

ANNA SCANNAVINI

## The Reception of Cooper's *The Bravo*

### 1. AHEAD, LOOKING BACK

As he departed Italy, James Fenimore Cooper confronted mental scenery that would become the generative kernel of a new novel; the city was Venice, and the scenery that of Piazza San Marco opening on the adjacent lagoon. The new novel germinated by this experience was *The Bravo* (1831), the first book of Cooper's European trilogy.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I will deal with the reception of the novel and consider several of its English and Italian reviews, including the attacks that *The Bravo* received in the Whig newspaper *The New York American* and by Venetian readers. The latitude of such attacks has something to contribute to our current interpretation of the book – even if they underestimated, in their own time, its complexities.

These complexities were in large part the result of Cooper's initial engagement with the scene of the Piazza. As Cooper would write in *Gleanings*, the first view of the square left on his mind a deep and instantaneous impression, that would acquire the force of a vivid visual memory. "Certainly, no other place ever struck my imagination so forcibly, and never before did I experience so much pleasure, from novel objects, *in so short a time*" (279, 280-81).<sup>2</sup> According to his daughter Susan, the experience roused her father's customary curiosity, and he, typically, set out to learn more: "He procured several of the principal works" on Venice, and "read them with lively interest." Thence he got "[a]n insight into the interior working" of the Venetian political system, and its past tyranny, that compounded with his aesthetic pleasure in Venetian scenery and gave rise to "the idea of writing a work in which views of both, as distinct and just as his pen could draw them, should be given to the reader" (249). The book was *The Bravo*, "the most American book I ever wrote," as Cooper would later define it.<sup>3</sup>

The intense impression produced by Piazza San Marco accounts for the opening of the novel, which, in turn, generates a plot revolving around the secretive power of the Venetian oligarchy of early eighteenth century (House 3;

Russo 72). Behind the forestage of the Piazza, the secret Council of Three carries out a policy of murders, intrusive surveillance, and executions. Their schemes are so skilful as to take on – as the narrator says – the semblance of natural rule. The Council governs the people “with a certainty of power that resembled the fearful and mysterious march of destiny” (157). The bravo of the title, Jacopo Frontoni, acts as an agent – and a supposed murderer – for the Council. Jacopo is in truth forced to serve the oligarchy by a hateful act of blackmailing. His father is unjustly held prisoner at the Piombi, with the only faint hope of freedom depending on his son’s services.

As often in the genre, the romantic part of the plot is comprised of two subplots: the love between the Neapolitan Duke of St. Agatha, Don Camillo, and the noble Venetian Violetta Tiepolo; and the more humble love between Jacopo and Gelsomina, the daughter of the gaoler at the Piombi. The second part of the novel develops around the public acts and the powers of the Republic. When Antonio, an old fisherman of the Republic, becomes too vocal and visible in asking for justice for himself and his grandson, the secret agents of the Council are ordered to assassinate him. Antonio’s death rouses the rage of the people, and a crowd assembles in Piazza S. Marco, near the Ducal Palace and in the Broglio. That marks the beginning of the resolution. As Camillo and Violetta escape by sea from Venice, the Three feign outrage at the killing of Antonio, and organize a public funeral. Jacopo, who has deeply resented the death of the fisherman and is now harshly opposing the Council, is selected as a scapegoat. He is accused of the murder and is publicly – and quite spectacularly – executed in the last chapter. Gelsomina’s madness ensues, and the story ends on this grim scenario.

The memories of both Cooper and his daughter concur in highlighting the complexity of the novel, and evidence that sympathy, landscape, and historical readings, all factored into its making, complicating the strong authorial claim that the book must be read in political terms. For Cooper, the story is one of mass mediatic manipulation, repression, and denial of liberty, and its didactic intention is openly avowed in the authorial Preface. *The Bravo* has been written in an effort to redress the “utter confusion” on the politics of monarchic and republican systems, and “to give his countrymen, in this book, a picture of the social system of one of the *soi-disant* republics of the other hemisphere,” aimed at warning them that republics are not *in se* immune from oligarchic power, but

must be always reminded that they are granted immunities *by* the people through a social contract: “[B]eing, in other words, concessions of natural rights made by the people to the state, for the benefits of social protection” (v, vi).

The urge to write on the subject was the result of Cooper’s seven-year sojourn in Europe (1826 to 1833) that the income from his books had made possible. The stay was intermixed with cultural and commercial preoccupations, as he not only kept regular contacts with his European publishers, but also worked actively to somehow settle the problem of European pirated editions of his work (Franklin, “Cooper 1789-1851”). It was, however, also relevant in terms of political instruction. Most of the seven years were spent in Paris, where Cooper became acquainted with tyranny, with the continental independence movements, and with the turbulent French political scene, witnessing the rise of Louis Philippe in 1830. It is common opinion among early biographers that Europe marks a turning point in Cooper’s life, as the stay was complicated by his pretense to speak in defense of the American democracy, a stance that was somewhat reflected in the reception of his literary works, both at home and in England (Grossman; Franklin, *James Fenimore Cooper*). This happened as the rise of Andrew Jackson, with the concurrent rise of mass culture, was creating a realignment in the U.S. that Cooper was scarcely ready to accept. On returning home, he particularly resented what he judged to be the overpowering importance of the press, and denounced several Whig newspapers for libel, starting a series of legal actions that lasted for several years.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly enough, the first bout of what came to be known as the “libel war” was the controversy that took place around *The Bravo*. A few months after its publication, the Whig newspaper *The New York American* published an utterly unfavorable article on the work. Despite what the reviewer would later contend, the article moved directly into the extra-literary, questioning Cooper’s positioning as a U.S. citizen.<sup>5</sup> Repeating a somewhat trite cliché, the article raised the question of what should be expected of an American writer abroad, and implicitly invited Cooper to keep inside the limits of his own world. The demand is doubly relevant because it shadows what was written by some of the Italian reviewers. Complaints as to the author’s inability to meet the demand of a new setting were especially voiced by Venetian intellectuals, bringing to bear terms of loyalty and accuracy. Such terms reflect in a prismatic fashion the mode of *The New York*

*American*. Its charge was that, by choosing a foreign setting, Cooper was becoming alienated from his American audience. In Italy, his foray into the Venetian past was felt to be superficial, and unauthorized by his scanty knowledge and study of the history and customs of the city. By moving out of his own terrain, he was betraying the expectations of the Italian audience. Faults with the novel's history and historiography were found, and they left a small but persistent trail of acrimonious comments that would last for years.

It is interesting to read *The New York American* alongside the unfavorable Italian reception. Given Cooper's reaction to it, *The New York American's* article has frequently been at the center of scholarly interest; focus, however, has mostly been on its biographical import (Grossman, Waples, Railton). Reading it anew in a somewhat different context helps to reinstate it as a text, revealing how much the reviewers' political anxiety superseded the novel's complexities. In both cases, anxiety entails an act of erasure of the authorial Preface, which obscures not only the struggle of the novel for a somewhat new meaning, but also the emergence of Jacopo (the bravo) as a victim in its second part.

## 2. AMERICAN AND ENGLISH RECEPTION

It is important to underline that not all contemporary reviews were so pointedly unfavorable. Many followed the traditional paradigm, focusing on *The Bravo's* merits and demerits as a novel (see House for contemporary reception in the U.S. and Europe). The book was generally read as an historical romance, and interpreted in the wake of its possible antecedents. The problem is considered by the anonymous reviewer of the *Southern Review* (February 1832): he counters possible accusations of plagiarism by arguing that Matthew Lewis's pretended translation of Zschokke (*The Bravo of Venice*, 1804) has a similar title, but shares little with Cooper's novel, except the innocence of the protagonist ("Art IV").<sup>6</sup> Other sources also seem to be approving, especially of the construction of characters. Despite "incongruit[ies]" in their way of speaking, characters are very favorably commented on by the *The Ladies' Magazine and Literary Gazette* (1832): "[T]he genius that can portray an individual in the lowest walks of life, one who is ignorant, poor, and old, and yet make the fate of that individual, in consequence of affectionate feeling and moral excellence

only, of intense interest to the reader, must possess powers of mind of a high, as well as pure order" ("Literary Notices" 43). The *American Monthly Review* also praises Cooper's ability with characters, and pronounces Gelsomina a witness to the author's ability to create female protagonists. On the other hand, the reviewer notes faults: the novel lacks polish, the style is sloppy, and there are repetitions. The title should contain a reference to Venice, rather than to an eponymous character, and it is in fact mistaken to call the protagonist "a bravo," since he does not possess the features of a cutthroat, and is rather a victim "of his own ill fame" ("Art. IX").

Things were different in England, where Cooper was read as a voice from the American ex-colonies. According to William Cairns' compilation of the British reception of American writers, "the *Bravo* attracted much notice in England, partly because it was, after *Precaution*, the author's first venture in the treatment of an European scene, partly because Cooper's political and controversial writings were making him a topic of discussion" (133). Some of the reviews were clearly positive. They came from the journals of Colburn – Colburn and Bentley were Cooper's publishers in England – and were so encomiastic as to be labelled "puffing." The *New Monthly Magazine* defined the novel powerfully moral; pronounced the protagonist an unparalleled portrayal of humanity; and described Cooper's view of Venice as a new and fresh representation of the city. The reviewer continued by speculating that "[s]ome of the historical and political details will be the dull parts of the work in the general eye"; but he objected that "they are valuable, and necessary to the effect to be produced." Similarly, the *Literary Gazette* claims that – despite Cooper's long political digressions, "whose whole and sole object is to prove that everything went wrong in the world till America set the example of right" – this "is no business of ours"; and that "all we have to do, is to assure our readers, that among the many productions of Mr. Cooper's prolific pen, few are more vivid in interest, or more original, than *The Bravo*" (qtd. in Cairns 137, 136).

The *New Monthly* and the *Literary Gazette* must have felt that there would be objections to the novel's excess of didacticism and politics, and raised the problem in order to answer it. And an excess of politics was one of the few clear faults that were ascribed to *The Bravo* at the time of its publication. Subtly intermixed with the prevalence of politics was dissatisfaction with Cooper's performance on a terrain not his own. The implication is that his

writing is powerful and lively enough to portray the new land, but not polished enough to enter the scene of Europe. The *Edinburgh Literary Journal* declared that Cooper, the writer of sea novels, could not set foot on land. Most importantly, a similar contention was contained in the issue of the *Athenaeum* reprinted in 1832 by *The Museum of Foreign Literature and Science*. The *Athenaeum* wonders how much space can be allowed an American to criticize England: "There is much that is national in our love for America and Americans . . . All feelings and impulses nevertheless have their limit, and so must nationality." Consequently, Cooper can "be as fiercely national as he pleases," but cannot "bring his prejudices and his caprices to the market of London." This pretense, and his trespassing, jeopardize his literary inventiveness, and Cooper proves a better writer on his native ground than in Europe. In Europe he becomes "but a second-rate genius," unable "to extract originality from the materials which earlier artists overlooked or laid aside," and *The Bravo* is basically biased by the authorial choice to teach a "political lesson," and to show "the complex machinery of a state," instead of representing "human feelings and human passions" ("Literary Notices" 45; "From the Athenaeum" 38-39).

It is not surprising that nineteenth-century reviews do not really consider problems of structure. Given *The Bravo's* overarching political thesis, on the other hand, comments on the novel's thrust in that direction were to be expected. As pointed out by Dorothy Waples, diverse political ideas were bound to prompt diverse reactions, and the author was right in claiming that "he had no reason to be dissatisfied with *The Bravo's* reception, since with the mass of readers it became popular for its story, and among a few 'who were accustomed to separate principles from facts' the political intention was perceived" (85). It is, consequently, significant that the authorial political intention is noticed and fastidiously set aside by the reviewer of the *New York American*.

### 3. CASSIO

In his response, Cooper claimed that the erasure had a political, and transnational, overtone. Although published in the U.S., he argued, the attack had been aimed at serving the French loyalists in the "financial controversy"

on public expenditure that had gained international attention at the time of publication of *The Bravo*. Following his arguments, Dorothy Waples assumes that the newspaper clearly changed its attitude, after receiving, in April 1832, a dispatch with news that Cooper had entered the “controversy,” to defend the American system (87-88).<sup>7</sup> It is only two months later (and more than six months after publication of the novel in the U.S.) that the newspaper published on its front page a review by an anonymous writer undersigned as Cassio (“[For the New York American]”).<sup>8</sup> Cassio’s article is so utterly destructive in literary terms that it can be set apart from the rest of *Bravo’s* reception, even the English press, or the unflattering *Athenaeum*.<sup>9</sup> In terms that recall Twain’s essay of half a century later, Cassio deprives the novel of any concrete existence, and defines it *null*, and *barren*: “We have forgotten the plot, we have forgotten the hero and heroine, we have even forgotten in what small portion of the work we were interested.” Besides the lack of empathy, the article insists on literary antecedents and complains of a lack of originality that goes beyond Cooper’s usual habit of “reproducing and re-grinding his own materials.” *The Bravo* is, in fact, not a specimen of Cooper’s “minor” fault of “self imitation,” Cassio contends, but a case of real plagiarism: the story is “borrowed from [the] almost forgotten drama,” *Abellino*, published in Boston by Dunlap in 1802.<sup>10</sup> The original plot being “swollen, by a fertility peculiar to weeds and our author, into nearly *five hundred octavo pages*” (emphasis added).

Accusations of being repetitive were not unusual for Cooper, and there might even be an influence, in *The Bravo*, of the “black legend” of Venice. Cassio, however, does not stop at the threshold of the literary, but construes his objections into an open political attack. Halfway through the article, he puts forward the crucial argument that carries the review into the national field. Literary assessment “would seem a natural conclusion to the duty of the critic,” were it not that “the bearings of the case” involve Cooper’s fame as an American author:

It happens that our author’s name is honorably identified with the literature of his country, and therefore we claim that he is bound either to sustain his reputation, or hold his peace: and we say this the more freely from our conviction that the falling off does not originate in his ability, but his will. There is, to our

apprehension, an excess of arrogance in giving a novel to the world with the virtual declaration, "my name is a guaranty [sic] for my book[.]"

At a time when Cooper was measuring his idea of nationhood against the European experience, Cassio directly stepped into the process, claiming a right to deny him authorization as an American author. He was clearly calling for a reaction. Cooper did not answer immediately, but followed suit only later, in a letter to the *Albany Daily Advertiser*, and in *A Letter to His Countrymen*.<sup>11</sup>

In what might be – and was – perceived as a paranoid construction, he framed the question in open trans-national terms, claiming that behind the review there were the French opponents of Lafayette. Interestingly enough, and contrary to Cassio's refusal to even "read" *The Bravo*, a large part of his argument was based on textual considerations of language and of the book's circulation (*A Letter* 281ff). Three editions had been published in 1831. The first one was printed in three volumes by Colburn and Bentley in London. The title decided upon by Cooper was *The Bravo*. Proofs of the Bentley edition went to the U.S., where the novel was published in November in two volumes by Carey and Lea of Philadelphia. In the Carey edition, the title reads *The Bravo. A Tale, by the author of "The Spy," "The Red Rover," "The Water-Witch,"* etc. A one-volume edition also came out in Paris in 1831, published by Baudry, arguably the "five hundred octavo pages" referred to by Cassio.

In *A Letter to His Countrymen*, Cooper follows a twofold line of reasoning. First, the given subtitle "a Venitian [sic] story" is an "interpolation of the European booksellers," and evidence enough that the reviewer used an uncontrolled version circulating on the French market. The reference is doubly incorrect, since the Baudry edition is not only issued in France – and one an "American" should not resort to – but is also "spurious, and abounds with blunders, having been, in part, printed from uncorrected sheets, obtained from another country." The second line of reasoning has to do directly with language. The French construction of some idioms and expressions used by Cassio – the article's French accent, in other words – is for Cooper clear evidence that the American review is a translation done from a French source. The style is obscure and denounces "insincere writing:" it abounded "in faults of idiom and of grammar ... and it violated, in an essential point, a received usage of English composition" (282-83).



However unlikely in terms of argumentation, the rebuttal amounts to saying that the attack was due to party affiliations, and that such must have been Cassio's chosen terrain emerges amid the catalogue of minimal narrative units that – he claims – are the only traces the novel leaves on the reader. “Honest appendages” that, he doubts, “should be introduced at all,” and that comprise the “already seen” writing devices of Cooper. Among such “appendages” there are not only the awkward “essays on political economy,” “interspersed” in the book, but also the “Preface”: “We can recal [sic], it is true, some <tracery> of a preface which appears to be <anything but to the purpose>.” This last statement engages what is, in fact, very much “to the purpose” in the author's mind; more significantly so, it does it by literally erasing the “Preface.” The denial is not to be underestimated, as it in fact denounces an inability to cope with the *Bravo's* request to open a “thought process.” It leaves open the problem of Cooper's eclecticism, and of his novels' resistance “to solution.”<sup>12</sup> There remains to be seen how such resistance and eclecticism was taken by Italian readers. They were certainly not biased by party affiliation, and the reviews were more committed to the text. In Italy as elsewhere, nevertheless, much depended on the possibility of reading *The Bravo* beyond its immediate context.

#### 4. “SO MUCH SURPRISE AND PLEASURE”

He stands at the head of romance. His works are regularly republished in England and at Paris, both in French and English. They have been translated into German, and a French version published in Belgium. Three translations of some of them have appeared in Italy, one at Milan, one at Leghorn, and a third at Naples. (“Art. VIII”)

No American writer has been extensively read as James Fenimore Cooper. His novels have been translated into nearly every European tongue. Nay, we are told – but hardly know how to believe it – that they may be had duly rendered into Persian at the bazars of Ispahan. We have seen some of them, well thumbed and worn, at a little village of a remote mountainous district of Sicily; and in Naples and Milan, the bookstalls bear witness that “L'Ultimo dei Mohecani” [sic] is still a popular work. (“Art. VI”)

Both quotations bear witness in their turn to the success of Cooper in Italy. As shown by Sullam Calimani in *Il primo dei Mohicani*, he was the most translated American author of the nineteenth century, with 19 of his 32 novels published in the country. Some of the novels had multiple editions, often by diverse publishing companies. By far the most important is *The Bravo*, with 22 editions in the nineteenth century – a remarkable performance for a book that was not bound to be a favorite, either in Italy or in America. There follows *The Spy*, with 14 editions, and then *Red Rover* with 10. Interestingly enough, *The Last of the Mohicans* comes fourth with only 6 editions. The most important place of publication was Milan, and the general focus seems to have been on Cooper as an author of historical romances (14–15). Angelo Bonfanti of Milan, for instance, published a series “Scelti romanzi storici di J.F. Cooper.”<sup>13</sup>

It can be safely surmised that interest in Cooper signified freedom and a generic thrust towards – and trust in – the possibilities of republicanism and national independence. An investigation of the ways in which this influenced the reception of *The Bravo* would require the contribution of Italian cultural historians. It seems likely, however, that a generic interest in Cooper as a writer from the “new world” pushed the American political scene to the background, stretching the novel’s intention. Although placed in a distant past, the oppression that the novel staged in Venice at the hands of a small oligarchy could have been taken as a metaphor of current political oppression in the Lombardo-Veneto, and in Italy at large: not a warning about a possible future, but a call to arms for the present. This much is implied by the publisher Batelli in advertising the first translation of “a new novel by Cooper ... plotted upon Italian history, and more precisely upon the interesting and little known [Venetian] Republic.” Readers that “hard times and bad fortune” prevent from “the practice of more rigorous and noble disciplines,” Batelli continues, will find the story moving and instructive. The authorial claim in the “Preface” that the novel aims to depict a “*soi disant*” story to instruct the American public against the dangers of political manipulation is reversed completely, and the readers are invited to look into the American mirror as a means of finding political inspiration for imitation and action.

Crucially, the dislocation finds a correlative in an act of erasure that recalls Cassio. The Batelli edition, and all the editions based on it, do not carry the

authorial “Preface.” The gesture through which Cooper points at the paradigmatic value of his story for democracy is buried. There might be several reasons for doing so. It was common practice in the past to cut prefatory materials – when not whole passages – in translated editions. In this case, however, there might have been a more pointed reason: the “Preface” could sound too radical to be safely kept; it was too close to the republican ideas that, at the time, were gaining momentum in Italy, in the context of irredentist movements. Be that as it may, thus deprived of authorial instructions, the novel could be interpreted more freely, and reception hesitated between acceptance and rejection, as some of the readers must have been taken aback by finding that exoticism, in *The Bravo*, was close to home. In terms that were not too far from the ones used by some English reviewers, Cooper’s othering capers were found much less acceptable when they did not take place in a distant setting.

Some read the novel as an unwarranted attack on Venice, and on its past independence. Venetian intellectuals, in particular, were ready to vindicate the city against the novel’s historical mistakes and inaccuracies, and outrage at the treatment of Venetian history is at the center of the lengthy reviews the novel received upon its appearance in Italy. As effectively documented by Calimani, Venetian intellectuals reacted hotly to the negative portrait of the Republic.<sup>14</sup> They pointed out a series of historical mistakes, “a cominciare dal personaggio del ‘bravo,’ figura inesistente nei territori della repubblica” (“the ‘bravo’ character in the first place, a role that never existed in the domains of the Repubblica”), arguing that “[u]no studio maggiore delle usanze degli italiani ... avrebbe istruito l’autore” (“more study of Italian usages ... would have better instructed the author.”)<sup>15</sup>

Here again, the general frame is lost because the focus is too close. By criticizing Cooper’s historical accuracy, the Venetian reviewers offer a direct critique of his most important historical source. The 1831 “Preface” refers to the “well-known work” of M. Daru for “the justification of [the author’s] likeness.” Having come to Italy with the army of Napoleon, Count Pierre Antoine Daru had produced a treatise on Venice based, as the “Preface” says, on “the archives of that ruthless government falling into the hands of the French” (House 3).<sup>16</sup> Along with Samuel Rogers’ long poem *Italy* (1822-1828) – a book given to Cooper in Florence by Rogers himself, and widely quoted in the epigraphs – Daru is certainly one of the novel’s favored sources.

More particularly, the narrative seems to have been generated by the apocryphal set of maxims that Daru had discovered in France, and that were intended as a secret guidance for the Council of Three, the city's inquisition. The maxims were attached to Daru's *History*, and they account for the most important events in the plot – and for their historical inaccuracy.

For all its awkwardness in terms of reflection on the Italian readership, Daru's meaning in the process of invention deserves attention. His maxims are necessary as the second term of the dialectics, described by Susan Fenimore Cooper, between the city's appearance and the machinery of government. Everybody in the novel is acted upon by this contradiction, and the most important actor in the secret council, Gradenigo, is himself represented as a product and a victim of its "vicious sway, corrupting alike the ruler and the ruled" (460).<sup>17</sup> Placed at the end of the novel, the claim that the system's "sway" corrupts rulers and ruled clearly reaches beyond the limits of Venice, pointing at other referents in the real world.<sup>18</sup> What these referents should be, however, is in fact a slippery question, and this might account for the fact that *The Bravo* has been construed – at different times – as targeting different objects.<sup>19</sup>

I will conclude by contending that uncertainty with regard to the book's final target amounts – at that time and moment – to a felicitous kind of indeterminacy. Felicitous, that is to say, in literary terms: a hesitancy that marks *The Bravo* as a passage, and enhances its drama. The hesitancy is made clear by a break in the narrative's development. One of the supposed secret maxims of Venice forbids that a Venetian noblewoman is given in marriage to a foreigner. This results in the secret scheme of the Inquisition to abduct Violetta in order to separate her from her lover Don Camillo. Set at the beginning of Book Two in the American edition – and in the middle of the story – the abduction of Violetta by the government's thugs should start, conventionally, a series of escapes and pursuits leading to some kind of happy – although qualified – ending. As reviewers complained, however, this does not happen. The subplot loses momentum, it is functionally abandoned and quickly resolved, to move on to Jacopo's undeserved death sentence. A gap is left open at the heart of the plot, which has all the characters of a "lapse" and such a lapse seems to be more significant than the contemporaries, or even Cooper, realized. Dynamic evidence that it was probably due to a temporary

change of direction has now emerged, showing that, immediately after the abduction of Violetta and midway through the book, there was a temporary bifurcation. In 2006, Lance Schachterle discussed two and a half rejected chapters of *The Bravo* numbered XVIII, XIX, and XX. Introducing an American sea captain, and resuming an earlier motif in the novel, the chapters “narrate an exciting quest by sea as Don Camillo, the Bravo, and their associates sail after Don Camillo’s abducted bride.”

The rejected chapters would have prompted a different development, turning the story into an adventure narration of naval pursuit in the Adriatic. Schachterle contends, however, that a stress on the fate of Camillo and Violetta was bound to detract “from Jacopo and his plight” (87, 91). Cooper must have realized that such was not the thrust of the novel. Instead, he went back to the possibilities opened by the abrupt and dramatic showdown in which Jacopo reveals his whole story to Don Camillo.<sup>20</sup> Set in the graveyard assigned to heretics outside the boundaries of the city, the showdown foregrounds the bravo as a tragic hero already beyond the limits either of Venice or the story. It anticipates the final tragedy, bringing to the fore the ideal scenario of the novel.<sup>21</sup> Like the burial ground, Jacopo Frontoni is set forth as a “no locus” already, a victim of the state of terror of “*the familiar operations of Venetian policy*” (*The Bravo* v-vi; emphasis added).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The other two works are *The Heidenmauer* and *The Headsman*.

<sup>2</sup> The Coopers entered Italy in October 1828, two years and five months after their arrival in Europe. They spent the winter in Florence and spring in the countryside. At the end of July 1829, the family moved to Naples to later spend some time in Sorrento. From thence to Rome on December 1, 1829 – and from Rome to the north by mid-April of 1830 – their journey crossed Italy in a northeast direction to reach Venice by the end of April. After ten days in Venice, the family left for Germany, a passage James Fenimore crossed nostalgically “looking over a shoulder,” as Mrs. Cooper would later say.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Griswold, 1844; *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, 4:461. Work on the established Cooper Edition of *The Bravo* is being carried on by Lance Schachterle and James Sappenfield. The “Historical Introduction” written by Kay Seymour House for the final text has already been approved by the editorial staff (Seymour House MSS). To their scholarly work I am much indebted.

<sup>4</sup> Dekker and McWilliams discuss the difference of treatment Cooper generally received (and reciprocated) by newspapers or magazines. A still authoritative study of the whole controversy is Waples.

<sup>5</sup> That the prolonged European stay provoked criticism in the U.S. similar to that in *The New York American* is argued by Railton. See also Battilana.

<sup>6</sup> Apparently, Zschokke also served as a basis for William Dunlap's *Abellino*.

<sup>7</sup> The question was whether monarchy is less expensive than a republic, and Cooper maintained that the latter was less expensive, bringing evidence from the U.S. taxation and expenditure system. In the background there was the opposition of Lafayette to the authoritarian swing following Louis Philippe's ascent to the throne. Cooper's version of these events is in *A Letter to His Countrymen*.

<sup>8</sup> House discusses the politics of the newspaper, and gives information on a possible identification of Cassio.

<sup>9</sup> It should be mentioned that the *Athenaeum* reviewer partially corrected his statements by claiming that Cooper is "an author whom we love: he has a fine conception of character, a true eye for the picturesque and an art in employing his many-coloured materials, at once striking and original" (38).

<sup>10</sup> See note 4. Knowledge of Dunlap's *Abellino* or Lewis's *The Bravo* was insistently denied by Cooper himself and by Susan Fenimore Cooper.

<sup>11</sup> Reprinted in the *New York American* (June 24, 1833).

<sup>12</sup> "[Cooper's] characters are elements of thought, things to think with; and the convolutions of the plots, the captures, rescues and pursuits of the narrative, are stages in a thought process, phases in a meditation" (Tompkins 119); and, says Geoffrey Rans, "we might add, just as resistant to solution" (37-38).

<sup>13</sup> This notwithstanding, and in spite of his success, it is very possible that at least some works of Cooper were translated into Italian from French translations. It so happens that, quite ironically, the first novel published in Italy by the name of Cooper was *Redwood* by Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1824) in 1827. The story had been tentatively attributed to Cooper in France, and it was ascribed to his name in Italy (Sullam Calimani 11).

<sup>14</sup> Also see House 8-9. Thanks to such interest, it can be safely maintained that the setting contributed to the book's success in terms of number of reviews. In a sense, *The Bravo* has received no less contemporary attention in Italy than in the U.S.

<sup>15</sup> Gaetano Barbieri, *L'Eco* 56 (aprile-maggio 1833), qtd. in Sullam Calimani 17. For a discussion of *The Bravo* in relation to the history of "bravos" in the territory of the Republic see Manzatto.

<sup>16</sup> References to Daru's work and to the inspiration Cooper received from Daru for the character of "the bravo" may be found in subsequent editions and in letters.

<sup>17</sup> Also see the definition of Gradenigo – the main schemer in the secret Council of Three – as the product of his own social context: "The Signor Gradenigo was born with all the sympathies and natural kindliness of other men, but accident, and an education which had received a strong bias from the institutions of the self-styled Republic, had made him the creature of a conventional policy" (98).

<sup>18</sup> Rosella Mamoli Zorzi argues that the Venice of *The Bravo* is a literary construct, and not the yardstick on which to measure the authenticity of the book.

<sup>19</sup> House reminds us that “[t]he influence of what would come to be known as President Jackson’s ‘Kitchen Cabinet’ could be likened to the mysterious Council of Ten” (4). Gerald Kennedy argues that in Europe Cooper came to regard the United States from “a critical viewpoint” (93). A similar contention is in Robert Levine, 58-103. On England and France as targets, see Franklin, “Cooper 1789-1851,” 45. On Venice as the embodiment of a threat to democracy see Schachterle.

<sup>20</sup> The rejection, Schachterle argues, is significant in the case of Cooper – who worked quickly, and revised significantly, but was certainly not inclined to erase his own work – and contradicts the notion that he was a sloppy writer.

<sup>21</sup> The passage is skilfully analyzed by John Paul Russo.

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