



Kerwan

International Journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies

Dūjī na koy

Scritti e pensieri per Pinuccia Caracchi

edited by
Alessandra Consolaro

23
Special Issue

2019

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Dūjī na koy:

alla mia amica e maestra Pinuccia Caracchi

Alessandra Consolaro

This volume is meant to wish Pinuccia Caracchi a happy sixty seventh birthday, before her retirement at the end of 2019. It collects some academic articles and some words and thoughts by friends and colleagues. My present to her is the Italian translation of the poem “Uske lauṭne kā intajār” by the Hindi poet Sadanand Shahi.

दूजी न कोया। सखी मेरी शिक्षक पिनुचिया कराक्की को।

Ho lavorato fianco a fianco con Pinuccia Caracchi dal 2002. Per tutto questo tempo è sempre stata un punto di riferimento e, come sono solita dire, “il miglior boss che si possa avere.” In un ambiente gerarchico e spesso poco trasparente come l’università italiana è veramente una rarità trovare persone rispettose delle idee altrui e portatrici di un’idea democratica che promuova la condivisione e la partecipazione, tanto che per la sua schiettezza e buona fede Pinuccia Caracchi è spesso stata considerata ingenua. Ma chi, come me, ha condiviso con lei le lotte per salvare il corso di laurea in Asia e Africa nella prima decade del ventunesimo secolo, conosce bene la determinazione con cui Pinuccia sa affrontare qualunque avversario una volta che sia certa di essere ancorata alla verità: saldamente fedele al suo *satyagraha*, si trasforma in una roccia capace di resistere con fermezza d’animo a ogni attacco.

Il pensiero dell’imminente pensionamento di Pinuccia Caracchi mi ha accompagnato con trepidazione negli ultimi due anni. L’intenzione di “fare la festa a Pinuccia” era resa molto difficoltosa dalla sua naturale tendenza a sfuggire ogni sorta di celebrazione, particolarmente quando ciò è riferito alla sua persona. Schiva e modesta come sempre, avrebbe trovato un modo per mettere qualche altra persona al centro o avrebbe provato imbarazzo nel vedersi oggetto di una celebrazione troppo accademica. Perciò, invece della classica Festschrift in occasione del pensionamento, con questo volume intendiamo celebrare il sessantasettesimo compleanno di Pinuccia Caracchi e ringraziarla di tutto il lavoro che ha svolto presso l’Università degli Studi di Torino.

Non credo sia necessario presentare in questa sede un curriculum dettagliato della vita accademica di Pinuccia Caracchi, che si è svolta interamente presso l’Ateneo torinese. Basti ricordare

che, dopo la laurea nel 1974 con una tesi sul Buddhismo *mahāyāna*, Pinuccia trascorse due anni, tra il 1976 e il 1978, presso la Banaras Hindu University di Vārāṇasī, dove grazie a una borsa di studio del Governo indiano poté approfondire gli studi indologici. In seguito, dal 1982 al 1985 tenne l'insegnamento di Lingua hindī presso il Cesmeo di Torino. Nel 1985 prese servizio presso il Dipartimento di Orientalistica dell'Università di Torino, dove ha svolto la sua attività di ricerca e insegnamento prima in qualità di ricercatrice, poi di professore associato tra il 2000 e il 2006, quindi di professore ordinario di Lingua e letteratura hindī presso il Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici.

Fra le pubblicazioni di Pinuccia Caracchi va ricordata senz'altro la *Grammatica hindī* (Torino 1992, VI ed. 2007). A fianco degli studi linguistici ha sempre coltivato anche la letteratura, come nell'antologia di *Racconti hindī del Novecento* (Alessandria 2004), e gli studi filosofico-religiosi nell'ambito delle tradizioni hindū (*Ad antiche fonti. Voci dell'Induismo attraverso il tempo*, in collaborazione con Stefano Piano, Savona 2012). Il suo campo principale di ricerca riguarda la letteratura mistica dei *sant* e dei *nāth* medioevali, il *Rāmcaritmānas* e la sua tradizione (*Vita di Rāmānanda - Il Rāmānandajanmotsava dell'Agastya-saṃhitā*, Torino 1989; *Rāmānanda e lo yoga dei sant*, Alessandria 1999; *Rāmānanda. Un guru tra storia e leggenda*, Alessandria 2017).

Questo numero speciale di *Kervan* raccoglie scritti e saggi di persone che hanno condiviso con Pinuccia Caracchi una parte del cammino nei modi più vari, non solo come colleghi e colleghe nel vecchio, amato, piccolo Dipartimento di Orientalistica, ma anche in qualità di studenti, amici e amiche che hanno potuto apprezzare le doti di Pinuccia come insegnante e la sua forte carica umana e ideale. Alcune persone non sono purtroppo riuscite a rispettare le scadenze imposte dal processo editoriale e ci dispiace che non compaiano, ma lungo la strada abbiamo raccolto altre testimonianze inaspettate e gradite. I contributi che hanno un carattere accademico sono stati trattati come articoli di *Kervan* a tutti gli effetti, sottoposti a doppio referaggio da parte di revisori anonimi; gli scritti più personali o che non si qualificano come articoli di rivista accademica sono presentati in una sezione a parte nella forma in cui ci sono pervenuti, senza procedere necessariamente a uniformare diacritici, grafie e stili. Ciò forse rende il volume poco uniforme, ma ci sembra che rispetti l'assoluta mancanza di dogmatismo sulle questioni formali a vantaggio della sostanza, che Pinuccia ci ha insegnato. Il filo rosso che lega tutti questi scritti è un sentimento di affetto, amicizia e simpatia.

Concludo questa introduzione presentando un componimento del poeta hindī Sadanand Shahi, un collega attivo presso la Banaras Hindu University. Abbiamo collaborato attivamente per alcuni anni e lui stesso, tramite la carissima Shashi Mudiraj, mi ha segnalato questa sua recente poesia, suggerendomi di tradurla in italiano, così che ci possa essere un contributo anche da parte sua. È perciò

con grande piacere che offro alla mia amica e maestra Pinu questa traduzione, esprimendo il sentimento dell'autore e della traduttrice.

उसके लौटने का इंतजार

वैसे भी
उससे रोज-रोज मिलना
कहाँ हो पता है

फिर भी उसका शहर में होना
इत्मीनान की तरह है
कि जब मन में
आयेगा
उठेंगे और मिल आएँगे

नहीं भी मिले
तो दिख ही जाएगी
आते-जाते
दुआ सलाम के साथ
एक अर्थपूर्ण मुस्कराहट उठेगी
उसके चेहरे पर
और वह
हवा में हाथ हिलाते हुए
आगे बढ़ जाएगी

इस तरह महीनों निकल जाएँगे
बिना देखे
बिना मिले
और
बिना बात किए

उसके शहर में ना होने से
इत्मीनान थोड़ा दरक जाता है
आसमान थोड़ा उदास हो जाता है
हवा में आक्सिजन कम हो जाता है
धरती का नमक कम हो जाता है
पक्षियों का चहचहाना कम हो जाता है

यह भी नहीं कि
रोजमर्रा के काम बंद हो जाएँ
या ठीक से नींद ना आये
बस्स

In attesa del suo ritorno

e comunque
quando mai
ci si può incontrare tutti i giorni?

però quando è in città
c'è una sorta di certezza
che quando
ci verrà in mente
ci alzeremo e ci incontreremo

e se anche non ci incontreremo
ci si vedrà almeno
di passaggio
scambiate due parole
sul suo viso
comparirà un sorriso eloquente
e lei
salutando con una mano
proseguirà

così passeranno mesi
senza vedersi
senza incontrarsi
e
senza parlarsi

quando non è in città
la certezza s'incrina un po'
il cielo s'immalinconisce un po'
l'ossigeno nell'aria diminuisce
il gusto di vivere diminuisce
il cinguettio degli uccelli diminuisce

e non è che
le attività quotidiane si fermino
o che non riesca a dormire bene la notte
solo

मन के कोने में कहीं
एक चोर घड़ी
टिकटिकाने लगती है
उसके लौटने का इंतजार करती हुई-सी।

in un angolo del cuore
comincia a ticchettare
un orologio furtivo
come in attesa del suo ritorno.

Cara Pinu, non c'è proprio nessuno che possa sostituirti. Buon compleanno!

Bibliografia

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Alessandra Consolaro is Associate Professor of Hindi Language and Literature at the University of Turin (Italy). Her field of interest and research is marked by interdisciplinarity and is based on feminist and gender critique. She has published on South Asia history, history of the Hindi language, colonial and postcolonial theory; contemporary Hindi literature: critical study and translation. Her recent publications include: Jacinta Kerketta, *Angor*, Italian translation from Hindi by Alessandra Consolaro, Torino 2018; “Theorizing Dalit Literature.” In *Dalit Assertion and its Space in Literature*, edited by Santosh Kumar Sonker. Delhi 2017, pp. 25-52; “Immanence, abjection and transcendence through *satī/śakti* in Prabha Khaitan’s autobiography *Anyā se ananyā*.” In *Cracow Indological Studies* 20/2, 2018, pp. 223-247; “Sconfinamenti poetici: genere e identità nella scrittura hindi delle poete *ādivāsī* Jacinta Kerketta e Nirmala Putul.” In *DEP Deportate, Esuli e Profughe* 38, 2018. She can be reached at: alessandra.consolaro@unito.it.

Articles

More than Just Warriors

Mythical and Archetypal Images of the Hero in Swahili Literature

Graziella Acquaviva

Since ancient times till today the image of the hero has universally influenced literary works. The “hero” becomes mythical only after his death, and through a form of remembrance realized in literary productions where his figure is re-created and transmitted through fictitious characters. The central focus of the paper is to examine, within the archetypal theories on myth and “hero,” the figures of two Swahili warriors, namely Liongo Fumo, one of the greatest warrior-hero figures of the Swahili oral tradition, and Chief Mkwawa of the Hehe people, who fought against the German rule in former Tanganyika, and whose deeds have been reinvented and described in modern written literature. Both Liongo Fumo and Mkwawa have acquired the status of mythical warriors, and, as other East African heroes, have inspired poets and writers and become symbols of bravery and national consciousness to which the historical and cultural memory of old and new generations refer. A second part of the work is devoted to the presentation of those who can be defined as “minor heroes” and who nevertheless represent a new way to look at literature and a bridge between tradition and modernity through the use of historical and mythical memory.

1. On Archetype and Criticism: A Brief Note

The word ‘archetype’ derives from Latin *archetypum* meaning “the original form.” The formulation of a theory of archetypes began in 1912 and marked a split with Freudian theory and the beginning of Jung’s stream of depth psychology – albeit Jung’s first use of the term ‘archetype’ occurred later in 1919¹ (Roesler 2012: 223). Jungian archetypal theory is based on the concept of a collective unconscious and argues that any individual’s personality is characterized by two dynamic interacting realms:

- *consciousness*, where two structures co-exist, namely Ego (the locus of the conscious field), and Persona (the individual mask);

¹ Before using the term archetype, Jung preferred the words “primordial images” – giving them the meaning of “foundations” – an idea that came to him in his attempt to explain the ubiquitous nature of certain cultural motifs which could be explained only taking recourse to some sort of collective human inheritance (Wamitila 2001: 75).

- *unconsciousness*, divided in its turn into personal – a repository of conscious or repressed experiences – and collective unconsciousness, which contains all the archetypes that are based upon Platonic theory of forms or ideas (Wamitila 2001: 74-75; Roesler 2012: 225; Stinchcomb 2013: 3).

In Jung²'s conceptualization, the archetype – having form but not content – is an innate pattern of perception and behavior which influences human perception and action and shapes it into similar forms: archetypes are autonomous from consciousness and are universal. It means that it is possible to find the same set of archetypes in all human beings: they are recognized within the subconscious and universally understood. Jung (1958) describes the archetypes as primordial universal images – such as gods and demons, the hero, the great mother, or the wise old man. All these figures are anchored to some moral principle, one that would confront the individual and constrain his or her action (Braga 2016: 226). According to von Franz (1975: 125-126), a clear distinction must be made between the archetypes and archetypal images: the archetypes are very probably innate structural predispositions which appear in actual experience as the factor, or element, which orders or arranges representations into certain patterns, whereas archetypal images appear in form of mythological and/or symbolic representations which are common to certain collectives, such as whole people of epochs. Even before Jung, it was known that there is a high degree of similarity between mythological narratives in peoples living in different parts of the world (Aarne and Thompson 1961).

According to Leigh (2015: 98), archetypal literary criticism moves in several directions at once – textual, intertextual and psychological. It often locates archetypes in the plot, characters, imagery, and setting of the text. Archetypal criticism of literature became widespread among literary critics through Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957), which created a structural map of literary genres derived from the four seasons: comedy from spring, romance from summer, tragedy from autumn, and satire from winter. The Fryean concept of archetype is not psychological like Jung's but rather structural: he defines an archetype as a symbol – usually an image – which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literacy experience as a whole (Frye 1957:365). Booker (2004) applied his own version of Jungian archetypal psychology to numerous

²Jung began as an empirical psychologist within Freud's circle in Wien, but gradually became interested in examining the role of archetypes in literary texts, and in 1920s and 1930s spoke and wrote on the relationship between analytical psychology, poetry, and literature. As Leigh claims, even if Jung's literary interpretations were often inadequate, his own criticism led to more sophisticated interpretations of the archetypal imagery in the so-called 'archetypal literary criticism' (Leigh 2015: 97).

narratives. In recent times, it seems that the most prominent current theory of archetype is based on the so called emergent/developmental model,³ that sees archetype as a product of emergence processes (Knox 2001, 2003, 2004; Merchant 2006).

2. The myth of the hero

The heroic age seems always to be past, and yet, whatever time we live in, we seem always to need heroes: figures who attract and capture our imaginations, whose thoughts and actions cut new channels, whose lives matter because they occupy a new territory (Edwards 1979: 33).

Myths play a very important role in the African understanding of reality; they express the inner side of individual and his/her relationship with the others, the nature and the supernatural: they are seen as vehicles conveying certain fact or truth about a man's experiences in his/her encounter with the created order and the relation with the super-sensible world (Jaja 2014: 9-10). For Brezinsky (2015), myths have been created to answer the most basic questions concerning human existence. The term 'myth' denotes "something told" or a "story," "speech," and "words." Every myth tells a certain "sacred story" which refers to some "primordial event" which happened in the so-called "primordial time" at the beginning of the world and of human history. Myths show how a given reality come into existence thanks to the intervention of "supernatural beings" referring not only to the whole universe but also to human behaviour. The heroes of myths are, thus, supernatural beings who enter the human world (Brezinski 2015: 13-20). According to Edwards (1979), even when the hero is a supposedly historical figure, he is always an invention, a recurring figure who emerges out of collaboration between the collective and the private. The result of this collaboration seems to follow a kind of typical pattern, with such elements as: familiar hostility, strained or combative relations between the heroic figure and the parents; a sense of specialness, of uniqueness and of isolation developing within the hero in response to the particular circumstances of his birth and early life; the undertaking of a literal or symbolic journey as an attempt on the part of the hero to put some distance between the Self and the opposing society; the endurance of trials and tests of both physical

³ The Emergence model is supported by the findings of developmental biologists who adhere to Developmental System Theory. Knox (2004: 1) claims that in developmental model, mental contents emerge from the interaction of genes, brain and environment. Merchant (2006: 125) adds that the model implies an archetype-environment nexus; it collapses the 'sacred' heritage approach to archetypes, and removes the conceptual division between the collective and personal unconscious.

and psychological strength, including an encounter with death itself (Edwards 1979: 33-34). Following Jung, who calls the hero a self-representation of the longing of the unconscious for the light of consciousness (Jung 1977: 205), it seems that the hero exists as a kind of character involved in a particular set of actions with a particular relationship to a social and metaphysical universe. Reed (1978) suggests that the heroic character tends toward freedom from the confines of the plot. The hero's desire for radical change is one of the factors distancing the hero himself from the surrounding society. The symbolic imagery of distance or liminality has been examined by Turner (1995: 95) and is frequently linked to death. For Campbell (1949), the hero becomes a rebel to the status quo, the established order of things, and manifests himself in historical time when the established world of reason and laws is no longer capable of satisfying the vital needs of humankind. If the hero is defined as a strong man, highly born and wealthy, and whose principal concern is the acquisition of power, and who acquires this sovereignty directly as the result of some combination of cunning and brute force, what about his female counterpart? As Goethals and Scott suggest, the English word "hero" is derived from the Greek word ἥρωϛ for a hero or warrior in the sense of protector or defender, and the original Hero in Greek mythology was a woman, a priestess of Aphrodite, the goddess of love (Goethals and Scott 2012: 186). Stressing the fact that the myth is the unconscious representation of a crucial life situation and analyzing Amor and Psyche in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, Neumann (1971: 63, 65, 93) explains the nature of the "woman hero" as follows:

in rejecting both Aphrodite and Eros, Psyche [...] enters into a heroic struggle of the feminine that ushers in a new human era [...] Psyche becomes a feminine Heracles (Neumann 1971: 93)

Mbele (2006: 62-65) focuses on the subject of women in the African epic and makes interesting observations on the issue of women heroes and female heroism, further claiming that the problem is one of perspective and inadequate research and documentation of the existing traditions. Women characters play various role in African epics, including heroic roles, but the experiences and actions of men get more attention than those of women. Askew (1999) highlights transformations in gender relations within the Swahili communities of the Swahili coast stating that there are a number of references in both oral traditions and historical documents to females addressed with the title of *Mwana*, which translates alternatively as "madam," "queen," or "child" (Askew 1999: 81). She stresses that even if male rulers dominated, an impressive number of sources document female leaders in the Lamu archipelago, in Mombasa and the islands of Pemba, Tumbatu, Mafia and Zanzibar. The earliest records of titled females on the Swahili coast identify *Mwana Mkisi* as the first ruler of Mombasa in

the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, there are several queens of Pemba, namely Mwana Mize binti Muaba, Mwana Fatuma binti Dathash, Mwana Hadiya and Mwana Aisha. In the Lamu archipelago, there was Mwana Inali of Kitao, who committed suicide rather than suffer defeat at the hands of the people from Pate, and Asha binti Muhammad, who was known as Asha Ngumi, ruler of Ngumi and who is also reputed to have organized a force of a thousand men to launch an attack on a neighboring chief at Port Dunford. In the eighteenth century, Mwana Khadija and Mwana Darini played a significant role in Pate politics, followed in the early nineteenth century by Fatuma binti Ali and Mwana Kazija binti Ngwali (Askew 1999: 82-84).

2.1. Archetypal images of Liongo Fumo:⁴ the mythical epic⁵ hero

Liongo, Liyongo Fumo, or Fumo Liongo (Mbele 1986: 464) is considered the most famous character in the Swahili epic⁶ and the national hero of the Swahili people. Liongo is one of the most impressive personalities in the oral and literary tradition of the Swahili coast. His legends and those of his entourage are very well preserved in the memory of the coastal people and have become an integral part of the national cultural heritage of Kenya and Tanzania. The complete Liongo's epic has not been preserved. There are only a few fragments, the largest being the *Utenzi wa Liongo* ("The Epic of Liongo") by Muhammad Kijumwa, a master-calligraphist (Knappert 1983; Mieke *et al.* 2004). Liongo is not only a legendary hero but was also a bard, and Allen suggests that parts of Liongo Saga were composed by Liongo himself in the 14th or 15th century, because he is mentioned in the Pate Chronicles as ruling over his seven towns at about this time, and as having subdued the kingdom of Ozi. As folk-heroes do, Liongo typifies the Swahili values: in fact he sings, dances and versifies, but he is more an archetypal African warrior than a polished townsman or merchant prince (Allen 1982: 230-231). Liongo has been compared to many other traditional and famous heroes belonging to other cultures: like Siegfried and Achilles, he is vulnerable only in one particular spot; like Robin Hood or

⁴ On Liongo Fumo see: Steere (1870: 438-451); Werner (1933: 145-154); Werner (1926-28: 247-255); Harries (1962); Knappert (1979: 66-107); Knappert (1983: 142-168); Mieke (2004).

⁵ The word for Swahili epic is *utenzi* (pl. *tenzi*), or *utendi*. The term means "action," and Knappert suggests that its original meaning was "performance" or "creative activity." The main theme of epic poetry is the hero, his life, his greatness of character, his deeds and his death (Knappert 1983: 47, 58).

⁶ As Kesteloot claims, African epics may be grouped under two main headings: the 'feudal' and the 'clan' epics. Feudal epics, which are linked to the heroes and warriors histories, are distinctive of societies organized into hierarchical professional castes bearing features analogous to those of European feudal societies. The 'clan' epics are always very long narratives punctuated by music, but they deviate far more from the history of the peoples that produce them. She suggests that it is possible to include the Swahili epic in the feudal category (Kesteloot 1989: 204-205).

William Tell, he is a great archer; like king Solomon, he dies with his head and back upright and stays rigid in that position, so that nobody dare approach him; like the Cid Campeador, he fights the nations' enemies, while the king intrigues against him (Knappert 1983; Wamitila 2001).

He was called *Fumo*, a term that refers to a king or chief:⁷

<i>Hadithi ya mfalume</i>	The legend of the king
<i>Mkuu wa wanaume</i>	A leader of the men,
<i>Mithali ya nyati ndume</i>	Like the big bull in the herd
<i>Fumo wa Sawahiliya</i>	the king of the Swahili
(Knappert 1983: 144)	(Knappert 1983: 144).

One of the key attribute of the hero discussed in psychological criticism is the hero's image as a protector of his community:

<i>Liyongo silaha yetu</i>	Liyongo is our weapon
[...]	[...]
<i>Alikuwa ngao yetu</i>	He was our shield
<i>Wute wakinena haya</i>	All people said this
(Mulokozi 1999: 57)	(King'ei 2001: 90).

On the physical aspect of Liyongo it is said to be an unusually huge man who could not be compared to any other human (King'ei 2001: 89):

<i>Liyongo kitamakali</i>	Liyongo grew up
<i>Akabalighi rijali</i>	Into a strong young man
<i>Akawa mtu wa kweli</i>	He became a real man
<i>Na haiba kaongeya</i>	He became more beautiful.
<i>Kimo kawa mrefu</i>	He grew tall
<i>Mpana sana mrefu</i>	Huge and tall
<i>Majimboni yu maarufu</i>	Famous throughout the land
<i>Watu huya kuangaliya</i>	People came to know him
(Mulokozi 1999: 23-24)	(King'ei 2001: 89)

⁷ He is called King of Shanga on Pate island and of Shaha on the Ozi river (Knappert 1983: 144).

Liongo represents the supernatural hero. According to Deme, the supernatural is the fundamental condition for the existence of the African epic. She states that:

The belief in the supernatural is what gives the African epic its unique heroic proportion. The presence of the marvelous, the fantastic is part and parcel of the dramatic storyline and does not take anything away from the veracity of the tale or its true heroism. [...] The existence of the marvelous and the recourse to supernatural means by the hero symbolize his consciousness about his own weaknesses and limitations as a human being and his desire to transcend them [...] The use of the supernatural in African oral epics conforms to one of the most widespread beliefs related to chieftaincy in traditional African societies, that of divine nature of kingship [...] (Deme 2009: 408).

The prodigious nature of the hero is predicted in the following verses on his birth and first years of life, where the archetypal image of the “child” is revealed. It is an important symbol of the Self and one that is usually captured by the references to heroic figures as being a “child of the royal house” (Wamitila 2001: 107):

<i>Liongo yuzewa jumbani</i>	Liongo was born in a palace
<i>Mama yake kuzalani</i>	His mother, while she was giving birth
<i>Kayuwa yu mwenye shani</i>	Knew that he was a prodigy
<i>Imara na ushujaa</i>	That he would be strong and brave.
<i>Na Liyongo akakuwa</i>	Liyongo grew up
<i>Nguvu nyingi akatiwa</i>	Got great strength
<i>Na usemi akapowa</i>	Received the gift of speech
<i>Kwandika kayifundiya</i>	And taught himself to write.
(Knappert 1983: 145)	(Knappert 1983: 145).

As Mbele (2014: 4-5) highlights, deception plays an important part in the epic of Liongo, involving a series of attempts by King Mringwari to kill him. Mringwari is afraid that Liongo might usurp the throne. Liongo hears about the king’s plot to kill him, escapes from the city and goes to live among the forest people. Mringwari, enlists the help of the forest people, namely the Sanye and the Dahalo,⁸

⁸ Sanye and Dahalo are two hunting-gathering peoples of Kenya. The Sanye (or Aweer, or still Boni, from Somali *boon* ‘hunters’) number at least a few thousands and inhabit the interior of the Kenya coast from Lamu to the Somali border and

and promises them a reward if they kill Liongo. They propose him to eat in common: each of them have to provide the meal in turns. When he refuses because is too poor to provide the meals, they say that their meals consist of *makoma*, the fruit of dum palm. Their plan is to shoot Liongo with arrows, when it is his turn to be upon the tree. When Liongo's turn comes, he first chooses the tallest palm, and then foils their plan by shooting down the fruits with his bow and arrows:

66. <i>Achaangusha ngaa ndima</i>	He brought down a cluster of fruits
<i>Na mangi mno makoma</i>	Such a cluster of very many fruits
<i>Na w'ute wakaatama</i>	(That) they were amazed and
<i>Ajabu zikawangiya</i>	Wonder reveted them all.
67. <i>Wakanena moyoni</i>	They murmured to themselves
<i>Amuwezao ni nyani</i>	Who can get the better of him
<i>Huyuno hawezekani</i>	Man is simply invincible and
<i>Ni kutaka kwangamiya</i>	To attempt to harm him is to court disaster.
(Wamitila 2001: 138)	(Wamitila 2001: 138).

Seeing this, Sanye and Dahalo go away convinced that Liongo is a spirit (Mbele 2014: 6). Concerning this episode, Wamitila states that, although the epic does not mention famine, it seems implicated in the text:

Mentioning the famine is of psychological importance [...] Experiences like hunger and thirst may be associated with aspects of the rejected shadow⁹ or equated with the forces of subjection represented by the king [...] one can see the trap intended by the tribesmen as a collective evil, they purpose to kill the hero. The hero's accepting to join them, be party to this collective evil or shadow as it were, is a way to accepting and coming to terms with his own evil shadow (Wamitila 2001: 139).

When the hero's enemies fail to kill him, they report to the king, who then organizes *mwao* and *gungu* dances – which for Wamitila symbolize archetypal music (Wamitila 2001: 140). According to Mbele

maybe beyond. The Dahalo are just a few hundreds, and live south of the Sanye. Both the Sanye and the Dahalo speak separate Cushitic languages belonging to different subgroups: the Sanye (linguistically usually called Boni) speak a language close to Somali (ISO 639-3: bob; Tosco 1994 is a tentative linguistic history), while the Dahalo (who are very possibly shifting to Swahili; Tosco 1992) speak either an Eastern or a Southern Cushitic language (ISO 639-3: dal) which is characterized by the presence of a phonemic dental click; Tosco (1991) is a grammatical sketch.

⁹ "Shadow" is used by Jung to refer the negative side of the personality (Jung 1953).

(2014: 9), when Mringwari uses the dance to trap Liongo, he is exploiting Liongo's love for dance, a sentiment characteristic of the Swahili people as a whole. During the dance, Liongo is captured and jailed. While in prison, Liongo thinks of plans to escape: since his mother used to send the slave girl Saada¹⁰ to the prison to bring him food, during these visits he teaches Saada a song with the secret message to his mother of a file with which to cut his chains:

[...]	[...]
[...]	[...]
<i>Afanye mkate kati tupa kaweka</i>	Let her bake a loaf of bran bread and in it insert a file
<i>Nikereze pingu na minyoo ikinemuka</i>	So that I can cut these shakles and break my chains
<i>Nikateleze nde kama kozi 'katoroka</i>	That I may slip and escape like a falcon
[...]	[...]
[...]	[...]
<i>Ningie shakani ningurume ja simba buka</i>	That I may appear in the fields and roar like a fierce lion
<i>Ningie ondoni ninyepeee ja mwana nyoka</i>	That I may creep in the reeds like a fierce snake
[...]	[...]
(Wamitila 2001: 184)	(Wamitila 2001: 184).

The heroic image of Liongo is created through the use of metaphoric images: the *kozi* (falcon), belongs to what Frye calls analogy of nature and reason, and is crucial in depicting the heroic leadership in high mimetic mode; *nyoka* (snake) is an archetype characterized by polyvalence and ambiguity: it symbolizes both evil and wisdom; and *simba* (lion) is associated with the sun, a particular symbol that appears in several religious poems (Wamitila 2001: 159-165).

After Liongo's escape, King Mringwari decides to send Liongo's son to him to find out how he can be killed – which is a copper needle in his navel. One day, the son finds his father in deep sleep. He stabs him in the navel with the copper needle. The navel is strictly connected with the prenatal life, and symbolizes the vital link to the mother and the individual's vulnerability. As Wamitila states, Liongo' death by a copper needle may symbolize the hero encounter with the original source of life,

¹⁰ Knappert reports the name Sada '(the happy one; Knappert 1983:162).

from where everything started. In Jungian psychology, death is seen as a counterpoint to birth and a symbol for the exuberance of all life processes (Wamitila 2001: 143-144).

2.2. The Chief Mkwawa wa Uhehe, alias the loneliness of the warrior

In the history of Swahili literature, writers and poets have been often inspired by historical figures. Mazrui states that poetry¹¹ which sought to document the colonial situation in what had become German East Africa is very important (Mazrui 2007: 20). Topan claims that the confrontation of the European colonial rules has had a significant impact on biography writing; particular is the relationship between biography and drama (Topan 1997: 302, 304). An example is Mulokozi's play *Mkwawa wa Uhehe* (Mkwawa of Heheland), first published in 1979,¹² whose precedent is the *Tragedy of Mkwawa* written in English by Mulokozi in 1968¹³ and translated in Swahili as *Yaliyomsibu Mkwawa*. Literature and historical memory are connected even though in literary works reality is only an initial inspiration. In fact, when a drama – as Mulokozi's play *Mkwawa wa Uhehe* – is performed on stage, or read, what remains in the memory of spectators or readers is only what the author chooses to reveal. In Mulokozi's play *Mkwawa wa Uhehe*, which is set in the territory of the Hehe (the modern region of Iringa), the author spells the names of the characters, the towns and the rivers as they are pronounced in the Hehe language (Bantu G60; ISO 639-3: heh) and '[...] not in the way they are found in the history and geography books written by the 'intellectual colonisers' [...]' (Mulokozi 1988: iii).¹⁴ For example, Mkwawa is Mukwava, Muyugumba is Munyigumba, Kalenga is Kwilenga, and Ruaha is Ruvaha.

¹¹ Three poems constitute an important source of historical study of German colonial period in Tanganyika: Hemed Al-Buhry's *Utenzi wa Wadachi Kutamalaki Mrima* ('The Epic of German Rule of Mrima' 1955), Abdulkarim bin Jamaliddin's *Utenzi wa Vita vya Maji Maji* ('The Epic of the Maji Maji War,' 1957), and Mwenzo Shomari's *Kufa k wa Mkwawa* (The Death of Mkwawa').

¹² The edition published in 1988 by the Dar es Salaam University Press will be used.

¹³ In the same year, *Johari Ndogo* (The Little Jewel) by Felician V. I. Nkwera was published. It contains two plays: the first is *Mkwawa Mahinya*, an historical drama about the chief Mkwawa and his fight against German colonial rule and the second, *Ushindi wa Tiba mwana kitinda mimba* (The victory of Tiba, the last born), a tale about the Ngoni people on the motif of the three king's sons who set forth in search of the water of life (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 338).

¹⁴ '[...] siyo kama yalivyohifadhiwakatika vitabu vya historia na jiografia vilivyoandikwa na 'wataalamu' wa kikoloni [...]' (Mulokozi 1988: iii). English version mine.

But who was the real Mkwawa? It is said that Mukwavinyika¹⁵ Munyigumba Mwamunyinga, known by the name of Mkwawa,¹⁶ was born in 1855 in Luhota, Iringa rural District, Uhehe (i.e., land of Hehe people), in former Tanganyika. Nothing is known about his childhood, except that he was called by the nickname of Ndasalasi, meaning “he who caresses with his hands looking for something with his fingers” in Hehe. Since his very childhood he showed the capacity to find things quickly (Musso 2011: 68; Mulokozi 1988: 4).

There is also little information about the Hehe people and their origins.¹⁷ The name Hehe was not recorded until 1860s, and is said to be derived from their war-cry “Hee! Hee!” (Crema 1987: 7; Musso 2011: 14-15; Peers 2005: 17). The earliest historical data concerning the Hehe and their land came through the first Swahili, Arab and European traders. When the Arabs began to trade in firearms and gun-powder that they exchanged for slaves and ivory, central Tanganyika was a peaceful area inhabited by small dispersed groups (Mumford 1934; Iliffe 1979; Redmayne 1968). According to Redmayne (1968: 410), the Arabs’ increasing arms trade was an important factor in the history of tribal warfare and alliances until the German government gained control of the whole territory.

The fate of Mkwawa is closely connected to the history of his land and the Hehe people (Wahehe in Swahili) during the German colonial rule. When the Germans arrived (1890), the Hehe were the dominant power in southern Tanganyika: military organization was the dominant element in their life, and every adult man was a warrior (Iliffe 1979: 57), so the greatest challenge to German authority came from the Wahehe under their leader Mkwawa. Between 1860 and 1880 the Hehe had emerged as a leading tribe, and during the 1860s and 1870s Munyigumba, Mkwawa’s father, had conquered the chiefdoms of northern Uhehe. In due course, many other Hehe chiefs either submitted to Munyigumba or simply fled. He united the numerous Hehe clans into a well organized an aggressive military force in Southern Tanzania. He died in 1879 and Mkwawa continued his aggressive policies,

¹⁵ According to Omari (2011: 70) Mukwavinyika means “Conqueror of Dry Grassland” in Hehe. According to Redmayne (1970: 103), the name derives from the Hehe words *kukwava inyika* meaning “to capture plains.”

¹⁶ In literature there are many variants of this name including Kwawa or Kuawa, Quawa, Mkwaba, Mkwatika or Mkuanika, Mukwawi Nyika, Kwawinyika or Kwawanjika, and Mkuu wa Nyika (Redmayne 1968; Crema 1987; Musso 2011). According to Redmayne (1968: 409; Redmayne 1970: 103), Mkwawa is the accepted spelling of the name used by his descendants and is the common version.

¹⁷ According to Mumford, the Iringa district was peopled by various ethnic groups, such as the Yinga, a small tribe who took the name of their first great chief Muyinga; the Hafiwa, a group named after their chief Mhafiwa; the Dongwe that received their name and have accepted it as descriptive of a custom of their group to wear special tufts of hair, and the Zungwa, whose name meant the people of the country of the hot sun and so on (Mumford 1934: 203-204).

first fighting the Ngoni¹⁸, and then raiding for cattle and ivory in all directions (Roberts 1969: 70; Lipschutz and Rasmussen 1989: 147; Peers 2005: 17; Iliffe 1973). The trade route from the coast to Tabora – founded by Arab traders in 1850s and soon becoming a centre of the slave trade (Jeal 2011: 76) - and beyond passed through Mkwawa's empire. In about 1887 Mkwawa consolidated his position by moving his capital to a stone fort in the hills of Kalenga:¹⁹ he and his people became a symbol of resistance (Pike 1986: 213). Gwassa states that he levied customs duty, or *hongo*, from those who traded through or in his empire. Reports of heavy *hongo* galled the Germans, and they wished to have Mkwawa under their control. The events that led to the German-Hehe clash showed only too well the German failure to understand and grasp the realities of African politics and practice.²⁰ Von Prince, an experienced officer who had spent some years in learning all he could about the Southern Highlands, and getting in touch with many Hehe chiefs and other members of Mkwawa's own family, attacked Kalenga, and on October 30, 1894 took the city and Mkwawa's palace. Mkwawa himself escaped to engage in guerilla war for four years. Finally, sick and alone, he committed suicide rather than fall into the enemy's hands (Winans 1994: 225; Gwassa 1969: 115). The dramatic character of Mkwawa was created following Mulokozi's inspiration. In the work he is described as a middle-aged man, at the height of his fame in and beyond the confines of the Uhehe territory. The aura of grandeur that envelops the character is already evident in the first scene, when he appears wearing the *magolole*, a typical Hehe mantle, and a turban that represent the clothes of chiefs or of people worthy of respect. In his hands he holds a flyswatter and a lance, symbols of majesty and audacity. Welcomed with trills and drums, speaking to his people about unity and brotherhood he warns them of the looming danger:

Mkwawa: "... Wahehe, even though we have beaten the Masai [...] the Wangoni, the Wanyamwezi and the Wasangu, they are no longer our enemies now. [...] they are our brothers [...] as you know there are greater and crueller enemies who in secret are preparing to invade us. We have already beaten the Arabs. They cannot return. But there is an enemy we have not beaten yet. Who is he?"

¹⁸ During the 1830s the Ngoni warriors fought their way northwards from Natal in South Africa, as far north as Ufipa in south-western Tanzania (Roberts 1969: 68).

¹⁹ The fort was known as Kalenga ("little water"), Ilinga ("stockade") and Lipuli ("strong elephant;" Redmayne 1968: 424-425).

²⁰ It seems that a series of incidents convinced Mkwawa that the Germans were treating him with contempt, and insulting him as an independent ruler: if Mkwawa sent presents to the Germans according to the custom they did not return presents. This was against Mkwawa's expectations and an affront to his person (Gwassa 1969: 114).

Wahehe: “The European!” (Mulokozi 1988: 23)²¹

He is aware that the next war could bring ruin to his people:

Mukwawa: “Remember, this is a war to defend our land [...] protect our freedom [...] Hard times await us. It will be a very bad moment for cowards and for traitors, but for the courageous [...] it will be a time for glory. Wahehe, are you ready?” (Mulokozi 1988: 24)²²

In historical reality, the Germans tried to strike a deal with Mkwawa (Gwassa 1969: 114), but in the play his wife Semusilamugunda’s efforts are not enough to convince him to accept. He swears he will never sell his land:

Mukwawa: The European will come or not come. If he comes he will face the heroes of the land of the Hehe [...] They will be the days when heads will be counted and the drums of the elders will sound. It will be a great feast (...) we shall fight to the end. But we shall not sell the land of the Uhehe. [...] Absolutely, I shall not sell the land of the Uhehe!” (Mulokozi 1988: 35)²³.

This passage probably anticipates the vision of the battle that took place near the Rugaro river: among the bodies left on the battlefield were ten Germans, 250 colonial troops, and around 100 porters. About 260 Wahehe had been killed (Peers 2005: 17).

Historically, Mkwawa continued to fight his war in the forest for other four years, hiding with his men. However, the weapons of the Germans were too powerful and when he realized that he would soon be captured he preferred suicide:

Mukwawa: “... There is still hope. But not today, tomorrow. And not for this generation, perhaps for the ones of the future. [...] The enemies that are searching for me are near. I

²¹ Mukwawa: [...] Wahehe, ingawa tumewashinda Wamasai [...] Wangoni na Wanyamwezi na Wasangu, lakini sisi hao sio maadui zetu hasa [...] hao ni ndugu zetu. [...] kama mnavyofahamu, kuna maadui wakubwa na wabaya zaidi wanaotayarisha njama ya kutuvamia. Waarabu tulikwisha washinda. Hawawezi kurudi. Lakini yupo adui mwingine ambaye hatujamshinda. Ni nani huyo?

Wahehe: Mzungu! (Mulokozi 1988: 23). English version mine.

²² Mukwawa: “Kumbukeni, hivi ni vita vya kuhiamia ardhi yetu [...] vya kuulinda uhuru wetu [...] Mbele yetu kuna wakati mgumu. Utakuwa ni wakati mbaya kwa waoga na wasaliti, bali kwa mashujaa [...] utakuwa ni wakati mtukufu Wahehe, mko tayari?” (Mulokozi 1988: 24). English version mine.

²³ Mukwawa: Mzungu atakuja au hatakuja. Akija atawakuta mashujaa wa Uhehe [...] Zitakuwa ni siku za kuhesabu vichwa na kuicheza ngoma ya wahenga. Itakuwa ni ngoma kuu [...] Tutapigana mpaka mwisho. Lakini hatutaiuza Uhehe. [...] Kamwe, sitaiuza Uhehe!” (Mulokozi 1988: 35). English version mine.

don't want to find me like this. I cannot live in slavery. [...] Better to die rather than be a slave. [...] there is nothing left for the Mhehe. Everything is bought or sold for money: even people are sold, even the land is sold. [...] I hate the European! [...] I hate this slavery! [...] A day will come when all the blacks [...] from the east coasts to the west coasts will cry together (with one voice) to claim their right to freedom and their land. That day those who are still living will be filled with joy and dead heroes will live again. [...] even now [...] I can hear the joyful voices of the heroes calling me. My country is calling. I GO!" (he shoots and dies immediately) (Mulokozi 1988: 102-103)²⁴

In this passage it is clear that the warrior-hero follows the traditional African belief that is referred to as ancestors worship, on the basis of an understanding of life course as cyclical and not linear: those who are dead are alive in a different world. According to Ekore and Lanre-Abasi (2016: 370), it is an African cultural belief that to be in the world of the dead confers supernatural powers over those in the world of the living, such as the ability to bless - in the case of Mkwawa, to bless his people - or to curse the enemies. From an archetypal point of view, the death of the warrior - whose key attributes are honour, courage, loyalty and self-control (Pressfield 2011: 39, 54) - means that he has finally encountered his limitations: he has met the enemy, and his own dark side, his unheroic side. As Hollis states:

The suffering of loneliness brings the encounter with the Self, which is founding the attainment of solitude, which becomes the source from which the new, the unique images of the individual rise to enhance, differentiate, and expand the collective sphere (Hollis 2000: 94).

Mkwawa has fought the revolution and has contacted his own inhumanity (Moore and Gillette 1990: 75), however death makes him a hero (Goethals and Scott 2012: 216-217).

Mkwawa committes suicide and this act becomes his ultimate empowerment. Studies of suicide in the colonial period report that in many African communities suicide was viewed as a quintessentially "bad" death, one that denied the perpetrator a place in the spirit world of the lineage. But there were also marked variations in approach, with some groups viewing suicide not as

²⁴ Mukwawa: " ...Tumaini bado lipo. Lakini si leo, kesho. Na si kwa kizazi hiki, labda vizazi vijavyo. [...] Maadui wanaonitafuta wako karibu. Sitaki wanikute katika hali hii. Siwezi kuishi utumwani. [...] Ni bora kufa kuliko kuwa mtumwa. [...] Hapakubakia kitu chochote kwa ajili ya Mhehe. Kila kitu sasa kinauzika na kununulika kwa fedha, hata watu wanauzwa, hata ardhi inauzwa. [...] Namchukia Mzungu! [...] Nachukia utumwa huul [...] Siku inakuja ambapo watu wote weusi (...) kutoka pwani ya mashariki hadi pwani ya magharibi, wataponyanyuka kwa sauti moja kudai uhuru na ardhi yao. Siku hiyo wale watakaokuwa hai watafurahika, na mashujaa walio kuzimu watafufuka. [...] Hata sasa [...] Naweza kusikia sauti za shangwe za mashujaa hao zikiniita. Nchi yangu inaniita, NINAKWENDA! (Anajipiga risasi na kufa hapohapo) (Mulokozi 1988: 102-103). English version mine.

a crime but as an act of bravery (Vaughan 2010: 386). About the suicide as archetype, Jung states: “The secret is that only that which can destroy itself is truly alive” (Jung 1993: 74). Hillman (1978) juxtaposes the archetype of the soul with that of the individual choice of death. The archetype of suicide is summoned by the ego complex and one enters into death’s field on one’s own terms, choosing to walk directly into it:

It is the thought that my soul is mine, and so my death belongs only to me. I can do with my death what I choose. Because I can end my life when and how and where I please, I am wholly my own being, utterly self-determined (Hillman 1978: 197).

The loneliness of Mkwawa when he was abandoned by his allies in his fight against the Germans has been described in the poem *Kufa kwa Mkwawa* (‘The Death of Mkwawa’), published in 1918, written by Mwenyi Shomari bin Mwenyi Kambi and edited by Carl Velten (Miehe *et al.* 2002: 256-277):

<i>Sikilizani habari</i>	Listen to the story
<i>yake Mkwawa kabiri,</i>	of Mkwawa the Great,
<i>alishikwa na ghururi</i>	he was fell of boasting
<i>akicheza na bahari.</i>	As he played with the ocean
<i>asiwaze kufikiri</i>	He could not image
<i>bahari kitu kabiri,</i>	the ocean is a great powerful thing,
<i>muna nyingi hatari</i>	in it there are many dangers
<i>wala mtu hakadiri.</i>	No one knows many.
[...]	[...]
<i>watu wa kale waronga:</i>	the ancestors said:
<i>“bahari haiuzwi nonga;”</i>	“the ocean cannot be vanquished;”
<i>mwa Muinga kaipinga</i>	the son of Muinga opposed it
<i>azani kitu saghiri.</i>	Taking it be a small thing. (Miehe <i>et al.</i> 2002: 260).

According to Ranne (2016), the image of the sea represents the powerful Germans: their armed strength was something that Mkwawa did not comprehend but tried to win. The choice of the word for describing the power of the sea might hint to death: with a subtle change it would be *bahari kitu kaburi* ‘the ocean (is) a thing (of) grave.’ Similarly, *kabiri* resembles the word *kiburi* ‘pride, arrogance’ which furthermore supports the image of the proud Mkwawa. At the end of the poem there is a

strong advice about the need to be afraid of the ocean. The second stanza deals with death most explicitly (Ranne 2016: 90-91) :

<i>nami nawapa hazari,</i>	And I give you a warning,
<i>msichezee bahari,</i>	do not play (with) the sea,
<i>mauti yako fujari</i>	your death (will be) horrible
<i>hufa ukabusuri.</i>	you die seeing it. (Miehe et al. 2002: 276).

The heroism of Mkwawa and his soldiers is symbolically evoked by Shaaban Robert in the poem *Mkwawa* (Robert 1968: 8):

<i>Ilikuwa ni usiku kabla kupambazuka</i>	It was the time of night before sunrise ²⁵
<i>[...]</i>	<i>[...]</i>
<i>Kabla kulia kuku na umande unashuka</i>	before the rooster sang and the dew dried up
<i>Alipovipata siku Mkwawa ya kutukuka</i>	When the day came for Mkwawa to be glorified.
<i>Na kwale walipolia Wadachi wameishafika</i>	And when partridges sang the Germans had already arrived
<i>Mjini wameingia na wao wamezungukwa</i>	They entered the city surrounding them
<i>Kutoka hawana njia moja iliyofunguka</i>	since there was no way out
<i>Mkwawa hakukawia mapigano kuyashika</i>	Mkwawa immediately started the battle
<i>Kama sime na kwa mikuki na ngao</i>	Arming themselves with lance, blades and
<i>walizoshika</i>	shields
<i>Kama simba kwa hamaki Wahehe</i>	Like roaring lions, the Hehe jumped
<i>walivyoruka</i>	
<i>Wadachi wakahiliki wasipate pa kutoka</i>	the Germans were destroyed cause they could not escape
<i>Kwisha kwa kitendo hiki Mkwawa akaanguka</i>	After this event Mkwawa fell (Robert 1968: 8).

²⁵ English version mine.

Zúbková Bertoncini (1984-1985: 100-101) claims that in this poem an important role is entrusted to time. In the first stanza the darkness seems to symbolize the darkness that enveloped the Africans at that time; the dew symbolizes the cold hand of colonialism and the cock that has not yet sung is the expected political awakening. *Kabla kulia kuku na umande unashuka* “before the rooster sang and the dew dried up” makes reference to the time before dawn: the Africans responded to the call of the partridge, clashing with the Germans; miserably armed, but full of courage like lions, they manage to put the enemy in difficulty. Then, at dawn, Mkwawa falls (Zúbková Bertoncini 1984-1985: 100-101).

A realistic vision of a Mkwawa proud of his people is offered in Gonsalves’s poetry *Conqueror of Many Lands* (2014), in which the Chief introduces himself as a man and a warrior:

I am no superhuman,
just a conqueror
defending his mighty tribe

I am a tribal leader,
determined to win
for the pride of my people.

I shall die
Before alien hands
Take pride in killing me

I am no myth
Or comical hero,
but a warrior you will remember (Gonsalves 2014: 79).

Although these verses reveal the image of a man in his own perception of reality, in her poetry Gonsalves repropose the figure of the archetypal hero who fights against the enemy for the triumph of good over evil and whose life is focused on power over his life and over others (Campbell 1949). The death of Mkwawa has been conceived as heroic both in historical reality and in literary works, and acquired a mythic status. A few months before his death, the former president of Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere, posted a memorial plaque near Mkwawa’s grave on the occasion of the first centenary of the chief’s death (Musso 2011: 117). Mkwawa’s myth among his people was described by Adams, who

observed that the Chief was known as a strong warrior, surrounded by supernatural powers. According to the conception of the Hehe,²⁶ he had “medicine,” which supposedly had the effect of making him intangible and invisible in battle (Adams 1899: 53-61). Nevertheless he died, and the Germans did not want to return empty handed. They beheaded him and took his head to Germany, and Bucher (2016: 284) claims that the skull of the defeated Hehe chief was a symbol of colonial authority in Tanganyika. Gaudi refers to a mysterious detail of Mkwawa’s skull: the Wahehe had thought Mkwawa immortal, because he was protected from bullets by an alliance of spirits and a magic horn that grew out of the center of his forehead. Examining the head after Mkwawa’s decapitation, the mythical horn was discovered to be a poorly-healed bullet wound (Gaudi 2017: 147). Mkwawa’s head was taken by Captain von Prince (Winans 1994: 225) who gave the skull to the Anthropological Museum in Bremen, where it laid for fifty years (Winans 1994: 225; Musso 2011: 117). In the aftermath of World War II, Sir Edward Twining, the last British Governor of Tanganyika, saw fit to heed the continuing Hehe request for the skull of their Chief. It was returned in 1954 and displayed in the museum of Kalenga, Mkwawa’s old capital, where it still remains.

3. Final remarks on the “renewed heroes” as literary trends

The figure and the history of Liongo Fumo has influenced and inspired some contemporary authors to create literary works. The play *Kifo kisimani*²⁷ (Death by the Well) by Kithaka wa Mberia (2001) is a sort of modern version of the Fumo Liongo’s epic (Zúbková Bertoncini 2010: 91). The play is set in an imaginary African society characterized by poor political leadership, corruption and violation of human rights. A modern hero created by wa Mberia is Mwelusi, who in many ways retraces the ancient Liongo’s footsteps. There are two events that make the two figures similar: the escape from the prison through the file that is passed to them inside the bread (wa Mberia 2001: 55-56), and their killing by a family member near a well.

In 2001, Matundura published a children’s book titled *Mkasa wa Shujaa Liyongo* (The tragedy of the hero Liyongo). The book resumes the story of the epic hero in twelve chapters, starting from the death of the king – itself the event which will lead to the conflict between Liongo and Mringwari –

²⁶ Concerning the the relationship between the Wahehe and ‘magic’ see Winans and Edgerton (1964).

²⁷ *Kifo Kisimani* has been performed three times: the first time in 1990 at the Coast Girls Secondary School at Mombasa, Kenya, by the Youth of Chakina (*Chama cha Kiswahili cha Chuo Kikuu cha Nairobi* – Kiswahili University Association of Nairobi); the second time in 1992, it was performed by the theater group of the *Theater Workshop Productions*, and the third time in 1998 under *the Kongamano la Tatu la Kimataifa la Michezo ya Kuigiza* (“The third National Theater Festival”), held in Kisumu, Kenya (wa Mberia 2001: iv-vi).

until Liongo's death. The text, characterized by the use of a linear prose, is an example of a literary genre finding its *raison d'être* in the representation of a traditional and cultural myth in a modern style through a contemporary tool – the pocketbook.

It is true that myths and legends are narratives of heroism whose main characters are highly revered national and/or cultural heroes; however, it is equally possible to find 'female heroes' in the same stories devoted to male heroes. An example is the trilogy *Siri Sirini: Mshairi na Mfungwa* ('Secret in the Secret: A Poet and a Prisoner;' 2014) by Rocha Chimera. The trilogy is based on Liongo's legend. In *Siri Sirini 1, Mfungwa na Mshairi* ('A Prisoner and a Poet'), the legend begins with Liongo's detention and escape to Ozi; in *Siri Sirini 2, Mpiga Mbizi Kilindini* ('A Diver in Deep Water'), the author focuses on the assassination of Mfawidi, an educated man and the minister for foreign affairs; *Siri Sirini 3, Mtihani wa Mwanamke* ('A woman's test') presents Liongo's return to Shanga and his murder by Prince Ngwari, who had been informed by Liongo himself about the only part of his body that could be mortally struck. Liongo's assassination triggers a military revolution led by Abanoye, Liongo's second wife and the chief of Ozi's daughter. According to Yenjela (2015), unlike the other historical characters who are mentioned in the trilogy – such as Mwana kupona, The Queen of Sheba and the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut – Abanoye is only a legendary heroine (Yenjela 2015: 54). Although in *Siri Sirini 1* Abanoye has already demonstrated her ability as a warrior woman in suppressing the men who had raped her (*Siri Sirini 1*: 402), it is Liongo's assassination that triggers the revolution that will transform Abanoye into a legend.

Also Mkwawa's myth inspired other literary works: the Swahili novel *Ngome ya Mianzi* ('The Fortress of Bamboo;' 1991) by Mulokozi²⁸ is an example and retells the story of the battle of Lugalo in June 1891. Besides the historical figure of Chiefs Mkwawa, the novel uses many other fictional characters, including the protagonists: young boy Mugoha and young girl Nyawelu. The heroic acts of the two children and other Hehe soldiers allow the Hehe to win the battle. The concept of heroism is repeatedly used to refer to acts of courage and bravery performed by an individual to defend a particular cause in spite of the risks involved (Gibson *et al.* 2007). In most cases, there is a tendency to focus on the heroic acts of political leaders, military commanders and other élite figures, as in the account of the Hehe's encounter with the invading German troops, which tends to highlight Chief Mkwawa and other members of his royal family (Redmayne 1968; Iliffe 1973, 1979; Pike 1986; Crema

²⁸ According to Aiello (2015: 146), the colonial experience is dealt within other historical novels written by Mulokozi like *Ngoma ya Mianzi* ('The Dance of the Bamboos;' 1991) and *Moto wa Mianzi* ('The Fire of Bamboos;' 1996). All these works are set during the years of the Hehe resistance in 1891- 1898 and report historically true events.

1987; Musso 1968, 2011), making them sort of cultural heroes.²⁹ Still, by mediating between realism and fictional representation, between the historical recounting and interpretation of a historical world and the novelistic creation of an imaginary world, Mulokozi's novel strikes a different note by directing the reader's attention to the heroic acts of people from a lower segment of society, many of them adolescent (Sanga 2019).

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²⁹ According to Quayson (2001), the concept of a cultural hero is usually used to refer to figures who have become embodied in cultural productions such as folktales, myths, novels, plays and epics.

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Living is Writing

Metaphors of Representation in Hanif Kureishi's *The Last Word*

Esterino Adami

Hanif Kureishi's *The Last Word* (2014) is a fictional work that depicts the effort of a young journalist from London, Harry, to write the biography of a very famous author of Indian origin, Mamoon, who now lives in the quiet English countryside. Starting from the very beginning, with its symbolic title, the novel is built upon a metatextual framework as it discusses the power of words and narratives in a literary context. In particular, the thematic coordinates of the text incessantly creates intersections between the conceptual domain of WRITING, which includes its peripheral subdomains such as researching, remembering, but also the manipulation and revision of facts and stories. The overall effect is to hybridise the fields of narrative, (fictional) biography and authorship, and deliberately challenge the reader in the construction of meaning and the attribution of reliability to characters. Therefore, the governing megametaphor LIVING IS WRITING and its possible micro-articulations emerge as a network of rhetorical devices of representation and conceptualisation of life experience through the practice of writing and communicating.

This paper intends to investigate the range of these metaphorical renditions in the novel, and their power to symbolically encapsulate lives in words (Mamoon's life recorded and/or reinvented through words). The central argument is that such structures superficially serve to mirror reality and experience, blending the macro-concepts of WRITING and LIVING, but in reality they are also endowed with the possibility to set off a sequence of ambiguities, given their ideological potential (i.e. biography writing as a process of adjustment and interpretation of facts in spite of claims of faithfulness). As readers are asked to apply a kind of "double vision" (Gavins 2007) to the text, various text worlds are generated, bringing to light the language continuum connecting the coterminous spaces of fiction and non-fiction and the key role of metaphor as a tool to approach the self and the other, and human existence at large. The purpose of this article is twofold, namely a) to take into account various metaphoric expressions originating from the central megametaphor in select extracts from the novel and b) to provide a preliminary examination of their ideological effects. Methodologically I follow an interdisciplinary frame that draws from stylistics, postcolonial discourse, biography studies and literary studies (Adami 2006; Ashcroft 2009; Bradford 1997; Browse 2016; Douthwaite 2000; Kövecses 2000, 2002; Stockwell 2009; Sorlin 2014).

1. Introduction

The idea of WRITING is a powerful embracing notion rooted in human culture and society, as demonstrated by frequent standard and idiomatic phraseology, and is often used directly or indirectly as a metaphor or image for a variety of life situations. On the one hand, superficially, it stands as a creative and practical activity in the arts, but on the other it emerges as a conceptualisation of various circumstances. This view seems to frame and drive metaphorical patterns in *The Last Word*, a novel by diasporic author Hanif Kureishi (2012), which depicts the effort of a young journalist from London, Harry, to write the biography of a very famous author of Indian origin, Mamoon, who now lives in the quiet English countryside. With its abundant recourse to metatextuality and metafiction (Wales 1995: 292-3), realised by a variety of deictic shifts and other resources, the novel triggers the megametaphor LIVING IS WRITING as a paradigm to conceptualise, represent and construct the abstract and complex sense of LIVING via the notion of WRITING, thus building (and blending) discourse and text worlds and inviting the reader to apply a “double-vision” (Gavins 2009: 146-164).

In this paper I propose to approach Kureishi's novel by mapping out the different metaphorical articulations that interweave the mingled conceptual domains of LIVING and WRITING (two very generic and wide fields) to signal the manifestations of identity.¹ Very often writing here functions as a source domain, whilst living represents the target domain, but at times the two seem to be interchangeable as their correspondences are not distinct: in this case, for Gibbons and Whiteley (2018: 214), “rather than unidirectional conceptual mapping, conceptual properties appear to be mapped dual-directionally.”

It is not incidental that the novelistic format is here, at least partially, hybridised with other genres such as literary biography, treatise, journalism or even parody, in an attempt to record and chronicle facts, although they may be subject to manipulation, revision and ‘rewriting’. The purpose of this article is twofold, namely a) to take into account various metaphoric expressions originating from the central megametaphor in select extracts from the novel and b) to provide a preliminary examination of their ideological effects, arising from the metaphors that the author decides to employ in his story. In other words, I aim to study the conceptualisation of the megametaphor LIVING IS WRITING, namely how the (meta)textual and figurative process of writing, of constructing a (fictional) biography may hide or modify some details, and in thus doing project other meanings and

¹ Conceptual metaphors and megametaphors are signalled by the use of small capital letters and I use this convention in my paper.

persuade the reader to adopt a particular viewpoint. In order to explore the complex textual architecture of the megametaphor running throughout the novel, I adopt a primarily stylistic methodology, though I also draw on and adapt theories and frameworks such as literary studies and postcolonial discourse (e.g. Ashcroft 2009; Gavins 2007; Kövecses 2000, 2002; Steen 1994; Stockwell 2009; Sorlin 2014).

2. Metaphors and megametaphors

Over the last decades, the study of metaphor has seen a growing body of important scholarship that reinvigorated its tenets and key concepts, in particular after the so-called ‘cognitive turn,’ i.e. a deep reflection on the conceptual nature of metaphor and its key position in human culture and language. Traditional approaches to metaphor (e.g. Bradford 1997), which refer to classical rhetoric, have been revised and updated taking into consideration other impactful aspects such as the mental work that occurs behind the production and reception of metaphorical constructions at large, as well as their entrenchment in thought and the way in which they conceptualise reality and life thanks to their two components: target domain (the main ‘topic’ of the metaphor) and source domain (the ‘source’ of the linguistic structure), cognitively tied by mappings, i.e. meaningful correspondences and links. These structures are termed cognitive metaphors: for Sorlin “ces représentations sont le fruit de nos interactions avec le monde” (2014: 193) and they function through “mappings between cognitive domains that are set up when we think and when we talk” (Fauconnier 1997: 8).

As a whole, metaphors are pervasive in and across discourses and texts, regardless of genre boundaries: the realm of literature in particular seem to exhibit a significant and more evident repository of such devices, which consistently contribute to the process of textual meaning creation and towards which readers respond and react in various ways. For example, Steen (1994: 241) draws attention to the issue of metaphor comprehension in literature and holds that “its basis in non-literal analogy can trigger fantasies, rich ideas, and pleasure in language which few other literary signs may be able to equal”. Rather than being a mere form of embellishment for aesthetic purposes, metaphors therefore are chief tools for the complex organisation of literary texts, but in reality they also signal the intricate relations and links between fictional and non-fictional discourse. Literary metaphors, for instance, are sometimes described as innovative and bizarre, but very often they are the final result of various linguistic processes of transformation, combination and extension of ‘mundane’ narrative material, as demonstrated among others by Kövecses (2002: 43-54). However, there is now scholarly agreement that both literary and non-literary metaphors share elements of creativity,

which in Carter's view (2004: 140) "is a mentalistic phenomenon and draws for its effects on basic conceptual categories and prototypical experiences of the world."

As mentioned above, cognitive metaphors imaginatively inform the way we think and speak and thus function as mental structures: they are not mere figures of speech but powerful expressive devices. When the same metaphor, in various shapes and functions, occurs regularly through the text, this may be identified as an embracing system of signification whose network of substructures allows the orchestration of complex meanings via the implementation of micrometaphors, making up the wider structure called megametaphor (Gavins 2007: 151; Kövecses 2002: 51-2). According to Kimmel (2009: 181) "a megametaphor is an implicit large-scale mapping onto a target domain that is recurrently hinted at, creating a deeper-level meaning the text 'really is about.'" Also termed extended metaphor, it is an imaginative conceptual strategy frequently employed in the exploration of the literary field, for example the poetic work of Blake (Kirvalidze and Davitishvili 2012), or some novels by Jack London (Rezanova and Shilyaev 2015). Recently, it has also received critical attention when functioning in the areas of specialised non-literary discourse too, for instance in the study carried out by Browse (2016) working with the language of the British financial crisis. In this perspective, all the metaphorical patterns (micrometaphors) that constitute the backbone of the megametaphor do not stay in compartmentalised spaces of meaning, but provide a range of linguistic and cognitive blending of two domains.

3. The novel and the language (between fiction and non-fiction)

In this section I provide an introduction to the novel, which groups together a few characters that for various reasons orbit around the figure of Mamoon Hazan, a famous author and essayist of Indian descent, settled in the UK. Harry Johnson, a brilliant and ambitious young writer and journalist, is commissioned to prepare his biography and therefore spends a lot of time with the old intellectual and his entourage, in particular Liana Luccioni, the artist's eccentric Italian wife. The story progresses in various directions, piecing together some sides of Mamoon's past and at the same time intruding into the life of Harry and his family too (we are shown his frail wife Alice and his father, a psychiatrist). However, ambiguity seems to mark all the narrative levels unfolded by the author, because the idea of writing and presenting one's past experiences clashes with personal interests, different viewpoints and personal ideologies. Researching Mamoon's life turns out to be complex and difficult to put into words, in particular when Harry has to consider two important female presences of the famous author's past. These are Marion, "a Colombian with an English Jewish mother" (Kureishi 2014: 187) that Harry manages to meet in the USA, and Peggy, Mamoon's first wife, who

committed suicide many years before the time when the action of the novel takes place but whose ghostly echo somehow seems to linger in the interstices of memory. Besides, dealing with his literary task and Mamoon's uneasy and overflowing personality, the young journalist also has to face transformations in his own life, with a progressive distancing from his wife and a parallel love affair with Julia, the girl who works for Mamoon and Liana, as well as a tense relationship with his messy and semi-alcoholic agent, Rob Deveraux.

Superficially the novel strives to follow or evoke the forms of biography writing, but it also has the force of provocation and even traces of parody since reviewers have juxtaposed it to or compared it with a 'real' biography, that of V.S. Naipaul, written by Patrick French and originally in 2008 (2009). Approaches to writing may change and oscillate for a variety of reasons, and can impinge or affect visibility, and implicitly popularity, fame and success, of public figures, as incidentally demonstrated by the controversial relationship for example between V.S. Naipaul and Paul Theroux, with the latter initially writing a very appreciative work on the author of Asian origin and then proposing a not so mild portrayal of the same some twenty-five years afterwards. Incidentally, it should also be noted that Kureishi has often shown an interest in the biographical genre, for instance with *My Ear at His Heart* (2004), a kind of biography of his father, a migrant from the Indian subcontinent.

In fictional terms, *The Last Word* works as an arena of confrontation between characters and viewpoints, and foregrounds the idea of literary manipulation, of how words can be used to represent certain ideologies or persuade people to follow certain perspectives. In this respect, the novel belongs to the postcolonial genre that questions the power of writing and linguistic representations for those subjects that are split between different cultural worlds and the manifestation, transformation and impact of logos, according to Ashcroft's view (2009). The text discloses bits and pieces of Mamoon's Indian boyhood, a period still clouded by the heritage of the colonial past, but these are depicted like distant, even exotic echoes, in an attempt to relocate the viewpoint and restrict the diasporic experience.

Hanif Kureishi's narrative prose and shorter fiction is particularly imbued with the trope of metatextuality and a general reflection on the sense of writing, and its capacity to persuade or influence readers (see Adami 2006), and this also lies at the heart of the metaphorical system operating in the novel under consideration here. The techniques of rhetorical manipulation and representation in this text are further amplified thanks to the hybrid nature of this type of writing, in which the fictional genre liminally borders with the biographical, with the consequence that in the reading process a proliferation and overlapping of narrative (and meta-narrative) voices and entities have to be considered (Gibbons and Whiteley 2018; Sorlin 2015). Investigating the various layers of

the literary biography genre, Holden (2014: 920) sets up the notion of contract operating between “two complementary identities: between the biographer and the narrator of the biography, and between the protagonist of the biography and the implied author of those literary texts discussed in the biography with which the reader is already familiar”. This approach *mutatis mutandi* may be extended to Kureishi's text, also considering that the novel is generously sprinkled with literary references, including Poe, Hugo, Hughes, Joyce, Pasolini, Tolstoy and Camus. In this way, the fictional biographical format engenders a rich polyphonic effect.

4. WRITING IS LIVING as a megametaphor and its realisations

One of the recurring features of the novel here under examination, which even a cursory look will reveal, regards its ‘literary’ essence (Douthwaite 2000: 134), namely the constant foregrounding of the idea of WRITING, spanning literariness and narrative activity realised via an assortment of images and items deriving from the wide, abstract notion of LIVING. Indeed, this is a fictional story that continually portrays and deals with writers, biographers, the value of literature and criticism, the world of letters and arts, or artistry in general, and the scope of writing for a variety of purposes such as recording or representing reality, society and life. Metatextual tones are suggested from the very title, which highlights the lexical item ‘word’, and its premodifying adjective ‘last,’ which triggers connotations of prophecy, inevitability and even responsibility as we wonder whose last word it is, e.g. the author's, the narrator's, the character(s)'s, the reader's and so forth. This and many other clues therefore contribute to the progressive construction of a large system of reference – in my hypothesis governed by the megametaphor LIVING IS WRITING, which remarkably impacts on the negotiation of meaning between author, text and reader, since, as Steen (1994: 48) argues, “understanding metaphor in literature is a mental process which is part of literary reception.” In this light, the dense significance of WRITING, interpreted as a term with a wide semantic area spanning both a very general (but practical) activity as well as a creative intellectual practice, runs throughout the text and underpins its main narrative structures. This recurring construction may be interpreted following what Kövecses (2000: 98) defines “complex system metaphors,” namely a patterning that “takes various social, psychological, biological, and emotional domains as its focus,” in this case the manifold significance of LIFE and LIVING reshaped through the prism of WRITING. Viewed from this perspective and hierarchically positioned at the top of a possible structure of classification, the megametaphor WRITING IS LIVING unfolds various image schemas (Gavins 2007: 5; Kimmel 2009) and comprises various subtypes such as ABSTRACT EXISTENCE IS PHYSICAL EXISTENCE OR ABSTRACT FUNCTION IS PHYSICAL FUNCTION that will substantiate several metaphoric expressions.

From a mere linguistic angle, it is also worth recalling that in the common lexicon of English the ‘sense’ of writing not only characterises a large number of possible linguistic collocations, but also surfaces with a variety of set expressions such as ‘written all over one’s face’ (a structure that symbolically cues the process of embodied metaphor), ‘the writing on the wall’ and idiomatic verb phrases such as ‘write someone off,’ ‘write something off,’ ‘write something up’ and others. This is evidence of the centrality of such notion in the human tendency to observe and conceptualise surrounding reality and circumstances, i.e. in the form of documenting, chronicling, communicating and passing on information and knowledge. Therefore, the domain of WRITING may serve as a mirror to filter and condense human life experience, and in this way it endorses the mapping of the two domains, which are interconnected in order to produce meaning. Very often these metaphorical constructions rely on the use of core vocabulary items, that is, “the most normal, basic and simple words available to a language user” (Carter 2004: 115), to convey and naturalise meaning out of less tangible subjective experiences. I now mine the novel to trace local instantiations of the megametaphor introduced above and examine their textual and cognitive mechanics in a selection of passages.

The presence of the megametaphor is sanctioned by the very first paragraph of the novel, which activates a text world about the relationship between LIVING and WRITING, via the mediating agency of the biography genre: “Harry was about to be employed to tell the story of the man he was going to visit. Indeed, he had been chosen to tell the *whole* story of this important man, this significant artist. How, he wondered, with a shudder, did you begin to do that? Where would you start, and how would the story, which was still being lived, end?” (Kureishi 2014: 1, emphasis in the original). A few elements here draw the reader’s attention to a particular type of context so as to build a network of analogies and correspondences: expressions such as ‘to tell the story of the man’ or the use of verbs like ‘begin’ (reinforced by the adjacent near synonym ‘start’) paralleled with ‘end,’ which literally and symbolically can be referred to ‘life’ as well. These, and other, lexical items subtly invite the reader to reflect on the sense of life, and implicitly identity (also with the aid of linguistic structures almost shaped as inner, existentialist questions of a wondering subject), and in a parallel fashion suggest the role of WRITING, in particular through the biographical genre, as a metonymic form of representation of the human experience, encoded in the key term ‘story.’ Moreover, the adjective ‘whole’ graphologically stands out thanks to italicisation and in this way it extends hyperbolically (and unrealistically of course) its meaning to cover an entire life. However rich and detailed a biography is, it cannot include every type of experience, and it is up to the author to select which events, and episodes will be covered and narrated.

Discussing the function of the narrating voice in literary biography, Diane Middlebrook puts forward a range of deep questions that can be applied to the developments of this novel too and that to some extent surface in the quotation above, in particular considering that “the life of the subject begins with birth; but where does the story of the subject’s life begin? Also, a life ends in a death, but where does the *story* end?” (2006: 14, emphasis in the original). Other issues raised by Middlebrook refer to the richness or paucity of materials and documents in the biographer’s work, as well as the difficulty for the biographer to investigate the subject’s inner thoughts and feelings. In the novel, the process of meaning construction will be developed and carried out with a wealth of images and metaphors that conceptually consider the correspondences linking the LIFE and WRITING domains.

One of the most salient micrometaphors activated in the novel by the intradiegetic narrator (Bradford 1997: 59) concerns the very material used in the narrative activity, the building blocks of discourses and texts, namely words. Mamoon, for instance, is described as being able to have “more or less complete control over his speech; he didn’t like his words to run away from him” (2014: 240), with an imaginative process which transforms words into objects, or dynamic or even animal forces to be tamed and dominated by the artist going through his life stages. Considering that the term ‘control’ relates to the individual’s attitude and behaviour, and thus covering an emotional sphere, the expression used in the quotation may be grounded on the mapping EMOTION IS (WILD/CAPTIVE) ANIMAL (Kövecses 2000: 133), with further support from the dynamic verb phrase ‘to run away.’ In another passage, focalised through the gaze of Mamoon, the linguistic fabric is heightened from the artist’s perspective as the access to higher levels of consciousness and comprehension. Words are seen as the brick and mortar of literature but in reality they serve to understand much more: “words were the bridge to reality; without them there was only chaos. Bad words could poison you and ruin your life, Mamoon had once said; and the right words could refocus reality. The madness of writing was the antidote to true madness. People admire Britain because of its literature; the pretty little sinking island was a storehouse of genius, where the best words were kept, made and remade” (Kureishi 2014: 46). Concreteness and abstraction both seem to characterise the elements of the quotation as it deals with tangible items (‘the bridge’) but also conceptually abstract and more complex notions (‘reality’), so that some cognitive mappings are endorsed: if life is too wide a notion to grasp and comprehend, with the risk of being overwhelmed by chaos, then the use and consideration of words appear to be tools for overcoming obstacles and yielding meaning, although such vision is not devoid of possible ideological implications concerning the very nature of words to be used and reshaped purposefully, as signalled by the symbolic list of three verbal items ‘kept, made and remade.’

In the fictional world of the text, Harry employs linguistic and rhetorical strategies to work on a particular narrative genre, i.e. biography, reconstructing Mamoon's life across and within a text, thus trying to illuminate two dimensions, in transit between a real person and an imagined persona: "what was a person then, but a self which travelled between private fantasy and public recreation?" (Kureishi 2014: 61). To corroborate the metaphorical framework, the novel here adopts the modality of free indirect discourse, thanks to which "it is not always straightforward to decide when the voice of the character leaves off and the narrator's takes over" (Black 2006: 68). The rhetorical question cited above captures the intricacy of representing a life's complexity by means of words, with the power of the writer to construct and manipulate elements. Significantly the occurrence of various forms of the causative verb 'make' (Griffiths 2006: 61) brings to the fore the nature of agency in both WRITING and LIVING as well as the idea of reporting, and implicitly the boundary between truth and falseness. Talking with the old novelist, the biographer affirms: "I'm trying to make you look interesting here. I can make you look good in bed, as out of it" (Kureishi 2014: 239). A possible conceptual mapping here lies in the CREATION IS MAKING metaphor (Kövecses 2000: 98), which in this instantiation centres around the notion of rendering, creating or inventing, a performance that distantly evokes and implies the action of a maker, or with a metatextual echo an author who decides what happens in the story-world, thus operating on the essence of life, and identity, in their plural breadth.

Normally in fiction, and other contexts, identity is portrayed as the sum of various aspects and traits, rather than with a monolithic image. The idea of split self, for example, is often utilised to keep track of the numerous manifestations of personality. Since writing a biography (fictional or non-fictional) means that it is necessary to reconstruct the various phases of the life, or in cognitive terms the various 'selves', of a subject, it is not surprising that Kureishi's megametaphor appropriates and elaborates this issue to construct a mental space embedding the many lives and many identities of Mamoon, who eventually admits: "Harry, you know more about my many selves than I do" (2014: 240). The polyphonic sense of identity as narrated and documented by the fictional biographer allows the unfolding of possible narrative alternatives, namely the Mamoon depicted in Harry's book is different from the 'real' Mamoon living in the novel and conceived by Kureishi himself. Put differently, this type of writing offers an insight into the exploration of the textual self, and to cite Holden (2014: 923) "literary biography, exploring the lives of individuals with particular inside knowledge of the narrative construction of the self, may have important things to tell us about the processes of individualization, of self-making through narrative."

Moreover, discussing the polarities of and intermediations between remembering and forgetting, Mamoon affirms: “I have to say, I particularly like it when you remember things which never happened. You are now making an imaginary life” (Kureishi 2014: 241). Once again the ideas of WRITING and LIVING are intertwined and given prominence. The cognitive scope of these, and other, expressions at play in the novel entails that both the characters in the text world and the readers in the real world shift between various conceptual and deictical levels (stories within stories, but also memories, dreams, speculations and other modal sub-worlds) to process language and extract meaning, and in so doing they construct, integrate and blend different text worlds (Gavins 2007). In fact, as Stockwell (2009: 7) points out, the shift between the various text worlds or narratorial levels is activated by a variety of means comprising “flashbacks, flashforwards, hypotheticals and speculations, representation of beliefs, wishes, or obligations through modalisation, metaphors, negations, and direct speech,” and throughout the novel such orientation will generate a range of self-contained images and stories, similar to a game of Chinese boxes.

The trope of constructing a life with and through words, i.e. WRITING as a conceptualised form of LIVING, lends itself to speculations about the discrepancy between real and make-believe as well as the role of mediator, or narrator, and their measure of reliability. In the novel, the old author is both fascinated by and suspicious about Harry's incessant questions and talks, but in the end he admits that “the idea of becoming a fiction does appeal. To my surprise, you might have the makings of an artist” (Kureishi 2014: 241). How does Mamoon become a fiction? Of course it is thanks to the biographer's work, which in reality might also disclose an unconscious form of symbolic ‘appropriation’ of the other's experience because the key word ‘fiction’ denotes imaginative works in opposition to reality, and thus it suggests binary links between the act of writing something on the one hand and the real, pragmatic experience of living on the other. But the metaphor amplifies its gist as it relies on a verb (‘become’) that in systemic functional terms expresses a relational process, in this case a transformation of the ‘real’ subject into a literary entity, with a proliferation of deictical shifts to and from the real world, the fictional realm and its multitude of sublevels, once again triggering, as in the other examples above, a system of text worlds with readers having to constantly pop into and out of them to make sense of the story.

Many other parts of the text exploit the two domains of the megametaphor to achieve relevant effects, for example by establishing new conceptual connections and analogies with items such as ‘book’ and ‘child’. From this perspective, the meaning of procreation and continuation of life is objectified and made material, as it filters out from the following instance: “Harry's priority and pride, his other child, had been the book” (2014: 320). To some extent this strategy is close to

traditional figures of speech, for example it could be rephrased via the simile child/book, but the conceptual environment is more articulated here as the reader is invited to look for connections between the two elements such as the sense of producing a text and a child, the role of the parent/writer in (re)creating life as well as the idea of facing time, memory and posterity. The emerging overall significance of the construction draws input from the mental representations of the two activities and requires a type of processing in the reader that will be affected by their own knowledge of the world and cultural vision (Douthwaite 2000), blending and condensing the two images.

5. Concluding remarks

In this paper I have tried to tease out the ways in which Hanif Kureishi elaborates and maps the domains of LIVING and WRITING with the aid of several imaginative textual structures targeting the construction of an organic, and composite, megametaphor, one that moves from abstract concerns to pragmatic and embodied issues, and eventually generates a plethora of various, and often new or unexplored, meanings. Black (2006: 109) for instance underscores that “the value of metaphor is to encourage us to think anew on familiar topics, to grapple with the unknown or inexplicable (which may account for the proliferation of metaphors in the mind).”

All the excerpts that I have briefly tackled here, in fact, do not work in isolation, but channel the macro-potentials of metaphor, and as such have to be considered collectively across the text, in particular “because recurrent metaphors comprise an effect of foregrounding device and because they lead to insights about how authors specifically conceptualize a narrative theme at large” (Kimmel 2009: 166). The constant and coherent presence of such figurative patterns in Kureishi’s novel is thus indicative of various stylistic and ideological positions, which climax in the final chapter of the text. Mamoon, by now in bad condition and confined to a wheelchair, attends a literary reception and is surrounded by his usual entourage. Harry uses this circumstance to come to terms with his personal quest for meaning in his biographical project, as the omniscient narrator illustrates in the very last paragraph of the novel: “He had completed his work, which was to inform people that Mamoon had counted for something as an artist, that he’d been a writer, a maker of worlds, a teller of important truths, and that this was a way of changing things, of living well, and of creating freedom” (Kureishi 2014: 344). The sentence condenses and amplifies the power of the metaphorical structure in its single components, for example the choice of verbs selected is particularly significant and evocative when combined in phrases such as ‘completed his work’, ‘inform people’ or the matter-of-fact, assertive form ‘he’d been an artist’. Lexical items are then employed for the construction of

comparisons ('something as an artist'), but they also acquire saliency thanks to parallelism and apposition in unfolding the assorted roles of the author seen as "a writer, a maker of worlds, a teller of important truths" (Kureishi 2014: 344).

The creative, visionary and authoritative aspects of the man of letters are here emphasised via the symbolic textual practices of a three item list in an attempt to blend the concepts of WRITING and LIVING, since the quotation explicitly mentions semantically broad terms such as 'worlds' and 'truths' as well as the notions of making and telling. With regard to this enumeration, the superficial effect is a rhetorical praise of the artist, the writer and the intellectual with an impact on society, but in reality, from a cognitive viewpoint, it is value-laden since, according to Jeffries (2010: 73), "the ubiquitous three-part list seems to imply completeness, without being comprehensive." Indeed, depicting Mamoon through these nouns (writer, maker, teller) discloses a captivating illusion of the entire life-experience of the character, but in reality it is based on selection and thus is partial and biased, as is the genre of biographical account. For Holden (2014: 932), "we read literary biography both in the quest to attain authorial presence, and in recognition that such presence is ultimately impossible" and the persistent use of the megametaphor conceived by Kureishi sustains the discourses of life, truth, falseness, memory and its discontents. Ultimately, in Fauconnier's (1997: 187) view it might be argued that in processing language "the simplest things are in fact not simple at all. They rely on remarkable cognitive mapping capacities, immense arrays of intricately prestructured knowledge, and exceptional on-line creativity," and hence stems the inventive power of metaphor, language and the mind in both WRITING and LIVING.

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Gopīnāth Kavirāj e la scienza solare¹

Sara Bianchi

This paper outlines the richness and complexity of Gopīnāth Kavirāj's (1887-1976) contribution to the Indological studies, in particular in the field of Tantric studies. Kavirāj was at the same time an important academic scholar acknowledged both in India and in the West, a traditional *paṇḍit* and a Tantric *sādhaka*. These three experiences were inextricably connected: for him the only valuable knowledge was the one that allows spiritual achievements. The focus is in particular on *sūrya-vijñāna* (solar science), a nearly unknown technique to materialize objects seemingly from nothing, strictly connected to Kavirāj's guru, Viśuddhānand Paramhams. In my opinion Kavirāj's treatment of *sūrya-vijñāna* is an interesting example of the link between *sādhana* world and critical thought in his work.

1. Gopīnāth Kavirāj

Gopīnāth Kavirāj² è stato al contempo una figura di confine e un ponte: da una parte tra il mondo degli studi accademici indologici e quello del sapere tradizionale *hindū*, dall'altra tra la conoscenza intellettuale e teorica³ e la conoscenza diretta a cui solo il *sādhaka*⁴ può avere accesso.

¹ L'articolo che qui presento è tratto dalla mia tesi di dottorato *Gopīnāth Kavirāj: un incontro con uno studioso tantrico del Novecento*, dottorato di ricerca in Studi Euro-Asiatici: Indologia, Linguistica, Onomastica, indirizzo in Studi Indologici e Tibetologici, ciclo XXII, anni accademici 2007-2008-2009. La Prof.ssa Pinuccia Caracchi è stata mia tutor: senza la sua guida e il suo aiuto premuroso, paziente e generoso non sarei stata in grado di portare a termine questo lavoro. A lei va la mia profonda riconoscenza e il mio affetto.

² Per i termini *hindī*, nomi propri compresi, sono stati adottati i criteri di traslitterazione oggi più usati, che non prevedono la trascrizione della *a* muta sia quando compare in finale di parola sia quando compare al suo interno. È stata trascritta la *a* breve quando può essere pronunciata con un suono debole, come dopo un gruppo consonantico o una *y* finali di parola. Sono stati adottati i medesimi criteri anche per la traslitterazione dei termini *baṅgālī* dal momento che comparivano, nelle fonti consultate, scritti in caratteri *devanāgarī*. I nomi delle città più note sono stati riportati secondo la scrittura corrente nelle lingue europee, non mancando di indicarne tra parentesi, per completezza, la traslitterazione scientifica la prima volta che ricorrono. I termini religiosi e filosofici sono sempre stati riportati nella loro forma sanscrita, con l'eccezione dei titoli delle opere sia *hindī* sia *baṅgālī*, nei quali, per un'esigenza di uniformità, sono stati traslitterati senza la *a* muta.

³ Nel saggio breve *Kuṇḍalinī-tattva* [La vera natura della kuṇḍalinī], contenuto nella raccolta *Bhāratīya saṃskṛti aur sādhanā* [Cultura e pratica spirituale indiane], Kavirāj definisce la conoscenza teorica disgiunta dall'esercizio della pratica spirituale come una conoscenza "ambigua" e "libresca" ("*granth-mūlak vaikalpik jñān*") e "parolaia" ("*śabda-jñān*"). Si rimanda a Kavirāj, Gopīnāth. 1963. *Kuṇḍalinī-tattva*. In *Bhāratīya saṃskṛti aur sādhanā*, vol. I, 302-315, in particolare 303. Paṭnā: Bihār-raṣṭrabhāṣā-parīṣad.

Scrive nel 1948 in una lettera indirizzata a un amico:

I have read hundred of books, but have I been able to learn what is worth learning? Have I learnt to be indifferent to both sorrow and joy? Where is for me that lesson of love after which there is no need for any other knowledge? My heart only makes the petty look important and forgets what is really big and worthwhile.⁵

In Kavirāj l'esperienza conoscitiva è inestricabilmente legata a una tensione di ordine spirituale: la conoscenza a cui aspira, e alla quale dedica tutta la vita, è quella conoscenza o consapevolezza (*jñāna*) della vera Realtà (il *brahman-ātman*) che fin dalle *Upaniṣad* più antiche è riconosciuta come l'unico strumento per liberarsi dalle pastoie del divenire (*saṃsāra*) e che è possibile attingere attraverso la pratica spirituale (*sādhana*) al seguito di un maestro (*guru*).

Gopīnāth Kavirāj nacque a Dhāmraī, Bengala Orientale, il 7 settembre del 1887 e morì a Benares (Vārāṇasī, Kāśī) il 12 giugno del 1976. Nel corso della sua vita ricoprì molti ruoli. Svolsse una lunga e proficua attività accademica presso il Government Sanskrit College di Benares, prima nella veste di direttore della sezione manoscritti dell'antica biblioteca del College, il Sarasvatī Bhavan, dal 1914 al 1920 e poi in qualità di direttore della stessa Università, dal 1920 sino al 1937, anno in cui chiese il pensionamento anticipato per potersi dedicare all'attività di insegnamento. Kavirāj occupa una posizione di primo piano nel panorama degli studi indologici ed è noto agli studiosi occidentali in particolare per il suo lavoro editoriale sulle fonti manoscritte e per il suo contributo alla conoscenza delle tradizioni tantriche. È sufficiente dare una breve scorsa alle bibliografie di alcuni degli studi sul tantrismo più significativi per comprendere come i suoi scritti continuino a essere un punto di riferimento importante: tra chi lo cita nella propria opera ricordiamo, per esempio, André Padoux, Douglas Renfrew Brooks, Teun Goudriaan, Mark Dyczkowski, David Gordon White. Oltre alla ben nota opera in *hindī Tāntrik sāhitya (vivarāṇātmak granthasūcī)*, nella quale vengono elencati, e descritti attraverso estratti, ben 4422 testi tantrici (Kavirāj 1972), gli scritti più citati e forse più conosciuti sono *Tāntrik vāṇmaya meṃ śākta dṛṣṭi* (Kavirāj 1963b) e *Tāntrik sādhan aur siddhānt* (Kavirāj 1979) in *hindī* e *Tantra o Āgam śāstrer digdarśan in baṅgālī* (Kavirāj 1962).⁶

⁴ “Praticante”, colui che è impegnato in una pratica spirituale, *sādhana*.

⁵ Rimando alla scheda biografica dedicata a Gopīnāth Kavirāj nella *Encyclopedia of Indian Literature* (Datta 1989: 2032).

⁶ Disponibile anche in *hindī: Tantra aur Āgamśāstrom kā digdarśan [Introduzione ai Tantra e agli Āgama]*. Anuvādak H. Divari. Paṭnā: Bihār-rāṣṭrabhāṣā-pariṣad.

In vita è stato insignito di numerosi riconoscimenti istituzionali e accademici (Simh 2005: 29-30; Sinha, Patra 1967: 584) e a lui sono stati dedicati, dopo la morte, convegni e volumi commemorativi. Il Governo britannico gli conferì il titolo onorifico di Mahāmahopādhyāya⁷ nel 1934 e il Governo indiano quello di Padmavibhūṣaṇ nel 1964.⁸ Ben quattro università lo nominarono Dottore in Lettere *honoris causa*: l'Università di Allahabad (Ilāhābād) nel 1947, la Hindū University di Benares nel 1956, l'Università di Calcutta (Kolkattā) nel 1965 e la Sanskrit University di Benares nel 1976. Ricordo infine che nel 1965, con il testo *Tāntrik vāṇmaya meṁ śākta dṛṣṭi*, vinse il premio per la letteratura della Sāhitya Akādami.⁹

Fu in tutto e per tutto un dotto (*paṇḍit*) tradizionale: una volta in pensione, Kavirāj acquistò una spaziosa abitazione nel quartiere di Sigrā a Benares e lì stabilì un vero e proprio centro di insegnamento e di studio che per quasi quarant'anni costituì un punto di riferimento fondamentale, in tutta l'India settentrionale, per un gran numero di studiosi, di studenti universitari e di giovani ricercatori (Upādhyāya 1994: 979). Baldev Upādhyāya definisce la casa di Kavirāj una 'corte letteraria', *sāhityik darbār in hindī* (Upādhyāya 1994: 977), mentre Viśvanāth Bhaṭṭācārya¹⁰ la paragona significativamente ai '*gurugṛhas of the past*' (*gurugṛha* è la casa del *guru*), sottolineando come Kavirāj fosse solito ospitarvi, in modo completamente gratuito così come erano gratuite le sue lezioni, gli studenti provenienti da fuori città che non avessero avuto i mezzi per mantenersi (Bhaṭṭācārya 1986: 5).

A Benares, sua città d'elezione, il nome del *paṇḍit* Gopināth Kavirāj è a tutt'oggi circondato da un'aura di profondo rispetto e ammirazione e proprio qui i suoi scritti continuano a essere oggetto di ristampe o, in qualche caso, di nuove pubblicazioni. La nota casa editrice e libreria Viśvavidyālaya Prakāśan in tempi recenti si è occupata sia di rieditare alcune opere pubblicate in precedenza da altri, come per esempio *Śrīkṛṣṇa-prasaṅg* (Kavirāj 2000), *Sādhu darśan aur satprasaṅg* (Kavirāj 2003) e *Akhaṇḍ mahāyog* (Kavirāj 2000b), sia di curare e pubblicare alcune raccolte del tutto nuove, attingendo con disinvoltura al grande serbatoio della produzione scritta di Kavirāj, senza dare indicazioni bibliografiche precise sui materiali selezionati, oppure pubblicando materiale inedito e, almeno in un

⁷ Titolo onorifico conferito dal Governo indiano, e da quello britannico prima del 1947, a studiosi, filosofi e letterati.

⁸ Istituito nel 1954, è il secondo riconoscimento più importante conferito dalla Repubblica dell'India a cittadini che si siano distinti per il loro lavoro in diversi ambiti.

⁹ Letteralmente "Accademia della Letteratura", è la più prestigiosa istituzione letteraria indiana e si occupa della promozione delle numerose letterature nelle diverse lingue indiane. È stata fondata nel 1954.

¹⁰ Professore di sanscrito in pensione, anch'egli frequentava la casa di Kavirāj quand'era uno studente universitario. Ho avuto il piacere di conoscerlo e intervistarlo a Benares il 17 febbraio del 2008.

caso, di natura orale. Si pensi a *Yogirāj Viśuddhānand prasāṅg tathā tattva-kathā* (Kavirāj 2000c),¹¹ oppure a *Śakti kā jāgaraṇ aur kuṇḍalinī* (Kavirāj 1990b),¹² o, infine, a *Sanātan sādhanā kī guptadhārā* (Kavirāj 2002).¹³

Nelle pagine a lui dedicate ne viene sottolineata l'enorme erudizione in pressoché quasi tutti i campi del sapere indiano, erudizione che gli valse, a Benares, il soprannome di 'enciclopedia mobile della sapienza indiana', *bhāratīya vidyā kā caltā-phirtā viśvakoś in hindī* (Upādhyāya 1994: 971). Parimenti ne vengono esaltate l'umiltà e la semplicità che lo facevano rifuggire, 'come fossero veleni'¹⁴, dalla fama e dalla notorietà e lo rendevano alla portata di tutti coloro dimostrassero un desiderio sincero di conoscenza, che fossero studiosi affermati o persone semi-analfabete (Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 5). Sulla cultura di Kavirāj, tanto vasta quanto approfondita, scrive Jaideva Singh (Jaidev Siṃh):

Kaviraj ji was an institution. There was not a single branch of Indian philosophy which he had not fully mastered. He was equally at home in *Vedanta, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sankhya-Yoga, Buddhism, Jainism, Śaivāgama, Vaiṣṇavāgama* etc. and the Tantras. He had also a thorough knowledge of Sufism and Christian mysticism. (Singh 1986: 7)¹⁵

Fu infine un ricercatore spirituale infaticabile e un *sādhaka* molto avanzato. Non possiamo in alcun modo disgiungere la figura dello studioso da quella del *sādhaka*, Kavirāj stesso si definì in un'occasione 'merely an explorer of the realms of consciousness' (Sen Śarmā 1998; Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 2). Ed è propriamente questo connubio che chi ha scritto di lui mette maggiormente in luce. Jaideva Singh avvicina Gopīnāth Kavirāj niente di meno che alla maestosa figura di Abhinavagupta e sottolinea come Kavirāj possedesse una caratteristica mancante nel venerabile maestro kaśmīro; egli così scrive nella sua introduzione alla raccolta *Śrīsādhanā* (Siṃh 2004):

¹¹ È questa una breve raccolta di scritti selezionati e tradotti in *hindī* dalla Viśvavidyālaya Prakāśan al fine di permettere anche ai non parlanti *baṅgālī* di potersi avvicinare alla figura di Paramhaṃ Svāmī Viśuddhānand attraverso le parole di Gopīnāth Kavirāj.

¹² Questo testo propone alcune conversazioni che Kavirāj ebbe con i suoi studenti senza specificare, però, quando, dove e come tale materiale orale venne raccolto, con l'eccezione della prima conversazione.

¹³ Raccolta di lettere scritte da Kavirāj ad alcuni studenti in risposta ai loro interrogativi.

¹⁴ È il prof. Viśvanāth Bhaṭṭācārya a utilizzare la similitudine citando *Manu-smṛti* 2, 162: "*sammānādbrahmaṇo nityamudvijeta viśādiva*", "a *brāhmaṇa* should always shrink from celebrity as from poison" (Bhaṭṭācārya 1986: 1).

¹⁵ La mancanza di precisione nella traslitterazione è nell'originale. Si rimanda inoltre a Mukherjee (1978: i).

Nel nostro paese, nel 20° secolo, abbiamo avuto dei *sādhaka* famosi e anche dei filosofi famosi, ma la bella unione di pratica e di intuizione filosofica che troviamo nel venerabile Gopīnāth Kavirāj non la si trova in nessun altro. È come se l'Abhinavagupta del 10° secolo fosse apparso di nuovo su questa terra nella figura di Gopīnāth Kavirāj¹⁶. Troviamo poi in Kavirāj jī una caratteristica che neppure Abhinavagupta aveva. Abhinavagupta era un eminente sapiente e un eccellente *sādhaka* tantrico, ma nel venerabile Kavirāj jī osserviamo, oltre alla luce dell'eccellente conoscenza e alla segreta pratica tantrica, lo scorrere di una corrente pura d'amore che non riscontriamo da nessuna altra parte.¹⁷

Anche per Bettina Bäumer la grandezza di Kavirāj risiede in un connubio unico di teoria e pratica, nonché nella padronanza di strumenti conoscitivi e metodologici di diversa provenienza: in lui una sorprendente erudizione si sposa con un'assidua pratica spirituale, una solida educazione tradizionale si affianca a una altrettanto solida preparazione scolastica secondo il modello anglosassone, che ne favorì la dimestichezza con gli strumenti della ricerca indologica nonché con le categorie teoretiche ed ermeneutiche del pensiero europeo (Bäumer 2001: 100).¹⁸ Ora ne viene messa in luce l'appartenenza indiscutibile alla tradizione, ora l'accento viene posto sulla sua originalità; quasi tutti ne parlano come di un'istituzione, Govind Gopal Mukhopadhyaya (Govindgopāl Mukhopādhyāya) addirittura come di un enigma e come di una personalità dalla natura contraddittoria (Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 3):

To many he may remain an enigma for the contradictory nature of his personality, combining in himself the profundity of a scholar and the simplicity of a child.

Soffermiamoci per un momento su quanto scrive Mukhopadhyaya a proposito della presunta enigmaticità e contraddittorietà del personaggio Kavirāj. Mukhopadhyaya, nell'opera *A Great Savant*, si occupa di delineare un profilo della sua personalità a partire dalla propria esperienza di studente. Il suo scritto è pervaso da sentimenti di stima, di riconoscenza e di affetto e il valore di Kavirāj dal punto di vista umano, spirituale e intellettuale è costantemente affermato. Tuttavia, a più riprese, egli sente la necessità di sottolineare come vi fossero alcuni tratti peculiari della sua personalità capaci di

¹⁶ Ritroviamo qui un tema tipico della tradizione agiografica indiana: pensiamo, per esempio all'autore del *Rāmcaritmānas* Tulsīdās, tradizionalmente ritenuto essere un *avatāra* di Valmikī, il *ṛṣi* a cui viene attribuita la composizione del *Rāmāyaṇa*.

¹⁷ Tutte le traduzioni di passi citati da opere in hindi sono mie. La presenza in Kavirāj di un sentimento di amore profondo verso tutti i suoi simili è sottolineata da tutti gli autori che hanno scritto di lui.

¹⁸ Rimando inoltre a Bhattacharya (1967: 515); Sampūrṇānand (1967: 523); Paṇḍeya (1967: 540).

offuscarne il valore intellettuale e che ne facevano, appunto, un enigma agli occhi di molti. Il tratto più significativo in tal senso è senz'altro la “credulità” di Kavirāj. Scrive Mukhopadhyaya:

Another remarkable aspect of his character was his simple faith or ready willingness to accept anything as true. This has proved an enigma to many and some are even inclined to take it as an inherent weakness of his character and lack of the critical faculty. I was also a little perplexed at first and could not reconcile how a man of such profound learning and wisdom could so readily believe or accept as true anything that was reported to him as a mystical experience (Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 5).

E più avanti:

This catholic spirit made him move literally from door to door in search of saints and sages, any one of whom having realised the truth, he believed, may perchance deliver the goods and so he felt it will be extremely unwise to ignore any one of them. This trait in his character made many a one misunderstand him as a credulous man who puts his faith without any question on anything that is reported or presented to him as supernatural or supersensuous (Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 48).

In entrambi i passi citati, Mukhopadhyaya fa riferimento alla tendenza di Kavirāj a non mettere mai in dubbio la veridicità degli eventi straordinari o miracolosi che giungevano al suo orecchio se non dopo essersene accertato personalmente. Da qui la sua abitudine di “correre dietro”¹⁹ ai *sādhu*²⁰, a Benares e in occasione dei raduni religiosi come i *kumbha-melā*, per penetrarne l'esperienza e comprenderne il valore. Ma questo atteggiamento mentale può essere letto come un segno di debolezza e di fallacia delle sue capacità critiche e, dunque, come un elemento che ne mette in dubbio il valore di studioso e la scientificità dell'opera, solo nella misura in cui noi estraniamo Kavirāj dai presupposti culturali e dalle credenze a cui fermamente aderiva. È nuovamente Mukhopadhyaya, difendendo il proprio maestro da possibili attacchi, a ricordarci che quell'atteggiamento mentale, bollato da alcuni suoi contemporanei come credulità, affondava le proprie radici in una fede in Dio

¹⁹ È Deb Brat Sen Śarmā a descrivere così questo tratto fondamentale della vita e del pensiero di Gopīnāth Kavirāj (intervista del 28 marzo 2008, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Golpark, Calcutta). Deb Brat Sen Śarmā è stato tra gli studenti più intimi di Gopīnāth Kavirāj: al suo fianco ha approfondito lo studio della scuola Trika, di cui è uno dei principali studiosi indiani; docente di sanscrito all'Università del Kurukṣetra per molti anni, all'epoca del nostro incontro collaborava con il Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture di Calcutta.

²⁰ Letteralmente “buono”, è il termine con cui genericamente si indicano tutti gli asceti che vivono come mendicanti religiosi itineranti (Piano 2001: 179, *sub voce* “sādhu”).

intensa, priva di tentennamenti e, anzi, continuamente riaffermata attraverso l'utilizzo lucido della ragione e delle facoltà critiche. Egli scrive:

To him the entire world is 'Sivamaya' [manifestazione di Śiva]. The one Siva has concealed himself by his *Nigrahasakti* [potenza di limitazione] and appears to us as the world. But He has His *Svatantryasakti* [potenza di libertà] too and so He is always free and if He so chooses He may reveal himself in toto whenever or wherever He may choose. So it is always wise to keep an open mind and accept readily whatever appears as a divine revelation and if it does not stand the test of time or close scrutiny of reason we could later dismiss it as nonsense. The real '*Astikyabuddhi*' – that God is and can reveal himself, anywhere and at any time – I have found thus embodied only in him (Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 6; parentesi quadre mie).

Kavirāj trovò la dimostrazione tangibile dell'effettiva onnipresenza del Principio divino a tutti i livelli dell'esistenza, la prova concreta che l'emanazione universale, il tutto, è il corpo stesso di Śiva, nel maestro tantrico Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃs e nelle sue manifestazioni straordinarie di potenza.

Dopo aver brevemente delineato la figura di Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃs, desidero soffermarmi su un argomento poco noto e a questi strettamente connesso, il *sūrya-vijñāna* o scienza solare.

2. Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃs e il *sūrya-vijñāna*

Il *sūrya-vijñāna*, tradotto con l'espressione “scienza solare”,²¹ costituisce un insegnamento strettamente connesso a Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃs e alla tradizione (*paramparā*) di maestri alla quale egli apparteneva. Gopināth Kavirāj apre il saggio *Sūryavijñān-rahasya* [*Il segreto della scienza solare*] con queste parole: ‘Chi non sia entrato direttamente in contatto con il maestro Śrī Śrī Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃsī o non ne abbia sentito parlare da una fonte tradizionale, non sarà in grado di comprenderne il significato: egli è stato infatti il primo a introdurre nel mondo di oggi questa scienza’ (Kavirāj 1964: 159).

²¹ La scelta di rendere *sūrya-vijñāna* con “scienza solare” è stata operata sulla base delle indicazioni fornite dallo stesso Kavirāj nei testi dedicati all'argomento. Si veda, per esempio, quanto scrive Kavirāj nel saggio *Sūryavijñān* (1963: 425): “In questo *āśrama* imponente sono anche insegnati, parallelamente allo *yoga*, svariati tipi di scienze naturali [*prākṛtika vijñāna*]. La scienza di Jñāngaṅj non corrisponde esattamente a ciò che generalmente si intende con il termine “scienza” [*vijñāna*] e che oggigiorno si osserva progredire in Occidente”. Inoltre, “solar science” o “the science of the Sun” è la traduzione adottata da chi ha scritto di Kavirāj e di *sūrya-vijñāna* in inglese (si vedano per esempio Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 2; Gupta 2004: 46).

Kavirāj conobbe Viśuddhānand, popolarmente noto come “Gandh Bābā”,²² nell’autunno del 1917, a Benares, e ne ricevette l’iniziazione (*dīkṣā*) pochi mesi dopo, nel gennaio del 1918. Ne fu discepolo fedele sino alla morte, avvenuta circa quarant’anni dopo la scomparsa del maestro.

La figura del *guru* Viśuddhānand è tanto affascinante quanto enigmatica e, per certi versi, problematica. Le fonti sul suo conto sono piuttosto scarse ma sufficienti per comprendere come intorno alla sua persona si fossero formati, nell’epoca in cui visse, pareri decisamente contrastanti. Pensiamo, per esempio, al giudizio *tranchant* che ne dà Yogananda in *Autobiografia di uno yoghi*, “[I] miracoli come quelli compiuti dal “Santo dei profumi” sono manifestazioni spettacolari, ma spiritualmente inutili” (Yogananda 1971: 53). D’altronde, questo non è un elemento di novità: come scrive Antonio Rigopoulos, “[T]ipicamente il *guru* suscita o entusiasmo o disprezzo, senza vie di mezzo: è riconosciuto quale la quintessenza della santità ed è dunque glorificato oppure è additato quale spregevole ciarlatano ed è allora denigrato” (Rigopolulos 2009: 13). Di segno diametralmente opposto rispetto al giudizio di Yogananda, sono, ovviamente, le testimonianze dei suoi discepoli, in particolare quelle di Nandalāl Gupta (Nand Lal Gupta) e dello stesso Gopīnāth Kavirāj. Il primo è l’autore di *Sūrya vijñān praṇetā Yogirājādhirāj Svāmī Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃsdev jīvan aur darśan* (*Vita e pensiero di Yogirājādhirāj Svāmī Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃsdev, promotore della scienza solare*) e della sua versione inglese, *Yogirajadhiraj Swami Vishuddhanand Paramahansadeva Life & Philosophy*;²³ il secondo di una voluminosa opera in *baṅgālī* intitolata *Śrī Viśuddhānand prasaṅg*.²⁴ Disponiamo di una traduzione parziale in *hindī* di questo testo, intitolata *Yogirāj Viśuddhānand prasaṅg tathā tattva-kathā*. Kavirāj dedica poi spazio alla figura del proprio *guru* anche in altri scritti, si vedano per esempio il capitolo a lui intitolato in *Sādhu darśan aur satprasaṅg (tritīy bhāg)*²⁵ e il breve saggio *Sūryavijñān*.

²² Questa espressione potrebbe essere resa in italiano in due modi, “il *bābā* profumato” oppure “il *bābā* dei profumi”, a seconda della ragione che viene addotta al soprannome: Gopīnāth Kavirāj, per esempio, lo spiega in ragione dell’intenso profumo, simile a quello del loto, che emanava costantemente dal corpo purissimo del maestro Viśuddhānand; altri, come Govind Gopal Mukhopadhyaya o Yogananda (Yogānand), lo collegano al suo potere di “materializzare” qualsiasi tipo di profumo dal nulla attraverso il *sūrya-vijñāna* (Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 2; Yogananda 1981: 50; Yogananda 1971: 48).

²³ Entrambi sono stati pubblicati a Benares da Viśvavidyālaya Prakāśan, nel 1983 l’originale *hindī* e nel 2004 la versione inglese. A onor del vero, il secondo non è semplicemente la traduzione del testo *hindī*: confrontando le due versioni è infatti chiaro che l’autore ha revisionato l’opera modificando l’impianto dei capitoli e inserendo parti mancanti nella prima versione.

²⁴ Quest’opera si compone di tre parti intitolate rispettivamente *Carit-kathā*, *Tattva-kathā* e *Lilā-kathā*, pubblicate separatamente tra il 1927 e il 1931. Bhagavatīprasād Siṃh (2005: 83) non indica la casa editrice né il luogo di pubblicazione. Secondo quanto riporta Śrīkṛṣṇa Pant nella prefazione a G. Kavirāj, *Tāntrik vāṅmaya meṃ śākta dṛṣṭi* l’opera dedicata a Śrī Viśuddhānanda sarebbe composta da cinque volumi anziché tre.

²⁵ “Tritīy bhāg” significa “parte terza”.

Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃs, al secolo Bholānāth Caṭṭopādhyāya, nacque nel 1853 nel villaggio di Baṇḍūl, distretto di Vardhamān (Burdwan), in Bengala Occidentale. Secondo le fonti agiografiche che fosse un bambino straordinario fu chiaro sin dall’attimo stesso in cui venne al mondo. Quel giorno la natura stessa, “traboccante di fascino radioso”, sembrava annunciare la venuta di un essere fuori dal comune (Kavirāj 2006: 1; Gupta 2004: 1).²⁶

Fin dalla più tenera età, egli avrebbe mostrato doti di profonda introspezione, di calma, di fede e devozione intense. Tutti al villaggio ne ammiravano la natura impavida e lo amavano per il suo buon cuore e la sua generosità, per l’onestà e la lealtà. Non attirato dai consueti giochi infantili, si dedicava di preferenza ad adorare le divinità di famiglia. Amava ritirarsi in luoghi solitari e là sedere a meditare. In particolare, gli piaceva sedere sotto un baniano (*Ficus benghalensis*) che si trovava nei pressi del terreno di cremazione, a nord del villaggio. Si distinse molto presto compiendo miracoli di varia natura: una volta ricompose una stoffa stracciata stringendone per alcuni secondi nel pugno i brandelli; un’altra, salvò la vita a un giovane compagno di giochi morsicato da un cobra con il solo tocco della propria mano. Se giungeva alle sue orecchie la notizia dell’arrivo di un *sādhu* nei dintorni, diventava come pazzo dal desiderio di conoscerlo; era allora impossibile trattenerlo: se non fosse riuscito a incontrarlo di giorno, l’avrebbe fatto di notte, allontanandosi da casa di nascosto.

Questi sono, molto sinteticamente, i tratti distintivi del futuro Viśuddhānand, enfaticamente descritti sia da Gupta sia da Kavirāj come le prove evidenti che Bholānāth era destinato a ottenere la liberazione nel corso della propria vita e a divenire un *paramahaṃsa*²⁷ in virtù di una straordinaria elevazione spirituale ottenuta nella vita precedente.

Secondo i nostri due autori, Viśuddhānand apprese lo *yoga* e vari tipi di *vijñāna* noti agli antichi veggenti (*ṛṣi*) – tra cui anche il *sūrya-vijñāna* – nell’eremo (*āśrama*) di Jñāngaṅj, una “terra perfetta” (*siddhabhūmi*)²⁸ sita sullo Himālaya, dove sarebbe giunto attraverso un volo notturno in compagnia di

²⁶ Possiamo riconoscere la presenza, sullo sfondo, di un *leitmotiv* caratteristico del genere agiografico: pensiamo, per esempio, ai segni straordinari che si manifestarono nel mondo naturale al momento della nascita del futuro Buddha (Aśvaghōṣa 1979: 18), oppure in occasione della venuta al mondo di Śaṅkarācārya (Piantelli 1998: 100).

²⁷ Titolo monastico che designa gli asceti più elevati.

²⁸ Leggiamo nel saggio di Kavirāj intitolato *Siddhabhūmi*: “Come l’universo che noi conosciamo, l’Uovo di Brahmā, si fonda sulla concezione che Hiraṇyagarbha [l’Essere universale nella sua forma sottile] ha di Virāṭa [l’Essere universale nella sua forma grossolana], così le diverse terre o sfere sono presenti nella concezione che ne hanno i *siddha*, gli *yogin* e i *ṛṣi*, sono la loro visione, è ciò che essi vedono. Tutte queste terre [*bhūmi*] o campi [*kṣetra*] sono visibili ed sperimentabili non da tutti ma soltanto da chi condivide quella concezione e su di essa si basa. In altre parole, come il Brahmāṇḍa in tutta la sua estensione, concepito da Hiraṇyagarbha, appare alla gente come esterno e reale, così tutte le terre che si fondano sulla visione e sulla concezione di tutti i *siddha*, i *muni*, i *ṛṣi*, sono sperimentate come esterne e come reali da tutte le persone che sono in contatto con loro. Sono proprio quelle a essere chiamate *siddhabhūmi*. Cercando sulla terra ma anche nell’universo, è

uno *yogin*. Qui avrebbe vissuto per dodici anni in compagnia di straordinarie figure di *yogin*, come per esempio Śrī Mahātapas, un “perfetto” (*siddha*) con più di 1200 anni (Kavirāj 2006: 19).

Non c'è dubbio che Viśuddhānand venga ricordato non tanto per i suoi insegnamenti quanto piuttosto per la spettacolarità dei suoi *satsaṅga* (riunioni religiose) e dei suoi metodi di insegnamento; come riconosce lo stesso Kavirāj, la maggior parte delle persone che si radunavano intorno a lui, desideravano innanzitutto assistere ai miracoli del *sūrya-vijñāna* (Gupta 2004: 188).

A quanto mi consta le uniche fonti di un certo respiro disponibili sull'argomento sono rappresentate dai due saggi di Kavirāj *Sūryavijñān* e *Sūryavijñān-rahasya*.²⁹ Troviamo brevi accenni alla pratica del *sūrya-vijñāna* in *Autobiografia di uno yogi* di Yogananda e in *India segreta* di Paul Brunton³⁰ e in entrambi i casi essa è messa in relazione con il maestro Viśuddhānand. Il termine compare inoltre in due volumi a opera di Rajmani Tigunait, *Tantra unveiled. Seducing the forces of matter and spirit* e *At the eleventh hour. The biography of Swami Rama*: nell'uno e nell'altro scritto l'autore si limita a definire *sūrya-vijñāna* come “solar science” e a connetterlo con la tradizione degli *aghorī* o *aghorapanthin* (classe di asceti *śivaiti*), senza fornire alcuna spiegazione in merito (Tigunait 2004: 21, 36; Tigunait 2001: 37, 102). Ho consultato un buon numero di dizionari sia di vedico sia di sanscrito ma nessuno di essi riporta la voce *sūrya-vijñāna*³¹; similmente non ha dato risultati di sorta l'analisi degli elenchi di lemmi forniti in *The Purāṇa Index* (Dikshitar 1995: 683-686), in *A General Index to the Names and Subject-Matter of the Sacred Books of the East* (Winternitz 1966: 557-562, 564) e in *Bhāratīya saṃskṛti kośa* (Śarmā 1995: 985-986).

impossibile conoscere e scoprirne l'ubicazione (la posizione geografica), nonostante il fatto che tutte queste terre perfette siano sperimentabili e reali proprio come questa terra. I *buddhakṣetra* di cui parlano i buddhisti sono tutte terre di questo tipo, non c'è dubbio.” (Kavirāj 2008: 112-113; il saggio venne pubblicato per la prima volta in *baṅgālī* nel 1964). Le parentesi quadre sono mie.

²⁹ Il capitolo dedicato a *sūrya-vijñāna* da Gupta nella sua biografia su Viśuddhānand Paramhaṃs (Gupta 2004: 42-50) non costituisce in realtà una fonte di informazioni utile poiché si limita a riportare alcuni stralci degli articoli di Kavirāj.

³⁰ Si vedano i capitoli “Il santo dei profumi mostra i suoi prodigi” in *Autobiografia di uno yogi* e “L'uomo dei miracoli di Benares” in *India segreta*.

³¹ Si vedano Pt. Bhagavaddatta evaṃ Hamsrāj. 1992 [I ed. 1926]. *Vaidika-kośaḥ*. Jñānpur (Vārāṇasī): Viśvabharati Anusandhān Pariṣad; Suryakanta. 1981. *A Practical Vedic Dictionary*. Delhi: Oxford University Press; Benfey, Theodor. 1982 [I ed. 1866]. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. New Delhi: Milan Publications Services; Monier-Williams, Monier. 2004 [I ed. 1899]. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Delhi: Bharatiya Granth Niketan; Apte, Vaman Shivram. 1959. *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* part. III. Poona: Prasad Prakashan; Apte, Vaman Shivram. 1970 [II ed.]. *The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass; Bhaṭṭācārya, Tārānāth Tarkavācāpsati. 1962. *Vācaspatyam* vol IV. Vārāṇasī: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; Rādhākāntadeva, Vasu, V., Vasu, H. 1961 [I ed. 1886]. *Śabdakalpādrumāḥ*, vol. V. Dillī: Motilāl Banārsīdās.

Il *sūrya-vijñāna* viene descritto da Kavirāj come una tecnica (*prakriyā*) (Kavirāj 1964: 159)³² che permette di manifestare, apparentemente dal nulla oppure a partire da un certo oggetto, qualsiasi cosa si desideri. I testimoni oculari di questi prodigi raccontano di profumi intensi e durevoli manifestati da Viśuddhānand su un fazzoletto, nell'aria o su fiori completamente inodori, di stoffa trasformata in legno, di rose tramutate in ibisco e di molto altro ancora.

Il *sūrya-vijñāna* è, al pari dei poteri o perfezioni (*vibhūti, siddhi*) che conferisce lo *yoga*, “*alaukika*”, letteralmente “a-mondano” o “non-mondano”, traducibile con “ultramondano”: sia lo *yoga* sia il *sūrya-vijñāna*, infatti, conferiscono a chi li padroneggi la ‘signoria’ (*aiśvarya*) sul mondo della natura in quanto permettono di esercitare le funzioni proprie del Signore supremo (Īśvara): emanazione (*śrṣṭi*), mantenimento (*sthiti*) e riassorbimento (*saṃhāra*) (Kavirāj 1964: 160). Tuttavia, l’emanazione frutto del *sūrya-vijñāna* e l’emanazione yoghica non sono la stessa cosa; esse si distinguono sia per la natura propria degli oggetti emanati sia per le modalità stesse dell’emanazione. Questa differenza, però, è molto difficile da cogliere ed è rilevabile esclusivamente da chi abbia raggiunto un livello molto elevato di qualificazione (*adhikāra*).

La pratica del *sūrya-vijñāna* si fonda sulla conoscenza profonda dei raggi del sole e sulla conoscenza dell’ordine esatto in cui essi debbono essere composti al fine di produrre un certo effetto (un profumo, un oggetto ecc.); può essere utile nell’esercizio del *sūrya-vijñāna* l’utilizzo di una lente di ingrandimento. La luce solare si compone di innumerevoli raggi dagli infiniti colori, sebbene tutti traggano origine dalla stessa e unica fonte, che Kavirāj descrive come una luce bianca (Kavirāj 1963: 434). Le fasi dell’applicazione del *sūrya-vijñāna* possono essere così sinteticamente enunciate: innanzitutto è necessario fare vibrare ed espandere la luce bianca originaria allo stato puro, normalmente non presente nel mondo della manifestazione; utilizzando come base il colore bianco così ottenuto, che deve essere mantenuto in essere per un po’ di tempo, si devono riconoscere e isolare i raggi, o colori, primari a partire da quelli secondari; una volta che i raggi/colori siano stati così individuati, è possibile passare alla fase di combinazione e, quindi, alla manifestazione di ciò che si desidera (Kavirāj 1963: 435). È fondamentale, però, conoscere l’ordine esatto di combinazione dei raggi altrimenti la pratica non sortirà alcun effetto. Scrive Kavirāj (Kavirāj 1963: 435-436):

Combinando alcuni colori secondo un certo ordine si produrrà un certo oggetto; non succede se si rompe l’ordine. Si deve apprendere quali siano i colori che compongono una certa cosa e in che ordine si debbano disporre. Se si ordinano secondo la successione

³² Faccio riferimento al termine “*prakriyāem*”, traducibile con “tecniche”.

corretta tutti quei determinati colori si manifesterà quella determinata cosa, non un'altra. Poiché tutte le cose [*padārtha*] del mondo sono fondamentalmente il prodotto dello sfregamento [*saṃgharṣa*] tra i colori, allora non c'è ragione perché l'uomo che conosca il sistema per distinguere i colori e per combinarli e separarli, non possa emanare e riassorbire tutte quelle cose.

Unire i raggi corrisponde, dunque, alla funzione di emanazione (*śṛṣṭi*); il parallelismo è tracciato in modo ancor più esplicito in *Sūryavijñāna-rahasya* (Kavirāj 1964: 162), dove leggiamo:

Le attività di emanazione e riassorbimento del mondo sono frutto dell'espansione e della contrazione della *śakti*. Il metodo della scienza può anche essere detto, con altre parole, il metodo dell'unione e della separazione.

Le descrizioni che Gopīnāth Kavirāj fa del *sūrya-vijñāna* nei due testi presi in esame, suggeriscono alcune riflessioni preliminari di ordine dottrinale.

È innanzitutto evidente la condivisione da parte del *sūrya-vijñāna* della concezione della causalità propria del Sāṃkhya-darśana e dello Yoga-darśana, ovvero il *satkāryavāda*, la “dottrina della [pre-]esistenza dell'effetto” (Torella 2008: 73) nella causa.³³ La produzione di oggetti tramite il *sūrya-vijñāna* non equivale certamente a una creazione *ex nihilo* ma piuttosto alla manifestazione di ciò che è ancora in stato immanifesto. C'è tuttavia un elemento che, apparentemente, contraddice piuttosto che avallare le posizioni del Sāṃkhya. Il principio di causalità su cui poggia il sistema Sāṃkhya si basa, infatti, su cinque criteri tra cui la necessità di una causa materiale adeguata all'effetto (*upādānagrahaṇāt*) e l'impossibilità che tutto si produca da tutto (*sarvasambhavābhāvāt*).³⁴ Kavirāj afferma, in più punti, esattamente il contrario; leggiamo per esempio in *Sūryavijñāna* (Kavirāj 1963: 419):

[...] nel mondo tutte le cose [*padārtha*] sono sempre presenti, esistenti, in forma sottile. Ma sono manifeste e percepibili dai sensi solo le cose la cui quantità [*mātrā*] è più

³³ Anche le scuole dello śivaismo del Kaśmīr aderiscono al *satkāryavāda*.

³⁴ I cinque criteri alla base e a sostegno del *satkāryavāda* sono espressi nella nona *kārikā* delle *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, “*asadakāraṇāt upādānagrahaṇāt sarvasambhavābhāvāt śaktasya śakyakāraṇāt kāraṇabhāvāt satkāryam*”, nella traduzione di Corrado Pensa: “Dal momento che l'inesistente non può essere prodotto, che si sceglie il materiale, che un determinato oggetto non può essere prodotto da un qualsivoglia altro oggetto, che una cosa può essere effettuata solo da chi ha la capacità di farla, che l'effetto è coesistente alla causa: in base a tutto questo affermiamo che l'effetto preesiste nella causa” (Īśvarakṛṣṇa 1978: 41). Si rimanda inoltre a Torella (2008: 68); Tigunait (1983: 122-124); Sharma (1987: 151-152).

espansa; in caso contrario, una cosa non è manifesta e non può esserlo. Pertanto chi conosce la loro capacità di espressione, può fare apparire da ogni dove qualsiasi cosa.

Questo principio, scrive Kavirāj, trova espressione nel *sūtra* IV. 2 degli *Yoga-sūtra* di Patañjali, “*jātyantarapariṇāmaḥ prakṛtyāpūrāt*”,³⁵ dove *āpūraṇa* (dalla radice *ṣṛī-* più il preverbo *ā-*), è un sostantivo indicante la proprietà di riempire, colmare completamente.³⁶

È interessante notare come Kavirāj, nel saggio *The Problem of Causality: Sāṅkhya-Yoga View*,³⁷ di soli tre anni posteriore a *Sūryavijñān*,³⁸ sostenga la medesima posizione dottrinale presentandola come coerente con la concezione della causalità del sistema Sāṅkhya. Per non contraddire il criterio di *upādānagrahaṇāt* (o *upādānaniyamāt*), scrive in una nota, è necessario distinguere tra due diverse declinazioni della *prakṛti*:³⁹ la *prakṛti* nella sua forma pura, che solo lo *yogin* può conoscere e governare, e le molteplici *prakṛti* o cause materiali limitate di cui l’uomo fa ordinariamente esperienza attraverso le proprie limitate facoltà mentali e sensoriali:

The arguments in Sāṅkhya-kārikā, viz. ‘*upādānaniyamāt*’,⁴⁰ etc., are in consonance with our ordinary experience which justifies this restriction. An effect, to be brought forth, requires an appropriate material (and appropriate subsidiary causes). This is so, because we are dealing with limited *Prakṛti* and with limited human resources. But to the *Yogin*, to whom the entire *Prakṛti* is open, it is easy to evolve any thing from any thing (Kavirāj 1987: 336, nota 227).⁴¹

³⁵ Nella traduzione di Federico Squarcini: “[A proposito di cause, si consideri che] al momento del completo compiersi (*āpūrāt*) delle [possibilità inerenti alle] cause sostanziali (*prakṛti*) coincide il [loro modale] riversarsi (*pariṇāma*) in ulteriori forme di vita (*jātyantara*)” (Patañjali 2015: 39).

³⁶ “Patañjali dice che il ‘*jātyantarapariṇāma*’ ha luogo grazie alla capacità della *prakṛti* di riempire completamente ogni cosa (*prakṛti ke āpūraṇa se*), per questo una cosa di una specie si può tramutare in una cosa di un’altra specie (*jātyantarapariṇāmaḥ prakṛtyāpūrāt*)” (Kavirāj 1963: 420).

³⁷ Il saggio preso in esame comparve inizialmente nel quarto volume della collana “The Princess of Wales Sarasvati Bhavana Studies” (1925. Benares: Government Sanskrit Library) con il titolo *Satkāryavāda: Causality in Sāṅkhya*, per poi essere ripubblicato come *The Problem of Causality: Sāṅkhya-Yoga View* nelle antologie postume *Aspect of Indian Thought* (1966. Burdwan: The University of Burdwan), *Notes on Religion and Philosophy* (1987. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University) e *Selected Writings of M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj* (1990. Varanasi: M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj Centenary Celebrations Committee, Mata Anandamayee Ashram). Faccio qui riferimento alla raccolta *Notes on Religion and Philosophy*.

³⁸ *Sūryavijñān* fu pubblicato per la prima volta nel 1922 mentre *Sūryavijñān-rahasya* nel 1956.

³⁹ La *prakṛti* (sostanza primaria o Natura) è uno dei 25 *tattva* ovvero 25 “principi costitutivi del reale” o “categorie della manifestazione” elaborati dal sistema Sāṅkhya.

⁴⁰ In caratteri *devanāgarī* nel testo.

⁴¹ Si veda inoltre Kavirāj (1987: 136).

Postulando l'esistenza di una sola *prakṛti* che si presenta sotto due aspetti distinti, sebbene in essenza identici, è possibile affermare che ogni cosa contiene in sé potenzialmente ogni altra cosa e, dunque, che tutto si può produrre da tutto senza per questo contraddire i criteri fondamentali su cui si basa il principio di causalità del Sāṃkhya (Kavirāj 1987: 136):

[...] since every subsidiary *Prakṛti* - finite cause, is ultimately permeated by and coincident with Pure *Prakṛti*, it naturally follows that every individual thing in nature contains every other thing potentially.

Mi sembra sia possibile intravedere la stessa distinzione in *Sūryavijñāna-rahasya* dove Kavirāj distingue tra una *mūla-upādāna* coincidente con la *prakṛti* e le molteplici *upādāna* all'origine dei singoli oggetti. Egli scrive (Kavirāj 1964: 163-164):

Gli *yogin* e i conoscitori della scienza [*vaijñānika*] dicono che tutte le cose del mondo sono da tutto costituite, vale a dire che in una qualsiasi cosa del mondo esiste in forma parziale una qualsiasi altra cosa. [...]. Noi riconosciamo una particolare cosa in virtù della sua particolare forma o del suo nome oppure in virtù delle sue qualità o della sua funzione [*kriyā*]. Pensare per questo che in quella cosa non sia contenuta la causa materiale [*upādāna*] di un'altra non è corretto. Se ammettiamo che la *prakṛti* è la causa materiale fondamentale [*mūla upādāna*] allora dovremo dire che proprio essa è la sostanza originaria di quella certa cosa, la quale è emersa dalla *prakṛti* attraverso un processo evolutivo [*pariṇāma*]. Ma la *prakṛti* continua a rimanere una e integra [*abhinna*]. [...]. Così, dal momento che in qualsiasi cosa è contenuta la causa materiale di tutte le cose del mondo è possibile trasformare una certa cosa in una qualsiasi altra a seconda del bisogno. Non c'è dubbio che ciò che chiamiamo rosa è davvero una rosa nella sua forma esteriore; ma al suo interno è contenuta la causa materiale da cui emana l'universo intero. Ecco perché, se necessario, una volta che sia stata attirata dal suo interno la causa materiale [*upādāna*] del loto, è possibile produrre un fiore di loto. E a partire dalla stessa rosa è possibile in egual modo manifestare un fiore di ibisco o di gelsomino. E non solo in un altro fiore: quel fiore di rosa può essere trasformato in una qualsiasi altra cosa. Questo è possibile perché nella rosa sono contenute le cause materiali [*upādāna*] di tutte quelle altre cose.

La distinzione tra due ordini di *prakṛti* costituisce, secondo Mukhopadhyaya, un ulteriore esempio della genialità interpretativa che distingueva Gopīnāth Kavirāj e che contribuì a farne una vera e propria leggenda vivente (Mukhopadhyaya 1990: 13-16). In Kavirāj, esperienza intellettuale ed esperienza spirituale sono strettamente, intimamente interconnesse, l'una e l'altra si nutrono vicendevolmente in una relazione di reciprocità. Ritengo che questo elemento assolutamente

centrale emerga qui con forza: vediamo infatti come i tre articoli presi in esame – *Sūryavijñān*, *Sūryavijñān-rahasya* e *The Problem of Causality: Sāṅkhya-Yoga View* – siano attraversati da un filo rosso che li connette e li fa dialogare, pur essendo testi dalla natura molto diversa.

La seconda riflessione che vorrei proporre riguarda la relazione tra il *sūrya-vijñāna* e la teoria cosmogonica fonemica propria delle tradizioni tantriche.

I raggi solari sono descritti da Kavirāj innanzitutto come colori, dove per colore si intende qualcosa di diverso da ciò che ordinariamente è conosciuto con questo nome.⁴² Leggiamo rispettivamente in *Sūryavijñān* e in *Sūryavijñān-rahasya*:

L'uomo che conosca a fondo i raggi del sole o lo spettro cromatico [*varṇamālā*] della luce solare e che impari a mescolare insieme i colori [*varṇa*] dopo averli resi puri, potrà facilmente produrre tutti gli oggetti [*padārtha*], attraverso un processo di composizione e scomposizione (Kavirāj 1963: 422).

La scienza solare si basa sulla conoscenza dei raggi del sole. Il raggio solare viene chiamato *varṇa* ["colore"] oppure, nella lingua parlata, *raṅga* ["colore"] ((Kavirāj 1964: 160).

I raggi o colori, come già detto, per poter essere composti al fine di manifestare un certo oggetto devono per prima cosa essere riconosciuti nella loro forma pura, o primaria. Perché ciò sia possibile è necessario fare emergere, a partire dalla luce del sole, la luce bianca al suo stato puro ovvero la fonte da cui emanano tutti i colori. Leggiamo in *Sūryavijñān*:

I raggi del sole sono infiniti nel numero e nella specie. La luce che sta all'origine [*mūla-prabhā*] è solo una, ed è bianca. Questo colore bianco di base riluce nella forma di vari colori, il rosso, il blu ecc. e anche in altri colori secondari derivati dal mescolarsi l'un con l'altro del rosso, del blu ecc. Dal bianco hanno origine innanzitutto il rosso, il blu e gli altri colori primari (Kavirāj 1963: 434).

Per sapere quale sia il colore primario [*mūla*], è necessario l'aiuto della luce nel suo stato puro, poiché non sarebbe possibile riconoscere esattamente i colori attraverso una luce a sua volta colorata. Non c'è alcun bisogno di dire che quello che vediamo attraverso degli occhiali colorati non corrisponde a ciò che dovremmo davvero vedere (Kavirāj 1963: 435).

⁴² 'Ciò che comunemente la gente chiama colore non corrisponde al colore preso in considerazione dalla scienza solare, ne è solo il riverbero [*chaṭā*]' (Kavirāj 1963: 436).

Varṇa, però, non significa soltanto colore ma anche “fonema”, “lettera” e *varṇamālā*, tradotto con “spettro cromatico della luce solare” perché così esige il contesto, significa propriamente “alfabeto”. L'equivalenza raggio solare/colore/fonema è ora suggerita indirettamente ora dichiarata esplicitamente. Kavirāj illustra in più di un'occasione il procedimento di unione dei raggi su cui si basa il *sūrya-vijñāna* utilizzando la similitudine delle lettere e della parola. In *Sūryavijñān*, per esempio, scrive:

Così come da lettere diverse, componendole in vari modi, si dà origine a parole diverse, così a partire da raggi distinti, attraverso la loro diversa composizione si originano i molteplici oggetti [*padārtha*] del mondo (Kavirāj 1963: 422).

Altrove il riferimento alla cosmogonia fonematica è esplicito:

È solo a partire dal suo tremolio [*vikṣobha*] che sorgono *nāda* e *varṇa*. Dal colore bianco, da questo *candrabindu* la cui essenza è puro *sattva*, sgorgano tutte le lettere a partire dalla ‘a’ breve (Kavirāj 1963: 436).

Ritroviamo un'eco di quanto scrive Kavirāj in un passo del *Tantrāloka* di Abhinavagupta ove la diciassettesima *kalā* di Śiva è detta corrispondere al *visarga*, a *kuṇḍalinī*, alla luce di tutte le cose, al cielo (o etere o spazio) di Śiva, *śivavyomam* (si noti che *vyoman* e *ākāśa* sono sinonimi). Così scrive Abhinavagupta in *Tantrāloka* III, 137b-40:

«La diciassettesima *kalā*, perciò,» così è detto nel *Triśirobhairavatantra* nella discussione finale sulla portata della *kalā* «ha per natura l'ambrosia e procede dallo spiegarsi dei due punti, che costituiscono la natura propria dell'emissione suprema-infima. Questa [*kalā*], la quale è la luce di tutte le cose, si presenta, quando è trascendente l'emissione, in forma di *kuṇḍalinī*-potenza (*śaktikuṇḍalikā*), quindi in forma di *kuṇḍalinī*-soffio vitale e, all'estremità dell'emissione (*prāntadeśe*), in forma di *kuṇḍalinī* suprema. Questa *kalā* viene variamente chiamata col nome di “etere di Śiva”, “luogo del sé”, “luogo del brahman” » (Abhinavagupta 1999: 65-66).⁴³

Kalā, termine chiave del lessico *śaiva* e *śākta*, assume un diverso significato a seconda dell'uso tecnico che ne viene fatto. Vale genericamente per “parte” o “porzione”, in particolare indica i sedici digiti lunari, ovvero ognuna delle parti che la luna perde o acquisisce nelle due fasi di luna calante e di luna

⁴³ Per un'analisi approfondita di questo passo del *Tantrāloka* rimando a Padoux (1992: 280-282).

crescente. Ogni fase ha una durata di quindici giorni lunari corrispondenti alle quindici *kalā*; la sedicesima *kalā* coincide con la fase di luna nuova, è la *kalā* invisibile ma immortale (*amṛtakalā*) che permette alla luna di comparire nuovamente nel cielo. Anche i primi sedici fonemi dell'alfabeto sanscrito – i quali rappresentano la prima fase dell'emanazione sonora, quella che ha luogo in Śiva e che precede la manifestazione oggettuale vera e propria – sono chiamati *kalā*: a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, e, ai, o, au, ṁ, ṁ̄, ḥ. Il sedicesimo fonema è il *visarga*, quel segno grafico costituito da due punti che fa acquisire alla vocale che lo precede una leggera aspirazione. Nell'ambito della speculazione tantrica, esso designa l'emissione creatrice poiché rappresenta graficamente la rottura dell'unità primeva, la divisione del punto (*bindu*) da cui muove l'emanazione cosmica. Anche Śiva viene descritto come costituito di sedici *kalā*:⁴⁴ la sedicesima *kalā* (o diciassettesima come nelle strofe di Abhinavagupta) si riferisce a Śiva nel suo aspetto trascendente, al di là dell'emissione universale e tuttavia suo fondamento; essa condensa in sé il potenziale “creativo” dell'Assoluto e permette il ripetersi dell'emanazione dopo il periodo di riassorbimento (Padoux 1992: 89 e seguenti). In alcune strofe precedenti a quelle in esame, inoltre, Abhinavagupta parla del *bindu* supremo, o *bindu* di Śiva, descrivendolo come la luce da cui ogni cosa è illuminata e definendolo come “coscienza” (Abhinavagupta 1999: 63 e 65, *śloka* 110-13a, 113b-16, 133b-34a).

La connessione tra emanazione sonora e *sūrya-vijñāna* è inoltre stabilita attraverso il riferimento alla cerimonia della *ṣaḍadhvaśuddhi*:⁴⁵ leggiamo in *Sūryavijñān* (Kavirāj 1963: 436):

Nell'India antica, i tantrici come i vedici conoscevano bene la realtà di questa scienza [*sūrya-vijñāna*, n.d.t.]. [...], poiché chi conosce il mistero della purificazione dei sei cammini [*ṣaḍadhvaśuddhi*] può capire che *varṇa* e *kalā* sono indissolubilmente uniti. Così come, sul piano del significante [*vācaka-bhūmi*], da *varṇa* si sviluppa *mantra* e da *mantra* procede *pada*, allo stesso modo nella sfera dell'oggetto significato [*vācya-bhūmi*], da *kalā* procede *tattva* e da *tattva* hanno origine i *bhuvana* e gli oggetti dell'esperienza sensibile che costituiscono la sfera degli effetti [*kārya-padārtha*].

Ṣaḍadhvaśuddhi significa letteralmente “purificazione dei sei cammini”⁴⁶ e costituisce una parte fondamentale del rito d'iniziazione tantrica. Il sestuplice cammino che deve essere purificato dal *guru*

⁴⁴ André Padoux traduce il termine *kalā* come dinamismo o energia limitativa, come energia che tende alla limitazione, per distinguerla dalla *śakti* suprema, di cui è tuttavia un aspetto (Padoux 1992: 91).

⁴⁵ ‘The *ṣaḍadhvan*, the sixfold pathway or the six courses, offers yet another picture of that cosmic evolution of the Word extending from the Godhead down to our world, a movement one can go back over by retracing the Word to its source’ (Padoux 1992: 330).

⁴⁶ Si vedano Abhinavagupta (1999: LXIV-LXV); Goudriaan, Jan Hoens, and Gupta (1979: 100-101); Padoux (1992: 330-371).

al momento dell'iniziazione e che si articola in due serie di tre cammini ciascuno, è, nelle parole di Raniero Gnoli, "il tutto, il quale è appunto concepito come una via, un sentiero che lo *yogin* deve percorrere" (Abhinavagupta 1999: LXIV). Il tutto macrocosmico coincide con il tutto microcosmico, il "cammino" è propriamente il corpo del discepolo che deve essere purificato tramite l'iniziazione. Le due serie in cui si articola il sestuplice cammino rappresentano, l'una, la sfera del discorso significativa (*vācaka*), l'altra, quella dell'oggetto significato (*vācya*). Alla prima appartengono i *varṇa* (i fonemi), i *mantra* e i *pada* (gli archetipi della parola pronunciata);⁴⁷ alla seconda le *kalā* (le "forze"),⁴⁸ i *tattva* (i principi costitutivi della realtà) e i *bhuvana* (i mondi). *Varṇa* e *kalā* rappresentano il livello più elevato – "causale" secondo l'analisi di Kavirāj – della manifestazione sonora da una parte e di quella oggettuale dall'altra, e sono in essenza coincidenti, poiché il suono, la Parola, è energia creatrice che si dispiega precedendo, e corrispondendo a, quella oggettuale. Similmente corrispondono *mantra* e *tattva*, il livello sottile di *vācaka* e di *vācya*, e *pada* e *bhuvana*, il livello grossolano. Proprio in virtù di tali corrispondenze, è sufficiente purificare uno solo di questi sei cammini perché anche tutti gli altri risultino, automaticamente, purificati (Abhinavagupta 1999: LXV). Questo per quanto riguarda l'iniziazione e la pratica della *śaḍadhvaśuddhi*. Ma tale principio è altresì valido nella concretezza del mondo oggettuale e il *sūrya-vijñāna* ne è la dimostrazione pratica (Kavirāj 1963: 436):

Poiché significante e significato [*vāk* e *artha*] sono eternamente uniti, chi controlla *varṇa* eserciterà un controllo anche su *kalā*. In altre parole, egli può muoversi senza incontrare ostacoli nel mondo grossolano, in quello sottile e in quello causale.

Il *sūrya-vijñāna* costituisce, dunque, la prova concreta della veridicità della dottrina filosofica dell'identità tra *vāk* e *artha*, tra *vācaka* e *vācya*, tra la Parola e il mondo.

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⁴⁷ Goudriaan, Jan Hoens, and Gupta (1979: 100). Per un'estesa e approfondita analisi del significato del termine *pada* nella concezione del sestuplice cammino rimando a Padoux (1992: 348-355).

⁴⁸ *Kalā* è l'energia, la forza che permea l'aspetto sottile (*tattva*) e grossolano (*bhuvana*) della manifestazione oggettuale. Vengono distinte cinque tipi di *kalā*: *nivṛtti*, *pratiṣṭhā*, *vidyā*, *śāntā* e *śāntātītā* (Abhinavagupta 1999: XI.8; Kavirāj 1990: 90 nota 1).

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La danza nel buddhismo antico¹

Antonella Serena Comba

The article analyses the status of dance in the Pāli Canon. At a first sight, it seems that dancing, watching dancers' performances and their organization were not approved by the Buddha; but the comparison between some canonical Pāli passages shows that this apparently negative evaluation was motivated by the expectations of the Indian people towards ascetics, rather than an absolute refusal of this art on its own.

1. Considerazioni generali

Le osservazioni qui contenute si basano principalmente sul Canone in lingua pāli, un insieme di testi che, sebbene modificato nel corso del tempo, si può ancora definire come il documento più antico a noi pervenuto degli insegnamenti attribuiti al Buddha. Nella sua forma attuale, per lo più, risale infatti alla fine del I sec. a.C., quando fu messo per iscritto nell'isola di Śrī Laṅkā. Al Canone si aggiunge una serie di commenti attribuiti a Buddhaghosa (V sec. d.C.) e a Dhammapāla (VI sec.). Come si vedrà, il Canone contiene apparentemente una serie di insegnamenti e regole monastiche in qualche modo non favorevoli alla danza. Ci si può chiedere perché fosse sorta questa mancanza di simpatia, a quali situazioni si applicasse, quale fosse il suo significato e il suo scopo nell'ambito della pratica del buddhismo. Nel corso del tempo questa posizione fu superata in alcune scuole, come per esempio in quella del Vajrayāna o buddhismo tibetano, che però non rientra nel campo della presente ricerca.

2. La danza nei giudizi dell'uomo comune

Nel Canone in lingua pāli si menziona la danza in vari passi dei discorsi del Buddha e della regola monastica. Innanzitutto c'è qualche cenno nel *Dīghanikāya*, che costituisce la raccolta dei cosiddetti "Discorsi lunghi". Il *Dīghanikāya* è diviso in tre sezioni: il *Sīlakkhandhavagga* o Libro dell'aggregato della moralità, il *Mahāvagga* o "Grande libro", e il *Pāthikavagga* o "Libro dei testi da recitare".

¹ La prima stesura di questo saggio è stata esposta in un intervento al Convegno "Esperienza estetica e tecnica nella danza indiana", tenutosi all'Università di Torino il 16 giugno 2015.

La prima di queste tre sezioni contiene discorsi di vario argomento, ma il suo titolo è giustificato dal fatto che, all'interno di ogni discorso, c'è una triplice parte sulla moralità: il *Cūlasīla* o “Piccola moralità”, il *Majjhimasīla* o “Media moralità” e il *Mahāsīla* o “Grande moralità”.

Il primo discorso del *Sīlakkhandhavagga* è il celebre *Brahmajālasutta* o “Discorso sulla rete di Brahmā”. In esso si narra che il Buddha, con un folto sèguito di monaci, si mise in viaggio dalla città di Rājagaha a quella di Nālandā; al gruppo si accodarono due asceti mendicanti (*paribbājaka*), Suppiya e il suo discepolo Brahmadata. Lungo la via, Suppiya criticò in vari modi il Buddha, il Dhamma (il suo insegnamento) e il Saṅgha (la comunità monastica), mentre Brahmadata li lodò. La discussione fra i due continuò anche durante la notte, allorché i monaci e i due asceti pernottarono in un parco. La mattina dopo i monaci commentarono la discussione che avevano udito. Giunse il Buddha, a cui fu riferito l'accaduto. Il Buddha raccomandò ai monaci di non arrabbiarsi di fronte alle critiche e di non esultare per le lodi, ma di stabilire imparzialmente quali asserzioni fossero false e quali vere.

Poi cominciò a parlare della “Piccola moralità”, introducendola con questa frase:

O monaci, è invero per una cosa insignificante (*appamattaka*), per una cosa inferiore (*oramattaka*), per la mera moralità (*sīlamattaka*) che l'uomo comune parla in lode del Tathāgata.²

Il Buddha fece quindi alcuni esempi della moralità che l'uomo comune poteva dichiarare di apprezzare in lui in quanto asceta: prima di tutto l'astensione dalla distruzione violenta della vita, e poi dal prendere ciò che non era dato, ossia dal furto; la castità, l'astensione dalla parola scorretta, l'astensione dal danneggiare semi e vegetali, e dal mangiare più di una volta al giorno. Poi concluse il discorso così:

“L'asceta Gotama si astiene dalla vista di danze, canti, musica e spettacoli”. Così invero direbbe, o monaci, l'uomo comune, parlando in lode del Tathāgata.³

La frase “Così direbbe invero l'uomo comune... [ecc.]” conclude ogni altro punto della “Piccola moralità”. Il Buddha asserisce pure di astenersi dall'usare cosmetici e ornamenti, dal dormire in letti alti o ampi, dall'accettare oro e argento, cereali crudi, carne cruda, donne, schiavi, pecore, capre, galli, maiali, elefanti, bestiame, cavalli, campi o terreni erbosi; si astiene dal fare ambasciate, dal comprare

² *Dīghanikāya*, I, 3 (per i testi in pāli si è utilizzata l'edizione digitale birmano-indiana in *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka*, Versione 4.0.0.15, Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri 1995. Ove non altrimenti indicato, le traduzioni dalla lingua pāli sono dell'Autrice). “Tathāgata” (lett. “Così-andato” oltre il ciclo delle rinascite) è un epiteto del Buddha.

³ *Nacca-gīta-vādita-visūka-dassanā paṭivirato samaṇo Gotamo - iti vā hi, bhikkhave, puthujjano Tathāgatassa vaṇṇaṃ vadamāno vadeyya* (*Dīghanikāya*, I, 5).

e vendere, da truffe, inganni, corruzione, sotterfugi, insincerità, dal ferire, uccidere, imprigionare, rapinare e prendere cibo con violenza: tutto ciò rientra nella lode dell'uomo comune.

Nella “Media moralità” muta in parte la formula che fa da contesto:

“Mentre alcuni asceti e brahmani, che si nutrono del cibo offerto dai devoti, sono dediti alla distruzione del gruppo dei semi e del gruppo dei vegetali, cioè i cinque tipi di semi: i semi delle radici, i semi dei tronchi, i semi dei nodi, i semi delle cime e i semi dei semi, l'asceta Gotama si astiene da tale distruzione del gruppo dei semi e del gruppo dei vegetali”. Così invero direbbe, o monaci, l'uomo comune, parlando in lode del Tathāgata (*Dīghanikāya*, I, 5).

Dunque in questa seconda sezione è variata la prima parte di ogni paragrafo, riportata in corsivo nella suesposta citazione, mentre la conclusione è identica. E poi prosegue:

“Mentre alcuni asceti e brahmani, che si nutrono del cibo offerto dai devoti, sono dediti all'uso di provviste accumulate (*sannidhikāra*) – provviste di cibo, di bevande, di vesti, di carri, di letti, di profumi, di carne – l'asceta Gotama si astiene da un tale uso di provviste”. Così invero direbbe, o monaci, l'uomo comune, parlando in lode del Tathāgata.

“Mentre alcuni asceti e brahmani, che si nutrono del cibo offerto dai devoti, sono dediti alla visione di spettacoli (*visūka*), cioè danze, canti, musica, esibizioni (*pekkha*), recitazioni (*akkhāna*), musica manuale (*pāṇissara*), cimbali (*vetāla*) e percussioni (*kumbhathūṇa*), spettacoli relativi a Sobha⁴ (*sobhanaka*), giochi acrobatici,⁵ combattimenti di elefanti, cavalli, bufali, tori, capre, arieti, galli e quaglie, combattimenti con bastoni, pugni, lotta, battaglie simulate, parate, manovre e riviste militari, l'asceta Gotama si astiene da una tale visione di spettacoli”. Così invero direbbe, o monaci, l'uomo comune, parlando in lode del Tathāgata (*Dīghanikāya*, I, 6).

L'elenco di attività da cui il Buddha si astiene prosegue con i giochi più comuni all'epoca, con l'uso di vari tipi di letti, sedie, coperte e loro decorazioni, con varietà di massaggi, profumi e ornamenti per il corpo, conversazioni futili (per esempio sulla politica, il cibo, i vestiti, i parenti, le donne, i morti), dispute, commissioni e vari tipi di inganni.

Infine la “Grande moralità” riprende la stessa formula-cornice della Media, ma con contenuti diversi:

⁴ La città dei Gandhabba (Walshe 1996²: 538, nota 26).

⁵ *Caṇḍāla-dhovana* è un gioco in cui un uomo tiene un palo sulla fronte e un altro uomo si arrampica sopra (Cone 2010, vol. II: 99).

“Mentre alcuni asceti e brahmani che si nutrono del cibo offerto dai devoti, si guadagnano da vivere con una conoscenza mondana, con un mezzo di sussistenza errato come la chiromanzia, la divinazione mediante segni, portenti, sogni, caratteristiche fisiche, morsi di topo, oblazioni nel fuoco (*aggihoma*), oblazioni da un cucchiaino, oblazioni di stoppie, polvere di riso, grani di riso, burro chiarificato, olio, oblazioni dalla bocca, oblazioni di sangue, la lettura delle dita (*aṅgavijjā*), la conoscenza relativa alla casa (*vatthuvijjā*), al giardino (*khattavijjā*), agli auspici (*sivavijjā*), ai demoni (*bhūtavijjā*), alle case di argilla (*bhūrivijjā*), ai serpenti (*ahivijjā*), ai veleni (*visavijjā*), agli scorpioni (*vicchikavijjā*), ai ratti (*mūsikavijjā*), agli uccelli (*sakuṇavijjā*), ai corvi (*vāyasavijjā*), l’assorbimento meditativo sulla maturità [di vita] (*pakkajjhāna*)⁶, la protezione dalle frecce (*saraparittāṇa*), la divinazione con gli animali selvatici (*migacakka*)⁷, l’asceta Gotama si astiene da una tale conoscenza mondana, da tali mezzi di sussistenza errati”. Così invero direbbe, o monaci, l’uomo comune, parlando in lode del Tathāgata (*Dīghanikāya*, I, 9).

L’elenco prosegue poi con altri modi errati di guadagnarsi da vivere, come la conoscenza delle caratteristiche delle gemme, dei vestiti, dei bastoni, di armi, schiavi e animali; predizioni per l’esercito; previsioni di eclissi lunari e altri avvenimenti astronomici; predizioni relative alla pioggia, al raccolto, alla salute, alla malattia; i calcoli e i conteggi, la composizione di poemi, la speculazione filosofica; il combinare matrimoni e divorzi; il portare fortuna e gettare il malocchio; il celebrare sacrifici; e il praticare la medicina.

Il Buddha conclude la “Grande moralità” con queste parole:

O monaci, è invero per questa cosa insignificante (*appamattaka*), per questa cosa inferiore (*oramattaka*), per questa mera moralità (*sīlamattaka*) che l’uomo comune parla in lode del Tathāgata (*Dīghanikāya*, I, 9).

Dopodiché il Buddha pone a confronto questi argomenti di lode con altri, più importanti:

Esistono, o monaci, altri fenomeni (*dhamma*), profondi, difficili da vedere, difficili da capire, pieni di pace, sublimi, oltre la sfera del ragionamento, utili, comprensibili [solo] dai saggi, che il Tathāgata espone, dopo averli realizzato da sé con una conoscenza superiore; per questi si può parlare correttamente in lode del Tathāgata secondo verità (*Dīghanikāya*, I, 9).

⁶ “La riflessione sulla maturità (*paripākagatacintā*). La conoscenza di ciò che si vede, manifestata in questo modo: ora «costui vivrà tanto tempo, costui tanto tempo». Questo è il significato” (*Dīghanikāya-Aṭṭhakathā*, I, 92).

⁷ “Si dice conoscendo i versi di tutti gli uccelli e i quadrupedi messi insieme” (*Dīghanikāya-Aṭṭhakathā*, I, 92).

Il Buddha si dedica poi a chiarire quali sono i fenomeni cui allude, soprattutto utilizzando una critica serrata alle dottrine propugnate dai suoi oppositori, come l'eternalismo e il nichilismo.

Ma, ritornando alla danza, si può intravedere in questo discorso la complessità del contesto in cui è espressa la valutazione negativa della danza: non è un giudizio assoluto, ma soltanto riferito al modo in cui l'uomo comune giudica il comportamento dell'asceta Gotama.

Nella "Piccola moralità" si dice che l'uomo comune loda il Buddha per vari motivi, fra cui il non assistere a danze; nella "Media moralità" si ripete questa affermazione, introducendola con un confronto fra gli asceti e i brahmani da una parte e il Buddha dall'altra; nella "Grande moralità" non si menziona più la danza, ma si insiste nel confronto fra gli altri asceti e i brahmani e il Buddha, menzionando modi poco onorevoli di guadagnarsi la vita. In genere questi modi sono espedienti basati sulla superstizione popolare, che non reggono il confronto con la pratica del Dhamma cui si dedica il monaco. L'ordine monastico può ricevere offerte dai laici solo per la sua virtù e per il suo impegno nella pratica meditativa.

È evidente quindi che in questo discorso non c'è una valutazione negativa assoluta della danza in sé, ma che il Buddha esorta i monaci suoi discepoli a tenere una condotta apprezzabile dal volgo, rinunciando anche agli spettacoli di danza se occorre, e nello stesso tempo sottolinea la necessità di una retta visione che informi di sé il comportamento più ineccepibile.

Il testo delle tre moralità riveste una funzione importante all'interno del Dighanikāya – libro posto all'inizio del Canone dai commentatori – dal momento che è ripetuto *verbatim* nel secondo discorso e poi, dal terzo al tredicesimo, è riassunto in poche battute, rinviando al testo integrale nel secondo discorso.

3. La danza nella regola monastica

Il secondo gruppo di testi importanti per capire il ruolo e la visione della danza nel buddhismo antico è contenuto nel "Canestro della disciplina" (*Vinayapīṭaka*), che contiene la regola monastica e il racconto delle circostanze in cui fu formulata dal Buddha secondo la tradizione.

Nel *Bhikkhu-vibhaṅga*, la regola monastica dei monaci contempla vari tipi di infrazioni. Fra le norme cosiddette *sekhiya* è descritto il contegno che il monaco deve tenere: per esempio, deve portare la veste ben avvolta intorno al corpo senza scoprirsi, essere sempre composto, attento, con gli occhi bassi, non deve urlare, ridere sguaiatamente, dondolare il corpo, giocherellare con le mani o i piedi, e soprattutto quando accetta l'elemosina e mangia, lo deve fare con buona educazione (*Vinayapīṭaka*, IV, 184 sgg.). La regola non dice esplicitamente che il monaco non deve danzare, ma ciò sembra sottinteso.

Nel *Bhikkhuni-vibhaṅga*, parte dedicata alle monache, si racconta un episodio in cui il Buddha dimorava vicino alla città di Rājagaha. Un giorno vi si celebrò una festa detta Giraggasamajja, e sei monache, che formavano un gruppo particolarmente trasgressivo, il cosiddetto “gruppo delle sei,” andò ad assistervi. La gente le criticò, dicendo che assistevano a danze, canti e musiche come laiche amanti dei piaceri. Le altre monache udirono le critiche della gente e le riferirono al Buddha, il quale chiese alla comunità monastica femminile di emanare la seguente regola: “Quella monaca che andasse ad assistere a danze, canti o musiche, sarebbe colpevole di *pācittiya* (un’infrazione che si espia con la confessione)”.⁸ Questo è l’unico passo del *Suttavibhaṅga* in cui è menzionata esplicitamente la danza.

Nella seconda parte del *Vinaya*, detta *Khandhaka*, dove le regole sono esposte nell’ordine di gravità delle infrazioni, la danza è menzionata cinque volte. Nel primo passo (*Mahāvagga*, I), in seguito all’ordinazione di Rāhula, il figlio del Buddha, i novizi (*sāmaṇera*) chiesero al Buddha a quali regole dovessero attenersi; il Buddha prescrisse loro dieci regole, che in parte ricalcavano quelle viste nel *Dīghanikāya*: 1) astenersi dall’uccidere esseri viventi, 2) astenersi dal prendere ciò che non è dato, 3) astenersi da una condotta sessuale scorretta (vale a dire rimanere casti), 4) astenersi dal mentire, 5) astenersi dalle sostanze inebrianti, 6) astenersi dal mangiare in tempo illegale (cioè dopo mezzogiorno), 7) astenersi dall’assistere a danze, canti, musiche e spettacoli, 8) astenersi dall’uso di ghirlande, profumi, cosmetici, ornamenti e gioielli, 9) astenersi dall’uso di letti alti e ampi, 10) astenersi dall’acceptare oro e argento (*Vinayapiṭaka*, I, 83).

Nel secondo passo (in *Mahāvagga*, VIII) si racconta la storia di Jīvaka Komārabhacca, che divenne il medico della comunità monastica. All’epoca del Buddha la città di Vesālī era una meravigliosa metropoli, ricca di viveri, beni, palazzi e giardini. La città prosperava grazie anche all’attività della bella cortigiana Ambapālī, che sarebbe poi divenuta una discepola del Buddha e si sarebbe fatta monaca. Era “leggiadra, avvenente, dotata di splendide forme, abilissima nella danza, nel canto e nella musica, frequentata da uomini passionali dai quali riceveva cinquanta monete a notte. Grazie a lei Vesālī acquistò sempre maggior lustro” (*Vinayapiṭaka*, I, 267; tr. it.: Talamo 2012, vol. I: 215).

Un giorno un cittadino di Rājagaha si recò a Vesālī, ammirò la città, vide che essa riceveva lustro dalla cortigiana Ambapālī; tornato nella sua città, andò a parlare al re Bimbisāra e gli riferì ciò che

⁸ *Vinayapiṭaka*, IV, 267. Sul *pācittiya*, si veda Brahmavamso: “A monk or nun who eats food outside of the proper time, from dawn until noon, commits an offence called *pācittiya*. To free themselves of the offence they have to approach a fellow monk or nun and tell them of their misdeed. This simple acknowledgement is all that is required for it serves to heighten one’s sense of duty, and of responsibility, and so it is a strong incentive to be more punctilious in the future. Thus these rules of Vinaya do not rely on punishment but rather urging greater mindfulness and restraint so that the same mistake will not be repeated”.

aveva visto, proponendogli di “creare una cortigiana” anche a Rājagaha. Il re acconsentì e l’uomo trovò una bellissima fanciulla di nome Sālavatī, che addestrò fino a che non fu abile nella danza, nel canto e nella musica. Gli uomini la pagavano il doppio di Ambapālī, ossia cento monete per notte. Dopo un po’ Sālavatī concepì un figlio;

Allora pensò: ‘Una donna incinta certo non piace agli uomini; se qualcuno venisse a sapere che sono incinta tutto l’ossequio che mi si tributa andrebbe in fumo! E se mi fingessi ammalata?’. Pertanto diede quest’ordine al portiere: “Portiere, fa’ che non entri nessun uomo! Se qualcuno chiede di me, digli che sono ammalata”. “Va bene, signora”, assentì il portiere alla cortigiana Sālavatī (*Vinayapiṭaka*, I, 267; tr. it.: Talamo 2012, vol. I: 215).

Quando partorì il bambino, lo mise in una cesta e lo fece abbandonare da una serva su un mucchio di rifiuti. Il bambino fu poi raccolto dal principe Abhaya e allevato a corte. In seguito divenne un medico famoso (*Vinayapiṭaka*, I, 267; tr. it.: Talamo 2012, vol. I: 215-216).

Questa storia mostra come la danza rappresentasse, all’epoca del Buddha, un’arte particolarmente apprezzata anche nelle corti dei re, e inoltre sottolinea l’importanza delle cortigiane: anche soltanto una di esse poteva costituire un’importante attrattiva locale, tale da accrescere la prosperità di una città o di un regno.

Il terzo passo (*Cullavagga*, I) narra un episodio di natura differente, che chiarisce tuttavia le tre moralità descritte nel *Dīghanikāya*. A Kiṭāgiri, una città nella regione di Kāsi, vivevano alcuni monaci seguaci di Assaji e Punabbasu, due monaci appartenenti al cosiddetto “gruppo dei sei”, l’equivalente maschile del succitato gruppo di sei monache.

A quel tempo i *bhikkhu* (seguaci) di Assaji e Punabbasu residenti a Kiṭāgiri erano impudenti (*alajjina*) e cattivi *bhikkhu* (*pāpabhikkhu*); essi tenevano questo basso comportamento (*anācāra*): piantavano e facevano piantare giardini fioriti (*mālāvachha*), li annaffiavano e li facevano annaffiare, ne coglievano e ne facevano cogliere (i fiori), li legavano e li facevano legare insieme, ne facevano e ne facevano fare ghirlande col gambo da una sola parte o da entrambe le parti, facevano e facevano fare composizioni floreali, corone, serti, diademi, pettorali; portavano e facevano portare ghirlande, composizioni floreali, corone, serti, diademi, pettorali a donne di nobili famiglie, a figlie, fanciulle, nuore e schiave di nobili famiglie; quindi assieme a quelle donne [ecc.] mangiavano nello stesso piatto, bevevano nella stessa coppa, sedevano sullo stesso sedile, dividevano lo stesso letto, la stessa coperta e lo stesso mantello; mangiavano in tempo illegale, bevevano bevande inebrianti, facevano uso di ghirlande, profumi e cosmetici; *danzavano*, cantavano, sonavano, si divertivano; *danzavano* mentre quelle *danzavano*, cantavano mentre quelle *danzavano*, sonavano mentre quelle *danzavano*... *danzavano* mentre quelle *cantavano*... mentre quelle *sonavano*... si divertivano mentre quelle si divertivano.

2. Giocavano con la scacchiera ad otto caselle, a dieci caselle, giocavano all'aperto, giocavano al circuito, alla *santikā*,⁹ ai dadi, alla lippa, alla mano-pennello,¹⁰ alla palla, al *paṅgacīra*,¹¹ all'aratro, ai salti mortali, col mulino a vento,¹² col *pattāḥhaka*,¹³ col carrettino, col piccolo arco; giocavano alle lettere,¹⁴ ad indovinare il pensiero, ad imitare i difetti fisici (degli altri); si esercitavano con l'elefante, col cavallo, col carro, con l'arco, con la spada; correvano davanti all'elefante, davanti al cavallo, davanti al carro, correvano innanzi e indietro, si esercitavano con impegno alla lotta e al pugilato, prendevano parte a rappresentazioni sceniche; stendevano (al suolo) il mantello e dicevano a una danzatrice: "Danza qui, sorella!" Quindi applaudivano e in vari modi si comportavano sconvenientemente (*Vinayaṭṭakā*, II, 9-10; tr. it.: Talamo 2012, vol. I: 286-287).

Un certo monaco giunse in quella città e fece la questua tenendo un "contegno irreprensibile nell'andare e nel venire, nel guardare e nell'osservare, nel piegarsi e nel rialzarsi, con lo sguardo sempre rivolto in basso". La gente non apprezzò affatto la sua compostezza, ma disse: "Com'è sciocco, com'è stupido costui, com'è borioso! Chi mai farà l'elemosina ad uno che si presenta in tal modo? I nostri monaci (seguaci) di Assaji e Punabbasu sì che sono gentili, cordiali, affabili, sorridenti, socievoli, gioviali, schietti e conversevoli! A essi, invero, bisogna fare l'elemosina!". Così nessuno gli dette del cibo. Un seguace laico lo invitò a casa sua, lo rifocillò e gli chiese di segnalare la situazione al Buddha, perché i monaci bravi se n'erano andati dalla città ed erano rimasti solo i cattivi. Il monaco riferì al Buddha cos'era successo e il Buddha chiese ai suoi discepoli principali, Sāriputta e Moggallāna, di recarsi a Kiṭṭāgiri:

"Sāriputta, andate a Kiṭṭāgiri e infliggete il bando¹⁵ da Kiṭṭāgiri ai *bhikkhu* (seguaci) di Assaji e Punabbasu: essi sono stati vostri compagni (*saddhivihārin*)".¹⁶ "Signore, come faremo ad infliggere il bando da Kiṭṭāgiri ai *bhikkhu* (seguaci) di Assaji e Punabbasu? Quei *bhikkhu* sono violenti (*caṇḍa*) e incivili (*pharusa*)". "Allora, Sāriputta, andateci assieme a molti (altri) *bhikkhu*". "Sì, signore" assentirono al Sublime Sāriputta e Moggallāna.

⁹ Termine dal significato oscuro; il gioco consisteva probabilmente nel cercare di togliere delle pietre da un mucchio senza far cadere le altre.

¹⁰ Giuoco consistente nell'immergere la mano nella tintura per tracciare poi delle figure su una parete.

¹¹ Tubi fatti con foglie e adoperati come trombe.

¹² Girandola fatta con foglie di palma.

¹³ Misura di capacità per fanciulli fatta con foglie di palma.

¹⁴ Giuoco consistente nell'indovinare lettere tracciate in aria o sul dorso di un compagno.

¹⁵ *Pabbājaniyakamma*, dal verbo *pabbājeti* = far uscire, esiliare.

¹⁶ Sāriputta e Moggallāna erano stati precettori dei *bhikkhu* di Assaji e Punabbasu, quindi spettava loro l'esecuzione del provvedimento.

7. “E in questo modo, o *bhikkhu*, si deve procedere: per prima cosa bisogna fare un’intimazione ai *bhikkhu* (seguaci) di Assaji e Punabbasu; fatta l’intimazione bisogna rammentare loro (le colpe); rammentate le colpe bisogna fargliele confessare; confessate le colpe un *bhikkhu* esperto e competente deve presentare al Saṅgha una mozione: «Venerabili, mi ascolti il Saṅgha: questi *bhikkhu* (seguaci) di Assaji e Punabbasu corrompono le famiglie e tengono un basso comportamento; si vede e si ode il loro basso comportamento, si vedono e si odono le famiglie da essi corrotte. Se il Saṅgha è d’accordo si infligga il bando da Kiṭāgiri ai *bhikkhu* (seguaci) di Assaji e Punabbasu: essi non debbono dimorare a Kiṭāgiri. Questa è la mozione. Venerabili, mi ascolti il Saṅgha... il Saṅgha infligge il bando da Kiṭāgiri ai *bhikkhu* di Assaji e Punabbasu... Il venerabile che approva rimanga in silenzio, chi non approva parli. Una seconda volta... Una terza volta io espongo la cosa... chi non approva parli. Il Saṅgha ha inflitto il bando da Kiṭāgiri ai *bhikkhu* (seguaci) di Assaji e Punabbasu: essi non debbono dimorare a Kiṭāgiri. Il Saṅgha approva, perciò tace; così io intendo» (*Vinayaṭīkā*, II, 12-1; tr. it.: Talamo 2012, vol. I: 288-289).

Da questo passo si vede come la moralità per cui l’uomo comune lodava il Buddha nel *Dīghanikāya* era costituita dall’astensione da un complesso di attività – giocare, bere, essere in intimità con le donne, ecc. – di cui la danza era solo un aspetto. Si può presumere che il Buddha avesse deciso di distinguersi nettamente dagli asceti propensi a compromessi su questi atteggiamenti, proprio perché nella sua infanzia e adolescenza era vissuto a corte in un ambiente dedito ai piaceri dei sensi e non ne aveva ricavato alcun rimedio duraturo alla sofferenza esistenziale. Dedicatosi alla vita ascetica, era in grado di vedere quale distrazione costituissero queste attività per il meditante e quale discredito potessero gettare sulla sua comunità.

Il quarto passo (*Cullavagga*, V) riguarda i *bhikkhu* del famigerato “gruppo dei sei”: anch’essi, come le monache, erano andati ad assistere alla festa del Giraggasamajja di Rājagaha, e ai relativi spettacoli di danze, canti e musiche. Anche stavolta la cosa fu riferita al Buddha, che proibì di tenere una tale condotta; chi lo avesse fatto, avrebbe compiuto un’infrazione detta *dukkata*, più leggera del *pācittiya* comminato alle monache (*Vinayaṭīkā*, II, 107; tr. it.: Talamo 2012, vol. I: 340).

L’ultimo passo (*Cullavagga*, X) del *Vinaya* in cui si menziona la danza è ancora una volta una sorta di catalogo di condotte scorrette attribuite alle monache, in particolare quelle del “gruppo delle sei”. L’elenco è molto lungo, ma qui si citerà soltanto il passo contenente il riferimento alla danza:

A quel tempo le monache del gruppo delle sei si facevano dei tatuaggi, si facevano un marchio in fronte, curiosavano dalle finestre, si mettevano in mostra (sulle porte), *organizzavano trattenimenti danzanti*, esercitavano il lenocinio, impiantavano taverne e mattatoi, aprivano botteghe, praticavano l’usura, si davano al commercio, tenevano schiavi e schiave, servi e serve, allevavano animali, facevano le fioriste, trafficavano in feltri. La gente [...] le criticava [...] Pertanto riferirono la cosa al Buddha. “O monaci”, [egli

disse,] “la monaca non deve farsi dei tatuaggi [...], non deve trafficare in feltri. Chi lo facesse incorrerebbe in colpa *dukkata*” (*Vinayaṭṭhaka*, II, 267; tr. it.: Talamo 2012, vol. I: 453).

Da questo passo, quindi, si deduce che per una monaca assistere a uno spettacolo di danza è più grave che organizzarne uno per gli altri, perché comporta una colpa *pācittiya* anziché una colpa *dukkata*.

4. La danza come espressione di gioia e tristezza

Il terzo gruppo di passi comprende occasioni in cui esseri umani, divinità, ma anche cose apparentemente inanimate, danzano per esprimere forti emozioni di gioia o di dolore.

Per esempio, nel Commento al *Vinaya* si dice che, quando il Buddha raggiunse il Risveglio, le montagne si misero a danzare (*pabbatānaṃ naccehi*), producendo un boato che andò ad aggiungersi alle esclamazioni (*sādhu!*) degli dèi e degli *yakkha* (*hiṃ!*), alle lodi mormorate dagli *asura*, agli schiocchi di dita dei brahmani, ai tuoni delle nuvole, ai versi dei quadrupedi, ai canti degli uccelli, ecc. (*Vinayaṭṭhaka-Atṭhakathā*, I, 94).

Nel *Mahāparinibbānasutta* del *Dīghanikāya*, dove si narra la morte del Buddha e il suo ingresso nel *nibbāna* (sanscrito *nirvāṇa*) definitivo presso la città di Kusinārā, si dice che Ānanda, il monaco assistente e cugino del Buddha, andò dai Malla a dare la notizia (i Malla costituivano l’etnia che abitava la regione di cui Kusinārā era la capitale). Quando i Malla appresero che il Buddha era morto, si intristirono, si afflissero, si misero a gridare strappandosi i capelli, alzando le braccia e togliendosi di dosso le vesti. Dissero che troppo presto il Signore era entrato nel *nibbāna* definitivo, e che troppo presto era svanito “l’occhio del mondo”. Poi ordinarono ai loro uomini di portare profumi e ghirlande e di convocare tutti i musicisti, e si recarono nel bosco di alberi di *sāla* dove giaceva il corpo del Buddha. Là gli resero omaggio per sette giorni con una *pūjā* (cerimonia di offerta) di danze, canti, musica, ghirlande e profumi. In seguito otto capi dei Malla, lavatasi la testa e indossati abiti nuovi, si predisposero a cremare il corpo del Buddha. Ma, malgrado i loro sforzi, non riuscirono a sollevarlo. Allora andarono dal monaco Anuruddha, cugino del Buddha, il quale disse loro che gli dèi avevano un’intenzione diversa dalla loro, e volevano onorare il corpo del Buddha con divine danze, canti ecc., e poi portare la salma al tempio Makuṭabandhana dei Malla. I Malla acconsentirono e si unirono agli dèi nel tributare al corpo del Buddha un’altra *pūjā* con danze, canti, musiche, ghirlande e profumi divini e umani (*Dīghanikāya*, II, 159).

Un’altra vicenda simile a questa è raccontata a proposito delle esequie della zia del Buddha, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. La sua vicenda è raccontata negli *Apadāna*, testi in versi del *Khuddhakanikāya*, e

nel commento di Dhammapāla alle *Therīgāthā*. Secondo la tradizione theravādin, Mahāpajāpatī era sorella di Māyā, la madre del Buddha. Entrambe sposarono il re Suddhodana. In seguito Māyā partorì il futuro Buddha, mentre Mahāpajāpatī dette alla luce un figlio di nome Nanda. Dopo sette giorni Māyā morì e Mahāpajāpatī si prese cura di entrambi i neonati, allattandoli e allevandoli con cura. In seguito Mahāpajāpatī ebbe anche una figlia che chiamò Nandā.

Dopo che il re Suddhodana fu morto, Mahāpajāpatī andò dal Buddha per chiedergli di creare un ordine monastico femminile. Il Buddha sul momento non dette il permesso, ma poi cedette alle insistenze del cugino Ānanda, figlio di un fratello di Suddhodana.

Mahāpajāpatī fu quindi la prima monaca della comunità monastica femminile creata dal Buddha Gotama. Morì in tarda età, prima del Buddha e dei suoi discepoli principali. Il *Mahāpajāpatigotamītherī-Apadāna*, un testo canonico in versi, narra nei particolari il suo *nibbāna* definitivo insieme a quello di altre cinquecento monache:

165. Posero il letto in cui Gotamī aveva dormito in un eccellente padiglione, delizioso e bello, tutto costituito d'oro.

166. I quattro Lokapāla¹⁷ la portarono sulle spalle. Gli altri dèi, Sakka ecc., si riunirono nel padiglione.

167. I padiglioni furono in tutto cinquecento; costruiti invero da Vissakamma, avevano il colore del sole autunnale.

168. Tutte le *bhikkhunī* erano sdraiate sui letti. Sollevate sulla spalla degli dèi, furono portate fuori una dopo l'altra.

169. La superficie del cielo fu interamente ricoperta da un baldacchino. La luna e il sole, insieme alle stelle, vi erano impressi, fatti d'oro.

170. Furono innalzati molteplici stendardi, e dispiegate coperture di fiori. Piovvero loti celesti. Dalla terra spuntò un fiore.

171. Si videro la luna e il sole, e splendettero le stelle. Pur giunto allo zenith, il sole non bruciava, come se fosse la luna.

172. Gli dèi fecero offerte rituali con divini aromi, ghirlande profumate, musiche, danze e canti.

173. I Nāga, gli Asura e i Brahmā, secondo la loro potenza e secondo la loro forza, fecero offerte rituali alla madre del Buddha che era entrata nel *nibbāna*, mentre veniva portata fuori.¹⁸

¹⁷ Lett. "protettori del mondo", i quattro grandi re divini dei punti cardinali.

¹⁸ *Apadāna*, II, 541-543, n. 18 (tr. it.: Comba 2016: 271-272).

5. Conclusioni

Da questi esempi tratti dalla letteratura canonica in pāli si evince che già ai tempi del Buddha (V sec. a.C.) la danza era diffusa come forma d'arte e di intrattenimento maschile e femminile, arma di seduzione, spontanea espressione di gioia e tristezza, offerta rituale. Il Buddha non condannò il danzare come attività in sé negativa, ma notò che le persone comuni della sua società lo lodavano rispetto ad altri perché non danzava. Pur rilevando che questo era un giudizio superficiale, perché avrebbe dovuto essere lodato per ben altri motivi, si adattò alle istanze sociali e emanò alcune regole sulla danza. Probabilmente, in un altro contesto sociale più favorevole alla danza sacra e rituale, non avrebbe avvertito questa esigenza. Ciò permette di comprendere come presso altre etnie e società buddhiste la danza si sia sviluppata anche in ambito monastico senza che questo sia stato sentito come un contravvenire all'etica.

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The Republic of China and a new opportunity

The revolution through non-violence by Mahatma Gandhi¹

Monica De Togni

The history of how the nonviolent proposal of Mahatma Gandhi resonates with Chinese intellectuals is a history of variability. In the late Forties, it seems appealing to some Chinese politicians who actually apply non-cooperative means, whereas during the Twenties, even if it was not at all a dominant idea, it resonates well with some Chinese intellectuals. However, during the Thirties, after Gandhi refused to compromise with Stalin, and while the Marxist proposal disseminated worldwide, the nonviolent leanings were no longer supported in China. In Hu Yuzhi, we find an example of this attitude toward nonviolence: he was a strong supporter during the Twenties, becoming an opponent in the Thirties. Copious are the difficulties in combining other political proposal with Gandhism, which is a comprehensive proposal, not only a political one. Someone perceived Gandhism as a competitor in the supremacy over the masses. Others disagreed about the possibility to use violent means. Another leading theme of objection concerned the industrialization, strongly opposed by Gandhi because of its deadly effects over the Indian population. Generally, an intense opposition came from the misunderstanding of the nonviolent path as a passive one. Moreover, the consideration of Gandhi's experiments changed from a perception of it as a native one because it comes from an Asian country, and in opposition to Marxism coming from Europe, to a perception of it as an external one when Marxism was "sinicised." Anyway, the main reason of the difficulty in implementing Gandhism is that it does not aim to triumph over the opponents; it is a way to individuate and assert the Truth (*satyagraha*), with both sides winning. When this intent is absent, it is impossible to realize it.

During the civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists in the Forties, the Chinese press is characterized not only by articles stating the necessity for an armed revolution to fight for the political unity and the control of the Country after having freed it from foreign interferences, but also by articles calling for a truce between the opponents. Among these late pieces, we find some cases of Chinese people proposing and following the peaceful path of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1896-1948). This inspiration is explicitly stated in some reviews, as for instance in 新聞天地 (*Xinwen tiandi, Newsdom*; 1948: 38) or in 正報 (*Zhengbao, The Righteous*; 1948: 4137).

¹ This is a peer reviewed version of the paper presented at the 22nd Biennial conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies (2018).

In the Forties, the tone of the articles against Gandhi was generally quite harsh, biting, even sour. It started to be this way mainly since the Thirties, when the internal situation of China became increasingly complicated. Intellectuals and politicians were unable to find a solution to the national problems; meanwhile the political opposition among Nationalists and Communists was ever sharper, after its manifestation in the break of the First United Front in 1927. In the Twenties, instead, we may find the roots of the appreciation for the Mahatma that crossed the Thirties and led to have some representatives of the 1948 Parliament called 中國甘地 (*Zhongguo Gandi, Gandhi of China*). At that time, the appreciation for Gandhi was clearly expressed by the Chinese press, expounding on him as an example to get rid of external influences because of his leading figure in the Indian movement of independence from the British rule. The following pages will try to follow the path already traced by Brian Tsui (Tsui 2015), considering the point of view of some Chinese intellectuals that used *Dongfang zazhi* as their tool to participate in the political debate. The main protagonists are the philosopher Zhang Dongsun (張東蓀, 1886-1873),² Hu Yuzhi (胡愈之, 1896-1986),³ and Fan Zhongyun (樊仲云, 1899-?).⁴

During the Twenties, while looking for a universal model of “decolonization” to apply locally, Chinese intellectuals sometimes portrayed Gandhi as an example to imitate, at other times as an example to avoid. One of the main reasons to distance oneself from Mohandas Gandhi was a divergent position on the use of violence as an instrument in political fights. Refusal of violence as a political mean was a source of strong opposition also between Gandhi and the Indian revolutionaries. The letters that some of them, quite likely Sachindranath Sanyal and Manmathnath Gupta,⁵ exchanged with Gandhi through *Young India*⁶ in 1925 are a clear example of this separation. These letters came after the appreciation by Communists for Gandhi had undergone some substantial changes. In 1921, the Communist International praised “Gandhi for leading the Indian masses toward the national independence of India” (Ray 1969: 88). But in February 1922, after the Chauri Chaura incident, Gandhi and the Indian National Congress halted the Non-cooperation movement,

² Zhang Dongsun is a leading intellectual of the Republican period that had undeservedly attracted a quite limited attention by Chinese scholars from WW II to the Nineties, and even less attention by Western scholars almost diverted by the struggle between the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese National Party. See, i.e., Fung (2002), Lin (2012), and Gao (2018).

³ Hu Yuzhi is known for his skillful translations, for his support to Esperanto, and for his political activism outside the CCP, as journalist, publisher, and editor, as well as member for many years of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and of the National People’s Congress. See, i.e., Zhu (2013) and Tsui (2013).

⁴ Fan Zhongyun is mainly known thanks to his translations (Chen 2018: 130-131, 141; Hockx 1998: 80), signed as Congyu 從予.

⁵ To find the transcript of the letters, see Gupta (1969). This essay is strongly intertwined with the political climate of its time, that is the Cultural Revolution, and with the resulting difficulties to be objective in writing history. Anyway, the letters have been copied by the curator from *Young India*, the magazine where Gandhi was editor.

⁶ A weekly paper or journal in English, published by Gandhi from 1919 to 1931.

considering the need for further education and training to the principles and guiding line of it.⁷ Manabendra Nath Roy,⁸ a leader of the Indian Communists, considered this choice a “betrayal of the revolutionary rank and file by the nonrevolutionary and reactionary leadership” (Ray 1969: 89), and in the following years he went on fighting against the Mahatma. This antagonism is not surprising, since it was a fight to prevail in the leadership of the Indian masses, as it was expressed also in the article signed “W,” and entitled 《印度之勞動狀況》 (“Yindu zhi laodong zhuangkuang. The state of workers in India”), published in 東方雜誌 (*Dongfang zazhi, The Eastern Miscellany*) in 1922 (19/3: 78-79).⁹ The author presents the fact that the workers’ trade unions in India owe a lot for their organisation to the British Union, and the Second Comintern in that colony is too connected with imperialists, while the non-cooperation movement is unwilling to unite with foreign organizations. The use of weapons for political purposes was not totally opposed by some Chinese intellectuals, despite their apparent appreciation of Gandhi’s pacifism, as, for instance, Hualu 化魯 (Hu Yuzhi 胡愈之, 1896-1986) clearly stated in the article 《民衆運動的方式及要素》 (“Minqun yundong de fangshi ji yaosu. Key elements and patterns of mass movements”), published in 東方雜誌 (*Dongfang zazhi, The Eastern Miscellany*) in 1923 (20/13: 23-32). In his writing, after a description of the catastrophic situation of the Chinese Republic 12 years since its establishment and after having stated that in China, at present, none of the most renowned political personalities of the time has the capacity to unify the Country - not Cao Kun (曹錕, 1862-1938), neither Sun Zhongshan (孫中山, 1866-1925), nor Wu Peifu (吳佩孚, 1874-1939) - Hu Yuzhi tried to find the right way to drive China out of the chaos. He appreciates the Italian Fascist Movement (*panghe yundong* 棒喝運動), revealing that he did not know its deep implications for the people living under that regime. Hu mostly admired the celerity of the Movement in achieving the desired result: national unity, in a situation that he compares to the Chinese one. Thus, he was convinced that the Fascist Movement could be the example to follow for an effective mass movement in China, provided that this last one would distance itself from the Fascist’s reactionary leanings. However, a broader thinking may lead us to different considerations, as Mark Shepard (2011: 38-39) wrote: “Somehow people have developed the myth that nonviolent action is slow, while violence is quick [...] [b]ut we can still rid ourselves of the idea that violence is necessarily quick. If we look at the Chinese Revolution, for instance, we find that Mao Tse-Tung and his Communist forces were engaged in combat over a period of 22 years. [...]”

⁷ The “Chauri Chaura incident” happened in Gorakhpur District (Uttar Pradesh). Some participants at the non-cooperation movement clashed with police officers, who opened fire and killed 3 people. Following this, the protesters became a mob that burned a police station, killing more than 20 police officers.

For a resumé by Gandhi himself, see M. K. Gandhi 1999: 146-148, n. 66 “Gorakhpur’s crime”, originally published in *Navajivan* 12/02/1922.

⁸ Manabendra Nath Roy, original name Narendranath Bhattacharya (1887–1954). In 1916 he moved to San Francisco, Calif., where he changed his name to Manabendra Nath Roy. Leader of the Comintern until 1929, when he left in disagreement with Stalin. Later on he was a member of the Indian National Congress.

⁹ “W” is likely a penname of Wang Senran (王森然, 1895-1984) (Zhu 1989: 743).

Where does the idea come from, then, that violence is quick and nonviolence is slow? Well, violence feels quicker, because time passes rapidly when you're dodging bullets. Nonviolent action, on the other hand, requires more patience because the action is less thrilling."

Nevertheless, Hu Yuzhi is aware of the results obtained in regard to the British government by "the Indian noncooperative movement" (*Yindu de buhezuo yundong* 印度的不合作運動), that is considered as "having specific active means" (*you juti de jiji de banfa* 有具體的積極的辦法), in opposition to those who are convinced that it has "a passive approach" (*xiaoji taidu* 消極態度). Likely, this last statement is an answer to the article 《誰能救中國》 (*Shei neng jiu Zhongguo* "Who can save China?") by Zhang Dongsun published in the previous (1923) number of 東方雜誌 (*Dongfang zazhi*, *The Eastern Miscellany* 20/12: 23-25). Zhang considers the Indian non-cooperation movement a passive and ineffective one for a dying country as China, giving the impression he had only a vague understanding of what was going on in India. He was supported in his opinion also by "S" (penname) in the article 《印度民族獨立運動與英國政治方針》 ("Yindu minzu duli yundong yu Yingguo zhengzhi fangzhen, The movement for the Indian national independence and the British policy"),¹⁰ where the Gandhian "movement of noncooperation" (*feixietong yundong* 非協同運動) is considered as "absolutely passive, lacking of the essential building factors and even if it would succeed, the results would not last in the long term" (*jie wei xiaoji de, quefa jianshe zhi yaosu, you yishi sui ke chengong, shiwu hedeng yong xu zhi xiaoguo* 皆為消極的, 缺乏建設之要素, 又一時雖可成功, 實無何等永續之效果). On the contrary, Hu Yuzhi does not seem to share this negative opinion of Gandhi's movement and he is quite accurate in his knowledge of the Indian features, also in detailing the specific measures of this mass movement in India (Hu 1923 20/13: 29): 1. Refusal to pay taxes and levies; 2. Refusal to hold office in the British government; 3. Refusal to attend any meeting with official organisations of the British government; 4. Refusal to be hired as servant by British people; 5. Refusal to get educated in a British school; 6. Refusal of any social intercourse with British people; 7. Boycott of any British product; 8. Refusal to trade with British people; 9. Refusal to present any lawsuit to a British court. Thence, Hu Yuzhi is well aware that, if applied on a national scale, these would be very effective measures. Much more effective than using a strong army. This is what India was testing. But still, for China, he recommends the creation of a mass movement endowed with a militarily disciplined organisation, and states "if we want to make a revolution, of course it's impossible without an army" (*women ru yao geming, guran fei you jundui bu ke* 我們如要革命, 固然非有軍隊不可). Accordingly, he shares this point of view with Sun Zhongshan, whose idea of the meaning of "peace" is very diverging from Gandhi's: "peace is always the purpose of politics, and war is only one of the instruments to reach this goal" (*heping shi zhengzhi de yongheng mubiao, er zhanzheng jinjin shi dadao zhege mubiao de shouduan* 和平是政治的永恒目标, 而战争仅仅是达到这个目标的手段) (Zhao 2005 1: 18), while for Gandhi only peaceful means can be used to reach peace. This is one of the main point of divergence between the "father of the Republic of China" and Gandhi the "father of India." Doubtful

¹⁰ "S" 1922 19/10: 69-70.

on the possibilities to apply the nonviolent method at the Chinese world, the last position was very clear to Hu Yuzhi, who insisted to explain it in the above-mentioned article. Anyway, we find the echo of the description written by Hu Yuzhi of the actions needed to reach the target with a non-cooperation movement in the fifth lecture on “Nationalism” that Sun Zhongshan held in Guangzhou on the 24th of February, 1924. Like Hu Yuzhi, he cited the Mahatma Gandhi and the success of his non-cooperation movement as a possible example to follow in order to save China, because the Country “was not conquered yet” (*hai mei you wang 还没有亡*) (Sun 1957: 646-7). It is similar also to Zhang Dongsun’s vision of a China “dying in mourning clothes” (*chuisi jiang shuai 垂死將衰*), previously cited, but diverging on the possible solution for its critical situation because of his misunderstanding on non-violent path and passivity.

Another intellectual with worldwide interests, Fan Zhongyun, publishes in *東方雜誌* (*Dongfang zazhi, The Eastern Miscellany*) the article 《革命果能避免麼》 (“Geming guoneng bimian ma, Will indeed be possible to avert the revolution?;” Fan 1923 20/24: 41-46). He states that to change the country, the Chinese people must choose between an armed revolution, as that led by Lenin in Russia, and “a passive revolution, like that of Gandhi in India” (*xiaoji de geming, ru Yindu de Gandhi 消極的革命, 如印度的甘地*) (Fan 1923: 41). Nevertheless, Fan’s article had a specific purpose: that is to criticise Woodrow Wilson’s “The road away from revolution” and his written reproach by G. O. P. Bland. However, in this article his words about the use of nonviolent means are not particularly accurate. At the contrary, two years later Fan Zhongyun would publish the book *Mahatma Gandhi* (*聖雄甘地 Shengxiong Gandhi*), stating from its introduction that “the so-called nonviolent person is not as meek as a lamb” (*suowei feibaolizhe fei ruo shun ru yang 所謂非暴力者, 非柔順如羊*) (Fan 1926:1), and that a non-violent person instead uses bright means to resist violence. In the book, Fan goes on explaining his opinion on Gandhi and his life, and writes toward the end of the book that “the nonviolent belief is the most active fight” (*feibaoli de xinyang bianshi zui jiji de zhanzheng 非暴力的信仰 便是最積極的戰爭*) (Fan 1926: 93). Fan completed this work on the wave generated by the first short biography on Mohandas Gandhi, written in 1923 by the literature Nobel Prize Romain Rolland (1866-1944) (Rolland 1924), and translated in Chinese in 1925 (Luolan 1925). A translation that came slightly later than the Russian one, by the Soviet State Publishing House in 1924, a work that sounded like an appreciation of Gandhi’s work for the masses, but which did not bound him to Soviet Russia: in the spring of that same year, the Mahatma refused an invitation by Stalin because he did not want to be used “for violent purpose” (Ray 1969: 91).

In this same year, China sees its very first book on Gandhi as a special issue of *東方雜誌* (*Dongfang zazhi, The Eastern Miscellany*), proposing again 7 articles which had already been published in the journal in 1922. The articles were presented as a “gift” for the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the journal, and this was also a way to feed the general interest raised by this message for the freedom from foreign interferences coming from India (Gao 1924). From the aforementioned “The movement for the Indian national independence and the British policy,” we may drive an important consideration on a reason why Gandhi’s proposal was felt as foreign by some Chinese

intellectuals. The author of the article thought that “the focus of the movement was no longer the intellectual class, moving instead toward the untrained mass of lower level. Gandhi is not strong enough to control a mass organisation of this level” (運動之中心已離去知識階級，而移到無訓練之下級民衆。甘地氏之勢力，竟不能統制此等羣衆團體 *yundong zhi zhongxin yi liqu zhishi jieji, er yidao wu xunlian zhi xiaji minzhong. Gandhi shi zhi shili, jing buneng tongzhi cideng qunzhong tuanti*; “S” 1922: 70).

But “S” was wrong. The Indian movement was close to the peasants and the excluded, not in their stead. Gandhi experimented personally the life he thought would free India from serfdom, without any contempt or disregard for who needed to be educated to his nonviolent way, and never thought that the Indian people could not be trained, or that the need for training was a matter of social class. This helped him to interact with people not just to control the masses, as the spinning wheel movement demonstrates, for instance. The spinning wheel may be considered a symbol of the distance between Gandhi’s proposal and the Chinese intellectuals and politicians, in as much as it was a refusal of the materialistic civilization. With this materialistic civilization, the British invaded India endangering its ancient culture, but in the meanwhile this materialism was increasingly deteriorating also European people (Hualu 1922: 96). Thus, as we may read in Gandhi’s *Indian Home Rule (Hind Swaraj)*,¹¹ the instruments of the invaders must be refused to be freed from foreign rule, also because the Western materialistic culture aims at a modernization without concern for the human being most important part: his soul and the resulting moral behavior. This refusal of the mechanization was part of a project to scatter artisanal industries all over India in order to solve the problem of widespread poverty, a poverty strictly connected with the British exploitation of India, of its manpower and of its material resources (even if indeed not exclusively with the British). It was to actually give back India to the Indians (Kumarappa 1946; Venu 2016).

The Chinese intellectuals argued whether the Gandhian proposal of pacifist noncooperation was suitable for China too. Example of this debate during the Twenties are two articles written by Zhang Dongsun and Hu Yuzhi. The two intellectuals differed also in some considerations on the link between Chinese history and the perspective of non-cooperation movement. Zhang’s point of view is quite clear. In his opinion, an ethical change within the intellectual class is needed to take China out of its decadence. However, he appears to ignore the ethical basis of Gandhi’s path, thus he thinks that the non-cooperation movement does not fit in with the Chinese actual and present situation (Zhang 1923: 94). Instead, in his article “Our two roads,” Hu argues that in the Chinese history it is possible to identify the roots of the tendencies typical of the Chinese people toward noncooperation, so similar to the Gandhian way, while revolutionaries that oppose Gandhi’s ideas instead plagiarize the West (Hu 1923 20/22). Nevertheless, Hu will change his mind after a period of study at the Sorbonne (1928-1931) and a short stop in Moscow on his way back to China (Tsui 2015: 66, 78). As we may read in his “The Indian revolution” (Hu 1931), he no longer deemed Gandhi’s position adapted to the Chinese situation. This opinion is shared by many intellectuals, as, for instance, A Qiong 阿穹 shows in his

¹¹ It was originally written by M. K. Gandhi in 1908 in Gujarati. The English translation is by Gandhi himself.

short article “Gandhi and China” (A 1931). There he explains his thought that Gandhi’s idea was not suitable for the Chinese situation because the history of the Chinese country does not allow to adopt an external solution. Moreover, Chinese intellectuals are not the only one that in the Thirties have a different opinion of the Mahatma and of his path to freedom after having shared it for a time. After a few days of dense and deep dialogue with Gandhi, who was on his way back to India following an official visit to the United Kingdom in 1931, one of his greatest supporter, Romain Rolland himself, “in face of the need to fight against Fascism with all available means, felt he could not be bound by Gandhi’s principle of non-violence” (Francis 1975: 291). However, the point is that “*Satyagraha* – Gandhi’s nonviolent action – was not a way for one group to seize what it wanted from another. It was not a weapon of class struggle, or of any other kind of division. *Satyagraha* was instead an instrument of unity. It was a way to remove injustice and restore social harmony, to the benefit of both sides. *Satyagraha*, strange as it seems, was for the opponent’s sake as well. When *Satyagraha* worked, both sides won” (Shepard 2011: 45). Maybe it is very difficult to apply it to a specific historical situation because, more or less unconsciously, we, human beings, hardly accept not to prevail over our opponents. This rests on us.

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Do murdoṃ ke lie guldastā

Ritratti di genere e gioco intertestuale nella prosa di Surendra Varmā

Veronica Ghirardi

Do murdoṃ ke lie guldastā (*A bunch of flowers for two corpses*) is a novel by Surendra Varmā, published for the first time in 1998. It is a sort of reversed Bildungsroman, with a highly theatrical flavor, still almost unknown among Western readers and largely overlooked by Hindi scholars. With this paper I aim at investigating two specific aspects of the text that may encourage reflections on a planetary scale: the deconstruction of conventional gender roles and the presence of intertextual irony. After introducing the plot and the main characters – not only the *corpses* mentioned in the title, but also the city of Mumbai where most of the events take place – I will firstly linger over the pictures of masculinity and femininity provided by the author, and the beneath problematization of conventional gender roles. As regards this, I argue that Surendra Varmā's novel should be read as a possible counterpart of Hindi feminist writing, as it represents a different perspective from which to observe the transformations of gender roles and of the relationships between men and women. Subsequently, I will show how the author plays with intertextuality, introducing ironic and often desecrating connections between *Itihāsa* (particularly the *Mahābhārata*) and his characters' vicissitudes. Both these aspects of the novel are extremely thought-provoking and allow to link Varmā's work to a conspicuous part of contemporary planetary literature.

1. Introduzione

Scrivo questo articolo con grandissimo piacere in occasione del pensionamento della Prof.ssa Pinuccia Caracchi, mia prima docente di lingua e letteratura hindī, cui devo il mio primo incontro con l'India e la sua inestimabile ricchezza culturale. Le sono estremamente grata per la passione profusa nell'insegnamento e per l'universo immenso che ha saputo dischiudere agli occhi dei suoi studenti.

In questo scritto ho deciso di prendere in esame un romanzo di Surendra Varmā,¹ *Do murdoṃ ke lie guldastā* ("Un mazzo di fiori per due cadaveri;" Varmā 2012), pubblicato per la prima volta nel 1998,

¹ Surendra Varmā nacque a Jhansi, Uttar Pradeś, il 7 settembre 1941. Raggiunse inizialmente il successo come drammaturgo con *Sūrya kī antim kiraṇ se sūrya kī pahli kiraṇ tak* (Varmā 1972), opera successivamente tradotta in sei lingue indiane. La sua produzione teatrale comprende inoltre *Āṭvām sarg* (Varmā 1976), *Kaid-e-hayāt* (Varmā 1983), *Ek dūnī ek* (Varmā 1987),

ancora del tutto sconosciuto al pubblico occidentale e ampiamente trascurato dagli studiosi del settore. Più nello specifico, mi propongo di analizzare due aspetti del romanzo che permettono di accostarlo a tanta parte della letteratura contemporanea che gode di un più ampio riconoscimento della critica e del pubblico su scala mondiale. Da un lato mi soffermerò sui ritratti di mascolinità e femminilità proposti dall'autore e la sottesa problematizzazione dei convenzionali ruoli di genere; dall'altro su come Varmā giochi con lo strumento intertestuale, proponendo accostamenti ironici e talvolta arditi tra le vicende dei suoi personaggi e la grande tradizione classica. Si tratta, a mio parere, di aspetti di primaria importanza, dal momento che accolgono e riflettono due sfide centrali della realtà globale: la creazione di nuovi equilibri nelle relazioni uomo-donna e di nuove modalità per il recupero e la rielaborazione di una vasta eredità culturale. Partendo da questa prospettiva, il testo verrà messo in relazione con altri due romanzi hindī degli anni Novanta, *Chinnamastā* di Prabhā Khetān (Khetān 2004) e *Mujhe cānd cāhie* dello stesso Varmā (Varmā 2009). In particolare, il raffronto con *Chinnamastā* metterà in evidenza come la prosa di Varmā possa essere letta come complementare alla produzione letteraria in lingua hindī di stampo femminista.

L'approccio con cui ho scelto di accostarmi al romanzo – pur nella consapevolezza dei limiti connessi alla “posizione” o “posizionalità” di chiunque si proponga di leggere e analizzare un testo – scaturisce dal desiderio di collocarlo su piano di discussione valido a livello *planetario*.² Prima di procedere con l'analisi, desidero soffermarmi brevemente sull'appena menzionata posizionalità, una questione di grande rilievo, che non può essere trascurata specialmente alla luce della critica di matrice postcoloniale e di genere. Come già indicava Bernheimer (1995) nel suo report *Comparative Literature at the Turn of the Century* per l'American Comparative Literature Association è importante che il comparatista (ma a mio avviso non solo) si assuma la responsabilità di indicare il luogo e il momento in cui svolge i propri studi e da dall'interno di quale tradizione. Non esiste ricerca del tutto

Śakuntalā kī aṅgūṭhī (Varmā 1990), *Ratī kā kaṅgan* (Varmā 2011). Proprio per la sua attività di drammaturgo nel 1992 fu insignito del Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. Varmā è inoltre autore di raccolte di racconti, quali *Pyār kī bātem* (Varmā 1974) e *Kitnā sundar joṛā* (Varmā 1982), e di romanzi quali *Am̐dhere se pare* (Varmā 1980), *Mujhe cānd cāhie* (Varmā 1993), *Do murdoṃ ke lie guldastā* (Varmā 1998), *Kāṭnā śamī kā vṛkṣa padma pañkhurī kī dhār se* (Varmā 2010). Sulla sua produzione letteraria si vedano Pāṭil (2011) e Therattil (2011).

² Mi ricollego con questa espressione all'evoluzione degli studi letterari (ma non solo) di origine comparatistica nel nuovo millennio, come proposta, per esempio da Miyoshi (2001), Spivak (2003), Krishnaswamy (2010), Elias e Moraru (ed.; 2015). In breve, la definizione di letteratura planetaria “è scaturita da un ripensamento critico in seno agli stessi studi postcoloniali, pervenuti ormai da qualche tempo a una sorta di autocritica rispetto ai rischi identitari e nazionalistici da una parte e all'accondiscendenza verso una politica multiculturalista e globalizzante di stampo liberale dall'altra [...]. In questo contesto la letteratura è valorizzata per la sua capacità di essere non solo luogo di resistenza, bensì pratica di invenzione di nuove modalità di rapporto tra gli uomini, spazio non sempre asservito ai processi di standardizzazione, ma anche relativamente critico nei loro confronti” (Benvenuti e Ceserani 2012: 8).

neutra e oggettiva: essa verrà sempre influenzata e conformata dalla formazione, dalle opinioni, dai valori di colui/colei che la conduce. Per questo motivo, la mia ricerca si orienta verso la prospettiva del bricolage (si vedano Kincheloe 2001, Denzin and Lincoln 2005) una prospettiva fondata sull'interdisciplinarietà, secondo la quale il ricercatore-*bricoleur* “abandons the quest for some naive concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality” (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg 2011, 168). Desidero quindi specificare che, per formazione, sono legata agli studi indologici e letterari di stampo “occidentale” (per quanto tale aggettivo non sia che una semplificazione di un ricco e variegato sistema di conoscenze, popoli, tradizioni materiali e culturali, caratterizzato da un approccio euro-centrico o, forse più correttamente, americano-centrico), ma, in considerazione della mia nazionalità, conduco i miei studi da una posizione *periferica*. Il mio interesse e attuale campo di ricerca è la letteratura hindī contemporanea, osservata nelle sue possibili correlazioni con le tradizioni letterarie occidentali più note e studiate in questa parte del globo. Il mio obiettivo non è quello di uniformare e appiattare la produzione letteraria in lingua hindī sulla base di una qualsivoglia gerarchia, bensì di analizzarne le peculiarità e cogliere quegli aspetti che possano più facilmente parlare a un pubblico al di là dei confini nazionali e di appartenenza linguistica.

2. Un mazzo di fiori per due cadaveri

Do murdom ke lie guldastā può essere letto come un Bildungsroman rovesciato, i cui protagonisti, Nīl Māthur e Bholā Pāṇḍe, attratti dal sogno di una facile ricchezza, smarriscono la propria traiettoria esistenziale. Se in un romanzo di formazione convenzionale, il protagonista compie una sorta di viaggio spirituale, intellettuale ed emotivo, che lo porta a crescere e a trovare il proprio ruolo nella società, Nīl e Bholā intraprendono un percorso inverso. I destini dei due uomini si incontrano durante un viaggio in treno, in direzione Mumbai, dove entrambi sperano di dare una svolta alla propria vita. Inizialmente i loro intenti sono elevati (desiderano aiutare le rispettive famiglie, Nīl sogna di finire il suo dottorato), ma lentamente e inesorabilmente vengono accantonati: Mumbai, attraverso percorsi diversi, sembra infatti condurre i due giovani uomini sulla strada della degenerazione e dell'auto-distruzione.

Vediamo più nel dettaglio chi sono i due protagonisti. Nīl è un giovane e affascinante dottorando, costretto ad abbandonare Delhi e le sue aspirazioni accademiche a causa di una relazione non approvata con la nipote del suo mentore. A Mumbai inizia a lavorare presso un'anziana donna, Śrīmatī Mehtāb Dastūr, la quale, dopo la morte del marito, desidera la compagnia (pagata) di una persona colta, con cui condividere il proprio tempo e i propri pensieri. In questo periodo,

praticamente per caso, Nīl inizia a lavorare come gigolo e, in poco tempo, diventa piuttosto conosciuto tra le signore dell'alta società di Mumbai. Il giovane è attratto dai loro soldi, ma allo stesso tempo si rende conto di provare disgusto per il loro atteggiamento disinibito e spesso aggressivo. Quando finalmente Nīl trova l'amore nella giovane musicista Naina, descritta come un'oasi di purezza e candore in mezzo alla decadenza di Mumbai, queste relazioni appaiono ancor più vili e abiette. Nīl vorrebbe sposarla e tornare a condurre una vita regolare, ma gli eventi impediscono la realizzazione dei suoi sogni. Dopo una serie di disavventure, infatti, il giovane viene assassinato da alcuni gangster: Nīl rappresenta dunque il primo dei due cadaveri (quello in senso fisico in realtà) cui allude il titolo del romanzo.

Il secondo personaggio e cadavere — anche se in questo caso solo in accezione morale e spirituale — è Bholā. Quando arriva a Mumbai da Mathurā, Bholā è alla ricerca di un lavoro come guardiano. È un uomo semplice (anche il suo nome lo sottolinea ironicamente, dal momento che *bholā* significa “semplice,” ma anche “innocente”), devoto al dio Hanumān, rigorosamente vegetariano, che definisce se stesso come un *brahmacārī*. A Mumbai, però, entra a far parte di una gang criminale e la sua vita, i suoi valori ne sono completamente sconvolti: inizia a mangiare carne e bere alcolici, diventa uno spacciatore e corriere di denaro sporco. Prende parte a una sparatoria e accoltella un esponente di una gang rivale, arriva addirittura a uccidere un compagno reo di aver tradito il loro capo. Per un certo periodo Bholā cerca di opporre resistenza a questa nuova vita, ma gradualmente ne è del tutto assorbito. Nella seconda parte del romanzo, unitosi in matrimonio a una ex-spogliarellista e diventato padre, inizia a essere preoccupato delle conseguenze delle proprie azioni: cosa potrebbe succedere alla sua famiglia se venisse assassinato o arrestato? Pensa di tornare a Mathurā, ma non è sufficientemente forte per abbandonare la *māyānagrī*, “la città dell'illusione” come Mumbai è definita (Varmā 2012: 280). Vorrei aprire qui brevemente una parentesi sul ruolo della città di Mumbai, un ruolo a mio avviso talmente importante da poterla considerare la terza protagonista del romanzo. A partire dalle prime pagine, Mumbai è descritta come la città delle possibilità, una metropoli in cui un uomo deve solo saper riconoscere le proprie qualità e puntare su di esse per essere ampiamente ricompensato (Varmā 2012: 13). Tale speranza induce Nīl e Bholā ad abbandonare la propria casa in direzione Mahārāṣṭra. In realtà, una volta giunti nella metropoli, incontrano una situazione ben più complessa: Mumbai è una città contraddittoria, in cui si possono incontrare a breve distanza immagini di struggente povertà e incredibile opulenza. All'uscita da uno degli appuntamenti con le sue amanti, Nīl si sofferma a osservare le strade della città. In svariate occasioni aveva incontrato toccanti esempi di povertà, ma mai come a Mumbai. Nella metropoli, allo stesso tempo, vivevano però anche donne come Śrīmatī Dastūr, che gli dava un ottimo stipendio solo per

alleviare la sua mente, o le sue amanti che per un rapporto sessuale erano disposte a pagare quanto lo stipendio mensile di tante persone in India. Mumbai, con le sue auto che sfrecciano senza sosta, è inoltre estremamente dinamica, ma di un dinamismo spesso disumanizzante.³ Sembra che a Mumbai tutto possa essere mercificato e sottoposto alle leggi del mercato. Il critico Sañjay Cauhān, nel suo *Uttar-ādhunikā aur hindī upanyās* (“La postmodernità e il romanzo hindī,” Cauhān 2011) si sofferma su questo aspetto del romanzo definendolo una forma di *dhan kī līlā*, un gioco illusorio in cui il denaro sembra poter acquistare qualsiasi cosa e giustificare ogni forma di condotta immorale e criminosa (*hatyā evaṃ aparādhikaraṇ kī līlā*; Cauhān 2011: 42). In un simile contesto le relazioni umane sono distorte e sembrano essere conformate dal solo interesse personale: chiunque può essere usato e gettato via in qualsiasi momento. Nīl usa in particolare una delle sue amanti, Pārul, e i suoi sentimenti, per poi abbandonarla. Da lei ottiene denaro, regali costosi e un appartamento in cui vivere, ma, non appena realizza di non avere più il controllo sulla relazione, prontamente la rifugge. In maniera analoga, in realtà, la donna usa Nīl per sfuggire alla frustrazione e all’insoddisfazione della propria vita matrimoniale. Quando Nīl cerca di parlarle, appare sorda ai pensieri del ragazzo, interessata ai soli propri desideri e bisogni.

Nell’ultimo capitolo Nīl chiede l’aiuto di Bholā per mettere fine alle persecuzioni di Pārul, la quale non riesce a rassegnarsi all’idea di essere stata abbandonata. Il capo di Bholā finge di offrirgli il suo aiuto per risolvere la questione: in realtà è stato assoldato da un parente della donna per assassinare Nīl.

Il romanzo, narrato in terza persona, si caratterizza per un abbondante ricorso alla prolessi. Il titolo stesso, infatti, allude alla conclusione dell’opera e al destino di decadenza fisica e morale che attende i due protagonisti a Mumbai. La narrazione è strutturata in sedici capitoli, ciascuno dei quali diviso in brevi paragrafi che si riferiscono in un primo momento a Nīl e successivamente a Bholā. Il frequente uso di dialoghi e discorsi indiretti permette al lettore di immergersi maggiormente nei pensieri e nelle vicissitudini di Nīl e Bholā e conferisce al romanzo un tono marcatamente teatrale. A

³ La degenerazione della società consumistica è in realtà un tema caro a molti degli autori hindī contemporanei. Si pensi, a titolo esemplificativo, a Uday Prakāś e al suo *Pīlī chatrī vāli laṛkī* (*La ragazza con l’ombrellino giallo*; Prakāś 2001) in cui l’autore in più occasioni mette in luce come la società indiana abbia assorbito gli aspetti peggiori del mondo occidentale contemporaneo, tralasciandone invece il contributo potenzialmente positivo. Anche in *Kali-kathā: vāyā bāipās* (*Bypass al cuore di Calcutta*) di Alkā Sarāvṅī (Sarāvṅī 1998) l’alternanza tra i ricordi del protagonista degli anni Quaranta e il suo presente negli anni Novanta mette in evidenza la decadenza etica e morale della contemporaneità. La fede in ideali solidi che aveva caratterizzato la lotta per l’indipendenza sembra essere svanita, soppiantata da una società vuota e consumistica.

conferma di ciò, l'opera è stata adattata per il teatro da Ashraf Ali, debuttando sulle scene di Delhi nel corso del 2015.⁴

3. Ruoli di genere in una moderna metropoli

Un aspetto ampiamente dibattuto della società contemporanea — che da tempo riguarda i paesi più avanzati, ma ha preso piede anche nei paesi in via di sviluppo — è la decostruzione dei convenzionali ruoli di genere e la conseguente problematizzazione delle relazioni uomo-donna (si veda, a titolo esemplificativo, Mac an Ghail and Haywood 2007). Le questioni di genere hanno acquisito negli ultimi decenni una centralità tale da rappresentare la lente privilegiata attraverso la quale leggere e discutere la crisi della società odierna. Con la sempre maggiore partecipazione delle donne al mondo del lavoro e la conseguente creazione di nuove dinamiche ed equilibri famigliari e sociali, con il diffondersi del femminismo, si è assistito a una progressiva ridefinizione dei ruoli di genere. Tali cambiamenti hanno raggiunto in maniera più o meno marcata anche il subcontinente indiano (quantomeno nella sua realtà urbana), intaccando il paradigma della donna indiana modello, docile e remissiva.⁵ La letteratura hindī contemporanea ha iniziato a riflettere tali cambiamenti, soprattutto attraverso l'opera di autrici di orientamento femminista, quali Citrā Mudgal, Mṛdulā Garg, Prabhā Khetān.⁶ Nei loro romanzi l'attenzione è posta sulle nuove immagini di femminilità, sulle possibili vie di auto-realizzazione, sui loro desideri e la loro sessualità. Simili tematiche, però, non sono da considerarsi esclusive della letteratura scritta dalle donne: un esempio può proprio essere la prosa di Surendra Varmā — autore uomo, appartenente all'establishment letterario, sensibile alla

⁴ Una breve recensione è proposta su The Hindu da Diwan Singh Bajeli (2015), *Brutality at play*, disponibile alla pagina <http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/brutality-at-play/article7535871.ece>

⁵ Lo psicoanalista Sudhir Kakar ha identificato Sītā come il modello convenzionale della buona moglie indiana: “the ideal of womanhood embodied by Sita is one of chastity, purity, gentle tenderness and a singular faithfulness which cannot be destroyed or even disturbed by her husband’s rejections, slights or thoughtlessness... The moral is the familiar one: ‘Whether treated well or ill, a wife should never indulge in ire.’” (Kakar 1981: 66). Ovviamente considerare questo stesso modello come una realtà monolitica, frutto di un medesimo atteggiamento di fondo, sarebbe una considerevole semplificazione. Infatti, come hanno sottolineato Gloria Goodwin Raheja e Ann Grodzins Gold nel loro *Listen to the Heron’s Words* (1994: 11), “characterizations of South Asian women as repressed and submissive are also half-truths in the sense that, at times, submission and silence may be conscious strategies of self-representation deployed when it is expedient to do so, before particular audiences and in particular contexts. They may often, in other words, be something of a discontinuity, a schism, between conventional representations and practices, on the one hand, and experience, on the other.”

⁶ Per un inquadramento generale sull'opera di queste autrici si vedano Consolaro (2011, rispettivamente 163-164, 286-290, 299) e Rāy (2002, rispettivamente 390-391, 352-354, 383-387). Per una più specifica analisi sulla questione di genere nell'opera di Mṛdulā Garg e in particolare nel romanzo *Kaṭhgulāb*, si veda Castaing (2013); sulla prosa di Prabhā Khetān si vedano invece Browarczyk (2015); Consolaro (2017).

problematizzazione dei ruoli di genere — il cui focus, specialmente nel caso di *Do murdom ke lie guldastā*, si sposta sui personaggi maschili. A mio parere può essere particolarmente stimolante osservare in parallelo questi nuovi ritratti di genere — proposti dunque da autrici femministe e da autori come Varmā — in quanto complementari. Come scriveva Connell (2005: 43) “masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition”: unire prospettive differenti può senza dubbio portare a uno scenario più completo e dettagliato delle trasformazioni in atto nella società indiana contemporanea.

Iniziamo dunque con l’analizzare il personaggio di Nīl, un promettente studente di dottorato che si trova, senza quasi rendersene conto, a lavorare come gigolo. Il giovane è un personaggio passivo, che, nel corso della propria esistenza, prende pochissime decisioni in prima persona: la maggior parte degli eventi della sua vita, infatti, vengono determinati da altre persone e, in particolare, dalle donne. Nelle prime pagine del romanzo il lettore incontra Kiran, la nipote del mentore di Nīl: è proprio Kiran a confessare al giovane la propria infatuazione e a cercare esplicitamente un rapporto fisico. In molte occasioni Nīl si rimprovera per non essere stato capace di fermarla: la giovane era rimasta incinta e le prospettive accademiche di Nīl erano svanite (Varmā 2012: 9-10). Il ragazzo era stato estromesso da tutte le università e centri di ricerca di Delhi e indotto a emigrare. A Mumbai inizia una relazione con Kumud, un’amica della sua datrice di lavoro, ma anche in questo caso è Kumud a compiere il primo passo (Varmā 2012: 53-58). Persino la carriera da gigolo di Nīl è avviata da una donna, Blossom. Quest’ultima approccia Nīl in un locale e gli propone di seguirla a casa. Nīl, pur stupito dalla situazione, non riesce a resistere alle *avances* della donna, ma non ne coglie il sotteso. Solo poco prima di lasciare l’abitazione, quando Blossom gli porge ottocento rupie, capisce cosa sia realmente accaduto (82-88). La stessa morte di Nīl viene causata da una delle sue amanti, Pārul. La donna — appartenete a una ricca famiglia di industriali di Mumbai, vincolata a un matrimonio per lei del tutto insoddisfacente — perde completamente la testa per il giovane, lo sommerge di regali costosi e addirittura gli offre un nuovo appartamento in cui vivere. Pārul si illude di poter un giorno scappare con il ragazzo e addirittura pensa di avvelenare il marito (Varmā 2012: 193-195). Infine, all’insaputa di Nīl, smette di prendere precauzioni e, incinta, mette alle strette il ragazzo. Nīl cerca di convincerla ad abortire, a pensare al buon nome della sua famiglia, ma, di fronte al suo netto rifiuto, le rivela di volere far ritorno a Delhi e sposare un’altra donna (Varmā 2012: 238-240). Pārul è furiosa e pronta a tutto per ottenere la sua vendetta: sarà infatti proprio suo fratello a commissionare l’assassinio di Nīl.

In maniera analoga Bholā non sceglie attivamente quella che sarà la sua nuova esistenza a Mumbai. Alla ricerca di un lavoro onesto da guardiano, finisce per ritrovarsi invischiato in una gang

criminale. Senza quasi rendersene conto abbandona tutti quelli che erano stati i valori e le abitudini della sua vecchia vita, semplicemente per uniformarsi alle persone con cui si trova a contatto. Diversamente da quanto avviene per Nīl, i cambiamenti nell'esistenza di Bholā non sono ascrivibili a personaggi femminili, ciò non di meno l'uomo sembra essere incapace di opporre resistenza agli eventi che lo trascinano verso il cuore della criminalità di Mumbai. Per la maggior parte del tempo si limita a obbedire agli ordini che gli vengono impartiti e anche quando, nella porzione finale del romanzo, sceglie in prima persona di colpire a morte un compagno, reo di aver assassinato uno dei loro capi, tale scelta sembra essere il mero frutto della degenerazione dei fatti. Nel momento in cui si sposa, timoroso per le conseguenze delle proprie azioni e afflitto dal senso di colpa per quanto commesso, pensa di far ritorno a Mathurā, ma non ha la forza per trasformare l'intento in azione.

Come si può facilmente cogliere da quanto sin qui descritto, le immagini, gli stereotipi di norma associati alla figura femminile e maschile in Asia meridionale (ma non solo) sono ampiamente infranti. Un uomo può essere fragile, incapace di prendere decisioni e perseverare nei propri intenti. Un uomo può essere supportato da una donna ricca, se non addirittura vivere sulle sue spalle. Di contraltare una donna può essere sicura di sé, giocare senza inibizioni con la propria sessualità e decidere, addirittura senza coinvolgere il compagno, della propria vita riproduttiva. Tali ritratti di genere sono particolarmente rilevanti in quanto tratteggiati da un autore uomo e appartenente all'establishment letterario. Da questo punto di vista, è importante sottolineare che *Do murdom ke lie guldastā* non rappresenta un *unicum* nella prosa di Surendra Varmā:⁷ una simile rappresentazione di genere, infatti, può essere riscontrata in un altro romanzo di successo, *Mujhe cānd cāhie* (*Voglio la luna*, 2009), per il quale l'autore ottenne nel 1996 il prestigioso riconoscimento della Sāhitya Akadēmī. Come sottolinea l'eminente critico Sudhīś Pacaurī nel suo *Uttar-ādhunik sāhityik vimars* ("Il discorso letterario postmoderno;" Pacaurī 2010), in un capitolo dedicato al romanzo in questione, la protagonista, Varṣā Vaśiṣṭh, è una giovane donna attiva e intraprendente, capace di cambiare radicalmente la propria esistenza. Da ragazza di provincia, appartenente a una famiglia fortemente tradizionalista (nessuno della famiglia ha mai recitato, né è mai andato fuori città, nessuna ragazza della famiglia può non rincasare la notte), diventa una stella del cinema a Mumbai. Nonostante le avversità Varṣā riesce ad adattarsi alla complessità di questo nuovo mondo e a plasmare di conseguenza la propria realtà. Al contrario il suo amante, Harṣ, da cui Varṣā aspetta un bambino, è incapace di conciliare arte, lavoro, affetti e finisce per cercare rifugio nella droga e morire. Dopo la scomparsa di Harṣ, la giovane donna è affranta, ma non abbandona il mondo del cinema: ha accettato

⁷ Sulle questioni di genere nel teatro di Varmā si veda, ad esempio, Hemlatā (2012).

le leggi del mondo contemporaneo e proprio per questo riesce a vivere, raggiungendo, almeno parzialmente, la sua luna (Pacauri 2010: 165). In breve, è facile notare come la prosa di Varmā rifletta i cambiamenti che stanno attraversando la società indiana contemporanea e che stanno lentamente portando a una ridefinizione dei convenzionali ruoli di genere e delle relazioni uomo-donna. I ritratti di genere realizzati da Varmā dipingono donne attive, determinate, talvolta aggressive, e uomini fragili, insicuri e, spesso, trascinati dagli eventi.

Come accennato in precedenza, tematiche affini hanno rappresentato il cardine della scrittura di stampo femminista in lingua hindī di fine Novecento. Per poter meglio osservare i punti di contatto e di divergenza tra la scrittura di Varmā e quella dichiaratamente femminista (solo in termini di descrizione dei ruoli di genere), ho scelto di far riferimento a un romanzo fortemente autobiografico di Prabhā Khetān, *Chinnamastā*.⁸ L'autrice, appartenente a una famiglia *marvārī* piuttosto conservatrice, individua nell'indipendenza economica la condizione di base per l'emancipazione femminile. Prabhā Khetān, da questo punto di vista, fu fortemente influenzata dalla lettura di *Le Deuxième Sexe*⁹ di Simone de Beauvoir. La protagonista di *Chinnamastā*, Priyā riesce infatti a liberarsi dalla gabbia dorata in cui si trova costretta a vivere grazie al proprio lavoro. La vita di Priyā è brutalmente segnata nell'infanzia da episodi di violenza sessuale all'interno delle mura domestiche. Durante la gioventù percepisce la propria condizione di genere come una maledizione: osservando sua madre e le sorelle maggiori vorrebbe non crescere mai e non diventare donna, ma soprattutto vorrebbe evitare le affezioni che sembrano essere inesorabilmente connesse alla vita matrimoniale. Presto, però, Priyā si sposa e diventa madre di un bambino, imboccando così la strada che tanto avrebbe voluto evitare. La svolta finalmente avviene grazie a un amico del marito che le offre una possibilità di impiego in un'attività di export. La giovane, che non si era infatti mai sentita completa nel ruolo di moglie e madre, scorge quindi una possibilità di auto-realizzazione. Progressivamente arriva a convincersi del fatto che la condizione di base per l'emancipazione femminile è l'indipendenza economica: quest'ultima è condizione imprescindibile per evadere da un sistema

⁸ Si noti che il titolo del romanzo è il nome di una delle Mahāvidyā (le dieci dee tantriche), tradizionalmente dipinta mentre regge in una mano la propria testa e nell'altra una scimitarra o un pugnale. Chinnamastā si erge in piedi su Kāma e Rati, allacciati in un rapporto sessuale, e le sua testa beve il sangue che zampilla dal collo mozzato. Questo aspetto della *devī* è normalmente associato al concetto di sacrificio di sé e al risveglio di Kuṇḍalinī, l'energia spirituale latente (per maggiori dettagli si veda Kinsley 1997: 144-166). Il romanzo rispecchia perfettamente questi due aspetti della *devī*: come si vedrà a breve, la protagonista è una donna coraggiosa, ferita fisicamente e psicologicamente, che riesce a riscoprire e liberare la propria energia interiore. Grazie al lavoro raggiunge una vita piena, autodeterminata, ma tale rinascita implica serie conseguenze nella sfera privata.

⁹ Il testo di Simone de Beauvoir rappresentò una vera e propria rivelazione per Prabhā Khetān, che lo tradusse in hindī con il titolo *Strī: upekṣitā* (de Beauvoir 1990).

sociale tradizionalista che colloca le donne su un piano di inferiorità. Purtroppo la soddisfazione di Priyā non è condivisa dal marito, che non ne comprende le aspirazioni lavorative e la ostacola con ogni mezzo. Priyā viene infatti costretta a scegliere tra la carriera e la famiglia: decidendo per la prima, la donna abbandona non solo il marito, ma anche il figlioletto. Un simile elemento sconcertò considerevolmente i lettori di lingua hindī degli anni Novanta: si trattava, infatti, di uno dei primi casi in cui un personaggio femminile decideva deliberatamente di abbandonare i ruoli di moglie e, in particolare, quello di madre. Chiaramente è una decisione sofferta – in molteplici occasioni Prabhā Khetān descrive i pensieri della donna che continuano a correre a quel momento cruciale – ma mai rinnegata. Tutti questi elementi sono particolarmente significativi alla luce delle scelte di vita dell'autrice stessa: Prabhā Khetān, infatti, nonostante un background familiare fortemente conservativo, riuscì ad affermarsi come donna e a diventare un'imprenditrice di successo.

Come emerge da questa breve presentazione, il focus di Prabhā Khetān è totalmente sulla protagonista femminile. Il personaggio di contraltare, il marito Narendra, nonostante provenga da una buona famiglia e abbia studiato negli Stati Uniti, si rivela essere un uomo ancorato ai vecchi modelli di ruolo e relazioni di genere. I suoi interessi sono fortemente limitati, circoscritti a denaro, cibo e sesso, e sembra trattare la moglie come un bell'accessorio, da sfoggiare in occasione degli eventi sociali, o come un oggetto sessuale. Non concepisce che Priyā possa avere una propria identità forte e che possa cercare una via di realizzazione esterna all'ambiente domestico. Fino a quando l'attività lavorativa della donna rappresenta una porzione marginale della loro vita, Narendra sembra magnanimamente accettarla, come se fosse semplicemente un nuovo hobby. Quando, però, si rende conto che per Priyā tale lavoro ha un'importanza del tutto differente e che vi si dedica anima e corpo, la mette spalle al muro con un terribile ultimatum: Priyā deve scegliere se continuare a lavorare o continuare ad avere una famiglia. In *Do murdoṃ ke lie guldastā* la situazione è considerevolmente diversa, in quanto sia personaggi maschili sia femminili riflettono i cambiamenti in atto e appaiono intenti nella definizione, più o meno difficoltosa, di un nuovo ruolo e una nuova posizione all'interno della società.

4. Il *dharma* dello gigolo: l'arte di dissacrare i grandi classici

Un aspetto indubbiamente interessante del romanzo è il modo in cui Surendra Varmā gioca con la grande tradizione classica, richiamando in varie occasioni gli *Itihāsa*. Un primo esempio compare nelle pagine iniziali del romanzo, in riferimento alle conseguenze della relazione di Nīl con la nipote del suo mentore. In un discorso indiretto il giovane uomo riflette sulla propria malasorte e su come, in tempi passati, molti ṛṣi avessero deviato dai doveri del *brahmacarya*, senza dover però abbandonare la

propria carriera (Varmā 2012, 12). Il riferimento è in particolare a Viśvāmitra e alla sua relazione con la splendida Apsaras Menakā, vicenda narrata sia nel *bāla-kāṇḍa* del *Rāmāyaṇa* (Libro I, Canto LXIII), sia nel *Sambhava-parvan* del *Mahābhārata* (Sezione LXXI-LXXII). Indra, allarmato dai poteri ascetici di Viśvāmitra, aveva inviato l'affascinante ninfa per sedurlo e interrompere dunque la sua meditazione. Il *ṛṣi* si era arreso dinnanzi alla bellezza di Menakā, ma, nonostante ciò, aveva comunque raggiunto l'agognata condizione di *brahmarṣi*. Poche pagine oltre, i due protagonisti, sul treno in direzione Mumbai, si raccontano le rispettive storie. Bholā commenta le disavventure di Nīl sottolineando come dietro a ogni conflitto al mondo vi sia sempre una donna. Senza le forzature di Kaikeyī, Rām non sarebbe mai stato costretto all'esilio nella foresta, senza Draupadī non ci sarebbe stato *Mahābhārata* (Varmā 2012: 15-16). Tale riferimento in particolare può essere letto non solo come una riflessione sul passato di Nīl, ma anche come un'anticipazione circa la sua nuova, breve vita a Mumbai.

Il *Mahābhārata* torna in altre occasioni del romanzo, dapprima durante il colloquio di lavoro di Nīl presso Śrīmatī Mehtāb Dastūr. La donna, infatti, per testare la cultura e la loquela del giovane, gli chiede di descrivere uno dei suoi quadri. Nīl inizia così a parlare disinvoltamente del turbamento di Arjuna all'inizio della grande guerra del *Mahābhārata*:

Arjuna vide in piedi in entrambi gli eserciti padri e avi, maestri, zii, fratelli, amici e parenti. Allora il figlio di Kunṭī disse con tristezza: “Oh Kṛṣṇa, la mia mente sta diventando debole. Quella stessa mia gente per la quale ho voluto il regno e la felicità, avendo messo in gioco la vita, è in piedi pronta per la battaglia. Che mi uccidano i Kaurava o che ottenga il governo dei tre regni, io comunque, Madhusūdan, non voglio ucciderli; come potrei ucciderli per un pezzo di terra? Uccidendo i figli di Dhṛtarāṣṭra sarò colpevole. Come potrò essere felice uccidendo la mia stessa gente? La mente dei Kaurava è accecata dall'avidità, non vedono colpa nel recare offesa agli amici o disgrazia alla famiglia, ma perché non dovrei evitare io questo peccato? Con la distruzione della famiglia le norme eterne della famiglia sono distrutte e, con la distruzione delle norme, l'intera famiglia sprofonda nel disordine. Con il diffondersi del disordine, le donne sono corrotte e si mescolano i *varṇa*. In una simile condizione vanno all'inferno sia i distruttori della famiglia sia la famiglia. E privi dell'offerta di *piṇḍa* gli antenati cadono in disgrazia. Detto ciò, Arjuna, turbato, prese arco e freccia e si sedette sul carro.¹⁰

¹⁰ “दोनों सेनाओं में खड़े हुए बड़े-बूढ़ों, पितामह, आचार्य, मामा, भाई, मित्र और सम्बन्धियों को अर्जुन ने देखा। तब कुन्ती के बेटे उदास भाव से बोले, हे कृष्ण, मेरा मन कमजोर पड़ रहा है। जिनके लिए राज और सुख हमने चाहा, वे मेरे नातेदार जीवन को दाँव पर लगाकर युद्ध के लिए खड़े हैं। मुझे कौरव मार दें या मुझे तीनों लोक का राज्य मिले, तो भी मधुसूदन, मैं इन्हें मारना नहीं चाहता, तो फिर जमीन के एक टुकड़े के लिए कैसे मारूँ? धृतराष्ट्र के बेटों को मारकर

È possibile individuare un parallelismo tra la condizione di Arjuna e quella di Nīl: le loro menti sono diventate deboli e sembrano essere incapaci di definire quella che dovrebbe essere la più opportuna condotta. La replica di Kṛṣṇa al turbamento del Pāṇḍava verrà citata più avanti quando Nīl, lavorando come gigolo, si ritrova a essere disgustato dalle sue clienti. Dopo un incontro particolarmente sgradevole ricorda gli insegnamenti della *Gītā* circa l'azione distaccata:

Gli tornò in mente l'insegnamento di Kṛṣṇa nella *Gītā*: colui che pratica lo yoga, che ha il cuore puro, che vince la mente e i sensi, pur agendo, rimane distaccato. Vede, ascolta, tocca, annusa, mangia, cammina, dorme, respira, parla, apre gli occhi, li chiude — i soli sensi fanno il loro lavoro, lo yogi che conosce la vera natura delle cose, consapevole di tutto ciò, ha compreso di non fare nulla.¹¹

Nīl è uno gigolo e come tale deve compiere il proprio dovere, il suo *dharma* da gigolo. Deve soggiogare i propri sensi e rimanere distaccato da ciò che sta facendo: solo in questo modo sarà in grado di sopportare i comportamenti lascivi e aggressivi delle sue amanti. Ovviamente associare il sacro insegnamento della *Gītā* ai pensieri di Nīl sottende una pungente ironia.

La presenza di riferimenti intertestuali (*antar-pāṭhyatā*) che riconducono i lettori ai grandi classici è in realtà un aspetto ricorrente della prosa di Varmā e, in generale, delle diverse tradizioni letterarie in lingue indiane.¹² Tornando al romanzo già precedentemente citato, *Mujhe cānd cāhie*,

हमें पाप ही लगेगा। अपने ही सम्बन्धियों को मारकर हम कैसे सुखी होंगे? कौरवों के मन लोभ से मैले हो गये हैं, वे कुलनाश से होने वाले दोष को और मित्र-द्रोह के पाप को नहीं देख रहे हैं, पर हम इस पाप से क्यों न बचना चाहें? कुल के नाश से सनातन कुलधर्मों का नाश होता है और धर्म का नाश होने से अधर्म समूचे कुल को डुबो देता है। अधर्म के बढ़ने से कुल की स्त्रियाँ दूषित होती हैं और वर्ण का संकर होता है। ऐसा होने के कुलघातक और उसका कुल नरक में जाते हैं। और पिंडदान न मिलने से उसके पुरखों की अधोगति होती है। ऐसा कहकर दुख से व्याकुल हुआ अर्जुन धनुष-बाण लेकर रथ में बैठ गया।” (Varmā 2012: 32). Questo passo, da me tradotto dall'originale, riprende in maniera quasi letterale la prima lettura della *Bhagavadgītā* (1, 28c-42d; si veda la traduzione italiana a cura di Piano 2005).

¹¹ Anche questo passo è stato da me tradotto dall'originale, qui a seguito riportato:

उसे गीता में कृष्ण का उपदेश याद आया, जिसने योग साधा है, जिसने हृदय को विशुद्ध किया है, जिसने मन व इन्द्रियों को जीता है, ऐसा मनुष्य कर्म करते हुए भी उससे अलिप्त रहता है। देखते, सुनते, स्पर्श करते, सूँघते, खाते, चलते, सोते, साँस लेते, बोलते, आँख खोलते, मूँदते - केवल इन्द्रियाँ ही अपना काम करती हैं, ऐसी भावना रखकर तत्त्वज्ञ योगी यह समझे कि मैं कुछ भी नहीं करता हूँ। (Varmā 2012: 151)

¹² Come noto, tradizionalmente in India il valore di un'opera letteraria non dipendeva strettamente dalla sua originalità: creare nuove narrazioni da materiale pre-esistente, rielaborando il ricco bagaglio culturale alle spalle del singolo autore, era percepito come un processo assolutamente naturale. Questo è il caso, per citare un macro-esempio, dei molti *Rāmāyaṇa* (Richman (ed.), 1991), ovvero delle molte versioni delle vicende di Rāma, diffuse in India e in molte altre zone dell'Asia meridionale e Sud-orientale. Dal *Rāmcaritmānas* (in avadhī) di Tulsidās all'*Irāmāvatāram* (in tamil) di Kampan, la base rimane sempre la *Rām kathā*, ma le narrazioni finali possono anche variare considerevolmente, in termini di stile, dettagli e struttura. Inoltre tali narrazioni erano e sono estremamente popolari nei relativi contesti e non vengono recepite come

l'autore, infatti, richiama in più occasioni le opere del grande poeta sanscrito Kālidāsa. Un primo riferimento può essere trovato nel nome stesso della protagonista, Varṣā. In realtà il suo nome era Silbil, ma aveva deciso di cambiarlo in Varṣā. La ragazza esplicitamente afferma di aver letto il *Ṛtusamhāra* di Kālidāsa, il poema sulle sei stagioni indiane, e di aver apprezzato in particolar modo i versi dedicati alla stagione della pioggia (*varṣā*), da cui era dunque scaturita la scelta del nuovo nome. Un secondo rimando porta il lettore al *Meghadūta*, il poema del nuvolo messaggero. In questo caso Varṣā sente la mancanza del suo amante Harṣ, che si è trasferito da Delhi a Mumbai. Per questo motivo le sovviene alla mente come il grande poeta avesse descritto la condizione della separazione. Ulteriori riferimenti possono essere individuati, in particolare a *Śakuntalā* (come modello per descrivere la bellezza femminile) e al *Raghuvamśa* (Varṣā, una volta diventata famosa, inizia a essere servita e riverita come Rāma e Lakṣmaṇa all'interno del poema). Tutti questi richiami intertestuali possono essere considerati piuttosto convenzionali, dal momento che implicano un rimando al modello classico in maniera poco, se non affatto problematica. Nel caso di *Do murdori ke lie guldastā*, invece, come mostrato dai precedenti esempi, l'intertestualità diviene uno strumento fortemente dissacrante, capace di rielaborare in chiave ironica persino i sacri insegnamenti della *Gītā*. Una simile scelta si iscrive perfettamente in un discorso che non è proprio delle sole letterature indiane, ma che riguarda la letteratura a livello planetario. Nel mondo contemporaneo, infatti, l'intertestualità sembra essere diventata la condizione base della testualità stessa:¹³ non è più possibile creare un'opera del tutto nuova prescindendo dai testi pre-esistenti, è necessario riconnettersi, in un modo o nell'altro, al passato. Come afferma Bernardelli (2010: 36), però, il peso di tale passato è divenuto pressoché insostenibile, proprio per questo la letteratura ricorre all'ironia come a una modalità espressiva privilegiata. L'ironia, se non addirittura la parodia (si veda Hutcheon 2000), è quindi uno

mere varianti dell'originale sanscrito. I richiami intertestuali possono chiaramente rappresentare porzioni molto più ridotte di una narrazione, specialmente nella prosa moderna e contemporanea, ma rimangono ugualmente significativi. In generale, i richiami alla tradizione classica indiana sono percepiti come arricchimento; spesso ben più problematica è, invece, la situazione in caso di richiami intertestuali che coinvolgono tradizioni letterarie occidentali (sull'argomento si veda, ad esempio, Trivedi 2007).

¹³ Roland Barthes, arrivando a proclamare la morte dell'autore, definì l'intertestualità come *l'impossibilità di vivere al di fuori del testo infinito* (Barthes 1975, 36). Secondo il critico, infatti, ogni testo nasce dalla combinazione di frammenti di varie linguaggi, di formule e modelli ritmici, molti dei quali inconsci o di incerte origini. Utilizzando le sue parole "the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them" (Barthes 1977: 146). Molteplici teorie si sono succedute nella seconda metà del XX secolo sul significato e sul ruolo dell'intertestualità: oltre a quello di Barthes, si pensi ai contributi di Julia Kristeva (1980), Harold Bloom (1997), Gérard Genette (1997). Per quanto riguarda la critica letteraria in lingua hindi, si veda, per esempio, Sudhīś Pacaurī (2010: 96-117) il quale si è soffermato sul ruolo centrale di intertestualità (*antar-pāṭhīyatā*), ironia (*vyaṅgya*) e parodia (*perodī*) come modalità espressive privilegiate del mondo postmoderno.

strumento particolarmente versatile, che permette di ricollegarsi alla propria memoria culturale, abbandonandone la tradizionale aura di grandiosità e magnificenza. L'efficacia di tale operazione letteraria “consiste nella messa in discussione e relativa sovversione di quei principi ideologici che senza alcuna forma di problematizzazione ironica o citatoria non sarebbe stato possibile rendere evidenti come i fondamenti impliciti di una cultura” (Bernardelli 2010: 33).

5. Conclusioni

Attraverso questo articolo mi sono posta l'obiettivo di presentare un romanzo di Surendra Varmā, *Do murdoṃ ke lie guldastā*, mettendone in luce alcuni aspetti, a mio parere, essenziali. Ho scelto di soffermarmi in particolare su due ingredienti del romanzo – la decostruzione dei convenzionali ruoli di genere e l'ampio ricorso all'ironia intertestuale – in quanto capaci di suscitare riflessioni valide a livello transnazionale. Per quanto sia necessario fare riferimento alle specificità locali e analizzare un testo in stretta relazione con il contesto che lo ha prodotto, ritengo che, specialmente nella realtà odierna, sia parimenti necessario individuare quegli elementi che possano essere considerati trasversali e comuni alle più diverse realizzazioni letterarie. Da un lato, la caratterizzazione dei personaggi e l'ordito stesso del romanzo appaiono specchio delle mutate relazioni di genere, e inducono il lettore a una riflessione sulla natura dei convenzionali ruoli di genere e a una problematizzazione degli stessi. Una simile riflessione, per quanto declinabile nelle singole realtà locali, appare immediatamente di portata planetaria. Dall'altro lato, la componente intertestuale, attraverso la quale Varmā richiama celeberrimi passi e insegnamenti tratti dagli *Itihāsa*, viene elaborata in chiave fortemente ironica, in accordo con le tendenze diffuse in tanta parte della letteratura di fine millennio.

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Da Ester la regina alla concubina senza nome

Ruoli e professioni delle donne tra Bibbia, *Mishnah* e percorsi interpretativi

Sarah Kaminski

The article examines the state of presence/absence of women in the Bible and in the Talmud, highlighting the importance of education as a tool to gain a position in society and in their own community, but also as an instrument against the power that tends to create submission at home and in the public sphere. The analysis of some female figures (Ester the scribe, Beruria the scholar, the pious daughters of Zelofcad), offers an insight into the narration of Jewish history and constitutes a reference model for the reading of current situation of the woman in the Jewish Orthodox world, particularly in Israel.

וּתְכַתֵּב אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בִּתְ-אַבִּיחַיִל
 וּמָרְדֳּכָי הַיְהוּדִי אֶת-כָּל-תְּקוּרָה:
 לְקַיֵּם אֶת אִגְרַת הַפְּרִים הַזֹּאת הַשְּׁנִיית:
 וּמֵאָמַר אֶסְתֵּר
 קַיֵּם דְּבַרֵי הַפְּרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְנִכְתָּב בְּסֵפֶר¹:

1. Scrisse la regina

Il testo biblico assegna alla regina Ester il ruolo di scriba e specifica: “E scrisse Ester figlia di Abicaïl e Mardocheo il giudeo...” Anche Mardocheo contribuisce alla narrazione del grande miracolo di Purim (la festa delle sorti), ma di fatto è Ester a guidare la composizione del testo. Molte protagoniste della Bibbia incarnano modelli tipici del mondo femminile: sono madri affettuose come Hanna o coraggiose e un po’ astiose come Sarah, sono levatrici, educatrici e sagge consigliere, come la saggia donna di Tekoa, mediatrici, profetesse e regnanti. Ma solo per Ester, chiamata anche Hadassah, ovvero mirto,² si specifica la funzione declinando il verbo scrivere alla terza persona singolare femminile “ella scrisse,” nonostante vi sia anche Mardocheo. In effetti nelle traduzioni in italiano troviamo perlopiù l’unione dei due soggetti nella formula congiunta “essi scrissero.” Il libro biblico a lei dedicato si

¹ Ester 9, 29, 32: “La regina Ester figlia di Abicàil e il giudeo Mardocheo scrissero con ogni autorità per dar valore a questa loro seconda lettera relativa ai Purim [...] Un ordine di Ester stabilì le circostanze di questi Purim e fu scritto in un libro.”

² TB, Megillah, 13, 1.

conclude definendo il ruolo storico di Ester, regnante dotta e potente, affiancata dal visir, secondo consigliere del re, Mardocheo.³

2. I racconti sulle donne

I racconti sulle donne sono importanti e interessanti, ma sono per un certo verso in contraddizione con lo status giuridico inferiore, definito dai testi biblici e confermato da quelli più tardi, redatti in Terra di Israele o nella diaspora, dai tempi della Mishnah, fino all'Illuminismo nel XVIII secolo (Cohen e Feiner 2006: 19-26). L'elevato numero di donne con un ruolo importante in alcuni libri biblici,⁴ rivela un'incoerenza all'interno del canone, ma anche una trasmissione di dati volutamente negativa nel periodo post biblico. Le donne sono presenti/assenti. Da un lato sono assai presenti, anche se non sempre in ruoli centrali e l'esegesi midrashica, la cui funzione è spesso di colmare i vuoti di informazione lasciati dal testo canonico, fornisce dettagli sulle donne senza volto o senza nome; d'altro canto i commenti possono anche diventare un motore di legittimazione dell'inferiorità della donna, causando l'assenza prolungata del femminile nell'arena pubblica.⁵

Eva, madre di ogni essere vivente è una vera protagonista culturale, la cui creazione è narrata addirittura due volte in due versioni diverse: la prima parla di una genesi separata e autonoma, mentre nella seconda si legge: "Il Signore Dio plasmò con la costola, che aveva tolta all'uomo, una donna e la condusse all'uomo."⁶ Solo dopo l'assaggio del frutto della conoscenza, chiamato mela, la procreatrice del genere umano viene sottomessa al dominio di Adamo.⁷ Nella memoria collettiva Eva è la seduttrice, il simbolo del peccato, mentre nella non canonica Vita di Adamo ed Eva appare in veste di donna mistica e di moglie leale, alla disperata ricerca di un modo per salvare il marito dalla malattia che lo porterà alla morte (Rosso Ubigli 1998). Le quattro madri della nazione risultano essere importanti e centrali per lo sviluppo delle dinastie bibliche, eppure sono prive di ruolo e potere nei confronti dei mariti assenti o deboli. Il lettore percepisce questa condizione di fronte ai silenzi delle donne o agli intrighi di certe protagoniste, come Tamar, nuora di Giuda. Abramo mente al Faraone e al Re Abimelech in merito al suo reale legame con Sarah per uscire indenne da una situazione

³ Ester 10, 3.

⁴ Si vedano ad esempio i libri di Giudici, Samuele, Ruth e Cantico dei Cantici.

⁵ In merito agli ordini sociali e sulla posizione delle donne nella Bibbia e nei successivi codici ebraici si trova un'ampia bibliografia. Si veda ad esempio Grossman (2011).

⁶ Genesi, 2, 22.

⁷ Si veda la presentazione di Eva nel Libro apocrifo *Adamo ed Eva*, Edizione Avraham Cahana, cap. 9, 1-4; cap. 33, 14, Tel Aviv, 1935.

difficile; Giacobbe non nota lo scambio di spose compiuto da Labano; Rebecca sfrutta l'ingordigia del marito per far avere a Giacobbe lo status di primogenito, a discapito di Esaù.

Yocheved, madre di Mosè e la figlia del Faraone, di cui non viene comunicato il nome, divengono simbolo di salvezza e accanto a loro vi è Miriam, guida del popolo di Israele e aiuto costante per il fratello Mosè durante la fuga dall'Egitto. Oltre a essere dotata di poteri sovranaturali, tanto che un pozzo di acqua viva la accompagna nel deserto per dissetare la sua gente, Miriam chiude il momento glorifico dell'attraversamento del Mar Rosso con un canto di ringraziamento al Creatore rivolto a tutto il popolo: "Allora Miriam cantò davanti a loro."⁸ Miriam, dicono i Maestri, diversamente da Mosè che si rivolge solo agli uomini, canta per tutta l'assemblea, uomini e donne, gli uni definiti dai Saggi Bet Israel, le altre Bet Yaakov (Kaminski 2009).

3. Inaudita violenza

Vi sono donne strateghe e combattenti, come Debora e Yael, ma altre sono imprigionate nel ruolo di vittima e subiscono aggressioni fisiche e sessuali, anche tra le mura domestiche. Tra questi modelli di un'esistenza priva di diritti e di difesa sociale, vi è la giovane Tamar, figlia di David, stuprata dal fratello Amnon nelle stanze del palazzo per espiare i peccati del padre. È paradossale che la punizione del re ricada sulla figlia, palesemente innocente.⁹ Anche Dina, figlia di Giacobbe, stuprata dal principe di Sichem figlio di Camor, è vittima di violenza e nel suo caso gli stessi codici d'onore che permettono, anzi auspicano il matrimonio con lo stupratore come soluzione riparatoria alla violenza carnale e al disonore, diventano secondari di fronte alla sete di vendetta e alla pura crudeltà dei fratelli (Frymer Kensky 1981).¹⁰ Dopo il misfatto, Sichem dichiara di amare Dina e di volerla prendere in moglie e accetta la circoncisione per sé e per tutti gli uomini sichemiti secondo la volontà espressa dai fratelli di Dina, ma le sue promesse non sono sufficienti e la strage viene compiuta a tradimento. Simeone e Levi avrebbero potuto garantire alla ragazza una vita dignitosa, salvandola dalla vergogna e dall'accusa infamante di prostituzione, eppure preferiscono scegliere, senza l'autorizzazione del padre, la dimostrazione di potere e la vendetta, senza minimamente prendere in considerazione la sorte della sorella.

⁸ Genesi 15, 20-21.

⁹ Cfr. 2 Samuele 13.

¹⁰ L'episodio è narrato in Genesi 34.

Ma il caso più eclatante è indubbiamente la storia della concubina di Gabaa, ambientata in tempi di caos e anarchia, che trovano la loro massima espressione in una vicenda di inaudita crudeltà nei confronti di una donna senza nome né status sociale, ricordata solo come “la concubina.” Il narratore sottolinea l’abominio nell’incipit e nelle parole dure della conclusione, affermando dopo un racconto dettagliato, quasi nello stile della pulp fiction, che si tratta di un’epoca senza ordine e senza moralità.¹¹

Per umiliare l’oste e il suo ospite straniero, gli abitanti malvagi di Gabaa minacciano di violentare il padrone di casa, compiendo un atto dirompente già menzionato nell’episodio dei Sodomiti che circondarono la casa di Lot.¹² La violenza omosessuale mira all’umiliazione della vittima e rappresenta il desiderio di “femminizzare” il maschio per dimostrarne la sua inferiorità, con l’intenzione di imporre la condizione di passività sofferta dalla donna (Ashman 2008). I codici di accoglienza e cordialità vengono preservati e l’oste bada a proteggere l’incolumità del viandante, escogitando una soluzione: offre agli aggressori di Gabaa la propria figlia vergine e la concubina.

Ecco la mia figlia vergine e la concubina di lui, le metterò fuori dalla casa e voi potrete fare a loro del male e fare a loro quello che vi aggrada.” Ma quegli uomini non vollero ascoltarlo. Allora il levita afferrò la sua concubina e la portò fuori da loro. Essi la presero e abusarono di lei tutta la notte fino al mattino; la lasciarono andare allo spuntar dell'alba. Quella donna sul far del mattino venne a cadere all'ingresso della casa dell'uomo, presso il quale stava il suo padrone e là restò finché fu giorno chiaro. Il suo padrone si alzò alla mattina, aprì la porta della casa e uscì per continuare il suo viaggio.¹³

La donna rappresenta la posizione più umile della gerarchia sociale: non è né moglie né vedova, non è tutelata dal padre, dal fratello o dal marito e vale meno della fanciulla vergine, figlia del vecchio oste. Rappresenta una categoria spoglia da qualsiasi difesa della società tribale di allora (Ashman 2008). Il racconto ha un incipit banale, come a voler introdurre un affare di famiglia che degenera e supera le usanze comuni. Poi si innesca una serie di eventi brutali, segno della dissolutezza della gente di Gabaa, della tribù di Beniamino e dell’umanità in generale. La donna sfinita e ferita torna alla propria dimora, cade sulla soglia della casa dell’oste e muore, perché nessuno esce a soccorrerla. La mattina, il padrone apre la porta e vede il cadavere.

¹¹ Giudici 19, 20, 25.

¹² Genesi 19, 4-5

¹³ Giudici, 19, 24- 27.

Il messaggio è chiaro: la donna stuprata è un ammonimento rivolto a chiunque tenti di infrangere le leggi socio-culturali che difendono l'incolumità del maschio; la concubina viene sacrificata con il pieno consenso di tutti, sia di coloro che le sono vicini come l'oste, l'uomo-padrone e i servi, sia della folla degli uomini violenti, convinti di essere i difensori del potere e del controllo sul territorio di Gabaa. Il corpo martoriato della concubina diviene anche una lezione per tutte le tribù di Israele. "Io presi la mia concubina, la feci in pezzi, che mandai per tutto il territorio della eredità d'Israele, perché costoro han commesso un delitto e una infamia in Israele."¹⁴

Negli ultimi decenni, diversi libri e saggi hanno trattato le questioni giuridiche, etiche e di gender presenti nel racconto, ma solo recentemente è stato tolto il velo del pudore dall'atto di stupro nella Bibbia e la concubina è diventata un simbolo forte della situazione precaria e fragile in cui si trovano ancora oggi molte donne, nei luoghi in cui vige la legge del clan.¹⁵

4. Beruria

Il racconto biblico ha lo scopo di ammonire e impedire situazioni simili e tuttavia, in un tempo assai lontano da quello dei Giudici, nel periodo della redazione della Mishnah (II sec. d.C.), si svolge una vicenda altrettanto clamorosa. Beruria, grande studiosa della Torah, viene messa alla prova proprio per il fatto di essere una donna pia e dotta nonché una severa insegnante. Beruria è l'unica donna a cui la tradizione attribuisce il titolo di tanna'it, studiosa e maestra della legge ebraica.¹⁶ Beruria, moglie dello studioso Rav Meir, direttore della scuola rabbinica di Usha, viene più volte citata nel Talmud e definita Morat Hora'ah e perfino Morat Halacha, maestra ed esperta delle normative ebraiche, esattamente come un rabbino.¹⁷ Inoltre è una donna timorata di Dio e si racconta che quando entrambi i figli morirono nello stesso giorno, proprio di Shabbat, ebbe cura di avvisare il marito soltanto al termine della festa per non indurlo a violare la sacralità del giorno di riposo.¹⁸ Eppure, nonostante gli elogi e i meriti che nei secoli diversi studiosi e commentatori le hanno

¹⁴ Giudici, 20, 6.

¹⁵ Si veda ad esempio Ilan 2006.

¹⁶ Tb, trattato Pesachim, 64, 2.

¹⁷ Midrash Tehillim, 30,10, Tb, Trattato Berachot 10, 71.

¹⁸ Midrash Proverbi 31.

riconosciuto, a noi è giunta un'immagine irritante di severità e nella nostra memoria resta soprattutto il suo spiacevole incontro con Rav Yossi.¹⁹

È il grande studioso Rashi ad attribuire un lato oscuro a Beruria.²⁰ A quanto pare alla studiosa non piaceva il detto sulle donne dalla mente frivola,²¹ che rafforzava la convinzione dell'inutilità di studiare Torah. Rashi riporta un racconto in cui si parla dell'umiliante prova a cui fu sottoposta Beruria per testare la sua integrità morale come moglie fedele. Rav Meir mandò un suo discepolo a sedurla e lei cadde nella trappola. Quando comprese l'inganno si tolse la vita e il marito fuggì in Babilonia dove morì di dolore. La vicenda è stata trasmessa da una generazione all'altra senza verificare le fonti talmudiche e midrashiche in cui si riportano informazioni opposte sulla vita coniugale e il forte legame affettivo tra Meir e Beruria.²² Forse la versione di Rashi non è altro che una storia popolare, un modo per allontanare le donne dalla sfera pubblica in cui avrebbero potuto diventare "dotte nella legge" (Broner 1989).

In tempi più recenti Beruria è divenuta un simbolo dell'istruzione femminile e della lotta all'idea ancora diffusa negli ambienti ebraici ultraortodossi sull'inferiorità congenita delle donne, relegate al ruolo di figlie e madri, secondo un'immagine che non nasce tanto dalle interpretazioni talmudiche quanto dal libro di Maimonide, *La guida dei perplessi*. La scrittura riflette lo spirito di Platone e non risparmia espressioni di disprezzo per le donne "dalla mente debole." Tuttavia, riconosce l'uguaglianza dei due sessi creati a immagine di Dio e considera le condizioni storiche e sociali come fattore importante per l'inferiorità in cui si trova il mondo femminile (Grossman 2012). Il versetto del Salmo (45, 14) "La figlia del re è tutta splendore, gemme e tessuto d'oro è il suo vestito", è una vera poesia, ma l'interpretazione dei rabbini la considera come un invito a trattenere le principesse lontane dall'occhio impudico dell'uomo o, in altre parole, da qualsiasi esposizione all'istruzione e al contatto con il mondo esterno al focolare domestico. La discussione è durata per lunghi secoli ed è sempre attuale, come dimostra il libro di Nava Wasserman, *Non ho mai chiamato per nome mia*

¹⁹ Il Talmud Babilonese riferisce che rav Yossi incontrò la studiosa mentre camminava fuori città e le chiese come si arrivasse a Lidda. Beruria gli rispose in modo secco e con un pizzico di ironia, per evitare ogni sospetto sulla sua disponibilità ad avvicinarsi a un uomo adulto, ma anche per rispettare i detti dei Saggi che raccomandano di non parlare con le donne, se non per comunicazioni strettamente indispensabili.

²⁰ Avoda Zara 18b.

²¹ Tb, Shabbat 33b.

²² Ancora oggi il sito del movimento ortodosso chassidico Chabad, molto frequentato da un vasto pubblico, non menziona il problema irrisolto della seduzione di Beruria. Cfr.

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112056/jewish/Beruriah.html

moglie²³. Non a caso la prima scuola talmudica per donne istituita in Israele nel 1978 porta il nome di Beruria.

5. Le figlie di Zelofcad

Il caso delle figlie di Zelofcad invece, non parla direttamente di istruzione o di mestieri, bensì del diritto di possedere e condividere la Terra di Israele. La normativa che regola lo status delle sorelle è desunta dall'esegesi:²⁴

Le figlie di Zelofcad [...] si accostarono e si presentarono davanti a Mosè, davanti al sacerdote Eleazaro, davanti ai capi e a tutta la comunità all'ingresso della tenda del convegno, e dissero:

“Nostro padre è morto nel deserto. Egli non era nella compagnia di coloro che si adunarono contro il Signore, non era della gente di Core, ma è morto a causa del suo peccato, senza figli maschi. Perché dovrebbe il nome del padre nostro scomparire dalla sua famiglia, per il fatto che non ha avuto figli maschi? Dacci un possedimento in mezzo ai fratelli di nostro padre». Mosè portò la loro causa davanti al Signore. Il Signore disse a Mosè: «Le figlie di Zelofcad dicono bene. Darai loro in eredità un possedimento tra i fratelli del loro padre e farai passare ad esse l'eredità del loro padre. Parlerai inoltre agli Israeliti e dirai: Quando uno sarà morto senza lasciare un figlio maschio, farete passare la sua eredità alla figlia.”²⁵

Le cinque donne non pretendono di avere un ruolo nella società nomade e tribale, ma solo di essere riconosciute come uguali davanti alla legge. A quanto pare, è proprio la loro saggezza e il grado di istruzione a permetterne l'intervento presso Mosè, che concede il ripristino della loro eredità. Secondo la raccolta midrashica Sifre, erano sagge e interpretavano il testo della Torah (Friedmann 1864: 44). Lo stesso pensiero si ritrova nel Talmud che le definisce esegete e pie e nel libro *Otzar Hamidrashim*, che le include tra le ventitré donne pie di cui è stato benedetto il popolo di Israele.²⁶ La Halacha ha volutamente ignorato per lunghi secoli il 'responso' divino dato a Mosè e solo negli ultimi anni si è aperto un dibattito serio non solo sul diritto all'eredità, per tanto tempo

²³ Wasserman, Nava. 2015. *Mi-yamai lo qarati le-ishti: zugiyut ba-Hasidut Gur*, Sede Boker: Universitat Ben Gurion baNegev.

²⁴ Numeri 27.

²⁵ *Otzar Hamidrashim*, ovvero 'il tesoro dei midrash', è una raccolta di esegesi e commenti pubblicata a New York nel 1915.

²⁶ *Tb*, Bava Batra, 104; 72.

esclusivamente maschile nonostante il precedente biblico, ma anche sugli incarichi possibili delle donne in ambito giuridico.²⁷

Nel primo libro di Samuele²⁸ si racconta dei mestieri e dell'artigianato che il re, tanto desiderato dal popolo, avrebbe imposto come tributo alle figlie di Israele: "Prenderà anche le vostre figlie per farle sue profumiere e cuoche e fornaie." Il testo rivela l'attività lavorativa e produttiva delle donne che tuttavia viene considerata come ruolo inferiore, mentre nell'episodio del vitello d'oro sono proprio le donne ad assumere un ruolo "superiore," poiché negano ai mariti l'aiuto nella costruzione della divinità pagana.²⁹

Nel libro di Esdra³⁰, le donne non si occupano solo dei lavori di casa, come dirà la Mishna "Lei macina e cuoce e fa il bucato e cucina e allatta il figlio e lavora la lana,"³¹ ma anzi contribuiscono alla costruzione e all'abbellimento della Tenda dell'Alleanza. Secoli dopo le figlie della famiglia Sallum saranno impegnate nella costruzione delle mura di Gerusalemme.³²

Un'altra figura interessante è la figlia di Iefte,³³ che secondo la studiosa israeliana Rivka Lovitz, rabbina reform e avvocato difensore presso la corte rabbinica, si trasforma da figura pia senza nome e volto, a portavoce e difensore delle figlie di Israele al cospetto dell'emanazione femminile di Dio, la Shekhina. Nel suo libro sul Midrash femminile, la studiosa chiama questo gruppo di donne *tanot*, dalla radice \sqrt{tnh} , in cui è contenuta l'idea di studiare ma anche di piangere (Lovitz: 28).³⁴ La Bibbia non prevede l'attribuzione della dignità regale alle donne. Eppure, nel periodo degli Asmonei dopo la morte di Alessandro Ianneo, la moglie Salomè (I secolo a.e.v.) sale al trono nell'ultimo periodo di sovranità ebraica indipendente in terra di Israele.

²⁷ In Israele le prime *to'anut* 'procuratrici' si sono diplomate nel 2001 e oggi la difesa nell'ambito del diritto di famiglia presso il tribunale religioso è in mano alle avvocatessse ortodosse. Dall'anno 2018 nel tribunale è prevista anche un'avvocatessa, assegnata a casi di diritto di famiglia e a pratiche di successioni Si veda www.kipa.co.il del 26.11.2018

²⁸ 1 Samuele 8, 13.

²⁹ In Pirke Rabbi Eliezer, 45 leggiamo che il loro compenso sarà non in questo mondo ma nella vita dell'aldilà.

³⁰ Esdra 35, 25.

³¹ Trattato Ketubbot, 5,5.

³² Neemia 3, 12.

³³ Giudici 11.

³⁴ Sottolinea l'ultimo versetto del capitolo, in cui si rammenta un'antica tradizione: "Di qui venne in Israele questa usanza: ogni anno le fanciulle d'Israele vanno a piangere la figlia di Iefte il Galaadita, per quattro giorni".

6. Profezia e istruzione

Si possono segnalare altri eventi importanti ed episodi apparentemente marginali, in cui sono coinvolte le figure femminili prima dell'epoca rabbinica, quando la trasmissione della Torah e lo studio della legge passano al Sinedrio e ai Maestri, in seguito all'abbandono forzato del luogo di culto di Gerusalemme.

In uno dei momenti cruciali per l'identità ebraica, ai tempi del re Giosia nel VII secolo a.e.v., emerge la figura della profetessa Culda, che assume una notevole rilevanza per il narrativo delle donne. Nel II libro dei Re (22, 14), si racconta del ritrovamento del libro della legge e della decisione del re di inviare una spedizione di sacerdoti, scribi e ministri «dalla profetessa Culda moglie di Sallùm, figlio di Tikva, figlio di Carcas, guardarobiere; essa abitava in Gerusalemme nel secondo quartiere», per accertare l'autenticità del libro sacro. L'autorità di Culda, moglie di un funzionario della casa reale, è forte e le sue parole sono pronunciate con determinazione, dall'interno del palazzo. Vengono ascoltate e seguite anche dal popolo. Solo dopo la sua dichiarazione, il libro, probabilmente parte del Deuteronomio, torna all'antica gloria.

Rachel Elijor (2004) parla di riduzione del ruolo carismatico di Culda e anche di Miriam e Debora, sottolineando un cambiamento di rotta in cui l'elenco delle donne profetesse scelte per guidare il popolo di Israele si riduce, mentre parallelamente si allunga quello di donne note per la bellezza: Sarah, Abigail, Ester e Hanna (la prima a pronunciare una preghiera nel Tempio di Shilo); donne senz'altro pie e benedette, ma non profetesse.

E in effetti diversi Maestri sminuiscono in vari modi la figura di Culda, sostenendo ad esempio che la donna era parente di Geremia e veniva interpellata solo quando il profeta si assentava. Sarebbe stata, insomma, una sorta di profetessa part time. Secondo altri la sua importanza e il rigore della sua profezia non sarebbero da tenere in alta considerazione perché Culda era discendente della prostituta Rahab e il suo nome, simile a quello di un roditore, è fonte di ironia e scherno. Elijor sostiene che nella lunga e prolifica produzione letteraria ebraica mancano titoli di studio declinati "al femminile:" non ci sono *tanna'iot*, 'studiose della *Mishna*,' *amora'iot* 'studiose del Talmud,' *darshaniot* 'studiose del *Midrash*' e fino alla seconda metà del XX secolo i casi di donne *chachamot* (sagge) o rabbine/rabbinesse è del tutto insignificante (Elijor 2004: 90). Ma, come scrive Maria Teresa Milano, la storia riporta molti casi di donne studiose negli ambienti ortodossi e il fenomeno è oggi in crescita in Israele e nel mondo, come dimostra il costante moltiplicarsi delle midrashot, le scuole talmudiche per le ragazze a cui partecipano anche tante donne con figli e non proprio in età scolastica (Milano 2019). A quanto pare il

desiderio di sapere e di voler assumere un ruolo all'interno delle comunità di appartenenza non è mai cessato, a dispetto del detto di Rabbi Eliezer: "Chi insegna parole di Torah a sua figlia, è come se insegnasse futilità."³⁵

In proposito, il grande filosofo Yehoshua Leibovitz (1992: 129) ha dichiarato:

È un errore grave e costituisce un disastro per il mondo storico ebraico. Chi studia collabora alla presenza della Shekhina in mezzo al popolo di Israele. Allontanare le donne dallo studio significa sottrarle a un diritto basilare e rendere la loro ebraicità inferiore a quella degli uomini.

Nel Talmud esistono, ovviamente, esempi di donne importanti, come la studiosa Yalta (IV sec.), moglie di Rav Nachman. Yalta chiede a un altro maestro, il rabbino itinerante Rav Ulla giunto in Babilonia dalla Terra di Israele, di poter bere dal calice di vino su cui egli ha pronunciato la benedizione prima del pasto. Le donne, sostiene Rav Ulla, sono già benedette per mezzo della fertilità data loro dal marito. Yalta, nell'udire questa affermazione, scende adirata in cantina e spacca quattrocento anfore di vino per dimostrare che il vino prezioso è secondario al valore spirituale della partecipazione alla benedizione.³⁶

7. Interpretazioni *in progress*

Oggi come allora, lo status sociale degli individui viene determinato dall'istruzione, dalla visibilità e dall'importanza pubblica legate alla posizione sociale o dalla professione. I testi biblici e post biblici presentano donne diverse tra loro, con caratteristiche e vocazioni specifiche, tutte unite dal contesto in cui si svolge la propria vicenda personale e dall'attenzione che la narrazione attribuisce alla loro figura. E quell'attenzione svolge un ruolo importante nel mantenere le dinamiche e l'attualità del testo. Tutti noi facciamo parte del percorso ininterrotto di commenti e interpretazioni, ovvero di testi già commentati, che portano una nuova conoscenza e creano una particolare attenzione verso il mondo femminile. A volte, come nel caso della figlia di Iefte, la centralità o lo status del personaggio biblico cambia proprio grazie ai nuovi commenti midrashici.

³⁵ Sullo studio femminile della Torah si vedano Fuchs (2014), Milano (2012; 2017; 2019) e Pantel Zolty (1993).

³⁶ Tb, Berachot, 51b.

Tal Ilan conferma la visione che i testi scritti dagli uomini, non solo sono stati ripetutamente modificati nei secoli, ma presentano allo storico o al sociologo, codici e punti di vista voluti e fissati solo dai rabbini, scribi, copisti e lettori di sesso maschile.³⁷

È nostro interesse, dunque, ricordare i casi eccezionali: Sefora (circoncisore, Esodo 4, 21), Osnat Barazani (Direttore di una scuola talmudica, Kurdistan, XVII sec.), Donna Grazia Nasi (Donna d'affari e benefattrice, Portogallo 1510 - Istanbul 1569), Gluckel Von Hameln (donna d'affari, Hamburg 1645-Metz 724), le poetesse italiane Sara Copio Sullam (Venezia 1588 - 1641) e Rachel Morpurgo (Trieste 1790-1871), la pedagoga Sara Schenirer (Cracovia 1883 - 1935) e tutte le altre donne che hanno aderito all'Illuminismo e al movimento sionista, nel mondo e in Terra di Israele. Il percorso verso l'autonomia lavorativa della donna nell'ambito ebraico tradizionale è una strada in salita. La società ebraica religiosa (e non) procede invece con passo accelerato sulla via dell'uguaglianza, per garantire diritti e tutela alle donne.

La regina Ester rimane il punto di riferimento, poiché presenta l'idea della completezza: è bella, dotta e anche consapevole delle sue qualità ed è accettata dai lettori di diverse epoche, grazie a continue interpretazioni *in progress*.

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From the Paper to the Stage: a New Life for Novels?

The Adaptation of Bestsellers in Contemporary China

Barbara Leonesi

This paper studies the evermore widespread phenomenon of the adaptation of novels for the stage, focusing on prizewinning contemporary Chinese novels. The first part provides the theoretical approach that is adopted in the second part, where two cases studies are discussed, i.e. the stage adaptation of the novel *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* by Wang Anyi and of the novel *To Live* by Yu Hua.

Starting from the perspective of “horizontal relations” among texts (Hutcheon 2013), the analysis of the adaptation process takes its distance from the fidelity/infidelity discourse, in order to investigate the network of echoing versions (trans-media, trans-language, etc) it is able to produce. This network is much more interesting to explore than supposed vertical hierarchies. Nevertheless, not every version is a text able to live independently from its source: the analysis shows that today's phenomenon of trans-media adaptation is fostered by a cultural industry that aims at exploiting all profits from a best-selling prizewinning novel. The role played by this industry in the adaptation process needs to be fully considered.

In his milestone book *After Babel*, George Steiner provided a definition of culture as ‘a sequence of translations and transformations of constants’ (Steiner 1998: 449): starting from this idea, it is becoming more and more evident in the world of contemporary literature or World Republic of Letters (Casanova 1999), that translation is the tool that keeps a text alive. Here I use both these terms, translation and text, in their broader sense: translation includes all the three categories described by Jakobson (Jakobson 1959: 233) that are interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic, and text includes literature, film, performance, etcetera. Following this broad approach to the concept of translation and text, in recent years a number of scholars have studied and underlined the common points between translation and adaptation studies: pursuing Steiner’s train of thought, we can consider them as ‘invariance within transformation’ (Steiner 1998: 448) or transformation within invariance. ‘All adapters are translators, and all translators are creative writers of a sort’ (Sanders 2006/2016: 9). Nevertheless, translation and adaptation still remain separate both in academia as well as in cultural industry: as Lawrence Venuti underlines,

Translation and adaptation are carefully distinguished by publishers and translators, filmmakers and screenwriters, even if copyright law classifies both cultural practices as 'derivative works' (Venuti 2007: 29).

This paper studies the evermore widespread phenomenon of the adaptation of novels for the stage, focusing on prizewinning contemporary Chinese novels. The first part provides the theoretical approach that is adopted in the second part, where two case studies are discussed.

The question of transborder, transmedia, intersemiotic, translation and adaptation are nowadays hot topics in academia. Nevertheless, in the discussion over translation and adaptation, we are still faced with the question of "fidelity." The old adage "traduttore traditore" is still very powerful, even if Derrida's deconstruction theory has already dismantled the hierarchy of original and copy, demonstrating that the prestige of the original is created by the copies, or if the intertextuality and transtextuality theory, from Kristeva to Genette, has already demonstrated the close relationship between texts inside and outside a certain culture, and the powerful influence this network of mutual echoing texts exercise over the blooming of literature, arts, and culture in general. In the rich corpus of critical articles, comments and evaluations of translations (from one language to another, from one media to another, or both translingual and transmedia) the lexicon of fidelity is still at the centre of the stage. But fidelity to what?¹

I wish to take distance from this discourse, that both translation and adaptation studies overcame long ago: as Robert Stam underlines,

The fidelity discourse [...] assumes that a novel "contains" an extractable "essence," a kind of a "heart of the artichoke" hidden "underneath" the surface details of style [...] But in fact there is no such transferable core: a single novelistic text comprises a series of verbal signs that can trigger a plethora of possible readings. An open structure, constantly reworked and reinterpreted by a boundless context, the text feeds on and is fed into an infinitely permutating intertext (Stam 2005: 15).

I will anchor my analysis to the point of view, shared by many scholars today, of translingual practice and adaptation to different media as being one of the infinite interpretations of a text, as one of the many intersemiotic and interlingual suits that a text can wear.² In this inclusive view, that considers

¹ In Desmond and Hawkes (2005: 34) view, to look for fidelity in comparing source and adaptation is like comparing apples with oranges: they will never be alike.

² The perception of translation and adaptation as the same transformative process (transformation of a source into different language/medium/culture) is shared by many researchers, eventually proposing a difference in stages or grades (Johnston

the different aspects a text can assume as a precious wealth, defending the “original essence” is much less important than tracing the network and the echoes a text may interlace and produce. In today’s more fluid network environment, ‘multiple versions exist laterally not vertically’ (Hutcheon 2013: XV), and it is more interesting to explore the “horizontal” relations than the supposed vertical hierarchies.³

I used the word “wealth” to refer to a cultural value, but we need to underline that the contemporary culture industry is well aware of the economic value of the multiple versions of a text.

Adaptation into another medium becomes a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original presentation, and repeating the production of a memory (Ellis 1982: 4-5).

Adaptation trades upon the memory of that text (Ellis 1982: 3).⁴

In her interesting study on the adaptation industry, Simone Murray investigates the economy that underpins the multimedial and translingual adaptation, with particular reference to the film adaptation, analyzing all the actors (media conglomerates, literary agents, festivals and prizes, screenwriters, authors, etc) and the entire production chain of a winning title: as she shows, the film adaptation often is not an after product, but is conceived at the same time as the book.

In contemporary globalised media conglomerates, book publishing is typically of relatively minor commercial significance in terms of its contribution to overall corporate revenues. Yet publishing divisions continue to enjoy a high profile within such conglomerates as a source of prestige [...] Cultural hierarchies [i.e. books carry more prestige than films] are, paradoxically, kept alive by the same industry that pushes audiences to consume near-identical content across multiple media platforms (Murray 2012: 18).

As royalties are subtly fragmented according to use or media, it has become evident that the “derived products” have already become a “money machine:” Murray argues, in a quite polemic tone, that

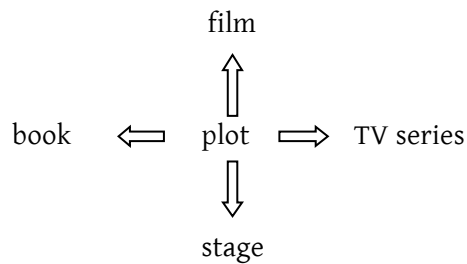
1996: 66 ‘The distinction between translation and adaptation [for the stage] is one of which is difficult to understand fully, unless is to refer to translation as the first stage of linguistic and broadly literary interrogation of the source text, and adaptation as the process of dramaturgical analysis.’) About the discussion on merging and/or diverging points of translation and adaptation discourse, see Krebs (2014 chapters 1 and 2).

³ This is particularly true in today’s fluid framework where old and new media are merged together (Jenkins 2006).

⁴ About the relationship between adaptation and memory, see the interesting perspective offered by Laera, who underlines that ‘in adaptation logic, time is no linear progression, but a spiral that keeps turning on itself, causing cyclical reoccurrences while ensuring evolution’ (Laera 2014: 3).

academia needs to take this economic factor into consideration when analyzing the relation between text and derived text.

Murray describes the Anglo-American adaptation industry: the chain production mechanisms she describes are obviously very similar in a globalized world; and the very same mechanism is already well established in China, with both its consequent positive and negative effects. In the Chinese cultural frame, we witness that the following map of multiple development depicts what is already a common practice:



The core is what I have called “plot” that is a nuclear story, which generates different products through different media and/or languages.⁵ This working and reworking of a certain plot has been there for centuries; nevertheless, the appearance of the concept of intellectual property has dramatically changed the relations between the source and the so-called derived products.

For the last 10-15 years, it has become a common practice in the Chinese cultural market to reshape a prize-winning book/ bestseller at least into a film, TV series, or play or even into many other myriad products, like mangas, cartoons, gadgets, and so on. Chinese academic literature, together with Chinese media in general, takes this phenomenon for granted, however I have found little analysis on it and its effects on cultural production.

How has this industry changed the approach to adaptation? In the West many studies on novel adaptation for the screen emphasize the relation of mutual profit behind this operation: the prize-winning novel guarantees both prestige and cultural value, together with reader/audience numbers. On the other side, the screen amplifies the reception of the novel, enlarging its audience and therefore enhancing both the prestige of the author and the sale of their books. Stage adaptation can enjoy the same benefits as the novel (cultural value + audience). But, traditionally, it enjoys a higher position in the common cultural hierarchy than that of film and TV. Moreover, it can offer the author a new platform to speak, space in the newspapers, interviews, etc.

⁵ In this map we can add translations in different languages, playing a fundamental role in enhancing the international prestige of the author, and through it internal prestige.

My research aims at analyzing the relationship between stage adaptation and contemporary Chinese prize-winning novels, focusing on the economic factor and the cluster I just described. Therefore, I have chosen as case studies novels that have at least been adapted for the stage, the screen and TV, in order to try to understand the role of the stage adaptation in this frame. The second question I wish to investigate is the quality of the adaptation itself, and in particular its capacity to become a real, independent text.⁶ If it is true that some productions clearly are there to take advantage of a successful plot, nevertheless I would pose the question is it always correct to simply classify this kind of operation as “culture industry subproducts”?

Just by going through the list of the prize-winning novels numerous examples appear: the novel *Massage (Tuina, 推拿)* by Bi Feiyu 毕飞宇,⁷ published in 2008 by the People’s Literature Publishing House clearly represents a typical literary prize pushed cluster: Mao Dun Prize winner in 2011, in 2013 it was adapted for the stage and the TV series,⁸ in 2014 for the screen.⁹ In only three years following the prize, a full “production line” was born, although with differing results in terms of quality and public.

Both the TV series, broadcast in prime time on CCTV1, during audience peak, as well as the movie, with its rich carnet of national and international prizes, enjoyed tremendous public success. Following up the triumph of the TV series, Chen Ping published the screenplay with the Xiyuan

⁶ While describing the right method to evaluate a translation, Antoine Berman lists as the first point the fact that a translated text has to be an independent text that can stand by itself and “works” (“tient”). ‘*Tenir* a ici un double sens: tenir comme un écrit dans la langue réceptrice, c'est-à-dire essentiellement ne pas être en deçà des «normes» de qualité scripturaire standard de celle-ci. Tenir, ensuite, au-delà de cette exigence de base, comme un véritable *texte* (systématicité et corrélativité, organicité de tous ces constituants)’ (Berman 1995: 65).

⁷ Born in 1964, he is well-known for his ability in the portrayal of the feminine psyche. His works have received several national and international prizes, they are translated in many languages and they are appreciated both by the critics and the readers. The novel *Massage* is his most successful long novel. It narrates the everyday life of a group of blind masseurs working at the Sha Zongqi Tuina Massage House in Nanjing. Organized in 21 relatively autonomous chapters, each following the action of one or more masseurs, the novel presents a rather loose structure constantly fragmented by flashbacks narrating the past life of the masseurs, the story of their blindness, their fears and their hopes. The massage house is the centre connecting the numerous isolated stories of the characters, and the trivialities of their everyday life become the occasion to dig into the inner life of the masseurs, and through their anxiety and their dreams to reflect ironically on contemporary society and the meaning of life.

⁸ 30 episodes, each being 42 minutes long, director Kang Honglei 康洪雷, screenwriter Chen Ping 陈枰, first aired the 15th August 2013 on CCTV1 in prime time.

⁹ Directed by Lou Ye 娄烨, it won the Silver Bear award for Outstanding Artistic Contribution. It received seven nominations at the 51st Golden Horse Film Awards and won six, namely Best Feature Film, Best New Performer, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Film Editing and Best Sound Effects. Very successful at the box office in China, with 7.68 million Yuan.

Publishing House, but Bi Feiyu and the People's Literature Publishing House brought a successful action against them, claiming they did not sell any rights for the printing of adaptation products: the Xiyuan Publishing House had to pay compensation and withdraw the book from the market.¹⁰ This kind of example demonstrates the mechanism of the cultural cluster, the complex thicket of conflicting authors' interest rights and the economic value of the derived products.

As far as the adaptation for the stage is concerned, a big coproduction project between the Beijing NCPA (National Centre for Performing Arts, Guojia Dajuyuan 国家大剧院) and the Shanghai SDAC (Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, Shanghai huaju yishu zhongxin, 上海话剧艺术中心), was launched; the prominent playwright Yu Rongjun¹¹ and the well-known director Guo Xiaonan.¹² both from SDAC, were invited to work on this project, supported by the author Bi Feiyu himself: he granted the rights for free, and set no limits on the playwright and director; his pictures appeared in many of the articles announcing the play as well as the leaflet. In spite of this big investment and its promotional campaign,¹³ the play met neither the public nor the critics' favour: only 26 performances in total, in Beijing and Shanghai of course, plus Nanjing, in a single run. The book was unable to guarantee an audience for the play. Pointing out the widespread phenomenon of bestselling novels

¹⁰ See Wang Xiaoyi 王晓易, "Bi Feiyu tan *Tuina* zao qinquan" (毕飞宇谈《推拿》遭侵权, Bi Feiyu speaks about the infringement of *Tuina*'s rights). *Dongfang Jinbao* (东方今报, Orient Today), April 1, 2014.

¹¹ Yu Rongjun 喻荣军, one of the most prolific contemporary playwrights, based at SDAC, where he plays important managing roles in publicity, marketing and programming. He combines his creative work with work on the translation of plays and he has adapted a number of foreign and Chinese novels for the stage. Despite a few controversial judgments (too prolific, writer of white-collar plays, too superficial, too commercial, too "Shanghaiese"), his works have won a number of national and international prizes and have been performed both in China and abroad. Among the most famous titles we mention *www.com*. For an analysis of his dramaturgy see Conceison (2011: 311-321).

¹² Designated as one of the most prominent theatre directors of this century in 2006 by the journal *Chinese Theatre* (*Zhongguo xiju*, 中国戏剧), Guo Xiaonan 郭小男 is listed among the first level directors of SDAC. His work as a director is combined with his academic work, both at the university (Central Academy of Drama, Shanghai Academy of Drama, etc) and in research associations (like the Shakespeare Society of China, *Zhongguo Shashibiya yanjiuhui*, 中国莎士比亚研究会). He has directed a large number of successful plays, Yueju (越剧) opera plays, Kunqu (昆曲) opera plays, Jingju (京剧) opera plays, thus creating a very personal and particular stage aesthetic which combines East and West, tradition and modernity.

¹³ The news of the stage adaptation was announced already in March posting big pictures of the writer Bi Feiyu (Shi Jianfeng 石剑峰, "Bi Feiyu *Tuina* huajuban jinnian jiu yue shouyan" (毕飞宇《推拿》话剧版今年9月首演, The stage adaptation of *Massage* by Bi Feiyu will be staged in September). *Dongfang zaobao* (东方早报, Oriental Daily), March 6, 2013); the big promotional campaign about this "North-South product" played in particular on the social topic of the play: Many local newspapers report with emphasis that this is the first time a play speak about blind people's lives, and that during the shows in Shanghai, the 15th of October, for the Blindness day, a group of blind people was invited to "listen" to the play (Zhu Guang 朱光, "Daomangquan pei 'mama' ting huaju *Tuina*" (导盲犬陪"妈妈"听话剧《推拿》, The guide-dog brings its "mum" to listen to the play *Massage*), *Xinmin wanbao* (新民晚报, Xinmin Evening News), October 16, 2013). Local Shanghai newspapers (i.e. *Xinmin wanbao* October 18, 2013) write in their titles that this play was "successful on stage" (*reyan* 热演), nevertheless they are but brief notices, without any data, centered on the Bi Feiyu bestselling novel.

being adapted for the stage, the reviews¹⁴ denounced the common problems shared by this kind of commercial operation: the plot lacks a clear cut dramatic action line, the relation between the characters and their reactions appear sometimes awkward or unjustified, and the characters themselves have no clear-cut identity. Qiao Zongyu was particularly harsh:

To be honest, this is not a very bad play, it's just one of those mediocre works circulating nowadays. [...] I encourage artists to calmly ponder on which direction they really do wish to see theatre develop in.¹⁵

In condensing the original plot, the adaptation chose the line of the love stories as its main topic, thus diluting and oversimplifying the multilayered content and the numerous social issues of the novel. Actually, this emphasis on romance is a trademark of SDAC white-collar productions, that normally brings to the targeted audience (25-30 years old white-collars) success. In this simplification process - that is by the way very common in the adaptation operations - some important episodes of the original novel were kept although the action chain that produced them was cut off. For example, the scene in which the cook puts more meat into the bowl of one of the masseurs, and is found out by the secretary: the cook and the secretary are the only two staff members who are not blind and can see what's happening. While in the novel this episode is produced by a long chain of events leading up to it and is based on a relationship of friendship or antagonism between the characters, in the play, however, it stands alone, with nothing leading up to it, keeping the meager signifier that blind men can be easily cheated by able-bodied people.

Over exploitation of multimedia and stage effects is another major criticism shared by the reviews: as Xu Jian underlines, many Chinese directors nowadays make abundant use of multimedia, as essential elements in all performances, but in many cases these effects do not merge with the play, do not help it to bloom.¹⁶ In this play, multimedia effects are used to express the complex inner life of the characters. Both the playwright and the director took on the challenge to depart from a traditional dramatic structure and chose to rebuild the fragmented structure of the novel, pivoting around individual characters along their own time line as they move back and forth from past to present, making them both coexist and superpose. The flux of the action is cut by numerous

¹⁴ See Xiang Rong (2013) and Xu Jian (2013).

¹⁵ Qiao Zongyu 乔宗玉, "Huaju Tuina bu chenggong, bi zai gainianhua" (话剧《推拿》不成功, 弊在概念化, The flop of the play *Massage*. The problem is the conceptualization.). *Zhongguo yishu bao* (中国艺术报, China Art News), September 13, 2013.

¹⁶ Xu Jian (2013: 128).

flashbacks and monologues, during which the widespread usage of video and multimedia effects has the aim to reignite the character's emotions, to give a visual or sounded form to his feelings. This is probably the reason why the targeted audience, probably expecting a more "traditional" action line, felt uneasy and could not immerse themselves into the play. A good example is the scene where one of the main characters, Sha Fumin, blind from birth, tries to understand beauty: this is a crucial passage in the novel, where long pages focus on Sha Fumin's efforts and his longing to understand and come to grips with the concept of beauty. On the stage, Sha Fumin stands up on a chair behind his beautiful employee Dou Hong, touching the air instead of touching her body: this non-contact is more powerful than any mimetic representation of the real contact in suggesting the violation of the girl's intimacy together with the dramatic quest of the man. In the background, colors cross the screen giving a visible form to the sensation of touch. But these interludes are over abundant, and they keep on cutting the action line, thus disturbing the audience reception. In the critics' view, they are too profuse and chaotic and have a cunning way of concealing the weakness of the script as well as its direction.

These are commented again as common problems shared by the plays produced from this "adaptation phenomenon:" the simplified plots of adaptation works focus on only one aspect of the characters pushing it to its extreme, and making it undergo a process of conceptualization (*gainianhua* 概念) and abstraction that separate it from real life. Taking *Tuina* as an example, the stage version is nothing but a multiple love story with a happy end, where the main characters happen to be blind. I do share these objections of the Chinese critics, this play cannot stand alone as an independent text, although some ideas and scenes, together with the aesthetics of the stage, are worth a mention¹⁷.

In spite of its failure to meet audience expectations, the stage production has nevertheless contributed to Bi Feiyu's prestige (what Murray calls the building up of "the celebrity author"): a series of interviews, articles, pictures on newspapers and blogs, websites, etc. have been published, enhancing the whole production.

On the bases of the cluster and the example I just described, I wish to examine two case studies that, in my view, can be placed at the two extremities of a line that runs from very close connection or dependency to a quite relaxed connection or independency: dependency or independency of the stage adaptation from the conglomerate cluster and of the adaptation from the source text.

¹⁷ My analysis is based on the video recording of the performance, courtesy of SDAC.

The Song of Everlasting Sorrow (*Chang hen ge*, 长恨歌), published in 1996,¹⁸ 2000 Mao Dun prize winner, was adapted for the stage in 2003 by the SDAC, for the screen in 2005 by the well-known director Stanley Kwan¹⁹ and for the TV in 2006.²⁰ Again, in a few years after the prize, a cluster of products came to life. As we underlined, this is a very typical phenomenon that is easy to trace on the Chinese market: it seems that literary prizes are the key to the production of the cultural cluster.

This successful stage adaptation is still enjoying a long life²¹ today, and has been warmly welcomed by the Shanghai public, who have been partially involved in the creation process. The promotion campaign started already in 2001:²² a few months after the Mao Dun prize, the SDAC announced they would stage the masterpiece by Wang Anyi and the adaptation work was entrusted to Zhao Yaomin.²³ Very well-known for his comic drama and beloved by his Shanghai public, Zhao Yaomin became from the very beginning the star of the project together with the author of the novel Wang Anyi. Actually, at the very beginning, Wang Anyi made no declarations: rumours circulated about still unsolved authors' rights questions.²⁴ In 2002 the SDAC kept the news of the novel adaptation in the public eye through various means including: the suspense over the selection of the

¹⁸ Written by Wang Anyi 王安忆 (1954), this famous bestselling prizewinning novel (listed as one of the 100 excellent Chinese books from 1900 to 1999 by *Asian Week* in 1999, Mao Dun prize in 2000) exploits the title of a famous poem by Bai Juyi 白居易 (IX century) narrating the romantic and tragic destiny of the imperial beauty Yang Guifei 杨贵妃. Wang Anyi's novel centres around the main character of Wang Qiyao, a beautiful, young, typical Shanghai alley-girl. Divided into three parts corresponding to three different epochs (Republican China of the 40s, Maoist China of the 50s-60s, and China under Reforms of the 80s), the novel follows the story of this woman through the XX century history of China and the story of her town, Shanghai: the powerful portrait of this female character stands out against the portrait of the city, that in many parts becomes itself the main character of the novel.

¹⁹ Coproduction Hong Kong/China, the film stages many Hong Kong stars like Sammi Cheng and Tony Leung. Director Stanley Kwan, screenplay by Elmond Yeung. It participated in the Venice International Film Festival.

²⁰ 35 episodes, 45 minutes long, director Ding Hei 丁黑, screenwriters Jiang Liping 蒋丽萍, Zhao Yaomin 赵耀民 and Wang Anyi herself, first aired the 26th March 2006 on two local TV-stations, the Shanghai TV channel and the Jiangsu City channel. The series is defined as "romantic," focusing on the main character's love stories.

²¹ Total 92 shows till now, on 8 runs: two runs in 2003 both in Shanghai, 2 runs in 2004, one in Shanghai and Beijing and one in Ireland, one run each in 2005, 2006, 2015 and 2016, all of them in Shanghai.

²² See Zhou Xiangyang 周向阳, "Chang hen ge yao shang wutai" (《长恨歌》要上舞台, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* is going to be put on stage). *Zhongguo wenhua bao* (中国文化报, China Culture Daily), February 24, 2001.

²³ Very skilled and productive Shanghai comic drama playwright. Born in 1956, he has been building his career since the 80s writing comedies. He has been collaborating with SDAC for many years while teaching at the Shanghai Academy of Drama. His works have been very well received both by the public and the critics, and he has been awarded several national and international prizes.

²⁴ See Qiu Lihua 邱丽华 "Wang Anyi Chang hen ge banshang huaju wutai: jiegou bianpai nan sha bianju" 王安忆《长恨歌》搬上话剧舞台：结构编排难煞编剧, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow* is going to be put on stage: it's very hard to write a play using the structure of this novel). *Xinwen chenbao* (新闻晨报, Morning News), February 13, 2001.

leading actress (Who is going to be Wang Qiyao?)²⁵ and a symposium in October on the adaptation work. From the beginning of 2003, a long series of articles followed the beginning of the rehearsals and the preparation of the play: Wang Anyi became the centre of attention with numerous interviews, in which she expressed her full support for the project.²⁶ The press campaign emphasized the huge effort to build a story about Shanghai and old Shanghai; the public was asked to give its opinion about some issues, in particular the language (local dialect or mandarin?). The attention focused on the playwright, Zhao Yaomin: he would write a comedy, and it would be about the life of a Shanghai alley girl in a “popular story.” In order to fit the performance time, he declared he would reduce the numerous plot lines and topics of the novel to one: the love stories of Wang Qiyao. The director Su Leci 苏乐慈 from SDAC, despite her well-established reputation, was kept at the margin of the debate which focused on the two authors (of the novel and of the play). The play was announced to have English subtitles, and therefore reviews began to appear on the local English language newspapers²⁷ which is quite rare in a stage production. The evident commercial intention was to appeal to the local expatriate, English-speaking audience too; the promotional campaign could not rely on the cultural value of the novel, but could take advantage from the fact that this community too is very sensitive to the fascination of the “old Shanghai.”

Thank to this active promotional campaign, tickets sold out long before the première and after it, dozens of critical articles locally enflamed a heated debate about the play: numerous the critics against the main actress, too young, too lively, not enough of a “Shanghai girl.” The reconstruction of old Shanghai (music, costumes, setting, etc) was greatly appreciated, but the play was judged to be too long (3,5 hours), and if the commentators and audience liked the second act for its sparkle, the first and third did not keep the pace. The review on the *Southern weekly*²⁸ suggested that probably SDAC was aiming at building a “Shanghai classic” on the Wang Anyi novel, that could compete with the Beijing classic masterpiece *Tea-house (Chaguan 茶馆 1957)* by Lao She (老舍 1899-1966). From this perspective, the business operation of adapting a bestseller became a much more far reaching and longer term project.

²⁵ See Yuan Yuan 袁媛, “Jixu xunmi Wang Qiyao” (继续寻觅“王琦瑶”Looking for Wang Qiyao). *Qingnian bao* (青年报, Youth Daily), November 22, 2002, and Zhang Jihong 张计红, “Wang Qiyao jiu ta le” (“王琦瑶”就她了, She will be Wang Qiyao). *Xinwen chenbao*, November 15, 2002.

²⁶ See Jiang Xiaoling 姜小玲, “Wang Anyi jieyuan huaju” (王安忆结缘话剧, Wang Anyi is now committed to the theatre). *Jiefang ribao* (解放日报, Jiefang Daily), October 18, 2002.

²⁷ See Zheng Susan, “Staging a Shanghai Original.” *Shanghai Daily*, March 20, 2003.

²⁸ Wang Yin 王寅, “Chang hen ge tuidao chonglai?” (长恨歌推倒重来?, The *Song of Everlasting Sorrow* makes a new start?). *Nanfang zhoumo* (南方周末 Southern weekly), May 1, 2003.

The attitude of SDAC confirmed this hypothesis: according to the critics and audience's comments and suggestions, the play "hui lu" (回炉, went back to oven):²⁹ in autumn 2003, for its second run, a new play went on stage. Thanks to generous cuts, the new play was reduced to three hours. In particular, the first and third acts were significantly changed, in order to speed up. The play "make a big leap forward"³⁰ were the newspapers headlines, and Wang Qiyao changed completely, despite the actress being the same. A second "big operation" on the play was made for the third run, in Shanghai and Beijing. The box office success however did not escape negative reviews, in particular on the Beijing newspapers: the audience was disappointed, they did not find the Wang Qiyao of the book on the stage, etc. The "Shanghai wei" 上海味 (Shanghai flavour) seemed not to meet the favour of the Beijing public.³¹ The situation in Shanghai was different: the play is warmly welcomed, becoming quickly a "Classic" in SDAC repertoire: it is restaged after years in 2015 to celebrate the 20 years of the SDAC, and then the year after a brand new cast reignited the "Wang Qiyao fever." The key point of the success was exactly the local atmosphere: with its faithful reconstruction of old Shanghai (dresses, furniture, objects), the play exploited not only the fame of the novel, but the nostalgia for the old Shanghai that had long been blooming in a huge industry (old Shanghai objects, gadgets, stories, etc). The critical reviews praised the theatrical character (*xijuxing* 戏剧性) of the script,³² and the solid structure in three acts, one act one epoch, one epoch one love story. Nevertheless, I do agree with some of the critics' opinion that lamented the flatness of the play.³³ Of the all-round, multilayered fresco of the novel, the stage version keeps only the tearful sentimental story of Wang Qiyao, building on it a romantic comedy that exploits the lively Shanghai humour. Therefore, in my opinion, this play is not a new text, but a subtext dependent on its source. Focusing only on the love plots, the play deprives the main character of Wang Qiyao of her complex psychology: her ambition to climb the social ladder; to become rich, her romantic passion tightly bound to her greediness, her difficult relationship with her daughter, indeed all this fades away in the play. The play is alive (and Wang Qiyao, too), because the book is there. Therefore, I would classify it

²⁹ Zhang Jihong 张计红 "Chang hen ge dingfeng huilu" (《长恨歌》顶峰回炉, After its success on stage, the *Song of everlasting sorrow* goes back to the drawing board). *Xinwen chenbao*, April 22, 2003.

³⁰ "Xin ban Wang qiyao de da yuejin" (新版王琦瑶的"大跃进", The big leap forward of the new Wang Qiyao). *Shishang Shanghai* (时尚上海, Fashion Shanghai), November 8, 2003.

³¹ Tao Lan 陶澜, "Chang hen ge jiaozuo wei jiaohao" (长恨歌叫座未叫好 The *Song of Everlasting Sorrow* attracts a large audience, does not attract applause). *Beijing qingnian bao* (北京青年报 Beijing Youth Daily), July 4, 2004.

³² See Sun Qinghua and Dong Limin (2007).

³³ Zhang Xudong 张旭东, "Chang hen ge cong xiaoshuo dao wutai" (《长恨歌》: 从小说到舞台, The *Song of Everlasting Sorrow*: from the book to the stage). *Wenhui bao* (文汇报 Wenhui Daily), June 2, 2004.

as strongly dependent both on the cultural cluster and the original source. This adaptation clearly hit its target of exploiting the best seller in order to attract the public, although I would not affirm it met the high expectation from SDAC to become the “great Shanghai classic.”

To the other extreme of the line of dependency/ independency from the cluster I have just depicted, I wish to present the case of the stage adaptation of the novel *To live!* (*Huozhe* 活着) by Yu Hua 余华.³⁴ Published in 1993, when this cultural industry was still germinating in China, the following year its well-known adaptation for the screen by Zhang Yimou 张艺谋 won the Palme d'or and the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival. This event reinforced the celebrity of the director himself,³⁵ and offered an international platform/audience both to the book and its author. The TV adaptation was not until 2005,³⁶ and the stage adaptation was in 2012. I believe that a gap of nearly twenty years between the book and the stage adaptation is a time span long enough to suggest this was not a media conglomerate operation.

The director Meng Jinghui 孟京辉 enjoys his own fame:³⁷ director of the National Theatre of China (NTCC Zhongguo guojia huajuyuan 中国国家话剧院), he runs at the same time his own Meng Jinghui's studio (Meng Jinghui gongzuoshi 孟京辉工作室) where he produces smaller and more provocative plays. Since 2008 he has been running his own theatre in Beijing (Fengchao juchang 蜂巢剧场) where he stages his studio productions: his name on the billboard is enough to guarantee sell

³⁴ At that time (1993) still a young and promising writer, Yu Hua (1960) enjoys today a worldwide reputation and his novels are translated in many languages. The fame of Zhang Yimou's adaptation played a role in launching his fame worldwide and promoting the translation of his books. The novel *To Live* narrates the story of the main character Fugui, the spoiled son of a landlord who gambled away his family fortune: against the background of the last 50 years of Chinese history, Fugui with his family manage to survive through the civil war, the Maoist political campaigns, the famine, etc. His wife and his kids die one by one, through a tragic destiny of hardship that nevertheless is narrated with a poetic smile. A long song to the tough, hard and fast attachment to life.

³⁵ Since 1987, when he won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival with his adaptation of the novel *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gaoliang jiazu*, 红高粱家族) by Mo Yan 莫言, Zhang Yimou obtained worldwide fame as one of the most important Asian film directors of his generation. In the following years, his works kept on winning international and national prizes.

³⁶ 33 episodes, 40 minutes long, director Zhu Zheng 朱正, screenwriter Xie Lihong 谢丽虹 first aired in 2005. Interestingly enough, the TV series does not exploit the fame of the title of the movie and of the book, but rather prefers to use the name of the main character, *Fugui* (福贵).

³⁷ Born in 1968, he gained his international reputation thanks to his first avant-garde, provocative and repeatedly censored productions. The unexpected, popular success of the play *Rhinoceros in love* (*Lian'ai de xiniu* 恋爱的犀牛) written by his wife Liao Yimei 廖一梅 brought him great fame among the young Chinese public. Premiered in 1999, it has already become a classic, at its 17th version, with more than 2000 shows till today, it is constantly sold out. Criticized for his “commercial turn,” Meng’s position is at the same time inside and outside the mainstream, on a border that Ferrari defines “pop avant-garde.” See Ferrari (2012).

out, his works “both challenge and become the mainstream” (Conceison 2017: 16), and are followed by a very loyal, young audience.

As he declared in interviews, Meng wished to stage another novel by Yu Hua, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* (*Xu Sanguan mai xue ji*, 许三观卖血记, 1995), but after a long discussion with his friend Yu Hua and then with the main actor Huang Bo 黄渤, he finally got the rights for *To Live*. Yu Hua participated in the press conference to promote the play in May 2012, together with Meng Jinghui and Huang Bo, but he made it clear he was not involved in the stage adaptation: ‘Meng can change it at his ease!’³⁸ Actually, Meng Jinghui gained a reputation of being someone who manipulates, destroys and shatters the texts he approaches, be they classic or contemporary, foreign or Chinese. He adopts any kind of trans-forming strategies (transculturation, intentional misreading, hybridization, etc) in order to dismantle, rebuild and offer to his audience his own text, his own reading or interpretation of the original text. Interestingly enough, the two playwrights, Zhang Xian 张先 and Xu Lulun 许绿伦, did not play a prominent role either in the promotion of the play or in the following up interviews, as for example Zhao Yaomin did for *The Song of Everlasting Sorrows*: the press spotlights were always pointed towards the director and the main actor. Yu Hua himself disappeared soon after the first press conference announcing the adaptation project.

A big production by NTCC, with a troupe totaling 50 people, *To Live* enjoyed huge success on the Chinese mainland, in Taiwan and in Germany. More than 59 performances around China in fewer than two years,³⁹ applauded both by the public and the critics. This play is at the same time the adaptation of the famous novel by Yu Hua, as is clearly conveyed by the use of the original title and the name of Yu Hua himself in the credits as “original author” and, at the same time a new, independent, imaginative text.

Compared to other adaptations by Meng, this is among the most conservative ones, and maybe because of this, the critical reviews, in this case, have been very positive.⁴⁰ This has not been always the case for Meng Jinghui adaptations: Chinese critics – but not only Chinese – lean towards fidelity and value closeness and proximity as fundamental (Ferrari 2012: 251). The adaptation has the same narrative structure as the novel: the main character, Fugui, narrates his life to a guy strolling around the countryside collecting popular ballads. The same actor who plays the main role, Fugui, plays that

³⁸ Zhao Chen 赵忱, “Yu Hua, gei Meng Jinghui Huozhe juegui ziyou” (余华,给孟京辉《活着》绝对自由, Yu Hua gives total freedom to Meng Jinghui for *To Live*). *Zhongguo wenhua bao* (中国文化报, China Culture Daily), June 5, 2012.

³⁹ The play toured to Tianjin, Shanghai, Chongqing, Chengdu, Hangzhou, Xi'an, Guiyang, Qingdao, Shenzhen plus Hong Kong, Taipei and Berlin.

⁴⁰ Zhang Lihong (2012: 18-20).

of this guy too: the guy appears only at the beginning and at the end to close the play, Fugui's role accompanies the public throughout his story. Fugui, a contemporary story-teller, narrates his life to the public: the rhythmic flow of the narration is constantly interrupted by the arrival of the different characters he mentions, the short dialogues between him and them and then the action originating from it. These episodes, that are true theatrical action and dialogue, balance the slow motion of the one voice narrator with frequent actions and movements.

The script of this play is simply a composition of some of the main episodes of the original novel; the narrative parts generally follow Yu Hua's text word for word, only in the dialogues are the lines by Yu Hua blended with new ones.⁴¹ Of course, the source text is abbreviated so as to limit the play to 3 hours.

The simple setting (a small house at the back of the stage, mirrors on both sides of it, some chairs) together with the videos, the cartoons, the strange clothes and make up draw the audience into a sort of "fairytalelike" or "naïf world." Brilliant the stage design, a platform crossed by four channels parallel to the public. These channels are primarily the ways in and out for the actors, that pop up here and there, appearing and disappearing along the channels. They play varying roles too: they become the furrows of the fields where the peasants work, the barricades where the soldiers hide, the line of desks at school, the hospital aisle, and so on.

The sorrow, the pain, the struggle to live and the emotions that the novel depicts in a lively way arrive on stage through the action and the gestures of the actors: these are not mimetic but aim at arousing, igniting a feeling, an emotion, a sensation in the spectator.

In Meng's method the theatrical experience must produce an electric current that flows from the artist to the audience and from the stage to the social sphere (Ferrari 2012: 240).

Exaggerated physicality, multirole acting, multimedia and sound devices all have to contribute to awakening the emotion of the audience. Let's take the big scene of Fugui grieving his son's death: no tears or crying, being the mimetic figuration of the desperation of a father. Instead the actor, in a corner, kneeling down on the stage takes plastic bottles full of water and beats them one by one again and again against the stage emptying them of their water. A red light illuminates the actor, that

⁴¹ During the press conference, Meng Jinghui declared that to maintain Yu Hua's language was one of the principles they followed during the creative process, together with avoiding rousing emotions in the most moving moments. See Zhang Yue 张悦, "Huoze de 'yishu': 'zhai ru shouzhang, kuan ruo dadi'" (《活着》的“艺术”: 窄如手掌宽若大地, The "art" of *To Live*: as minute as your palm, as big as the earth). *Zhongguo yishu bao* (中国艺术报, China Art Daily), August 7, 2013.

gasping for breath keeps on smashing the bottles. In that violence, in that repetition of a useless gesture there is all the tragedy of a father that cannot do anything. The water floods the stage as a flood of tears, or as a flood of blood, the same blood the son donated and that caused his death. All the reviews underline this as a crucial scene in which Meng Jinghui has successfully built the sense of tragedy and desperation (Zheng Xinwendi 2014: 30).



Fig.1. From the scene "Donating blood at the hospital". The desperation of Fugui after the death of his son Youqing. Courtesy by Meng Jinghui Studio.

The stage design itself plays a role in this flux of emotion towards the audience: the inner urge to struggle for life that Yu Hua builds up throughout the novel is very well depicted in a scene where the four main characters madly run up and down the channels. They cannot meet each other, they do not arrive anywhere, they do not know why, but they keep running, running, running: if you run, it means you are alive.



Fig. 2. From the scene “The execution of Long’er.” Courtesy by Meng Jinghui Studio.

Brief clownesque interludes, together with the projection of naïf cartoon, from one side solving the technical question of tidying up the stage without closing the curtains (for example, to dry up the water poured out by Fugui in the scene of the death of his son). On the other side, they play a key role in suspending the tragic flow of events, giving a breathing space to the public. At the same time, they do not forget to interweave the core topics of the play: for example, the clownesque interludes focusing on the fight for a small piece of bread, Fugui always finds a way to eat. To stay alive, you have to fight for food, and in fact food and starvation are main topics of the novel as well as of the play. All these flashes of fairytale interrupt the narration of Fugui’s tragic destiny, opening the breach that gives the true meaning to the entire play: to live!

The play is closely connected to the novel, but can stand as a text in its own right:: despite the scattered structure as a montage of action scenes that flow alongside the long monologue of the protagonist, the play successfully weaves the multiple threads of the tragic story of Fugui: through love, destiny, death, hardship and starvation, the fight for life becomes a powerful celebration of it: of the happiness of life. The adaptation does not simplify the story, does not choose a single plot line to

concentrate on, cutting off all other threads in order to fit the time limit, instead it becomes a work of concentration and distillation (*jinghua* 精华). We do not read comments about the “fidelity” of the Fugui of the stage to the Fugui of the novel, as we have read for Wang Qiyao: the Fugui in the play is a well rounded character able to ignite emotions in the audience by himself, he stands on his own two feet, and is not the double of anyone.

In conclusion, it would be very easy to compress these observations on the two case studies in a scheme in which conglomerate production produces sub-products and vice versa a product with artistic value is the result of non-conglomerate actors’ operation. The position of the product on the line that runs from close connection to a quite relaxed connection to the conglomerate cluster can eventually suggest a plausible expectation of the dependency or independency of the adaptation from the source text. But the frame is very complex, and it would be too simplistic and misleading to come to a rigid schema. Many commentators lament the lack of good playwrights in the contemporary world of Chinese theatre: in recent years, the increasing and overwhelming number of novel adaptations would therefore be caused by the lack of good scripts.⁴² The TV and screen industry are much more fruitful and attractive for young creative writers. Another factor at play in this complex game is the increasing visibility and main role of the theatre directors in the creation of the play, overriding the playwright’s role: in the everlasting controversy over the priority of the text or of the theatrical performance, it seems that the creative role of the directors is now the focus of attention, they are the stars. Nevertheless, I do think that the schema combining quality and economic value produces a very useful analytical tool that allows us to better understand the actors involved in the cultural production today as well as the reasons why a certain artist in a certain society in a certain period produces a certain kind of adaptation/interpretation of a text.

Going back to my premise, the net produced by a text is the germination of its life: maybe some fruits are not excellent, nevertheless its ability to produce different echoing voices deserve our attention. In Yu Hua’s words, “Only idiots are faithful to the original!”⁴³

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⁴² Chen Xihan 陈熙涵, “Huaju: gaibian mingjia xiaoshuofanchen yuanchuang quexi” (话剧: 改编名家小说 反衬原创缺席, Theatre: the stage adaptations of famous writers' novels highlight the lack of original playwrighting). *Wenhui bao*, July 5, 2013.

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And prepare a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah and to Jerusalem, the mighty city.⁵

Targum Jonathan provides too free a rendering to be of any real text-critical value but again it seems to reflect the MT's use of the adjective "fortified", although the Targum applies it to the cities in which fugitives from Jerusalem took refuge:

אורקא אתקין דגיתון בה קטולי חרבא מרבת בני עמון ועל דבית יהודה דנפקו מירושלם למיתב בקרוין
קרין

Set a road by which those who slay with the sword might come from Rabbah of the Ammonites, against those of the House of Judah who went out of Jerusalem to dwell in fortified cities.⁶

This is the Hebrew text of the verse as reconstructed by H. Cornill in his critical edition of the book of Ezekiel published in 1886 (Cornill 1886: 306):

דרך עיר תשים לבוא חרב את רבת בני עמון ואת יהודה וירושלם בתוכה

Cornill translates the verse as follows:

nach jeder Stadt setzen, dass das Schwert komme nach Rabbath der Kinder Ammons und nach Juda und Jerusalem in seiner Mitte.

Heinrich Cornill⁷ belonged to a generation of Biblical scholars that was not at all afraid of conjectural emendation⁸ and he reworks Ezekiel's text accordingly. Cornill essentially makes use of retroversion:⁹ The Hebrew text he reconstructs at the end of the verse is a translation into Hebrew (בתוכה) of the LXX's ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῆς.¹⁰ A few years after Cornill's edition, this emendation was accepted in H.C. Toy's critical edition of *Ezekiel*: וירושלם בתוכה (Toy 1899: 74).

⁵ Transl. Lamsa (1957: 847).

⁶ Transl. Levey (1987: 67).

⁷ On Heinrich Cornill see Rabenau (1957: 367).

⁸ On the art of emending the Biblical text see Martone (2012).

⁹ On the criteria for retroversion see Tov (1997: 57-89).

¹⁰ It should be noted that this is not the only emendation in this verse put forward by Cornill. However the correction of MT's דרך into עיר דרך is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Cornill was not the only scholar who proposed to emend this passage. Some fifty years earlier, another scholar who had no qualms about altering the Biblical text, Ferdinand Hitzig,¹¹ had proposed to replace the MT's *בְּצוּרָה* with *בְּקִרְבָּה*, “womit alle Schwierigkeit gehoben ist” (Hitzig 1847: 147).¹²

After the use of conjectural emendation in Biblical studies went out of fashion, the difference between the MT and the LXX in Ezek 21:25 received little or no attention, since no *Schwierigkeit* was felt any more.¹³

Be that as it may, it should be noted that this is the only time that the LXX translates *בְּצוּרָה* in this way: In all other occurrences¹⁴ the passive participial form is translated with terms related to the semantic field of strength.¹⁵

A lexical solution to the tension between the readings of MT and the LXX has been proposed by Joshua Blau (Blau 1956). In a short and elegant note, Blau interprets *מְבוּצָרֵת* in *mNeg.* 1:5 as meaning “in der Mitte”. The passage in question runs as follows:

הִיְתָה בּוֹ מִחַיָּה וְהִלְכָה לָהּ הַמִּחַיָּה, הִיְתָה מְרַבֶּעֶת וְנִעְשִׂיתָ עֲגֻלָּה אוֹ אֲרָבָה, מְבֻצָּרֵת וְנִעְשִׂיתָ מִן הַצֵּד, מְכַנְסֵת וְנִתְפָּזְרָה, וּבָא הַשָּׁחִין וְנִכְנַס בְּתוֹכָהּ.

This is H. Danby's explanatory translation of this difficult passage (Danby 1933: 677):

or if [on the Sabbath] there was quick flesh but [the next day] the quick flesh was gone;; or if it was four-sided but [the next day] it became round or long; or if it was encompassed but [the next day] it appeared only to the side; or if it was united but [the next day] it was dispersed; or if [the next day] a boil came and entered therein.

Thus, in this case *מְבוּצָרֵת* means a rash that is *surrounded* (“encompassed”)¹⁶ by healthy flesh,¹⁷ and this is the general meaning given to the root *בָּצַר* in M. Jastrow's classic dictionary of Talmudic language, with a reference to the passage discussed here:

¹¹ On Ferdinand Hitzig (1807-1875) see Villiger (1999).

¹² Other proposals in Barthélemy (1992: 175). Barthélemy's attribution of the emendation of *בְּצוּרָה* to *בְּתוֹכָהּ* to Cappel's *Notae Criticae* is mistaken.

¹³ On this topic see Catastini (1991, 1995: 5-12), Chiesa (2000; 2002) and Hendel (2010).

¹⁴ Num 13:28; Deut 1:28; 3:5; 9:1; 28:52; Josh 14:12; 2 Sam 20:6; 2 Kgs 18:13; 19:25; 2 Chr 17:2; 19:5; 32:1; 33:14; Neh 9:25; Isa 2:15; 25:2; 27:10; 36:1; 37:26; Jer 15:20; 33:3; Ezek 21:25; 36:35; Hos 8:14; Zeph 1:16; Zech 11:2.

¹⁵ See Muraoka (2010:166). The case of Zech. 11:2 deserves a separate study.

¹⁶ See also Neusner (1998 *ad loc.*) who translates “encompassed” too: a further proof of the enduring usefulness of Danby's translation of the Mishnah.

Neg I, 5 מְבוֹצֵרָת an eruption surrounded with sound flesh (Jastrow 1950: 185).¹⁸

The same meaning is given for other occurrences, too, such as jPes 56a:¹⁹

גגות ירושלים קודש. ר' ירמיה ר' מיישא רבי שמואל בר רב יצחק בשם רב גגות ירושלים חול.
והא תנינן מן האגוף ולפנים כלפנים מן האגוף ולחוץ כלחוץ פתר לה בגג מבוצר לאויר חצר הא
מתניתא

The roofs of Jerusalem are sanctified. Rebbi Jeremiah, Rebbi Miasha, Rebbi Samuel bar Rav Isaac in the name of Rav: The roofs of Jerusalem are profane. But did we not state, “From the wing and inside it is like inside; from the wing and outside it is like outside”? Explain it that the Mishnah speaks about a roof surrounded by buildings forming a courtyard.

In this context too, it is clear that the verbal form means “to surround”. The question being debated is whether the roofs of Jerusalem are to be considered profane so as to decide within what limits it is lawful to offer sacrifices. In the discussion a mishnaic passage is reported and interpreted as referring to a roof “surrounded” (מבוצר) by buildings. Thus, it would seem that the meaning of the root in mishnaic Hebrew is not so different from its meaning in biblical Hebrew: “fortified, surrounded”, stemming from the basic meaning “inaccessible, unassailable”, as a participial form of the root *בצר* I.²⁰ This brings us back to where we started: Why does the LXX translate the MT’s *בְּצֻרָה* (“fortified”) by *ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῆς* (“in her midst”)? To obtain a possible solution we should take into consideration the fact that the MT of Ezek 21:25 is a rather difficult text, although most modern translations do not mention any problems. A literal translation would run more or less as follows:

Mark out the road for the sword to come to Rabbah of the Ammonites *and to Judah in Jerusalem fortified.*

In this connection it is interesting to note that the version most faithful to the MT seems to be the *Vulgata* of Jerome, who had no problem with translating literally the phrase *ad Iudam in Hierusalem*:²¹

¹⁷ See Levy (1876-89: 252).

¹⁸ Other instances are jShav 40a and parallels.

¹⁹ Text and translation (slightly modified by the present writer) in Guggenheimer (2013: 291-292).

²⁰ See Köhler, Baumgartner, and Richardson (2017: 142), and Gen 11:6; Job 42:2. See also Clines (1995: 246): “be fortified, be inaccessible (alw. passive ptc., oft. as attributive adj., fortified city, etc.)” on the same line also Gesenius (1987: 167) (“befestigen [eigtl. etwas V. dem Daranliegenden absondern, umringen, umgeben”).

²¹ Text in Fischer and Weber (1994).

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A Sureth Version of the East-Syriac Dialogue Poem of Mary and the Gardener

Alessandro Mengozzi¹

In the present paper, a Sureth version is published of the dialogue poem of *Mary and the Gardener*. As a first attempt to reconstruct the history of this text, the poetic version in the vernacular is compared with five manuscript witnesses of the Classical Syriac original. The poem is presented as part of an intertextual web of Classical Syriac hymns for Easter and Pentecost that are preserved in late liturgical collections and appear to be narrative and rhetorical expansions of John 20:11-17. Formal and thematic parallels to the poem are then found in the broader framework of Christian and Jewish hymnography written in varieties of Late Aramaic.

1. The Character of Women in Syriac Dialogue Poems

In a number of publications, Sebastian Brock has shown that in Syriac literature dispute poems – i.e. poems that display the formal features of the Mesopotamian dispute as recently described by Jiménez (2017) – represent a specific sub-group within a wider corpus of texts, the vast majority of which are poems and in which dialogue is a more or less salient structural feature. Following Grelot (1958) and Murray (1995), Brock (1984: 35-36) thinks that the Mesopotamian dispute was adopted early and adapted by major Syriac authors like Ephrem (c. 306-373 AD) and Jacob of Serugh (c. 451-521) in various forms: simple allusions to disputes or disputes as substantial parts of *madrashē* (stanzaic hymns) and *mēmre* (metrical homilies). In a second phase, which includes the largest number of texts,

¹ This paper is a small sign of gratitude for Pinuccia Caracchi. I have always admired her passion for teaching and commitment to our work as a humble service for students and colleagues. I feel fortunate to have been working with her in recent years and I am now honored to dedicate this paper to a friend and a colleague with whom I share an interest for the deep connections that bind poetry and spirituality. Both poetry and spirituality help to unmask the impalpable nature of the psychological and disciplinary borders that separate West and East, Europe and Asia, Mediterranean and Indian cultures. As objects of study and fascination, both poetry and spirituality are necessary components of an integral humanistic approach to scholarship and knowledge, to the complexity of cultures and of the human condition.

the stanzaic hymn called *soghithā*² is the commonest genre and metrical form used for anonymous disputes, dialogues and, in general, poetry containing direct speech.

Most Syriac dialogue poems are not disputations or precedence disputes, but argumentative discussions on specific – biblical or theological – topics. Brock (1983a: 44) suggests that the transition from dispute to argumentative dialogue is an indication of the Christianization of the genre. Dialogue *soghiyāthā* often use narrative details or gaps in the Biblical text to promote the exegetical discourse through the dialectical and dialogical discussion of two characters. The authors exploit the euristic potential of both poetry and rhetoric as tools and expressions of theological reasoning and thinking.³ Sometimes exegetical and theological contents are introduced in the dialogues in a simple and schematic way and thus the texts appear to have a pedagogical, catechetical function, which makes the festivals of the liturgical calendar for which they are composed occasions for a living and recurring catechesis. In the liturgical performance, hymns become the textual support of both theological reflection and spiritual experience.

Most characters are taken from the Bible and the texts are narrative and rhetorical expansions of dialogues that are just implied, sketched or alluded to in the Biblical text: Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Joseph and Benjamin, Joseph and Potiphar's wife, Job and his wife, Zechariah and the angel, the angel and Mary, Mary and Joseph, Mary and the Magi, John the Baptist and Christ, John the Baptist and the crowd, Christ and the Pharisees, the sinful woman and Satan, the two thieves, the Cherub and the (good) thief, Mary and the gardener. Dialogues between historical characters, saints and personifications are also attested: Nero, the soldiers and Peter, Queen Helena and the Jewish people, King Shapur and the martyrs, Cyril and Nestorius, Saint Behnam and Satan, Elijah of Hirta and an angel, Saint Marina and Satan, the rivers Jordan and Pishon, Grace and Justice, the Church and Sion, Christ and the Synagogue (Brock 2010: 97-104).

Women are generally positive characters in Syriac dialogue poems. For pedagogical and parenetic purposes, women such as Mary, suspected of having committed sin, or the sinful woman who wept at Jesus' feet stand on the right side and demonstrate intelligence, autonomy of thought, spirit of initiative and freedom of choice and action, sometimes as opposed to men such as Zachariah, Joseph and Satan alias the perfume seller. Men, in contrast, are representative of social norms and conventions, conformism and reductive interpretations of reality and Scripture (Harvey 2001: 124). In

² On the relationship of Syriac dialogue poems as a literary genre with exegesis, see Harvey (2001: 106 and 2005: 82), Upson-Saia (2006), Heal (2007: 87-8).

³ In a *soghithā* verses usually consist of four seven-syllable lines and an alphabetic acrostic often marks the pairs of verses in which the disputants alternate in direct speech.

Syriac dialogue poems, women often defend perfect faith against the rigidity of rationality (Harvey 2010: 176).

The space and freedom granted to women's voices, taken from the Scriptures or invented in imaginative poetic texts, may have actually been expressed in the female choirs, mostly virginal, whose existence and importance is well documented in Syriac culture from Ephrem's time (Harvey 2005 and 2010). The presence, the originality and the strength of the female characters would be underlined by the choirs of girls and women who have always animated and still animate the Syriac liturgy, in monasteries and parishes. On the other hand, liturgy is a public space traditionally dedicated to cultural communication and education and allows the representation and, within certain limits, the negotiation and redefinition of social roles (Harvey 2001: 129).

Christian Syriac literature is not the only Aramaic literature that preserved, adopted and adapted the format of the Mesopotamian dispute. Rhythmical compositions, sometimes with alphabetic acrostics, that contain a dialogue or a dispute, are interpolated within the Aramaic translation of various Biblical passages in the Palestinian Targums.⁴ However, the comparison of disputes and dialogue poems with the same characters that have been preserved in Syriac and Jewish Aramaic (Cain and Abel, Joseph and Potiphar's wife, the months of the year⁵) reveals the paradox of the relative uniformity of a supposedly inherited genre and the high degree of cultural idiosyncrasy between literary traditions that share more or less the same language as well as the historical and possibly socio-cultural macro-contexts (Münz-Manor 2010, Mengozzi, forthcoming b).

2. Mary and the Gardener: Sources, Exegetical Choices and Intertextual Webs

Among anonymous Classical Syriac hymns that are preserved in late liturgical collections, we find at least three poems that appear to be narrative and rhetorical expansions of John 20:11-17:

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking

⁴ A list can be found in Smelik (1995: 414-415). Text and translation of a number of Targumic disputes, with an insightful commentary, can be found in Rodrigues Pereira (1997).

⁵ On Jewish and Christian disputes of the months and calendars in verses, see Rand (2012) and Mengozzi (forthcoming a), both with bibliography.

he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her (NIV).

The Syriac hymnographers combine John’s account with the themes and details of the Synoptics, as if reading a Gospel harmony, and exegetical sources. It is possible that they draw inspiration also from non-canonical narratives that have not yet been identified. As far as the canonical Gospels are concerned, John 20:1 states that it was Mary Magdalene who went to Jesus’ tomb early on Sunday, and exegetes tend to identify her, who is also mentioned at the end of the pericope (John 20:18), with the Mary of John 20:11. Matthew 28:28 has that Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” went to Jesus’ tomb at dawn on Sunday. Mark says that “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph [probably Joseph of Arimathea, mentioned in 15:43] saw where he was laid” (15:47) and, in the immediately following verse, “when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb” (16:1-2). Mark 16:9 says that “when Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons”.

A *madrāshā* of the Syriac Catholic Breviary, intended for the time after Pentecost,⁶ elaborates on the theme of Mary thinking that Jesus was a gardener (John 20: 15):

1. The Lord of Paradise is risen from the tomb
and Mary saw him and likened him to the gardener.
He is the Gardener who planted Paradise
and encircled it with the sword and the cherub (Genesis 3:24)⁷.
You did well, Mary, to call him ‘Gardener’ (transl. by Brock 1983b).

⁶ Mosul *Fenqitho* (1884), Mosul: Imprimerie des Pères dominicains, vol. I, 434-5. An English translation of this *madrāshā* can be found in Brock (1983: 230-231).

⁷ The Cherub who protects Paradise with a flaming sword is one of the two disputants in another, perhaps the most famous dialogue poem for Easter, namely the *Dispute of the Cherub and the Thief* (Mengozzi-Ricossa 2013b, with bibliography).

It is not clear if the author implies the Mary in question is Mary Magdalene or the mother of Jesus (Brock 1983b: 232). In the following verses 2-4, she asks the Gardener where is “the fruit of salvation” that should be in a tomb in the garden. The gardener does not answer and the *madrāshā* cannot be described as a dialogue poem. The opening lines of v. 3 (“O gardener, how nice is your garden! In it is a tomb where, like the sovereign of the trees, is the fruit of true salvation...”) partly overlaps with the beginning of a very popular Easter hymn of the Church of the East, entitled *O gannānā!* ‘O gardener!’.⁸ The two hymns are clearly linked to each other:

1. “O gardener, how nice is your garden!
In it there is a tomb and the bride-chamber inside it.
The guards are sitting at the tomb
and the chamber, cherubim surround it.”
“How nice of you, Mary, that you have called me ‘gardener!’”

Jesus alias the gardener speaks to Mary in the line that closes v. 1 in a ring composition: “O gardener, how nice is your garden ... how nice of you, Mary...” From v. 3 it would seem that Mary is the mother of Jesus: “Weeping, Mary said: ‘They stole my son!’”, but from v. 5 it is clear that Mary Magdalene is speaking: “That one who drove seven demons out of me, I am burning with love for him!” Other characters speak to Mary in this text (Joseph of Arimathea in v. 3 and an angel in v. vv. 14-5), which, however, does not have the structure of a dialogue poem proper.

A third hymn, that expands on John 20, does have the structure of a dialogue poem. It is the East-Syriac *soghithā* of *Mary and the Gardener*. Mary repeatedly asks a reluctant gardener where is the fruit she is looking for. It is a fruit, hardly visible to human eye, that will give her life.⁹ The gardener

⁸ The text of *O gannānā!* has been published by Benyamin (1968: 178-182). Pastore (2013-2014) gives an Italian translation of the hymn and analyzes it as performed by the Assyrian singer Linda George. The audio of her performance is used as a sound track for a video posted on YouTube in 2013 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jjtd27Jy1o4): a transliteration in Arabic script of the Syriac text appears in the video, in combination with images drawn from the film *The Passion of the Christ* (2005), directed by Mel Gibson. In another video, published in 2015 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YaQ6LHcPFs), the text is tentatively attributed to the East-Syriac hymnographer Narsai (5th century) and the slides combine the East-Syriac text of each stanza as printed by Benyamin (1968) with an Arabic and an English translation of the text sung by Linda George. In this second video, images are drawn from Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977) and books of European popular devotion.

⁹ The idea of a woman seeking a fruit in the garden alludes to the contrast between Mary and Eve, which is a theme dear to the Syriac tradition (see, e.g., in Ephrem's *Hymns on the Church* 37; Brock 2010: 34-35). Mary has a fruit that gives life in the garden, her son Jesus, whereas Eve stole, as it were, a prohibited fruit from Eden. Times were not yet ripe for her and Adam to eat the fruit of the tree of life and here Jesus alias the gardener suggests that it is not the right season to look for fruits in the garden (7), so as to open the theological discussion of the dialogue.

dares her to explain what kind of fruit she is looking for and finally reveals to her the mystery of resurrection.

In some Eastern Christian traditions, probably inspired by a text of John 20:1 and 18 in which the word ‘Magdalene’ is omitted,¹⁰ the Mary who “stood outside the tomb crying” is identified with the mother of Jesus.¹¹ This is the exegetical choice of the author of the East-Syriac *soghithā* of *Mary and the Gardener*. In line with the role often played by women in Syriac dialogue poems, “Mary spars unwittingly with her resurrected son whom she does not recognize. While the Gardener (Christ) attempts to fend off her queries, Mary remains determined in her faith and continues to badger as the Gardener exclaims, “How you weary me with your talk / how you vex me with what you say!”¹² (Harvey 2010: 184, quoting Brock’s translation).

In the *madrāshā* of the Syriac Catholic Breviary and in the East Syriac hymn *O gannānā!*, the authors praise and approve as theologically sound that fact that Mary — Jesus’ mother or the Magdalene — thought Jesus was a gardener, the defender of Paradise and the one who opens up Paradise for Adam redeemed (actually the good thief, the first man who was granted access to Paradise on the cross). In *O gannānā!* Jesus himself approves Mary’s non-recognition: “How nice of you, Mary, that you have called me ‘gardener!’” On the other hand, in the *soghithā*, Jesus plays the role of a gardener, as if intending to test his mother’s understanding and faith. In the dialogue, he actually acts as a man annoyed by the woman’s insistent questioning. The anonymous author would seem to play with a stereotype of man-woman interaction so as to explain the fact that a mother does not recognize her son and build up the discussion that converges to the climax of the final revelation, expressed in the rhetorical form of an antimetabole: “His resurrection bears witness to His mother and His mother bears witness to His resurrection” (v. 21).

Precisely the identification of the Mary of John 20 with Mary the mother of Jesus suggests to Brock (1983b: 226) that the East-Syriac dialogue poem “may be of considerable antiquity: since it does not seem likely that a composition of the Arab period would any longer make such an identification, the text might hesitantly be attributed to about the sixth century”. However, the sophisticated

¹⁰ E.g., the text of the *Vetus Syra* (Codex Sinaiticus, 4th century) and the Arabic *Diatessaron* do not have Mary Magdalene, but just Mary in John 18: 1 and 18 (Brock 1983: 226).

¹¹ Brock (1983: 226) mentions works such as Ephrem the Syrian’s *Commentary on the Diatessaron* (fourth century), the Greek *Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos*, probably by Theodoret of Cyrhrhys (first half of the fifth century), references to this identification in works by Jacob of Serugh (d. 521) and other West-Syriac anonymous liturgical texts (Brock 1983: 232). Brock refers to Giannelli (1953) on Greek texts that speak of Jesus’ appearance to His mother after resurrection.

¹² Harvey (2010: 184) quotes Brock’s (1983) translation. See here, below, on the problematic attribution of this v. 13 to Mary or the gardener.

rhyme pattern of the hymn as preserved in manuscripts of the Ottoman period point to a much later date. Rhyme is generally believed to be characteristic of poetry in the Mongol and Ottoman periods, when Syriac hymnographers imitate or compete with Arabo-Persian models.

3. A Mother Searching Her Son

Mary is a mother who looks for her son, albeit described in highly imaginative and theological terms as a fruit that gives life, coherent with Jesus' appearance as a gardener. The author inserts into the account of the Gospel according to John a variant of the question that the two men in glistening clothes¹³ ask "the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee" (Luke 23:55), when they bring spices and perfumes early on Sunday: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). The gardener's wording is somewhat stronger: "Why, lady, do you seek the living in Sheol the devourer?"¹⁴

The idea of someone looking for Jesus after resurrection is probably a rather common rhetorical feature in many Christian hymns for Easter. For instance, in a possibly late East-Syriac *soghithā* for Easter, each couplet opens with the formula *ezzēt d-eḥzē* 'I went to look [for Jesus in a given place]' and the second hemistiches create, with the formula 'they told me to go [somewhere else]', a climax path of wandering in the geography of Jesus' passion and resurrection: from Golgotha to Jerusalem, the Upper-Chamber of the Last Supper, Sion and finally Heaven. Christ is not to be found anywhere, but in Heaven on the right hand of the Father, where he nevertheless appears as 'a perfect human being' (text and translation in Mengozzi and Ricossa 2013a: 164-165).

The verse opening formula and the geographic wandering of the East-Syriac Christologic *soghithā* has a formal parallel in a Jewish Palestinian Aramaic poem on *Jochebed's Search* of the body of his son Moses.¹⁵ In the Jewish poem each verse is opened by the formula *ezlat yokhevedh mpisā*¹⁶

¹³ In John 20:12 they are two angels in white; in Matthew 28 an angel — "His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow" — comes down from heaven accompanied by a violent earthquake; in Mark 16:15 there is a young man dressed in a white robe.

¹⁴ Brock (1983: 233) observes that 'the devourer' is a standard epithet of Sheol in liturgical poetry, possibly deriving from Proverbs 1:12 ("let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit", NIV) and already used by Ephrem the Syrian.

¹⁵ Lieber (2018: 150-151) translates the text as published by Yahalom-Sokoloff (1999: 244-7). Lieber (2018) is an English translation of the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic poems that Yahalom and Sokoloff published in 1999 with Hebrew translation. At least to my sensitivity of non-native reader, Lieber's English is sometimes difficult and odd, unnecessarily formal and pompous. Remarkable is her attempt, in this and other publications (e.g., Lieber 2014, 2015, 2016a and 2016b), to stress the oral and vocal dimensions of the texts and to reconstruct their performative arenas: not only and not primarily liturgy in the

‘Jochebed went to entreat [a given place so that he may say whether it has perhaps seen Moses]’ and the various places – Egypt, the Nile, the (Red) Sea, the desert, the Sinai, and the rock (i.e., the rock struck twice by Moses in Numbers 20:11) – answer they have not seen him since he performed one of his miracles and wonderful deeds. As is very common in this kind of Targumic poetry, verses are connected by structuring formulas and alphabetic acrostics¹⁷ and have a clear pedagogical function in that they arrange Bible quotations or references to Biblical events in a rhythmical text, easy to understand, memorize and sing chorally.

As far as the content is concerned, the Jewish poem on *Jochebed’s Search* parallels the East-Syriac *soghithā* on *Mary and the Gardener*, both depicting a mother’s reaction to the real or imagined death of her son. Jewish and Christian hymnography (in Hebrew, Greek and various forms of Late Aramaic: Jewish Palestinian, Samaritan and Syriac), especially of late antiquity, is nowadays seen as the literary expression of a common culture, sharing the historical context of the early Byzantine Middle East as well as aesthetics and motifs that easily circulated across confessional and linguistic borders.¹⁸ It is not surprising to find parallels in form and content of Aramaic hymns belonging to quite different epochs, but dealing with similar themes and functioning with a traditional set of formal tools in analogous performative arenas. *Mary and the Gardener, I went to look for Jesus* and the Jewish poem on *Jochebed’s Search* do not necessarily depend on each other or derive from a common model, but they

synagogue (some texts are interpolated in Targum “lectionaries”, for instance to mark the ends of biblical units such as the Tora or the Psalms, or preserved in prayer books, possibly hymnaries), but also life-cycle rituals such as marriages, funerals, possibly bar-mitzvahs. Less convincing is the idea that these texts may have been performed in “civic spaces (such as theaters)” (Lieber 2018: 8). As far as contents are concerned, Lieber’s approach is often brilliant and successful in showing the performative force and the semiotic efficacy of the texts as performed poems and their function in the construction of a communal identity. Nevertheless, she probably asks too much of these texts when she “mines the poems for clues about the lived reality out of which the JPA [Jewish Palestinian Aramaic] poems emerged” (Lieber 2018: 9). The texts speak of the every-day life of Aramaic-speaking Jews of late antiquity no more than the *Salve Regina* tells about European Christians of various epochs. Hymns say a lot about communal identity and belonging, about hope and despair, but they give almost no clues on “lived reality”, which may be irrelevant in the (para-) liturgical discourse.

¹⁶ Or perhaps *mpayysā* (*pa“el* participle), since the word is written with double *y* and this usually indicates a consonant *y* rather than a vowel *i* in the orthography of Jewish texts. In vv. 2-3 and 5-6 the scribe writes this verb form with a final *-t*, that gives a feminine participle in the construct state, barely understandable in the context. He possibly copied onto the participle the regular final *-t* of the 3rd feminine singular perfect of the beginning of the lines (*azlat* “she went”). The verb derives from Greek *peisai* ‘to persuade’ and is generally used in Jewish Aramaic in the basis form *p‘al* with the meaning ‘to persuade, reconcile’. Curiously, Lieber (2018: 150 n. 14) follows Kister (2008: 177) and translates the participle with the meaning that it has in Classical Syriac in the *af‘el* causative form ‘to persuade, beseech, plea’.

¹⁷ In this poem the opening formulas that divide each verse in two couplets begin with the two first letters of the alphabet *alef* and *beth*.

¹⁸ Rodrigues Pereira (1997) has been a pioneer in the formal comparative study of Late Aramaic poetry. See, more recently, Münz-Manor (2010 and 2013), and Lieber (2016a), widening the scope of the comparison to Christian Greek texts.

show typical rhetorical devices — such as ethopoea, the question and answer pattern, anaphora and structuring formulas — and the pedagogical function of (para-)liturgical hymns in Late Aramaic literatures.

Lieber (2016a) compares the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic poem on *Jochebed's Search* with other Jewish (Hebrew) and Christian (Syriac and Greek) texts on maternal grief and the sons' preoccupation for the mothers: Jochebed, mother of Moses, Sarah, mother of Isaac, and Mary mother of Jesus. As is the case in Syriac dialogue poems, a close comparative reading of the texts — especially the two anonymous Hebrew poems on Moses and the Aramaic *Jochebed's Search* — reveals that implicit and explicit dialogues are instrumental in putting gender confrontation on stage. “These poems suggest male expectations of extreme maternal mourning, but they then counter those assumptions with depictions of women displaying stubbornness and resilient control” (Lieber 2016a: 277).

4. The Texts

Brock (1983b) published the East-Syriac version of the dialogue poem of *Mary and the Gardener* on the basis of the ms. Cambridge Add. 2820 (C). In the present paper, a Sureth version is published of the same text, as preserved in a miscellaneous multilingual manuscript of the Berlin Sachau collection: Berlin 134 (Sachau 336), ff. 89v-90v (henceforth S).¹⁹ For comparative purposes, the Classical Syriac text is published here, in the right column below, on the basis of the collation of five manuscript witnesses:

A = Chaldean Diocese of Alqosh 13 (Alqosh, Iraq, 1679), ff. 37r-37v²⁰

B = Baghdad Archbishopric of the Church of the East 6 (1719?), pp. 63-64²¹

C = Cambridge Add. 2820 (Telkepe 1881), ff. 52v-53v

M = Mangeš (Iraq), Mar Gīwargīs Church 7 (20th century), f. 75r²²

¹⁹ Sureth is the autoglottonym used for spoken and written Christian varieties of the language group that dialectologists label as North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic. The content of the ms. Berlin 134 (Sachau 336) is described in Mengozzi (2018: 77-78). A digital copy of the manuscript is available in the website of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Germany): Sammlung von Gedichten, Hochzeitsliedern und Geschichten, 1883.

²⁰ DCA 13 in HMML data-base. A digital copy of the manuscript can be seen in the virtual Reading Room of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (Collegeville, Minnesota).

²¹ The ms. was photographed in the context of a 2005 project for the preservation and documentation of Syriac manuscripts (Kaufhold 2006). Since the folios of this manuscript are not numbered, I refer to page numbers as given in the jpeg file names.

²² MGCCM 7 in HMML data-base. A digital copy of the manuscript can be seen in the virtual Reading Room of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (Collegeville, Minnesota).

V = Vatican Syr. 188 (sine data, perhaps 18th century), ff. 54r-54v

All witnesses preserve the first eighteen verses, with a low degree of textual variation. B has ten other verses, whereas C and the Sureth version (S) have eight additional verses quite different from those preserved in B. The discovery of other versions and copies will probably shed more light on the history of this text. Since B and C preserve more or less the same text of vv. 20-22, it may be that vv. 19-26 in C and S and vv. 19-28 in B are variants of an archetypal text that contained more than eighteen verses, i.e., the full alphabetic acrostic and perhaps a couple of closing verses.

For the present edition, B has been used as a base text of vv. 1-18, whereas a synoptic text of C (in the middle column) and B is given for vv. 19-26/28. Variants are recorded in the footnotes. When the reading of all other manuscripts is preferable, the variant of B is put in the footnote. I opt for the numbering of the couplets adopted by Brock (1983b) for the edition of C. In the Classical text, the alphabetic acrostic marks the couplets 3-24. However, the rhyme pattern (A A -li -nā) suggests pairing the couplets in quatrains of seven syllable lines, which is the typical stanzaic structure of the *soghithā* meter.

None of the collated texts is the Classical Syriac Vorlage that the author of S translated into the vernacular. In 6b and 11a the Sureth translator appears to render the text as preserved by all manuscripts except B. On the contrary, in 8b, 9b, 14b, 18b the Sureth version reflects a text similar to B in contrast with all the other manuscripts. S translates a text of v. 19 that corresponds to B, whereas C has a completely different version of this verse.²³ In 20a C and S have ‘woman’, where B had ‘Mary’. For no apparent reason 20b is completely different in B, C and S. In vv. 23-26 S clearly follows a text similar to C. The line 27a of B is the text of line 23a in C and S.

The Sureth version is generally quite faithful. Nevertheless, eight syllable lines — possibly compatible with the melody according to which the hymn is supposed to be sung — occur from time to time and the rhyme pattern of the original (A A -li -nā) tends to become A A A -nā in the poetic translation. The alphabetic acrostic of the Classical Syriac *soghithā* is preserved only in vv. 4, 6, 8, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, where the vernacular uses the same word or root of the original in the classical language. In 1d, probably for metrical reasons, the author of S omitted ‘my son’, that identifies Mary

²³ In line 19b of C we find the adjective *bthulāyā* ‘virginal’, that Brock (1983, 233) has not “noticed in any text that can be dated definitely before the sixth century”. Its occurrence led Brock (1983, 226 n. 8) to deem an earlier date of the text unlikely. It now appears, from B and S, that a sub-archetype of the poem existed in which this relatively late form does not occur at all.

as the mother of Jesus from the very beginning of the text.²⁴ Metrical reasons probably led the translator to introduce a dubious enjambment in 3b-4a (“He said to her / in the garden”), that displaces the adverbial of place (“in the garden”) out of the question that the Lord asks Mary: “What are you looking for today in the garden?”.

Possibly confused by the ungenerous, somewhat rude comment that Jesus alias the gardener addresses to his mother (“How you weary me with your voice(s), how you vex me with your words!”), all scribes of the collated Syriac witnesses and the author of S or its Vorlage would seem to attribute v. 13 to Mary, who is expected to speak to the gardener using masculine pronominal forms. In fact, in Classical Syriac feminine and masculine enclitic pronouns and suffix pronouns attached to plural nouns are homophones in the second person singular (... -at ... -ayk ‘you... your...’) and can be distinguished only at the level of orthography, that requires the feminine forms be marked with a silent -y at the end. The scribe of B has a regular feminine form only for *m’iqat(y)* ‘you (f.) vex’. Brock (1983b, 228) restores the feminine spelling of all pronominal endings in his reconstructed text of v. 13. The verbal forms and suffix pronouns in Sureth (... -et ... -ukh) are unequivocally masculine, at the levels of both phonology and orthography, which compels listeners and readers of S to attribute this verse to Mary and not to the gardener.

The author of S or its Vorlage is probably wrong in a couple of other passages, especially in the last verses. In 8a I propose inserting *kemrat* ‘you (f.) say’ to complete the translation of the Syriac text and the seven syllable meter of the line. I am inclined to think that *ettēh* ‘his church’ in 21a is a scribal mistake rather than a textual variant of *yemmēh* ‘his mother’, which makes much better sense in the context and correctly translates the Classical Syriac text as preserved by B and C. In 22b the translator (mis)read as *ܕܢܢ ܕܢܢ* ‘uninjured’ a text similar to *ܕܢܢ ܕܢܢ* ‘transcending nature’, a standard theological formula that occurs in 22b in both B and C, in B also in 20a. In 23a S reads as *šem’ēt* “I heard” a form like *šem’at* “she heard” of C.

The scribe of S occasionally uses a classicizing spelling, with final silent y, for the 2nd singular subject endings – 7a-b *d-yad’at(y)*, *k-khazyat(y)* – which is unusual in Sureth manuscripts of northern Iraq. They parallel the 1st singular dative endings in the preceding and following verses and restore, albeit only at the graphical level, a kind of visual rhyme: *lā zālmēt-ti*, *lā ṭardēt-ti*, *et-ti* (5a-6a), *ṭleb-li* (ergative construction), *bed ya(h)bel-li* (8).

²⁴ However, the same expression (“my son”) is used in the East-Syriac hymn *O gannānā*, where Mary Magdalene is speaking.

(S)	(C)	(B)	
ܕܘܕܗܘܢ ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܘܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ²⁵	
	(C)	(B)	
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	1
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	2
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	3
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	4
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	5
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	6
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	7
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	8
ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ		ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ	9

²⁵ A, C: ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ; V: ܡܘܨܪܐ.

²⁶ V: ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ.

²⁷ C: ܡܘܨܪܐ; Brock (1983: 227) corrected ܡܘܨܪܐ as attested in the other mss.

²⁸ V: ܡܘܨܪܐ.

²⁹ V: ܡܘܨܪܐ.

³⁰ B: ܡܘܨܪܐ.

³¹ A: ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ.

³² B: ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ.

³³ B: ܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ ܕܡܘܨܪܐ.

5. Translation of the Sureth version (S)

Another hymn on Our Lord and Mary⁵¹

- 1 On Sunday in the morning
Mary came to the grave
- 2 and said: “Who will show me
my Lord,⁵² whom I am looking for?”
- 3 Our Lord revealed himself to her⁵³
like a gardener. He spoke to her⁵⁴
- 4 in the garden and asked her:
“Whom are you looking for at this time?”⁵⁵
- 5 “Gardener, do not treat me unjustly
and do not chase me out of your garden,
6 since I have a fruit here⁵⁶
and I do not ask⁵⁷ for anything else but it.”
- 7 “You should know that in this season
there are no fruits in the gardens
8 and you, <you say> to me today:⁵⁸
that you want a fruit today⁵⁹?”
- 9 “You should know my secret:
I thought that fruit that I asked for
10 will give me life,⁶⁰

⁵¹ Cl. Syr. rubrics have: Another [hymn] for (the feast of) resurrection.

⁵² Cl. Syr.: my son and my Lord.

⁵³ Cl. Syr.: appeared to her.

⁵⁴ Cl. Syr.: He answered and said to her.

⁵⁵ Cl. Syr.: Woman, reveal to me / what are you looking for today in the garden!

⁵⁶ Cl. Syr.: in it; V: in your garden.

⁵⁷ Cl. Syr.: I seek; B: I do not know.

⁵⁸ Cl. Syr.: and you say to me though.

⁵⁹ B: ‘I want a fruit in your garden’.

- if I happen to see it.”
- 11 “Woman,⁶¹ what⁶² is this fruit
about which you spoke? Reveal it to me!”⁶³
- 12 “I know that it is real.
It is higher than eye can see.”⁶⁴
- 13 “How you weary⁶⁵ me with your voice
and how you annoy me with your flattering⁶⁶!
- 14 Reveal to me where you removed it,
since I will go after it!”
- 15 “Whom⁶⁷ are you looking for, oh woman?
Life⁶⁸ in the Sheol that devours everything?
- 16 Me? To me are you asking
Him whom you are seeking?⁶⁹
- 17 The guards took the swords
and they resemble rabid dogs!⁷⁰”
- 18 “About His resurrection reveal and explain to me
how he resurrected so that I will believe!⁷¹”
- 19 “Desist from this thought
and renounce this search!⁷²

⁶⁰ Cl. Syr.: You should know, gardener, / that I hoped that the fruit / that I am trying to find (B: that I want) may give me life; V: You should know, gardener, / that the fruit that I am trying to find / may give me sure life.

⁶¹ Cl. Syr.: girl.

⁶² B: who.

⁶³ Cl. Syr.: about which you are saying wonderful things.

⁶⁴ Cl. Syr.: I know and it is clear to me / that it is higher than eye can see. V: bigger than eye can see.

⁶⁵ S: *kmağhetti* < **ke-mağh(d)-et-li* (from Arabic كع, fourth form, ‘to weary out, *tourmenter*’)? Maclean (1901: 155) gives *mğahed* ‘to quarrel, dispute’ from Arabic كع in the third form.

⁶⁶ Cl. Syr.: with your words (B: voice).

⁶⁷ Cl. Syr.: what.

⁶⁸ Cl. Syr.: the living.

⁶⁹ Cl. Syr.: He about whom you are questioning me went out / from the grave this night.

⁷⁰ Cl. Syr.: The guards took the swords / and, look, they resemble rabid dogs! B: The guards were lying down and stood up. / They set seals and kept guard. See Matthew 28:4 for the guards lying down “as dead men” and Matthew 27:66 for the seal. Neither swords nor rabid dogs occur in the Gospels in this context.

⁷¹ B: so that I will become a believer in Him!

- 20 Listen to me, oh woman⁷³,
since there is nobody who knows where I am!”⁷⁴
- 21 His resurrection bears witness to His mother⁷⁵
and His mother bears witness to His resurrection.
- 22 Height and depth bear witness to her⁷⁶.
He was born and has risen uninjured.⁷⁷
- 23 I heard His voice and doctrine
“Mary, Mary” [was] his word.
- 24 “Come to my side, my Master!
I carry my anguish in you.
- 25 Come to my side, son of Mary,
as you came to Mary’s side,
- 26 and with her show me the light
of your resurrection at the end of time!”⁷⁸

⁷² Here S translates a text similar to B, whereas C reads: He flew down from highest heavens / and dwelt in a virginal womb.

⁷³ B: Mary.

⁷⁴ B: Hearken my voice, Mary, and listen to me! / He was born and has risen transcending nature. C: Give ear to my voice, woman, and listen / so that I may disclose to you concerning Him!

⁷⁵ The ms. of S has “his church”. Cl. Syr.: to her who gave birth to Him.

⁷⁶ Cl. Syr.: to me.

⁷⁷ B and C: He was born and has risen from death transcending nature.

⁷⁸ C (Brock’s translation):

- 23 She heard his voice and recognized him
for he repeated the words ‘Mary, Mary’
- 24 [Mary] “Come to me, my Lord and my Master,
for I now forget my anguish.”
- 25 Come in your compassion, o Son of Mary,
just as you came to Mary;
- 26 and with you, at your resurrection, let your light shine forth
on me and on him who composed this.

B:

- 23 Glory be to Him who has risen from the grave,
as he had truthfully said.
- 24 What he professed is still right for me,
every time and at all times.”
- 25 Resurrection, life and renewal

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 may be to the composer of the hymn,
26 those who listen to me
 and those who profess this word.
27 She heard His voice, recognized Him
 and hastened to touch Him,
28 but He replied: “Do not touch me,
 since I am hastening to go to the side of my Father!”

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Thamar y Amnón di Federico García Lorca

Una traduzione

Lia Ogno

Thamar y Amnón is the last of the poems that make up the *Gypsy Ballads* by Federico García Lorca. With this *romance*, a strophic lyric written in octosyllabic lines following alternating assonant rhyme – the metre par excellence of Spanish folklore – Lorca elaborates, in a gypsy key, the biblical episode of the incest between the King David's son Amnon and his half-sister Tamar. With this contribution, we introduce Lorca's poem and present its metric-mimetic translation in the Italian language.

Il più *orientale* dei 18 componimenti poetici che formano il *Romancero gitano* (1928) di Federico García Lorca è quello che chiude la raccolta, il poema gitano-giudaico¹ *Thamar y Amnón*. È questo il *romance* che segna nel volume la maggior distanza spaziale e temporale rispetto alla contemporaneità andalusa della sua redazione, quello dotato di una maggiore carica di storicità (De Paepe 1972: 62). Non a caso viene collocato dal poeta all'interno di quella seconda e ultima parte del libro che egli stesso aveva denominato *Romances históricos*. In questa breve sezione, costituita da appena tre composizioni, Lorca, che nel corso di tutta la prima parte del volume aveva già forgiato un universo mitico e leggendario gitano, retrocede ora, rispettivamente, al mondo paleocristiano, medievale e biblico come a voler rivendicare per i gitani il medesimo passato e le medesime radici culturali che conformano l'Andalusia.

Il tema di quest'ultimo *romance* è erudito, di ascendenza biblica,² e ruota intorno alla violenza sessuale perpetrata da Amnon, figlio del re Davide, ai danni della sorellastra Tamar. A detta di molti critici, è questa una delle composizioni del *Romancero* lorchiano che presenta una maggior densità e un maggior grado di ermetismo (García-Posada 1988: 29), tuttavia è proprio l'antecedente biblico a fornire le prime chiavi della sua interpretazione. Ricordiamo dunque l'episodio, seppur convinti che,

¹ L'aggettivazione è dello stesso Federico García Lorca (1989: 346).

² L'episodio è narrato nell'Antico Testamento, più precisamente nel secondo libro di Samuele, XIII, 1-34. Per le successive citazioni della fonte biblica utilizzeremo la versione Nuova Deodati (2005).

come spesso accade nell'opera di Lorca, per quanto non riesca sempre a cogliere tutti i numerosissimi riferimenti, il lettore sia comunque nelle condizioni di avvertire tutta l'intensità drammatica e il lirismo del testo.

Nel Secondo Libro di Samuele si legge di come Amnon “fu preso da tale passione per sua sorella Tamar da cadere malato, perché essa era vergine; e pareva difficile ad Amnon di poterle fare qualcosa.” Così, consigliato dall'astuto amico Ionadab, Amnon finge di essere gravemente malato e chiede al padre, il re Davide, di essere accudito dalla sorella che, in sua presenza, avrebbe dovuto preparare da mangiare per lui per poi offrirglielo dalle sue stesse mani. Il re mandò allora a chiamare Tamar e la inviò dal fratello, ma quando la ragazza arrivò, Amnon si rifiutò di toccar cibo fin quando non fossero usciti tutti i presenti. Rimasto solo con la sorella, Amnon tentò i primi approcci, ma al rifiuto di questa “essendo più forte di lei, la violentò e si coricò con lei.” In seguito “Amnon prese a odiarla di un odio grandissimo, cosicché l'odio che aveva per lei era più grande dell'amore con cui prima l'aveva amata.” E la cacciò, nonostante le suppliche della ragazza che, sopraffatta dalla vergogna e dal peso del disonore, “si sparse della cenere sulla testa, si stracciò di dosso la tunica [...] e, mettendosi la mano sul capo, se ne andò gridando.” Venuto a conoscenza del fatto, il re rimase molto contrariato, ma non volle punire il suo primogenito. Qualche anno dopo, sarà il fratello Assalonne a vendicare l'onore della sorella Tamar, ordinando ai propri servi di far ubriacare Amnon e di ucciderlo.

Per più di un motivo la vicenda dei due fratelli fece presa su García Lorca, in essa “trovò una storia paradigmatica dell'amore impossibile, di quella solitudine amorosa che, con dolorosa insistenza e ineluttabile destino, attanagliava il poeta” (Cattaneo 1986: 381; trad. nostra). Inoltre il tema dell'incesto era di suo interesse “in quanto plasmava un desiderio indomabile, una passione che trasgrediva le leggi” (Díaz Viana 1981: 6; trad. nostra). Ma, non per ultimo, nella violenta ed esiziale perdita della verginità della protagonista egli scorse un motivo che va a toccare nel profondo i valori primari della cultura gitanoandalusa. E il coro (da tragedia greca) delle piangenti gitane che accorrono attorno alla ragazza per raccoglierne *il sangue sparso* è una potentissima, drammatica e originalissima immagine che Lorca apporta alle rivisitazioni del passaggio biblico. L'episodio, infatti, era già stato abbondantemente rielaborato dalla tradizione letteraria spagnola, sia nelle forme più colte del teatro classico aureo,³ ma ancor più nelle forme popolari della tradizione orale.⁴ Lorca, per elaborare la sua versione gitanizzata della storia, attinge indiscriminatamente tanto alle fonti erudite

³ Ricordiamo, tra le più note, le opere drammatiche *La venganza de Tamar*, di Tirso de Molina, e *Los cabellos de Absalón*, di Calderón de la Barca.

⁴ In diversi e approfonditi studi Manuel Alvar (1957, 1959, 1969) ricostruisce magistralmente la fortunata trasmissione di questo tema.

quanto a quelle popolari, e va a comporre, non disdegnando l'utilizzo di diverse tecniche apprese dalle esperienze avanguardiste del momento, un personalissimo quadro di straordinaria bellezza.

Offriamo qui a seguire una nostra traduzione del poema lorchiano, ma non prima di aver chiarito uno dei criteri fondamentali che ha retto il nostro lavoro traduttivo. Abbiamo anzitutto cercato di rispondere alla primaria esigenza di far “sentire” la voce di Lorca, perseguendo a tal fine una corrispondenza, una fedeltà non solo al contenuto, al senso del testo, ma anche al suo aspetto formale, sonoro e ritmico.

La scelta di Lorca di utilizzare gli schemi narrativi del *romance* (componimento poetico spagnolo di carattere epico-lirico, in doppi ottonari assonanzati, di cui si attesta l'esistenza già a metà del xv secolo) era stata chiara e deliberata e rispondeva alla sua volontà di collegarsi, rinnovandola, a una tradizione popolare ricca di secolari esperienze. La fortuna del *romance* è stata alterna nel corso dei secoli. Poco prima di Lorca, e dopo un periodo di abbandono, il Modernismo aveva rivitalizzato questa forma poetica, arricchendone il ritmo interno di modo da spezzare la monotonia dell'ottonario che lo caratterizzava, ma con Lorca, che rinnova il *romance* dal punto di vista tematico e linguistico, assistiamo tuttavia al ritorno al suo ritmo tradizionale (Díaz Plaja 1968: 116) che è la cadenza dell'oralità, quella che maggiormente si confà al suo proposito di cantare un universo gitanizzato.

Per restare aderente alla tessitura ritmico-fonica dell'originale, dunque, nel tradurre *Thamar y Amnón* ci siamo imposti di salvaguardare ciò che fa di un *romance*, un *romance*, scegliendo pertanto di non rinunciare mai all'assonanza (in -a -a, in questo caso) nei versi pari e di mantenere, quanto più possibile, un ritmo in cui predomini il verso ottosillabico. Concordiamo, in linea di massima, con Maria Grazia Profeti quando, parlando delle traduzioni del teatro barocco spagnolo in italiano, avverte che conservare il verso e la rima “funziona benissimo con l'endecasillabo e con i versi della tradizione nobile italiana (sonetto, ottava, *silva*), ma il ritmo martellante dell'ottosillabo, nel *romance* e nella *redondilla*, risulta stancante e, a un orecchio italiano, risuona a filastrocca infantile” (Profeti 2002: 26; trad. nostra). Tuttavia, accettandone i rischi, riteniamo che nel caso di Lorca e, segnatamente nel caso del *Romancero gitano*, sforzarsi di riprodurre l'apparente semplicità del verso e la monotonia del ritmo in contrasto con la densità delle immagini e con il sorprendente e innovativo linguaggio metaforico, sia il modo più adeguato per tradurre il geniale poeta andaluso.

*

Tamar e Amnon

La luna gira nel cielo
sopra le terre senz'acqua
quando l'estate semina
rumori di tigre e fiamma.
Suono di nervi d'acciaio
su dai tetti si dirama.
Il vento arriva arricciato
coi suoi belati di lana.
Mostra il monte le ferite
da pelle cicatrizzata,
oppure scossa da acuti
cauteri di luce bianca.

*

Con gli usignoli in gola
la bella Tamar sognava
al suono di un tamburello,
e di una cetra allunata.
Il suo corpo dalla gronda,
nudo, acuto nord di palma,
chiede neve per la schiena,
e grandine per la pancia.
Tamara stava cantando
ignuda sulla terrazza.
Cinque colombe gelate
ai suoi piedi ammaestrava.
Sottile e concreto, Amnone
dalla torre la guardava,
pieni gli inguini di spuma,
di oscillazioni la barba.
La sua nudità illuminata

si stendeva sulla terrazza,
con un rumore tra i denti
di freccia ormai conficcata.
Amnon rapito guardava
la luna rotonda e bassa,
e rivide nella luna
i seni duri di Tamara.

*

Quando alle tre e mezza Amnone
si stese nella sua stanza,
fremeva tutta l'alcova
mentre lo sguardo volava.
La luce, massiccia, interra
villaggi sotto la sabbia,
o svela corallo fugace,
intreccio di rosa e dalia.
La linfa del pozzo oppressa
da brocche silenzio emana.
Mentre sul muschio dei tronchi,
disteso il cobra canta.
Amnon geme sulla tela
fresca del letto, algida.
Edera rabbrivida
sulla sua carne riarsa.
Tamar entrò silenziosa
nell'alcova silenziata,
color di vena e Danubio,
di oscura impronta lontana.
Tamar, cancellami gli occhi
con la tua immobile alba.
Tesse il filo del mio sangue

volant sulla tua sottana.
Lasciami quieta, fratello,
ché sulla mia schiena bianca
son vespe e vento i tuoi baci,
sciame di voce flautata.
Tamar, dai tuoi alti seni
una voce di pesci mi chiama,
e sulla punta delle dita
risuona una rosa ingabbiata.

*

Cento cavalli del re
nitrivano sotto la casa.
Sole a cubi resisteva
la foglia dell'uva chiara.
Ora l'afferra per i capelli,
ora la camicia le strappa.
Tiepidi coralli disegnano
rigagnoli sulla bionda mappa.

*

Oh quali grida si udivano
al di sopra della casa!
Che spessore di pugnale
e di tunica strappata.
Salgono e scendono schiavi
tristi su e giù per la scala.
Emboli e cosce giocano
sotto una nube immutata.
Vergini gitane in coro
gridano attorno a Tamara,

altre raccolgono gocce
della sua rosa straziata.
Panni bianchi s'arrossano
in ogni nascosta sala.
Pampini e pesci confusi
ai rumori di una tiepida alba.

*

Stupratore infuriato, Amnon
fugge sulla sua cavalla.
Negri gli scagliano frecce
su dalle torri di guardia.
E quand'ormai i quattro zoccoli
non erano che risonanza,
David, prese le forbici,
tagliò le corde dell'arpa.

Thamar y Amnón

La luna gira en el cielo / sobre las tierras sin agua / mientras el verano siembra / rumores de tigre y llama. / Por encima de los techos / nervios de metal sonaban, / Aire rizado venía / con los balidos de lana. / La tierra se ofrece llena / de heridas cicatrizadas, / o estremecida de agudos / cauterios de luces blancas. // Thamar estaba soñando / pájaros en su garganta, / al son de panderos fríos / y cítaras enlunadas. / Su desnudo en el alero, / agudo norte de palma, / pide copos a su vientre / y granizo a sus espaldas. / Thamar estaba cantando / desnuda por la terraza. / Alrededor de sus pies, / cinco palomas heladas. / Amnón, delgado y concreto, / en la torre la miraba, / llenas las ingles de espuma / y oscilaciones la barba. / Su desnudo iluminado / se tendía en la terraza, / con un rumor entre dientes / de flecha recién clavada. / Amnón estaba mirando / la luna redonda y baja, / y vio en la luna los pechos / durísimos de su hermana. // Amnón a las tres y media / se tendió sobre la cama. / Toda la alcoba sufría / con sus ojos llenos de alas. / La luz, maciza, sepulta / pueblos en la arena parda, / o descubre transitorio / coral de rosas y dalias. / Linfa de pozo oprimada / brota silencio en las jarras. / En el musgo de los troncos / la cobra tendida canta. / Amnón gime por la tela /

fresquísima de la cama. / Yedra del escalofrío / cubre su carne quemada. / Thamar entró silenciosa / en la alcoba silenciada, / color de vena y Danubio, / turbia de huellas lejanas. / Thamar, bórrame los ojos / con tu fija madrugada. / Mis hilos de sangre tejen / volantes sobre tu falda. / Déjame tranquila, hermano. / Son tu besos en mi espalda / avispas y vientecillos / en doble enjambre de flautas. / Thamar, en tus pechos altos / hay dos peces que me llaman, / y en la yema de tus dedos / rumor de rosa encerrada. // Los cien caballos del rey / en el patio relinchaban. / Sol en cubos resistía / la delgadez de la parra. / Ya la coge del cabello, / ya la camisa le rasga. / Corales tibios dibujan / arroyos de rubio mapa. // ¡ Oh, qué gritos se sentían / por encima de las casas! / ¡Qué espesura de puñales / y túnicas desgarradas! / Por las escaleras tristes / esclavos suben y bajan. / Émbolos y muslos juegan / bajo las nubes paradas. / Alrededor de Thamar / gritan vírgenes gitanas / y otras recogen las gotas / de su flor martirizada. / Paños blancos enrojecen / en las alcobas cerradas. / Rumores de tibia aurora / pámpanos y peces cambian. // Violador enfurecido, / Amnón huye con su jaca. / Negros le dirigen flechas / en muros y atalayas. / Y cuando los cuatro cascos / fueron cuatro resonancias, / David con unas tijeras / cortó las cuerdas del arpa. (Federico García Lorca, *Romancero Gitano*, 1928)

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राम इति नित्यं जपत्यक्षरद्वयम् । रामचरितमानसोत्तरकाण्डेऽन्यतमशिवस्तुतेरतिलघुकल्याणव्याख्या

Gianni Pellegrini

This short work (bearing the title: “Rāma!” [She] constantly repeats two syllables. A very short Kalyāṇa elucidation of one among Śiva’s hymns in the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Rāmacaritamānasa) consists in an extremely concise as well as newly composed Sanskrit commentary on a Śiva’s hymn chanted to Rāma, once he was back to Ayodhyā at the end of the war against Rāvaṇa. These ten *avadhī*-verses hosted in the Uttarakāṇḍa (7.13.1-10) of Tulasī Dāsa’s Rāmacaritamānasa extol Rāma as the Supreme Being, the ultimate *reservoir* of all devotions, thoughts and acts.

संगतिः

सौन्दर्यसारसर्वस्वं माधुर्यगुणबृंहितम् । ब्रह्मैकमद्वितीयं तत् तत्त्वमेकं द्विधा कृतम् ॥
वेदादिशास्त्रसंवेद्यं सीतारामस्वरूपकम् । सरहस्यं सतां सेव्यमद्रूतं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥¹
ईश्वरो गुरुरात्मेति मूर्तिभेदविभागिने । व्योमवद्व्याप्तदेहाय दक्षिणामूर्तये नमः ॥

अथायं टिप्पण्यात्मको निबन्धोऽस्मदन्तःहृदये आसीनानां **पिनुच्चा-काराक्की**ति नामीकानाम् अद्रूतप्राणिनां प्रसादाय स्वान्तःसुखाय च लिख्यते, यासु स्थितासु प्रफुल्लति आह्लादति चास्माकं सर्वस्वम्, यासां पिनुच्चानां स्वभावाय चरित्राय च प्रणमामि मुहुर्मुहुः ।

यस्मात् श्रीमद्रोस्वामितुलसीदासमहानुभावैः प्रणीतं श्रीरामचरितमानसं श्रीमतिभ्यः पिनुच्चाभ्योऽतीव रोचते, तस्मादहमत्र दशछंदोबद्धस्य शंभुगीतस्तोत्रस्य सुप्रियसंस्कारोद्भावकस्य अतिलघुकायं कल्याणख्यं व्याख्यानं यथाशक्ति यथामति च रचयिष्यामि । वस्तुतस्तु गोस्वामिग्रन्थस्यातिगंभीरार्थत्वाद् विदुषामपि दुरुहः, अतः किमुत मम बालकस्य शेमुषी । एवं सत्यपि महिम्नस्तोत्रवचनं “ममापि एष स्तोत्रे हर निरपवादः परिकरः”² इति मनसि निधाय, अहमपि किञ्चित् प्रकटयितुं प्रवर्ते ।

अथ कल्याणव्याख्या

गोस्वामिभिः प्रणीतस्य श्रीरामचरितमानसस्योत्तरकाण्डे यदा युद्धानन्तरं श्रीरामचन्द्रो रावणं पराजित्य, पुष्पविमानं चारुह्य सीतया विभूषितः सभ्रतरोऽयोध्यां प्रत्यवर्तत, तस्मिन्नवसरे महान्महोत्सवस्तत्राभूत् । अनेकाः देवताः, ऋषयः सर्वे, चत्वारो वेदाश्च स्वां स्वां स्तुतिं प्रस्तुतवन्तः । भगवान् देवदेवो जगत्पतिः गिरीशोऽपि, यो नित्यम् अक्षरद्वयात्मकं राम इति नाम परमतारकमन्त्रं जपति, स एव अश्रुपूर्णाकुलेक्षणो गद्गदस्वरेण लोकप्रियावधिभाषायाम् इदमतिमनोहरमतिगंभीरं स्तोत्रमुद्गातुम् आरब्धवान्-

जय राम रमारमनं समनं । भव ताप भयाकुल पाहि जनं ॥

परमपुरषे यस्मिन् रमन्ते प्राप्तप्राप्यसाधवः, यम् अयोध्याधिपतिं नित्यं ध्यायन्ति योगिनः, स एवात्र प्राकृतः संबोधनाहूतः । हे राम ! हे मर्यादापुरुषोत्तम, अकारणकरुणावरुणालय जय विजयस्व, अनन्तकोटिब्रह्माण्डघटितासु सर्वासु अवस्थासु अपराजितोऽद्वितीयो भव । यो रघुवीरः पराम्बायाः रमायाः सर्वेषां प्राणिनामनुस्यूतशक्तेस्सीतायाः रमनं आनन्दः स्वयं “विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्म” इति

¹ श्रीकरपात्रस्वामिप्रणीतायां रामायणमीमांसायां पृ. १ ।

² शिवमहिम्नस्तोत्रे १ ।

वाजसनेयकश्रुतेः,³ स समनं शमनमेव सर्वेषां संसारान्तर्भूतानाम् अधिदैविकाधिभौतिकाध्यात्मिकदुःखानां समूलोच्छेद एव, न तूच्छेदकमात्रः । यत्रोच्छेदकस्तत्र उच्छेद्योच्छेदनेऽपि स्वभावतोऽन्ये द्वे तत्त्वे वर्तते, अतः स्फुटितद्वैतप्रतिबन्धकत्वाद्विलम्बेन उद्धरणं विद्यते, शीघ्रं तु भवति यत्र एकमेव तत्त्वम् उच्छेदमात्र इति । यस्मिन् कस्मिंश्चिदवसरे रामे केवले विद्यमाने सति तु दुःखात्यन्ताभावो भवत्येव, येन अत उच्छेदमात्रः स्यात्, तयोः रामदुःखयोस्तमःप्रकाशवत् विरुद्धस्वभावत्वादिति चिन्त्यम् ।

हे रघुवंशभूषण ! पाहि पालय भवकूपे पतितमिमं जनं जीवात्मानमुद्धर, त्वत्कृपापिपासुरयं जीवः परिभ्रमति निरन्तरमस्मिन् मरुस्थलरूपिणि भवचक्रे, जन्ममरणाद्यानलतापातप्तोऽतो भयाकुल त्रासातुरः किंगन्तव्यविमूढो भवति । यावत् प्राणी द्वैतमनुभवति तावद्विभेति “द्वितीयाद्वै भयं भवति”⁴ इति श्रुतेः । तस्मात् शोकाभिभूतस्त्वम् अशेषभेदविभेदनेऽभयेऽद्वैतेऽनन्यभक्त्या जानकीपतौ शरणमन्विच्छ ।

अवधेस सुरेस रमेस बिभो । सरनागत मागत पाहि प्रभो ॥ १ ॥

हे अवधेस ! अवधनिवासिनां स्वामीति अतोऽवधेशः । न तु केवलमवधराज्यमीष्टेऽपि सुरेस अपि, यो देवानां लोकेषु आधिपत्यं बिभर्ति स एव रमेस रमेशो भवितुमर्हति । सर्वाण्यपि भूतानि अघटितघटनापटीयसीमंगलमयीमायायाः शक्तेर्वशे वर्तन्ते, स तु श्रीरामः शक्तिमान्, अतो मायवी । एवं हि अन्यैः सेव्यमाना लक्ष्मीदेवी, सैव सेवते नित्यं पदयुगलं त्वदीयम् । हे विभो ! हे विष्णो ! हे परब्रह्मस्वरूप ! यथा भाष्यकारैः भगवत्पादैरपि शारीरकभाष्ये⁵ स्पष्टीकृतं बृहतेर्धातोः व्यापनार्थत्वम्, ब्रह्मणो देशपरिच्छेदोपलक्षितपरिच्छेदत्रयापरिच्छिन्नापरिच्छिद्यमानत्वात् । अतोऽमूर्तम् आत्माभिन्नपरब्रह्म रामो विष्णुस्वरूपभगवान् व्यापकोऽपि भक्तवात्सल्यवशाद् अयोध्यापुर्यन्तर्गृहे मूर्तिमान् बभूव, भवति, भविष्यति च, परमसत्यस्य रघुवंशनायकस्य त्रिकालाबाध्यत्वात् ।

भो प्रभो भगवन् पाहि अव माम्, हे कृपासिन्धो पालय मां यं संसारसागरनिमग्नं मागात् विषीदन्तं सरनागत त्वच्चरणोः शरणागतम्, जन्ममरणादिक्लेशप्रवाहपातात् सर्वथा तुभ्यं विश्रमं प्रार्थयन्तम् । हे दीनबन्धो भवज्वालामुखेः नानातापतातप्यमानस्य मम क्रन्दनं शृणु ! इति ॥ १ ॥

दससीस बिनासन बीस भुजा । कृत दूरि महा महि भूरि रुजा ॥

हे अच्यत ! दससीस दशवदनस्य बीस भुजा विंशतिबाहुकस्य रावणस्य बिनासन विनाशनं ध्वंसस्त्वमेव नान्यः, यथा भैरवरूपं धारयित्वा सर्वान् भीषयसि “भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भयात्तपति सूर्यः । भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चमः ॥”⁶ इति काठके “कस्य बिभ्यति देवाश्च जातरोषस्य संयुगे”⁷ इति स्मृतेश्च, त्वमेव अभयस्वरूपः “अभयं वै जनक प्राप्नोऽसि” इति श्रुतेः⁸, “अस्पृश्ययोगो वै नाम दुर्दर्शः सर्वयोगिभिः । योगिनो बिभ्यति ह्यस्मादभये भयदर्शिनः ॥”⁹ इति आगमशास्त्राच्च ।

हे दयासागर ! यावन्तः महा अतिभीषणाः रुजा रोगाः कायिकवाचिकमानसिकव्याधयः महि धरित्रीताले भवन्ति, तावतः भूरि सर्वान् दूरि दुरं कृत कुरु, अपनोद मनसः, शरीराच्च अखिलान् विकारान् तत्संबन्धिचिन्ताश्च, अन्यविषयवृत्तीन् अपि च समूलम् उन्मूल । हे हितकारिन् शाधि नः परमार्थपाथेयं, यतो मम एकैव वृत्तिर्भूयात्, त्वदीयातिरमणीयाकाराकारिता ।

रजनीचर बृंद पतंग रहे । सर पावक तेज प्रचंड दहे ॥ २ ॥

हे महेश्वास ! त्वदतिप्रज्वलितवह्निरूपिपराक्रमसमक्षं रजनीचर बृंद निशाचरचमू राक्षसानां सेना पतंग पतंगा इव कीटपतंगादयो यथा जातवेदाकृष्टाः रहे वर्तन्ते, तथा तवाक्षयतूणीरस्थः सर बाणः पावक प्रचंड तेज अग्नेः दारुणौष्णमिव दहे दध्वा तान्

³ बृहदारण्यकोपनिषदि ३।१।२२ ।

⁴ बृहदारण्यकोपनिषदि १।४।२ ।

⁵ ब्रह्मसूत्रभाष्ये १।१।१ अनुसंधेयम् ।

⁶ कठोपनिषदि २।३।३ । तैत्तिरीयोपनिषदि २।८।१ अपि द्रष्टव्यम् ।

⁷ वाल्मीकिरामायणे १।१।४ ।

⁸ बृहदारण्यकोपनिषदि ४।२।४ ।

⁹ गौडपादीयकारिकायाम् ३।३९ ।

शलभवद्राक्षसान् भस्मसत्कुरुते । हे करुणनिधे द्वेषरीत्या तेषामपि दुर्बुद्धीनाम् आततायिनां त्वदीयेन शल्यरूप्याशीषा पापानि विधूयन्त इत्याशयः ॥ २ ॥¹⁰

महि मंडल मंडन चारुतरं । धृत सायक चाप निषंग बरं ॥

भो साक्षान्मन्मथमन्मथ ! महि मंडल पृथिव्याः संपूर्णाया आयतेः चारुतरं मंडन अमूल्यभूषणं त्वमेव । न केवलं महिमण्डलेऽपितु त्रैलोक्ये, तथा अनन्तकोटिब्रह्माण्डेऽपि नास्ति महार्हतरं मण्डनम् । किं बहुना, सुन्दराणां समस्तवस्तुनां यत्साक्षात्सौन्दर्यम् अतिरमणीये त्वयि मनोहरे सदर्थवत्तां भजते “तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति”¹¹ इति श्रवणात् ।

हे शूरसत्तम ! धृत त्वया धार्यन्तेऽनेकानि आयुधानि, तेषां मध्ये तु अन्यतमानि बरं श्रेष्ठाणि, यथा सायक इषुकाः, चाप धनुः निषंग तूणीरश्च । धनुर्धरत्वं त्वदीयम् अनेकेषु वृत्तान्तेषु कीर्तितम्, यच्च त्वदीयायुधानि एव त्वदतिप्रियाणि त्वयैव प्रमाणितं विदेहराज्ये, यदा सर्वेषु आश्चर्यचकितेषु सत्सु जनकराज्ञः सम्मुखे जनकीस्वयंवरंऽस्मदीयं शांभवीयमपि धनुर्तिरस्कृत्य भंगोऽभूद् इत्युवाच शंकरः साक्षात् ।

मद मोह महा ममता रजनी । तम पुंज दिवाकर तेज अनी ॥ ३ ॥

हे तमसः परस्तात् परमार्क ! मद विषयेष्वन्धाभिमान आकर्षणं च, मोह सदसदविवेको यः कर्तव्याकर्तव्यभ्रान्तौ बुद्धिनाशे च परिणमते । ममता च अनात्मस्वरूपजडेषु पदार्थेषु “इदं मम, अहमिदम्” इति वस्तुतोऽसंबद्धेषु घटपटमठादिषु शरीरेन्द्रियान्तःकरणादिषु बाह्याभ्यन्तरवस्तुषु च योऽध्यस्तस्वामित्वभाव इति ईदृशी ममता अभिप्रेता । ताः मदमोहममताः विशेषत्वेन पृथक्पृथक् सन्ति, सामान्यत्वेन तु अपृथक्, समानरूपाः प्रतीयन्ते । कदा कथं च समानरूपा भवन्तीति पृष्टे सति महा रजनी घोरान्धकारायां निशायां यस्यां प्राणी किमपि न पश्यति, स्वमपि न परिजानाति, तस्यां रजन्यां शेरते जन्तवः सर्वे । एक एव चेतनो योगी स्वान्तःगुहायां निहितं ज्योतिःस्वरूपरामचन्द्रं ध्यायति अजस्रम् “या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी । यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः”¹² इति गीतावचनात् ।

परन्तु तस्याः निशायाः तम पुंज घनतमःस्वरूपायाः प्रतिद्वन्द्वी त्वमेव, यतो दिवाकर ज्ञानस्वरूपभास्कर इव विभ्राजसे । यथा तस्य भानोः तेज अनी रश्मीनां समूहः, रात्रेस्तमांसि अपनुद्य प्रदीप्यते सर्वत्र, तथैव अनन्तकोटितेजोराशी ज्ञानभास्करो जाड्यान्धकारं भित्त्वा अविद्याया अस्तमयं गमयित्वा स्वप्रकाशस्वरूपं द्योतयति स्वतः “वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् । तमेव विदित्वातिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय”¹³ इति दिक् ॥ ३ ॥

मनजात किरात निपात किए । मृग लोग कुभोग सरेन हिए ॥

मनजात मनसो जायते इति मनोजः, कामदेवः मन्मथः, स एव किरात महाव्याधो भवति । कथमिति के अस्य मदनस्य लक्षा इति जिज्ञासायां सत्यामुच्यते – कुसुमेषुररविन्दाशोकचूतनवमल्लिकानीलोत्पलनामकपञ्चबाणयुक्तो मृग मृगपशुरुपाः लोग जनाः मनुष्या इत्यर्थः, तेषां जनानां हृदयं कुभोग शरीरेन्द्रियचित्तासक्तिकारेण सरेन कामविषयशरेण हिए प्रहरति, हिनस्ति, निहत्य च निपात किए नैष्ठुर्येण निपातयति ।

हति नाथ अनाथनि पाहि हरे । बिषया बन पाँवर भूलि परे ॥ ४ ॥

हे नाथ, सर्वेश्वर ! हे हरे पापतापान्तक ! त्वं तं व्याधिवेषं रतिपतिं हति हत्वा बिषया नानाविधविषयरूपे बन घनारण्ये भूलि दन्द्रम्यमानाः क्रगन्तव्यविमूढाः विस्मृतमार्गाः स्वस्वरूपस्य प्रच्युतत्वात्, परियन्ति इतस्ततः पाँवर घनजाड्यापहतचेताः मूढास्ते परिवर्तन्ते, यथा “अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्वयं धीराः पण्डितमन्यमानाः । दन्द्रम्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढा अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथाऽन्धाः”¹⁴ इति काठकशाखायाः । हे अकारणकरुणावरुणालय अनाथनि अनाथान् शरणरहितान् तान् जनान् अस्माभिः सहितान् हे अशरणशरण, अनाथनाथ पाहि उद्धर दुःखनिरोधित्वदीयहस्तछायया गोपय ॥ ४ ॥

¹⁰ यद्यपि अन्यस्मिन् संदर्भे पठ्यते, तथापि मुण्डकोपनिषदि २।२।३-४ दृष्टान्तोऽपि द्रष्टव्यः ।

¹¹ कठोपनिषदि २।२।१५, मुण्डकोपनिषदि २।२।१०, तथा श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषदि ६।१४ ।

¹² श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाम् २।६९ ।

¹³ श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषदि ३।८ ।

¹⁴ कठोपनिषदि १।२।५ ।

बहु रोग बियोगन्हि लोग हए । भवदंघ्रि निरादर के फल ए ॥

बहु बहवोऽनेके नानाविधाः रोग रोगाः, व्याधयस्तैः, एवं बियोगन्हि वियोगैः प्रियवस्तुवियोगैरप्रियवस्तुसंयोगैश्च हए हता अभिहताः, घनाताः लोग जनाः, सर्वे मनुष्याः, प्राणिनः समे । एतत् सर्वं भवदंघ्रि त्वदीयचरणयुगलं प्रति निरादर अनादरस्य, उपेक्षायाः, निराकरणस्य फल फलानि, परिणामाः ए भवन्ति ।

भव सिंधु अगाध परे नर ते । पद पंकज प्रेम न जे करते ॥ ५ ॥

जे ये नर मानवाः, प्राणिनः पद पंकज त्वदीयपद्मांघ्रियुगं प्रेम न करते प्रेमाणं न कुर्वन्ति, प्रीतिं नानुभवन्ति, अनुरक्तिं न कुर्वन्ति, ते इमे अगाध अतिगभीरे भयङ्करे भव सिंधु महाकल्लोलसंसारसागरे, प्रपञ्चस्य गाढदुःखावर्तवत्समुद्रे परे निपतितेषु सत्सु निमग्न वर्तन्त इति संक्षेपः ॥ ५ ॥

अति दीन मलीन दुखी नितहीं । जिन्ह कें पद पंकज प्रीति नहीं ॥

जिन्ह कें येषां मनुष्यानां पद पंकज त्वच्चरणकमलयोः प्रीति प्रेम, आसक्तिः नहीं नास्ति, ते अति दीन महादीना अत्यन्ताः कृपणाः, मलिन बाह्याभ्यन्तराशुद्धा एवंविधजनाः नितहीं सदैव पदे पदे दुखी उद्विग्नाः, सर्वासु अवस्थासु अभितप्ताः, शरीरे पीडिताः, मनसि व्यथिताः विविधदुःखग्रस्ताः, यत्र कुत्रापि येन केन प्रकारेण जीवनयत्नतापाद् विश्रमं कथमपि न प्राप्नुवन्ति ।

अवलंब भवंत कथा जिन्ह कें । प्रिय संत अनंत सदा तिन्ह कें ॥ ६ ॥

वैपरीत्येन जिन्ह कें येषाम् अवलंब आश्रयः, शरणं भवंत भवदीया कथा त्वदियं चरित्रवृत्तान्तं वर्तते, तिन्ह कें तेषां कृते ये संत संतस्तव भक्ताः साधवो योगिनश्च एवं यः अनंत कालदेशवस्तुपरिच्छेदरहितो भगवान् सत्यज्ञानानन्तोऽद्वैयानन्दस्वरूपश्च सदा सर्वदैव ते उभयवर्गाः प्रिय प्रेमास्पदा वर्तन्ते । कश्च परमप्रेमास्पद इति जिज्ञासिते सति, सम्यक्तया प्रतिपद्यते यथा “इयमात्मा परानन्दः परप्रेमास्पदं यतः । मा न भूवं हि भूयासमिति प्रेमात्मनीक्षयते ॥ ८ ॥ तत्प्रेमात्मार्थमन्यत्र नैवमन्यार्थमात्मनः । अतस्तत्परमं तेन परमानन्दताऽत्मनः ॥ ९ ॥ अभाने न परं प्रेम भाने न विषये स्पृहा । अतो भानेऽप्यभाताऽसौ परमानन्दतात्मनः ॥ ११ ॥”¹⁵ इति विद्यारण्यमुनेरुपदेशात् । किं च ये साक्षात्कृताभेदाः प्रत्यभिज्ञातात्मानः “ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मैव भवति”¹⁶ इति श्रुतिवचनाद् ब्रह्मभूतास्ते एवं शुद्धबुद्धमुक्तस्वभवोऽखण्डानन्दघनः परमेश्वरः, तावुभौ साध्वीश्वरौ अचिन्त्यलीलया द्वौ भास्यमानौ, अभिन्नावपि भक्त्यर्थं भिन्नावि प्रतीयेते, वस्तुतस्तु इमौ एक एव भवतः, यतः “द्वैतं मोहाय बोधात् प्राक् प्राप्ते बोधे मनीषया । भक्त्यर्थं कल्पितं द्वैतमद्वैतादपि सुन्दरम् ॥”¹⁷ इति नरहरिणा बोधसारे स्पष्टीकृतम् ॥ ६ ॥

नहिं राग न लोभ न मान मदा । तिन्ह कें सम बैभव वा बिपदा ॥

अत एवंविधाः महानुभावाः साक्षात्कृतस्वस्वरूपाः, प्रत्यागात्मानं ब्रह्माभिन्नत्वेन अनुभूयमानाः, तेषां नहिं राग नैव विषयेषु राग उत्पद्यते न तु द्वेषः, न च तेषां लोभ तृष्णा भवति, न वै तेषु मान मदा गन्धमात्रमिथ्याभिमानोद्भूतोन्मदो विद्यते । यद्वा न वित्तपुत्रलोकस्थानीयपादोत्थाभिमानो वर्तते, न च तत्पराकाष्ठारूपमदः संभवति । ते साधवो युक्तचित्तेन्द्रियग्रामा रागद्वेषमोहलोभमदमात्सर्यादिहीनाः शुद्धा इति भावः । यतस्तैरनुभूत आनन्दैकरसात्मा, ते सर्वावसरेषु समाः, अतः तिन्ह कें तेषां कृते बैभव वैभवो विभवश्च, सुखरूपसंपत्तिः वा अथवा बिपदा दुःखरूपविपत्तिः सम अभिन्नो भवति, तेभ्यः संपत्तिविपत्ती उभेऽनन्ये प्रतिभातः । अथ साधूनां शरीरेन्द्रियान्तःकरणाभिमानशून्यानां समत्वसंप्राप्तयोगिनां समदर्शिन्याम् आत्मारामाणां कृते सुखदुःखान्यतरभोगस्य तुच्छत्वात्, यथा “समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ॥”¹⁸ तथा च “समत्वं योग उच्यते”¹⁹ इति भगवदुक्त्योरिति संगृहीतार्थः ।

¹⁵ विद्यारण्यमुनिप्रणीते पञ्चदशीप्रथमप्रकरणे तत्त्वविवेके १।८-९, १।११ ।

¹⁶ मुण्डकोपनिषदि ३।२।९ ।

¹⁷ नरहरिप्रणीते बोधसारे १।१३।४२ ।

¹⁸ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाम् १।४।२४ ।

¹⁹ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाम् २।४।८ ।

एहि तें तव सेवक होत मुदा । मुनि त्यागत जोग भरोस सदा ॥ ७ ॥

एहि एतेन प्रकारेण ये मुनि मुनयः, त्वन्नामश्रवणमनननिदिध्यासनशीलनात् दृष्टरामात्मानः, तें ते जोग भरोस शरीरोपमर्दकसाधनायाः श्रद्धाम्, विभिन्नधर्ममार्गाणां विश्वासं च त्यागत सर्वथा परित्यज्य, सदा सर्वदा अनुक्षणं च तव त्वदीयाः सेवक ललाटिककिङ्करा अङ्घ्रिपरिचराः मुदा आनन्दपूर्णहृदयेन होत भवन्ति । त्वयि दयालुपरमात्मनि एव नान्यस्मिन् विश्वसन्तीति यावत् । यथा चरमश्लोके भगवतः श्रीमुखादेव विनिश्चितम् “सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज । अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥”²⁰ इत्यनुसांधेयम् ॥ ७ ॥

करि प्रेम निरंतर नेम²¹ लिएँ । पद पंकज सेवत सुद्ध हिए ॥

एवंविधाः हरिभक्ताः मुनयः सुद्ध शुद्धानि हिए हृदयानि येषां ते शुद्धहृदयाः, निर्मलचित्ताः सन्तः प्रेम करि प्रेमाणं प्रीतिं कृत्वा नेम नियमेन संकल्पबलेन नियमं च लिएँ धारयित्वा, न तु कृत्रिमरूपेण अपितु अनायासेन स्वभाविकप्रवृत्त्या तं प्रेमविधिं स्वीकुर्वन्ति । ते नियतानुरक्ताः पवित्रभावनाः निरंतर नित्यमविरतमनिशं सततमेव त्वदीयं पद पंकज कमलचरणयुगं सेवत सेवन्ते, सुखेन परिचरन्ति, अतिशयेन प्रीयन्तीत्यर्थः ।

सम मानि निरादर आदरही । सब संत सुखी बिचरंति मही ॥ ८ ॥

ये सब सर्वे संत मुनिवृन्दाः, महन्तः, सम समानं तुल्यमनन्यं यथा निरादर अनादरम्, अप्रियमशिवम् तथा आदरही आदरम्, प्रियं शिवम्, मानि अवीक्ष्य एवमन्यमानाः “तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥”²² इति यावत्, ते सन्तः सुखी आनन्दानुभावाः जीवन्मुक्ताः निर्लिप्ता अनिकेता अनग्रयो दिगम्बरास्त्यक्तैषणात्रययतिनोऽकर्तारोऽभोक्तारः मही पृथिवीं बिचरंति विचरन्ति, स्वेच्छाचारिणो यान्ति, परिभ्रमन्ति, परिव्रजन्ति, भैक्षचर्यं चरन्ति, स्वयं तीर्णभीषणभवाणवा अन्यान् प्राणीनपि तारयितुं नित्यमुद्यन्तः परोपकारैकचक्षुषः “शान्ता महन्तः निवसन्ति सन्तो वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः । तीर्णाः स्वयं भीमभवाणवं जनानहेतुनान्यानपि तारयन्तः ॥”²³ इति आचार्यपादवचनादिति तात्पर्यम् ॥ ८ ॥

मुनि मानस पंकज भृंग भजे । रघुबीर महा रनधीर अजे ॥

अहं प्राणिमात्रस्थानीयस्तुलसीदासः, मुनि मुनीनां मानस पंकज मनोकमलस्य भृंग भ्रमरम्, रघुबीर रघुवंशस्य वीरं राघवं श्रीरामं महा रनधीर युद्धक्षेत्रेऽत्यन्तं धीरं स्थिरं शूरतमम्, यस्य शत्रुषु पराक्रान्तेषु देहेन्द्रियमनांसि अविचलितानि, तं अजे अजेयमनभिभूतानभिभव्यं यद्वा अजं जन्मादिषड्विकारशून्यं मुनिचित्तांबुजद्विरेफरूपं रघुपतिमहं भजे नमामि पुनः पुनः, दण्डवत् साष्टांगं प्रणमामि । यथा पद्मे मध्वर्थं परागं चिन्वन् मधुरं गुञ्जति भ्रमरोऽनवरतः, तथैव मुनिहृदयकमले एक एव वृत्तिप्रवाहो निरन्तरं वहति रामतन्नामध्वानिरूप इत्ययं विमर्शः ।

तव नाम जपामि नमामि हरी । भव रोग महागद मान अरी ॥ ९ ॥

अहं साधारणः प्राणी संसारमहाब्धौ निमज्जयन् नाम आस्यभूषणं नामधेयं तव त्वदीयं नित्यं जपामि क्रमेण वाचिकमानसोपांशुं जपं करोमि, जपाजपम् अभ्यासेयमहं यावत् सिद्ध्येत । हरी हे हरे सर्वदुःखहर ! त्वदीयं नामलीलायुधचरित्रलोकभक्तान् नमामि प्रणमामि वन्दे, भजामि । यतो महानुभावाः निगदन्ति रामात्परं रामनामेति, अतो यद्यपि साध्यसाधनयोरभेदस्तथापि साधनस्य साध्यप्रापयितत्वेन उत्कृष्टत्वम् ।

हे दयासागर ! हे शोकभिषक् ! भव जन्ममरणादिरूपप्रपञ्च एव रोग रोगः, विकारो व्याधिः, तं प्रति त्वमेव महागद महौषधिः, त्वत्सदृशान्त्रान्यः प्रपिपक्षः । अगदश्च स्वास्थ्यमिति रोगाणां तत्कारणानां च समूलोच्छेदोऽपुनर्भवश्च । प्राकृते तु महांश्चासावगदो महागद इति । अत्र महदिति विशेषणेन स्वरूपावस्थितिरेव, नान्यलक्षणम् आपेक्षिकं स्वास्थ्यम् अभिप्रेतम् । तस्मात् श्रीरामस्य एव ब्रह्मात्माभिन्नरूपत्वाद् आत्मस्वरूपरामसाक्षात्कारो भवरोगापुनर्भवरूपमुक्तिः । हे राम, हे अजेय, हे अपराजित

²⁰ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाम् १८।६६ ।

²¹ नेमु इति पाठान्तरम् ।

²² श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतायाम् १४।२४ ।

²³ विवेकचूडामणौ ३९ ।

! त्वत्समक्षं मान मिथ्याभिमानमदमोहलोभादिराक्षसाः सर्वेऽभ्यन्तरशत्रवः कम्पन्ते, परिद्रवन्ति, क्षीयन्ते हृदयग्रन्थय इत्यर्थः । त्वमेव अरी मत्तमतङ्गहृदयग्रन्थिरूपिरिपूणां विरोधी, त्वमेव तेषां नाशको विक्षेपकः ॥ ९ ॥

गुण सील कृपा परमायतनं । प्रनमामि निरंतर श्रीरमनं ॥

हे अनन्त ! कथं मनुष्यैस्त्वदीयगुणकीर्तनं संपादनीयम्, यावत् “असितगिरिसमं स्यात्कज्जलं सिंधुपात्रे सुरतरुवरशाखा लेखनी पत्रमुर्वी । लिखति यदि गृहीत्वा शारदा सार्वकालं तदापि तव गुणानामीश पारं न याति ॥”²⁴ इत्यतस्त्वमेव गुण गुणानां सील शीलस्य, आचारस्य तथा कृपा दयायाः, करुणायाश्च परमायतनं आयतनम्, आस्पदं परम्, अनुत्तराश्रयः, त्वं हि निराधारो जगदाधारः । एतेन कारणेन अहं निरंतरं पुनः पुनरजस्रं दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारैः श्रीरमनं समग्रैश्वर्यवीर्ययशश्रीज्ञानविज्ञानयुक्तं लक्ष्मीपतिं सीतास्वामिनं भगवन्तं रामं प्रनमामि साष्टांगं नमामि ।

रघुनंद निकंदय द्रुंघनं । महिपाल बिलोकय दीनजनं ॥ १० ॥

रघुनंद, हे रघुनन्दन द्रुंघनं यं सुखदुःखप्रियाप्रियरागद्वेषक्षुत्पिपासाजन्ममरणदृग्दृश्यादिद्रुंसमूहम्, एतन्मिथ्यात्वग्रस्तं द्वैतं निकंदय निरुन्धि, अभिमर्दं सर्वथा छिन्धि, त्वयि निराकारेऽद्वैते भक्तवात्सल्यवाशात् कृताकारे समस्तद्वित्वस्य अवसादनत्वात्, तस्य मूलस्य अविद्यायाः विशरणत्वाच्च । यतः प्रसिद्धमेतत् “कारणापाये कार्यापायः” इति नियमात् ।

महिपाल हे भूभृत् ! पृथिव्यास्तद्विवासिनां प्रजानामेवं प्रजापालकानामपि स्वामिन्, दीनजनं भवावर्तगाहितं यं कमपि प्राणिनं मधुर्यदृष्ट्या बिलोकय विशेषेण अवलोकय, पालय, गोपय । धन्यास्ते त्वत्कृपैक्षणक्षणगतेः पात्रीकृता²⁵ इत्यलम् ॥ १० ॥

॥ इत्यस्याः पिनुच्चाप्रेमोद्भाविताज्ञान्यपराह्वासुहृत्प्रणीतायाः शिवस्तुतेरतिलघुकल्याणव्याख्यायाः पूर्णाहुतिरिति ॥

एवं समाप्यते मयेदमद्वैतपारकं शिवप्रणीतरामस्तोत्रस्य कल्याणाख्यं व्याख्यानं यत् पिनुच्चां प्रति कृताज्ञातां प्रीतिं च प्रदर्शनार्थं यथामति विरचितम् । अस्य अभिक्रमस्य संपादनाय यद्यपि अयोग्योऽहमिति स्वयं मन्ये, तथापि अस्मिन् सर्वथा निरपेक्षेऽद्वितीये रामचारितमानसनामके ग्रन्थेऽशुद्धमपि मल्लेखनं यथाशक्ति निवेशितम् । अत एव अपूतरथ्योदकं यथा गंगायां पतित्वा पवित्रेण गंगाजलेन परिणमते, तथैव परमेश्वरस्य देशिकानां च असीमानुकम्पया ममापि रचना परिशोधिता । अतः प्रसीदन्तु अनयाऽपि अपुण्यकृतिना यावन्तोऽस्मदुपास्या इति तेषां ज्ञानाग्निचरणयोः समर्पयामि यज्ज्ञातमज्ञातं च मदीयमिति विरम्यते ।

हे पिनुच्चे त्वदीयां मैत्रीमानुभूय धन्योऽहम्, अतस्त्वदीयं वस्तु तुभ्यमेव समर्प्यते ।

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् । ब्रह्मैव गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥²⁶ इति शम् ।

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ईशादि नौ उपनिषद् शांकरभाष्यार्थ, २००२, गोरखपुर: गीता प्रेस.

²⁴ शिवमहिम्नस्तोत्रे ३२ ।

²⁵ अस्मिन् विषये विवेकचूडामणौ ४१ द्रष्टव्यम् ।

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Sull'etimologia del termine *tarbusc* “fez”

Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti

The word *tarboosh* (Arabic *ṭarbūš*) indicates in all Arab countries the fez, i.e. the well-known felt headdress in the shape of a raised cylindrical flat-topped hat, usually red, with a silk tassel attached to the top. This word has not an Arabic origin and is currently thought to be a loanword from the Persian via the Turkish language, i.e. *sar* “head” – *pūš* “covering.” In the present article *tarboosh* is considered a purely Turkish word, composed by *ter* “sweat” and *pošu* “a light turban cloth,” i.e. the cloth once put by the Ottoman soldiers under their helmets.

A Pinuccia Caracchi,
a cui mi legano antica amicizia
e grati ricordi per il tempo vissuto
nel Dipartimento di Orientalistica
dell'Università di Torino,
allora felicemente operante
nel nascondimento
di Via Roero di Cortanze, 5

Il termine *tarbusc*, scritto anche *tarbush*, è uno di quei lemmi che nella lessicografia italiana hanno fatto il loro tempo, essendo scomparsi dai dizionari più recenti.¹ In questo modo comunque è chiamato il fez sia in Egitto, in Sudan e nel Vicino Oriente un tempo soggetto all'impero ottomano, sia in Marocco, territorio che con il potere ottomano non ha mai avuto a che fare. Esso si riferisce però a un tipo particolare di fez, che non è quello rigido ma corto che indossano, per esempio, gli Evzoni – la

¹ Cf. Devoto e Oli (1971); De Mauro (2000).

guardia d’onore del palazzo presidenziale ad Atene.² Il *tarbusc* non è neppure il fez floscio alla zuava indossato alternativamente dai Bersaglieri. Si tratta piuttosto del classico fez rigido e alto, a tronco di cono e di feltro rosso,³ dalla cui calotta piatta pende una nappa nera fissata a un cordoncino dello stesso colore, come in ogni altro tipo di fez.

Come tale, il *tarbusc* corrisponde al fez che, dal 1826, anno dell’abolizione del corpo dei Giannizzeri, fino alla fondazione della Repubblica Turca, ha funto da copricapo standard dell’esercito ottomano. Nel 1826 il sultano Mahmud II (1785-1839) impose però il fez non solo all’esercito, ma anche ai suoi sudditi civili, proibendo contestualmente l’uso del tradizionale turbante.⁴ Quasi un secolo più tardi, nel 1925, toccò al fez la stessa sorte riservata al turbante, quando Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) decise di proibirne l’uso, definendolo polemicamente un “copricapo dei Greci” e imponendo ai suoi concittadini copricapi all’occidentale.

Nell’esercito egiziano, che notoriamente è di matrice ottomana, l’impiego del *tarbusc* durò comunque altri 25 anni, fintantoché nel 1952, con la caduta della monarchia e l’avvento della repubblica, anche in Egitto si decise di abolirlo.

Ad imitazione dell’esercito egiziano e a partire da circa la metà del XIX secolo, varie potenze coloniali, tra cui l’Italia, adottarono questo tipo di fez come copricapo delle truppe indigene e ne presero anche il nome arabo egiziano *ṭarbūš*, adattandolo alle rispettive consuetudini grafiche.⁵ Pertanto il termine *tarbusc* entrò anche nel vocabolario italiano, soprattutto grazie al fatto che il tipo di fez da esso designato divenne il tratto più distintivo dell’uniforme degli Ascari (altra parola araba, da *askarī* “soldato”), cioè dei militari eritrei o libici che, fino al termine della seconda guerra mondiale, furono inquadrati come componenti regolari dell’esercito coloniale italiano.

Il fez come copricapo ha un’origine controversa, ma non di ciò mi occuperò in questa nota.⁶ Altrettanto controversa è però anche l’etimologia del termine *tarbusc*. È sì una parola araba,

² Il fez degli Evzoni è associato alla cosiddetta *fustanella*, una sottana corta, bianca e pieghettata, da indossare sopra pantaloni bianchi aderenti. Essa è tipica del folclore degli Albanesi, degli Arnabiti e dei Bosniaci. Nonostante la desinenza diminutiva italiana, è un termine derivato da *fustān*, che in arabo moderno significa “sottana, gonna,” cf. Pennacchietti (2017: 364).

³ Nel costume albanese il fez è alternativamente di feltro bianco, oppure viene sostituito dal *qeleshe*, uno zucchetto alto, anch’esso di feltro bianco.

⁴ Presumo che la decisione di Mahmud II di imporre ufficialmente quel copricapo abbia contribuito in modo determinante alla diffusione del termine *fez* nel mondo occidentale.

⁵ Il termine *tarbush* compare la prima volta per scritto in lingua inglese (*tarboosh*) nel 1702, in francese (*tarbouch*) nel 1849, in tedesco (*Tarbusch*) nel 1927 e in italiano (*tarbusc*) nel 1931. Cf. *Dictionnaire* (1969: 475); Battisti e Alessio (1957: 3719).

⁶ Secondo *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. XI (1988: 560), il fez è di antica origine greca. In turco e in tutte le lingue balcaniche esso, a prescindere dalle sue possibili fogge, viene chiamato *fes* o con parole foneticamente affini.

senonché all'orecchio dell'arabista essa suona chiaramente come un termine non semitico, anche solo per il fatto di contenere quattro consonanti radicali, ṬRBŠ, nessuna delle quali ha funzione morfologica. In questo caso, quasi per istinto, si pensa subito a una derivazione dal turco oppure dal persiano tramite il turco.

A prescindere dai lessici che non si preoccupano di fornirne un'etimologia accontentandosi di segnalare la forma corrispondente in arabo,⁷ ce ne sono (1) alcuni che definiscono il *tarbusc* semplicemente come una parola di origine turca senza entrare nei dettagli,⁸ (2) altri che lo definiscono come una parola persiana mediata dal turco, (3) altri ancora che distinguono in essa una componente turca e una componente persiana.

Autorevole rappresentante della seconda categoria è *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, che distingue in *tarbush* due componenti persiane: il segmento *tar-*, inteso come trasformazione di persiano *sar* 'testa, capo,' e il segmento *-būš*, dal verbo persiano *pūšidan* 'coprire,' come dire 'copricapo.'⁹

Più convincente mi sembra la soluzione proposta dal *Dizionario Etimologico Italiano* di C. Battisti e G. Alessio, che fa parte della terza categoria. In questo caso gli autori riconoscono nel primo segmento *tar-* di *tarbūš* la parola turca *ter* 'sudore' e nel secondo segmento *-būš* il tema persiano *pūš-* che abbiamo appena citato. Il significato originario di *tarbūš* sarebbe pertanto, secondo i due autori, qualcosa come 'accappatoio per il sudore.'¹⁰

Al di fuori di queste tre categorie emerge per la sua originalità la proposta avanzata da Federico Corriente, secondo cui *tarbūš* sarebbe in realtà una parola di origine romanza, diffusa nel mondo islamico dai Moriscos, i discendenti dei musulmani arabi che tra il 1492 e il 1526 furono costretti ad abbracciare il cristianesimo. Si tratterebbe quindi della trasformazione, secondo le regole fonetiche dell'arabo, di *trapucho*, diminutivo di spagnolo *trapo* 'straccio, avanzo di stoffa,' o del suo aggettivo

⁷ Si vedano per esempio Battaglia (2000: 730); *Dictionnaire... par Paul Robert* (1969: 475); *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1988); *Webster's International Dictionary* (1963: 560).

⁸ Si veda per esempio Dauzat, Dubois et Mitterand (1964: 733).

⁹ Cf. *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (2005: 1727).

¹⁰ Cf. Battisti e Alessio (1957: 3719).

traposo ‘cencioso.’ Questi termini rifletterebbero secondo Corriente ‘la conocida aversión de los musulmanos españoles en sus primeros tiempos a cubrirse la cabeza.’¹¹

Alle ipotesi tipo (2) e (3) testé elencate e all’ipotesi di F. Corriente vorrei aggiungere in questa sede una mia ipotesi che potrebbe rientrare nel tipo (1): *ṭarbūš* come parola semplicemente turca.

Poiché è altamente improbabile che la parola persiana *sar* ‘testa, capo’ possa trasformarsi nel *ṭar*-di arabo *ṭarbūš*, condivido l’opinione di C. Battisti e G. Alessio che vedono in questo primo segmento la resa di turco *ter* ‘sudore.’ In turco ottomano *ter* veniva scritto con le lettere arabe <TR>, dove la <T> stava ad indicare la presenza delle vocale anteriore [e].¹² In arabo la lettera <Ṭ> di *ṭar*(*būš*) ha invece la funzione di segnalare che la dentale esplosiva sorda di *ter* non è aspirata. A sua volta la vocale [a] di *ṭar*(*būš*) rende la vocale breve turca [e], data l’assenza in arabo del corrispondente fonema /e/.

Differente viceversa, a mio modo di vedere, è l’origine del secondo segmento *-būš*, dato tuttavia per assodato che l’esplosiva sonora di *-būš* rende in questo caso il fonema /p/ che in arabo non esiste.

Mi chiedo infatti perché sia necessario ricorrere a un termine iranico per creare un ibrido turco-persiano inverosimile e senza precedenti,¹³ quando il lessico turco fornisce apertamente una soluzione alternativa. Mi riferisco al termine turco ottomano *pošu*, che J. W. Redhouse definisce «un leggero tessuto da turbante, o il turbante confezionato con esso, che i soldati un tempo indossavano».¹⁴ Probabilmente il termine designava una sorta di cuffia che in antico i militari ottomani portavano sotto il tipico elmo conoidale.

In ogni caso il termine turco *pošu* è stato preso in prestito da varie lingue balcaniche e dal neogreco, anche al di fuori della sfera militare. Per esempio in bulgaro è attestata la parola *poš* che L. Stéphanova ritiene equivalente a *kārpa* e traduce di conseguenza ‘fazzoletto; asciugamano; strofinaccio, straccio; cuffia; frangia di tende.’¹⁵ Altrove vengono attribuite al bulgaro le parole *pošu* ‘fazzoletto’ e *pošija* ‘turbante.’¹⁶

¹¹ Cf. Corriente (1999: 322 “fez”, 453 “tarbuche”); Corriente, Pereira et Vicente (2019: 524-525 “tarbuche”). Sono grato all’amico David Gold, di New York, per avermi segnalato questa particolare ipotesi etimologica e a Federico Corriente per avermi tempestivamente indicato la relativa bibliografia.

¹² Cf. Redhouse (1890: 524/b).

¹³ In persiano *-pūš* funge quasi da suffisso con il significato di “che ricopre,” per indicare tanto un indumento riferito a una parte del corpo, per es. *pā-pūš* “babuccia, scarpa,” da *pā* “piede,” e *sar-pūš* “cappuccio; coperchio, copertura,” da *sar* “testa,” quanto circostanze affini, per es. *serr-pūš* “che mantiene il segreto; discreto;” cf. Grünbaum e Coletti (2006: 149, 439).

¹⁴ Cf. Redhouse (1890: 459/a), scritto <PWŠW>, “a light turban cloth, or the turban made up with it, once worn by soldiers.”

¹⁵ Cf. Stéphanova (1973: 365, 658, *poš* e *kārpa* “mouchoir; essuie-main; torchon, chiffon; coiffe; crépine”).

¹⁶ Cf. *Dicționarul Dialectului Aromân*, (1974: 1006): *pošū* “mouchoir” e *pošija* “turban.”

Ma è il macedo-rumeno (o arumeno) la lingua che fornisce in merito le testimonianze più significative. In questo idioma, parlato da un gruppo etnico stanziato in Macedonia, nel nord della Grecia, in Albania, Romania, Serbia e Bulgaria, sono attestati sia *poşe* (pl. *poşi, poş*) ‘fazzoletto da collo; copricapo di seta’, corrispondente a neo-greco *πόσι*¹⁷ e a bulgaro *poš*, sia *tarpoaşe* (pl. *tarpoşi*) ‘fazzoletto da collo.’¹⁸

Mi sembra, a questo punto, che il problema dell’origine del termine arabo egiziano *ṭarbūš* e della sua resa in diverse lingue europee come italiano *tarbusc*, possa dirsi risolto. Il macedo-rumeno con la parola *tarpoaşe* dimostra di avere preso in prestito dal turco un antico composto non più registrato nei lessici: **ter-poşu* “panno per il sudore”.¹⁹ Si tratta di una parola composta di due elementi entrambi turchi. Come dimostra Redhouse, la parola turca *poşu* era già sufficiente a designare un turbante leggero indossato dai soldati ottomani. Data l’assenza in arabo del fonema consonantico /p/ e del fonema vocalico /o/, la seconda parte del composto è evidentemente diventata *-būš*.

Nell’Egitto e nel Levante questo composto ha chiaramente assunto un significato ben diverso da quello originario di “panno per il sudore” o di “turbante leggero,” venendo a designare propriamente il fez ossia l’alto copricapo di feltro rosso, di probabile origine greco-balcanica, con cui il potere turco nel 1826 decise di sostituire l’antico turbante militare e il pittoresco elmo ottomano.

Come mai gli Ottomani abbiano deciso di chiamare in turco *fes* questo particolare copricapo non mi è chiaro. Sta di fatto che la corrispondente parola *fez* si è diffusa dappertutto, tranne che nei Paesi arabi un tempo sotto l’influenza dell’impero ottomano e in Marocco, esente da tale influenza, dove invece è stato preferito il termine *ṭarbūš*.

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¹⁷ Cf. *Dicţionarul Dialectului Aromân* (1974: 1006: *poşe* “fichu; couvre-tête de soie.”

¹⁸ Cf. *Dicţionarul Dialectului Aromân* (1974: 1166: *tarpoaşe* “fichu.”

¹⁹ Si confronti la traduzione “panno per il sudore” con “accappatoio per il sudore” di Battisti e Alessio (1957: 3719).

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The Study of the Paippalāda Recension of the Atharvaveda

The state of the art*

Umberto Selva

This article provides a survey of recent scholarship on the Paippalādasamhitā (PS) of the Atharvaveda, and presents the main lines of research that are currently being pursued. In particular, it discusses: the different approaches to the text-critical work on the PS; the debate on the history of its transmission; the linguistic studies based on the text; the hypothesis that the PS is a manual for the king's *purohita*; the ongoing research on the connection between the Paippalādins, the Vrātyas and the Pāśupatas; and recent scholarship on its ancillary literature.

1. Introduction

Within the literary corpus of Vedic India (ca. 1500–500 BCE), the Atharvaveda (AV) is second only to the Ṛgveda (ṚV) in importance, extent and antiquity. While the ṚV is a collection of praise hymns addressed to various gods and presumably recited during solemn public rites, the AV mainly contains healing charms, sorcery spells and prayers to be employed in domestic rituals. For this reason, the AV is an unparalleled source for the documentation of popular values, beliefs and realia from daily life in Vedic India.¹

In antiquity, the AV existed in numerous diverging recensions (*saṃhitā*) belonging to different schools of practice (*śākhā*).² However, only two of these have survived to the present day: the Śaunaka and the Paippalāda.

The Śaunakasaṃhitā (ŚS), also known as the “Vulgate,”³ has been preserved mostly in western India⁴ through uninterrupted oral transmission, as well as in numerous manuscripts (hereafter

* This article could be revised before publication thanks to the contribution of the J. Gonda Foundation of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS).

¹ On the AV in general, see Bloomfield (1899a), Gonda (1975: 267ff.) and Witzel (1997: 275–283).

² There were nine schools, according to both the Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa (49.4.1) (which lists the following names: Paippalāda, Stauda, Mauda, Śaunakiya, Jājala, Jalada, Brahmavada, Devadarśa and Cāraṇavidya) and the fifth Pariśiṣṭa of the Śuklayajurveda, known as Cāraṇavyūha (which lists the following names: Paippalā, Pradānta, Dānta, Auta, Jābāla, Śaunaka, Brahmopalāśa, Kunakhivedadaśi and Cāraṇavidya). See Bloomfield (1899a §10), Renou (1947: 58) and Lopez (2010: 6ff.) for an overview of the evidence on the AV *śākhās*.

“mss.”), equipped with a *padapāṭha*, *anukramaṇīs* and a commentary ascribed to Sāyaṇa, and accompanied by a set of ancillary texts⁵ (*Gopathabrāhmaṇa*, *Kauśikasūtra* and *Vaitānasūtra*, plus *prayaścittas*, *prātiśākhya*s, *pariśiṣṭas* and *paddhatis*). On the basis of these sources, several critical editions of the *saṃhitā* have been produced: Roth and Whitney (1856), revised by Lindenau in 1924 (2nd ed. 1966); Pandit (1894-1898), which was the first to include the *padapāṭha* and Sāyaṇa’s commentary; and Vishva Bandhu (1960). The standard translation of the collection (covering the first 19 of the 20 books) is Whitney (1905), although earlier translations also exist. Because of its diffusion and because of the early availability of reliable editions and translations, the Śaunaka has become the “reference” recension for the vast majority of scholarly studies on the Atharvaveda.

Conversely, the study of the Paippalādasamhitā (PS) was long neglected, as the recension was known only through a single very corrupted and virtually incomprehensible manuscript stemming from Kashmir. However, the late 1950s discovery of a new set of mss. in Odisha⁶ sparked new enthusiasm in the Indological community, as these mss. contained a much better preserved text, which anticipated that a reliable edition of the *saṃhitā* could soon be produced. The ongoing task of editing the 20 books that constitute the PS has occupied a number of scholars for several decades since then; it has generated a number of publications, reviving interest in the Atharvaveda in general as well as promoting the study of the Atharvavedic ancillary literature. It thus seems useful at this point to provide, in the present article, a survey of the history of the scholarship devoted to the Paippalāda thus far, in order to assess the results achieved and illustrate the direction of recent research. This article is aimed both at those students who might wish to find guidance as they first approach this field of study, as well as experienced scholars who might benefit from an overview of the state of the art.⁷

³ This appellation is most likely unjustified, as in the past, the Paippalāda was probably more widespread, prominent and influential (cf. Bhattacharyya 1964: xxxii ff.).

⁴ The sources used for the editions of the ŚS mostly stem from Gujarat and Maharashtra (see Vishva Bandhu 1960: xiii-xxxii).

⁵ For information on these texts, see the references collected in Griffiths (2007b: 141 fn. 3).

⁶ Most previous studies on the PS refer to the country with the appellation “Orissa,” and to its language as “Oriya.” As the official English name of the country was changed to “Odisha” in 2011, and that of its language to “Odia”, it seems appropriate to me to adopt these new appellations in this and future publications.

⁷ May this double goal be a homage to my beloved teacher Prof. Pinuccia Caracchi, who first opened the door for me into the world of Indological studies with her courses, ever so accessible and engaging for us young students, while at the same time conveying the most rigorous and up-to-date scientific knowledge. It is an honour and a pleasure to dedicate this short work to her, just as it was a pleasure, while writing it, to recall, in the back of my mind, dear memories of my early twenties, spent learning about India as much as learning about life and myself. I feel grateful to have had Pinuccia’s guidance during those formative years.

2. History of research

It is thanks to Tübingen professor Rudolph Roth that the existence of a first manuscript containing the text of the Paippalāda recension of the Atharvaveda was brought to the attention of the academic community. Roth's dissatisfaction with the mss. that he and Whitney had used to produce the *editio princeps* of the ŚS (1856) pushed him to look for better sources. In particular, he incited the authorities of the British Government of India to acquire mss. from Kashmir, as he was aware of the presence of brahmins in the region who claimed affiliation with the Atharvaveda.⁸ Eventually, as Bloomfield and Garbe (1901: 2) recall, "his Highness the late Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Ranbir Singh, announced that he had in his library, at his capital city, Srinagar, a manuscript of the Atharva-Veda 'written in characters which could not be read by anyone outside of Srinagar'" (i.e., in the Śāradā script). What made this ms. so special was that the Atharvaveda recension it preserved did not correspond to the Śaunaka text, but rather, the colophons attributed it to the Paippalādaśākhā. Thanks to the efforts of Sir William Muir, the Lieutenant Governor of the North-Western Provinces, a Nāgarī copy of this ms. was made for Roth in Śrīnagara in 1873 and delivered to him in November 1874, leading to the publication of the essay *Der Atharvaveda in Kaschmir* (Roth 1875). Finally, in 1876, the Government of India loaned Roth the original birch-bark codex, and the German scholar could present a description of its characteristics at the *Congresso internazionale degli Orientalisti*, held in Florence in September 1878 (the proceedings were published in 1881). The ms. has remained in Tübingen ever since and, after Roth's passing in 1895, it was preserved at the University Library, where it can still be consulted; hence it is often referred to as the "Tübingen ms." Given the importance of this *codex unicus*,⁹ and aiming at making it available to the community of scholars, in 1901, Bloomfield and Garbe published a volume containing a chromophotographic reproduction, which is widely used and referenced by scholars to this day.¹⁰

Unfortunately, the Kashmirian ms. contained only the text of the *saṃhitā*, mostly without accents, with neither *padapāṭha* nor commentary, and proved to be extremely corrupt. Leroy Carr Barret's strenuous and commendable efforts towards a critical edition, carried out over the course of over 35 years (1905–40), did not suffice to produce a readable text of the 20 books (*kāṇḍa*) that constitute the *saṃhitā*. Even after Raghu Vira's (1936-1942) revision, which introduced several

⁸ In his *Abhandlung über den Atharva Veda* (1956: 6), Roth refers to a report by the traveller Baron von Hügel (*Kaschmir und das Reich der Siek*, vol. ii, p. 364), according to whom the brahmins of Kashmir belonged to the "Atterwan" or "Atterman" Veda.

⁹ "In the entire domain of Indian manuscript tradition there is no single manuscript which claims so much interest as the unique birch-bark manuscript of the Kashmirian Atharvaveda" (Bloomfield 1899b: 184).

¹⁰ Since 2001, a digitalized version of the original ms. has also been available (see Griffiths 2009: xxii fn. 18).

improvements and provided references to parallel passages, much of the text remained incomprehensible.

The turning point in the history of PS research was Calcutta professor Durgamohan Bhattacharyya's late 1950s discovery of the existence of Odisha brahmins who claimed affiliation with the Paippalādaśākhā (see Bhattacharyya 1957). Bhattacharyya was able to retrieve several palm-leaf mss. of the *saṃhitā*¹¹ in their possession, and to witness the tradition first-hand, as it was still alive in Odisha at the time.¹² The mss. that Bhattacharyya found also lacked a *padapāṭha* and commentary, but preserved a significantly better version of the text than the Kashmirian ms.¹³ Producing a critical edition of the PS had now become a feasible goal.

The task was taken up by Bhattacharyya himself, who published an initial critical edition of the first *kāṇḍa* in 1964, shortly before his untimely passing in 1965, leaving a collection of lectures on the PS and a volume with his edition of books 2, 3 and 4 to be published posthumously (1968 and 1970). His endeavour was picked up in 1976 by his son, Dipak Bhattacharya (see Bhattacharya 2016: c),¹⁴ who over the course of several decades succeeded in completing an *editio princeps* of the 20 books of the collection, published in four volumes (1997, 2008, 2011, 2016). Bhattacharya's edition is an outstanding achievement of learned scholarship, even more so for its being the work of a single man, and it has been the starting point for all later editorial efforts. Nevertheless, starting from his 1997 publication, Bhattacharya's work has been the target of harsh criticism. His work has been criticized for not matching the standards of a proper critical edition, failing to set forth clear editorial principles and apply them systematically; for making use of only the few mss. discovered by his father (while others had been retrieved in the meantime—see below); for generally adopting the text of the Odisha mss., while considering the Kashmirian evidence only when the Odisha one is insufficient; for neglecting metrical considerations; for lacking a translation and a philological commentary; and so forth (see Griffiths 2009: xviii–xx §1.5 for a summary of the problems raised by

¹¹ Bhattacharyya also discovered texts belonging to the ancillary literature. See §4.5 below.

¹² Bhattacharyya was able to find families of Paippalādins also in West Bengal and Bihar, and to consult ritual manuals in their possession. However, he discovered mss. of the *saṃhitā* only when he visited the districts of Puri and Balasore in Odisha (Bhattacharyya 1957: 81f.). The tradition is still alive today also in parts of what is now the state of Jharkhand.

¹³ The Odisha mss. also revealed the beginning of the collection, which was missing from the Kashmirian ms. as the first folio was lost and the following few are damaged (see Barret 1905: 198). This includes the very first line, *śaṃ no devīr abhiṣṭaye* (Bhattacharyya 1957: 83f., 1964: xx), which “is recited in daily prayer all over India as the initial stanza of the Atharvaveda” (Bhattacharya 1997: xiii)—but does not correspond to the incipit of the ŚS – and which various traditional sources attribute to the Paippalāda (see Bhattacharya 1997: xiii), a fact that testifies to the greater influence of the PS compared to that of the ŚS in ancient times.

¹⁴ Note the difference in the spelling of the family name with respect to his father.

critics). Therefore, in the last 25 years, several scholars at European and American universities have committed to improving Bhattacharya's edition.

Karl Hoffmann offered a few important methodological observations in two articles on the topic (1968 and 1986), in which he also provides numerous suggestions for improvements on Durgamohan Bhattacharyya's work; seminal work was later undertaken by Michael Witzel, especially during his appointments as associate and then full professor of Sanskrit language and literature at Leiden University, the Netherlands (1978–1986), where he inaugurated a "Veda project" (Ghosh 2002b: 8). In November 1981, he and Jan Heesterman provided Dipak Bhattacharya with a ZWO fellowship and invited him to carry out his editorial work in Leiden for one year (Bhattacharya 2016: ci; van Bijlert 2002: 19). Having had access to Bhattacharya's mss., Witzel visited Odisha himself in 1983, collecting new ms. material¹⁵ as well as information on the Odisha Paippalāda tradition. In a series of articles (1973-1976, 1985a, 1985b; cf. also 1993), Witzel laid out the foundations for the study of the transmission of the text: by carefully studying the ms. errors in light of palaeographic considerations and an analysis of pronunciation mistakes in the oral transmission, Witzel posited the existence of a written archetype, redacted in Gujarat around the 9th century CE and written in a late form of Gupta script (and hence identified with the *siglum* *G). From this archetype, the two extant traditions would have arisen. The Kashmirian birch-bark ms. and various late apographs are traced back to a lost hyparchetype referred to by the *siglum* *D, written in Devanāgarī script and dating to ca. 1350 CE;¹⁶ the extant Odisha palm-leaf mss. (dating from the 17th to the 20th century CE) are believed to descend from a second lost hyparchetype, labelled *B, written in Proto-Bengali script and dating to ca. 1400 CE. Besides these advances, the "Veda project" produced a first electronic transcription of the PS, known as "the Leiden e-text," which has constantly been updated through the years as new critical editions were published.

The "Veda project" lagged as Prof. Witzel left Leiden to take up the chair of Wales Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard in 1987, but it was revived in the late '90s as other scholars, such as Leiden professors Hendrik W. Bodewitz and Alexander M. Lubotsky, took an interest in the PS. Thomas Zehnder spent a year (1997-1998) in Leiden to collaborate with Prof. Lubotsky, while preparing his

¹⁵ See Griffiths (2003a: 336 fn. 8) and Griffiths (2009: vii).

¹⁶ The Kashmirian ms. itself has been dated to the mid 16th century CE. The ms. contains a colophon that bears a date which has been interpreted as referring to the year 1419 CE, but Witzel (1985a) has argued on the basis of paleographic considerations that this date was most likely copied from an exemplar (sometimes referred to with the *siglum* *K) written in an older version of the Śāradā script. Thus the Kashmirian line of the genealogical tree is as follows: *D (Devanāgarī) 1350 CE → *K (Śāradā) 1419 CE → K (Śāradā) ca. 1550 CE. See Slaje (2007: 330-331, fn. 10), and the summary in Lopez (2010: 10).

Zurich doctoral dissertation (1999),¹⁷ an edition of *kāṇḍa* 2 with a German translation, and Prof. Lubotsky himself published an edition of *kāṇḍa* 5 (2002). Prof. Bodewitz supervised Arlo Griffiths's doctoral dissertation (2004, published in 2009), which contained an edition of *kāṇḍas* 6 and 7.

Following Witzel's example, Arlo Griffiths also went on several field trips to Odisha,¹⁸ and was able to uncover the existence of new manuscripts of the *saṃhitā*, as well as others containing ancillary literature belonging to the Odisha AV tradition.¹⁹ Meanwhile, in the previous years, the Odisha State Museum of Bhubaneswar had also been able to collect a fair number of mss.²⁰ Griffiths provided a description of all of these new sources (2003a) and strongly emphasized the necessity of collating these additional mss. in new editions of the PS *kāṇḍas*. Griffiths's 2009 edition of *kāṇḍas* 6 and 7 set a new editorial standard for its attention to the constitution of the text by carefully collating additional mss., and by presenting a rich introduction with detailed discussions of a number of related problems, such as orthography and *sandhi* peculiarities, textual divisions, *mantra* abbreviations, the phenomenon of perseveration (and anticipation), etc. Griffiths also published extensively on PS-related topics (2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2007a, 2007b; with A. Lubotsky: 1999, 2000-2001, 2009, 2014; with P. Bisschop: 2003, 2007; with S. Sumant: 2018), and co-edited an important volume of collected studies on the PS (Griffiths and Schmiedchen 2007).²¹

In recent years, Leiden has remained a centre of Paippalāda studies thanks to a number of scholars, such as Drs Marianne Oort,²² Dr Leonid Kulikov²³ and Dr Werner Knobl.²⁴ For many years Prof. Lubotsky has welcomed scholars and students into his office for weekly "Paippalāda readings."

¹⁷ Thomas Zehnder had already devoted his Lizentiatsarbeit to editing PS book 1 (1993, unpublished). This *kāṇḍa* is now being re-edited by Zehnder within the Swiss Paippalāda project (see below).

¹⁸ Witzel and Griffiths have co-authored an article (2002) containing a list of the villages where they were able to meet Paippalāda Atharvavedins during their field trips to Odisha. Cf. also C. G. Kashikar's report (2002) of a similar tour that he undertook in Odisha in 1969. Both articles are featured in a volume, Ghosh (ed.) 2002a, that collects a number of useful essays focussing on the Paippalāda.

¹⁹ On the latter, see Griffiths (2007b) and §4.5 below.

²⁰ See Mohapatra (2002-2003).

²¹ Griffiths has also been working on an edition of *kāṇḍa* 4 with Lubotsky (the unfinished material has now been passed on to the Zurich project, on which see below), and with Duccio Lelli on an edition of *kāṇḍa* 10.

²² Oort has been working on an edition of *kāṇḍa* 8. See also Oort (2002), a study on the preparation of the intoxicating drink *surā*, based on PS hymns 5.10 and 8.12.

²³ See §4.2 below for a survey of Kulikov's publications related to the PS.

²⁴ Although based in Kyoto, Dr Knobl has been an active member of the Leiden Paippalāda community, not least by visiting Leiden yearly on the occasion of the Leiden Summer School in Languages and Linguistics, where he teaches Vedic poetry and prose, but also by having contributed to Griffiths's dissertation through intense email correspondence, as well as to both mine and Lelli's dissertations.

He has supervised Duccio Lelli's doctoral dissertation on *kāṇḍa* 15 (2015), my Research MA thesis (2014) on *kāṇḍa* 17, *anuvāka* 1 (the *Bhūmisūkta*) and my doctoral dissertation (2019) on the three “new” *anuvākas*²⁵ (3, 5 and 6) of the same *kāṇḍa*, and he is currently supervising Kristen De Joseph's doctoral dissertation on the Wedding Hymn of *kāṇḍa* 18.

Other centres of Paippalāda studies besides Leiden have been the following: Harvard University, where Prof. Michael Witzel supervised Carlos Lopez's 2000 doctoral dissertation on *kāṇḍas* 13-14 (publ. 2010); the University of Oxford, where Dr Elizabeth Tucker has been working on book 11 and supervised Victor D'Avella's 2007 MPhil thesis on PS 10.10–16; the University of Bonn, where Philipp Kubisch defended his doctoral dissertation on PS 20.1–30 (2012); Paris, where Prof. Georges-Jean Pinault and Prof. Nalini Balbir supervised Carmen Spiers's 2016 MA thesis on *kāṇḍa* 3.1–20 (Spiers is now editing the whole of *kāṇḍa* 3 for her doctoral dissertation); the University of Würzburg, where from 2011 to 2014, Dr Jeong-Soo Kim carried out a DFG research project that resulted in his edition of *kāṇḍas* 8 and 9 (2014), and also produced a series of useful research tools – such a PS-ŚS concordance (Kim, *Konk.*) and collections of manuscript errors (Kim, *Schreib.*, and *Auss.*) – that have been constantly updated and made available online. Kim has also produced an improved version of *kāṇḍa* 16 (Kim, *K16*, based on Bhattacharya 2008), and is now carrying out a new DFG project aimed at compiling an *index verborum* of the AV (PS and ŚS) – of which a preliminary version is already available online (Kim, *Index*) – and a new critical edition of the ŚS.²⁶ Finally, a Swiss Paippalāda project was recently launched at the University of Zurich, involving Prof. Paul Widmer, Prof. Angelika Malinar, Dr Thomas Zehnder, Dr Oliver Hellwig and others.²⁷ Among the aims of the project is the edition of some of the remaining *kāṇḍas*,²⁸ as well as preparing an online version of the PS. Two Paippalāda workshops have been organized in Zurich, in June 2018 and 2019, and a major Atharvaveda conference is planned at the same university from 26–28 September 2019.

²⁵ That is, the three *anuvākas* (two of which in prose) that have no parallel in the ŚS, and that have never been translated or studied in detail before.

²⁶ For updates about the Würzburg project and for the material that has been made available, see <https://www.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/vgsp/forschung>.

²⁷ See <https://www.atharvavedapaippalada.uzh.ch>.

²⁸ The Zurich team is now focussing on the revision of *kāṇḍa* 1 (Zehnder's 1993 MA thesis), *kāṇḍa* 4 (based on material initially prepared by Griffiths and Lubotsky) and *kāṇḍa* 12 (on which Gerhard Ehlers and others had been working in Berlin).

3. Approaches to the text-critical work

The superiority of the Odisha tradition over the Kashmirian one is immediately evident to anyone who sets out to edit any portion of the text. Let us consider, for instance, the text of PS 17.35.1, which is preserved in the Kashmirian ms. (K) as follows:

*yathā hīnāśvatthād avravīt tracā vrāhmaṇa nindyāni ādenam aśṛṇunye juṣṭapūrtenaṃ
vyabhavānīti* | (transcription from Barret 1936: 181).

In his edition (based solely on K), Barret was not able to get much out of the above:

*athā hīna āśvatthād avravīt taṃ cāvrāhmaṇam anindyan adevam aśṛṇan ye juṣṭāḥ pūrtena
†vyabhavānīti* | (Barret 1936: 182).

Now, compare the text that was preserved in most of the Odisha mss.:

*athāhīnā āśvatthir abravīn na tād brāhmaṇaṃ nindāni yād enam aśṛṇon ned iṣṭāpūrtena vi
bhavānīti* |

This text is comprehensible,²⁹ to the extent that no emendation is needed, and a translation is easily obtained:

Then Ahīnas Āśvatthi said: “Therefore I will not censure [this/a] brahmin for having learned about him (i.e. heard about Indra and imitated his observance [N.B. the topic of the chapter]), lest I be deprived of [my] merit, gained from worship and donations” (Selva 2019: 282).

However, this does not mean that the Odisha tradition always preserves the best readings. Griffiths (2002: 44) has rightly criticized Bhattacharya for his method, never explicitly acknowledged, of “basically follow[ing] the Orissa manuscripts, and consider[ing] readings from the Kashmir manuscript only when the reading of the Orissa manuscripts is evidently unacceptable.” Indeed,

²⁹ Indeed, upon seeing the Odisha evidence, Bhattacharya did not fail to recognize that part of this line is cited in Vāmana’s Kāśikā with the aim of illustrating the use of the ending -āt as *na tād brāhmaṇād nindāmi*, *na tān brāhmaṇān iti prāpte*, “One gets *na tād brāhmaṇād nindāmi* while normally it should be *na tān brāhmaṇān* etc.” (Bhattacharya: 2004: 182); Bhattacharya (ibid.) also notes that Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita’s Siddhāntakaumudī (16th cent. CE) cites the same line as *na tād brāhmaṇam*. Even for a learned scholar like Barret, it was almost impossible to notice this on the sole basis of the Kashmirian text.

there are numerous cases in which **K** preserves the correct reading,³⁰ or in which both traditions preserve a corrupt reading, and both variants should be treated equally. Nevertheless, in most cases the Odisha evidence, is fundamental to the constitution of the text, so that it is crucial for the PS editors to collate the Odisha manuscripts.

At the same time, it is also true that situations in which only one Odisha ms. preserves the correct reading, while all the other mss. have faulty variants, are extremely rare.³¹ This is because, in most cases, the most problematic passages were already corrupted in the PS archetype *G. Because of this fact, in the event that, after collating a number of mss., we do not find an acceptable reading, there is little hope that, after collating more Odisha mss., we will eventually come across one that preserves the correct reading. This is why editors like Lubotsky and Zehnder were content with availing themselves of the Odisha data collected in Bhattacharya's apparatus and did not collate any additional mss., yet they managed to produce high-quality editions, succeeding in emending difficult passages thanks to their great expertise and familiarity with the Vedic texts and their language.

However, even when it is not conclusive, the collation of the Odisha mss. can offer us a number of eye-opening insights into how to evaluate the manuscript evidence, so critical editions on the model of Griffiths (2009), who was the first to set out to carefully collate as many sources as possible, remain the most desirable. Moreover, whenever possible, the insights gathered from the reconstruction of a *stemma codicum* of the Odisha mss. can lead to significant improvements in the editorial work, as I shall illustrate below.³²

In my partial 2019 edition of *kāṇḍa* 17, I was able to draw a *stemma codicum* of the eight Odisha mss. that contain the *kāṇḍa* and that I indicate with the following *sigla*: **Ma**, **Ja**, **V122**, **Ji₄**, **Pa_c**, **Mā**, **V71** and **JM₃**.³³ These mss. can be shown to belong to two sub-groups. The mss. **Mā**, **V71** and **JM₃**

³⁰ See for instance PS 17.28.29 *tam ṛksāmābhyām ādatta yajuṣā* [...]. Here **K** reads *ādatta* (...), but all of the **O** mss. have *uttabhito*, which is clearly due to perseveration from PS 17.42.6 (from the same *anuvāka*): *ṛksāmābhyām uttabhito yajuṣā* [...]. On the importance of the phenomenon of perseveration (and anticipation) in a text based on formulas that are learned by heart, such as the PS, see Griffiths (2009: xxxvi–xxxvii §2.4).

³¹ It appears that **Ma**, the oldest ms., is the most reliable, and preserves the correct reading even when most of the other mss. have faulty variants.

³² The task of drawing a *stemma codicum* of the Odisha mss. has sometimes been neglected by the editors of single books. Other times it proved impossible to achieve, given the contradictory manuscript evidence and the high probability of conflation between the sources. Moreover, the possibility of reconstructing a *stemma* that is valid for all PS books and includes all mss. is highly problematic, as not all mss. contain the whole collection, but only smaller portions, e.g. one or two books. Thus, it is possible that parts of a single mss. were copied from different sources and that the history of their transmission followed a different path from that of the remaining parts of the same ms.

³³ See Selva (2019: 15ff).

share a number of errors that cannot be due to chance, but must indicate a genetic relationship.³⁴ Accordingly, I posit the existence of a hypoarchetype $*\beta$, and refer to the sub-branch of the Odisha mss. derived from said hypoarchetype with the *siglum* O^B . Furthermore, **V71** and **JM₃** share a number of errors that are not featured in **Mā**,³⁵ which allows us to infer that they are derived from a common hypoarchetype $*\beta^2$ that is sister of **Mā**.³⁶ All the other mss. generally preserve better readings than the O^B mss. (especially **Ma**, which is the oldest) and may be grouped in a sister sub-branch, to which I refer with the *siglum* O^A , although it is difficult to demonstrate beyond doubt that they are all derived from a single hypoarchetype $*\alpha$ rather than being direct descendants of the Odisha archetype $*B$.³⁷ These observations allow us to draw the following *stemma codicum*:³⁸

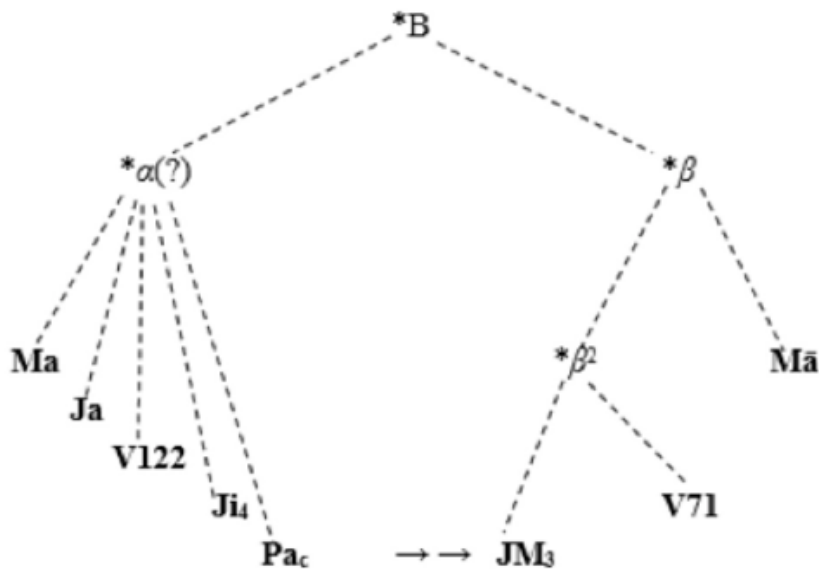


Figure 1. *Stemma of the genetic relationship between the Odisha mss. for PS 17.*

³⁴ For example, one such case is the reading *kva prepsan pavate* in PS 17.7.5b, preserved correctly in most mss., but which appears as *kva prepsasmanpavate* (with the insertion of the sequence *sman*) in **Mā**, **V71** and **JM₃**.

³⁵ For instance, the shared lacuna in 17.21.10, where the whole line is missing from **V71** and **JM₃**, but present in **Mā**. For other examples, see Selva 2019: 23f.

³⁶ It can be shown that **Mā** cannot be the exemplar of **V71** and **JM₃**. In fact, it features errors that are not found in the other two mss. See Selva 2019: 24f.

³⁷ One argument in favour of positing a hyparchetype $*\alpha$ is the agreement between O^B and **K** on reading *devā* (which is presumably also the correct reading) vs. *devān*, as preserved in all the other (O^A) mss., in PS 17.28.26 (see Selva 2019: 20, 254).

³⁸ Note that **JM₃**, despite belonging genetically to O^B , frequently agrees with the O^A mss. against **Mā** and **V71**, as if **JM₃**'s copyist had collated other sources together with $*\beta^2$ and corrected various readings accordingly. This general influence of O^A on **JM₃** is indicated with arrows in the stemma.

I will now illustrate one case in which such a detailed knowledge of the history of transmission can help us with the editorial work. Consider stanza PS 17.14.10, belonging to the third *anuvāka* of *kāṇḍa* 17, containing spells to exorcize the *Sadānuvās*, female demons who threaten pregnant women and their children. In particular, we will discuss the opening of *pāda* e, which I shall omit from the edited text and leave untranslated at first:

- a *āmādinīḥ krūrādinīḥ*
- b *anagnigandhyādinīḥ |*
- c *amum parety_aoddhitam*
- d *śavam atta sadān_uvāḥ |*
- e *___ kevala ācārah*
- f *kim u śālās_v *ichatha ||*

O eaters of raw flesh, O eaters of bloody flesh, O eaters of what does not smell of fire (i.e. is uncooked), O *Sadānuvās*, having gone away [from here], eat that exposed corpse over there. _____, so what do you seek in [our] houses?

Ms. readings for the opening of *pāda* e:

savaḥ **Ma V122 Ji₄ Pa_c**, *śivaḥ* **Ja**, *śavaḥ* **Mā JM₃**, *saśvavaḥ* **V71**, *savaḥ* **K**

Bhattacharya (2011 *ad loc.*), whose edition is based only on three mss., **Ma**, **Ja** and **Mā**, adopts **Mā**'s reading, *śavaḥ kevala ācārah*, with *śavaḥ* featuring a palatal sibilant that is also found in **Ja** (*śivaḥ*), as opposed to **Ma** and **K**, which both have a dental/alveolar sibilant (*savaḥ*, *savaḥ*). A few years earlier, Griffiths (2009: 277), who quoted this stanza in a comment, adopted the same reading, and translated the line with “The corpse is [your] only diet.” This reading makes sense semantically; the word *śava-*, “corpse,” is also used in *pāda* d; and Bhattacharya could have argued in favour of adopting a palatal ś on the basis of the majority criterion, as two out of his three Odisha mss. feature it—although, once again, Bhattacharya might be accused of neglecting the evidence from **K**.

However, if we avail ourselves of additional ms. evidence and take the stemmatic relationship between the mss. into consideration, we can make the following observations. All of the **O^A** mss. preserve a dental sibilant: in fact, *savaḥ* is found in **Ma V122 Ji₄ Pa_c**; **Ja śivaḥ** is the sole exception. All of the **O^B** mss. preserve a palatal sibilant: *śavaḥ* in **Mā** and **JM₃**, *saśvavaḥ* **V71**. Considering that the **O^A** mss. (and especially **Ma**) generally preserve the correct reading, and that **K** also has a dental sibilant (*savaḥ*), it seems reasonable to regard the **O^B** reading *śavaḥ* with a palatal as a scribal error attributable to *β, and the palatal in **Ja**'s *śivaḥ* as a genetically independent error of little significance.

Moreover, the reading *savaḥ* with a dental sibilant can definitely be considered the *lectio difficilior*, as *śavaḥ* can easily be explained as being due to perseveration from the preceding *pāda d* (*śavam attā sadānuvāḥ*). If we interpret the reading *savaḥ* as consisting of two words, *sa vaḥ*,³⁹ we obtain the following meaning: “That (*sa*) is your (*vaḥ*) customary conduct.” In this way, we also have the advantage of not having to supply the necessary word “your,” as Griffiths was forced to do in his translation.

4. The direction of recent and current research

4.1. The debate on the history of transmission of the PS

The history of the medieval tradition of the PS and the circumstances that led to the transmission of the text in Kashmir and Odisha have been a matter of debate. Bhattacharya (1997: xi–xii, xxxviii–li), following his father (Bhattacharyya 1964: xii–xiii), has claimed that the AV only entered Kashmir after the 15th century, pointing to an account by (Pseudo-)Jonarāja in his *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*,⁴⁰ according to which a Kashmirian scholar named Yuddhabhaṭṭa, who had studied the AV among the *Karṇāṭas*, introduced the AV to Kashmir under the patronage of the influential scholar Śiryabhaṭṭa during the reign of Sulṭān Zayn-al-‘Ābidīn (ca. 1420–70 CE). Thus, the Paippalādaśākhā would have been present in South India and, from there, it would have spread to Kashmir and presumably to Odisha.

Griffiths (2002: 40–44) has questioned this hypothesis, first of all by pointing out that Bhattacharya had ignored Witzel’s articles on the topic (see §2 above), which identified Gujarat as the likely medieval home of the PS and hypothesized its diffusion from Gujarat to Kashmir and Bengal, then from Bengal to Odisha. Secondly, Griffiths suggests, on the basis of various observations on the historical use of the term *karṇāṭa*, that the word might actually refer to any other part of the Vijayanagara empire, at the time referred to as *Karṇāṭa*, and even to Odisha itself, whose Gajapati rulers claimed the title of “Gajapati Gauḍeśvara Navakoṭi Karṇāṭa-Kālavargeśvara.” Thirdly, stressing the lack of any positive evidence for a South Indian home of the PS, he points out the particularly evident knowledge of the PS displayed by North Indian grammarians, from Pāṇini to Patañjali and the *Kāśīkāvṛtti* (cf. Bhattacharyya 1964: xxxii; Bhattacharya 1997: xl ff. and K. Bhattacharya 2001).

³⁹ The stem *savá-* does not seem to yield much sense in this context; perhaps one might wish to translate with “[Your] customary conduct is [my] command (*savaḥ*) only.”

⁴⁰ The precise reference is interpolation nr. 121, Ins. 74–89; see Kaul (1967: 173). Griffiths (2002: 42) specifies that this is “part of the extensive late 16th century interpolations inserted when the text was being translated into Persian on behalf of Mughal emperor Akbar.” Slaje (2007: 329–330) proposes distinguishing this longer version of the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* with interpolations from the shorter original text by Jonarāja by referring to its author as “Pseudo-Jonarāja.”

In his article in the edited volume Griffiths and Schmiedchen 2007, Walter Slaje (2007: 330 fn. 2) criticizes Griffiths's suggestion, pointing to the existence of "epigraphical evidence for the presence of Atharvavedic brahmins in 'Southern Karṇāṭa' (~ the Vijayanagara area) around ad 1430" and that "in Kalhaṇa's earlier Rājatarāṅgiṇī, Karṇāṭa is used clearly with reference to the South Indian region." Slaje's (2007) article further discusses the circumstances that might have led to the redaction of the Kashmirian ms.: he makes a strong case for the possibility that the PS was not introduced, but rather re-introduced into Kashmir in the 15th century, as there is evidence of the presence of the AV in Kashmir already from the 7th century (2007: 331 and fn. 11). In fact, the Kashmirian ms.'s (or its exemplar's) date of 1419 points to the reign of the tolerant Sulṭān Zayn-al-'Ābidīn who, following 30 years of violent persecution of Hindu worshippers and the forced Islamisation of the region during the reign of his predecessors, made great efforts to allow paṇḍits to resettle and re-import their lost literature. Slaje reconstructs these historical circumstances, and highlights the influential role played by the Kashmirian scholar Śiryabhaṭṭa at Zayn's court, providing a credible scenario for (Pseudo-)Jonarāja's account of Yuddhabaṭṭa's authorship of the Kashmirian AV ms. under his patronage.

One additional piece of evidence for understanding the Paippalāda tradition in Kashmir is Kei Kataoka's 2007 study of the likely Paippalāda affiliation of the 9th-century Kashmirian philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta, featured in the same volume.

In the introduction to said volume (Griffiths and Schmiedchen 2007: v, fn. 3), Griffiths withdrew his 2002 suggestion to identify (Pseudo-)Jonarāja's Karṇāṭa with Odisha, but remained open to the possibility that the reference was still "the result of some geographical misconception, because it cannot be made to fit with the other evidence at our disposal."

Finally, building on Diskalkar 1959-1960 and 1962, Annette Schmiedchen's 2007 contribution to the same edited volume provides additional epigraphical evidence for the presence of the Paippalāda in early medieval Gujarat and later medieval North Bengal and Odisha. The evidence consists mainly of copper-plate grants recording royal donations of land to (groups of) brahmins from the 4th to the 12th centuries CE.⁴¹ Thus, with regard to the early medieval diffusion of the Paippalādaśākhā, Witzel's Gujarat hypothesis (see §2 above) is still the most widely accepted.

⁴¹ Schmiedchen (2007: 357) notes that "out of the twenty-three references to Atharvavedins [in the collected epigraphic evidence], only six explicitly specify the particular śākhā those Brahmins belonged to. In all the six instances [...], it is the Paippalādaśākhā that is referred to; there is not a single piece of epigraphical evidence for the Śaunakaśākhā"; moreover, "it remains a striking feature of the relevant data that, although almost all Indian dynasties that ever issued copper-plate charters between the 4th and the 10th centuries endowed first and foremost Brahmins and only secondly Buddhist and Jain monasteries or Hindu temples, just a minority of them seem to have supported Atharvavedic Brahmins."

4.2. The linguistic and philological study of the PS

When compared with the ṚV or the ŚS, the PS presents us with abundant new linguistic material, new words, new forms and grammatical innovations next to probably intentional archaisms.⁴² Besides a few early linguistic studies by Renou (1955, 1957a, 1957b, 1957c, 1964-1965) and a more recent one by Tucker (2016) that have a rather general character, and an important article by Insler (1998) on the redactional history of the AV recensions, the hymn-composition and the stanza arrangement techniques used by the ŚS and PS redactors, most recent works on the PS consist of single-word studies, or focus on the linguistic analysis of single hymns – which is frequently the occasion for providing a new critical edition of small new portions of the PS.

For instance, Griffiths and Lubotsky (1999) offers a preliminary edition of the *tṛca* 19.34.7–9, relevant for the interpretation of the form *jan̄gahe*, an intensive of the root *gandh-*, “to smell, be fragrant,” according to Lubotsky (1997: 562f.) Griffiths and Lubotsky 2000–01 provides a critical edition of PS 4.15 (= ŚS 4.12), a charm to heal an open fracture, which contains a very old type of formulaic magic (“Let marrow come together with marrow, and your joint together with joint [...] Let bone grow over [together] with bone [...],” etc.) that we also find, for instance, in the Second Merseburg charm (“Like bone-sprain, so blood-sprain, so joint-sprain: Bone to bone, blood to blood, joints to joints, so may they be glued”⁴³). Griffiths and Lubotsky (2009) discusses the words *yātar-* and *giri-* on the basis of the *tṛca* PS 19.19.9–11, for which an edition is provided. Griffiths and Lubotsky (2014) contains a critical edition of PS 4.14, a charm to remove an arrow tip or another foreign body (*śalyá*) that has penetrated a victim’s body. Griffiths (2007a) studies the figure of Tumburu on the basis of PS 20.61.7–9 and 20.62.1–2. Lubotsky (2007) contains an edition of PS 8.15, a unique appeal to the brahmins to show solidarity and protest when one of them is abused. Lubotsky 2010 contains a list of words attested in PS 5 (edited by the author in 2002) that do not appear outside of the PS: each lemma provides the occurrences (also from elsewhere in the PS) and a brief discussion. Knobl (2007) discusses the word *jatravya-*, found in PS 7.15.7, and *abhīlī-*, in PSO 20.62.9a–63.5d ~ PSK 20.58.7a–59.4b. Kulikov 2009 discusses PS 14.8.4 (= ŚS 19.49.4), containing the word *piśá-*, which the author proposes to translate with “cheetah” or “leopard” rather than as “antelope” or “stag.” Kulikov has also devoted three articles to the Vedic “night”: Kulikov (2010) discusses ŚS 19.49.1 = PS 14.8.1 and the

⁴² This latter point has been stressed, among others, by Witzel (1997: 278), who has interpreted it in light of the Paippalādins’ efforts to be “accepted by the nobility and by the Brahmins who represented the *Trayī*, the three other Vedas” (more on this in §4.3 below). Indeed, the PS editors frequently inserted Ṛgvedic forms (e.g. Ṛgvedic *kṛṇoti*, *kṛṇu*, etc. in place of the allegro forms *karoti*, *kuru*, etc. as found in the ŚS), and hypercorrections can also sometimes be found.

⁴³ Translation from Fortson (2010: 368-369).

etymology of the word *rātrī*; Kulikov (2013) offers a translation and text-critical and linguistic comments on the hymn to the night in ŚS 19.50 = PS 14.0, while Kulikov (2014) is similarly devoted to another hymn to the night,⁴⁴ ŚS 19.47 = PS 6.20. Kulikov (*forth.*) treats PS 15.3.4 ~ ŚS 19.44–45 dealing with the Traikakuda ointment. Tucker (2007) contains an edition of PS 11.10–11 which deal with a harvest rite connected with Indra, while Tucker (2014) discusses feminine epithets belonging to the *-van/-varī* inflection that appear in PS 11.16, a praise to the Waters used in the royal unction rite. Lelli (2018) contains an edition of the *tṛca* in PS 19.20.15–17, a unique charm against wrinkles. The same author, together with Kristen De Joseph, is preparing an article on the semantic development of the word *méhana-*, “urethra.” De Joseph *in press* analyses the textual variation between the PS Wedding Hymn (18.1–14) and the ŚS (14) and ṚV (10.85) versions.

Atharvavedic metre has been the focus of an article by Philipp Kubisch (2007), who has proposed an elaborate notation based on his statistical analysis of the stanza types found in the first seven books of the ŚS.⁴⁵ Kubisch then systematically applied this notation in his 2012 critical edition of PS 20.1–30. Lelli’s (2014) Macerata PhD dissertation offered the “Paippalāda counterpart” to Kubisch (2007) by analysing the then published editions of seven and a half PS *kāṇḍas* (2, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15 and 20.1–30), making use of Kubisch’s notation, which Lelli then also applied in his 2015 edition of PS 15. I have also employed this notation in my 2014 Research MA thesis, although with some minor criticism with regard to the notation’s failure to account for some possibly intentional use of break rhythms (see Selva 2014: xviii fn. 9). However, the scholarly community responded with mixed reactions, as many found the notation to be unnecessarily complicated. To give an example: in Kubisch’s notation, a *Triṣṭubh pāda* that deviates in both opening and break from what he has determined to be the standard (or most common) structure would be encoded with the notation “+(#)T”; one that deviates in both opening and cadence, with “(+)#T”; one that deviates in both break and cadence, with “(+#)T.” Although such a concise notation might be useful for computer-based research, it is indeed little intuitive. Sharing this criticism, both Lelli (in his yet-to-be-published revision of his 2015 PhD dissertation) and I (in my 2019 PhD dissertation) have decided to revert to a simpler notation, providing, for each *pāda*, the number of syllables next to a metrical scheme. For instance, a *Jagatī pāda* would be provided with a notation such as the following: “12 [◡ – ◡ – | ◡ ◡ ◡ | – ◡ – ◡ ×]”. Nevertheless, Lelli’s painstaking (2014) analysis remains an important step in the study of the PS metre.

⁴⁴ On the group of hymns dedicated to the night (ŚS 19.47–50), see also Rotaru (2012).

⁴⁵ A limited sample was chosen due to time constraints.

The prose of the PS is a much neglected subject. Renou devotes to the PS only a “note additionnelle” at the end of his 1955 work on the AV prose – although much of the observations he makes on the basis of the ŚS data in the main body of his article are also valid for the PS. In Selva (2019: 41-52 and 222-233), I provide a sketch of the syntax and style of the two prose *anuvākas* of PS book 17 – *anuvāka* 5 = 17.21–26, mainly composed in *yajus*-style prose, and *anuvāka* 6 = PS 17.27–43, in *brāhmaṇa*-style prose – both lacking a ŚS parallel. Werner Knobl has also studied the prose of the PS, and in particular PS 9.21.1–12, as the locus of the earliest appearance of the *etád-yád* (or *yád-figé*) construction (see Knobl 2009). Much still remains to be studied.

4.3. The interpretation of the PS as a manual for the king’s *purohita*

The Atharvedins’ particular concern with exalting and promoting their own tradition was recognized early on. From the evidence collected by Bloomfield (1899a: 28-34), we gather that the Atharvedins’ agenda was mainly focussed on achieving three goals, which can be summarized as follows: 1) having the Atharvaveda recognized as a “fourth” full-fledged Veda beside the already well-established *trayī vidyā* (the Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda);⁴⁶ 2) claiming a prominent position for the AV priest, the *brahmán*, within Śrauta ritualism, next to the priests affiliated with the other Vedas (the *hóṭṛ*, the *adhvaryú*, the *udgātṛ* and their assistants); and finally 3) recommending themselves as the best candidates for the office of a king’s “house chaplain” and main adviser, the *purohita* (also called *guru*).⁴⁷

The textual efforts aimed at promoting themselves over other schools sometimes reveal rivalries even between different *śākhās* of the AV itself. Much quoted is AVPariś 2.1–5: “The Atharvan keeps off terrible occurrences, and acts as a charm against portentous ones [...] not the Adhvaryu, not the Chandoga, and not the Bahvṛca [...] The Bahvṛca destroys the kingdom, the Adhvaryu destroys sons, the Chandoga dissipates wealth; hence the *guru* must be an Atharvaṇa [...]. A Paippalāda as *guru* increases happiness, sovereignty, health, and so does a Śaunakin who understands the gods and the mantras [...] The king whose *purodhā* is in any way a Jalada or a Mauda [N.B. other AV *śākhās*] is deposed from the kingdom within the year” (quoted in Bloomfield 1899a: 30).

However, recent studies have pointed out that the Paippalāda in particular seems especially concerned with the necessity of obtaining royal patronage, much more so than the ŚS. Witzel (1997:

⁴⁶ Note the new term *brāhmāṇi* (neuter plural), with which the Atharvedins refer to their own *mantras*, as opposed to the *ṛcas*, *yájūṃṣi* and *sāmāni* belonging to the other Vedas. Accordingly, the Atharvaveda acquires the name of “Brahmaveda.”

⁴⁷ See also the references collected in Sanderson (2007: 204ff., fn. 28, 29, 31).

278-279) has noticed a number of features in the PS, such as the tendency to use linguistic archaisms (see fn. 42 above), and the particular attention to developing special life-cycle-related Gṛhya rituals (marriage, *upanayana*, royal consecration, etc.), that are absent from the ŚS, which he thinks are a clear indication of this concern. In particular, he has also singled out PS book 10 as having a specifically royal character. “The AV texts, as we have them now, have in all probability been composed/adapted and collected under the Kuru hegemony, — or, to suggest a name, in the realm of the famous king Parikṣit (see ṚV-Khil. 5.10 = ŚS 20.127). Book 10 of PS, little studied and even less understood, provides further evidence for the time and the aims of the Atharvan collectors. It deals with an early form of the royal consecration rituals as part of a *Sava*, that is, an unction ritual inserted into a standard Soma sacrifice. While the Ṛgveda and Śaunaka Saṃhitās only contain a few simple ‘installation hymns,’ the priests of the Paippalada school made an effort to provide the king with a more solemn rite, a *state ritual*” (1997: 278).⁴⁸

Following Witzel’s observation, numerous other hymns have been identified as likely being intended for royal ceremonies. Lelli (2015a: 32; 2015b: 377–378) provides a list of such hymns – mainly from the books that had been edited at the time of publication (1, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14) – comprising over 20 items,⁴⁹ only a couple of which are found in the ŚS. As Lelli (2015a: 32) writes, “the fact that almost all the hymns mentioned above are found only in the PS and not in the ŚS means that there must be ‘a conscious effort of Paippalāda Brahmins to appear as best suited to be the king’s *purohita*’ (Lopez 2010: 51), in competition with other ‘orthodox’ Brahmins; ‘although later Dharma texts point out that the *purohita* of the king should be an Atharvavedin, the Śaunaka school do not seem to have the same agenda in the redaction of its Saṃhitā’ (Lopez 2010: 83).”

⁴⁸ A new, complete critical edition of PS 10 provided with a translation is still wanting. Above, I have mentioned D’Avella’s (2007) MA thesis, covering only PS 10.10–16. However, Tsuchiyama has devoted a short study (2007) to the concept of *rāṣṭra* and the dynamics surrounding the notion of kingship as it emerges from this book: the tribal alliances, the assembly (*samiti*), the selection of the leader and his ascension (*ruh-*) to the role of king, his embodying of the notion of kingship (*rāṣṭrām bhū-*), the collection of tributes (*balī*), etc.

⁴⁹ I cite from Lelli (2015a: 32): “PS 1.11 ≈ ŚS 1.29 Ein Halsamulett (*mani-*), um Herrschaft (*rāṣṭra-*) zu erlangen; PS 1.19 ≈ ŚS 1.9 Für Gedeihen und Reichtum; PS 1.53 (PS only) Für Respekt (*upa-citi-*) und Herrschaft (*rāṣṭra-*); PS 1.54 (PS only) Für Ansehen (*varcas-*) und Macht; PS 1.74 (PS only) An einen König; PS 1.75 (PS only) Der König als Beschützer vor Feinden; PS 1.92 (PS only) An die (Gerichts-)Versammlung (*samiti-*); PS 2.18 ≈ ŚS 6.38 Bitte um Prestige (‘Funkeln’); PS 2.25 (PS only) Um in der Schlacht den Sieg zu erringen; PS 2.65 (PS only) Zur Sicherung der Herrschaft; PS 2.72–73 (PS only) Zur Erhaltung der Herrschaft; PS 2.86 (PS only) Prosaformel: für Feindlosigkeit in jeder Richtung; PS 2.88 ≈ ṚV 10.152 An Indra (zum Schutz vor Feinden); PS 5.29 (PS only) For splendor (*varcas-*); PS 6.9 (PS only) For a king, against enemies: with a bull; PS 7.12 (PS only) For a queen, against rival wives: with *pātā*; PS 13.1–2 (PS only) Internalization of cosmic elements; PS 13.7–8 (PS only) A riddle hymn (in the style of a *brahmodya*). PS 14.1–2 (PS only) The king-engendering (*rājasūyā*) waters. PS 14.5–6 (PS only) The offering of the Śataudanā-cow.”

To this, Lelli (2015a, 2015b) adds evidence from book 15. He regards this book as consisting of two main divisions, the first of which, comprising PS 15.1–12 (five hymns spread over 12 *sūktas*) he calls a “collection of royal hymns” (2015a: 31): *sūktas* 1-2 contain spells for protection of the kingdom, many of which are borrowed from YV sections that deal with the Aśvamedha; 3-4 contain stanzas to be recited in a Mahāśānti ceremony, which borrow formulaic expressions normally employed in the royal consecration (Rājasūya); 5-6 deal with the king’s investiture; in the refrain found in 7-9, the reciter invokes various gods as “overseers” (*ādhyakṣa*) of various spheres, wishing for their help with his office of *purohita* (*purodhā*); and 10–12 deal with warfare. As Lelli points out, many of the stanzas found in these texts consist of material from the ṚV or YV texts that has either been directly borrowed or rearranged. This, he believes, betrays the Paippalādins’ intentional efforts aimed at collecting materials in order “to grant undisputed authority to their practices and literature” (2015b: 394), and establish themselves as potential *purohitas*.

The interpretation of the PS as a manual for the king’s *purohita* appears one of the most promising lines of research on the Paippalāda today.⁵⁰ The presence of Vrātya elements (see §4.4 below) in the *saṃhitā* might also be interpreted as being related to the Atharvavedins’ attempts to obtain royal patronage, either because they shared the Vrātyas’ marginal status and preoccupation with finding means of subsistence, because they shared a common Rudraic cult or perhaps because they, as *purohitas*, needed to offer their services to the newly formed dynasties that emerged as a result of successful conquering expeditions by Vrātya warrior brotherhoods.⁵¹

The topic of kingship in relation to the Atharvaveda has also been treated in a recent book by Geslani, titled *Rites of the God-King* (2018). By focussing on the AV ancillary literature vis-à-vis the astrological (*jyotiṣa*) and Purāṇic literature, the author traces the emergence and development of the Śānti (“appeasement”) rituals as a specialty of the AV priests, and shows how these came to be “instituted within the office of kingship (*rājadharma*) [...] as the basis of the king’s annual ritual life” (Geslani 2018: 18). Moreover, he shows how, around the middle of the 1st millennium CE, AV royal priests became “creatively engaged with the problem of omens as delimited by the nascent astrological tradition” (Geslani 2018: 254) and how, at the same time, the astrological tradition appropriated the Śānti ritual techniques, so that it is possible to speak of an “Atharvan-astrological ritual regime” that was able to provide kings with efficient solutions for detecting bad omens as well

⁵⁰ See also Whitaker’s (2004) article on the use of amulets (*manī*) as it emerges from the AV in relation to royal power and prestige, and Tucker 2014 on PS 11.16, a hymn to the Waters used in the royal unction rite.

⁵¹ On this latter dynamic, see Bollée (1981), Vassilkov (2015) and Selva (2019: Appendices I and II).

as for averting bad consequences by means of spells. Geslani further claims that this ritual regime informed the Purāṇic notion of kingship and that *śānti*-based ritual of royal consecrations even informed the later ritual of image installation (*pratiṣṭhā*).

If Geslani is correct, it seems to me that we need to recognize that the efforts at promoting themselves as royal advisers pervaded the AV tradition for the longest time and across multiple phases: first of all, in the early Vedic period, around the time of the Kuru realm, when the AV *mantras* were first collected; then when the first *śākhās* emerged with their own competing *saṃhitās*; then with the emergence of the Śānti ritualism as it appears from the AV ancillary literature; and finally, throughout the 1st millennium CE, in combination with the emerging astrological tradition.⁵²

4.4. Paippalādins, Vrātyas and Pāśupatas

The first scholar to suggest a connection between the Vrātyas and the Paippalāda tradition was Duccio Lelli in his edition of PS 15 (2015a). The second of the two hymn collections identified by Lelli in this book comprises four hymns (across *sūktas* 15-23, possibly also including 13 and 14) dedicated to Rudra. Lelli (2015a: 33) identifies the “core” of the collection as *sūktas* 20-21, which are partially rearrangements of ṚV 2.33 (one of the three Ṛgvedic hymns to Rudra), and invoke Rudra in the form of Bhava and Śarva, the “two lords of animals” (*paśupati*, PS 1521.1a, 2a). Lelli finds Rudraic references also in *sūktas* 18–19, to the Apsarases, and 22–23, in which the Maruts are mentioned as Rudra’s sons.

To highlight the prominent presence of Rudra in the PS, Lelli points to PS 14.3.1–10 and 14.4.1–7. These 17 stanzas were, in fact, also transmitted independently from the *saṃhitā*, as the first half of the second *kāṇḍa* of the Nilarudropaniṣad, and are regarded as the Atharvan equivalent of the Yajurvedic Śatarudriya (Lubin 2007: 81, 85).

To explain Rudra’s prominence in the PS, Lelli suggests that the Paippalādins shared some elements of Vrātya culture. He is hesitant to propose a one-to-one identification, but highlights the fact that Rudra was the tutelary deity of the Vrātyas and, secondly, that “neither the Paippalādins nor the Vrātyas were fully recognized as part of Vedic society, both living at its borders; this would explain both the references to specific cults, like the Rudraic one, in the PS, as well as the simultaneous effort to appear as the best candidates to be the king’s *purohita*, namely, as a means to

⁵² Also note the evidence from the Āṅgirasakalpa (see §4.5 below), which contains instructions for hostile rituals meant to be used by *purohitas* in the service of kings, and the social dynamics proposed by Sanderson (see fn. 55 below) to explain the presence of Śaiva rituals in AV texts as a reaction to the rise of Śaiva officiants threatening the Atharvavedins’ privileged status.

becoming honourably included in the highest ranks of Vedic society” (Lelli 2015a: 34)⁵³ – thus connecting the Vrātya question with the question of royal patronage discussed in §4.3 above.

The issue of Rudra’s prominence in the PS cannot be separated from the problem of the presence of numerous textual connections between the AV texts (and particularly the Paippalāda texts) and the Pāśupata cult. Above (see §2 and §4.1), we have discussed Witzel’s proposed localization of the home of the Paippalādaśākhā in Gujarat in early medieval times. This hypothesis is particularly relevant for the study of the relationship between the Atharvavedins (Paippalādins in particular) and the Pāśupata cult, because the latter was widespread in precisely the same area of western India (Gujarat, Malwa), as pointed out by Bisschop and Griffiths (2003: 320). Bisschop and Griffiths (2003) survey the epigraphic evidence and highlight the presence of Śaiva names among the recipients of land grants, as well as among western Indian Atharvavedic authors in the 1st millennium CE. A particularly important role was likely played by Kārohaṇa (modern Karvan, Gujarat). This city, believed to be the place where Śiva was incarnated as Lakuliśa and consequently an important Pāśupata āyatana, lies in the proximity of localities where grants to Atharvavedins have been found.⁵⁴ This, according to the authors, might contribute to explaining why we find detailed knowledge of the Pāśupata cult in AV texts, such as the description of the Pāśupata observance (*pāśupatavrata*) in AVPariś 40, which is the focus of their article.⁵⁵

At the time of Kauṇḍinya’s commentary to the Pāśupatasūtra (4th century CE), which is the main source for our knowledge of the cult, the second stage of the *pāśupatavrata* required the ascetic to behave in a deranged way, pretending to be mad, in order to attract the censure of onlookers. In this way, the ascetic believed he could provoke a magical exchange in which his detractors’ merits (*iṣṭapūrta*) were transferred to him, and his own demerits to his detractors. In a 2013 article, aptly styled “How to behave like a bull,” Acharya demonstrated that, in its original form, the *pāśupatavrata*, as illustrated in the Pāśupatasūtra, required the ascetic not simply to behave as a mad person, but

⁵³ Lelli (2015a: 34) also identifies a possible explicit reference to the Vrātyas in 15.21.4ab (PS only), *na praminanti vratino vratāni satyaṃ jinvanto vidathā vadantaḥ*, “The ones observing a vow do not violate their vows, furthering truth, announcing distributions of wealth” (Lelli).

⁵⁴ In a later article devoted to another portion of the AVPariś (36) – known as Ucchuṣmakalpa, a text of Tantric character, dedicated to Rudra in the form of Ucchuṣma – the two authors claim that in at least one case, it can be proven that Pāśupatas and Atharvavedins inhabited the same city, namely Aṇahilapātaka or Aṇahillapurapattana (Bisschop and Griffiths 2007: 1 fn. 1).

⁵⁵ Note that Sanderson (2007: 196–197) explains the presence of the *pāśupatavrata* chapter and the Ucchuṣmakalpa (see previous footnote) in AV texts as the result of the co-opting and adaptation of Śaiva rituals to the ritual repertoire of AV priests who, in this way, hoped to react to the rise in popularity of Śaiva officiants who were challenging their pre-eminence as the principal beneficiaries of royal patronage.

specifically to behave like a bull, i.e. like the cattle of his lord, Paśupati; and that it actually prescribed the imitation of the behaviour of a bull throughout all phases of the ascetic's life. The ascetic was supposed to headbutt, eat grass, drink from puddles, defecate in public and sexually harass women. Acharya went on to investigate possible Vedic sources of this peculiar observance, and was able to prove the existence of an archaic Vedic bull *vrata* on the basis of numerous textual sources. Among these sources, he identified two Atharvavedic texts: the so-called Anaḍutsūkta, “the hymn to the draft-ox” (ŚS 4.11 ~ PS 3.25), and a prose text, the sixth *anuvāka* of PS *kāṇḍa* 17 (PS 17.27–43).

Building on Acharya's work, I studied these two texts extensively as part of my PhD research (2015–2019). During a reading session in my adviser Prof. Lubotsky's office in 2015, Prof. Bisschop noticed a textual parallel between PS 17.35.4 and Pāśupatasūtra 4.10–13. Prof. Bisschop's presentation at the Indo-Iranian and its Indo-European Origins workshop, held in honour of Prof. Lubotsky on the occasion of his 60th birthday, 8–9 April 2016, Leiden, featured my preliminary critical edition of the relevant PS portion, which was then included in Prof. Bisschop's contribution to the workshop's proceedings (Bisschop 2018). The discovery of such striking textual parallel once again raised the question of the connection between the Paippalāda and the Pāśupatas.

In the following years, I went on to complete a critical edition of PS 17 *anuvāka* 6, as well as of the PS version of the Anaḍutsūkta (PS 3.25), both now included in my PhD dissertation (Selva 2019). Moreover, I provided these two editions with two studies on Acharya's archaic bull *vrata*. In the first study (Appendix I of my dissertation), I investigate the ideology and praxis of this archaic *vrata* (referred to as *anaḍuho vratam* in the texts), and trace its origins back to the initiation practices of the Indo-European *Männerbund*. I focus especially on two cultural traits: 1) the IE *Männerbündler*'s practice of identifying with wild animals during their initiatory period in the wilderness and of performing masked parades while impersonating dead ancestors at specific yearly festivals; and 2) the *Männerbündler*'s idea of being entitled to a “stealing right” or *sakraler Stehlrecht*, that is, to receiving gifts and means of subsistence from the community. I provide textual evidence to show that both traits were present, although, of course, in a different (but structurally comparable) fashion in Vrātya culture, which I consider an intermediate stage towards the rise of the Pāśupata's observance involving the identification with bulls and the idea of stealing merit. By highlighting the socio-economic factors that drove the development of the *Männerbund* from an institution devoted to the education of the youth to a warrior and ascetic brotherhood that provided a means of social mobility to marginalized people, I attempt to uncover the dynamics that led to the re-elaboration of these prehistoric Indo-European cultural practices into the culture of the Vedic Vrātya warrior brotherhoods and later early Śaiva asceticism.

In the second study (Appendix II of my dissertation), which contains my critical edition of the PS Anaḍutsūkta (PS 3.25), I present a new interpretation of the hymn based both on the comparison with PS 17 *anuvāka* 6 and the data from my cultural reconstruction, outlined in Appendix I, uncovering the connections between the *anaḍuho vratam* and the celebrations of the solstices that are mentioned in the hymn: the Gharma ritual at the summer solstice, and the celebrations of the 12 *vrātyā* nights of the winter solstice. Both of these can be traced back to Indo-European practices. I once again expand on Acharya's 2013 article, in which he claimed that the archaic bull *vrata* belonged to the cult of Indra, and I suggest that, in fact, both Indra and Rudra play a role in the observance, because they are both deities connected with the Vrātyas.

4.5. The study of the ancillary literature

In the late 1950s, together with the mss. of the *saṃhitā*, Durgamohan Bhattacharyya also discovered mss. containing ancillary texts (1964: xvii; 1968, *passim*). In later years, other such mss. have been collected by the Odisha State Museum, the Parija Library of Utkal University and other institutions (see Griffiths 2007b: 142f.). However, most mss. still belong to private collections, although Griffiths has made some of them available to the scholarly community by producing numerous sets of photographs. Griffiths (2007b) describes these sources and the texts that they preserve, with particular attention to the *upaniṣads* and, in particular, to a version of the Caraṇavyūha (= AVPariś 49) called Caraṇavyūhopaniṣad (CVU), the purpose of which is to provide an overview of the Atharvavedic canon from the *saṃhitā* to the ancillary literature.

This text, of which Griffiths (2007b: 162ff.) provides a critical edition, mentions the Gopathabrāhmaṇa, *vedāṅgas*⁵⁶, five *kalpas*⁵⁷, *lakṣaṇagranthas*⁵⁸, *pariśiṣtas*⁵⁹ and a number of *upaniṣads*:⁶⁰ “Only for this last genre of ancillary literature does the CVU version differ substantially from the version that is AVPariś 49. The list of Upaniṣads in the CVU shows a remarkable overlap with what we

⁵⁶ No AV *vedāṅga* actually seems to exist (see Griffiths 2007b: 182-183).

⁵⁷ See Sanderson (2007: 202f.), Griffiths (2007b: 183f.) and Bahulkar (1984). The five texts are 1) the Nakṣatrakalpa (= AVPariś 1), not found in Odisha, although ritual manuals do refer to a *nakṣatrakalpokta* ritual sequence (*tantra*); 2) the Vaitānakalpa, not found; 3) the Saṃhitāvidhi, better known as Kauśikasūtra, possibly known to Śrīdhara, the author of the Karmapañjikā; 4) the Āṅgirasakalpa (see below); and the Śāntikalpa (see Griffiths 2007b: 184).

⁵⁸ See Griffiths (2007b: 185).

⁵⁹ The text mentions 72 *pariśiṣtas*. On the Śaunaka *pariśiṣtas*, see Modak 1993. No collection of *pariśiṣtas* has been found in Odisha, although a number of texts that could belong to this category are found within other collections (e.g. the Caraṇavyūha or AVPariś 49 is found among the Odisha *upaniṣads*) (see Griffiths 2007b: 185f.).

⁶⁰ The given number is 18, but more titles are listed. See Griffiths (2007b: 148-161).

actually find in the common initial parts of the Upaniṣad-manuscripts that are available in Orissa” (Griffiths 2007b: 179). Besides this major difference, and some minor variations probably due to carelessness in transmission, it is likely that the two texts descend from a common source, so it is not possible to speak of two recensions (Griffiths 2007b: 162-163). The original Caraṇavyūha must have been shared by different *śākhās*.

Indeed, Griffiths’s study of the CVU has re-ignited the old debate on the affiliation of the known AV ancillary texts with the Śaunaka or the Paippalāda tradition.⁶¹ It seems likely that a number of texts, such as the Kauśikasūtra, Vaitānasūtra,⁶² the AV *prāyaścittas* and AV *pariśiṣṭas* might in fact have originally belonged to both the Śaunaka and the Paippalāda canons (see Griffiths 2004; 2007b: 186f. and *ibid.* fn. 72). The affiliation of the Gopathabrāhmaṇa (GB) has been a matter of discussion: the Paippalāda tradition knew a now lost *brāhmaṇa* text, but it is unclear whether this can be identified with the GB. Kataoka (2007) showed that the famous Kashmirian philosopher Bhaṭṭa Jayanta was a Paippalādin; therefore, his quotations of the GB in the Nyāyamañjari at least seem to prove that the GB was known to 9th-c. Kashmirian Paippalādins. Griffiths also mentions GB quotations in the Karmapañjikā, a ritual manual of the Odisha Paippalādins (see below), and still other evidence has been brought to light (see Griffiths 2007b: 179ff.). However, the traditional notion that the Paippalāda *brāhmaṇa* consisted of eight *adhyāyas* does not match with what we know of the GB. However, this information is actually only attested in the Prapañcahṛdaya, a late South Indian text, and Griffiths (2007b: 180–182) is inclined to question its reliability.

As for the ancillary texts that were actually found in the private collections of Odisha Paippalāda brahmins, three are most prominent and widespread: the Karmapañjikā, the Karmasamuccaya and the Āṅgirasakalpa.

The Karmapañjikā (KP) (see Griffiths and Sumant 2018; Griffiths 2007b: 144), authored by Śrīdhara, is a *paddhati*-type ritual manual for the performance of domestic rituals that belong to the tradition of the Odisha Paippalādins. This text, composed “during the 16th century CE, and possibly in the precise year 1589” (Griffiths and Sumant 2018: xli), is divided into two parts: the first deals with the various rites (*saṃskāra*) that a male Paippalāda brahmin must undergo during his life,⁶³ with

⁶¹ See Gaastra (1919: 14-15).

⁶² Note that an additional Paippalāda *sūtra* (as well as a *paribhāṣā*), ascribed to Paiṭhīnasi, is cited in Śrīdhara’s Karmapañjikā (Griffiths 2007b: 187). On this author, see Rotaru (2016).

⁶³ KP 10 identifies seven *saṃskāras*: *vivāho garbhakaraṇaṃ tataḥ puṃsavanaṃ tathā | jātakarma ca godānopanayanāplavanānīti ||*, “[The rituals are] marriage, rite of impregnation, rite for obtaining a male child, rite for new-born child, rite of shaving the

special focus on the marriage ritual (Griffiths and Sumant 2018: xxxi), whereas the second focuses mainly on funerary rites (Griffiths and Sumant 2018: xxxv). Arlo Griffith and Shilpa Sumant have been working for several years on a critical edition to be published in three volumes, although only the first part of book 1 has been published so far (Griffiths and Sumant 2018). Sumant, a pupil of Prof. Shrikant Bahulkar in Pune, began focussing on the Karmapañjikā while working on her doctoral dissertation (2007), a study of the development of the marriage ritual throughout the history of AV ancillary literature. She later produced numerous related publications: Sumant (2009), on the Mitādipūjā, that is, the practice of worshipping 57 deities (“Mīta, etc.”) at the start of religious ceremonies, according to the Odisha Paippalādins’ ritual manuals; Sumant (2010–11), again on the Paippalāda wedding ritual; Sumant (2010b) on the worship and iconography of Nṛsiṃha as the *iṣṭadevatā* of the Odisha Paippalādins, especially as it emerges from the KP; Sumant (2011) on the quotation of *saṃhitā mantras* in the KP and their ritual use, with attention also to the present-day oral tradition; Sumant (2017a), with a survey on the *gaṇas* (group of *mantras*) found in the KP; Sumant (2017b) on the instructions for the construction of the pavilion (*bahiḥśālā*) used for conducting domestic rituals according to the KP; and Sumant (2017c) on the ritual application of *mantras* from the PS, ŚS and ṚV versions of the Wedding Hymn, especially according to the Kauśikasūtra.

The Karmasamuccaya (see Sumant 2016; Griffiths 2007b: 145f.) is “a corpus of anonymous *prayoga*-texts used by the Paippalāda Atharvavedins of Orissa for conducting domestic rituals” (Sumant 2016: 883). It consists of three books (*pustaka*): Vratapustaka, Vivāhapustaka and Durbalakṛtya[pustaka]. Its focus is on the same *saṃskāras* treated by the KP: the first book deals with a great variety of these life-rites (Puṃsavana, Godāna, Upanayana, etc.) and related rituals (the preparation of a ritual hall, the selection of the priests, the Śāntiyudaka, etc.); the second deals with the marriage ritual in particular; and the third deals with funeral and Śraddhā rites (Sumant 2016: 885). Sumant (2010–11: 394) notes that “even today this ritual guide-book is copied in smaller sections, called *khātā*, ‘notebook’ in Oriya and is used by the priests in the performance of rituals.” A critical edition is still wanting.⁶⁴

hair, rite of initiation and bath of a student who has completed his study” (Sumant 2016: 885 fn. 10). The funeral rites are not included in this enumeration.

⁶⁴ In 2000, Umākānta Paṇḍā published a modern ritual manual, the Paippalādavivāhadisaṃskārapaddhati, on the basis of mss. containing this text (see Sumant 2016: 893), but this does not constitute a critical edition. As Sumant (2016: 893) notes, “due to the scarcity of published material, [Paṇḍā’s] book is useful to some extent for understanding the rituals. However, one must know that this book is an attempt to compose a *prayoga*-text in modern times. Though KS manuscripts are at the base of this *prayoga*, it does not give a faithful rendering of them. At several places, the author deviates from the

The Āṅgirasakalpa⁶⁵ (see Griffiths 2007b: 146f.; Bahulkar 1987; Sanderson 2007), or Abhicārakalpa, is an open corpus of texts,⁶⁶ mainly consisting of “instruction in the procedures of hostile ritual through the propitiation of post-Vedic Mantra-deities following Tantric rather than Vedic liturgical models” (Sanderson 2007: 201). Such instructions are provided in the form of answers given by the sage Āṅgiras to questions posed by the sage Pippalāda (Sanderson 2007: 201). The rituals are explicitly tailored for kings as sponsors and beneficiaries, and the rituals’ goal is the subjugation of the kings’ enemies;⁶⁷ thus, the priests involved were clearly *rājapurohitas* (Sanderson 2007: 203–204). Sanderson (2007) has provided a survey of the ms. sources, highlighted the Odia character of the corpus (as evinced from the pre-eminence of Nṛsiṃha and other pieces of evidence) and discussed the period of composition of the corpus,⁶⁸ its evolution and its distinct Tantra character.⁶⁹

In recent years, there has also been renewed attention towards the rest of the AV ancillary literature that had been traditionally associated with the ŚS, especially towards the Kauśikasūtra (KauśSū). Griffiths (2004) has collected those *mantras* quoted in the KauśSū that can be found in the PS, re-opening the debate on how much this text is indebted to the Paippalāda tradition – although it is not to be excluded that the *sūtrakāra* could have taken these *mantras* from other lost recensions or from the “undifferentiated mass of atharvanic tradition” (Gonda, cited by Griffiths 2004: 50). Julieta Rotaru has also published extensively on the KauśSū (2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2018, *forth.*) and, together with Shilpa Sumant (who herself published on the KauśSū: 2010a), is preparing a new critical

manuscripts.” Sumant (2016: 893) also mentions the existence of other ritual manuals in Odia language: the Durbalakṛtyavidhi and the Śrāddhapaddhati.

⁶⁵ According to Sanderson (2007: 203), the content of this text shows that this can’t be the same Āṅgirasakalpa that the tradition enumerates among the five AV *kalpas* (e.g. the Caraṇavyūha: see fn. 57 above), “but by taking on this title it asserts that it is; and in this capacity it adds the claim that of all the five Kalpas it is the foremost.”

⁶⁶ “The manuscripts that I have seen [...] do not transmit a single, constant work but contain varying but overlapping collections of texts” (Sanderson 2007: 201). Note that, in 2003, Umākānta Paṇḍā privately published one such ms. with the title Paippalādavaśādiṣaṭkarmapaddhati (see Sanderson 2007: 201).

⁶⁷ As an exception, Sanderson (2007: 239–254) provides the edition and translation of one text from the corpus, called Parāṅgirasavidhi, “The Procedure for the Japa of the [Mantra of the Goddess] Parā,” that originally belongs to the Trika Tantra corpus, and is “taught exclusively for the personal spiritual benefit of the priests themselves, as the means by which in spite of being ritualists (*karmī*) they may attain meditative absorption (*yogaḥ*) and final liberation (*mokṣaḥ*).”

⁶⁸ According to Sanderson (2007: 234), if the pre-eminence of Nṛsiṃha is not simply due to the hostile character of the hymns, it is possible that the bulk of the Odisha Āṅgiras material predates the 12th century CE, when the cult of Puruṣottama supplanted Nṛsiṃha as the main deity of Odia Vaiṣṇavism.

⁶⁹ Besides a Trika influence (see fn. 67 above), Sanderson identifies a Kālikula influence, and provides an edition (2007: 255–276, followed by a discussion) of the Bhadrakālīmantravidhiprakaraṇa, “the Section on the Rites of the Mantras of Bhadrakālī” [the title is given by Sanderson], which contains *mantras* by which a king can propitiate Bhadrakālī and obtain victory in battle.

edition of the text on the basis of additional ms. sources (see Rotaru and Sumant 2014). This initiative comes after the efforts of Bahulkar (1977, 1990, 1994, 1999) and other scholars in Pune, who inaugurated a new wave of studies on the Kauśū with a critical edition of Dārila's Bhāṣya (Diwekar *et al.* 1972) and Keśava's Paddhati (Limaye *et al.* 1982). Despite these new studies, the world of AV ancillary literature remains largely unexplored: careful text-critical work on yet unedited texts remains a desideratum, translations are few and old editions would greatly benefit from revisions.

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The Long-Lasting Influence of Ideological Prejudices

The Case of Ye Lingfeng (1905-1975), a Misunderstood Writer and Intellectual in Modern China

Stefania Stafutti

Through the works and some biographical issues of Ye Lingfeng (1905-1975), one of the writers of the so-called Shanghai School (*haipai*, 海派), this paper aims to offer some hints of the multi-folded bunch of prejudices which the history of modern Chinese literature is intertwined with.

To reach this goal, the following issues will be taken into consideration:

1. an analysis of Ye Lingfeng's early production, before his moving from mainland China to Hongkong - with particular reference to *The Dream of a Virgin Chunüde meng*, (处女的梦, Chunüde meng), in comparison with Ding Ling (丁玲) *Miss Sophia's Diary* (*Shafei nüshi de rij*, 莎菲女士的日记); to which a much bigger success arose;
2. a general description of the complicated issues which led inflicting on him the very unfair label of being a "traitor", moving from his clash with Lu Xun in the late The twenties and early Thirties to his "collaboration" with the Nationalist Party during the first period of his staying in Hong Kong;
3. an overview of his literary works in order to highlight his way to connect traditional and modern literary tradition, which - if prejudices were not working - could provide some suggestions to the core issue of the relationship between "classic" (feudal?) literature and the literature of New China.

Mi piace immaginare che se fossimo un laboratorio dove si agucchiano ricami e si intrecciano pizzi dedicheremmo un lavoro di aghi, fili, spolette e colori a una collega che chiude il suo percorso professionale insieme a noi. Ma, per dirla con Lu Xun, siamo "tessitori di parole": questo è il solo lavoro che - spero- sappiamo fare e questo abbiamo messo insieme, dedicando a Pinuccia un poco del tempo della nostra ricerca. Ho scelto di scrivere in inglese perché è l'inglese, oramai, la lingua franca della comunità scientifica e perché, in onore di Pinuccia, ho cercato di fare del mio meglio affinché il mio saggio non fosse un esercizio di circostanza ma potesse avere qualche utilità all'interno dell'ambito scientifico in cui lavoro. Mi sono però voluta tenere uno spazio iniziale "privato", nella mia lingua madre, lo spazio dedicato a una amica con cui condivido anche la lingua di nascita. L'ombrello oramai frusto delle "discipline orientali", che continuiamo a utilizzare per comodità, per pigrizia, forse persino per affezione, ma che non ha oramai alcun significato, ha tuttavia fatto in modo che Pinuccia ed io lavorassimo per moltissimi anni fianco a fianco, pur occupandoci di mondi molto diversi. Non abbiamo quindi condiviso il lavoro di ricerca, ma abbiamo per molti anni condiviso il lavoro burocratico, la attività di progettazione e di programmazione dello sviluppo delle nostre discipline, insomma una parte forse

meno nobile ma altrettanto necessaria del nostro lavoro. E io sarò sempre grata a Pinuccia, perché ha reso queste incombenze meno faticose di quanto troppo spesso non siano e... mi ha addolcito la vita. E non solo perché ha sempre avuto nel cassetto della sua scrivania un tesoretto di cioccolatini, zenzeri canditi e caramelle da condividere con noi, ma perché non ha mai tradito la mia certezza che – anche nella rara eventualità in cui non fossimo d'accordo – mi trovavo di fronte a una persona PER BENE, che accompagnava il proprio non comune spirito di servizio alla capacità di dipanare le matasse ingarbugliate dell'accademia con la mano paziente della moralità e del buon senso. Mi mancherà, ma la immaginerò contenta nella sua casa immersa nella natura che tanto ama, e questo continuerà ad addolcirmi le giornate. Grazie Pinu.

1. Introduction

Ye Lingfeng (1905-1975) is up to now one a rather neglected author of *haipai* (海派) - the “Shanghai school” of writers booming from the Twenties to the early Forties – in spite of the “*haipai* fever” which arose both in China and abroad from the end of the Nineties of the last century. Ye Lingfeng left China, moving to Guangzhou and then to Hong Kong, in the late Thirties (1938-1939), but this does not explain the oblivion he has been relegated; many other authors, who later enjoyed great attention, also fled to Hong Kong in those days or later. Leo Ou’fan Lee, who devoted to Ye a limited but as usual very inspiring and well documented pages, considers him as a writer of “limited technique”, who “compensated for the weakness of his fictional technique with his pointed evocations of the sites and sounds of the city based on his own familiarity – as if he, too, were playing urban dandy and *flâneur* via his fiction” (Lee 1999: 263).

My paper will not focus on the evaluation of Ye Lingfeng literary production in spite of the fact I think that Leo Ou’fan Lee evaluation is ungenerous and that Ye Lingfeng literary production deserves to be reconsidered; in this paper, anyway, I will rather try to undergo the reasons why, in spite of the prominent role Ye Lingfeng had among the Chinese intellectuals in Hong Kong till his death in 1975 and also hereafter, and notwithstanding the reputation he had enjoyed both in mainland China and Hong Kong in the first decades of the last century, he is almost totally ignored by readership in mainland China, contrary to what happened to many other authors of the Shanghai school. Among them, the most noticeable are Zhang Ailing (张爱玲, 1920-1995) and Mu Shiying (穆时英, 1912-1940). The former enjoyed a sort of “Zhang Ailing fever” in the twenty years between the end of the 20th

century and the beginning of the 21st, with the success of the movie *Lust Caution*¹, by Ang Lee, which won the Golden Lion in Venice in 2007 contributing to spread her fame; the latter is far less famous but anyway has become part of the overall picture of the “Old Shanghai” which contributed to the glamorous image of the city sold within the country and abroad in silent juxtaposition with the “back to the motherland” Hong Kong (1997) but also with the “after-Tian’anmen incident” Beijing (1989).

As we know, in China, the “reevaluation” of a writer cannot be detached by the political context: Mu Shiying died very young and was probably killed by a Guomindang agent, so that his dramatic death fed the never proved rumours that he was a two-faced secret agent; this biographic element, together with some features within his novels, which somehow show his concern about social inequality, helps to understand his victory against the political prejudice which for a long while labelled the “Shanghai-school” as “decadent” (*tuipei*, 颓废).

As for Zhang Ailing the reasons of her fortune would deserve some more analysis, and in my opinion it is connected with a sort of “invention” of Zhang Ailing as a “romantic character”, fitting with the simultaneous invention of the “Shanghai myth” which was carried out within the last years of the 20th century. Of course, I am not taking into any consideration the literary value of Zhang Ailing's works, as I am moving from the assumption that the “literary value” is often not enough for promoting a writer in China. In the case of Zhang Ailing, by the way, the biographical element of her (short-lasting) marriage with Hu Lancheng (胡兰成, 1906-1981), which seems to have ended because of his reiterative adultery, could be enough to keep her in the realm of the writers who deserve to be forgotten. Hu was a Vice Minister of the Ministry of Propaganda in the Japanese-supported government in Nanjing, which was created after the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937 and was led by Wang Jingwei (汪精卫, 1883-1944), whom the current narratives regard as a traitor of his motherland. In spite of this “black mark” on her reputation, and although she left China to Hong Kong and then to the United States, she has been regarded with much less suspicion than Ye Lingfeng, to whom the Chinese critics have been quite severe if not unfair.

¹ The movie is taken from the short story *Se jie* (色戒 Abstain from sex), written in 1950.

2. Was Ye Lingfeng a “decadent” writer? Sha Fei vs. Sha Mei

Why Ye Lingfeng has been often simply brushed off as a “decadent writer”² if not a traitor for a long while after his death in 1975? Does he “deserve” these labels?

I will try to answer these questions taking into account two different issues:

a) the major mismatch between some of his works and some similar production by other Authors, with particular reference to Ding Ling’s (丁玲) *Miss Sophia’s Diary* (*Shafei nüshi de rij*, 莎菲女士的日记), which I will compare with Ye’s *The Dreams of a Virgin* (处女的梦, *Chunü de meng*, 1928);

b) the role played by some biographic elements, with special regard to Ye’s clash with Lu Xun in the last years of Ye’s staying in China (end of the Twenties and beginning of the Thirties) and his alleged close relationship with Japanese government in the early Forties, during the Japanese occupation of the British Protectorate.

I am cagily suggesting in my paper that if a sort a long-lasting prejudice against Ye Lingfeng were not working, his literary production would have been somehow even useful in helping the so-called new literature to build up new and original ties with the literature of the past, which was a major issue for the Chinese intellectuals in those days, no matter which political battlefield they were belonging to.

It is to be pointed out that the label of “decadent writer” is at present questioned or overcome by several scholars in mainland China, some of them openly arguing about the morality of his works. But, at the same time, a sort of over-cautious attitude is not infrequent also among those who apprise Ye Lingfeng’s literary works. In 2011, when the Shanghai school had since quite a while already gained its place within the Chinese literature of the first decades of the 20th century, Wang Airong writes an interesting article³ underling the importance of the psychological analysis of the characters

² See the speech Lu Xun (鲁迅) gave to the Research Association for Social Sciences (Shehui kexue yanjiuhui, 社会科学研究会), on August 20th, 1928: “Art and Literature in Shanghai: a Glance“, (“Shanghai wenyizhi yi pie, 上海文艺之一瞥), in Lu Xun (1973, vol. 4: 279), where he referred to Ye Lingfeng as a “decadent” painter belonging to a new generation of “hooligans” (xin de liumang huajia, 新的流氓画家). Ye Lingfeng moved to Shanghai from his birthplace, Nanjing, at the beginning of the Twenties. We know that he enrolled in the Shanghai Professional Institute of Arts at (上海美术专科学校, Shanghai Meishu zhuanke xueyuan) at the beginning of the Twenties, he basically learned Western art, but he never graduated; at the age of 19, he was already active as an editor and young write in the Weekly Journal of the Creation Society (创造周报, Chuangzao zhoubao).

³ See Wang (2011: 61). In the same year, an article by Gu (2011) published in a periodical under the control of the Ministry of Education was still sticking to the idea that Ye Lingfeng writings are basically superficial, narrow-minded and even “vulgar in descriptions” (Wang 2011: 103), with an evaluation much less generous than Li Yeping (李夜平), who early in 1990 was

in Ye Lingfeng's works and the writer's mindful approach to Freud's theories, but, at the same time, at the end of the paper the scholar points out that:

The creative works of Ye Lingfeng do use multiple and not uniform patterns: he makes use of the "montage" (蒙太奇) techniques and puts a lot of attention on time and space dislocation. *In spite of the fact that we cannot ignore the negative aspects of his "ideological system as a whole", and we should not be seduced by his tendency in concentrating on the dual nature of his characters and their sexual and material desires, thereby making his works losing any positive social meaning and aesthetical value, nevertheless, if we take as unquestionable the sole point that "literature is for the sake of understanding human beings" and consider psychoanalysis as a tool which art can use for digging out a person's inner world, for portraying the multi-dimensional subconscious features of human beings and as a sort of preferred medium to enrich the expressive means of the realism, we have then to admit that psychoanalysis has provided both a brand new esthetical train of thought and new artistic concepts and we have to confer Ye Lingfeng the status of master of psychological analysis in the history of literature.*"

To question this label, I would take into consideration one of the most representative among Ye Lingfeng short stories, *The Dreams of a Virgin* (*Chunüde meng*, 处女的梦), which he accomplished in November 1928, and compare it with Ding Ling (丁玲) *Miss Sophia's Diary* (*Shafei nüshi de rij*, 莎菲女士的日记), a well-known short story published for the first time in February 1928, some months earlier than Ye Lingfeng one's, on the monthly journal *The Short Story Magazine* (*小说月报*, *Xiaoshuo yuebao*), which achieved a resounding success and whose main character, Sophia, "has remained an icon in modern Chinese literature" (Wong 2014: 116). The reputation of Ding Ling character (and story) relies on the fact that critics regard the *Diary* as "boldly expos[ing] the psyche of a modern Chinese woman who is tormented by her erotic desires..."; for this very reason the *Diary* is considered as a milestone of the female literature in China: 'the fact that the story is an internal monologue by and about a young woman, written by a female author, is often applauded as the emergence of "Chinese feminism" (Wong 2014: 116)⁴.

already labelling Ye Lingfeng literature as "romantic scripts in an ivory tower" but was anyway acknowledging its literary value (Li 1990), and even its importance as a "manifesto" to promote "the right of loving" versus old moral principles.

⁴ This article, while focusing on the "colonial fantasy embodied by Ling Jishi, 凌吉士, the young handsome man from Singapore and offering a new and interesting perspective to read the story, also gives a general overview of the most qualified literature on the "feminist" interpretation of Ding Ling's story.

Besides the time of publication, Ye Lingfeng story has a lot of points in common with Ding Ling's one: the main character in both stories is an eighteen years old girl who spends most of the time in her bedroom (if not lying on their beds), Shafei/Sophia living in Beijing and Ye Lingfeng's character living in Shanghai. Ding Ling's character's name Shafei (莎菲), is usually understood as a personal name coming from the West, a sort of *wailaici* (外来词) but it could be read as Sha (莎), family name and Fei (菲), a personal name. The name of the main character in Ye Lingfeng's novel is Sha Mei (莎璜), and Sha here works as a family name; however, the two characters' names are quite similar. Ding Ling's Shafei is in poor health, Sha Mei is not, but the two girls seem to enjoy a sort of "seclusion" which allows them feeding their *reverie*⁵ and which confers to both the stories a sort of claustrophobic atmosphere; they both communicate a lot by letters, both have a sort of "secret lover" they dream about, and both are facing the turmoil arising from a sexual desire they are not able to cope with. Both the stories are told using the first person, Shafei is a "writer" in the sense that she makes use of a diary to describe her life and the diary itself constitutes the novel; *The Dreams of a Virgin* is not a diary, but Sha Mei seems to have the ambition to become a writer and this element is crucial to understand her fascination for Mr. Tanhua (昙华君), a young writer of some success to whom she addresses her letters and sends one of her works. Interestingly enough, anyway, the first chapter's title of *The dreams...* is "Diary of Sha Mei" and the title of the last one is: "Diary of Tan Huajun". The core of Ding Ling's story is a quest for love which is not but the childish pursuit of a sexual experience which she thinks will drive her to the world of the grown-up people. The quest for love is also the as "core business" in Ye Lingfeng's story, but Sha Mei childish attitude takes the shape of a radical rejection of sex as something which will force her to relinquish her "world of dreams"⁶. On her way to the bookshop, in the hope of meeting her beloved hero, she reacts with a sort a revulsion to the (ambiguous) reading suggestion from a peddler:

A shabby-looking peddler asked me in a whisper if I wanted to buy a recently published "History of sexuality". I stared at him and he left without saying anything more. I happened to read some books on this the topic in the past, but I cannot find any interest in this kind of reading. I do not understand why some of my previous schoolmates were plunged in these readings round the clock. One of them, who had a big mouth, was

⁵ The term "dream", 梦, meng, appears in the title of Ye Lingfeng's story, in the title of some of its chapters, and quite frequently within the text.

⁶ On this "swinging between dream and reality" see Xiao (2005).

mocking me saying that as I do not have any experience, I cannot understand this kind of literature. Is it true? I hope never undergo this experience, I hope to let my heart soaking in love forever. I hope it will be never invaded and harassed by the demon of sex.

(一个衣服褴褛的小贩低问我可要买一本新出的性史⁷。.....我红着脸向他瞪了一眼，他才一声不响的走开。以前的性史我是看过的，但我对于这类的书感不到很大的兴趣。我始终不明白以前的几个同学为什么那样昼夜不离的喜爱这类的书。一个刁嘴的同学笑我第一层爱的经验还没有经过，当然不会了解这类的书。真的么？我但愿我永远不要有这样的经验！我但愿我的心永远浸在爱的领域里。永远不要让性的恶魔来侵扰) (Ye 1997: 41).

Her Prince Charming was perfectly fitting with the ideal image of men which was common among the young girls of the newly-born Shanghai bourgeoisie at least partially influenced by Western patterns:

My ideal man should have a gentle temper and a healthy, strong build; he should have an iron fist and a velvet heart...

(我理想中的男性，是要有温柔的性情，健强的体格，有男性的手腕而具女性心肠。) (Ye 1997: 35).

At the same time he should also be good in appeasing her (and eventually her parents'!) concerns and fears for the future in those troubled days⁸:

I do not like politicians or scientists, to get married with these sort of people would not bring any happiness to a woman

(我不喜欢政治家和科学家，和这些人结合都不是女性的幸福。) (Ye 1997: 35).

The description of Sophia's "object of desire" is not very different:

How can I describe the charm of this man? Of course, his tall stature, his delicate white face, his soft hear are enough to dazzle anyone, but he moreover has an elegance which you cannot describe nor grasp, but which burns your heart away.

他，这生人，我将怎样去形容他的美呢？固然，他的颀长的身躯，白嫩的面庞，薄薄的小嘴唇，柔软头发，都足以闪耀人的眼睛，但他还另外有一种说不出，捉不到的丰仪来煽动你的心⁹

⁷ (Of course, a "pest" cannot but being ragged and shabby!)

⁸ This additional remark is actually not crucial in the general economy of Ye Lingfeng's description and in my opinion mirrors the difficulty of Ye Lingfeng himself to directly being "politically engaged", as we will see later.

⁹ <https://www.kanunu8.com/book3/8372/186097.html> (February 20th, 2019)

As Ka F. Wong points out, he has an “exotic” allure, being a Singaporean Chinese. The fascination for “exotic” is there also in Ye Lingfeng story, but in a wittier way: Sha Mei likes the youngsters who wear Western suits which seem to be a must-have for *à la mode* young men in Shanghai, even if she tells us that her father often alerts her by saying that those “bandits” causing riots and troubles on the streets will never snatch young people in Western suits: penny-less and boring people, who for the most part possess nothing else but the Western suit they wear on (父亲 曾说拦路的强盗向来是不劫西装青年的, 因为西装青年除了一身衣服之外大多是不再有, 常常是穷而无聊, *Fuqin ceng shuo lanlude qiangdao xianglai shi bu jie xizhuang qingniande, yinwei xizhuang qingnian chule yishen yifu zhiwai daduo shi bu zai you qian, changchang shi qiong erqie wuliao*). Ye Lingfeng, who is himself deeply interested in Western culture and art and seems to enjoy looking like a *dandy*, is anyway aware that “Western-ized” young men are not always welcome by young ladies’ fathers and are much less well-off than they pretend to be. He confers then to Sha Mei a sort of consciousness that appearances can be deceptive. On the contrary, Sophie does not show any critical attitude when looking at Ling Jishi. Both the male characters have features which are good to feed the two girls’ romantic dream, no matter if it has or not direct sexual implications; this reverie anyway helps Sha Mei and “Sha Fei” to remain detached from reality, which Sha Mei fear, as it breaks dreams, and which Sha Fei – with some compliance – does not dear to long for, as she is suffering from tuberculosis.

SHA MEI:

It's true, I do not have any direct experience. I know from books and other people... As a matter of fact "actualizing" is the most ruthless word. As far as you "actualize", as far you take this turning, all your beautiful dreams will disappear.

(我自己是一点没有经验的, 仅是从旁人的口口中和书上才知道, 实现实在是残酷的一个名辞。一踏上实在的路, 什么美好的梦儿都要消灭).

....

(什么是爱, 什么是男性, 这些都与结婚和性爱一样都是我不知道而且也不愿知道的问题) (Ye 1997: 38).

SHA FEI:

Day and night I am constantly dreaming of things that would enable me not to have regrets when dying. I imagine myself lying on a bed in a sumptuous room....

无论在白天, 在夜晚, 我都在梦想可以使我没有遗憾在我死的时候的一些事情。我想能睡在一间极精致的卧房的睡榻上。。。

On the basis of these remarks on the two short stories, which have a lot in common, I cannot but be at least partially puzzled by the general understanding of the Sophie character as a sort of icon on the way of women's liberation, while Sha Mei has been forgotten. Ding Ling is a female writer, while Ye Lingfeng is not, and her courage in writing about female sexual turmoil is somehow remarkable for those days, but if we look at the characters of the two stories Sha Fei/ Sophie is by no means more "progressive" than Sha Mei and her way to openly talk about "sex" and about her own physical desire does not bring along any gender consciousness. If compared with Sophie, Sha Mai is much more farseeing and more aware of the tricky implications the "Western" model of women liberation brings along; she is fascinated by those fashionable young men, but she keeps at a safe distance:

Ah, ah, penny-less and boring, you're simply demons disguising yourselves in a Western suit, who simply take us as everyday tools to kill time!

(啊啊，穷而无聊你们竟拿我们来作每天消磨时间的工具了，好一个西装里面的灵魂！)

At the same time she can question her father's opinions:

But not all the young men who wear western suits are poor and boring, you cannot tar everybody with the same brush.

(着西装的青年男性也未必人人都是穷而无聊，我也不能一笔抹杀) (Ye 1997: 42).

And, moreover, she shows some "gender consciousness" when revolting against those bothering her on her way home:

These slick and lecherous youngsters are quite annoying! I hope there will be one day when women can also be brave enough to walk after you the same way and make you experience how it tastes.

(这些浮滑的青年真讨嫌！但愿有一天女性也会大胆的跟在你们的后面，让你们来尝尝这个中的滋味) (Ye 1997: 42).

My point is of course not that, in order to build up a sort of new women's "prototype," Ye Lingfeng's Sha Mei should have chosen rather than Ding Ling's Sha Fei /Sophie but I think that a sort of "positive" prejudice towards the female writer was working while choosing Ding Ling's character – in spite of the sharp criticism Ding Ling also faced at the very beginning of the Forties and in some other moments of her long career-. On the contrary, Ye Lingfeng character was never taken into

consideration as a strong “negative” prejudice was constantly working while evaluating Ye Lingfeng overall production and career.

3. Attacking Lu Xun: a clash with long-lasting consequences

This prejudice can be traced back to the clash he had with Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881-1936) in 1928. This fight is imbedded in the harsh debate “on the nature of revolutionary literature,” which had already started in 1927 and which “in the following two years embroiled virtually all the writers and critics gathered in Shanghai” (Denton and Hockx 2008: 126). The Creation Society, who had the young Ye Lingfeng among his active actors, had a prominent part in the debate. At the very beginning of 1928, Feng Naichao (冯乃超, 1901-1985), a young poet just back from Japan who was close to the Creation Society, wrote an essay advocating “the intensification of the political movement by the masses” and claimed that “Chinese literature since then had largely vented the misgivings of a displaced petite bourgeoisie [...] In particular he accused Lu Xun of escapism and indulgence in self-pity during a period of social transformation. “Lu Xun the old man” enjoyed nothing better than [...] “contentedly surveying, with intoxicated eyes and from the top floor of a murky wine shop, life outside the window”¹⁰.

In May 1928, Ye Lingfeng had already given up with his studies at the Shanghai Professional Institute of Arts and since 1925 was a young fellow of the Creation Society (创造社小伙计, *Chuangzaoshe xiaohuojì*) and the chief editor of many journals which had strong ties with the Creation Society. The bi-monthly *Gebi* (戈壁, *The Gobi Desert*) was among these periodicals. In the issue n.5, May 1928 Ye Lingfeng published a sort of cartoon drawn by he himself which was transparently “quoting” Feng Naichao’s article. The title of the drawing was “Mr Lu Xun” and Ye Lingfeng provides his sarcastic description¹¹: “Lu Xun, with his two-faced visage, wielding his past successes, waving his “literary weapons” while hiding behind a jar of wine, is resisting to the even-so-coming external aggression.”

¹⁰ Feng Naichao (冯乃超), “Yishu yu shehui shenghuo” (艺术与社会生活, Art and social life), *Wenhua pipan* (文化批, Cultural Critique) 1928/1; quoted in Denton and Hockx (2008: 127).

¹¹“鲁迅,阴阳脸子老人, 挂着他已往的战绩, 躲在酒缸的后面挥着他“艺术的武器”, 在抵御着纷然而来的外侮。”



Fig. 1. "Mr Lu Xun," The Gobi Desert 1928/5.

The mockery is harsh, but it is perfectly in line with the tone of the debate among the literary societies in those days. On club and the cudgels of the drawing there are not only the titles of some of the best known among the Lu Xun's works, but also some other snarky quips, as for example the sentence "Save the old man!", which openly refers to the last sentence of the widely known *Kuangren riji* (Diary of a mad man, 狂人日记, 1918): "Save the children!" The term *weiquan* (威权), "authoritarianism" appears on one of these "weapons" and seems to give vent to a certain degree of intolerance shared by the young writers belonging to the Creation Society against the attitude of

many writers of the former generation, and mainly against Lu Xun – who was the most prominent but not the only one they seemed to be intolerant of. The most “engaged” authors were probably perceived as regularly hazing the new comers. If, indeed, the youngsters did not prove to be very respectful, on the other side is also true that Lu Xun did not show any indulgence towards their juvenile excesses; in spite of his strong criticism against the “feudal morality” and the old values like *xiao* (孝), which clipped the wings of young people, he did not spare his huffy vitriol to their infatuation towards Western “lifestyle” as a whole. Within two letters, both written on August 10th 1928, he was referring to Ye Lingfeng and some others so-called “revolutionary writers,” as people regularly hanging out at Western-style coffee-shops, who could not but necessarily be “young and pretty-looking, with white teeth and vermilion lips (a transparent metaphor for their lack of true revolutionary spirit)” (革命文学家，要年轻貌美，齿白唇红。。。), “gathering together either loudly presenting their viewpoint or quietly plunging into their deep thoughts” (他们有的在那里高谈着他们的主张，有的在那里默默沉思...). He went even further openly attacking those whose fame of being “revolutionary” was relying on the founding or sponsoring of some new journals,¹² on their biblio-mania (Ye Lingfeng himself) or on their habit to invite people for an ice-cream or to present silk garments to those they would like to please. The first letter¹³ is then slipping along the slope of some reprehensible gossip while inducing the idea that their ultimate goal is to pull some dancing-girls or some maidservants (and the cursing them by the means of a very “class-oriented” and aristocratic remark!) and the last part of the paper turns even livid when explaining why he does not like frequenting coffee-shops:

First of all, I do not like coffee, I think that's something for Western people, but maybe this is my mistake, a “generation mistake”. I do not like it, still, green tea is much better." (一，我是不喝咖啡的，我总觉得这是洋大人所喝的东西[但这也许是我的«时代错误»],不喜欢，还是绿茶好)。

The polemics bring Lu Xun so far to make him showing a sort of chauvinist attitude in sharp contrast with his (selective) interest to Western culture and, at the same time, shows us his temper. The second letter is still quite sharp but at least takes into account some theoretical issue, as the theme of

¹² Probably referring to still neglected poet, writer, editor and publisher Shao Xunmei (邵洵美, 1906 -1968), one among the many Lu Xun clashed with.

¹³ See “Revolutionary coffee-shops” (Geming kafeiguan, “革命咖啡馆”), in Lu (1983: 125-126).

the correspondence was dealing with what should be considered revolutionary literature (革命文学, *geming wenxue*), and the difference between “revolutionary literature” and “literature revolution” (文学革命, *wenxue geming*)¹⁴. Anyway, some room is left to label *The Gobi Desert*, published by the “young revolutionary artist Ye Lingfeng” as a one man’s business (独唱的戈壁, *duchangde Gebi*), that is with no influence in the realm of Shanghai literature.

The young Ye Lingfeng does not keep aside and in November 1929¹⁵ he publishes an unfinished and quite daring short story, *The Autobiography of a depressed* (穷愁的自传, *Qiongchou de zizhuan*). At the beginning of the story, the poor Wei Riqing (魏日青), after having spent a very uncomfortable night laying on the carpet of his even more uncomfortable attic (亭子间, *tingzijian*)¹⁶ where rain is leaking from the roof, gets up early and moves to the balcony to defecate. No toilet paper in such a poor environment and Mr Wei decides to rip up three pages from a second-hand copy of *Shouting* (呐喊, *Nahan*), a quite famous work by Lu Xun he had bought in the previous days...

Lu Xun does of course not appreciate the mockery and on August 12th, 1931, during a talk at the Research Association of Social Sciences¹⁷ gives vent to his rage labelling Ye Lingfeng as a “new bandit painter”(新的流氓画家, *xinde liumang huajia*) - with reference to Ye Lingfeng work as illustrator of many journals and publications of the Creation Society - a “talented bandit” (才子+流氓, *caizi+liumang*), and a “decadent” (颓废, *tuipei*)¹⁸ artist, as Ye Lingfeng proves to be very fond of H.Beardsley whose works he is influenced by. Lu Xun cannot deny that Ye Lingfeng also portrayed some “proletarian” (普罗列塔利亚, *puluolietaliya*), but their risen fists were bigger than their heads, which does not fit with the principle of depicting the reality as it is! Interestingly enough, the essay takes into consideration and discusses many different and quite “learned” issues, some of which are hot in the literary debate those days, as for example the so-called “mandarin-duck and butterfly

¹⁴See “Anecdotes from the world of letters” (“文坛的掌故”, *Wentan de zhanggu*), in Lu (1983: 128-132).

¹⁵ Published for the first time in the journal *Xiandai xiaoshuo* (现代小说, *Modern Narrative*), vol.3, n.2. See Ye (1997: 303).

¹⁶ The penny-less writer living in a poor attic was a topos, in Shanghai those days, both in literature and cinema, but also in real life. Some of them have even be labelled as “attic-writers” (亭子间作家, *tingzijian zuojia*). Usually, these intellectuals were left-oriented, but maybe it is not the case for Wei Riqing, as Lu Xun was regarded with great respect from these “progressive” writers, which is not the case here, or, if it were, it could sound even more offensive!

¹⁷ “A glimpse on art and literature in Shanghai” (“上海文艺之一瞥”, *Shanghai wenyizhi yi pie*) in Lu (1983: 276-294).

¹⁸ This is probably the first time Ye Lingfeng works are connected with the idea of a “decadent” production, but this prejudice worked for a long while.

literature" (鸳鸯蝴蝶派, *yuanyang hudie pai*) in connection with Hu Shi's (胡适) play *The Greatest Event in Life* (终身大事, *Zhongshen dashi*), but Lu Xun completely loses his temper when going back to Ye Lingfeng. Talking about Ye Lingfeng understanding of "revolutionary literature" he states: "The well-read Mr Ye Lingfeng, while depicting his revolutionary writer, says that he makes use of my *Nahan* any time he goes to the toilet, in order to rub his ass, no wonder then that he can stay at the back of those so-called democratic literati's ass." (Lu 1983: 285). (文学家叶灵凤先生，他描写革命家，彻底道每次上茅厕时候都用我的 *呐喊* 去揩屁股，现在却竟会莫名其妙的跟在所谓民族主义文学家屁股后面了). This harsh debate witnesses the violence of the polemics among the intellectuals during the first decades of the 20th century, but in some cases these clashes will cast a dark shadow on a writer's reputation, particularly when he happen to dispute with some *monstre sacré* of the pantheon of literati established by Communist China later on.

This is the case of Ye Lingfeng, in spite the fact Lu Xun and Ye Lingfeng even worked together to introduce the xylography artist Frans Masereel (1889-1972) in China, whose freshly published albums each of them wrote a preface; Lu Xun also took advantage more than once of Ye Lingfeng good social connections which seemed to be relevant in order to overcome some difficulties Lu Xun met in organizing his famous xylography exhibition in 1935.¹⁹

After his moving to Hong Kong in 1938. Ye Lingfeng seems not to like so much to raise this topic and when questioned about it, he does not say too much. This seem to be a constant attitude of the mature Ye Lingfeng and Ye Lingfeng's family, who do not spend too much time to dissipate rumours about Ye Lingfeng integrity²⁰ In spite of his juvenile arrogance, later on, he usually avoided any polemics, but we can understand from some indirect references that he felt sorry about his attitude towards Lu Xun.²¹ The most relevant testament on this topic comes from an article by Qiang Yingliang (强英良) who quotes somebody stating that during the last period of his life in his essay "In between Lu Xun and Ye Lingfeng," from which we know that during the last period of his life, when

¹⁹ See on this topic a short but interesting article by Guo Lingli (Guo 2014).

²⁰ See Liu (1988: 25). Su (柳苏). The translation of the title is quite challenging as it is a play on words based on the fact that the personal name of Ye Lingfeng can be translated as "soul of phoenix"; it is a nom de plume, the official name of the writer being Li Linfeng (李林风), which echoes the personal name of his first wife, Guo Linfeng (郭林凤).

²¹ See Luo (2003), who quotes an essay by Ye Lingfeng written in the Sixties, on the "people of the third kind" (第三种人, *disanzhongren*), namely those who were not communist nor anti-communist, dealing with Du Heng (杜衡, 1907-1965), who fled to Taiwan from mainland China in spite having being a Party member and leader, in which there is a hint about this issue.

some friends were again asking about these old staff, he could not but smile, without offering too much explanation, but simply saying that he went to pay visit to Lu Xun's grave and silently expressed his kind feeling to him.²²

What for sure harmed Ye Lingfeng much more than this old quarrel was the fact that in the edition of the *Complete Works of Lu Xun* (鲁迅全集), published in China in 1957, it came out that “during the war of resistance against Japan, Ye Lingfeng turned into a “traitor scholar” (汉奸文人, *hanjian wenren*). The shameful calumny was not there anymore in the following edition, coming out in 1981.

4. An “informer” to keep informed about: the unfair destiny of the patriot Ye Lingfeng

Ye Lingfeng left Shanghai at the beginning of 1938, moving to Guangzhou. In March same year he was among those who assumed the office of resuming the publication of 救亡日报 (*Jiawang ribao*, The Salvation Daily) in Guangzhou, together with Xia Yan (夏衍 1900-1995) and other people fled to Guangzhou from Shanghai. The role of Ye Lingfeng in the editorial board of the newspaper is almost totally neglected in the sources from mainland China. *The Salvation Daily* was a newspaper jointly supported by Guomindang and Chinese Communist Party and published in Shanghai from August 24th, 1937, to promote the resistance against Japan. Due to the occupation of Shanghai by the Japanese, the newspaper stopped its publication on November 22, 1937 and moved to Guangzhou, where it was kept in life till October 21, the same year. When Guangzhou also felt under the control of the Japanese army, Ye Lingfeng moved definitively to Hong Kong, where, in spite of the distance from Shanghai, “he already had his fans” (远在香港也有他的仰慕者, “*yuan zai Xianggang ye you tade yangmuzhe*”)²³.

²² “In between Lu Xun and Ye Lingfeng” (Zai Lu Xun yu Ye Lingfeng zhi jian, 在鲁迅与叶灵凤之间), in Lu Xun yanjiu yuekan (鲁迅研究月刊, Research on Lu Xun - Monthly), June 1992: 53. Strangely enough, the quotation Zhang Yingliang is referring to (footnote n.17) is missing at the end of the text, whose notes leap from n.16 to n.18. I was not yet able to detach the source.

²³ I am grateful to prof. Fan Sinpiu (樊善标, Hong Kong transcription of the name, used by the author himself), from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, from whom I benefitted the privilege of reading the article I am quoting hereby, which prof. Fan has not yet published. Most of the information on Ye Lingfeng early staying in Hong Kong come from his article: “Art, Literature and the War of Resistance. A side survey of Ye Lingfeng as editor-in-chief of «The Foundation Daily - The wood of worlds [insert] »” (Wenyi yu kangzhan - Ye Lingfeng zhubian Xianggang «Libao- Yanlin» cemiao guanqia, 文艺与抗战-叶灵凤主编香港«立报-言林»的侧面观察).

As Fan Sinpin points out “as British authorities were neutral with the conflict, [in 1937] Hong Kong was not affected by the war and was a good resort for those running away from upheaval.” Ye Lingfeng had already left Shanghai at the beginning of 1938 and in March same year he assumed his office in Hong Kong. Even if in this paper I will not go into details of his *hou ban sheng* (后半生), “the second part of his life” – to quote a very inspiring article by Zong Lan (宗兰),²⁴ I cannot avoid scrutinizing the first years of Ye Lingfeng staying in Hong Kong, and particularly the period after Japanese occupation of the city in 1941, as the shameful accusation to have been a traitor is rooted in these years and probably relies on some events which were unveiled by the controversial but very important article Liu Su wrote in 1988. Based on a short autobiographical piece by the Hong Kong “finance king” Hu Hanhui (胡汉辉),²⁵ Liu Su unveiled an episode Ye Lingfeng himself did never talk about. After having moved to Hong Kong, Ye Lingfeng worked for the *Sing Tao Daily* (星岛日报) from March 1939 up to his retirement. He was introduced to the Sing Dao media group by Dai Wangshu (戴望舒), his friend and companion, who had moved to Hong Kong some time in advance. After some time he took over the responsibility of the newspaper supplement *Constellation* (Xingzuo/星座) from Dai’s hands and *Constellation* became somehow his “one man’s business, as he ran it all his life long and it disappeared after Ye Lingfeng retirement (Luo 1986: 125). During the so-called “three-years-and-eight-months” period of Japanese occupation the newspaper was changed the name in *Xiangjiang ribao* (香江日报), *The Fragrant River Daily*, and Ye Lingfeng continued working there while also working in the *Datong gongsi* (大同公司), Datong Company, a publishing company directly ran by the Japanese Ministry of Culture. For this reason, he was got in touch by the Guomindang (国民党), and asked to do some clandestine work behind the enemy’s line, collecting information on Japanese cultural activities and printed material spread in sized Hong Kong, but also on the Hong Kong cultural life itself. Standing on Hu Hanhui memories, Ye Lingfeng did this job for around one year, and Hu

²⁴ This name standing for Luo Fu (罗孚). The article has been published on 人物 (Personage), n.1, 1986; the complete title reads: “The second part of Ye Lingfeng’s life” (叶灵凤后半生, Ye Lingfeng hou bansheng).

²⁵ Hu Hanhui (1922-1985), the so-called “king of banking and finance in Hong Kong”. A Li (阿离). 2016. (真金不镀, 情义常存 “Real gold cannot be overlaid, the ties of friendship cannot be cut. Remembering the King of Finance Hu Hanhui” (Zhenjin bu du, qingyi chang cun. Yi Xianggang jinwang Hu Hanhui, 真金不镀, 情义常存. 忆香港金王胡汉辉), in Hu Hanhui (胡汉辉), *Xianggang huangjin shichang* (香港黄金市场, *The Gold Market in Hong Kong*), Hong Kong, Sanlian shudian: 32-33. I am deeply grateful to prof. Xiao Si (小思) who provided me with this reference.

himself was asked to offer him some support (配合叶灵凤, *peihe Ye Lingfeng*). Liu Su was rather close to Ye's family and his article bear a quite devoted tone, to mention the Guomindang issues seems even to cause him some discomfort, as if openly linking Ye Lingfeng to the Nationalist Party could still bring some harm to his memory and spoil once again his image in mainland China, whose Hong Kong was becoming closer and closer. For this reason, he probably tries to minimize the event, naively questioning the verb *peihe*, which in his opinion suggests a very minor and episodic role of Ye Lingfeng.

But an article published in the monthly journal *Nanbeiji* (南北极, South and Nord poles) two years later provided some files from Japanese archives which definitely witness that Ye Lingfeng did this job and was even paid 50 yuan pro month for it (Zhu 1990). The Japanese discovered the trick and Ye Lingfeng was imprisoned (1942).²⁶ It is quite interesting and offers some hints to Ye Lingfeng personality the fact that, after the end of the war, Ye Lingfeng never mentioned to have been imprisoned for the sake's of his love for motherland and patriotic feelings, not even when China labelled him as a traitor.²⁷ And this is even more remarkable as his imprisonment happened only a few months later than Dai Wangshu was caught in prison, but everybody knew about the latter, no one knew about the former. The consciousness that Ye Lingfeng was a patriot was anyway well spread. Many knew, for example, just to quote a minor issue, that he was the one who paid a visit to the lonely grave of the young female writer Xiao Hong (萧红, 1911-1942), bringing her a bunch of tea from Hongshan, but what is, of course, more important is that – together with many others and as far as it was allowed by the times – he kept constant relationships with many prominent intellectuals from continental China, also after the foundation of PRC. But all the pieces of evidence we can rely

²⁶ I do not have (yet) the precise date, but it is for sure in 1942, as this happened a few months later than Dai Wangshu's imprisonment, which took place at the end of 1941.

²⁷ As Liu Su states: "Ye Lingfeng was not a fighter for the sake of his ideals, he was simply a good fellow" ("...他不是志士, 只是有良心的人"; Liu 1988: 25). This psychological feature does by no means prevent him having his personality, ideas and consequent behavior, but he probably did not see any heroism in been imprisoned, but rather considering this experience as an attack to his dignity as a human being. I make this remark based on a rather unknown fact which occurred to him in August 1926, when he was based in Shanghai and working for the Creation Society. Due to the accusation of being a supporter of the Northern Expedition (北伐战争, 1926-1927), he was arrested with some other members of the literary society and put in jail. All the group was released within a few days, but Ye Lingfeng was somehow shocked by this experience: "Even if I did not really suffer...I was in a dark room together with some 60-70 people whom I did not know, most of whom were naked and whose skin was stinky due to the lacking of a proper shower since a few days: well, I really could not bear all this!... Then those who really suffered hardships before I came to my mind and I felt ashamed. Oh, friends, you who by mouth are rising the signboard of revolution, I'd like you to try it!" (see Li Guangyu 2003: 40-41).

on, show that Ye Lingfeng and Ye Lingfeng's family did not like to go back to those days' memories. The only information provided by Liu Su in his article, which the family reacted to denying it deals with an invitation Ye Lingfeng had possibly received from the Japanese Government to go to Tokyo for attending a conference on cultural issues. The family stated clearly that Ye Lingfeng never went to Tokyo and the press did an indirect account of this retraction by an article written a few months later in the supplement of *Wenyi bao* (文艺报, The Journal of Letters and Art; Jiang 1988: 8).

What we can take for granted now is that there was nothing infamous in Ye Lingfeng's behaviour and that the times were quite hard and full of contradictions. In April 1941, while asking him to collaborate, the Guomindang Censorship was signalling *The Red Angel* (红天使, Hong tianshi), a short story Ye Lingfeng had written in 1930, in its lists of proscription.²⁸ The dangerousness of the work relied on the fact that, in the opinion of the zealous officer who compiled the list, it was "strengthening the class consciousness and advocating the class struggle" (强调阶级意识, 鼓吹阶级斗争). I guess he never read the story, whose main male character is Ding Jianhe (丁健鹤), a not convincing "revolutionary chap," is involved in a four-sided love affair by his young and neurotic sister-in-law. The story ends up into a tragedy, as the girl commits suicide and, even if the plot deals very marginally with revolution, Ye Lingfeng takes the chance to express his distance from possible revolution's spell.²⁹ In this respect, the most interesting issue deals with his usage of the image of the sun in the novel, which seems both ironic and vaguely hopeless as we know the story turns into a tragedy. Ye Lingfeng had an educational background in the field of arts, and here he proves to be totally aware of rising sun's metaphoric meaning for Marxist revolutionaries: the just married couple stands in front of the rising sun, on their boat-trip to Shanghai, and the narrator's voice gives vent to their feeling "Long live to the Red Angel [i.e. the sun]" he screams at the end, but we know that his story does not have a happy end:

²⁸ See Wu (2013: 270). I am deeply grateful to prof. Xiao Si (小思), from Kong Kong, who gave me this information together with a big bunch of information and suggestions and, together with Ye Lingfeng daughters, made me feel the wonderful atmosphere within the intellectual circles of "Chinese immigrants" and their mates in Hong Kong.

²⁹ When interfering with the story, the narrator happens to share his ideas on the "ideals" of Ding Jianhe and really seems to keep quite some distance: "Making the classes disappear and struggling for the emancipation from any tyranny, questing for the happiness of the masses and the happiness of the entire world: an extremely realistic reformer maybe is, at the same time, an extremely ridiculous dreamer" (阶级的铲除, 缚束的解放高压下的挣扎, 群众的幸福, 幸福的世界, 一个极端的现实的改革者, 同时也几乎是一个可笑梦想者, see Ye (1997: 404).

At then, on the surface of the sea, in that daybreak, in front of that sun pouring out from the East, as a Red Angel, everybody felt as the brightness of their future and the emblem of their happiness were standing under the light of the rising sun, anyone was swearing hat if only the sun were there they could coexist that way forever, one by one, under its light. Long live to the Red Angel!

(于是这一天在这黎明中的海面上，对了这从东天涌出的太阳，这红的天使，个人觉得这正是他们前途光明和幸福的象征立在朝阳的光明下，各人都暗誓着这要太阳有一天存在，他们都要永远这样的并立在他的光明中。“红的天使万岁”(Ye 1997: 418).

It can be taken for granted that the shabby official from Guomindang did not know the story, but the book written by a Guomindang “informer” was put on the blacklist! Something likewise contradictory happened when the label of “traitor” was buckled on him: *The Complete Works of Lu Xun* in which this insulting epithet appeared, was published in 1957, nevertheless in 1959 he was anyway invited to participate the ceremonies for the 10th anniversary from the foundation of PRC and he was again officially invited in 1965, at the eve of the Cultural Revolution³⁰. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, when the new edition of *The complete Works of Lu Xun* appeared, the reference to Ye Lingfeng as a traitor had completely disappeared but the Author in those days had already passed away. We only can collect the witnesses which still prove his lifelong attachment for his country, among which the bequest of a prominent part of his library to the Sun Zhongshan library in Canton³¹ and we cannot but feel sorry that a long-lasting prejudice against this intellectual prevented also the Chinese scholars to take into consideration some suggestions coming from his early literary production (even regardless of its artistic value) on a possible way to make traditional literary heritage and modern literature keep a vivid and fruitful dialogue.

5. “Transplanting the past into the present:” the neglected lesson of a young writer

The frequency Ye Lingfeng refers to “classical literature” in his short stories and novels is quite relevant and I think it cannot be neglected, particularly as we are taking into consideration a period when the relationship with the past literature was a core point for the Chinese intellectuals. Ye

³⁰ Among the others, Liu (X1988: 26).

³¹ One of Ye Lingfeng’s daughters, Ye Zhongmei (叶忠梅), told extensively to me about this issue. Ye Lingfeng’s craze for books was well known within the intellectuals in Hong Kong and became also an issue in some academic articles. Zhongmei told me that the amount of money his father spent for buying books was one of the very few reasons for quarrelling between his father and his mother.

Lingfeng did not write theoretical essays on the topic during his stay in Shanghai, even if the so-called *dazhong xiaoshuo* (大众小说, “novel for the masses”) was somehow a topic on his agenda.³²

Here I will take into consideration some among the not rare references to the classical heritage which can be tracked down in his production. As many other authors of the so-called 海派 (*Haipai*, Shanghai-school writers) Ye Lingfeng often resorted to quoting at least names and titles from Western – European and American – or Japanese authors to add some exotic *allure* to his narration. The role of these “quotations” is very limited and often seems to be a way of showing off some familiarity with Western/alien culture to impress the reader. This is not the case for the use of Chinese traditional literature in Ye Lingfeng, which often brings along a strong inter-textual function.

Let’s take into consideration one of the earliest works of Ye Lingfeng, *Sand washed by the waves* (浪淘沙, *Lang tao sha*). It is the unhappy love story between two cousins, to which the relevant difference in social status is preventing any happy end. The reciprocal attraction between the two youngsters relies on the fact that they praise to be versed both in Chinese and Western culture and to melt and adapt to each other new and old. (他们自誉是学贯中西，融新恰 (*qia*) 旧...) (Ye 1997: 7).

In spite of this “correspondence in loving senses,” the lack of self-confidence of the male character Xi Qiong also relies on a traditional *topos*: “The fame coming from *belles lettres* is written on water” (文艺上的名誉是写在水面)(Ye 1997: 8). This claim is conferred supplementary strength by many elements, which all are rooted in the traditional literature:

The title, which refers to a poem by Li Yu (937-978), one verse of which also works as the subtitle of the short story; at the same time it also recalls an image used by many poets from Liu Yuxi 刘禹锡 772- 842) to Bai Juyi, Su Shi etc.

The “subtitle,” which is a verse by the famous emperor-poet Li Yu (937-978); “The water runs off, the flowers fall, also spring comes to an end: everything, in the sky and among man” (流水落花春去也天上人间?) Ye 1997: 5).

³² See the introduction to his novel 时代姑娘 *Modern Girl* (时代姑娘, *Shidai guniang*) the first of two novels by Ye Lingfeng to be serialized in the newspaper *New Times* (时事新报, *Shishi xin bao*), where his understanding of 大众小说 actually coincides with a “market-oriented” literature, whose plot and narrative scheme seems to be influenced by the readers’ reaction and seems somehow to be the product of an interaction with the readership (Ye 1977: 472-473)

And, above all, the choice of the author both of lovers are reading and do love: Huang Zhongze. 黄仲则 (1749- 1783) a Qing poet, known to be poor but honest, lifelong frustrated and penniless. Does he completely mirror the male character Xi Qiong 西琼? (琼 being a perfect homophone of 穷).

It is interesting to note that Ye Lingfeng is consciously using Western (or not- Chinese) literary references with different aims.

Western/alien literature is to please his readership letting it know that his acquaintance with these works of literature can be shared with them, as they are part of a more "global", modern world. But he is perfectly aware that the non-Chinese authors do not echo in the mind of his readers and do not cause any phenomenon of empathy: they only add some “Shanghai colour” (海派克勒, *haipai kele*), to use a term fashionable in those days.

On the contrary, he makes wide use of references to the Chinese traditional literature to provide in short the idea he wants to convey. This happens, for example, while describing the concerns of the mother of the female character, Shu Hua, who dislikes the perspective having her daughter married with a nice but penniless “intellectual,” as she made a lot of sacrifices and now she risks not to get anything in return (她并不是对他们起了怜惜，她是叹息自己养蓄女儿的一番苦心的结果³³). To describe her awareness of the “dangerous situation” Ye Lingfeng simply informs his reader that “She is perfectly aware that they are not indifferent to each other anymore and that they have already started to play their own *Hongloumen* story” (“她知道他们已不是无心出此，已是在演着红楼梦中的故事...”).³⁴

The case of the short story 落雁 *Luo Yan* (1929) is even more interesting. *Luo Yan* is the personal name of the female character of the story.³⁵ Keeping the personal name as the title of the short story also in its translation is, of course, correct but completely fails in conveying what it conveys in Chinese. As a temporary solution I would probably choose *Mr. Bluebeard daughter* even if this choice fits with Ye Lingfeng story, but, as we will see, it is misleading if put into connection with the original “*Luo Yan*”’s story, as *Luo Yan* is a historical female personage who was leaving the first century B. C.

Ye Lingfeng’s story reminds me the much more articulated and fascinating *Traumnovelle* (“Dream Story”/ “Dream Novel”) by Arthur Schnitzler, which Ye Lingfeng could know, as its first

³³ *Sand washed by the waves* (浪淘沙, *Lang tao sha*), in Ye Lingfeng (1997: 16).

³⁴ *Sand washed by the waves* (浪淘沙, *Lang tao sha*), in Ye Lingfeng (1997: 14-15).

³⁵ I cannot but underline that the choice of personal names in Ye Lingfeng, including his own pen name, deserves some attention as it often mirrors some psychological features of his characters [or some auto-biographic issues].

edition came out in 1926, having been originally written in 1925. *Luo Yan* is an interesting example of exploring the world in between dream and reality and moving far to the line which divides the unspeakable drives from the “acceptable” sexual impulses. Quite interestingly, the novel brings an element of latent homosexuality, which is a realm Ye Lingfeng explores also in other works. The plot is simple: a young and fascinating lady arrives at the cinema where Mr Feng Ruowei (冯弱苇), a young poet of the same reputation has also planned to watch a movie. Strangely enough in the "modern Shanghai" she arrives riding in a white horses drawn carriage (which is a hint which should act as a warning for the reader: no white horses along Shanghai's streets in those days: haven't we be plunged into a fair-tale?) The two happen to meet and literature is once more the match-maker between them. They even have the chance to carefully evaluate the Chinese translation of *La Dame aux camélias* (*Chahua nü* 茶花女) by Leng Hongsheng³⁶

I have heard that when Lin Shu was translating "The Dame of Camellias" he was bereaved of his wife and that, for this reason, his language is unusually and sadly touching. The pity is that the text has been oversimplified. A. Dumas work is much more brilliant”(听说冷红生译《茶花女》的时候，正在悼亡期内，所以文笔异常哀艳，只可惜太简略了。小仲马的原文精彩更多”) (Ye 1997: 26).

Feng Ruowei (whose name sounds as “week/flexible reed”) is attracted by the strange young lady, whose spell he cannot resist so that he accepts her invitation to follow her to her father's home. The father is a sophisticated intellectual coming from the North of the country who is used to seduce or to force the young male victims her daughter provides him. Mr Ruowei is at the end rescued by Luo Yan herself, who drives him out of the house, where he hires a car which tries to pay with some “money of the dead”. The charm of Luo Yan was almost costing him his life and a watchful Chinese reader could guess it from the very title of the story. Luo Yan is the nickname of Wang Zhaojun (王昭君) one of the Four Beauties of ancient China, and she was the “pearl in the palm” of her old father. Around 30 B.C. she was sent by Emperor Yuan to marry the Xiongnu Chanyu Huhanye (呼韓邪) to establish friendly relations with the Han Dynasty through marriage. In the most prevalent version of the "Four Beauties" legend, it is said that Wang Zhaojun left her hometown on horseback on a bright autumn morning and began a journey northward. Along the way, the horse neighed, making Zhaojun extremely sad and unable to control her emotions. As she sat on the saddle, she began to play

³⁶冷红生 (1852-1824), better known as Lin Shu (林纾).

sorrowful melodies on a stringed instrument. A flock of geese flying southward heard the music, saw the beautiful young woman riding the horse, immediately forgot to flap their wings, and fell to the ground. From then on, Zhaojun acquired the nickname “the one who fells geese” or “drops birds.” It seems that there are about 700 poems and songs and dozens of stories and folktales about Wang Zhaojun from more than 500 famous writers. What is interesting in Ye Lingfeng story is that the power of her charm is used to “drop a young man”, potentially causing him some harm. His heroine is rather closer to the traditional “fox”, in the less dangerous version of the one who finally rescues her lover from the disaster. Or, if we want to read the story the other way around, the true “fox” is here embodied by Luo Yan’s father, who at the first step is enchanting the young man by the means of his culture. Luo Yan is bestowed the new and much progressive role of a woman who saves a man from another man’s fascination.

Ye Lingfeng has a very interesting way of dealing with classic tradition and I think that if more dialogue were possible between the intellectuals who happened to settle down in Hong Kong³⁷ during the Thirties and Forties, not only the narrative about the history of Chinese Literature would be different, but the literary production itself could benefit from a broader developing path.

The very ungenerous prejudice, fed by continental China, which – at least up to the end of the Seventies – was describing Hong Kong as a “cultural desert” (文化沙漠, *wenhua shamo*), was more or less consciously working also among the majority of the Western scholars. We have made not enough research work in order to dig out and to unveil the role of the “immigrate intellectuals”, who moved to Hong Kong from mainland China and who were actively working in preserving, transmitting and critically evaluating the classical literary tradition, linking it with the culture and the literature of modern and contemporary China. Ye Lingfeng story works as a quite meaningful example.

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³⁷ Some scholars point out that maybe the decision to settle down in Hong Kong was not planned by Ye Lingfeng but, as it happened for many other intellectuals, it was a “consequence of history”. See on this topic Lü (1985: 128).

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Words and Thoughts

Quando penso a Pinuccia, mi viene sempre in mente quel primo giorno di corso di lingua hindi, il primo incontro con un'insegnante che nel tempo è diventata un'amica, una confidente e un affetto prezioso.

È un pomeriggio inoltrato, sono in ritardo perché con l'insicurezza della neopatentata ho impiegato ore a parcheggiare l'auto in zona universitaria. Percorro quindi affannata il corridoio dell'allora Dipartimento di Orientalistica: uno scantinato spoglio, illuminato con luci al neon che ricorda in tutto e per tutto il seminterrato di un'ospedale. Mi sporgo timidamente nell'aula e mi trovo di fronte a una situazione inaspettata. L'insegnante, con i lunghi capelli neri e un abbigliamento anni settanta che ispira simpatia, si sta rivolgendo a un uditorio composto da una decina di studenti al massimo. Al mio ingresso, a conferma dell'impressione data, mi elargisce un accogliente sorriso al quale rispondo ingrugnita per la vergogna d'essere entrata in ritardo e per lo choc di dovermi unire a una lezione così poco frequentata.

Chi conosce Pinuccia riconoscerà, in questa breve descrizione, il tratto fondamentale del suo carattere e la maniera del tutto peculiare di ricoprire il ruolo di insegnante universitario. In un ambiente in cui per tradizione nel rapporto tra docente e discente deve vigere un rispettoso e formale distacco, Pinuccia invece si è sempre distinta quale insegnante disponibile e accogliente, capace di mantenere un atteggiamento equo e rispettoso nei confronti di ogni persona che abbia bussato alla porta del suo studio. Negli anni che ho impiegato a uscire dal limbo universitario, molte situazioni sono mutate, quello di lingue orientali è diventato un corso di studi più seguito e, forse anche per questa ragione, al Dipartimento è stata assegnata una sede più decorosa. Pinuccia ha avuto una cattedra, ma il suo atteggiamento no, quello non è mai cambiato.

Non saprei dire se sia accaduto durante quel primo giorno di corso o in una delle lezioni di poco successive, ma ho impressa nella memoria l'immagine di Pinuccia che estrae dalla borsa una scatolina in metallo contenente semi che non avevo mai visto prima di allora. Si trattava del cardamomo che lei naturalmente fece girare tra i banchi. Non le ho mai chiesto se fosse un suo rimedio omeopatico per farci digerire l'alfabeto devanagari e non ho idea se abbia sortito lo stesso effetto anche nei miei compagni di corso. Per me fu il primo contatto sensoriale con l'India, provai una sensazione simile al momento in cui per la prima volta misi la testa fuori dall'aereo sulla pista di Delhi e venni investita da quell'odore fortissimo, un misto di spezie, smog e umidità. Fu uno stimolo a guardare al di là dei

simboli e dei suoni che apparivano tanto ostici e a sfruttare la lingua per esplorare un mondo nuovo. Nel giro di pochi mesi avevo abbandonato il corso per andare a visitare il nord dell'India con lo zaino in spalle.

Cerco di convincermi che non siano passati tanti anni dal mio primo anno di Università, eppure sono cambiate moltissime cose dalla metà degli anni novanta ad oggi; una su tutte: le distanze si sono accorciate. Allora l'India sembrava ancora una terra irraggiungibile, il paese della spiritualità e della povertà più estrema e non una delle superpotenze asiatiche. Assaporare cibi indiani era difficile, in Italia i ristoranti indiani si contavano sulle dita di una mano e di sicuro nessuna massaia conosceva le proprietà antiossidanti e cancerogene della curcuma. Appese alle pareti del Dipartimento d'Orientalistica c'erano immagini in bianco e nero raffiguranti vacche sacre, templi sormontati da scimmie e statue del Buddha in *Nirvana*, un'India che sebbene esista ancora non suscita più l'interesse di un tempo.

Quella è l'India che ha conosciuto Pinuccia da studentessa e da ricercatrice, quella è l'India che si assaporava a lezione con lei, tra una regola grammaticale e l'altra, attraverso i suoi aneddoti e i suoi racconti vividi, privi del distacco intellettuale e dell'oggettività dello studioso. Le storie di Pinuccia erano, e sono tuttora, narrate con la passione e il coinvolgimento di una persona che ha abbracciato l'India e la sua cultura in maniera personale e intima. Questo è stato per me di grande insegnamento, mi ha consentito di arrivare in India con l'obiettivo di viverla sulla mia pelle, di apprendere la lingua non tanto sui libri, quanto piuttosto sfruttando l'amore degli indiani per la conversazione fine a se stessa e di farla diventare, anche per me come per lei, una seconda casa.

Quando finalmente sono riuscita a laurearmi, è caduta anche l'ultima formalità del lei con cui mi rivolgevo alla mia insegnante, l'ultimo freno a un'amicizia che nel tempo si è consolidata. Spesso quando atterravo in India durante i miei frequenti viaggi, il pensiero andava a lei, talvolta le scrivevo una mail per raccontarle il mio vissuto, confidarmi e chiedere consiglio. Sapevo quanto anche lei avrebbe voluto essere in India in quel momento. Pertanto il mio augurio è, dal momento in cui sarà libera dagli obblighi universitari, di tornare a viaggiare con la curiosità di un tempo sperando che, nonostante i grandi cambiamenti, l'India di oggi abbia ancora qualche bella sorpresa da riservarle!

Elena Aime
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Ricordo ancora bene il primo incontro con Pinuccia Caracchi nell'aula quasi sotto terra dell'allora dipartimento di orientalistica. Un luogo con poca luce illuminato dal sorriso accogliente di Pinuccia. Le parole con cui iniziò la prima lezione sono perse nella memoria, ma rammento che uscii dalla lezione con l'entusiasmo alle stelle: avevo incontrato un po' di India, che mi stava chiamando in sordina, che mi attraeva, incuriosiva e sembrava lontanissima.

Quella lezione è stata un'importante crocevia nella mia vita e Pinuccia da quel momento è diventata una persona chiave – la prima mano che mi ha accompagnato con le sue lezioni e i suoi racconti vividi verso la mamma India.

Pinuccia Caracchi è la mia guru, a modo suo e a modo mio. Mi ha insegnato la struttura della lingua hindi, infondendo coraggio ed entusiasmo per lo studio e l'incontro con l'immensità caleidoscopica della cultura indiana, ma non è solo per questo che la considero una maestra.

Ho pensato molto, da quando ho saputo che sarebbe andata in pensione, al perché Pinuccia Caracchi sia così importante per me, a come abbia aiutato la mia crescita accademica, professionale e umana.

Ho capito il perché quando, senza piani e senza programmi, ci siamo magicamente ritrovate in India – di tutti i luoghi e di tutti i tempi a Kolkata durante la Durga Puja! Un *prayag* estemporaneo delle nostre vite.

Grazie a Pinuccia sono approdata a Varanasi e ho conosciuto l'India più legata al passato e alle tradizioni. Sono passati gli anni, le esperienze indiane si sono diversificate, i luoghi attraversati sono diventati tanti, il Paese dell'innamoramento è diventato quotidianità e, a vent'anni di distanza, ho ritrovato Pinuccia a Kolkata, dove il lento fluire del sacro fiume Gange raggiunge il suo estuario. Durante la festa della *Durga Ma*.

In un piccolo negozio del cambio è stata una gioia e un'emozione forte dire in hindi, con orgoglio: “Lei è la mia maestra di India!”

Nei *pandal*, tra le vie, nei chioschetti del *chay* ho visto Pinuccia muoversi, interagire con la gente e ho capito quale sia l'influenza più importante che abbia avuto su di me e sul mio percorso in India: la Caracchi mi ha aiutato a entrare in empatia con gli indiani ancora prima di conoscerli, a connettermi con il cuore della loro cultura, dalle pulsazioni spaventosamente forti e spesso incomprensibili in modo razionale.

La mia prima India l'ho vista attraverso il cuore di Pinuccia Caracchi, riflessa nei suoi occhi e evocata dalle sue parole durante le lezioni di hindi. Quella stessa India che ho poi visto riflessa nei suoi occhi pieni di interesse ed empatia mentre parlava con la gente nel poco tempo che siamo state assieme nella terra che ci ha fatto incontrare e che è diventata la mia seconda casa.

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Scrivere di Pinuccia è fare un tuffo nel passato, in quel giorno nel 1995, quando entrai in classe per la prima lezione di hindi e vidi Pinuccia sorridente ad accoglierci. E iniziò la mia storia d'amore con la hindi e l'India. Fino a quel momento, non avevo mai visto la scrittura devanagari, non avevo conoscenze pregresse né assistito a documentari: in poche parole, non immaginavo nulla dell'India.

Pinuccia con i suoi racconti inizia dipingere un luogo lontano, e ad ogni lezione il quadro va arricchendosi dei dettagli che colgo negli aneddoti. In classe leggiamo racconti in cui ritrovo l'ambiente da lei descritto e al contempo incontro elementi sconosciuti, a cui la mia mente avrebbe dato una forma solo dopo essere stata in India. Come ad esempio le akash dip che Campa accendeva la sera in attesa del marito, che non riuscivo a farmi fino a quando non le vidi sulle rive del Gange a Benares.

In questo scenario lontano si muoveva una persona, Sarita.

Pinuccia ne parlava con tanto affetto e la prima volta che andai a Varanasi affidò a me e alle mie compagne di viaggio una scatola di dolcini per lei.

Gliela consegnammo, e lei ci accolse con la dolcezza e i modi gentili che la caratterizzavano. Ci accolse come chi accoglie degli estranei che poi potranno incontrare una persona cara, che sta lontana e non si ha la possibilità di abbracciare. Come se coccolando noi con ottimi pranzi e con il rassgulla, in fondo, stesse un po' coccolando la sua cara amica Pinuccia.

Le lezioni di Pinuccia sono state la coccola che ha caratterizzato il mio percorso universitario.

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गुरु बिना कोई काम न आवे

Conobbi Pinuccia tredici anni fa quando, appena iniziata l'università, seguivo le lezioni di lingua e letteratura hindī. Allora non potevo avere idea di come quell'incontro avrebbe avuto un impatto così profondo su di me.

Penso di non essere l'unica a poter dire che se l'India ricopre un'importanza così grande nella mia vita è senz'altro merito della professoressa Caracchi. Grazie ai suoi insegnamenti appassionati, per molti studenti, anche per quelli inizialmente più incerti e perplessi, si è aperto un mondo nuovo che sicuramente ha esercitato una qualche influenza su di loro.

Fin dall'inizio rimasi colpita dalla dedizione, dall'umiltà e dalla pazienza con cui era presentato un universo tanto affascinante, ricco e complesso. Ricordo come la passione di molti per la cultura, la filosofia e l'arte indiana sia nata tra i banchi universitari proprio durante i corsi della prof. Caracchi, quando, a poco a poco, veniva svelato quel mondo così lontano che al tempo stesso appariva, per qualche ragione inspiegabile, estremamente vicino, familiare e incredibilmente intrigante, ancor più perché raccontato con quel coinvolgimento di chi ha trovato in esso una ragione di vita. La spiegazione di concetti filosofici, anche tra i più articolati e meno immediati, suscitava non solo gradevole interesse ma soprattutto un desiderio di conoscenza e di interiorizzazione di quei diversi modi di vedere la realtà che offrono la possibilità di dare un senso, una risposta a chi ne è costantemente in cerca.

Nella mia mente di giovane studentessa, tanto inesperta quanto curiosa, un nuovo orizzonte iniziava a dispiegarsi, partendo dalla traduzione delle frasi contenute nell'eserciziario di hindī. Tra una spiegazione e l'altra delle regole grammaticali, i termini di quella nuova lingua acquisivano significato attraverso il racconto di esperienze di vita e situazioni emblematiche della realtà indiana vissute in prima persona dalla professoressa. Immagini di luoghi, cose e circostanze che, portati con me come un prezioso bagaglio durante i miei viaggi, si concretizzavano inaspettatamente davanti ai miei occhi. Anche oggi, ogni volta che torno a Benares e rivedo posti che inizialmente conoscevo solo attraverso le descrizioni di Pinuccia, ripenso con affetto ai suoi racconti e la immagino avventurarsi tra le *galī*, fare visita a qualche tempio o entrare nella sua casetta ad Assī *ghāt*.

Con un modo di porsi paritario, anzi affettuoso nei confronti degli studenti, Pinuccia ha saputo prenderli per mano e accompagnarli lungo un vero e proprio percorso di scoperta e di crescita. Il rigore degli insegnamenti è sempre stato accompagnato da una profonda umanità e comprensione che è propria di chi è dotato di una sensibilità fuori dal comune. Ricordo come di sovente domande

tra le più disparate -spesso tra le più ingenuie o meno pertinenti- trovavano risposta ed erano sempre accompagnate da un sorriso.

In modo molto materno, Pinuccia rappresenta per me il vero guru: un costante punto di riferimento, una saggia guida, non soltanto intellettuale, che ha saputo amorevolmente condurmi verso la luce della conoscenza di un mondo che avrebbe cambiato la mia vita. O meglio, in maniera ancor più determinante, il mio modo di vedere la vita. Ho indubbiamente molto ancora da imparare da lei: generosità, dedizione e compassione. La fiducia nel prossimo e in un mondo migliore. La pazienza e la passione, segno autentico di devozione, che portano alla convinzione profonda che il bene può solo generare altro bene. La capacità di trasmettere speranza e amore. L'amore in fondo è quel sentimento complesso, a volte controverso, che si prova anche per l'India, verso quel caro amico che, come direbbe Pinuccia, nonostante abbia molti difetti, si ama incondizionatamente.

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Dhanyavād

“Nello specchio si vede lo specchio e l’acqua diminuisce senza posa.
 Nel sé si vede il sé, non lo si conosce se non lo si vede.
 Il cielo piove, la terra germoglia, le nuvole portano la pioggia.
 Piovono parole dalla bocca del nostro Guru e io raccolgo quelle gemme a una a una.”
 (Gyāṃna tilaka,12, Rāmānanda)¹

Con questa breve dedica intendo porre i miei omaggi e un profondo e sentito ringraziamento alla mia cara insegnante di Lingua e Letteratura Hindī, Pinuccia Caracchi. L’incontro con questa splendida docente, avvenuto nel 2001 presso la Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature straniere di Torino, è stato senza dubbio il più importante, proficuo e illuminante di tutto il mio lungo percorso formativo. La sua approfondita conoscenza del contesto culturale e spirituale dell’India, illuminata e supportata da un grande amore per la disciplina insegnata, ha permesso a tanti studenti e appassionati di discipline orientali di accostarsi in modo serio e rispettoso alla complessa e affascinante realtà indiana. I corsi di Pinuccia hanno rappresentato, per me e per i tanti studenti che hanno frequentato le sue lezioni universitarie, un momento di scoperta culturale e di crescita personale e spirituale. La chiarezza espositiva della docente, corroborata da una vivida e tangibile esperienza diretta del mondo indiano, ha sempre permesso agli studenti di comprendere a fondo anche gli aspetti più profondi e complessi della civiltà del subcontinente. Ringrazio dal profondo del cuore Pinuccia per avermi introdotta alle meravigliose gemme della letteratura spirituale indiana: il suo suggerimento di leggere la celebre *Autobiografia di uno Yogi* di Paramahansa Yogananda ha modificato in modo permanente il mio percorso esistenziale, introducendomi al sentiero dello Yoga. Durante i corsi universitari di Pinuccia ho avuto modo di scoprire i capolavori della letteratura devozionale della *bhakti*, uno fra tutti il *Rāmcaritmānas* di Tulsidās, così come la incantevole e sconfinata produzione poetica dei *sant*.

Ringrazio infine Pinuccia per la grande disponibilità e l’infinita pazienza dimostrate durante i tanti anni di insegnamento: la comprensione e la dolcezza con le quali si è sempre

¹ Pinuccia Caracchi, *Rāmānanda e lo yoga dei santi*. Alessandria: dell’Orso: 1999.

rivolta agli studenti rimarranno per sempre nel mio cuore e rappresentano un luminoso esempio da seguire.

Dhanyavād, Pinucciajī.

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Ho iniziato l'Università un po' per scherzo e di certo, all'epoca, non avrei mai pensato di proseguire ulteriormente gli studi dopo aver conseguito la laurea. La passione per i paesi extra-europei era molta e fra le lingue che l'Ateneo torinese poteva offrire scelsi di studiare il giapponese come prima lingua e la hindī come seconda. È in questo modo che ho conosciuto Pinuccia ed è in questo modo che ho conosciuto la lingua hindī. Sebbene, come ho detto, il giapponese fu la scelta privilegiata, fin dalle mie prime lezioni di hindī iniziai a innamorarmi di questa lingua e fu così che, sul finire del primo anno di corso, non esitai a invertire le mie scelte. Ciò fu indubbiamente dovuto alla bellezza della grafia *devanāgarī*, alla ricca morfologia e alle pressoché infinite sfumature semantiche e pragmatiche che la hindī riesce a formalizzare in simili, ma assolutamente non identiche, strutture grammaticali.

Ma il merito della mia passione per tale lingua, e per la cultura indiana in generale, è da attribuire sicuramente a Pinuccia che, fin dal primo anno, mi ha seguito in tutto il mio percorso di studio universitario. Non mi riferisco soltanto alla sua eccellente competenza della lingua scritta sotto ogni aspetto grammaticale, alla sua perfetta padronanza della hindī parlata e alla sua profonda conoscenza della vita quotidiana dell'India, quella conoscenza che possiede soltanto chi ha avuto modo di vivere per diverso tempo a stretto contatto con la popolazione indiana, come lei ha avuto modo di fare durante la sua permanenza di due anni a Vārāṇasī. Mi riferisco anche e soprattutto alla passione che Pinuccia trasmetteva nello spiegarci le particolarità della lingua hindī e nell'esemplificare il tutto con scene di vita quotidiana vissuta sui *ghāṭ* in riva al Gange, una passione così profonda a cui è difficile resistere. Chi conosce Pinuccia, e a maggior ragione chi ha avuto modo, la fortuna, di seguire le sue lezioni, sa bene di cosa sto parlando.

Nel mio caso, la passione veicolatami è stata tale che, dopo aver conseguito la laurea, decisi, su consiglio e appoggio proprio di Pinuccia ma anche della carissima Mariangela D'Onza Chiodo che ora non c'è più, di proseguire la mia formazione universitaria iniziando così, a fine 2001, il mio dottorato di ricerca in Studi indologici e tibetologici. L'argomento che avrei potuto scegliere per il mio progetto di ricerca poteva essere di vario tipo, purché connesso a quell'immensa miniera di conoscenza che è la cultura indiana con tutte le sue più svariate manifestazioni. Poteva spaziare dalla religione alla filosofia, dalla storia all'arte, dalla letteratura alla lingua, e poi dall'antico al moderno e, perché no, anche al contemporaneo, a maggior ragione nel caso di un Paese come l'India, testimonianza viva di quanto il contemporaneo sia indissolubilmente connesso con la cultura tradizionale. Pur dipanandosi

davanti a me un orizzonte di scelte così vasto, decisi di focalizzare le mie indagini sullo studio linguistico della lingua hindī, dal momento che tale lingua mostra al suo interno delle caratteristiche tali da renderla unica non soltanto nel contesto delle lingue indoeuropee, ma anche e soprattutto in quello delle stesse lingue indo-arie, tanto moderne quanto antiche e medievali.

Unica è la storia dell'origine della hindī che la vede formarsi da una vera e propria mescolanza linguistica a partire da idiomi differenti, almeno uno dei quali, a sua volta, veicolo letterario in India di una tradizione religiosa tipicamente non indiana. Unica poi è la storia dell'evoluzione più recente della hindī che la vede differenziarsi gradualmente, sul piano grafico e lessicale, dalla sua sorella più prossima, la lingua urdū. Tale unicità chi scrive l'ha appresa innanzitutto da quello studio descrittivo, attento e dettagliato, che è *la Grammatica hindī* di Pinuccia Caracchi (2016, Magnanelli-Promolibri). Ormai giunta alla sua quarta edizione, dopo la prima del 1992, la *Grammatica* di Pinuccia è ancor oggi attuale, giacché unica, non superata nel panorama delle grammatiche di lingue indo-arie in Italia, e, dopo anni di studi linguistici, mi sento di dire anche fuori dal nostro Paese.

L'attenzione e curiosità da parte mia verso i processi evolutivi che hanno portato a essere quello che la lingua hindī è a tutt'oggi, mi hanno fornito il pretesto, quanto mai gradito e quanto mai cercato, di avere lunghi e diversi colloqui con Pinuccia, al fine di cercare di comprendere, a volte insieme, alcuni aspetti, più fluidi, meno canonizzati, di alcune di quelle lingue o varietà linguistiche che, senza ombra di dubbio, sono intimamente connesse con la *khaṛī-bolī* hindī, in quanto in qualche modo sue progenitrici. Mi riferisco alla *sādhūkārī bhāṣā*, o *sant-bhāṣā*, che Pinuccia ben conosce, come ne è testimonianza il frutto del suo lavoro e della sua ricerca di una vita intorno alla figura di Rāmānanda (si veda la sua recente monografia *Rāmānanda. Un guru tra storia e leggenda*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria, 2017, edizione rivista e aggiornata di *Rāmānanda e lo yoga dei Sant*, Edizioni dell'Orso, Alessandria, 1999). Ma, allo stesso modo, mi riferisco anche alla lingua avadhī, che grazie agli appunti delle sue lezioni sul *Rāmcaritmānas* di Tulsīdās, gentilmente da lei donatimi, ho avuto il privilegio di conoscere in forma del tutto inedita.

E siamo a oggi, dopo ventisei anni di rispetto, stima, ma soprattutto affetto reciproco. Dopo avermi visto crescere come persona da poco più che un adolescente ad adulto e dopo avermi visto maturare da studente a studioso, tanto da assumere, lo spero, una mia personalità specifica nel campo degli studi sull'India in Italia, tra le speranze che nutro per il futuro ve ne sono due che hanno Pinuccia come protagonista, una personale e una professionale. In quanto alla prima spero vivamente di avere ancora tante occasioni per poter trascorrere del tempo con quella che è stata la mia maestra, il mio guru, e di avere quindi, fra le altre cose, il privilegio di poter ancora attingere a quella che è la sua conoscenza della lingua hindī. Per quanto concerne invece la seconda, spero di aver fatto tesoro

della competenza, passione, ma soprattutto umanità e semplicità di Pinuccia, un tesoro che però, come lei mi ha insegnato, invece di essere nascosto, va donato a pieni mani e senza esitazioni agli altri, in primo luogo agli studenti e alle studentesse.

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La professoressa Caracchi va in pensione. Una semplice frase che ha portato alla mente i molti ricordi del mio periodo universitario. Sono passati ormai vent'anni da quando ho fatto il mio ingresso all'università. Venivo da un paese di una manciata di anime, e nonostante i diciotto anni ero ancora decisamente acerba. Inoltre, al liceo il professore di filosofia ci aveva preparato all'università come a una selva piena di lupi. Ora posso dire con certezza che fu l'incontro con la professoressa Caracchi a trasformare questa "selva" in un luogo piacevole, amichevole, bucolico.

Nella sua figura di docente universitaria, infatti, si fondono le sue qualità umane: non posso affermarlo con certezza per gli altri studenti, ma ho sempre avuto la sensazione che tutti noi la stimassimo profondamente perché ci trattava con empatia, e perché di fronte a lei mai ti sentivi un numero, una matricola senza volto. Allo stesso modo, perché ci rendeva ugualmente accessibile la grammatica Hindī e la complessità burocratica universitaria con un sereno sorriso sulle labbra, con pazienza, senza mai dare niente per scontato.

Ama intensamente ciò che insegna ed è lampante e contagioso. Nel mio immaginario la professoressa incarnava tutto ciò che mi affascina di quel Paese e di quella cultura che ancora non avevo conosciuto di prima mano. A lezione camminavamo con lei nei *galī* di Benares, incontravamo *sādhu*, osservavamo la *pūjā* dai *ghat* della nostra aula a Torino. La magia era che durante le lezioni di Pinuccia, si materializzava un'India senza spazio e senza tempo, un concentrato la cui essenza ci veniva presentata in una traduzione, in una lezione di letteratura, nella condivisione di aneddoti di vita vissuta.

Negli anni di corso e in special modo durante la stesura della tesi, mi ha insegnato che il rigore, la precisione e l'attenzione si possono accompagnare a collaborazione, affabilità, accessibilità del sapere: mi sono sempre sentita accompagnata nel percorso di apprendimento, supportata e mai giudicata. La professoressa Caracchi mi ha mostrato come la conoscenza non sia una gemma custodita in una torre inaccessibile, ma un frutto che va coltivato con costanza e pazienza e che se ben accudito produrrà raccolti sempre più abbondanti. Per questo, per la passione, la dedizione e l'onestà con cui ha portato avanti il suo lavoro negli anni, per essere stata una guida prima e un'amica poi, non posso che ringraziarla.

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In quel grande romanzo che è la vita di ciascuno di noi, le persone che incontriamo possono diventare i personaggi archetipali del racconto della nostra memoria: per ogni fase della nostra esistenza possiamo giocare con la fantasia e assegnare dei ruoli alle persone che ci hanno accompagnato. Troviamo così l'antagonista di turno, l'aiuto fidato, il grande maestro che ci indirizza verso la giusta strada, e così via.

Nei miei anni universitari, Pinuccia Caracchi è stata l'”Insegnante”.

Se esistono gli Archetipi e il mondo delle Idee, per me Pinuccia rappresenta la figura dell'insegnante ideale.

Una guida preziosa: inestimabile Virgilio che ha stimolato in me l'amore per l'India, con le sue lezioni puntuali, precise e semplici, nel senso più positivo e ricco che esista di questo termine.

Con il tempo ci si accorge che non tutto quello che abbiamo appreso sarà utilizzato nelle fasi di vita successive: ma sicuramente tutto, prima o poi, tornerà utile in modi che non possiamo neanche immaginare.

Sono grato alla professoressa Pinuccia Caracchi per avermi insegnato la lingua hindi e la sua cultura. Ma sono ancora più grato a Pinuccia per avermi insegnato una virtù inestimabile, con il suo esempio di tutti i giorni: la gentilezza.

Gentilezza che diventava amore, per i suoi allievi e per l'India: per noi ha sempre rappresentato una figura amorevole e ricca di risorse, dai modi gentili e disponibili.

Gentilezza che diventava umiltà: dietro alle maniere semplici si intravedeva bene una conoscenza sconfinata della sua materia, senza che mai e poi mai lei la facesse pesare in alcun modo.

Gentilezza che diventava fermezza, laddove riteneva che ci fossero dei torti: senza paura si gettava con tutta sé stessa contro la macchina burocratica universitaria, se pensava che i ragazzi ne fossero danneggiati.

Gentilezza che diventava generosità: la sua porta era sempre aperta, nei momenti felici e in quelli più difficili, sempre disponibile ad aiutare e consigliare.

Gentilezza che diventava attenzione e cura, per il prossimo e per l'ambiente che ci circonda. Ricordo bene che si rifiutava di utilizzare l'ascensore: una scelta “ecologica”, come l'avrebbe definita lei, che ancora oggi mi torna alla memoria con piacere quando scelgo di fare le scale.

Così come ogni volta che mi ricordo di sorridere a chi incontro per la mia strada (anche se è una giornata difficile), ogni volta che cerco di essere gentile e di aiutare chi mi accompagna, ogni volta che tendo la mano o lascio la mia porta aperta, mi ricordo con gratitudine della professoressa Pinuccia Caracchi, Insegnante dei migliori anni della mia vita.

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L'incontro con Pinuccia: un *prayāga* propizio

I fiumi che scorrono sembrano le vite di ciascuno di noi. Alcuni si sfiorano appena, per poi incedere spediti lungo il proprio corso. Altri, invece, confluiscono spontaneamente gli uni nelle acque degli altri generando *prayāga*, congiunzioni particolari, feconde di sacralità. Sono questi gli incontri con le persone speciali con cui si inizia a fluire insieme verso una foce comune.

Per proseguire con la metafora il rapporto con Pinuccia è, per tutti noi del Maṭha Gītānanda Āśram, un *prayāga* propizio: il congiungersi di una passione per la ricchezza culturale, artistica e spirituale che Bhārata Mātā ha prodotto. Ma è anche molto di più: è un'amicizia vera, profonda, di cuore.

L'ammirazione e la spontaneità tra noi, maturata negli anni, sono testimonianza di un antico *anubandhana* che ci unisce. Un legame foriero di amore per la conoscenza e per il Dialogo, anche dimostrato dalla vicinanza di Pinuccia in occasione di molti incontri culturali e artistici. Le nostre lunghe conversazioni sulle tematiche più disparate, dai suoi e nostri lunghi soggiorni in India, all'approfondimento di aspetti teologici, letterari fino ad arrivare alla sua ottima padronanza della lingua hindī, che con grande pazienza e zelo cerca di insegnare alle studentesse dell'*āśram* e non solo!

Per la sua conoscenza mai ostentata bensì abitata con grande umiltà, per la sua disponibilità, la sensibilità e per tante altre qualità, ma soprattutto per un grande affetto, Pinuccia è una parte del piccolo grande "universo" del Maṭha Gītānanda Āśram di cui Paramahaṃsa Yogānanda Giri jī è anima e guida e che ha per Pinuccia una profonda stima e grande affetto.

Apprestandoci a scrivere queste poche righe, esitavamo nella difficoltà di trovare delle parole che potessero esprimere in modo esaustivo un rapporto lungo di anni e una considerazione per una persona davvero speciale; poi, improvvisamente pensando a Pinuccia abbiamo trovato nelle lettere che compongono il suo nome un acronimo che forse, in modo simpatico, racchiude alcune delle sue tante virtù! Affidiamo dunque a questo acronimo il compito di concludere questo breve pensiero con la speranza che riesca a trasmettere il grande affetto e il desiderio di essere insieme ancora in tanti progetti futuri.

Pazienza, impegno, naturale umile curiosità, comunichi insegnando amorevolmente: PINUCCIA!

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La rinuncia ai frutti dell'azione

Lo studio di ricevimento della professoressa Caracchi a Palazzo Gorresio non era per noi studenti e studentesse universitarie solamente un luogo fisico, ma soprattutto un nido, un rifugio, un punto d'incontro in cui ritrovarsi e condividere le proprie esperienze. Nei miei anni trascorsi in università – dal 2006 al 2013 – ha spesso assunto anche la connotazione di “casa”, richiamando per analogia il focolare acceso e la cucina. La professoressa infatti ci accoglieva sempre sorridente, ci invitava ad accomodarci con tono amorevole e ci offriva una varietà di biscotti, merendine, frutta secca e caramelle. Una volta rifocillati si informava sui nostri studi e sul nostro stato generale. Ci ascoltava con attenzione e si preoccupava di trovare soluzioni a qualsiasi nostro problema, anche non prettamente universitario, e se non era in grado di occuparsene direttamente ci metteva in contatto con la persona adatta.

Nonostante le scelte lavorative ci abbiamo geograficamente allontanate, ci ritroviamo ancora dopo anni a rievocare i tempi universitari con le compagne del corso di laurea triennale e specialistica, tra cui Erika Caranti, Daniela Perotti, Miriam Battistoni e Sara Marzinotto. Ricordiamo con stima e ammirazione la capacità della professoressa Caracchi di dare la priorità ai bisogni degli altri e di farsi carico della nostra vulnerabilità di studenti. Specificatamente, nel mio percorso di danzatrice, il suo intervento nel far riconoscere i mesi di studio trascorsi presso la Rudrakshya Foundation di Bhubaneswar come tirocinio universitario, ha segnato una svolta importante nel mio studio della danza Oḍissī.

Tra le qualità della professoressa Caracchi v'è indubbiamente la generosità, una generosità d'animo che si rivela in infiniti gesti di benevolenza verso gli esseri umani. Il rapporto di fiducia incondizionata che si è instaurato tra gli studenti e Pinuccia le è valso l'appellativo affettuoso di “mamma”, ad indicare una figura genitoriale che si prodiga per il benessere dei suoi “figli”, come sembra suggerire il ciondolo indiano che porta appeso al collo su cui è dipinta la Devī.

Tra i miei ricordi più significativi del tempo trascorso in compagnia di Pinuccia Caracchi v'è la settimana di ritiro estivo di Yoga presso il Gitananda Ashram di Altare nel 2012, in cui ho avuto la fortuna di averla come compagna di stanza, conoscendola così al di fuori della veste di docente. Sono stati giorni intensi, arricchiti dall'amicizia e da alcune confidenze profonde e toccanti. Oltre alle pratiche di meditazione, haṭha yoga e mantra, nel corso della giornata si dedicava del tempo al karma yoga. Durante la pausa dopo pranzo, Pinuccia si sedeva all'ombra di una tettoia e revisionava

instancabilmente le bozze di un libro a tematica indologica che le erano state inviate, senza mai riposarsi.

L'amore sconfinato per la cultura hindū traspare chiaramente nell'insegnamento della professoressa Caracchi. Le lezioni settimanali erano per noi studenti un appuntamento immancabile. Durante quelle ore in classe non apprendevamo solamente le nozioni di lingua e letteratura hindī previste dal programma accademico ma soprattutto imparavamo ad avventurarci tra le fitte e intricate vie della filosofia, della metafisica e della cosmologia indiana. Se sentivamo di esserci perse in quell'universo tanto affascinante quanto complesso, Pinuccia si adoperava prontamente per fornirci nuove chiavi di lettura e di interpretazione. Quei testi monumentali dell'epica indiana quali il *Mahābhāārata*, il *Rāmāyaṇa* e il *Rāmcaritmānas* sono impressi indelebilmente nelle nostre menti proprio grazie alla passione e alla dedizione con cui Pinuccia insegnava.

Concludo rivolgendo un pensiero di gratitudine verso questa donna e docente straordinaria che ha segnato la storia dell'indologia italiana. Attraverso il suo esempio quotidiano, Pinuccia Caracchi ci ispira a condurre un'esistenza onesta, umile e altruista, ci invita amorevolmente a divenire esseri umani migliori, capaci di azioni buone e disinteressate, non motivate dal desiderio dei frutti dell'azione, proprio secondo l'insegnamento di Śrī Kṛṣṇa nella *Bhagavadgītā*, di cui lei stessa è portatrice.

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Scrivere qualcosa di personale sulla Prof. Pinuccia Caracchi è cosa facile e difficile nel medesimo tempo, specialmente per chi, come me, è stato suo professore in passato. Proprio per questo sono stato orgoglioso degli obiettivi da lei raggiunti e ho anche avuto il piacere di collaborare con lei a qualche iniziativa editoriale. Sono in pensione da circa 10 anni, ma continuo a vedere ogni tanto la cara Pinuccia e mi sembra che il tempo non sia passato, perché lei non è mutata, neppure al termine della sua carriera universitaria.

Quella che mi torna subito alla mente è una definizione che ebbi l'occasione di formulare scherzosamente di lei come “la natura prima del peccato originale,” definizione che mi sembra valida ancora oggi, se solo penso alla sua schiettezza, alla sua ineguagliabile disponibilità alla meraviglia e allo stupore e, nel medesimo tempo, alla sua istintiva generosità.

L'unico modo che conosco per esprimerle anche oggi quello che provo per lei è accoglierla in un lungo abbraccio, senza aggiungere parole.

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Che cosa scrivere di Pinuccia in un volume che finirà sicuramente nelle sue mani, sapendo che non ama essere lodata e ringraziata?

Siamo amiche da molti anni ma prima dell'amicizia c'è stato un momento in cui, lei docente del corso di lingua hindi del Cesmeo e io allieva del suddetto corso, i nostri ruoli sono stati diversi. Io allora avevo un infelice ciuffo di capelli che mi ricadeva su un occhio e che fermavo con una molletta per poter vedere quello che scrivevo e, solo dopo anni, ho saputo da Pinuccia quanto le sia rimasto impresso nella memoria il detestabile ciuffo. L'impedimento tuttavia non ostacolò il mio apprendimento della lingua hindi, che affrontavo con grande entusiasmo nelle sei ore settimanali del corso.

Pinuccia dal canto suo mi diede la prima prova della sua grande tenacia, non mancando a una singola lezione e insegnando con passione, nonostante gli attacchi di nausea e vomito che accompagnavano la sua gravidanza. Un baccello di cardamomo dopo l'altro, finimmo il corso, anche se a tenere l'esame fu il Professor Sinha, Sinhaji per gli studenti, e non Pinuccia.

Il ricordo seguente è a Mathi, a casa di Pinuccia: siamo sedute nella veranda assolata, con una tazza di fragole appena colte in mano, e Beatrice è ormai nata. Io mi sento al settimo cielo. Mi sembra di essere eletta a conoscenze sacre. Il profumo degli incensi indiani che Pinuccia usa nello studio, la vasta biblioteca, i racconti degli anni passati in India, tutto forma una miscela di propellente che mi catapulterà in India di lì a poco.

Passo al ricordo successivo: sto bevendo il famoso *chay* al cardamomo di Pinuccia, inzuppandovi i torcetti di Lanzo, quando arriva una telefonata dalla Mistral tour di Torino, un'agenzia di viaggi, allora a conduzione familiare, che organizzava viaggi di taglio culturale in Oriente. Chiedono se Pinuccia sia disponibile per accompagnare un gruppo di turisti in qualità d'indologa. "No - dice lei - io non posso ma ho qui una persona che fa al caso vostro." Sento come fosse oggi la morsa allo stomaco, il baratro sotto i piedi e poi espressioni di protesta uscirmi dalla bocca. Ma le parole di Pinuccia, pesanti e ineluttabili come un *guruvakya* o, se volete, come un calcio nel sedere, non mi lasciano scampo e in men che non si dica mi trovo trasformata in un'indologa volante. Ma non finisce qui. Scelto l'argomento della tesi di laurea, avevo preso accordi con uno studioso europeo residente a Benares affinché mi presentasse a persone e istituzioni presso le quali avrei dovuto fare studi e ricerche. Arrivata a Benares, scoprii con mio grande rammarico che lo studioso in questione non

aveva nessuna voglia di accompagnarmi e di presentarmi e che dunque me la sarei dovuta cavare da sola. In realtà, sola non ero perché a Benares c'era di passaggio anche Pinuccia, la quale non solo mi presentò a tutti con la necessaria ufficialità ma mi trovò anche una sistemazione come ospite pagante all'interno del campus universitario.

Ecco come la tenacia, l'integrità e il profondo senso dello *svadharma* si manifestano in Pinuccia con la stessa disinvoltura con la quale, all'occorrenza, ti offre uno zenzero candito o il rimedio omeopatico più adatto al malanno di turno.

Che cosa posso aggiungere?

Vorrei far leggere queste righe a Pinuccia per sapere che cosa ne pensa ma non posso: è una sorpresa!

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Nel corso di un lavoro sulla Bibbia dei LXX mi sono imbattuta in un passo della storia di *Susanna* che ha attirato la mia attenzione. Il racconto di *Susanna*, com'è noto, non è riportato dalla Bibbia ebraica, ma fa parte delle aggiunte greche al libro di *Daniele*. Un'altra particolarità di questo piccolo libro, che ha avuto tanta parte nell'iconografia occidentale, è data dal fatto che ci è giunto in due versioni greche, una ascrivibile ai LXX e l'altra a Teodoziona. Più nota è la versione attribuita a Teodoziona che è quella privilegiata nelle Bibbie in traduzione italiana. Di minor fortuna ha goduto, invece, il testo cosiddetto dei LXX, tanto da essere stato ben presto relegato nel dimenticatoio. Il racconto, oltre alla virtù di *Susanna*, esalta l'abilità del giovane *Daniele* che riesce a scagionare la donna dalle ingiuste accuse che le sono state rivolte da due anziani giudici. Nella conclusione del libro secondo i LXX si tesse l'elogio della *haplotes*, della «semplicità» (v. 63: «Per questo motivo i giovani sono i prediletti di *Giacobbe* per la loro semplicità» [traduzione di S. Ceriani]); diverso è invece l'epilogo della versione teodozionica che non vi fa alcun cenno.

Lo stesso tema variamente declinato s'incontra in un'opera della letteratura giudaica (o giudaico-cristiana) – i *Testamenti dei XII Patriarchi* –, dove si delineano i ritratti dei dodici figli di *Giacobbe*. Il motivo della *haplotes*, anche sotto forma di semplicità di cuore o di semplicità d'animo, ricorre in più punti (*T. Ruben* 4, 1; *T. Simeone* 4, 5; *T. Levi* 13, 1; *T. Issacar* 3, 2.6-8; 4, 1.6; 5, 1.8; 6, 1; 7, 7; *T. Beniamino* 6, 7): ben sedici sono le occorrenze del termine che vi sono state riscontrate. Per contro nella stessa opera simmetricamente viene stigmatizzato l'atteggiamento opposto (*T. Beniamino* 6, 7).

Questa, della “semplicità”, è senz'altro uno dei tratti che più mi hanno colpito nella personalità di *Pinuccia Caracchi* sin da quando c'incontravamo nei locali di *Via Roero* di *Cortanze* – allora sede dell'Istituto d'Indologia, poi divenuto Dipartimento di Orientalistica –, un tratto che si è mantenuto immutato nel tempo e che tuttora caratterizza il profilo di *Pinuccia*, non disgiunto dalla laboriosità e dalla passione per la sua materia e per il lavoro con gli studenti, aspetti tanto più significativi e apprezzabili dati il suo ruolo e le responsabilità istituzionali. Oggi c'incrociamo ancora in spazi diversi, ma la sensazione di un tempo non è venuta meno, anzi si è arricchita di nuove esperienze.

A *Pinuccia*, tenute nel debito conto le mutate condizioni socio-culturali, potrebbe ben essere dedicato l'elogio della “donna di valore” di *Proverbi* 31, 26: «Apre la bocca con saggezza e sulla sua lingua c'è insegnamento di bontà» (secondo l'ebraico).

Liliana Rosso Ubigli

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La *Dīpāvalī*

Sono passati ormai quarantun anni da quando ebbi la possibilità di conoscere Pinuccia.

Arrivato in Italia 3 o 4 anni prima, fu per me era una grande sorpresa sentire una persona che parlasse in hindi come lei, che era appena tornata dall'India. Molte volte ho avuto bisogno di aiuto e lei era una delle prime persone ad essere sempre presente. Ad ogni ricorrenza indiana è lei la prima a farmi gli auguri, ricorrenze che a volte io non ricordavo nemmeno.

Nel 1978 fondai il *Centro di Cultura Indiana* e chiesi a Pinuccia di tenere una conferenza sulla *Dīpāvalī (Divālī)*; ricordo ancora come lei raccontò il suo vissuto sul periodo che precede la *Dīpāvalī*, la *Rāmlilā*. Spiegò che la *Rāmlilā* è il teatro sacro all'aperto, molto popolare in tutta l'India, con interpretazioni del *Rāmāyaṇa* di Vālmiki. In un tempo in cui ancora non c'erano la televisione, Internet e i programmi satellitari, esso ha portato fino ai villaggi più sperduti, dove manca persino la scuola di primo grado, il vero senso della parola del *Rāmcaritmānas*. Nei villaggi, la sera, le donne si radunano per cantarlo al suono del *dholak* e non sono rari gli analfabeti che conoscono l'intero poema a memoria! Pinuccia merita un grande grazie parte mia, ha fatto conoscere la vera realtà dell'India, la grande popolarità di queste tradizioni.

Ricordo con gratitudine, inoltre, quando mi aiutò in un momento difficile in cui avevo deciso di comperare casa. Come sempre, lei si è presentata con un aiuto concreto e dimostrandosi una vera amica. Entrambi, io e Pinuccia, dobbiamo tutto al nostro Maestro e Amico Stefano Piano che ci ha trasmesso i veri valori umani.

Un grazie di cuore, Pinuccia!

Sandhu Roop Lal

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Epilogue

Gatij d'angiol

A Pinu

An sopatand j'ale
(gatij!)
(ma un gatij ch'an ven d'an su)
a së stërmo
(a së stërmo da cò? – a ciamo ij savù)
e svicio a corato,
a corato a la sosta
(a la sosta... ant ël ciel?!?).

Ma quand che a së strenzo
– dëscauss, patanù –
e a deurbo j'ale,
anlora as vardo,
j'euj sarà,
la boca ch'a sagna,
e a rijo,
a dësmoro,
as patelo,
a robato,
as bësbijo stranòm
– che mi iv dirai nen –
e mai a së stofio,
j'angioj an ciel.

E ël cercc ëd j'angioj
– contacc, s'a l'é bel! –
– parla pa, s'a fa gòj! –
a l'é në specc
– che j'òmo an sla Tera

a-j dijo Sol,
ma a l’é franch l’istess –
(che peui i volia fé na rima con “specc,”
ma a l’é franch l’istess).

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ISSN:
1825-263X

Cover by Marta Tosco