Cesare Barbieri Courier

Spring 1961

Volume III, Number 2

Cesare Barbieri Courier

SPRING 1961 VOLUME III, No. 2

CONTENTS

Page

THE CENTENARY OF ITALIAN UNITY . . . 3

THE RISORGIMENTO AND ITALIAN LITERATURE – Olga Ragusa . 4

POEMS – John Tagliabue . . . 10

EXISTENTIALISM IN ITALY – Nicola Abbagnano . . . 12

MUSIC – Clarence H. Barber . . . 19

ART – Belle Krasne Ribicoff . . . 22

BOOKS:

Sergio Pacifici: *The Dark and the Light* by Elio Vittorini . . . 24

Alan Cassels: *Italy in the Giolittian Era* by A. William Salomone . . 27

ITEMS . . . 30

CONTRIBUTORS . . . 31

Cover: Giovanni Fattori: Soldiers on Horseback
From the collection of Nelson C. White

Published by The Cesare Barbieri Center of Italian Studies at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut

The *Cesare Barbieri Courier* is issued twice a year and is designed to provide information on matters of Italian culture and the affairs of The Cesare Barbieri Center.

Distributed at no charge to *Friends of the Center*. Subscription price $1.00 a year; single numbers: 50 cents.

Editor: MICHAEL R. CAMPO

The Centenary of Italian Unity

While we Americans observe this year the centennial of the outbreak of our divisive War Between the States, Italians celebrate the centennial of their Unification. In March 1861, after centuries of tyrannous disunity, the states and regions of the Italian peninsula were finally forged into a single nation. Although the Three Venetias and Rome were yet to join the Kingdom of Italy, the event was cause for jubilation for it crowned a long, sustained, heroic national effort – the Risorgimento, the struggle for liberation and national unity. By it the Italian people were reborn in new vigor which has since manifested itself in a dazzling variety of ways.

Throughout the world and in many cities of the United States ceremonies have been held commemorating the centenary of Italian unity. At Turin especially, the cradle of Italian unification, elaborate programs have been designed which extend from May to October. In our own immediate area, on a more modest scale, several interesting events also have celebrated the centennial. One of these was the special concert of Italian music performed by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Fritz Mahler. Another was the special exhibition, *Salute to Italy: 100 Years of Italian Art,* held at the Wadsworth Atheneum from April 20 to May 28. This exhibition, jointly sponsored by the Atheneum and the Cesare Barbieri Center of Italian Studies, represented an unusual survey of Italian painting, drawing and sculpture. Both events are reviewed in the music and art sections of this journal.

In addition, the Barbieri Center sponsored a centennial lecture series which included talks by G. E. Kidder Smith on "Contemporary Italian Architecture" and by H. Stuart Hughes on "The Italian *Risorgimento:* Some Unfinished Business." The Barbieri Center also arranged an exhibition at Trinity College of one hundred years of Italian postage stamps from the collection of Dr. Everett H. Adams of West Hartford, Connecticut.

As a final salute to the Italian nation on the occasion of its historic centenary of unity the Barbieri Center dedicates the present number of the *Cesare Barbieri Courier.*

The Risorgimento and Italian Literature

In its historical limits, the Risorgimento is the movement for Italian unity and independence which gained momentum after the Restauration of 1815 and came to a successful conclusion with the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. But like all vital historical movements, the Risorgimento overflows its chronological barriers at both ends. While 1861 marked the end of the second war for Italian independence, it also prepared for a third and, if we wish to call them so, a fourth and a fifth. For in 1870, Rome was wrested from the Pope; in 1915–18, it was the turn of the provinces to be freed from Austria; and in 1945, the social revolution aiming to make Italian life more democratic, and comparable to the nineteenth-century revolts that had liberalized Italian life politically, was still felt to be an integral part of the Risorgimento.

Similarly, the roots of the Risorgimento reach far into the past, and long before 1815 poets and philosophers had indulged in the dream of a reborn Italy, rival in power and grandeur to the Roman Empire. Dante had fashioned the image of an Italy linguistically united: *il bel paese là, dove il sì suona*. Petrarch had added the definition of a geographic reality: *il bel paese ch'Appenin parte e 'l mar circonda e l'Alpe*. Machiavelli had called for liberation from foreign oppressors.

In its indefatigable erudition, the eighteenth century had shed light on earlier centuries of Italian history. And in the twenty or thirty years prior to Napoleon's descent into Italy (1796), a vigorous program of reforms, especially in Lombardy, but in other parts of Italy as well, laid the groundwork for renewing and strengthening the Italian spirit. It was in those years that the clarion call sounded most powerful in the impassioned verse of Alfieri, as it was to echo later in the early Leopardi, and ring with polyphonic splendor through the life and works of the soldier-poet Foscolo.

Seen in this light, the Risorgimento colors Italian life and culture from about 1750 (discounting earlier adumbrations of a united Italy as the dreams without issue they were) to the present.

The literary movement which paralleled the political movement was Romanticism. The close connection between Italian literature and political action throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century has always been recognized. So much so that a strong current in literary criticism has tended to equate Italian Romanticism with the Risorgimento: "From the literary point of view, the Ottocento is the age of Romanticism; from the political, the age of the Risorgimento." But Romanticism, too, though apparently limited to the years between 1816 (date at which Mme de Staël's article on the usefulness of translations set off a fiery literary *querelle*) and the middle of the century (when evidence of a reaction begins to take shape), can be extended to embrace a vaster span of time. Its origins lie in pre-Revolutionary Europe. By qualifying the term ever so slightly, it can be made to cover not only the whole nineteenth century, passing from an initial, to a second, and finally to a third stage of what is essentially the same phenomenon, but a good part of the twentieth century as well.

In order to consider the relationship between the Risorgimento and Italian literature with any degree of comprehensiveness, it is therefore necessary to encompass more than the forty-odd years between 1815 and 1860. But while the preparatory stage, pre-Romanticism and neo-Classicism, has been studied exhaustively and the contributions of the literature of that time to national feeling enumerated, the post-Risorgimento period is only now beginning to be an object of serious study. It is for that reason that we shall concentrate not on the first phase of Romanticism when literature was to such a large extent the handmaiden of history, but on the second phase when it reflected upon or represented history. Not so much the role of the pen in preparing and abetting the Risorgimento will be our subject, as the role of the pen in recording it.

The first to attempt a systematic classification of the literary production of Italy during the nineteenth century was Italy's greatest critic, Francesco De Sanctis. His magnificent *Storia della letteratura italiana,* published in 1870–71, the very year in which Rome became the capital of Italy, had stopped just short of his own century. But its final pages did contain a rough outline of what was to become a four-year lecture course which De Sanctis held at the University of Naples between 1871 and 1876 and which, preserved in classroom notes taken by one of his disciples, was later published. In the thirty-six lessons that form the core of this series, De Sanctis isolates the two dominant currents or schools of nineteenth-century Italian literature: the liberal or romantic and the democratic. "These two schools," he says, "constitute, with their attrition, the history of the human mind in the nineteenth century and we find them armed one against the other in literature, in metaphysics, in science, and even in the turmoil of battle and revolution." Joined in a common aspiration and objective – the achievement of national unity – they differed, however, in methods, ideals, goals, and in the very form of the works which issued from them. "The style of the one," De Sanctis continues, "is analytic, of the other synthetic. The language of the first is close to the spoken tongue. Of the second it is solemn, almost apostolic, sometimes slipping into the rhetorical; for when inner conviction cools, the false and fictitious takes its place." The leader of the first school was Manzoni (who, incidentally, died in 1873, at the venerable age of eight-eight), and around him were grouped D'Azeglio, Balbo, Gioberti, Rosmini, Pellico, and at some distance, Grossi, Tommaseo, and Cantù. The leader of the second school was Mazzini, and next to him stood Niccolini, Berchet, and Guerrazzi.

The mere listing of these names again calls attention to the preponderance of political sentiment in nineteenth-century Italian literature. Of the writers examined by De Sanctis, Balbo and Cantù were essentially historians; D'Azeglio a statesman; Gioberti and Mazzini political theorists; Rosmini a philosopher; Grossi and Guerrazzi, and D'Azeglio and Cantù as well, authors of ponderous historical novels whose references to contemporary events were perforce veiled, but which might never have been written but for the fire and conviction inspiring them. "Up to now Italy has been enveloped in a brilliant aura, the aura of liberty and nationality," De Sanctis wrote in his *History*.

Very little of that aura is still alive today. Actually, of the writers mentioned by De Sanctis, only one has continued to be an integral part of Italian literature, an ever renewed source of inspiration: Manzoni, and he for reasons only distantly related to the Risorgimento. But none of the others (with the exception of Niccolini) has been relegated to complete obscurity. Not only Mazzini, who has always been the object of particular veneration, but the others as well, have been kept alive by the untiring labor of scholarship and, in the case of the historical novel, by the cultural heritage of the average middle-class Italian among whose family memories may be a great-grandfather who was a Garibaldino. Needless to say, these memories become more and more diluted with the passage of time.

But since De Sanctis' lecture course, many new names have been added to the constellation of the Ottocento as we see it, and in the work of many a writer the Risorgimento is mirrored, suffused with the "brilliant aura" mentioned above, or perhaps obscured by storm clouds unperceived in the first flush of victory. These writers could not possibly figure in De Sanctis' history. Some of them were too young at the time, and this applies more or less to all those born after 1835. In the case of others, fame was late in coming; such is the case of Nievo, for instance, who was already dead in 1861. Others again were recuperated for history only retrospectively when they were seen to be forerunners of ideas fully exploited only later.

* * *

Ippolito Nievo wrote his *Confessioni di un italiano* in a few months between 1857 and 1858, and died three years later when returning from Sicily where he had gone with Garibaldi's redshirts. The book was not published until 1867, at which time, in the midst of the surfeit and depression which often follows concentrated effort, its title was changed to *Confessioni di un ottuagenario*. This action was taken by the publisher in an effort to forestall unfavorable reaction on the part of the public that had grown tired of patriotic fervor and preferred the tale of an ordinary mortal, though he was eighty, to that of an "Italian." But the reader cannot have been misled for long, for it was sufficient to open the book to the

SILVESTRO LEGA: Death of Mazzini

Museum of Art
Rhode Island School of Design

first page to read: "I was born a Venetian 18 September 1775, the Day of St. Luke the Evangelist, and shall die, by the Grace of God, an Italian, whenever the Providence that mysteriously controls our world shall so ordain." But intention is one thing, execution something else. Of the two worlds – the anachronistic world of the Venetian Republic and, more locally, of the Castle of Fratta, and the contemporary one of the struggle for independence – Nievo was irresistibly attracted to the first.

In the Venetian hinterland, the Friuli, Nievo had found the site of a primitive, rustic society which still lived in close contact with nature and which became the setting of the fabulous childhood and adolescence of the protagonist of his novel. The mature years, those from 1815 to 1855, are unmercifully pressed into only four of the twenty-three chapters into which the *Le Confessioni* is divided. And if the Napoleonic period is treated more fully – from the first mention of the General's name ("Napoleon! What kind of name is that?!") to the double defeat of Leipzig and Waterloo – it is essentially because that period corresponded to the awakening of Carlino to the wider world about him.

Changing the novel's title was therefore perhaps as much the result of intuition as of expediency. *Le Confessioni* is recognized today as a minor masterpiece, in which the modern psychology of memory and its personal poetry make their first appearance in Italian literature. And Nievo has taken his rightful place in the very center of the literary Pantheon, rather than being admitted to the company of poets merely because he was a heroic soldier and *also* – in second place – an artist.

But while Nievo was still too close to view the Risorgimento retrospectively and to shed upon it the transfiguring light of memory which shines upon Fratta, for Carducci and Fogazzaro the situation was different.

Had De Sanctis included Carducci in his discussion of nineteenth-century Italian literature, he would surely have figured in the ranks of the democratic school, for not only was he programatically anti-Manzonian and anti-Romantic, he was also polemically – throughout a good part of his career, at least – anti-monarchic and anti-clerical. But Carducci was a patriot, unconventional perhaps, yet nurtured in the tradition of the Risorgimento. Born in 1835, he belongs to a

generation whose favorite authors in adolescence had been Cantù and Grossi, D'Azeglio and Berchet. If we add Carducci's wide acquaintance with the Classics, it becomes obvious why Italy since Roman times was a living reality for him and its history a rich storehouse of giant plastic figures and of teeming masses. Croce was to call him "the poet of history," and the appellation has remained even though subsequent critics modified it to "the nostalgic poet of the heroic." Carducci himself said: "Poetry, great poetry that is, always aspires to the past and proceeds from it."

Although he had treated Risorgimento themes earlier, it was not until 1890 that he wrote his great ode *Piemonte*. At that time the Risorgimento could be considered a thing definitely of the past. The old rancours were dead; sins of omission forgiven; the enthusiasm of youth heightened and colored by the rosy hue of distance. And from the craggy Alpine mountain tops of the Gran Paradiso, Carducci looks down into the valleys of Piedmont and sees its history unfold from Roman times, through medieval sieges, French and Austrian conquests, down to 1848, date of the first war for Italian independence. The news of the victory of Peschiera (1848) echoes in his heart again as it had done when he was thirteen, and, on the battlefield, its hero, Charles Albert, King of Sardinia, is for the moment acclaimed King of Italy. "O re de' miei verdi anni," the poet exclaims, and in one perfect synthesis the personal memory of the individual is absorbed into the historical memory of the nation.

How different is Fogazzaro's evocation of the decade between 1849 and 1859! From the heroic we pass to the idyllic; from the forgers of history to the passive spectators. But are they passive? Is the remote world of the Valsolda, on the quiet Lake of Lugano, completely undisturbed and can its inhabitants attend to their daily tasks in peaceful forgetfulness?

In writing *Piccolo mondo antico* (1895), his poem of the Risorgimento, Fogazzaro was animated both by affection for "that little world of once upon a time" and by patriotic feeling, by the desire to remind his contemporaries – "the newcomers of a new Italy" – of things they had long forgotten. *Piccolo mondo antico* is thus in a sense a documentary novel which recreates social conditions in Lombardy-Venetia at the height of the Risorgimento, at a time when it was impossible to remain neutral and everyone from the Marchesa down was either pro-Austrian or pro-Italian. But though there is no doubt about Fogazzaro's own feelings and the fact that the really likeable characters are all on the right side, the lukewarm, the indifferent, the weak, the "traitors" in brief, are by no means completely daubed in black. After all, political allegiance is influenced by so many things, not the least of which is the necessity of finding employment. And how can one bear any deep grudge against a minor civil officer who pushes his allegiance to the Emperor so far as to insist that his nephew be baptized Francis Joseph? "The size, the power, the glory of Austria filled him (the uncle, a customs collector) with boundless pride. He could not admit that Brazil was larger than the Austrian Empire, nor that China was more populous. . . . His real God was the Emperor; and in the God of Heaven he respected merely an ally of Vienna."

"*Piccolo mondo antico* is the dearest of my books to me," Fogazzaro wrote, "peopled by familiar and friendly images, filled with memories, with the sweetness and bitterness of actual experience. . . . (Those) times were the dawn of my life (he was born in 1840) and also the dawn of Italy, distant now, so distant! But I have not been able to forget them."

* * *

The experience of the Risorgimento had been one thing for a North Italian but something quite different for a Southerner, especially if he was a Sicilian. While the continental part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies had always been in close contact with developments in the rest of Europe, Sicily had remained almost unbelievably isolated. It is enough to recall that Napoleon's soldiers reached even remote parts of Calabria, but that they never crossed the Strait of Messina. To Garibaldi's "Mille," setting sail in 1860, Sicily was a mysterious land "burning in the middle of the sea," "almost cut off from the world," whose outlines on the map were familiar, "but whose interior had never even been charted." The words are Abba's, the most famous (with the exception of Nievo, of course) of the writer-soldiers who followed Garibaldi, and he adds, "We had to go, it can almost be said, to liberate the soul of the island, . . . (to help) those poor people down there."

It is small wonder that mutual incomprehension was the first result of the liberation of Sicily, that bloody episodes accompanied

it, and that Sicily contributed the first serious criticism of the Risorgimento, the first revision of an historical opinion which had made of the Risorgimento not only a necessity but also an unadulterated good for the nation.

A first embryonic suspicion that all was not as simple as it seemed, is already reflected in an episode recounted by Abba (*Noterelle d'uno dei mille,* 1880). On May 22, 1860, just outside of Palermo, he had met a monk, Padre Carmelo, whom he urged to join Garibaldi and the "Revolution."

> "I would come," answered the monk, "if I knew that you are doing something really great; but I have spoken to many of your fellow soldiers and all they could tell me was that you want to unite Italy."
>
> "Of course, in order to create a great and single people."
>
> "A great and single territory! . . . As far as the people are concerned, whether they are united or divided, when they suffer, they suffer. And I am not so sure that you want to make them happy."
>
> "Happy! The people will have liberty and schools."
>
> "And nothing else!" the monk interrupted, "because liberty isn't bread and neither are schools. Maybe these things are enough for you in Piedmont; for us, here, they aren't."
>
> "What do *you* need?"
>
> "A war not against the Bourbons, but a war of the oppressed against the oppressors great and small, for they are not only at Court, but everywhere, in every city, in every village."

Such a "war" is described by Verga in a short story, "La libertà" (in *Novelle Rusticane,* 1883). Verga was almost an exact contemporary of Fogazzaro and only slightly younger than Carducci. For him, too, the Risorgimento was a memory of adolescence, but he portrayed it neither in its heroic aspect nor yet in the idyllic aura of times gone by. In the poverty-stricken world of Verga's mature works, the Risorgimento is an episode which passes, and leaves only added misery in its wake. The revolting peasants – the oppressed – upon hearing of the liberation of their island, had hung a red-white-and-green kerchief from the church tower and shouted "Hurray for liberty!" "Like a sea in storm" they had broken into the houses of the rich – the oppressors – and sought surcease from century-old hunger. They had pillaged and killed, mercilessly, like wolves come down from the hills. And when the General (Garibaldi) came, he meted out justice: the ringleaders shot on the spot; the others taken away to be tried and sentenced. "The charcoal man, while they were putting the handcuffs on him, stammered: 'Where are you taking me? To the galleys? Why? I never even got so much as a few feet of land! And they had told me that liberty had come . . . !"

In the two instances just referred to, the Risorgimento is shown as having failed to mitigate economic inequalities in Sicily. But even more hopeless, if this were possible, is the political situation after the Risorgimento as analyzed in the work of another Southerner, Federico De Roberto's *I Vicerè.* De Roberto, a friend of Verga, differs from the older writer in his greater objectivity, in his completely impersonal naturalistic presentation. *I Vicerè* (1894) is the story of the Uzeda family, descendants of the viceroys who once ruled Sicily, in the years between 1850 and 1882. The terminal date, 1882, is significant, for in that year a new election law, granting the vote to a larger cross-section of the population, went into effect. But while the Sicilian middle class, the sons of the pro-Italian patriots of 1860, are thinking that thanks to the new law the strangle hold of the aristocracy can finally be broken, Consalvo, the youngest Uzeda, heir to the title, rises to power by constitutional means and becomes Sicily's representative in the Parliament at Rome. "History," the young man tells his aunt in the final pages of the novel, as a kind of concluding and conclusive comment, "history is a monotonous repetition. Men were, are, and will always be the same. External conditions change. Of course, there seems to be an abyss between the almost feudal Sicily of before 1860 and the Sicily of today. But the difference is only external. The first to be elected under a system of suffrage which is almost universal is neither a man of the people, nor a bourgeois, nor a democrat. It is I, because my name is Prince of Francalanza. . . ."

* * *

In the preceding pages we have paused to examine the comments made on the Risorgimento by a handful of Italian writers between 1860 and 1900. De Sanctis, Nievo, Carducci, Fogazzaro, Abba, Verga, and De Roberto – among many others, of course –

looked back and recorded their personal experience of the making of Italy. And since literature in the final decades of the nineteenth century was striving more and more to approach the impersonality and the objectivity of the document, it is no falsification of their work to read it in this light: that is, essentially, for its documentary value. The relationship between the Risorgimento and Italian literature can thus be seen – in the broadest and most general sense – as an interchange of the two terms. From 1815 to 1860 literature passes into action and serves the Risorgimento; from 1860 to 1900 the Risorgimento passes into memory and serves literature.

A final question seems, however, not completely without relevance. Did the Risorgimento play any larger role in Italian literature than the one just indicated by the double equation? The Risorgimento was a political movement, but it was also a cultural movement. Politically, it united and freed Italy. Did it also unite and free Italy culturally? The answer, in nineteenth-century terms, is "no." In his inaugural speech for the academic year 1874 at the University of Bologna, Carducci broke into invective against the contemporary literary situation in Italy. He pictured the nation as a convalescent girl, greedily eating up the leftovers from the literary dinners of Louis Philippe and of the Second Empire, and "chewing indigestible German meals." Drama, the novel, criticism are all mere echoes of foreign fashions. Worse still, the question of the literary language itself, has again been reopened. How can a nation whose literary tradition is seven centuries old, Carducci asks, have fallen so low?

It matters little what Carducci's diagnosis is, nor yet what solution he offers. What matters is that Carducci's words fell upon receptive ears and that a kind of destructive cultural nationalism vitiated for many years the literary and artistic atmosphere of Italy. To explore this in any detail is beyond the scope of this essay. It is sufficient to point out that that narrow-minded attitude is now definitely a thing of the past. In seeking out its origins, contemporary Italian literature looks indifferently to its "native" and its "foreign" traditions. Nor are its "local" traditions dead. Political unity has not yet obliterated cultural particularism. Political independence has made it possible to look more dispassionately to what is going on beyond the borders. Chronological distance from events brings with it emotional distance. The subject of the Risorgimento and Italian literature is seen for what it really is: but one aspect, one theme, one episode of the development of Italian literature in the past two hundred years. Eighteenth-century "Rinnovamento," nineteenth-century "Risorgimento," twentieth-century "Rinascimento": useful catchwords which it is the duty of the historian to explore. Anniversaries and celebrations are artificial occasions. Nonetheless, in inviting a backward glance, they favor the work of the historian; in concentrating attention, they favor the dissemination of knowledge; in opening new vistas, they contribute to keeping alive the past – the past, which is a monotonous landscape, unless it is peopled by figures salvaged by each individual reader from oblivion.

OLGA RAGUSA
Columbia University

POEMS

by John Tagliabue

It has been the policy of this journal to publish translations of Italian poems and American poems of Italian inspiration. With the present number we initiate a new practice: the publication of English language poems in Italian translation. The two poems below are from Tagliabue's collected Poems *published by Harper.*

The translator is Giuseppe Prezzolini, the distinguished writer and teacher, under whom John Tagliabue studied at Columbia University. Our readers will remember Professor Prezzolini's article on Ponte Santa Trinita in C.B.C., *II, 1.*

The four poems that follow appear for the first time and are from Tagliabue's "Ischia and Italy" Journal.

She came in lilies like the spring,
Wet and white,
To bring the dew to wash my brow,
Kind and light,
To bring the fragrance of the morn,
Cool and bright,
To tempt the hand to touch,
To win, to hold, to love, to live,
Fierce and bright.
She came in lilies like the spring,
To love, to live, to dance, to sing.

Venne ingigliata come primavera,
Umida e bianca,
Portò rugiada per lavar la fronte,
Gentil, leggera.
Portava la fragranza del mattino,
Fresca e brillante,
La mano era tentata di toccarla,
Per vincerla, tenerla, amarla e viverla,
Tremenda e brillante.
Venne ingigliata come primavera,
Fatta per vivere, amar, ballar, cantare.

Deep as the beard of a sage
High as the waving of a tree
Unseen as the voyage of a bird
Mighty as the song of the sun
Married as Man and Woman
Blessed as Man and Woman
Is every Creative Act.

Profondo come la barba d'un saggio
Ed alto come l'ondeggiar d'una cima
Invisible come la direzion d'un uccello
Potente come il canto del sole
Sposato come l'Uomo e la Donna
Benedetto come l'Uomo e la Donna,
è ogni Atto Creativo.

Momentous news is told by shepherds or by sheep
Or love quietly as if unseen unknown
And life's devotion shows that we have heard
Creation shows that we have enjoyed.

Two sheep by a blossoming tree in a clear blue day hold their heads together

Sheep hold their heads together and know Christ's glory
Husband and wife in sleep hold their heads together
And know Christ's story. White trees wildly
Delicately blossom, everything is telling you something.
The sun is a giant to put you to sleep to make you remember.

Going to see Giotto in Padova

Giotto is a miracle so is the world
Giotto is the world so is the world
A better place for man to see God's miracles
Or Jesus riding on a humble ass of art
Than if no frescoes freshened our dawn.

On the thought of leaving Italy

Italy, you do not fade but go like one of those saints
upon the Golden Dome,
The Mosaic of Beauty, the Wheel of time,
You fly like the dove in memory or leap like a fish or surprise
Or all beauty. The sun's eyes speak, the blue sea speaks,
A saint does not leave us but grows more golden in eternity.

EXISTENTIALISM IN ITALY

by Nicola Abbagnano

The expression Existentialism has acquired, in popular parlance, a connotation which is as broad as it is lacking in precision. It designates not only certain philosophic directions which are, in their own right, quite difficult to characterize in their totality, but also a conglomeration of literary and artistic expressions, of mores, of fads and even mannerisms of dress and snobbish attitudes. Among all these things it is extremely difficult to discern common characteristics.

The widespread and equivocal use of the word may be understood if we note how, in many cases, it serves to arouse polemical attention to the most unfavorable, negative and disconcerting features of contemporary life. So-called Existentialist literature tends, in fact, to emphasize the less respectable, more wretched, more corrupt and more painful aspects of human phenomena, as well as the very uncertainty of human endeavor, be it good or evil, and the ambiguity of good itself. As regards the more banal aspects, the "Existentialist" mannerism of dress tends to reveal the young bohemians who adopt it as "lost souls" in perennial protest against the bourgeois respectability of contemporary society.

Although many of these aspects may seem peculiar and even grotesque, the use of the term with the above meaning is explicable since it is actually so used in recurring attitudes of Existentialist philosophy, although the blame for this popular connotation is not to be attributed to this philosophy.

Existentialist philosophies tend, in fact, to focus on the instability and uncertainty of human reality and of all reality with which man is engaged. Their argument is, implicitly or explicitly, directed against nineteenth-century Romanticism and its derivatives, for which the destiny of man in the world is guaranteed in an infallible way by an infinite force which has been called Humanity, Reason, the Oversoul, Absolute, etc., but which has, in each case, the task of providing for inequalities, of rectifying discrepancies, and of directing man inevitably to the final triumph of good. Against this consoling view, in which man must be considered quite simply as the more or less conscious tool of a superior Reality, philosophic Existentialism casts light on those aspects of human experience that disprove, or at least render doubtful and problematic, such a prospect. It insists primarily on the instability and the risk of all human reality, and, in general, on all that limits, conditions, renders dangerous or downright impossible human initiative in the world.

A comparison between the theses of Romanticism and those recurring in Existentialist philosophy in this regard is very instructive. Romanticism affirms that an infinite force operates in man of which he is only the manifestation. Existentialism affirms that man is a finite reality, that he exists and operates at his risk and peril. Romanticism affirms that the world in which man finds himself, as an expression of the same infinite force that works in him, has an order which necessarily guarantees the final success of human actions. Existentialism affirms that man is *thrown into the world*, that is, abandoned to a determinism which may render his endeavors vain or impossible. Romanticism affirms that freedom, as the active force of the infinite principle, is absolute, infinite, creative and capable of new and original achievements at any moment. Existentialism affirms that man's freedom is conditioned, finite, hindered by many limitations which can, at any moment, render freedom sterile and make it fall back on what has already *been* or on what has already been *done*.

Romanticism affirms the continuous and inexorable progress of humanity. Existentialism denies or ignores the very idea of progress because it cannot perceive any assurance in it. Romanticism always has a certain spiritualistic tendency; it is inclined to exalt the importance of interiority, of spirituality, as well as spiritual values, to the

---

This article first appeared in Italian in *La Filosofia Contemporanea in Italia*, Roma, 1958.

detriment of that which is concrete, material, earthly, etc. Existentialism recognizes without apology the importance and weight that the external, the material, and the world, in general, carry for man; hence, those conditions of human reality that come under the heading of necessities, the use and production of things, sex, etc. Romanticism considers insignificant certain negative aspects of human experience as suffering, frustration, sickness, and death because these do not affect the infinite principle that manifests itself in man and therefore *they do not exist* for it. Existentialism considers these aspects particularly significant for human reality and depends mainly on them to interpret it.

The comparison of these theses, which I have sought to reduce to their most simplified statements without diminishing their validity, demonstrates that Existentialism is not isolated in contemporary culture. Almost all of the theses which I have advanced here as proper to Existentialism find agreement with other philosophic and scientific points of view in the world of contemporary culture. This comparison is not always carried out and is rather rarely undertaken, either because of the polemic attitude that contemporary philosophies generally assume toward one another, each claiming for itself the priority of truth or at least of integrity, or because of the metaphysical developments that Existentialism has undergone in some of its forms which have forced it to place itself in a negative attitude toward all the rest of contemporary culture, science included. The comparison, nevertheless, can be asserted and can prove conclusive.

It may be noted, in fact, that the unstable, precarious and risky character of human reality and of the world to which it belongs has been clearly recognized independent of Existentialism by Dewey and American Instrumentalism. That man is conditioned by the world in which he lives, that it limits and in some measure determines his actions or his plans – is something that has been recognized by all the forms of philosophic naturalism and constitutes the presupposition of every scientific consideration (psychological, anthropological, sociological) of human behavior.

The importance of the material factors that affect man is at the root of such scientific investigations. The idea of progress is negated, put in doubt or reduced to a problem by contemporary historicism and other philosophic currents. The importance that certain limit-situations like suffering, failure, and death have for man finds equal recognition in pragmatism and in many forms of contemporary personalism. It may be said, therefore, that some of the fundamental themes of Existentialism are found scattered among other philosophic currents or constitute the presuppositions or points of departure of scientific investigations. Existentialism just puts them together and organizes them on the foundation of a basic category. That category is the *possible*.

It is not sufficient to characterize a philosophy by expounding its favorite themes. The most direct and least arbitrary method to determine its character and its laws consists in focusing on the manner in which it understands and practices its own philosophy. It can be said, for example, that logical positivism views and practices philosophy as analysis of language (popular or scientific). Language (popular or scientific) is for it the fundamental instrument of philosophizing; this fact can be assumed as the feature that defines it in its totality.

Likewise, it can be said that Existentialism is characterized by the fact that it views and practices philosophy as analysis of existence. As a preliminary it is sufficient to understand *existence* as the whole of the *situations* in which man finds himself or in which he usually finds himself. Such an analysis is made in the following procedure in whatever field one may wish to institute an analysis: namely, in utilizing, in large measure, general and scientific language and in correcting and integrating it, where it is deemed advisable, with linguistic elements of philosophic tradition or *ad hoc* concepts or propositions. But the analysis of an Existential situation can be initiated and continued only if all the elements which compose it are included from the beginning; that is, not only an individual man, in his specific modes of being and of acting, but also other men, things, etc., in a word, the "world" in general, because only in regard to this ensemble of factors can the specific modes of being and acting of singular man be understood. In other words, a situation always presents man *in relation* to other men, to things and, in the limits in which the expression is valid, to himself.

Existential analysis, therefore, is one of relations which indeed center about man but which also go immediately beyond him since they connect him (in different ways which must be determined) with other be-

ings or things. Now to speak of relations really means to speak of *conditions*, that is, it means that any subject of relations possesses characteristics or qualities only within the limits of these relations, which condition him, in the sense that they make it possible for him to be what he is. But precisely at this point the principal instrument of Existential analysis becomes clear, that is, the idea of the possible. That which enters into an Existential relation, insofar as it is conditioned by such a relation, is possibility and only possibility. In other words, existence, as a way of being "in situation,"* is possible existence. The feature that characterizes it is precisely that of being a possibility of being and, as such, an anticipation and a projection. Its chief temporal dimension, then, is the future. It is not, however, an indeterminate future in which or through which all is possible, but a future limited by the past which allows only the determination of the possibilities that present themselves. The past conditions and limits the future – that is, the possibilities that present themselves to man – in particular situations under the anticipatory form of expectations or plans.

Nor is this an altogether exclusive feature of Existentialism. Dewey, for example, says that the characteristic of Instrumental Empiricism, as compared to Classical Empiricism, is its orientation toward the future, in the very sense that, through it, the analysis of past experience serves for planning and directing future experience. But now the difference of attitude between Existentialism and other philosophies (like Dewey's), which have fundamental theses in common, can be understood. Existentialism seems not to offer man any positive prospect of the future. In an editorial in the *Saturday Review*, Norman Cousins says:

> The cause of Existentialism's failure is to be found, we believe, in the nihilist turn it took. The human personality is not nihilist. Perhaps under certain circumstances and for limited periods man may make a virtue of defeatism, but over the long range his equilibrium will assert itself and he will hunger for inspiration and positive values.[1]

This is undoubtedly true of some schools of Existentialism and precisely of those which have had literary success and which have had more influence on the formation of the Existentialist vogue. *Possible* existence has been transformed by the analysis of these schools into *impossible* existence. The Existential possibilities have been, in fact, clarified and described in their negative and nullifying sense, as if they were exclusively expounding the radical impossibility of all that man can be and can do. These directions of Existentialism seem to have avoided proposing any way, any instrument, technique or attitude capable of facing the uncertainty and instability of human affairs. Nor have they seemed to allow man to look to the future with reasonable, even cautious confidence, or to take calculated risks. Aggressively intent on destroying the illusion of certitude – an important task and rich in positive implications – these philosophies have taken no interest in that which is probable for man. They have ended by neglecting the sources from which man draws the means and the techniques of his positive expectations: nature and society.

It is especially upon these considerations that Italian Existentialism has focused.

* * *

In Italy Existentialism began to spread in the years that preceded the Second World War. Italian culture was dominated in those years by Romantic Idealism as represented by Croce and Gentile. Though politically divergent in their attitudes toward Fascism, these two personalities have exercised an analogous and concurrent influence upon Italian culture because of the great similarity of their philosophies. Their philosophic polemic remained entirely within the sphere of Idealism and did not offer any new themes or new problems for philosophy. The reaction against these adherents of Romanticism in Italy assumed, therefore, the form of a reaffirmation of the reality of the human individual in his relations with other individuals and with objects of nature, and hence, also of the reality of society – such as communication between individuals – and of the reality of nature. This signified a recognition of the *finite* reality of man, that is, of man not as a manifestation of the Infinite Spirit or of Pure Act, but as a being subject to the dangers of nature and of history. This reaffirmation was utilized on one hand by Catholic thinkers or in general by those dominated by religious interests with the view toward restating and justifying the theme of the transcendence of God in relation to man, nature, and history. On the

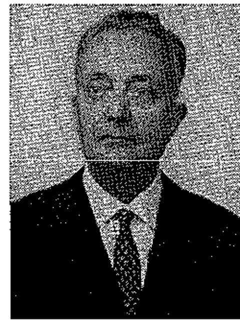
* "Situation" in Abbagnano's thought signifies man's relationship with the world insofar as it limits, conditions, but also founds and determines human possibilities as such.

other hand it was utilized as a point of departure for new investigations about the finite structure of man in relation to his natural and historico-social world.

Armando Carlini, in a work written in 1936,[2] was the first to make use of some themes of Kierkegaard and Heidegger, which he then developed into numerous other books. With analogous interests but in a different tone (and referring above all to Gabriel Marcel), Luigi Pareyson, in the years that followed, studied the various manifestations of Existentialism,[3] especially the philosophy of Karl Jaspers, to whom he dedicated a monograph.[4] From Existentialism he drew motifs and suggestions for an elaboration of spiritual personalism which received its most mature form in studies collected in *Esistenza e persona.*[5]

The other point of view is represented by Franco Lombardi in two monographs on Feuerbach[6] and Kierkegaard[7] which underlined the dichotomy between the philosophy of the Infinite Idea and its restatement in human terms as a clarification or analysis of the possibilities offered to existent man. In Feuerbach, Lombardi saw an attempt at a possible and more adequate understanding, of the *individuality* of man. In Kierkegaard he saw, as against Hegelianism, the more resolute affirmation of the finiteness of man, that is, of the really human characteristics of the world in which man exists and acts. Lombardi, however, did not sympathize with Existentialism for the same reasons that he did not sympathize with Kierkegaard, that is, for the excess of autobiography and the tendency toward subjectivity, for the negative position derived from the central concept of anguish assumed in this philosophy, and finally for the political and social consequences which seemed to spring from this negative position. Nevertheless, the two monographs cited (like the other two books in which the same exigencies were presented in theoretical form)[8] pointed up the theme which was to remain Italian Existentialism's own: the possibility of understanding man as a finite being, among other men, in the world.

The first Italian contributions to the Existential analysis, thus understood, came with the publication of *Principi di una filosofia dell'essere* by Enzo Paci[9] and with my *La struttura dell'esistenza.*[10] Paci, even though explicitly assuming some presuppositions of Italian Idealism, concentrated his attention on two intimately connected problems which were foreign to this Idealism: the problem of personality and that of nature. For Paci, in fact, the existentiality of man signified primarily his *naturality:* a naturality, however, that is not satisfied with itself, but that transcends toward value and seeks to realize it. The spiritual life of man (morality, art, religion) was, moreover, considered by Paci as a *tension* between existence and value, that is to say, as value which seeks existence or as existence which presents itself as value. The problem of value, which had remained foreign to German Existentialism, was presented, therefore, together with the concern for the natural world and, hence, with the recognition of the validity of science.



Nicola Abbagnano

As for me, I took a position in *La struttura dell'esistenza* with respect to the Existentialism of Heidegger and Jaspers, adding to the Existential analysis a third possible way. I considered, in fact, that, while Heidegger had come to define human existence as the impossible attempt to issue from nothingness, Jaspers had ended by defining existence as the equally impossible attempt to identify itself with Being. Thus, while Heidegger posited his presumed (and unsurmountable) initial phase to define existence, Jaspers was committed to his equally presumed (and unattainable) final phase. The path neglected by these two thinkers was indicated in *La struttura dell'esistenza* as the only legitimate approach to Existential analysis. This path consists in recognizing that existence is structurally *possibility of being* and that it can therefore be analyzed only within the limits and conditions that define its particular possibilities without ever restricting any or all of these into necessary *impossibilities.* The presupposition of this analysis was the reduction of human life to its problematic significance. In other words, and to use an obvious image, I intended to suggest that, if human life is

a perilous voyage, it is important that man not complain that it cannot release him from ties with terra firma or that he can never put in at a secure and definitive port. It is important rather that man recognize the possibilities offered him by the voyage to face dangers more adequately and that he come to terms with himself within the bark that shelters him. This position evidently hinged on the notion of the possible and required a detailed analysis of this notion. Such an analysis, in turn, presupposed that it could in some way isolate or abstract the *possibility* of the possible, that is, that it could distinguish between real or authentic possibilities, which are those that, once recognized and chosen, remain as such, and fictitious or inauthentic ones, which are those that, although they seem to be possibles, reveal themselves as non-possibles when put to an ultimate test.

The criteria used by the sciences and, in general, by particular disciplines to distinguish real objects from unreal ones could be assumed from this point of view as determinations or specifications of the criterion of possibility; or, reciprocally, the latter could be assumed as a generalization of specific criteria. The validity of science implicitly or explicitly denied by the other forms of Existentialism could thus be recognized and the avenue for its methodological consideration opened up.

Everything pivoted, therefore, on the idea of the possible. In fact, a positive interpretation of human existence can be discussed only if that idea is kept both in its positive and negative aspect, without neglecting one to the advantage of the other. The positive character of Existential interpretation does not consist in decorating with the words *being* and *value* that which other interpretations brand as "nothingness," but only in making use in a coherent manner of the idea of the possible. If the Existential possibilities are understood as necessary determinations, or as potentiality in the Aristotelian sense – inevitably destined to occur – included too is a negative interpretation of existence since existence is based on facticity and on the past, and is similarly reduced to impossibility and nothingness. The forms of theological Existentialism (Marcel, Lavelle, Lesenne) make this very attempt in the illusion of opening alluring prospects for man but with the result of only embellishing facticity and the necessity of existence with noble names.

On the other hand, the coherent use of the idea of the possible leads to the consideration of man in his concrete, natural, and historical experience. In fact, the possibilities that are offered to the individual man do not only concern him but involve natural objects and other men in such a way that an analysis of such possibilities is always simultaneously an analysis of the relations between the individual and nature, and between the individual and the human world. The dangerous tendency of contemporary philosophy to fall into solipsism and subjectivity, to neglect the problems inherent in external nature and the historico-social world can be validly checked by an Existential analysis which centers on the notion of the possible.

From 1939 to the present Existentialist literature in Italy has become vast.[11] A study promoted by the review *Primato* in 1943, with the collaboration of major Italian thinkers, contributed to the spread of interest in Existentialism and in popularizing its principal themes. After the war, the recognition of the work of Sartre, and especially of his literary writings, helped nourish this interest, without changing, however, the orientations of Italian Existentialism in any way.

The preceding remarks indicate, I hope, why in the controversy between metaphysics and anti-metaphysics, which is now developing especially in those countries where Naturalism and Neo-Positivism have had the greatest diffusion (but which is alive in Italy too), Italian Existentialism has found itself on the side of anti-metaphysics. It deals, without doubt, with an anti-metaphysic of an historically specific meaning, as a movement critical of and departing from classical metaphysics, that is, the metaphysics of Being, of Substance, of Necessity, etc. but which does not exclude a restatement of metaphysical problems in a manner independent of the premises of classical metaphysics.

But through this anti-metaphysical direction, Italian Existentialism has remained aloof from the controversy against science and against the forms of "analytical philosophy" which receive their impetus from science. It is also capable of accommodating many of the demands of contemporary Naturalism and Instrumentalism as well as of Logical Positivism itself, to the degree that the latter does not intend to reduce all problems to merely linguistic problems.[12] This orientation is certainly incomprehensible if by Existentialism one understands

some particular doctrine (for example, that of *dread* or of *nothingness*). It becomes comprehensible, however, if one considers that a philosophy proposes, in the first place, a certain *mode* of philosophizing and that this mode can be described only by referring to the tools of conceptualization (or to *categories* as they are customarily called) used by that philosophy.

Now, as has been said, the category that characterizes the mode of Existential philosophy is that of the possible.[13] One recalls that dread is, according to Kierkegaard's definition, nothing but "the feeling of the possible."

That which has constituted the guiding principle of Italian Existentialism is the coherent use of this category. By *coherent use* is meant one which does not surreptitiously change this category into a different and opposite category; that is, one which does not transform the possible into the necessary or the impossible (which is the necessary negativized) and, consequently, which does not sacrifice one of the two aspects of the possible to the other. The coherent use of the category of the possible can function in the same manner as experience in Dewey's *Experience and Nature* where experience is a *method* of investigation and a *reminder* for the philosopher. As Dewey said, "When the varied constituents of the vast universe which are unfavorable, precarious, uncertain, irrational, and odious receive the same attention which is given to those which are noble, honorable, and true, then philosophy will perhaps be able to do without the concept of experience." The possible exercises this same function, not as an extrinsic *reminder* for philosophic inquiry, but as the mainspring of this inquiry. It indicates that there is everywhere a *possible being* as well as a *possible non-being*. That strange combination of stability and instability, of necessity and contingency, of good and evil, of truth and falsity, etc., which, according to Dewey, is the world of experience, cannot be understood as a distribution of parts. If this were so, the parts, once isolated and recognized in the whole, would remain permanently provided with the character of their recognition. In reality, that which appears and is stable, good, etc. may at a certain point, reveal itself to be unstable, the absence of good, etc.

Possibility is the method which permits us to understand the combination of empirical characteristics of the world, to orient ourselves to that combination and to find the effectual, if not infallible means of submitting it to the needs of man. In this way, moreover, the starting point of philosophy and, in general, of every investigation or inquiry which deals with verification and empirical controls – whatever the means by which the investigation and inquiry are carried on – is guaranteed. If a hypothesis, a theory, or, in general, a proposition is nothing but a *possibility* which opens a kind of perspective on the future, its validity consists only in being able to be tested and in being able after the test to propose itself again as a subsequent *possibility*. The use of the category of the possible confirms the orientation (which has already been emphasized)[14] of the philosophy of Existence toward Empiricism, and it allows one to recognize and exploit this tendency openly, thus leading to a positive evaluation of empirical investigation in every field including that of human relationships and social techniques.

It has been said that for American Neo-Naturalism nature can be defined as a "kingdom of possibilities"[15] considered not only logically or linguistically or in terms of scientific verification but also in terms of practical or esthetic concerns. This definition can well be assumed and appropriated by Italian Existentialism. Besides, it has an illustrious and ancient precedent. When Plato, in the *Sophist*, wished to define a concept of being that would render the controversy between Materialists and Idealists insignificant, he defined being precisely as possibility (δύναμις):

> I say, then, that everything which has by nature the possibility of either doing something else or bearing the action of some other thing however insignificant, infinitesimal or infrequent – really exists. I therefore propose this definition: beings, in as much as they are, are naught but possibilities.[16]

But in assuming and appropriating as its own a thesis of this kind, Existentialism must be careful. None of the possibilities offered to man is destined to come true in an inevitable manner. If man lives and works on the horizons of the possible, he is offered no absolute assurance. On this point Existentialism reproduces, in secular form, a fundamental doctrine of religion which states that the designs of God are inscrutable and often demand that even the best of men be put to a hard test. And, therefore, like religion, it insists on the experi-

ence of death, which is an ever-present *possibility* and, as such, constitutes the limit and the condition of all human undertakings. The only limited and partial guarantees of which man can partake are those offered to him by his own ingenuity and his own experiences, as well as by the possibilities they open up to him for new discoveries and experiences. If Existentialism, in its negative forms, has been a loud cry of alarm, in the period and situation in which the danger has been real and imminent for contemporary civilization and the values by which it endures, then, in its positive form, it can help to mold in men a measured sense of risk, to render them less exposed to the disappointments of failure and the exaltations of success and to dispose them toward investigation, in every area, of effective means for the solution of their problems.

Doubtlessly, an Existentialism constructed in this way is not suited to the fabrication and encouragement of myths. It patronizes neither the myth of Science nor that of Anti-science, neither the myth of Technology nor that of Anti-technology. It seeks to understand technology and science in their historical development and in their present reality, considering them in terms of their effective procedures and from the point of view of the human possibilities they initiate and derive from. It does not ignore the limits of science nor the dangers of technology. But it does not admit that the limits of science can be overcome by an artificial or superstitious understanding nor that the dangers of technology can be avoided with a pure and simple condemnation of technology itself in the name of *the values of the spirit*. The present dangers deriving from science (the atomic bomb) and technology (mechanization of man) are not to be fought with sermons, oracles, or myths, but only with finding and testing other *techniques* – techniques of human coexistence which the ancients called *wisdom* – whose study has always been the task of philosophy.[17]

Translated by
NINO F. LANGIULLI

---

[1] *Saturday Review*, July 10, 1954.

[2] A. Carlini, *Il mito del realismo*, Florence, 1936.

[3] The essays were then collected in one volume: L. Pareyson, *Studi sull'esistenzialismo*, Florence, 1943.

[4] L. Pareyson, *La filosofia dell'esistenza e Karl Jaspers*, Naples, 1943.

[5] L. Pareyson, *Esistenza e persona*, Turin, 1956.

[6] F. Lombardi, *L. Feuerbach, seguito da una scelta di passi tradotti*, Florence, 1935.

[7] F. Lombardi, *Kierkegaard*, with a selection of translated passages, systematic bibliography etc., Florence, 1936.

[8] F. Lombardi, *L'esperienza e l'uomo, fondamenti di una filosofia umanistica*, Florence, 1935; *Il mondo degli uomini*, same place and year.

[9] E. Paci, *Principi di una filosofia dell'essere*, Modena, 1939.

[10] N. Abbagnano, *La struttura dell'esistenza*, Turin, 1939.

[11] Cf. the rich bibliography of Vito A. Belleza in the issue of *Archivio di Filosofia*, 1946 no. 1–2. dedicated to Existentialism and in the one dedicated to Christian Existentialism in the same review, 1949.

[12] For this trend cf. N. Abbagnano: *Introduzione all'esistenzialismo*, Milan, 1942, Turin, 1948; *Filosofia, religione, scienza*, Turin, 1947; *Esistenzialismo positivo*, Turin, 1948; *La mia prospettiva filosofica* in the volume of the same title, Padua, 1950; "Dewey: esperienza e possibilita" in *Rivista critica di Storia della Filosofia*, 1951, no. 4; "Contemporary Science and Freedom" in *The Review of Metaphysics*, 1952, no. 3; "L'appello alla ragione e le techiche della ragione" in *Rivista di Filosofia*, 1952, no. 1; *Invito al dialogo*, ibidem. E. Paci: *Esistenzialismo e storicismo*, Milan, 1950; *Il nulla e il problema dell'uomo*, Turin, 1950; *Fondamenti di una sintesi filosofica*, Milan, 1951; *Tempo e relazione*, Turin, 1954. P. Chiodi: *L'esistenzialismo di Heidegger*, Turin, 1947; *L'ultimo Heidegger*, Turin, 1952. U. Scarpelli: *Esistenzialismo e marxismo*, Turin, 1949.

[13] For the importance of this category in all the forms of Existentialism, cf. J. Wahl, *Les philosophies de l'existence*, Paris, 1954, p. 73 ff.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 13 ff.

[15] P. Romanell, *Verso un naturalismo critico. Riflessioni sulla recente filosofia americana*, Turin, 1953, p. 28.

[16] Sophist, 247D – note that the Platonic δύναμις has nothing to do with the Artistotelian δύναμις which is a correlative to the act (ἐνέργεια or ἐντελέχεια) that is itself alone true and primary being. Instead, the Platonic δύναμις defines the primary sense of being.

[17] In addition to works already mentioned we list here other significant writings concerning Italian Existentialism.

Enzo Paci, *Pensiero, Esistenza, Valore*, Milan, 1940; Enzo Paci, *L'esistenzialismo*, Padua, 1942; Luigi Stefanini, *Arte e Critica*, Milan, 1942; Cornelio Fabro, *Introduzione all'esistenzialismo*, Milan, 1943; Armando Vedaldi, *Esistenzialismo*, Verona, 1947, 1949; Giorgio Giannini "Le idee generatrici dell'esistenzialismo di N. Abbagnano" in *Giornale di Metafisica*, 1950, no. 5; A. Aliotta, *Critica dell'esistenzialismo*, Rome, 1951; Luigi Stefanini, *Esistenzialismo ateo ed esistenzialismo teistico*, Padua, 1952; Giovanni di Napoli, *La concezione dell'essere nella filosofia contemporanea*, Edizione Studium, 1953; Vicente Fatome, *La existencia Humana y sus Filosofos*, Buenos Aires, 1953; P. Prini, *Esistenzialismo*, Rome, 1953. See also the presentation of Existentialism in the review *Primato*, Rome, 1943 with the contributions of N. Abbagnano, E. Paci, A. Carlini, U. Spirito, F. Olgiati, A. Guzzo, P. Carabellese, C. Pellizzi, G. Della Volpe, C. Luporini, A. Banfi and G. Gentile.

MUSIC

Centennial Celebration

Fritz Mahler and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra presented an all-Italian concert on Wednesday evening, December 13, 1960, in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of the unification of Italy. In spite of a blizzard early in the week and the omission of a rehearsal, the orchestra played brilliantly to the great delight of a large audience which included representatives of important Italian cultural organizations. The guest soloist was Ornella Santoliquido, pianist.

Mr. Mahler's imaginatively selected program embraced music from four centuries of Italian music. Historically, we moved from Giovanni Gabrieli's *Sonata Pian e Forte* through the Piano Concerto in C Major of Giovanni Paisiello to the Verdi overture to *La Forza del Destino* and on to two modern works, Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and Federico Ghedini's *Concerto dell' Albatro.*

The most rewarding works on the program proved to be the rarely heard Paisiello concerto performed with great taste and finesse by Miss Santoliquido and the works by Verdi and Respighi. Verdi's overture to *La Forza del Destino* is one of his rare full-length operatic preludes. In the manner of Rossini, this work is a potpourri of airs from the opera and it takes a good conductor to unify such a loosely constructed form. Mr. Mahler was most successful in tying the overture together, and the Hartford orchestra played this with an accuracy and brilliance not often heard in the opera house. The excitement of the players was amply conveyed to the delighted audience. We understand that the Boston Symphony played this work a few weeks later for the first time in its long history of concert giving!

The real disappointment of the evening was the first Hartford performance of Ghedini's *Albatross Concerto.* Based on one of the most sublime passages from Melville's *Moby Dick,* this 28-minute work did not appear to reflect the emotions Ghedini claims the reading of this episode inspired in him. It is scored for a curious combination of solo violin, cello, piano and recitativo voice plus orchestra of two flutes, two trombones, percussion and strings. Many of us felt that Ghedini made a mistake in casting the work in the form of a *concerto grosso.* His idea of using a narrator to declaim some of Melville's most beautiful lines was a good one. However, after Professor John Dando recited a few lines most eloquently, we sat through a long passage of concerto technique literally imploring the composer to get to the next idea of the narration. Again, some more spoken lines and some more apparently meaningless solo passage work. Nor did the end of the work reflect the ethereal final idea of Melville as the bird flies off to heaven. It is a pity that a work with such a fine literary program turned into a technical problem for the composer.

Whatever reservations we may have felt for Ghedini's attempt were promptly forgotten with the final number, Respighi's *Pines of Rome.* This is one of the finest twentieth-century symphonic poems and a real credit to Italian instrumental music. It is also one of the most successfully scored works in the modern repertoire, and to hear a minor-league orchestra emit a sound like the New York Philharmonic in the final section was one of those rare thrills which reassures the constant concert-goer that he can still encounter a stirring experience in a symphony concert in these days when mass production of recordings and concerts operates at the expense of concentrated musical effort.

Mozart's *La Finta Semplice*

The Mozart Festival Orchestra and singers, Baird Hastings conductor, presented the American premiere of Mozart's first full-length opera, *La Finta Semplice,* in a concert performance in Boston Friday, January 27, 1961. The youthful work which Mozart wrote at age 12 is astonishing in its foreshadowing of the late masterworks, particularly *Figaro.* In fact, the title role, Baroness Rosina, seems to be a sketch for the later Countess Almaviva, and the "pardon scene" in the last act shows the composer in full command of operatic resources.

The original Italian text is by Marco Coltellini after Carlo Goldoni, and its treatment of the love intrigues is worthy of Lorenzo da Ponte. While this reviewer would have preferred to hear the work in the original Italian, Mr. Hastings felt that the audience could follow the plot better in English and made his own careful translation for this performance.

Mr. Hastings conducted the sparkling score with authority and mature musical in-

terpretation. The seven singers, young professionals from Boston, performed with wit and polish. Outstanding in the cast were Antonia Dalapas, soprano, whose portrayal of Rosina revealed a voice of great promise and emotional warmth, and John Morabito, tenor, whose ringing tones brought to life the swashbuckling soldier, Fracasso. Richard Conrad as Polidoro showed a fine command of the Italian opera buffa style.

An event of this importance should have received national as well as local notice. After a summer of study at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Mr. Hastings plans to re-assemble his company for a tour of eastern American colleges.

Italian Avant-garde Music

The recognizable reaction of music to the upheaval of World War II is only now becoming apparent, and it is certain that Italy is reflecting many of the new tendencies. With Puccini still alive during the confusion of the 1920's, Italy was too close to Romantic opera to take a dynamic role in the experiments following World War I. In contrast, as we enter the full tide of the period since 1945 many striking contributions of Italy to the second most interesting period of twentieth-century music now become apparent. Dallapiccola, Riccardo Malipiero and others have shown us how the Italian love for melody has humanized the twelve-tone style of Schonberg's disciples like Webern. It is now obvious that in the new interest in electronic instruments and percussion the composers Berio, Maderna, Nono and others are important men to reckon with.

This was strikingly brought to our attention in a concert of avant-garde music produced by composer Luciano Berio and his ensemble at Harvard University Friday, February 10th. This was one of a number of concerts Mr. Berio produced in this part of the United States early this year. Like Boulez in France, Stockhausen in Germany and John Cage in America, Berio has enjoyed a carte blanche from radio studios to develop new techniques in musical sounds. To share some of his discoveries with us, Berio filled the stage of Paine Hall with an amazing assortment of percussion instruments including Chinese blocks and Victorian stained glass.

As our Harvard colleagues have noted, two of the most ingenious and pleasing works were by the two Italian composers represented on the program, Silvano Busoti and Berio, himself. Berio is a former student of Luigi Dallapiccola and especially interested in new musical settings of the spoken word. R. Malipiero has pointed out that Berio shares the enthusiasm of many young Italian composers for American literature. On this program we found his *Circles*, based on three poems by e. e. cummings, admirably suited to his purpose. Everything in the piece served to emphasize the voice and stylized movement of the singer, Miss Cathy Berberian (wife of Luciano Berio). With consummate vocal control and a dramatic ability of a Medea-like intensity, Miss Berberian traversed the half-chanted, half-sung utterances of the score with a truly virtuoso performance.

Silvano Busoti's "Voix de France" was also written for the voice with obbligato percussion. In this work, Miss Berberian was required to hum, chant and rasp in at least five different languages (she concluded by moaning "Mush, straight ahead, mush") both at the audience and occasionally into a grand piano which sympathetically resonated her tones. Here again she presented a triumphant reading of an unusually demanding work.

We could also describe other works on the program by Bruno Maderna and Stockhausen. Mr. Berio was fortunate to have a superb group of performers in his company. The timpani player frequently traveled in a complete circle to reach all of his percussion instruments. A flutist executed passages of great agility to the accompaniment of two stereo speakers emitting electronic sounds. When not singing, Miss Berberian crunched together a cluster of Victorian glass strips and then a cluster of Chinese wood blocks. The large audience of young intelligentsia were as excited by the skill of the performers as they were perplexed by some of the new sound effects they heard.

The concert was a great success from the audience standpoint, but the conservatives present still wonder whether it was the music or the virtuosity of the performers which called forth the ovation. In the few works we heard where any real melody was required (those including flute solos) was there anything vital in the melodic line which could command attention? Could Berio and Maderna produce acceptable musical compositions with traditional instruments in a neo-classic or twelve-tone style if they had not arbitrarily chosen to embark on

this new path of experimenting with sounds? Or are they seizing this escape to cover up a lack of real musical talent? We would have to know their earlier works to answer these questions.

Whether we would choose to spend another evening soon in listening to bloops, burps, squeals, moans, percussion taps, etc. is a question. Whether we yet understand this new music is not so important as recognizing the possibility that this technique is going to become increasingly important in all music for at least the rest of this century. Electronic and new percussion effects are apparently here to stay. Even if Berio and Busoti do not emerge as the Haydn and Mozart of the 1960's, the world has plenty of room for their innovations. After all, it was the innovators like Satie and Charles Ives who paved the way for the work of men now recognized as prime forces in the music of our time. For this reason, we are grateful to Luciano Berio and his troupe for bringing to this country the new ideas developed in *Radio Italiana* and exposing our ears to new sounds of real potentiality to the coming generation of composers.

CLARENCE H. BARBER
Trinity College

ANTONIO MANCINI: THE CONVALESCENT

Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Elizabeth H. Gates Fund

ART

Salute to Italy: 100 Years of Italian Art

In 1949, as Italy was just emerging from a long and culturally devastating siege of political reaction and war, a major exhibition of twentieth-century Italian art was staged by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. This exhibition virtually introduced the American public to modern Italian art. Perhaps a little provincially, the foreword to its catalogue noted: "The field is one that we in America have tended to neglect, not only because of our rightful interest in our own contemporary painting and sculpture, but also because of two formidable counterattractions in Europe – the Parisian present and the Italian past."

Since that event, as if to compensate for our earlier neglect, Americans have supported a very lively commerce in Italian art. Witness to this is the recent "Salute to Italy" exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum (sponsored by the Atheneum and the Cesare Barbieri Center of Italian Studies), a hundred-year survey of Italian art, drawn entirely from American collections. The Atheneum's general curator, Mr. Edward Bryant, organized this exhibition, and it is to his credit that, despite admitted limitations of time, space and budget, he has managed to assemble about a hundred works which convey an impression of the diversity and vitality of Italian art since 1861.

Needless to say, there are artists in this group whose names have become almost household words. The museum is rich in Chiricos (small, but first-rate pictures), and its Modigliani pencil portrait of Leon Bakst is a delicate example of this artist's superb draftsmanship. On loan for this occasion, Balla's *Leash in Motion* (or *Dog on Leash,* as it is referred to in the catalogue) is a familiar bit of fun. Severini is adequately represented. Boccioni, Carrà and Morandi, however, might have been shown to better advantage.

Of the middle generation, the De Pisis is pretty but indifferent; the Casorati is a well-known and arresting picture, and for an added fillip, there is a small "pure" abstraction by Osvaldo Licini, whose work is virtually unknown to Americans.

The real virtue of the exhibition, of course, is that it gives a tantalizing view of areas of Italian art that are still too little known in this country. One of these areas is the late nineteenth century. And one of the most astonishing paintings in the show is by Segantini, who died a year before the century ended, and whose visionary *La Penitente, Caglio,* with its curious light effects, is both intensely personal and remarkably modern. Mancini and the somewhat older Lega are revealed here as painters of sensitivity despite their interest in sentimental narrative that was so characteristic of the era. The virtuoso painter, Boldini, parallels our own Sargent in a deft portrait of James McNeill Whistler – one brilliant expatriate painted by another. Fattori, the leader of the "Macchiaioli" group is represented by a fluent ink drawing, *Soldiers on Horseback,* a sketch reminiscent of Manet but also recalling the Civil War reportage of Winslow Homer. And supreme among the sculptors in the show, there is Medardo Rosso, whose impressionist technique allegedly influenced Rodin, and whose first American exhibition was held at a small gallery in New York only two years ago, some thirty years after his death.

Apart from the attention that it focuses on these and other artists of the nineteenth century (as well as some that might better have been left to obscurity), the exhibition is notable for the place that it gives to artists who were born in this century: more than twenty of these were not represented in the Museum of Modern Art show of 1949.

Marini, Fazzini, Manzù and Mirko, among the sculptors, and Birolli, Capogrossi, Cremonini, Guttuso, Santomaso and Afro, among the painters, have been seen fairly frequently in this country, both in major group exhibitions – the Carnegie International, for example – and in New York one-man shows. Burri and Music also have established reputations here, and are most felicitously represented in this show. Burri's burlap collage, ironically daubed with gold metallic paint, demonstrates his ability to create quite sensitive tactile effects with extremely coarse means. Music's lyrical painting of huddled mushroom forms in close-valued earth colors is a handsome work.

But we have had little or no opportunity to see the work of Scialoja, Romiti, Rotella, Dova, Francesconi, Scanvino, Signori and Dorazio, and even if the isolated examples we see here provide insufficient evidence for judging the abilities of these younger artists, at least they serve to open a few new vistas. The most refreshing of these is the work of Piero Dorazio. Possibly taking Barnett New-

man as a point of departure, his large abstract oil, *Minus One,* has a sensuous and shimmering surface texture; the picture glows and mesmerizes. Dorazio's other contribution to the show is a small, silver sculpture, literally a jewel of pure form, its intricate relationships of solid and void worked out with deliberate coolness and consummate artistry. Also compelling is the strange imagery and the rich effect of *L'Indifferente Ammirabile,* a painting by Dova, who appears to be indebted to such international surrealists as Matta.

It is easy enough to carp about survey exhibitions. Like most comprehensive displays, this one tends to be sketchy; it might have been a better show if more important works by fewer artists had been included. Many better examples of most of these artists do exist, principally in European collections, but even in this country. Moreover, judicious pruning might have allowed for the inclusion of the other outstanding "Macchiaioli": Sernesi, Signorini, Abbati. For these one would happily exchange the academic Annigoni, the slick Virgilio Guidi, a Guttuso (there are two), and the sentimental and Sert-like Favretto.

Granted these shortcomings, however, there is enough material in this exhibition to provide a view of Italian art *sub specie aeternitatis,* as it were. For example, there is abundant evidence of the Italian artist's fascination with his own classical past – a glorious past, and a difficult one to ignore. Borrowing from the past, of course is not an intrinsically bad habit. (Great artists have always managed to impose themselves on their material.) But for the artist *manqué,* it can be devastating. Chirico drew heavily on the inspiration of native architecture, but his metaphysical paintings are brilliantly inventive; Sironi and Campigli, on the other hand, have not re-invented Pompeian ruins and Etruscan sculpture; they have affected them as mannerisms, making stylish and monotonous use of them.

It perhaps is not farfetched to say that there are a number of parallels between Italian and American art: we both have our Victorian pastiches, petit bourgeois anecdotal setpieces and academy portraits; we both produced a number of part- or full-time expatriate artists. For Boldini there is Sargent, and for each propagandist picture of Guttuso there is one by Gropper or Gwathmey.

Since the Second World War – as contact between our artists has resumed, as art has become an instrument of diplomacy and an import-export commodity, as big international shows have proliferated throughout the world – national differences in the arts are becoming almost imperceptible.

Looking at the work of the young painters and sculptors in this exhibition, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to explain why it is more Italian than American or French. Perhaps this no longer matters. Artists are generally said to be ahead of their times, and the obliteration of national boundaries in art may be one of the most hopeful signs in the world today.

BELLE KRASNE RIBICOFF
Hartford, Connecticut

Another review of the exhibition appeared in the *New York Times* (Sunday, April 23, 1961), written by John Canaday.

At the opening of the exhibit were, left to right, Professor Michael R. Campo, director of the Barbieri Center; Edward Bryant, curator of the Atheneum; Charles Cunningham, director of the Atheneum; Mrs. Brosio and Italian Ambassador Manlio Brosio.

BOOKS

The Dark and the Light. By Elio Vittorini. New Directions, 1961.

In the rich literary firmament of contemporary Italy, no one occupies the unique, and in many ways ambiguous place of Elio Vittorini. He is one of the few literary artists of a generation, which includes Alberto Moravia, Vasco Pratolini and Ignazio Silone, to have reached a truly international audience, in terms of critics *and* readers, without becoming, in any sense, "popular." By the same token, every book he brings out – a rare event, for he is anything but prolific – is hailed as an exciting expression of avant-garde literature, as a new, bold attempt to turn into a finished product the "one" truth Vittorini wishes to dramatize. His work, because it is controversial, demands and receives ample attention by the critics, who are forever forced to come to new, frequently contradictory conclusions about a figure whose fiction is as strange as it is confounding. Hence the ambivalent attitude of his critics who only in a few instances have been able to say something about the worth of Elio Vittorini, and of what he has done and where he is going.

As some may know, Vittorini is more than a mere writer. The story of his important contributions to Italian culture is now, if not as widely known outside of his native country as it deserves to be, a matter of established record. In the thirties, he translated with brilliance and sensitivity the works of Poe, D. H. Lawrence, Faulkner, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Saroyan, Caldwell and a score of lesser Anglo-American novelists and, with the late Cesare Pavese, he was instrumental in introducing the study of modern American letters in his country. For several years after the war (in which he had taken an active part working with the underground forces) he served as the chief editor of the original series of neo-realistic fiction by young novelists dubbed "I Gettoni" (The Chips); between 1945 and 1947 he published the cultural-political journal *Il Politecnico,* remarkable for the breadth of its interests and for the impact it had upon a large segment of the Italian reading audience. Lately, in association with Italo Calvino, he has been editing the Milanese literary quarterly *Il Menabò*. At the present time Vittorini is also the editor-in-charge of the foreign literature section of Italy's largest publishing concern, Mondadori of Milan.

Activities such as those briefly outlined have placed Vittorini in the intellectual limelight of Europe. His production consists of seven novels and novellas (the terms are used here with considerable reservation), a collection of short stories, a volume of lyrical prose and a vast number of articles, notes and aphorisms on literature and the arts, politics and life, recently published in the omnibus volume bearing the title *Diario in pubblico* (Public Diary). Quantitatively, Vittorini's fiction may not be too impressive, to be sure: yet few other writers in Italy can match his internal coherence or boast of a similarly rich, or similarly erratic, progression toward the book they aspire to write. What Vittorini has written thus far should be viewed as parts of a "work in progress." And there is the rub: despite the notable achievement of each individual book he has written, none, with the possible exception of *Il garofano rosso* (which Vittorini wishes to exclude from his *opera omnia*) is what a critic might call "a well-made novel," a truly finished work. It is in this light that we may appreciate the furious revisions to which the author submits his work (and which, in the case of *Le donne di Messina* actually prevented the novel from appearing in English), the dilemmas of technique and form obsessing him, and the inevitable dissatisfaction he experiences when the book is completed. "I have never aspired to write books; I have always sought to write *the* book," he wrote once, when he felt compelled to "explain" his *Garofano rosso.* "I write because I believe there is 'one' truth to be said; and if I turn from one thing to another it is not because I see 'other' truths that can also be said, or because I have 'more' or 'something else' to say, but because it seems to me that something constantly changes in the truth that requires that the

way of expressing it be constantly renewed." To this end, Vittorini has indeed dedicated the better part of his creative efforts.

But he has not done this in a regular, disciplined manner. It is the acentricity of his interests, the richness of his curriculum and activities (translations, editorial work, creative writing, and so forth) carried into his fiction that eventually led one of his critics to comment on how Vittorini's "way or reasoning [in his novels] is much like a small jungle: to confirm, to consolidate an idea that has just struck him, he loses himself in other arguments, at first parallel and similar, then increasingly more disparate, always less probable, and finally opposed to each other. . . ." "I envy," Vittorini confessed some years ago, as though he were in effect answering his critics, "I envy those writers who have the capacity of remaining interested in their own work while pestilences and wars are ravaging in the world. . . . Any large public event can unfortunately distract me and cause a shift of interest in my own work just as, no more no less, can a personal misadventure (or adventure). Thus, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, in July 1936, made me quite suddenly indifferent to the continuation of this story [*Erica*] on which I had worked for six months in a row. When I took up my pen again, around September 1937, it was not to complete *Erica:* it was to write the first pages of *In Sicily*."

The Dark and the Light, just issued by New Directions, consists of two novellas, both beautifully translated by Miss Frances Keene, who has also prepared a short, useful introduction. *Erica,* the first piece, was actually written between January and July of 1936, at which time the author found the political atmosphere unbearable to the point of being unable to continue writing. He put aside the manuscript and forgot about its existence, until it was discovered in 1952 by the author's late son, Giusto. Two years later it was printed in the pages of the Roman review *Nuovi Argomenti,* accompanied by a letter to the editors of the magazine. On this occasion, too, as Vittorini had done when Mondadori published in book form *Il garofano rosso* (thirteen years after its original composition), the author explained some of the technical reasons why he was unable to bring his *racconto* to a conclusion even when the manuscript had been found:

> The manner in which I have become accustomed to write from *In Sicily* on, is not exactly the same in which the present [story] is told. Today I have become accustomed to refer to the feelings and thoughts of my characters only through their exterior manifestations . . . It no longer comes natural for me to write that such and such a character 'felt' that, or that 'he thought' that . . . But when I wrote this book, it was still natural for me (as it had been in *Piccola Borghesia,* or in *Sardegna,* or in the *Red Carnation*) to say directly what one felt or what one thought. The book, in fact, is replete with 'she thought,' 'she felt,' 'she used to think.'

Traditional in structure, *Erica* is at once one of the few works by Vittorini not, in some sense, autobiographical and his first attempt to handle the theme of poverty in a world of cruelty and hypocrisy. The story revolves around the experiences of a fourteen-year-old girl left to her own resources by her mother who, wishing to join her husband working elsewhere (and obviously not too interested in his family), leaves town. Erica is left in charge of her younger brother and sister and, for a while at least, she succeeds in managing quite well. Soon enough, however, her good judgment and maternal instincts prove to be insufficient, when the few provisions left by her mother are exhausted. Unwilling to beg others for help and unable to solve her situation by honest means, Erica becomes a prostitute. Her decision is readily accepted by her neighbors: "Indeed just because she was little more than a child, and because they had witnessed the long agony which debouched in this misfortune they were more silent than ever . . . in a certain sense, they also felt grateful to Erica for having freed them of their preoccupation about what she should do." But, even if Erica has turned to prostitution as a means to feed her brother and sister, her life, rather than degenerating into vulgarity, continues to be limpid and honest (in a human sense). Her suffering and her agony serve to make her more aware of life and to increase her stature as a woman.

The tale is left unfinished and abruptly ends just as the young girl is about to enter the world of tears and insults, hoping to find in it some measure of happiness and fulfillment. The end of the novel coincided with the end of Vittorini's realistic phase. *Erica,* a novella of sorrow written in a simple yet moving manner, may seem naive in outlook. The problem of evil and human cruelty no

doubt seem oversimplified. Yet it is not so much the depth in which the author explores complex feelings and social situations that strikes the reader, as the manner in which they are reduced to understatements.

In retrospect, and taking into account the position of the book in the context of Vittorini's production, we realize that *Erica* contains the first developments of a seed planted in his earlier *Red Carnation*, a seed that eventually blossomed into a total identification of the author with the masses. This identification was translated into a lyrical concern for "the doomed human race" that divided mankind into "uomini e no," men and mice. There should also be recognition of the style in which *Erica* is written. Vittorini was working within the limitations of those modes of expression and structure imposed by his native, and not original, literary tradition. It is only here and there that it is possible to find the first hints of a style that will develop into a coherent, personal, poetic means of communication in subsequent books; only seldom in *Erica* is such style endowed with a magical quality of myth and fable. By the end of 1936 – the great year of the Spanish Civil War and of an intensive period of translation – Vittorini was no longer interested in the facts of the day and in a realistic vision and diction. He had reached a spiritual and artistic crisis, out of which he was to produce his most significant novels.

If *Erica* belongs, stylistically and thematically, to Vittorini's first period of creativity, *La Garibaldina*, on the other hand, reads like an extension of, or a concluding note to *In Sicily* and *Le donne di Messina*, published in 1941 and 1949 respectively. *La Garibaldina* (the last full-length work to be completed and published by the author in book form, in 1956) was written between December 1949 and May 1950 and originally brought out in installments in the Florentine review *Il Ponte*. It is appropriate and revealing that it should have appeared in the same volume together with the novelette written fourteen years earlier, as it offers a valid yardstick to measure the long road traveled by Vittorini in his poetic quest. It becomes apparent, too, that the author's *sense* of, and feeling *for* reality has increased at the same pace as his *interest* in contemporary reality has decreased. The works published by Vittorini since 1941 have gradually removed him from the ranks of traditional novelists (no negative judgment implied), say Silone or Moravia, whose primary concern is, simply stated, "to tell a good story." The world created by the complex and rich imagination of Vittorini is one with fewer and fewer connections with the "real" world we know. Eventually he formed an ambition to write a "new" kind of fiction that seeks to make alive not so much facts and events, or people for that matter, as universal states of mind and aspirations. Thus, again and again the reader finds himself transported into a never-never land where the characters talk, feel and suffer, to be sure, but do not work, or play or make love. Vittorini's finest tales are set in a symbolic Sicily, or on a train moving toward a distant destination (never reached), or anywhere in post-war Italy (although one wonders whether *Il Sempione*, even after reading the polemical appended to the book, is describing Italian situations), rather than in the genuinely "real," cosmopolitan milieu of *Il garofano rosso*, or in the Milan of *Uomini e no*.

Structurally and stylistically, the affinities of *La Garibaldina* with Vittorini's previous works are numerous and easily recognizable. There is hardly a plot in this story, and much of it takes place on a train. Likewise, *La Garibaldina* is an effective tale less for what it says than for what it succeeds in evoking. Its style is typical of the linguistic agility we have come to expect of Vittorini, and the feeling for situations and sentiments is, as always, profound and amazing. And one can always rely on the amusing combination of encounters and confrontations as an instrument of aesthetic pleasure. There are many wonderful scenes in the book: the meeting of the eccentric Signora, Baronessa Leonilde with Innocenzo, the *bersagliere* on his way to Terranova on leave; their meanderings in the town after the two have gotten off the train and the strange finale itself. What is most instructive, however, is the author's method used with considerable subtlety to fuse the real with the unreal, the present with the past, the immediate with the timeless, as in the description of the town and the impact it makes on the unsophisticated soldier:

> The tolling of a bell whose tone fell suddenly, reverberating against the paving stones, reminded them both of the task they had in common, but it frightened Don Carlos who ran out of one of the alleys. They looked back at the dark town whose bronze throat had given voice. Was it one o'clock or did the sound mark a quarter after an unpredictable hour?

The town too had something that was undefinable. There were wide-open doors, dark wells of emptiness, wide-open windows, wells of emptiness too: and there were other doors and windows closed as if they had been blacked out for centuries upon centuries in a far distant age, before the flood.

The walls were covered with cracked dust and the north-west wind, blowing full strength, raised a yellowish clay of grit from the façades; even the houses with some sort of attempt at a style appeared shapeless with their outlines drayed, their corners rounded and their cornices nibbled away.

The town might have witnessed the coming of Abraham, the pilgrimage of the Three Kings, Roland's passage on his way to Roncesvalles, and Garibaldi's passing . . . The soldier and the old woman were somehow reconciled. They stopped and decided to rest.

The tone of the entire book is constant as in this passage. Things are made to speak for themselves and questions are made to contain the answer to what is being asked. And that answer, in the last analysis, is the truth of the great Lombard of *In Sicily:* "I believe that man is ripe for something else . . . Not for stealing, not killing, and so on, and for being a good citizen . . . I believe he's ripe for something else, for new and different duties." Hence the insults in *La Garibaldina* heaped upon the train conductors who insist that the poor soldier traveling on the wrong train pay the difference in fare; hence the heroine's magnificent rebellion and condemnation of old and useless rules, and of human folly.

People speak in this extraordinary novella: but so do houses, smoke, and ghosts! And after we are through reading the tale, and manage to find stillness again (after so much, and such astonishing *coralità*), we realize that it was not a "novel" we had been reading all along: it was a cry against despair, or a hymn to man's dignity and hope, and to the vitality, courage and humor of a race not yet totally doomed and certainly not yet ready to surrender.

SERGIO PACIFICI
Yale University

Some sections of this review will appear, in revised form, in Professor Pacifici's *A Guide to Contemporary Italian Literature* to be published in the fall by Meridian Books.

Italy in the Giolittian Era. By A. William Salomone. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960.

In the years since the close of the Second World War, while the Germans have shown a noticeable reluctance to discuss their recent past, Italian scholars and publicists have been conducting a lively argument about the nature and origins of Italy's totalitarian experiment. The reason for this contrast is not far to seek. Italian fascism, although a thoroughly disagreeable phenomenon, never plumbed the depths of sadism and brutality reached by its German counterpart and, moreover, always maintained about it something of an *opéra bouffe* aura.

In retrospect the fascist interlude in Italy has provoked from the Italian intelligentsia not so much horror as an almost amused surprise that Mussolini's regime lasted as long as it did. In view of this attitude it is perhaps only natural that attention has been fixed largely on the twenty years which preceded the fascist *coup d'état* of 1922 in an attempt to discover why the Italian parliamentary regime – at a time when it was taking positive steps to satisfy the demands of political democracy and social reform – should have collapsed so woefully in the face of the threat of an empty and eclectic movement like fascism. Put another way, there has taken place recently in Italy a reevaluation of the character and policy of Giovanni Giolitti who was more or less continuously premier of Italy between 1903 and 1914 and who remained from 1914 to 1922 the *doyen* of Italian parliamentarianism.

It is probably not too much of an exaggeration to say that until the end of World War II Giolitti's reputation was that of a corrupt parliamentary manager with only half-hidden authoritarian tastes who degraded Italian representative government in the eyes of the populace and paved the way for Mussolini's unparliamentary dictatorship. This simple-minded interpretation was bound to fall out of fashion sooner or later, but its demise was hastened by the exposure of the hollowness of the fascist regime during the Second World War. Giolitti's era, notwithstanding the unscrupulousness of its party political life, appeared a halcyon time after twenty years of the even more unscrupulous and in the last resort politically inept Mussolinian government. The liberals who had castigated Giolitti's unsavoury political methods indulged in self-deprecation.

Wrote Gaetano Salvemini: "I must acknowledge that I would have been wiser had I been more moderate in my criticism of the Giolittian system."

Contributing to this favorable reappraisal of Giolitti and the faltering parliamentary regime which he symbolized was Dr. A. William Salomone's *Italian Democracy in the Making* which was published in the U.S.A. in 1945 and appeared in Italy in translation four years later. The Italian edition of the work received considerable notice and helped to restimulate – if indeed that were necessary – the great Giolittian debate. *Italian Democracy in the Making* did not explicitly plead a case for Giolitti. Rather it dissected in a scholarly fashion – that is, with documentation drawn from governmental publications, records of party congresses, memoirs, journals, and newspapers of the day – the problems which faced Giolitti in his years in office from 1901 to 1914 and the solutions proffered by the great parliamentary dictator. The book laid great emphasis on the factionalism and consequent unpredictability of nascent Italian socialism which was only part of the wider difficulty of incorporating a labor force lately come of age into Italy's bourgeois parliamentary state.

Besides the problem of meeting the democratic claims of labor it was Giolitti's fate to be faced with yet two more newly emergent mass movements – those from the opposite political pole in the form of Catholicism's re-entry into politics and the wave of popular nationalism epitomized in the eccentric figure of D'Annunzio. In treating of Giolitti's response to these fresh and turbulent problems *Italian Democracy in the Making* had much to say of the Italian premier's forward-looking policy – his attitude to labor disputes and of course his universal suffrage measure of 1912 – which wooed at least a part of the political Left from its intransigence to the parliamentary state. Although the point was not made by Dr. Salomone, it might be argued from his researches that if anyone or anything saved Italy from bolshevism after World War I (it was certainly not Mussolini as fascist propaganda liked to pretend), it was the heritage of Giolitti's handling of the Left. This measure of success offset somewhat Giolitti's miscalculation and complaisance, which Dr. Salomone readily granted, in the face of the destructive strength of those forces on the Right – particularly virulent nationalism – which ultimately brought about the downfall of Italian parliamentarianism. All in all, the Giolitti of *Italian Democracy in the Making* appeared a much more sympathetic figure than Italian historiography was accustomed to fifteen years ago. And if indeed it was necessary to draw a clear moral from Dr. Salomone's work, both the American and Italian editions contained an interpretive introductory essay by the famous Italian historian and erstwhile political opponent of Giolitti, Gaetano Salvemini. It has already been observed that Salvemini in 1945 was in a repentant mood. In his introductory essay Salvemini stated openly the inferences to be drawn from Salomone's book:

> It often happens that he who seeks only the best not only fails to get it but also plunges into the worst. It is said that in the next world we shall be assigned either to hell, or purgatory, or paradise. In this world, however, there is no paradise. If, in seeking an impossible paradise, we scorn purgatory, we will surely end in hell. If it were possible for me to live again in Italy between 1900 and 1914 with that modicum of experience which I have gained during these successive thirty years, I would not omit any of my censures of the Giolittian system, but I would be more indulgent and I would regard with greater suspicion those who found pleasure in my criticism because they wanted to lead Italy in the opposite direction from that which I envisaged for her.

Italian Democracy in the Making, together with Salvemini's introductory essay, has recently been reprinted in the U.S.A. as part of a more comprehensive book by Dr. Salomone bearing the title *Italy in the Giolittian Era*. What the author has added to his previous work is a fascinating essay, "Giolittian Italy Revisited," which recounts the battle of the books which has raged in Italy during the past fifteen years around the name of Giolitti – a controversy in which Dr. Salomone's earlier work has played no small part. To some extent what Dr. Salomone has to tell is predictable. Writers of a right-wing persuasion have long admired Giolitti as a precursor of fascism and, with the return of fascism to Italian political life in the late 1950's, apparently it has once more become permissible to express this point of view. The moderate and most numerous element in Italian historical scholarship and journalism has tended to

follow the line set out by Dr. Salomone himself; that is, to stress the difficulties faced by Giolitti and to accord him mild praise for his gropings toward democracy against overwhelming odds.

With this dispassionate but not uncharitable evaluation, the majority has approached the traditional views of two powerful forces in Italian intellectual life. The first of these is the philosopher Benedetto Croce who was a strong supporter of Giolitti in the first quarter of this century even to the point of applauding his support of Mussolini's government in its early years; the second, the Italian Communist party. Orthodox Marxism has always admired Giolitti for his attempt to democratize the Italian state and has explained away his flirtation with the Right as evidence of his inescapable bourgeois background. As for the charge that Giolitti helped to bring on the overthrow of the parliamentary state, it hardly need be said that this is not a crime in Marxist eyes and in fact Giolitti has been and is commended for hastening fascism – a sign of decadent capitalism according to the dialectic. In this sophisticated approach the fine hand of the able Togliatti may be discerned.

But by far the most interesting twist in the Giolitti controversy is that afforded by Gaetano Salvemini. Toward the end of his life both in his writings and in conversation with Dr. Salomone, Salvemini, who had taken the lead in 1945 in restoring Giolitti's historical reputation, was quite clearly of the opinion that the whitewashing of Giolitti had been carried too far. While not returning to his pre-1914 animosity toward Giolitti as an individual, he found it necessary to reiterate his strictures of the corrupt political system which came to bear Giolitti's name. Thus, rather than regret his criticisms of *Giolittismo* made in the pre-fascist period, it appears that Salvemini was beginning to feel unease at his espousal after the Second World War of the philosophy that we "rather bear those ills we have than fly to others we know not of."

To speak frankly, this compromising stand of Salvemini sat ill with one of his known integrity and proven social conscience. We may assume that the rehabilitation of Giolitti as a rationalization of the imperfections of Italy's parliamentary system in the post-De Gasperi years aroused again the fighting reformist socialist in Salvemini. At all events, at his death in 1958 the most eminent of twentieth-century Italian historians was more unwilling than ever to pronounce an unmistakable value judgment on Giolitti and *Giolittismo*. It is quite clear from Dr. Salomone's bibliographical essay – and especially from his examination of the eponymous thought of Salvemini – that the Giolittian enigma is far from resolved and that we may expect more assessments and reassessments, scholarly and polemical, of the man and his policies.

In conclusion, it must be said that *Italy in the Giolittian Era* at first sight appears to be a scholarly book for a scholarly audience. It is copiously footnoted and contains an extensive bibliography – which, incidentally, could prove a mine of information for a researcher in the field of early twentieth-century Italian history. Nonetheless, it would be unfortunate if the non-specialist were to be discouraged by outward appearances. This book by its subject matter alone can be of interest to all concerned with the methods whereby parliamentary democracies survive or die.

Alan Cassels
Trinity College

ITEMS

• One hundred years of Italian unity is the theme of the "padiglione unitario," the unity pavilion which opened at the ITALIA 61 celebrations in Torino on June 2nd. In charge of the exhibition in the labyrinthine structure is none other than film director and novelist, Mario Soldati. He has arranged a vast pictorial narrative of Italy's last one hundred years – gathering material in the form of rare prints, photographs and documents from museums and private collections throughout the peninsula. He has divided the exhibition into five sections roughly corresponding to the five twenty-year periods of the century.

As was to be expected Soldati's conception has come in for sharp criticism. The show reflects his own bizarre and ironical tastes. To recall the fateful Italian defeat at Adua, Ethiopia, in 1896, he chose not one of the popular illustrations of the day but an enormous photograph of mustachioed, whiskered, pompously bemedaled military brass, stiffly seated on cane chairs on the bridge of a ship carrying them to Eritrea and annihilation.

Under the headings of language, sports, cinema, economics, etc., the dizzying kaleidoscopic display covers all aspects of national life from jingoism to juke-boxes. What does help to give unity to the unity pavilion exhibition is the linking commentary provided by another notable literary figure, Guido Piovene.

• The most gripping annual athletic event of Italy is by far the Giro d'Italia bicycle race. It is, like the Tour de France, an international contest with cyclists from many other countries competing. The race is run down and up the peninsula through hundreds of villages and lasts several weeks. It engages the national attention in much the same way that our World Series does. Of late the Italians have not fared well in the Giro or the Tour. The glorious days of Coppi and Bartali are past.

This year the national honor is really at stake since the race celebrates the Centennial of Italian Unity. It is indeed called the Giro d'Italia del Centenario. For the first time the course has been charted very fittingly through every region of Italy. The starting point is the ITALIA 61 headquarters at Torino and the finish line is at Milan: 3928 kilometers in all, divided into twenty-one laps (with just two days rest).

Dean Arthur H. Hughes, Professor Donini, Professor Campo and Ambassador Brosio

The racers will frequently climb the Alps and the Apennines. Moreover, the Giro crosses the sea twice: from Genoa to Cagliari in Sardinia; then from Cagliari to Marsala in Sicily. The fifth lap, from Marsala to Palermo, of course, retraces the historic route of Garibaldi and his "Mille."

One hundred and seventy cyclists are included in this grueling test of stamina, among them specialists in straightaway sprinting and others of plain uphill pumping. Italy is not optimistic about its chances of winning the Giro. But win, lose or draw it will put up a good show just as it did in international Davis Cup competition and in the Summer Olympics.

• Before the opening of the *Salute to Italy* exhibition on April 20th at the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Cesare Barbieri Center held a ceremony at Trinity College honoring Italian Ambassador Manlio Brosio and Professor Filippo Donini, Director of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in New York City. Both guests were received as honorary members and installed as Fellows of the Cesare Barbieri Center.

Ambassador Brosio has completed his tour of duty as Ambassador to the United States and will shortly take up his post in Paris as Ambassador to France. For all his efforts in strengthening the cordial ties that exist between America and Italy we are deeply grateful. The good wishes of all his friends in America go with him and Mrs. Brosio.

Professor Donini will also leave the United States very soon to assume the Directorship of the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in London, the oldest and most flourishing Italian Institute of Culture in the world. In the few years that he has been in our country Professor Donini has done a singular job in establishing the Istituto and in conducting its affairs. The Istituto has

been a focal point for Italian cultural activity in the United States and has been of immense assistance to teachers of Italian and to institutions like the Center. It is fervently hoped that its function will continue. We shall miss the active presence of Professor Donini and we sincerely hope that the "viva corrente d'idee" which now exists between Italy and America and for which he is in great part responsible will be maintained and encouraged.

The Trustees of the Cesare Barbieri Center and his friends at Trinity College and throughout the country wish him "buon viaggio" and all good fortune in his new post.

• One of the most heartening statistics to come out of Italy of late has been that indicating the expenditure figures for Italian public education. For the first time since the Unification the costs for education exceed those for national defense: 702 billion lire as opposed to 667 billion lire or 16% of the national budget as compared to 15.5%.

CONTRIBUTORS

NICOLA ABBAGNANO is Professor of the History of Philosophy at the University of Turin and one of Italy's major Existentialist philosophers. He is also co-director with Norberto Bobbio of the distinguished journal *Rivista di Filosofia.* In addition to the numerous books mentioned in his article he has written *Possibilità e libertà, Problemi di sociologia,* and the very significant *Dizionario di Filosofia* (1961).

CLARENCE BARBER holds three degrees from Harvard and is on the faculty of the music department at Trinity College. He specializes in seventeenth-century French church music.

ALAN CASSELS teaches modern diplomatic history at Trinity College. He has just taken his doctorate at the University of Michigan.

NINO LANGIULLI is a graduate of Maryknoll Seminary and Hunter College and is studying for his doctorate in philosophy. At present he is studying at the University of Torino under Professor Abbagnano as a Fulbright Fellow and recipient of an Italian Government Grant.

SERGIO PACIFICI teaches Italian at Yale University. He is a specialist in contemporary Italian literature. Recently he was guest editor of the *Saturday Review* issue dedicated to Italy. He has just received a Guggenheim Fellowship.

OLGA RAGUSA is Professor of Italian at Columbia University. She contributes frequently to learned journals. Her book *Mallarmé in Italy* (Vanni) is an important work in the field of Franco-Italian literary questions.

BELLE KRASNE RIBICOFF before coming to Hartford was a critic for leading art journals and the editor of *The Art Digest.* The past two years she has devoted to the organization of the Vassar College Centennial Loan Exhibition which will be on view in New York this summer at the Wildenstein Gallery.

JOHN TAGLIABUE has taught at the American University in Beirut, at Tokyo Daigaku and Tauda College, Alfred University, and now teaches at Bates College. He has had Fulbright Fellowships to Italy and Japan. His poems have been published in leading literary journals and his collected *Poems* (Harper) have provoked very favorable response.