

The 2016 SIS Postgraduate Colloquium **Charting Deviation** (16th December 2016) was held at the University of Leeds and organised by PhD students Alice Franzon, Laura Lucia Rossi and Clara Stella. The organisers had invited proposals on how “deviation” is represented, constructed, expressed and interpreted across Italian Studies in any historical period and discipline. The event took place at the Leeds Humanities Research Institute (LHRI).



The colloquium started with Frank Zappa’s famous quotation, “Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible”, which was a *leitmotiv* throughout the colloquium. In the first panel,

chaired by Clara Stella, we looked at *deviation* in Medieval Italy through the lens of Dante’s theology and Cavalcanti’s philosophical and lyric profile. Then we moved into the 20th century with an analysis of the narrative, and non-narrative, nature of the ‘romanzo in versi’. Michael Biasin (University of Reading) focused on Dante’s literary experience of purgation through the second realm of the afterlife, showing how in some parts it fits in while in others it contrasts with the Florentine culture of penance of the 13th century. The literary representation of the poet’s embodied pain was also the main topic of Rommany Jenkins’s paper (University of Birmingham), which highlighted the complexity of Cavalcanti’s relationship with the troubadour literature of Southern France. By considering the hybrid nature of the verse novel, Francesco Roncen (Università di Padova) gave a critical insight on the most representative examples of the genre, namely Elio Pagliarani’s *La Ragazza Carla* (1960) and the more recent *Conoscente* by Umberto Fiori (2014).



The first keynote speaker of the colloquium was Dr Pierpaolo Antonello (University of Cambridge). In his talk '**Un differente impegno: laicità, responsabilità, e pedagogie del fare**', Antonello compared the approaches of three intellectual outsiders (Bruno Munari, Don Milani and Primo Levi) to the social debate of the time. Antonello demonstrated how – although they came from different experiences – they shared similar agendas. All were guided by a strong trust in science and knowledge and they tackled with



similar approaches some of the most debated issues in post-war Italy, e.g. the problem of education and the role of the intellectual. In the debate that followed, the focus was on the problem of school and education in Italy at the present time and on the split between the theoretical reflection of the *intelligentsia* and the actual implementation of school reforms.



In the second panel, chaired by Dr Olivia Santovetti (University of Leeds), we investigated the role of deviation in the relationship between representation, art and life. Oscar Seip's paper (University of Manchester) dealt with the employment of the theatre trope during the sixteenth century, especially focusing on Giulio Camillo's so-called *Theatre of Knowledge*, and underlining the links between the concepts of theatricality, subject and space. Serena Vandi (University of Leeds) compared Dante's and Carlo Emilio Gadda's works exploring how they both share an idea of literature as a

mission of research: for both authors, deviation from a fixed and conventional language addresses the ethical aim of revealing truth. The attempt to unveil truth by means of expression, together with the concept of the theatricality of life, were also the topics of Annalisa Zungri's paper (Scuola Normale Superiore). Through the analysis of Pier Paolo Pasolini's short film *Che cosa sono le nuovole?*, Zungri investigated the author's will to reflect on the relationship between artistic representation and life.

In the following panel (chaired by Laura Lucia Rossi) the key theme was the experience of deviation as generated by *otherness*. Eleanor Crabtree (University of St Andrews) presented the theoretical framework with which she aims to consider post-colonial renegotiations in her Ph.D. about the casting of the city of Rome as a protagonist in recent Italian post-colonial narratives. Crabtree focused in particular on how these texts deviate from the fascist imperialist connotation of Rome in order to demand a renegotiation and re-signification of the city. Elisa Walker (University of St Andrews) also reflected upon the methodology that she uses in her Ph.D. dissertation. In this, she analyses the works of Elvira Dones through the lens of queer theory, in order to understand how postcolonialising the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, although leading to disorientation and failure in conventional terms, thereby brings new values. Finally, Carola Farci (Università di Padova) presented her analysis of the novel *La stagione che verrà* by Paola Soriga (2015), highlighting how the novel breaks a commonplace of Sardinian writing: the tendency to narrate only about the island. *La stagione che verrà*, in the context of globalization, shows instead how three young people experience the spatial otherness of the world, thus expanding the borders of the imagery of the island.





Dr Olivia Santovetti introduced the second keynote speaker Dr Alessandra Diazzi (University of Manchester), who, in her talk '**Deviant Subjects: Disorder and Commitment in Ottiero Ottieri and Edoardo Sanguineti**', compared the two writers Edoardo Sanguineti (who represents in some way the norm of the intellectual of his time) and Ottiero Ottieri (a deviation from that norm). More specifically she discussed how in their works they dealt with psychic disorder in two almost antithetical ways. If for Sanguineti the deviant subject coincides with the figure of the subversive (which, in the literary work, has a counterpart in a disorder of language that has a revolutionary power), for Ottieri mental deviance is a trap for the subject, incapable of any revolutionary act (which has a counterpart in the literary text in the form

of an aspiration towards order). In the debate that followed, the attention was moved to a third writer, Giorgio Manganelli, who focused on the question of mental disorder.

In the last panel (chaired by Alice Franzon) we focused on deviance and its political use in recent literature and films, thus focusing on works published at the end of the 20th century and during the 21st century. Rachel Johnson (University of Leeds) analysed the figure of the *undead* in Italian cinema using Lacan's theory of the Real; she argued how just as *Antigone* provides a model of the undead undermining state power, undead figures in films – like the figure of Aldo Moro in *Il divo* (Sorrentino, 2008) and the figure(s) of the Black Bloc protesters in *Diaz: Non pulire questo sangue* (Vicari, 2012) – might do the same. Marco Malvestio (Università di Padova) showed us how extreme right-wing writers have used the literary genre of alternate history in order to convey their political arguments; the results are often amusing, as the analysis of *Gli anni dell'aquila* by Enrico Passaro (1996) proved. Political polemic was also at



centre of Giampaolo Rugarli's work, as Martina Codicè (Bangor University) pointed out. By looking at a range of oeuvres from *Il punto di vista del mostro* (1989) to *Manuale di solitudine* (2015), Codicè argued how recurrence of carnivalesque elements and the taking over of irrationality are configured as desperate reactions against the model of society proposed by capitalism and its social implications.

The closing remarks by the colloquium organisers focused on the wide range of topics discussed, which covered a long span of time (moving from the 13th century to the present

day) and a variety of disciplines. The organisers would like to take the opportunity to thank again everyone who took part in the colloquium, the SIS for funding and supporting the event, and the University of Leeds and the LHRI, who hosted the colloquium.

Alice Franzon

Clara Stella

Laura Lucia Rossi