio Tricorni (Pisa and Calabria) discussed the Utopian challenge to the concepts of limit and authority, bourgeois morality and values, Catholic culture and reformist communism in the light of an

'oedipal' phenomenon suggested in the filmic and literary texts dealing with the 1960s and 1970s; while Francesco Caviglia (CNR, Genova) and Leonardo Cecchini (University of Aarhus) employed the criminal theory of 'violentization' to account for how representations such as Gillo Pontecorvo's *La battaglia di Algeri* can lead in stages to violent action, and raised the key issue of the ethical representation of political violence.

In the session on 'Gender, Violence, Representation', Ruth Glynn (Bristol) considered how the different 'speaking identities' inhabited by the female terrorist in her memoirs, especially the mature or retrospective creation of a post-terrorist identity, are often denied to her in adaptations of her work by (male) others. Giancarlo Lombardi (CUNY) in a close reading of Giuseppe Bertolucci's *Segreti segreti* carefully traced how the cinematic tools of script, costume, mise-en-scène and montage, as well as gender tropes, are employed to give a devastating portrait of the moral state of Italy in the 1980s. Luciana D'Arcangeli (Strathclyde) closed this session with an account of the appalling punishment rape of Franca Rame by members of the Carabinieri, before showing in full the televised performance of Rame's monologue based on this experience, *Lo stupro*.

'Representing Violence Today' contained the sole paper on right-wing violence, in which Anna Bull (Bath) explored how contemporary exponents of the far-right are engaged in a rhetorical battle to present themselves as the authentic inheritors of the fascist soul. Isabella Pezzini (Rome) discussed televisual accounts of violence as a pictorial narrative of Italy's past in the recent programmes broadcast to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the RAI foundation before going on to examine the important documentary series on terrorism, *La notte della Repubblica*.

A range of perspectives on the Moro affair comprised the session on 'The Meaning of Events'. David Moss (Milan) offered an anthropologically informed examination of the 'official' scrutiny of the Parliamentary Committees of Enquiry into the Moro affair between 1979 and 2001, while Joe Farrell (Strathclyde) provided an overview of the various ways in which the 'tragedy' – a key word in Farrell's reading – of the Moro kidnapping and murder has been interpreted, from an autonomous action of the Red Brigades to cynical political machination by the Christian Democrats. A third paper in this session, by Neelam Svrivastava (Newcastle) provided a convincing reading of Pontecorvo's film, *Ogro* – ostensibly dealing with Basque terrorism – as a complex left-wing response to the circumstances of the Moro case.

In 'Narrative Contestations', Eleanor Spaventa (Birmingham) took the kidnapping of Judge Mario Sossi as a case study to explore how legal language and concepts can be employed by victim, perpetrator and government to influence the development and outcome of a particular event. Angela Barwig (Erlangen-Nürnberg) gave a very complete account of the various responses to political violence by Italian singer-songwriters, a paper complemented by Domenico Scarpa's (Naples, 'L'Orientale') similarly full account of the responses provided in literary writing from the seventies and beyond in the works of influential writers such as Calvino, Sciascia, Parise and Eco, arguing that the most successful reflections occurred in texts avoiding explicit reflection on terrorism.

The final themed session of the conference, 'Picturing the Seventies' explored cinematic and commemorative practices. Julian Preece (Kent) and Alan O'Leary (Cambridge) gave an account of the German film, *Die bleierne Zeit* and discussed

how the Italian translation of its title, *Anni di piombo*, came to lend its name to the period of political violence and terrorism, before arguing that it is misleading and should be jettisoned. Mary Wood (Birkbeck College) described how the political filmmakers Petri, Rosi, Risi and Comencini have represented the pervasive nature of state power and the mysteries associated with it, through an 'overdetermined' use of cinematic space and mise-en-scène. The session was rounded up with an account by Ed Emery (Red Notes) of the march on Rome organised by Dario Fo and Franca Rame to commemorate Piazza Fontana and other *stragi*, before providing an autobiographical account of his activities as an archivist of left-wing protest in Italy.

The conference closed with a final roundtable which crystallized a disagreement that underpinned much of the discussion during the conference: whether the proper object of study should be the events themselves (and the facts about them) or how those events come to be represented, remembered and interpreted in cultural products like novels and films.

Pierpaolo Antonello and Alan O'Leary
University of Cambridge

**Society for Italian Studies Postgraduate Colloquium
University of Cambridge, 16-17 April, 2005**

This year the annual Postgraduate Colloquium was hosted in Cambridge by Pembroke College and organized by Linda Risso and Claudia Peverini. Once again, the Colloquium offered young researchers the opportunity to discuss their research and to form new networks in a friendly and supportive environment. Particularly remarkable this year was the fact that more than twenty people attended the Colloquium without presenting a paper and took active part in the panel discussions as well as in the several social events that were organized throughout the weekend.

The thirty papers presented at the Colloquium covered areas of linguistics, history of language, literature, translation studies, gender, political writing, politics, history of art and architecture, theatre, and history of cinema. It was a special aim of the organizers of this year's Colloquium to include students working on various aspects of Italian studies in order to show how lively and heterogeneous the research interests of the discipline really are. For this reason, the call for papers was circulated through the most well known mailing lists dedicated to Linguistics, History, Politics and History of Art in addition to the Italian studies mailing list. As a result of such promotion (the organisers are particularly thankful to Dr Sandra Paoli, Dr Paola Filippucci and Dr Claudia Bolgia), 41 abstracts were received, of which only 30 could be included in the final programme, owing to a lack of facilities for parallel sessions. The final selection however reflected once more the extremely wide range of topics currently researched within Italian studies.

Following the successful example of previous Colloquia, we tried to find a balance between academic exchange and social occasions in which postgraduate students could establish new contacts. A wine reception kindly sponsored by Mr Keith Sykes helped to facilitate this exchange, in addition to the discussions which carried on over lunch and into the evening.

The conference organizers are in contact with two publishers who have expressed interest in publishing a refereed selection of papers from the Colloquium. The details of the publication are not defined yet, but the Colloquium's organizers hope to be able to follow the trend inaugurated in 2003 by Dr Ian Revie and Luisa Carrer at Edinburgh University, and continued last year by Dr George Ferzoco and Monica Boria at Leicester University.

The organizers are very thankful for the academic and financial support offered by the Department of Italian at Cambridge University and would like to express their gratitude to Prof. Zygmunt Barański, Dr Abigail Brundin and Dr Pierpaolo Antonello. This year the Colloquium received additional sponsorship from the Association for the Study of Modern Italy, which also helped to circulate the call for papers and the Colloquium's programme among their members and on their website.

Finally, we would like to thank Monica Boria for her kind help. Monica has helped us throughout the organization of the Colloquium offering her valuable experience as one of the organizers of last year's Colloquium.

Linda Risso
University of Cambridge

**Dialogue with Tradition: Contemporary Writers and Literary Heritage
University of Warwick, 5 February 2005**

The conference, organized by Liz Wren-Owens (Italian), brought together researchers from Arabic, English, French, German, Italian and Portuguese departments to discuss the ways in which writers in their disciplines from the 1970s onwards used literary heritage in their own work.

The conference took 1970 as a starting point, based on the notion that dialogue with tradition changed around this time due to a crisis in literature and the belief that writers could no longer say anything new or original. The keynote speaker, Professor Martin McLaughlin (Oxford), contextualized this crisis in light of an earlier crisis (particularly in the Italian tradition) at the time of the Renaissance. Professor McLaughlin began by examining the peculiar nature of the Italian literary canon, which produced three great writers between 1305 and 1350 in Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, and then saw an absence of literary giants until 1500. As a result of the dominance of this triumvirate, the writers of the Renaissance, such as Poliziano and Alberti felt that their own writings could only be mosaics of the works which preceded them. Professor McLaughlin suggested that the Italian crisis of 'originality' might in fact be traced back to the period 1370-1470, rather than just to the 1970s when the notion of re-writing was brought to the fore by writers such as Bakhtin, Kristeva and Harold Bloom. Professor McLaughlin then offered an overview of dialogue with tradition in Italo Calvino's texts of the 1970s, examining the ways in which *The Invisible Cities* is a re-writing of Marco Polo and suggesting that *Mr Palomar* is modelled on Pliny. Professor McLaughlin's keynote address offered a valuable and interesting contextualization for the papers which followed.

The theoretical debate within the Italian tradition in the 1970s as to what literature should aim to do was explored in Florian Mussgnug's (UCL) paper, offering

an interesting parallel with the later papers which explored how debate with the canon was achieved in practice in the work of individual papers. Interesting links between the different national traditions and methodologies emerged throughout the day, as papers explored the ways in which key literary figures were used (and abused) both in their national tradition and abroad. In addition to the great figures of the canon such as Dante, lesser known figures such as W.G. Sebald and Fernando Pessoa also emerged as representing important notions for writers both inside and outside their national boundaries. Papers illustrated how through appropriating and re-working the texts, characters and central concepts of the literary canon, contemporary writers attempt to situate themselves and to problematize notions of both the past and present.

Throughout the day the notion of dialogue with tradition as a politicized, religious and potentially transgressive process was also addressed, with an analysis of how the British government uses the canon in education policy (Claire Feehily, Birkbeck College) and the issues faced by Islamic writers when they write in Arabic, the language of the Qur'an (Mohammed-Salah Omri, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter).

The day provided a valuable forum for discussion and provoked new ideas and leads for researchers to follow up on. The refrain in post-conference emails has been 'when can we do it again?'

Liz Wren-Owens
University of Warwick

SUBMISSIONS TO THE SIS WEBSITE AND STAFF LIST (2006)

In an effort to facilitate the gathering of information for the SIS website, the schedule for the submission of material which has traditionally appeared in the *Bulletin* has been retained. All material may be in either Italian or English and should normally be sent in the body of an e-mail message. Attachments (formatted Word 2000 or above) may be used for longer documents. Submissions may be edited slightly for publication on the website.

**Dr Daniela LaPenna, Department of Italian Studies,
University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6AA
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Submissions are requested on the following topics, and may be sent throughout the year to Dr LaPenna:

- Conference Reports: reports (500-800 words) are welcomed from conference organisers or participants on Italian Studies conferences, and on interdisciplinary and other conferences of interest to Italianists.
- Staffing Matters: news on departmental appointments, promotions and retirements.
- Honours and Awards: news on distinctions achieved by members of departments, and on grants and awards.

- Research Activities and Seminars: news of department-based seminars, workshops, lecture series and other local research-related activities.
- Reports or notices of collaborative ventures and Italian-related events from departments and other sources are also welcome.

**Dr Catherine O’Rawe, Department of Italian,
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Submissions are requested for the updating of the SIS Staff List for 2006-07, which will appear as usual in printed as well as electronic form. Details for the academic year 2006-07 should be sent to Dr O’Rawe at the above address by **Friday August 25 2006**.