

In Praise of Lunatics

Franco Cambi

translation of Rossella Certini

1. On the symbolic power of the moon

The 1969 (July 20) remains a memorable date, a date of change within the complex history of relations between man and the moon. This date does it come out from the imaginary sphere (cultural, anthropological, scientific, etc..) and places it among the “events experienced.” That first journey of the man on the moon, with all the signs that the left landing, with the universal attention that it caused, has renewed our sense of the moon, and it has left behind the fantasies of poets, utopians, archaic religious cultures. The same fate also of the sublime Leopardi who wrote “*che fai silenziosa luna?..*”, directed to the motionless witness of human life. The moon is eternal in its constant wandering always equal to itself. It been neglected too Cyrano who wrote “*Storia degli stati del sole e della luna*” and dreamed of an ideal society built on them. Even the religious constructions of Tanit, Isis, Diana are neglected, which enhance its feminine dimension, which is at once chaste, faithful and terrible. With the figure of Mary, the moon is taken to the role of redemption. Same fate for the “Tales of moon” (as Sermonti reminds us) which are so imbued with folklore, magic and even madness.

The 1969 marks a radical change in the object-moon. It enhances the physical and experimental side of the moon and at the same time it does not erase the symbolic face of her. This continues even if re-read critically - within our culture, linked to the imaginary, from poets to archetypal symbols of a civilization (all of this is the synthesis of many cultures, from the Mediterranean to the Jewish, for example).

Before the 1969 and Galileo (which downgrades the moon from pure star, crystal clear and perfect for a planet similar to Earth: rough, non-linear, imperfect, he did so through the new strategy of the telescope) the moon has played a role high and constant of symbol and as such, it has accompanied the history of human culture. The moon has always been a primary representative as well as the sun. As queen of the night. Because it is the passing of time through its phases as the full moon and new moon. Because it is active presence in the life of men, she is mistress of fate, and together with other celestial bodies it governs the fate of the world and men. The

moon was “the star after the sun has most excited the admiration of man, from the beginning, and he led the worship” (Aa.Vv., 19..., p. 654). This is true from an anthropological point of view but the culture has interacted with the moon in a more symbolic ways as a symbol of the feminine, of illness (lycanthropy), of destiny (astrology), of anxieties (it has become commonplace for poetry) and so on up to the song, for example *Tintarella di luna*, a *divertissement* sung by Mina in the 1959. All this points out the power of a symbol that still remains a fundamental element of the imaginary.

2. *The moon and the men*

What is symbolic link tied the moon to the men? The links have been many but the most important is the idea that the moon has always had influence on human things. From menstruation to the tides, we could say. Even on psychology, on the characters and the changes. It is exemplary the belief of “bad moon” also known as lycanthropy, which is active in the full moon, and reverses the men to wolves. It’s a belief, of course, but not ingenuous, after Darwin.

At a more spiritual level, the moon becomes the secret confidant of moods, in particular on poetry. The moon is witness to a soliloquy, a suffering, an inner anxiety. Inside magical perspective, that we do not share, the moon governs our character as it was our DNA, even if it is editable so hard and sacrifice. The moon affects very little about our character (we have to rethink the attack made by Adorno to astrology as strong element of mass culture), but we are conditioned by the sense and from the way to act with her.

So the moon-as-symbol is still with us. It accompanies us in our imaginary, it is our partner during our city nights, completely illuminated by artificial lights that have tarnished the glow of the moon. It reaffirms in our ecological imaginary, it is the balance between the various factors of nature and that it represents the return to equilibrium: the nights return at night, for example. It becomes a silent friend, interlocutor of dreams, anxieties and worries. But in practice it also represents the time of the ambush where is the Evil, and Evil attacks. It is time to hangings, as happened to Pinocchio, or it is a symbol of witchcraft and evil spells, as it did for the Queen in *The Magic Flute* by Mozart.

In this complex *mélange* of symbols, there is one not original, more existential and lived, and it is that of lunatics, spoken of a popular psychology, a psychology coarse and shallow, and crosses many different lifestyles and communication. They are brief psychologies but they have a very strong symbolic and a descriptive value. The lunatics are in this size. They are unstable and undergo changes and metamorphoses. Restless figures that belong to that uncertain world that we live and that, in the words of Heidegger, we live in: a troubled and mutant world. Can lunatics teach us something?

3. *The Three Faces of Lunatics*

Behind the idea of lunatic there is the variability of the moon and its many forms so it becomes the symbol of inconstancy. This is proved by many “ways to say” present in popular culture such as “be like the moon” (moody), “have the moon” (being in a bad mood), “go to quarter-moon” (moods alternating) and others (*O Fortuna sicut luna, semper variabilis*, inside *Carmina burana*. Or think of the Pulci or Cecchi and Ariosto, Ariosto, and even with his Astolfo for which the moon is the place to seek the lost mind. Other ways of saying, “want the moon in the well”, “live in the world of the moon” (expressions bland and unreal in the world of lunatics) and finally the “honeymoon” (ironically post-marriage: it is of short duration and below becomes a moment of brutal and prosaic married life, as Honoré de Balzac said bitterly). Now the moon has become an anthropological symbol, indeed, psycho-anthropological, and lunatics are in the middle of it. This is based on three characteristics: *First*: be willing to change your point of view, to be mutable, changing mood, change his opinion, be plural and restless. So behaves moody and therefore he is a figure unsettling and unpredictable and therefore he is plural and open. *Second*: one of the characteristics of the mood is living at the same time the irrationality and rationality situation. The lunatic is in multiple practice that moves between reason and understanding. This means having a mind open and problematic, in constant tension and dialogue with itself and with otherness. *Third*: Live in extravagance, in the diversity of manners, in the provocation, outside the prejudices and away from common ideas. Baudelaire for walking Paris with blue hair and Oscar Wild walking with a sunflower in the buttonhole: they both wanted to prove the legitimacy of the extravagance and its productivity (praise for the “artificial paradises” or ostentation of homosexuality during Victorian age).

The lunatics stood on the three borders and remind us *in unum*. They want change, they want to testify to the value and function of non-reason and want to justify the extravagance.

The social experience of lunatics, however, is more pedestrian and uncomfortable. They do not give trust and you do not know who you are dealing with. They always avoid a constructive dialogue. They are loners, narcissistic and egocentric. All this is true but the lunatics show us how to be in the Time of Complexity, Difference and Pluralism: with *creativity* and *responsible freedom*. With challenge. With decision. With the *forma mentis* more appropriate and productive for our time.

4. *Become Lunatics*

Must we become lunatics? Yes, but just enough. As *forma mentis* but not in living. Even if we do that internalize a touch of madness that frees, which separates, which has a higher vision of life. As was the *Barone Rampante* of Cal-

vin, who climbing trees and neverleaving that position, he lived in a detached, with extravagance, with a critical attitude (rejection), and he exalted reason as synonymous of divergence, just in the century of *Raison* and *Raison critique*. Baron of Rondò might be a good symbol of the effect-moody as we understand it today, above and beyond its communicative effect.

Then we get a little Cosimo di Rondò. We assimilate his “stay at another place,” which means to be in freedom; He has a look rational and open, which means having a critical eye, ready to rethink himself, too. He wants to be *extravagant*, *non-conforming*, *eccentric*, but bringing these devices in reason and not in costume. All this becomes a form of Ego. An Ego plural and flexible, it always on the way to its own and toward a world increasingly plural, open and flexible. The *Barone Rampante* is our prophet and teacher and he represents the fineness of Calvino which still remains one of the great masters of contemporary literature - or of thought? symbolic and anthropological.

He is one of the authors to be read and reread to form themselves.

Note

Verification of vocabulary. On old Zingarelli (edition of 1943). After the definition of epilepsy as a lunatic (but epilepsy does not go “to moons”), it sets two meanings: *First*: fickle, inconstant, moody. This means open to change, non-stable, non-encoded in a standard behavior. To this first aspect, we re-done “for the praise”. *Second*: fantastic, crazy, or free, eccentric and outside the rules. person who is able to differentiate herself and to dissent, to appear insane. As happened to Cosimo di Rondò. This is the second front on which has worked “our praise.”

Bibliography

- AA.VV. *Luna (ad vocem)*, *Enciclopedia italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti*, Roma, Istituto delle Enciclopedia Italiana, 1951
- H. Biedermann, *Enciclopedia dei simboli*, Milano, Garzanti, 1991 (ad voces: Astrologia, simboli e Luna)
- M. Cepeda Fuentes, *Le tre facce della luna. Modelli e archetipi della donna attraverso i secoli*, Firenze, Camunia, 1996
- H. de Balzac, *Scene della vita privata*, Milano, Corbaccio, 1931
- I. Calvino, *I nostri antenati*, Torino, Einaudi, 1960
- G. Durand, *Le strutture antropologiche dell'immaginario*, Bari, Dedalo, 1987
- M. Eliade, *Trattato di storia delle religioni*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1976
- M. Eliade, *Immagini e simboli*, Milano, Jaca Book, 1984
- A. Fresa, *La luna: movimenti-topografici, influenze e culto*, Milano, Hoepli, 1933
- S. Grossi, *Il potere della luna*, Milano, Xenia, 1993

- G. Leopardi, *Poesie*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1886
- A. Lieber, *Effetto luna. Masse biologiche e emozioni umane*, Milano, SugarCo, 1980
- O. Lurati, *Dizionario dei modi di dire*, Milano, Garzanti, 2001 (ad vocem: Luna)
- P. Martiniello, *I lunatici*, Napoli, Ferraro, 1999
- T. Middleton, W. Rowley, *I lunatici*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2004
- N. Minerva (a cura di), *La luna allo specchio. Rappresentazioni mitologiche e metafore seleniche nella letteratura e nell'immaginario*, Bologna, Patron, 1990
- G. Sermonti, *Fiabe di luna. Simboli lunari nella fiaba, nel mito, nella scienza*, Milano, Rusconi, 1986
- F. Troncanelli, M. P. Saci (a cura di), *Mal di luna. Lunatici, folli, indemoniati nella tradizione popolare*, Roma, C.D.F., 1981

Appendix. To Become "Lunatic" but How?

At our "praise" cultural and theoretical we substitute an ironic and playful tone. If being moody is a value (change and dissent), if to be anthropologically and psychologically lunatic can be useful today, how can we adapt to this dimension? How can we growing it? Are there exercises you can do to create this inner disposition? Maybe yes. We show below some exercises related to both self-awareness and culture of the subject.

First exercise. Being able of irony. the irony is unsettling, moves boundaries, reverses identities. The irony lives on another plane than usual, has another view of reality and often escapes the rules. He is never where it should be. He forces the rules, and with this action rereads the same rules as a bond. He creates and produces freedom. He shows the depth of moody soul, which is not a weird person but he is one who lives the contradiction as *forma mentis* and makes it his own.

Second exercise. To become lunatics we feed ourselves of that critical culture which reflects the things, which is out of the ordinary and normal. This can be done with poetry, which re-establishes the language, radiographer experience from "ground zero", increases the sensitivity irrational. So even in mathematics, which creates new forms, which are able to establish itself as syntax of experience. Just as the philosophy that is based on the comparison of several points of view, and it manages to create a space for review of each rule, costume and ideas.

Third exercise. Playing with extravagance. Even micrology but this is. This also in relation to ourselves, to communicate, to live the life of society and its rules. The lunatic is a multiple of EGO and also changeable. He changes costumes, even slightly. Even if only in a verbal game.

Fourth exercise. We are in dialogue with other people and provoke them without mocking and without bitterness but we insinuate the doubt of the rules, of ceremonies, of habits. We arm the conformism at multiple levels. We play at exposing conformism. and displace it.

Fifth exercise. Always ask: Who am I? Why am I so? But inwardly I am really so? We always raise doubt about everything. and we must always suspect of this principle-a principle regulator. The radicalization is quite possible as a guiding principle. We must always tend to freedom, a freedom from . and freedom of . and we must always bear witness to it in the everyday life.

All are lunatics thinking exercises in relation to *cura sui*.. Witnessing them, Bringing out them, and the first thing they must find them.