

## Introduction

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Carlo Linati, an eclectic writer from Lombardy whose love for Irish culture led him to introduce Irish literature to Italy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>, in a book of «prose lombarde» (Lombard prose texts) wrote that in spite of being so different in their «storia, luoghi, costumanze»<sup>2</sup> (history, places, customs), a great deal of affinities were detectable between the Italian and Irish peoples. Later, Linati went on to say that these affinities were «delicate e profonde» (delicate and deep) and that the two peoples were «storicamente compagni» (historically akin) because of the common «decenni di servaggio» (decades of servitude) from which both countries were freed «attraverso odissee di dolori e di sacrifici»<sup>3</sup> (through odisseys of sorrows and sacrifices). Despite this early recognition, the cultural inter-relations between Italy and Ireland have seldom been investigated. With the emergence of globalisation, which has also affected literary studies by enhancing transnational/translational perspectives, increasing attention has been paid to the cultural interaction between Ireland and its various Others<sup>4</sup> but the relationship of Ireland with Italy is still relatively underexplored.

The Irish experience of Italy in pre-independence days, however, deserves special scrutiny since it was only apparently shaped by British attitudes, sharing with the dominant country a similar enthusiasm but also similar stereotypes and denigrating observations. Underneath this surface similarity, however, there were specific differences in attitude, dictated primarily by the colonial and postcolonial status of Ireland and by a special relationship through the centuries partly due to common Roman Catholicism. As the opening essay to this section by Carlo Maria Pellizzi demonstrates, Ireland, too, had a privileged position in Italian consciousness. As for present day Ireland, first the Troubles and then the glitter of the Celtic Tiger have made it a focus of Italian interest and a cult tourist destination, especially for the young attracted by its music, the New-Wave craze for Celtic lore and the fame of its *craich*.

Among the examples of the special relationship between Ireland and Italy one could cite the monastery-founding Irish monks (St. Columban being the foremost) colonizing the peninsula from North to South, or the Irish colleges in Rome and elsewhere providing an education to Irish Catholic students

banned from Protestant universities (St. Oliver Plunkett, among others). 'The flight of the Earls' in the 17th century led Hugh O'Neill and other exiles to Rome where they received hospitality from Pope Pius V. Daniel O'Connell's dying wish was to have his heart buried in Rome. Exiles and *émigrés* to Italy not only made their country better known in the host land but brought something of Italy back to their own country. On the Irish front, Italian music and, especially, Italian opera contributed to closer links and appreciation while Italian visual art was always present on the Irish horizon. From such premises a special relationship was born, enhanced in the nineteenth century by the rising nationalism and aspirations to independence of the two countries, both under foreign domination.

Late twentieth century Italian scholarship regarding Ireland has been flourishing, following the pioneering steps of Giorgio Melchiori. Many books and essays on Irish literature have been published and there have been in the course of the last thirty years numerous important conferences dealing primarily with Ireland<sup>5</sup>. This also testifies to a special relationship. However, not much has been written, either in Italy or in Ireland, about the specific issue of interaction between the two cultures, with the major exception of Joycean studies (and now of groundbreaking work on Yeats) nor about reciprocal representations, myths and misconceptions. There have undoubtedly been some thorough studies on Medieval ties between Italy and Ireland<sup>6</sup>. Irish travellers to Italy (e.g. Oliver Goldsmith, Lady Morgan, Sean O'Faolain, Elizabeth Bowen to name just a few) and Italian travellers to Ireland (e.g. Giuseppe Acerbi, Mario Manlio Rossi) have left accounts which have offered the opportunity to investigate the theme of the representation of the Other and revealed the nuances which make the Irish gaze different from that of other northern observers. References to Italy in Irish literature (and vice-versa) and the influence of Italian literature and art on Irish authors (and vice-versa) have been highlighted in a number of very interesting studies. We can think offhand of some fine pieces on Dante's importance for Heaney and Ciáran Carson, or, conversely, on Thomas Moore's reception in nineteenth century Italian culture. These studies, however, are scattered in journals and miscellanies while, were they grouped together, they would gather momentum and give more visibility to the theme of interaction between the two cultures permitting an organic exploration of specific issues. Chiara Sciarrino's pioneering contributions on contemporary ties between Ireland and Italy<sup>7</sup> work in that direction, opening up several new perspectives.

While both France and Spain, as well as several other countries such as Brazil and Japan, have had specialized journals<sup>8</sup> which in the course of years have explored the many facets of the intercourse between their countries and Ireland and have provided a forum for their scholars to present their work, Italy until now has lacked a periodical publication regarding Ireland exclusively as well as an association of Irish studies with regular conferences (again with

the exception of the specialized branch of Joyce studies<sup>9</sup>). Therefore the fine scholars cultivating Irish studies, and especially the younger ones, have not had a regular forum in which to give more visibility to their work. Only the journal «Il Tolomeo» has regularly provided a section for reviewing works of Irish interest. The present publication aims at offering a showcase for the considerable interest about Ireland in Italy while the monographic section it harbours tries to make amends for the neglected discourse of Irish Italian cultural relations – a discourse which is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary – by filling some of these gaps. The essays gathered here examine Irish literature (and occasionally Italian literature) in a transnational perspective and range from the Middle Ages to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Diverse forms of interaction are taken into consideration, from a study of the presence of Ireland in Italian culture and history, which opens the collection of essays, to one of Italy in Irish writing which concludes it, also taking in translation studies, the study of influences, travel literature and the representations of Italy.

Starting with the Middle Ages, Carlo Maria Pellizzi presents an ample overview of the representations of Ireland in Italy arguing that the same images recur, though intermittently, over the centuries. He does not only address literary transmission. Pellizzi's essay is truly interdisciplinary as he also takes in his stride historical facts and diplomatic and commercial exchanges as well as the influence of Irish exiles and *émigrés* in Italy. Through a variety of documents that range from saints' lives to accounts of Italian pilgrims and merchants and church documents, he studies the evolution of medieval and early modern representations of Ireland. As to the nineteenth century vision, Pellizzi, on the basis of articles from different sources including some by Cavour and Mazzini, argues that because of the anglophilia that reigned in Italy at the time of the Italian Risorgimento, the Irish liberation movement, which could have been seen as twin to the Italian one, was instead regarded with little sympathy and understanding. After Italy was unified, however, Ireland received much more attention and consideration and the cause of Irish independence was followed with great participation and drew support both from Catholic and from left-wing press, notably Mussolini's newspaper «Il Popolo d'Italia» which contained violently anti-British and pro-Irish articles by the future dictator. Later on, Ireland and Irish literature attracted much attention throughout the years of fascism as an alternative to the banning of literature from the enemies Great Britain and America. The post-Second World War years showed initially much neglect towards Ireland until the Civil rights movement of Northern Ireland reawakened interest in Italy which was itself going through a wave of terrorism. Pellizzi's long essay and the attached bibliography are a mine of information and quotations from little known sources. One could only wish that a similar kind of work also existed for the presence of Italy in Ireland; Chiara Sciarino's concluding essay about twentieth century literature is a step towards that goal.

As a result of interest in the Troubles, New-Wave craze for Celtic lore and the centrality of Ireland in youth culture, a spat of translations of Irish texts into Italian have seen the light followed by a number of translation studies which are well represented in this monographic section of our periodical. The specificities of the Irish situation and the Irish language have offered inspiration for two articles, Giulia Gozzelino, *The Dimension of Wit in Translation: Rendering Wilde's Puns and Wordplay into Italian*, and Elisa Armellino, *Translating Memories into Words. Hugo Hamilton's The Speckled People and Il cane che abbaiva alle onde*.

Gozzelino examines the different translation strategies adopted by three Italian translators of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Luigi Lunari, Masolino d'Amico and Guido Almansi) to render all the ambiguities of the title and in particular the word play on Earnest / Ernest. Her analysis is extremely subtle but it does not deal with specific features of the Irish language or Irish society, as the concept of earnestness, which is being debunked by Wilde, is a characteristic of Victorian England. What is of Irish interest, however, is Wilde's ironic scepticism about British values, which the title conveys while the attempts at translating it fail to bring out. The other article dealing with translation studies is more Irish specific. Armellino's paper deals with difficulties of translating the «speckledness» at the core of Hugo Hamilton's *The Speckled People*. The interplay of the three languages, Irish, German and English which are part of the cultural identity of the author of the memoir, presents a great challenge to the Italian translator who has to deal with the multilingualism of the text and the frequent code-switching. But this is nothing compared to the difficulty of transmitting the sense of Irish identity which is closely tied to the complex interplay with the two other languages. The transgressive value of writing the memoir in English, the forbidden language in the author's Irish- and German-speaking home, must necessarily be lost to an Italian audience to whom only cumbersome notes can explain the painful language question of Ireland. Translations, concludes Armellino, transpose not only language, but a whole complex culture.

Some of the essays published in this miscellany prove that there is still a lot to uncover even about the major literary figures on whom apparently everything has been said even regarding their links with Italy. Research in the Zurich James Joyce Foundation has permitted Ilaria Natali to examine a collection of documents by and relating to James Joyce, recently donated by Hans E. Jahnke, son of Giorgio Joyce's second wife, Asta, and which has been, so far, neglected. Of particular interest are the poetry written in Italian and the private correspondence, especially the letters to Giorgio which contain a mixture of English, Italian and occasional Triestine dialect, with the Italian reserved for the more emotional passages and English for the descriptive and informative ones. Another sample of Joyce's use of Italian is the poem «Sulla Spiaggia a Fontana» which is closely interconnected to «On the Beach at

Fontana». Since the Italian poem is not dated, it is not possible to determine which was composed first and which is a translation/adaptation of the other. Natali notes the different registers of the two, the Italian poem being more archaic and formal, and conducts an accurate semantic and thematic analysis of both reaching the conclusion that translation as a form of rewriting is but one of Joyce's many forms of poetic experimentation. Indeed, the newly acquired documents testify to the Protean nature of Joyce's uses of languages rich in new relationships and associations and multiple meanings.

Within the scope of comparative studies no other subject has been as fruitful as that of the study of links and influences within and across cultures. The influence of *commedia dell'arte* in three of Austin Clarke's poetic plays is used by Christopher Murray to emphasize the international, self-reflexive nature of the Irish satirist and playwright. Nurtured by turn-of-the-century Irish drama with its concentration on poetic language and Celticism, Clarke soon turned to a more realistic and European perspective provided by the Gate Theatre, dedicated to Harlequin. And from then on his theatrical career oscillated between the Gate and the Abbey, with the *commedia dell'arte* providing a corrective to his Celticism. The influence of the Italian tradition is evident in some of his own plays staged or published between the 1940s and the 1970s. *The Kiss*, *The Second Kiss* and *The Third Kiss* use the characters of Harlequin, Columbine, Pierrot and Pierrette (the French avatars of Italian *commedia dell'arte* characters) and borrow many other features of the carnivalesque, libertine, tongue-in-cheek Italian genre, thus allowing Clarke to pay tribute to an ancient foreign style of comedy while also holding a mirror up to Irish society.

In *Derek Mahon's Homage to Pasolini*, Irene De Angelis focuses on Mahon's poem *Roman Script* (1999) published following a stay in Rome. The title echoes Gore Vidal's words in Fellini's *Rome* (1972): «Roma è la città delle illusioni, non a caso qui c'è la Chiesa, il governo, il cinema, tutte cose che producono illusione» (Rome is the city of illusions; it is no accident that the Church, government and the cinema industry are concentrated here, all of them producing illusions). Mahon had appropriated and adapted the expression «Roman illusions» in the elegies contained in *Life on Earth* (2008) to talk about the Romantic poets Byron, Keats and Shelley. The concept is the basis for an analysis of the many faces Mahon perceives in the Eternal City – from Rome as *Caput Mundi* to the metropolis of 'sublime decadence' through memories of Piranesi's etchings, 'la dolce vita' and Pasolini's proletarian myth. The core of the essay is dedicated to the latter to whom Mahon's line «amid disconsolate lives [...] a myth survives» refers.

Travel literature is *par excellence* the place where the comparison between two cultures finds its best expression and where Otherness is put into words, but also where, in talking about the Other, it becomes impossible not to be talking about the Self. Irish and Italian travellers and their respective repre-

sentations of their counterparts have been amply studied in Italy as well as Ireland, but there are still many travellers whose works have to be explored and many writers who are not primarily known as travellers to one of the countries in question but who have left interesting accounts. One such is Synge, whose articles on Italy for «The Irish Times» and in particular a piece of investigative reporting on some riots in Rome demanding Francesco Crispi's resignation are here analysed by Giulia Bruna. The article on the riots was published anonymously in the paper but, on the basis of jottings in Synge's diary (some of them in Italian) and a successive reportage for «The Manchester Guardian», Bruna conjectures that it might be his. Her analysis dwells on stylistic features, such as Synge's ability to capture the *soundscape* of a mob but there are also implicit appeals to an Irish readership such as dwelling on tramcars, a technical novelty widely discussed in Dublin at the time. The persona of a leisurely eyewitness of the riots, strolling through Rome and taking in the mob as well the most recent innovations in transportation, reminds Bruna of the *flâneur*, Leopold Bloom, the epitome of George Simmel's «metropolitan type of individual». Synge in writing about Italy ends up writing rather about his metropolitan self, a forerunner of an Irish trend that was to display itself through other cosmopolitan would-be journalists, Joyce, who would stroll through Rome ten years later and, we might add, O'Faolain fifty years later.

Donatella Abbate Badin's contribution deals with two kinds of journeys to Italy, a fictional one and a real one, both made at the time of the struggle for Italian independence. Edward Maturin's *Bianca. A Tale of Erin and Italy* (1852) takes the hero, a Trinity College student who has fallen in love with an Italian young woman, from Ireland to Italy on a tour which reflects all the ambivalence of the author towards possible similarities between Ireland and Italy, both suffering for the lack of independence and the oppression of foreigners, as Bianca points out to the hero's embarrassment. The novel, in spite of its Italian setting and characters and vague nationalist rhetoric, is a compilation of commonplace observations about a picturesque Italy, full of artistic beauties and villains. On the other hand, Lady Morgan is much more outspoken and radical. In her *Italy* (1821), the voluminous account of an actual tour, the author offers a multifaceted portrait of Italy and the political situation of the moment, that of a country, which, in her words, like Ireland, «can breathe the spirit of liberty beneath the lash of despotism». The occasions for demonstrating this are numerous and throughout Morgan displays great sympathy for the Italian people (though not for its rulers). Morgan, however, is an exception, Badin argues. Most Irish travellers of the period were too keenly aware that a portrait of Italy could be read as a metaphor of Ireland and that this could imply danger. Thus at a time when the Risorgimento might have represented an appeal for the Irish (as it did for many English radicals), as a rule the Irish kept silent because of the similarities perceived and concentrated instead, half-heartedly, on art, landscapes, beggars and *banditti*.



The example of Maturin suggests that nineteenth century Irish fiction, especially Gothic fiction, which is now being studied with great intensity, also promises to offer many interesting insights on this issue and that among the many authors considered minor who had their day and were forgotten we may discover new Italian settings and different perceptions of Italy.

The concluding essay by Chiara Sciarrino offers an organic attempt at a survey of the presence of Italy in Irish culture. Her survey includes various forms of transnational relations, starting with the most obvious one, the study of influences which she conducts basing herself on an earlier work published by the Italian Institute of Culture of Dublin in 1964 to dwell in more detail on the influence of Pirandello and Dante. Translations take the lion's share with a list of Irish poets who translated Italian poems and a detailed analysis of some of them (Denis Devlin, Derek Mahon, Paul Muldoon, Desmond O'Grady, Harry Clifton); mention is also made of Marco Sonzogni's collection of responses to Leopardi on the bicentenary of the poet's birth. The study also includes a brief discussion of poems dealing with Italy. Travel literature comes next as an example of intercultural exchange. Besides briefly examining the major figures of the Italian Grand Tour, Sciarrino also looks at accounts which are closer to autobiography or, even, at fictions about travel in Italy, such as Elizabeth Bowen's *A Time in Rome* and some of her short stories. A most original part of her essay is the section in which she examines the important role played by Italian visual arts in Ireland and their reflections in literature as, for instance, in Frank McGuinness' play about Caravaggio. Italian music and Tom Murphy's *The Gigli Concert* constitute yet another important part of the survey. As for the representation of Italians, a standard topos in comparative studies, Sciarrino takes an unusual approach: she concentrates on images of Italian migrant workers in Ireland. This essay provides a fitting conclusion as it takes into consideration many of the topics examined in the miscellany and introduces new areas of investigation.

The nine contributions published in this section of the journal offer a foretaste of the sort of work that could still be done, while bearing in mind what has already been achieved by the many scholars not represented here. Some of the issues that come to mind are stereotypes regarding Italy and Italians in Romantic and nineteenth century Irish fiction, especially by authors considered minor or marginal; the presence of Italy and of Italian paradigms in the Irish Gothic; travel books about Italy and their differences from British travel books; the influence of Italian intellectuals (e.g. Giambattista Vico, Antonio Gramsci, Italo Calvino) and of Italian authors (other than the ones already mentioned) on Irish critical and literary production; translations; the presence of Italian cultural manifestations (musical, artistic, material such as gastronomy) in the works of Irish writers. Much of this has already been dealt with in individual studies but a more systematic approach to single topics is needed. «Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies» aims at being the privileged forum for such debate and research.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Linati translated plays by W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge, Lady Gregory and several other Irish writers into Italian. See Carlo Linati, *Belli spiriti d'Irlanda. Versioni da Yeats, Lady Gregory, Synge & Joyce* (a cura di Maurizio Pasquero), Terra Insubre, Varese 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Carlo Linati, *Sulle orme di Renzo e altre prose lombarde*, Treves, Milano 1927, pp. 20-21.

<sup>3</sup> Carlo Linati, *Irlanda e Lombardia sorelle senza saperlo*, «Corriere d'informazione», 12-13 aprile 1949, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> The relationship between France and Ireland has been explored thoroughly thanks to the groundbreaking work of Patrick Raffroidi, by his *Cahiers* of the University of Lille and the influential journal «Etudes Irlandaises». More recently the volume edited by Eamon Maher and Grace Neville, *France-Ireland. Anatomy of a Relationship*, Lang, Frankfurt-am-Main 2004, has added many interesting new perspectives. As for Germany there is Patrick O'Neill's *Ireland and Germany: A Study in Literary Relations*, Lang, Frankfurt-am-Main 1985, and the series *Irish-German Studies* edited by Joachim Fischer and Gisela Holfter at Limerick University. In Spain Antonio Raúl De Toro Santos has authored *La literatura irlandesa en España*, Netbiblio, A Coruña 2007. Looking further away from Europe one could cite Joseph Lennons *Irish Orientalism A Literary and Intellectual History*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 2004, Irene De Angelis' *The Japanese Effect in Contemporary Irish Poetry*, Palgrave, Basingstoke 2011, and even some recent contributions on Irish-Caribbean relationships: Maria McGarrity, *Washed by the Gulf Stream: The Historic and Geographic Relation of Irish and Caribbean Literature*, University of Delaware Press, Newark 2008; Michael G. Malouf, *Transatlantic Solidarities: Irish Nationalism and Caribbean Poetics*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville 2009; «Irish Migration Studies in South America», (2003-) a journal of the *Society for Irish Latin American Studies* available at <<http://www.irlandeses.org>> (07/ 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Fiorenzo Fantaccini has furnished an exhaustive bibliography of Italian scholarship on Ireland: *Italian Contributions to the Study of Irish Culture*, in *The Cracked Lookingglass. Contributions to the Study of Irish Literature*, ed. by C. De Petris, J.M. Ellis D'Alessandro and F. Fantaccini, Bulzoni, Roma 1999, pp. 253-291.

<sup>6</sup> Vincenzo Berardis, *Italy and Ireland in the Middle Ages*, Clonmore and Reynolds, Dublin 1950; Martin P. Harney, *Medieval Ties between Italy and Ireland*, St. Paul Editions, Boston 1963.

<sup>7</sup> *Un'Italia fuori dall'Italia. Immagini di cultura italiana nella letteratura anglo-irlandese contemporanea*, Aracne, Roma 2005, and *Translating Italy. Notes on Irish Poets Reading Italian Poetry*, Aracne, Roma 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Namely «Études irlandaises» (<<http://www.pur-editions.fr/revue.php?idRevue=28>>), «Estudios Irlandeses» (<<http://www.estudiosirlandeses.org/>>), «ABEI Journal. The Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies» (<<http://www.freewebs.com/irishstudies/abeijournal.htm>>), IASIL Japan. Journal of Irish Studies (<<http://www.musashino-u.ac.jp/iasil-j/journalofirishStudies.html>>).

<sup>9</sup> The occasional publication *Joyce Studies in Italy* is printed by Bulzoni, Rome, and in 2010 its 11<sup>th</sup> issue was produced. The James Joyce Italian Foundation was created in Rome in 2006 and conferences on Joyce are held regularly. Bulzoni also publishes a series called «Piccola Biblioteca Jocyiana» edited by Franca Ruggieri.