

The Scapigliatura: experiments in narrative.

Rovani, Tarchetti and Dossi

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ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the diversity and experimentalism that typifies the narrative writings of the Scapigliatura. It offers a reading of key-texts by Rovani, Tarchetti and Dossi which focusses on the narrative techniques and structures which are used in the construction of meaning. Although critical attention addresses itself to the text and the narrative elements distinctive to it, it considers too the influence that context and circumstance exercise over the production of the work.

The introduction looks at the particular problems that Italian Unification of 1861 with its accompanying political and cultural changes brought to the writer. This is followed by the body of the thesis which is made up of readings of specific texts. Chapters 2 and 3 study Tarchetti's and Rovani's very different attempts to produce committed, didactic writing with the instruments of popular fiction and the devices of the feuilleton. The 4th chapter discusses Dossi's semi-autobiographical fiction, L'altrieri and Vita di Alberto Pisani, in which although here too the narrator interpellates the reader through the medium of the text, empirical questions relating to the reading-public and the political climate no longer present themselves. The fragmentation of text and self that is witnessed in Dossi's writing returns as a theme in the discussion of Tarchetti's racconti fantastici in the last of the genre-related chapters. Here the function of the fantastic is examined together with the narratological elements of the genre. The last two chapters

take up one aspect of this: the assault the fantastic makes on our sense of the integrity of character. The textual construction of character is discussed in relationship to Tarchetti's novel Fosca, where it is inscribed as an unstable, ambivalent category dependent on who is employing the linguistic register at any given time, and Dossi's misogynistic treatise La desinenza in 'A' which has to find the devices to construct and sustain a reductionist image of all women as Woman fixed in a few immutable traits.

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Foreword

The writers of the Milanese Scapigliatura have presented critics with an apparently intractable problem. Their importance has been acknowledged both for the historical significance of the period they lived through and for their own awareness that literature had to find a new social function and forms appropriate to it. Critical evaluation, however, of the literary merits of their individual works, from Carducci and Croce on, has generally found their writing disappointing, so attention has been concentrated on the contribution they have made as a movement to Italian cultural history. It is this notion of a unifying thread which will integrate them in the literary canon that is the nub of the problem. They have successfully resisted any attempt to identify them definitively as a cohesive group organised around an anti-conformism of life-style and attitudes, leaving space for successive generations of critics either to draw up fresh registers of their members (recently critics such as Bigazzi and Bettini have dismissed Rovani from the ranks of the Scapigliatura) or even to deny that such a grouping exists at all; such is Marcazzan's approach when he reduces the movement to a number of "incontri piuttosto fortuiti". Work aimed at identifying in their narrative fiction or in their critical writings a common aesthetics has also proved unsuccessful, leaving Binni to condemn them for "la mancanza di una vera poetica organica, coerente" or Romano relegating most of them to the much less innovatory - and more provincial-sounding "secondo Romanticismo lombardo".

The present thesis shares with other critical works, such as those by Mariani and Ghidetti, the assumption that the socio-cultural background exercised a considerable influence on the literary product; I am thinking in particular of the Grub Street conditions, the effects of serialisation, a new public and the changing relationship between writer and readers. It believes too that the writings of the Scapigliatura have a function as a cultural clearing-house, recuperating aspects of Romanticism that were lost through the nationalistic bent of Italian culture in the immediately preceding years as well as introducing into Italian literature, through original works as opposed to translations, forms and genres which were being elaborated elsewhere in Europe.

Where it differs fundamentally is that it sets out to examine the writings of the Scapigliatura in terms of the questions and problems that the individual text raises and not in response to external issues imposed by a reading which seeks to intergrate the work in a literary canon. These specific writings by Rovani, Tarchetti and Dossi have been chosen because each of them is in some way innovatory either in the text's response to the socio-cultural problems associated with writing fiction at that time, or in its exploration of the structures of story-telling which lead to questions about the narrative act itself. The thesis is postulated on the belief that the Scapigliatura have in common a decision to produce an autonomous form of artistic expression, which owes no debts to the patria or the establishment, but which does have a serious commitment to narrative experiment. By opening up the body of the text and examining its components, it sets out to discuss the range, heterogeneity and complexity of these experiments with narrative.

Chapter 1.

Political unity and cultural disunity

1.1 The political background

Life in post-Unification Italy brought with it for the Milanese Scapigliatura along with many Italian intellectuals of the day a disillusionment mounting at times to a sense of personal betrayal. An initial reaction of disappointment and anti-climax was to be expected after the conditions which had given rise to the expression of unity and national mission had been, at least in part, resolved, but it was exacerbated by the circumstances in which unity was obtained and by the structures through which it was maintained. Pasquale Villari observed of his contemporary Italy:

Chiunque... oggi esamina sè stesso, s'accorgerà, se è stato patriotta, che la sua condizione nella società era nel passato più morale, che non è oggi. Allora c'era una guerra, una speranza, un sacrificio ed un pericolo continuo che sollevava lo spirito nostro. Oggi invece è una lotta di partiti e qualche volta d'interesse, senza un Dio a cui sacrificare la nostra esistenza. Questo Dio era allora la patria. (1)

The roots of this response are to be found in the moral and ideological disquiet experienced after the events of 1848 which routed many of the myths of the Risorgimento. Morale in Lombardy must have been particularly badly affected by the factionalism and internal struggles which developed during the Milanese insurrection and which Cattaneo records so vividly in Dell'insurrezione di Milano nel 1848. The sense of a common mission had gone. In his memoirs Giovanni Visconti Venosta contrasts the climate of '48 and '49 with the conditions that prevailed a year later:

Tutto era finito, tutto era perduto! Non s'erano perdute soltanto le battaglie, s'erano perdute quella concordia e quella fede che avevano sollevati e diretti gli animi fino allora. La leva possente che aveva mossa la rivoluzione pareva spezzata per sempre. (2)

To plumb the depths of emargination that the scapigliati experienced in regard to the new state one must take into account the way in

which Unification was achieved and the early decisions made in its name.

In their capacity as writers and journalists the Scapigliatura had no part to play in the new Italy, none was given to them, nor were they able to carve one out for themselves. The scission that came about between intellectuals and society, culture and politics, was both so divisive and so decisive that according to Asor Rosa it persisted through to the Fascist era and possibly beyond (3). Treves in a review of the scapigliati writers to whom he was by no means always sympathetic, pointed out that

in Italia si presta poca attenzione a quel piccolissimo mondo che si chiama letterario. Da noi comincia appena ad esistere, giacchè fin qui l'uomo di lettere non era che un supplemento di avvocato, di notaio, di professore. Il letterato non era una professione distinta. (4)

Villari too in a closely argued essay on the function of school in the new Italy observed that inadequate attention had been paid to socio-cultural and moral issues, but that at the same time these could not be tackled without an immediate amelioration of the material conditions of life for the majority of people. (5)

Politically, in common with 98% of the population, the Scapigliatura were also emarginated as citizens for they had no democratic right to intervene in the decisions taken in their name. Cavour's liberalism and his belief in a parliamentary system was related to his faith in a very narrow census. The electoral law of 1860 was substantially the same as that of 1848, - males over 25, literate and paying 40 lire in tax per year. This meant that between 1861-70 under 2% of the population or 418,696 Italians were qualified to vote. The patrimony necessary was so large that even the middle-class and the highly qualified were excluded. Electors and elected did not therefore represent the country.

It was a reactionary decision, but it was also for political and psychological reasons a bad decision because it emarginated many of those who had until then been actively and creatively involved in the building of a unified Italy. The Right soon came to appreciate the danger; Stefano Jacini produced a pamphlet in 1870, 'Sulle condizioni della cosa pubblica in Italia dopo il '66', in which he argued that the electoral law was anachronistic, and even the ruling-class came to see that the electorate had to be increased because of the degree of political alienation that existed in the country. (6) Indeed, an important result of the extremely unrepresentative way in which the main democratic body in the country was elected, was the deep hostility and mistrust with which it was regarded. Politics and parliamentary life were regarded with suspicion and cynicism. They were held in such low esteem that, for example, when Felice Cavallotti decided after much consideration to enter his candidature in 1873, his close friend Achille Bizzoni tried to dissuade him by pointing out that parliamentary politics were corrupt and beyond redemption.

Il Parlamento è un sozzo porcaio, ove l'uomo più onesto ci lascia per lo meno il senso della delicatezza e del pudore. (7)

Bizzoni and Cavallotti both had some experience of this having five years earlier published two bitterly condemnatory articles in the Gazzettino rosa, the voice of the democratic wing of the Scapigliatura which saw itself as the rallying-point for the young against the fearful and ultra-cautious politics of the 'old' men. Bizzoni's and Cavallotti's articles accused some members of Parliament (it was claimed at the time that as many as sixty were involved) of accepting bribes from bankers. The result was a clamp-down on many democratic journalists and of these the case brought against

the editors of the Gazzettino rosa for defamation and insult proved to be the most sensational. This distrust which was shared by all those associated with the Milanese Scapigliatura soon extended across all areas of public life and the journals of the 1860's testify to the involution away from the public arena. Ghislanzoni in his own journal Rivista minima noted what was happening:

Come abbiamo detto nell'esordio, patria, indipendenza, libertà sono parole che hanno perduto il loro effetto. Voi potete udirle senza scossa, collo sbadiglio sul labbro, fors'anche con ghigno beffardo. (8)

In his role as journalist Ghislanzoni observed and recorded the growing cynicism and disillusionment, but also made his own contribution to its development by presenting politics as essentially dirty. He frequently resorts to the language of disease which was so fashionable in his day to impart a sense of the impure; the contaminated and the contaminating, "... la città mi apparve alquanto purgata da codesta lebbra. La politica è in ribasso a Milano". (9) Disillusionment, indifference, egotism, cynicism, these are the terms in which the friends, commentators and biographers of the Scapigliatura describe the moral and political climate of the day.

There were specific areas of concern too, one of the most manifest being the monarchy. The first important law to be passed by Cavour's government after Unification was the promulgation of the act which conferred on Vittorio Emanuele II the title of King of Italy. It was a contentious issue among the Left because the addition of secondo to his title represented not just a symbolic attachment but the institutional continuity between the Kingdom of Sardinia and the Kingdom of Italy. Sardinia gave Italy her

dynasty, the Statute and many important aspects of her legislature. The Statuto Albertino conferred on Italy the most powerful monarchy in Europe with complete freedom to intervene in both internal and external politics; as article 5 spells out:

Al re solo appartiene il potere esecutivo. Egli è il capo supremo dello Stato; comanda tutte le forze di terra e di mare; dichiara la guerra, fa i trattati di pace, d'alleanza, di commercio ed altri,

(only in fiscal and financial matters did the King require the Chamber's agreement). The legal powers the monarchy enjoyed were particularly visible in the early years, for the King frequently intervened in the choice of ministers for the War Ministry and the Admiralty and, more importantly, in resolving at an extra-parliamentary level the various government crises from Riccasoli's cabinet through to Menabrea's. Both Vittorio Emanuele II and Umberto I had very close connections with the army, but the best instrument for them to realize their aspirations was the Senate which consisted of the monarchist faithful, recruited in general from ex-deputies, high functionaries and famous citizens with strong conservative leanings. Less evident but nevertheless highly influential was the partito di corte, whose presence was for example lamented by Ricasoli. At the same time there was no forceful opposition to the monarchy for the republicans to identify with, nor was it easy to voice opposition in view of the strict censorship. The king's mistakes were either received with silence or actively covered up, as happened in the cases of Aspromonte and above all Mentana when various parliamentary groups hid the documents which implicated him.

But it was not so much the figure of the man himself that was a source of concern for the democratic forces in Italy, as a preoccupation with the effect the institution was having on the

creation of Italy. Tarchetti, in his short story "Re per 24 ore" makes the point that a monarchy is not only a regressive force in itself, but that it also inevitably influences the other centres of power. A despotic form of government is always more amenable to a king than a democratic one. Here Tarchetti's king considers how he can consolidate his position:

Se io riesco a consolidarmi sul trono; se coi tesori di mio padre potrò formare un partito numeroso alla mia causa, muterò sull'istante i vecchi statuti del regno... e cambierò il governo costituzionale che mi tien legate le mani in un governo despótico. Farò come mio padre un colpo di stato. Che cos'è questo governo costituzionale? ... Aveva appreso nel mio paese come si debba governare una nazione: allora era suddito, adesso sono re, ma non si trattava che di invertire le parti. (10)

In Tarchetti's salutary tale an experienced and devious prime minister, the king's right-hand man, tells him that his position could be consolidated were he to operate a diversionary politics involving a foreign policy of expansion and aggression (war has regrettably to be ruled out because of the island's isolation), and a domestic policy of very minor acts of charity.

Amid the general dissatisfaction with the way in which unification was being forged, Lombardy felt with good reason, particularly hard done by. It experienced the effects of unification negatively: on a political and administrative level it found its role diminished as it underwent an obtuse process of "piedmontisation", while on an economic level it suffered badly from its loss of ties with Veneto and the rest of the Habsburg empire. In fact Lombardy emerged so badly that when it came to the question of Tuscany, Cavour used it as an example of how not to set about unifying and, in the event, Tuscany emerged with a much greater degree of autonomy. In a speech in the Chamber on 20th May 1860 Cavour had this to say:

È un fatto (ed io non giudico se sia fondato o no), è un fatto che quando noi siamo venuti al Ministero abbiamo trovato la Lombardia irrimediabilmente del modo col quale si era proceduto a suo riguardo, perchè, cioè, in poche settimane si erano pubblicati non so quante migliaia di articoli di legge decretandone l'applicazione in un paese nuovo, con impiegati nuovi e con norme assolutamente nuove. Che questo avesse prodotto un gran malumore in Lombardia è un fatto incontestabile. Non so se questo sia esagerato, ma quello che è certo è che, avendo veduto il cattivo effetto prodotto da questo modo di procedere, non abbiamo voluto seguirlo verso la Toscana. (11)

Lombardy inherited from the Piedmontese system a more authoritarian character and a centralized administration which left it with less autonomy than it had previously enjoyed under the Austrian legislature. It was above all in the sector of public security that the repressive nature of the new laws revealed itself most starkly. What emerged was a State organized according to very rigid criteria, based on laws which were insensitive to people's needs (e.g. in the field of education), and little space for manoeuvre.

There remained however one area the Scapigliatura, in common with the democratic opposition, could rally round, and that was the need and desire to realize a complete and honourable completion to Italian unification. There had over the years been a radical transformation in the ideological climate in Italy, a change which had its roots in 1848 but again accelerated after 1860. Liberal catholicism which had linked the Church with the movement for national unity and ideals of progress, had gradually declined in the face of the intransigent politics of Pope Pio IX and the clash between the new state and the papacy in 1859-60. The publication of the encyclical Quanta cura and the Sillabo on the 8th December 1864 caused an uproar, for with their outright condemnation of various currents of contemporary philosophy (Ernesto Renan's book

Vita di Gesù with its humanisation of the figure of Christ had been published in France a year earlier and had immediately been translated into Italian) and all political ideologies inspired by them, they brought to an end any hope of reconciliation with the papacy and helped launch a new wave of anti-clericalism. In scapigliati circles the anti-clericalism extended into anti-catholicism, an ideological itinerary which can be traced, for example, through Praga's first volume of poetry Tavolozza to his second Penombre. (12) In the second half of Cento anni where he is freed of a very restrictive censorship Rovani includes many hostile references to the papal doctrine of infallibility and the Church's temporal power and wealth: "Il potere temporale del papa fu la più grande sventura del cristianesimo" (13) but some of the most vehement anti-papal sentiment finds expression in Dossi's writings. In "Una visita al papa" in Gocchie d'inchiostro the narrator describes his visit to the Vatican, identified as "quel piccolo rifugio dell'ignoranza e della immobilità, ammorbato d'Europa". Later what appears to be a white sack comes into view which on closer examination is found to be "Sua Santità, il servo dei servi, primo fra gli inciampi al progresso, massimo fra i nemici d'Italia". (14) Papal opposition politics continued unabated through the decade, culminating in the death-sentence passed and executed on two Italian patriots in 1870 (the King's personal plea for clemency went unheeded) and the publication of the Concilio Vaticano I in 1870 which continued the same intransigent attitude adopted in the Sillabo, with its condemnation of liberalism and socialism and its reiteration of the dogma of papal infallibility. Despite the many provocations, the Italian

government upheld the commitment made by Cavour in 1861 that Rome would become the capital of Italy, but it would be achieved by diplomacy and not by force. In the event it was internal changes in France which brought about the reluctant Italian occupation of Rome.

Ma il modo come il governo era andato a Roma suscitava anche perplessità e delusioni, soprattutto negli uomini di principi, come allora si diceva, nei quali erano più vive certe esigenze ideologiche e più sentite certe impostazioni generali nate nella prima metà del secolo. (15)

Or as Carlo Dossi bitterly observed, echoing the mood of many of his contemporaries:

Noi italiani, i vinti dei vinti dei vinti (perocchè vinti a Custoza dagli Austriaci, che erano stati battuti a Magenta dai Francesi, alla loro volta sconfitti a Worth ecc. dai Prussiani) siamo stati finalmente vincitori. E di chi? Dei soldati del Papa. (16)

The reluctance with which it appeared Rome was taken seemed to confirm the grounds for disillusionment which has its roots in the army's humiliating defeats a few years earlier in Custoza and a month later Lissa, where again poor leadership helped defeat the Italians. As we shall see in chapter 2, the army was already regarded with the deepest distrust by the democratic Left in Italy for whom Tarchetti's Una nobile follia became for a while a point of reference. Although Dossi makes no mention of Tarchetti, he criticises the De Amicis line which defended the role of the army as a democratic force and a source of public education:

Inoltre, l'autorità militare è pessima compagna di libertà; e gli eserciti non furono mai tanto funesti agli altri quanto ai loro propri paesi. E c'è ancora, chi in rima osa celebrare i massacri di migliaia di uomini. (17)

By the end of the decade Tarchetti was dead, Rovani was old and Dossi's own ideology moved sharply to the right and shortly afterwards he embarked upon a diplomatic career under Crispi, the

hero whom he felt made a stand against the meschinit  of the bourgeoisie and monarchy alike. Others turned their back on national politics and Praga for example whose biography is in many ways emblematic of the period after having written poems of patriotic fervour ("L'inno di Pio non" and "Ai colleghi napoletani") wrote a poem to commemorate his rejection of all nationalistic and ideological commitment:

Non un verso a Bruto o a Cesare
 Non un sol gettato ai venti
 In cui freme e rugge e turbina
 La bufera degli eventi! (18)

1.2 The Milanese "Scapigliatura"

In the early years it was their journalistic work, their life-styles and their personal friendships which in the eyes of their contemporaries, identified the members of what later became known as the Milanese Scapigliatura as part of a loosely-knit, numerically fluctuating group. The Scapigliatura was associated with a certain way of living and thinking one's life rather than with any literary or political movement, and when it was extended to the field of art its concerns continued to be ones of attitude. (19) The term itself first appeared in Cletto Arrighi's novel La Scapigliatura e il sei febbraio which was initially serialized in his own journal Cronaca grigia before appearing as a book in 1862. But Arrighi's presentation of the novel with an accompanying introduction first appeared in 1857 under the title La Scapigliatura milanese. He describes his search for the right word emphasizing that the term is not itself new but has been extricated from a dictionary and polished up. The characters in the novel are patriots who participate in the insurrection of the 6th February 1853,

but although he relates them in the introduction to precise social and psychological conditions he noticeably omits any reference to artistic self-expression or to any precise historical moment.

(This might be because his previous book Gli ultimi coriandoli suffered badly at the hands of the Austrian censors.) The protagonists are placed firmly in an urban context from which they feel emarginated but of which they form the avant-garde.

In tutte le grandi e ricche città del mondo incivilito esiste una certa quantità di individui d'ambo i sessi, v'è chi direbbe: una certa razza digente - fra i venti e i trentacinque anni non più; pieni d'ingegno, quasi sempre più avanzati del loro secolo; indipendenti come l'aquila delle Alpi; pronti al bene quanto al male; inquieti, travagliati, turbolenti... Quest casta o classe, vero pandemonio del secolo, personificazione della storditaggine e della follia, serbatoio del disordine, dello spirito d'indipendenza e di opposizione agli ordini stabiliti, questa classe, ripeto, che a Milano ha più che altrove una ragione e una scusa di esistere [..] (20)

Further on in the same description Arrighi writes of their exaggerated life-styles, their anarchistic flamboyance, their depths of despair, and it is these same characteristics that will later be used to identify the artistic Scapigliatura. Just over one hundred years later, on the occasion of an exhibition mounted to commemorate the Scapigliatura's impact in the visual arts, Dante Isella's definition does not deviate from his predecessors,

una condizione esistenzionale, riconducibile senza troppa fatica entro gli schemi descrittivi di qualsiasi evento o atteggiamento anticonformista, dai bohémien ai beatniks di oggi. (21)

The French bohême which provided the model for Arrighi similarly gave individuals in the Milanese group a precedent with which to identify and offered a succession of biographers a means of interpreting them which gave priority to their respective life-styles. There was no serious unity of intention in an artistic programme however, although the 1880's did see the emergence of a group of

realist scapigliati who took their literary models from France, in particular Zola. One effect of this group, which included Arrighi, Tronconi, Valera and Giarelli, was their recuperation of earlier scapigliati writings which singled out Tarchetti and Praga in the light of a socialist reading. As Cameroni's introduction to the Italian edition of Murger's Scènes de la vie de Bohême of 1872 makes explicit, the term continued to identify a movement in opposition.

La Scapigliatura è la negazione del pregiudizio, la propugnatrice del bello e del vero, l'affermazione dell'iniziativa individuale contro il quietismo. La reazione perseguita la Bohême perchè suona la diana della riscossa; i gaudenti la odiano perchè turba la loro digestione; gli ingenui la calunniano perchè non sanno comprenderla. (22)

It delineates an attitude which combines patriotism with hostility towards the bourgeoisie and the status quo, independence of thought and anti-conformism in life-style, but as the term became increasingly diffuse so its usage became accordingly flexible. It was also taken up as the title for a new periodical (Lo Scapigliato) which Cesare Tronconi launched in December 1866 and which sank after six numbers had appeared. In the only one still in existence, number 2, he identifies it very loosely as "un'assoluta indipendenza d'idee".

The emphasis given the term varied according to when and where it was used. The Gazzettino, later to become the Gazzettino rosa consistently emphasized its rebelliousness and anti-bourgeois nature sometimes to the annoyance of those concerned - Tarchetti wrote to the journal to take it to task for the unjust exaggeration of the amount he drank. At the same time there was a degree of self-conscious posturing injected with a substantial dose of irony; for example on the 19th February 1868 the Gazzettino published a 'private' correspondence exchanged between Bizzonei,

Ghislanzoni, Tarchetti and Torelli-Viollier in which much play is made of their mutual and acute poverty and their literary intentions directed at remedying this state of affairs. A colleague, the reader is told, has "ritirato dal suo editore il prezzo del suo romanzo intimo-psicologico-spiritistico-leggendario: Il palazzo del diavolo!!!!!!!!!!", while Tarchetti it is claimed has just committed himself to writing a novel for Il palcoscenico called Le emozioni di un verme del cimitero. The portrait of Tarchetti as a lover of the ugly and misshapen, a connoisseur of the macabre and grotesque owed much to his own self-projection as illustrated in the short piece he submitted to the Gazzettino for a special pre-Christmas number:

Vorrei essere un'iena, addentrarmi nei sepolcri e pascermi delle ossa dei morti. A questo mondo io non vedo che teschi e stinchi. Se una donna mi bacia, io non sento che freddo; se mi sorride vedo i suoi denti a muoversi senza gengive, minacciando di uscirle di bocca; se mi abbraccia, non ho che la sensazione di un corpo stringente e pesante come la creta. (23)

This extract is the cultural product of a late Romantic tradition with Gothic influences, which speaks much of death in terms of decay and dissolution and the relentless metamorphosis of matter. But given the context of its publication and the autobiographical use of the first person, it is extrapolated from its cultural frame and becomes a personal statement of defiance and bravado. In this sense the scapigliati were deliberate performers as well as journalists and writers. (24) They set into motion a process of mythicisation that continued with various changes of direction long after their deaths; Tarchetti for example was metamorphosized in the 1870's into a delicate, suffering Romantic poet, misunderstood in his own lifetime. (25)

With this emphasis on the individual there developed out of and through the Scapigliatura a poetics of the personal in which the artist's integrity and moral standing was used to justify the value of the artistic product itself. We shall later be examining in detail the narrative consequences of the textual incorporation of these highly verbal and visible narrators, but here it is enough to add that the blurring of all distinction between the implied and real author encouraged an approach to literary criticism which was to be condemned by Emilio De Marchi among others.

Bisogna deplorare il triste andazzo che ora prevale nella critica italiana, del non separar mai l'uomo dallo scrittore, del non saper dimenticare il frontespizio per esaminar solamente e spassionatamente il volume. Ciò che avviene è tutto il contrario, e dovendo discorrervi del contenuto di un libro, il critico comincia di solito a farvi la genealogia dell'autore; passa poi a descrivere la vita e i miracoli, finchè conchiude colla relazione della morte e dei funerali che per lo più si dà la briga di celebrar a modo suo. (26)

To understand the real preoccupation that led to the domination of the ideological over the artistic and the accompanying absence of a literary or linguistic poetics, one of the most revealing contemporary documents is the periodical Figaro between the 7th January and the 31st March 1864 when it was under the joint editorship of Emilio Praga and Arrigo Boito. Figaro changed hands frequently and with each change came a shift in direction, but the time of Praga and Boito was unusual because the two of them placed the journal's emphasis firmly, from the very first number on the arts, "Programma - FIGARO è principalmente ARTISTA; FIGARO è artista perchè ama l'Arte, l'arte giovine, l'arte bella, l'arte ideale". (27) The responsibility for the emargination of the arts in Italy they attribute to their predecessors who are condemned for their failure to respond to the post-'48 crisis.

The comparison is once again with France.

Mentre in Francia si conquistava palmo a palmo il terreno della giovane arte ed un'intera famiglia di poeti cantava e moriva inascoltata ma non inutile, cenciosa ma piena di aureole, mentre Victor Hugo agitava le prime faci della rivolta, e la grande anima di Musset dolorava sotto il disprezzo e il dileggio: mentre il povero Murger languiva di fame e Gerardo di Nerval, scagliando un'ultima ironia contro il solito, si strozzava in abito nero e in cravatta bianca, in Italia un beato branco di pecore risuscitava il poema epico, l'idillio degli Arcadi, e l'inno dei profeti, galvanizzandosi il cuore, adulterando la storia e brutalizzando il Vangelo. (28)

They denounced their predecessors for abdicating their civic responsibilities, for taking a 'moral holiday' at a time when literature had a vital civic duty to perform as rallying-point and educator of a still non-united Italy. They use the example of France, and both men were confirmed francophiles who had spent some time in Paris, to affirm the principles of revolt and autonomy for literature. When the conservative journal Museo di famiglia attacked them for having spoken "a fior di labbra d'Alessandro Manzoni" they repudiated it, answering evasively that "genius" is a different matter; but there is little doubt that anti-Manzonian feeling ran high among them. The problem was that Manzoni was still alive, a national cultural monument inhabiting the same town, while they, lacking all power and influence, were trying to create an alternative literature which might some day have a bearing on the course of events in united Italy. But once dead Manzoni could be incorporated into their literary canon without difficulty. This can be seen in two of Praga's poems; in "Preludio", which dates from 1864 and opens with the famous line, "Noi siamo i figli dei padri ammalati", he writes in the same verse of Manzoni:

Casto poeta che l'Italia adora,
 vegliardo in sante visioni assorto,
 tu puoi morir!... degli antecristi è l'ora!
 Cristo è rimorto. (29)

While the other, called simply "Manzoni" and written on the occasion of his death in 1873, is fulsome in its expression of praise and gratitude to the great man. (Rovani on the other hand who belongs to the previous generation liked and knew Manzoni and expressed nothing but praise for his writing.)

In a subsequent article published three weeks later Praga and Boito make another attempt to explain their own position in terms of the changed historical conditions which have brought about the collapse of unity and moral resolve under the weight of disillusionment and indifference. It is here that they make their famous statement on realism.

La nostra generazione, quella dei capelli biondi, ne va gridando ogni giorno che il Cattolicismo crolla, che il feticismo ruina, e che una inquieta verità, forse il messianismo di Mickiewicz s'innalza. Ne va gridando che un Dio s'è putrefatto, e che un Uomo s'è divinizzato... E da queste grida... ne viene l'arte che ci frulla nel cuore. E sarà un'arte malata, vaneggiante, al dire di molti, un'arte di decadenza, di barocchismo, di razionalismo, di realismo ed ecco finalmente la parola sputata. (30)

It is a reactive aesthetics born of an immediate and direct response to the age, whose cri de guerre introduces a notional realism which is at total variance with that offered by France. The distinction becomes immediately apparent if one turns to an article which appeared in Figaro at the same time. In 'Saggio sulla scultura di Duprè' written under the pseudonym Jacopo Cosmate the author criticizes those authors and artists who work to produce a copy of reality thereby rejecting, as he saw it, the imagination in favour of observation and representation. This might be the product of a latent desire to recuperate

some of the experiences of and experiments in Romanticism which had been conducted elsewhere in Europe and in particular Germany, and which Italy had missed because of the singular nationalistic orientation of its culture. It is also an early expression of a fear that was to be frequently articulated that the sciences would take over literature's educative function. At this stage the manner in which Boito and Praga mobilised the word realism to rally around a programme of ideological and moral regeneration leaves it indistinguishable from Cletto Arrighi's use of the word to define the aims of his journal Cronaca grigia :

aver sempre il coraggio di gridar la verità pericolosa, di smascherare tutto ciò che v'ha di nocivo, di codino, di falso, di malvagio nel paese, a costo di perdere la beata tranquillità de' suoi giorni. (31)

In the brief period in which Praga and Boito edited Figaro what emerges is an interesting combination made up of a lack of expressed interest in the possibility of constructing an alternative aesthetic programme and a dominating commitment to the production of a serious literature which lies beyond the embrace of the establishment. At the same time they convey their own sense of betrayal by their literary predecessors and their pronounced admiration for what has been happening elsewhere in Europe and finally an important intimation of the difficulties that being the first generation of writers in opposition created for them. The journal provides a useful testimony of their common decision to produce an autonomous form of literature which was committed above all to the freedom to experiment.

1.3 The changing role and conditions of the writer

Such freedoms, however, have to be placed in the context of

the cultural level of the majority of Italians at the time of Unification, which in comparison with other European countries was extremely low. According to the 1861 ratings 78% of the population was illiterate (this figure is of course distorted by the serious discrepancy between North and South, with Sardinia (90%) and Sicily (89%) coming out worst and Lombardy, Piedmont and Liguria (54%) emerging most favourably). These figures give us no indication of the number of semi-literates. Literacy was only one factor, for problems were multiplied by the absence of a common language. There was a cultural and social minority that could read and speak in Italian, but because of the language's literary roots and past history it was little suited to the exigencies of daily life and once outside Tuscany and parts of Rome, this same minority continued to use the livelier and more adaptable dialects. Change was slow in coming. Although Italian was taught at primary school where attendance was in the eyes of the law obligatory, the level of instruction was very low and Italian was really only available as a subject to the minority of children who enjoyed some form of secondary education. According to De Mauro the Italian speakers at the time of Unification numbered little more than 600,000: 400,000 Tuscans, 70,000 literate Romans and about 160,000 people with some sort of secondary education in the rest of the country. (32)

The restrictions this imposed on a writer's potential readership at that time become immediately apparent; it means that before any other criteria of selection can operate the readership is already numerically and socially limited. It was geographically restricted too, for Italy was rich - richer than any other European country - in the number of towns it had, which

meant that it was difficult for any one city to exercise the kind of cultural hegemony that Paris and London enjoyed over their respective countries. By 1861 Milan had a population of 184,000, Florence 130,000, Rome 184,000 and Naples, by far the largest city, had 447,000. Reading is largely an urban phenomenon requiring leisure, light, a degree of privacy and ready access to reading-material, and not only did the Milanese writers of the period find that their work did not travel abroad, it did not travel within Italy either. (The exception was the exchange of writing between Milan and Turin, but this was established through close personal contacts. In Turin Giovanni Faldella founded with friends a journal called Velocipede, the "Gazzettino del giovane popolo" out of which developed the Dante Alighieri society, a focal point for what Faldella called the "giovine letteratura torinese". It included Molineri, Sacchetti, Giacosa, Galateo and Camerana. In 1864 when Praga and Boito were editing the Figaro the Milanese and Turinese groups began to meet, drawn together by their common ideal of a new art.)

Apart from the effects of regionalism there is one other factor of economic origin, which influenced the nature of the Italian readership. Between 1700 and 1860 Italy was unique in Europe in that there was a bigger increase in the rural population than in the urban communities. This relates to the delay with which industrialisation reached Italy, but also owes something to the siting of many of the early industries in the country which left the towns in a slightly parasitic role. It meant that the middle-class had little or no direct experience of industry or manufacturing. A class, that as the historian Ragionieri has pointed out, was difficult to identify because of its backwardness,

its dislocation from capitalist development and the internal divisions between those who owned land and those who did not. The confusion which existed is reflected in the language of the period which refers to the bourgeoisie variously as the "ricchi", the "signori" and the "notabili". (33) The picture that emerges is of a small, localised and backward-looking readership; as Asor Rosa recently wrote:

L'assenza di una base sociale di massa della cultura e la fragilità del rapporto tra mondo politico e intellettuali portavano ad avere un'opinione pubblica ristretta e un culturale asfittico. (34)

The unpropitious nature of the Italian reading public is underlined when conditions are compared to those of England - a country which provided the Scapigliatura with an important cultural model in the field of narrative. The literacy figures for England and Wales in the same year, 1861, were 75.4% for males and 65.3% for females and as early as 1841 of the total employed population (6.7 million) nearly 40% were engaged in manufacture, commerce or trade and less than half as many were in agriculture (18.80½). (35)

In addition to the sharp divisions that existed between town and country, and North and South, the cities themselves, particularly Milan in the 1860's, were undergoing an extremely rapid process of expansion and change. The scapigliati writers were very alert to the signs that a new environment was being constructed around them and mounted a rearguard action, in which Rovani was the principal protagonist to defend old Milan against the speculators. They saw the developments as product of the ruthlessness and corruption of the politics of the day; Dossi in an article he wrote some years later for La Riforma identifies the decline in moral and cultural standards with the building of the "gran

Galleria" and the opening of the "Magazzini Bocconi" (36). Tarchetti begins Paolina with a lament for the destruction of the working-class tenements in the "Coperto dei Figini" which were razed to make way for the Piazza del Duomo, its inhabitants evicted to the new suburbs that were springing up in the outlying fields. There is also a serious literary consequence to all this, for with the conversion of the centre into an area of commerce and business, the scapigliati writers lost the physical sense of a tangible public, many of whom in the former small town atmosphere they would have known at least by sight. (Verga on the other hand, coming in from outside in 1872, was deeply impressed by the transformation of the city.)

But in a sense it does not matter how many readers a writer has, unless he is financially dependent on them. It is this economic dependence that changes the relationship between writer and reader. The group of writers that made up the Milanese Scapigliatura were in the main dependent on their writing for their livelihood and at the same time felt that they were working for a public which was numerically limited, ideologically hostile and culturally philistine. Another writer who also was hostile to the scapigliati's work, Carducci, outlined the problem in 'Per l'ordine e contro l'ordine' :

L'età nostra non porta più i cittadini e i gentiluomini scriventi a piacer loro o a piacere di qualche grande: il lavoro letterario deve oggi, come ogni altro, avere un valore economico che lo renda utile e rispettabile, costituendo il lavoratore in condizioni indipendenti e da potere attendere senza distrazioni alla libera e feconda produzione.

The language Carducci chooses to describe a writer and his work is in itself indicative of his perception of his changed role; "lavoratore", "produzione" and "il lavoro". (37)

Tarchetti also expresses his awareness of the downgrading of the status of the letterato now it has become a transaction between writer and public in which the former is financially dependent on the latter.

Tutti coloro che come l'autore di questa storia, furono condannati al mestiere del letterato - il pessimo dei mestieri - giova sperare per il bene dell'umanità che siano pochi - potranno immaginare... (38)

There is plenty of evidence from within the ranks of the Scapigliatura that they felt oppressed by the circumstances under which they had to write but there is little sign of any real attempt to analyse and discuss the nature of the new relationship between writer and reader. The columns of the 'alternative' press frequently upbraided and denounced the reading-public, taking it as emblematic of the nature of Italian society as a whole. It provided the plot for one of Roberto Sacchetti's best known novels, Cesare Mariani, which was based, very loosely, on the life and character of Tarchetti, summed up by Croce as

... una critica della società che nega all'artista i mezzi per svolgersi e produrre quello che porta dentro di sé, e lo schiaccia e lo lascia perire nella lotta con le necessità pratiche. (39)

Elsewhere in his review of literary life in Milan, Sacchetti does come to express appreciation for what the Milanese literary market has to offer writers, but this perspective comes from his own negative experiences elsewhere in Italy.

... perchè Milano è un mercato letterario dove, seguendo le leggi della domanda e dell'offerta, si può procacciarsi colla penna una discreta posizione; lo scrivere non è qui, come altrove, una mania solitaria, ma una professione riconosciuta e quasi regolare. E se il compenso non è tanto ciò dipende della poca estensione della cultura in Italia, dalla scarsità del pubblico che legge e dalla nessuna espansione della nostra lingua all'estero. (40)

The figure of the artist brutalized and suffering from the combined force of poverty and hostility became a commonplace in the obituaries and 'memorial' literature of the day. The examples of Rovani and Tarchetti lent themselves particularly well to this sort of treatment. To take but one example, Catanzaro writing on Rovani, "questo povero martiro della letteratura":

La vita dello scrittore in Italia è circondata da sirti e da scogli; non basta avere ingegno, non basta aver ingegno per andar liberi di censure bestiali, - anzi più avrete ingegno più avrete nemici. (41)

Clearly, however, the area where these tensions, real or imaginary, between writer and public had the most lasting impact was on the literary product itself. How does the author reconcile the appeals of popular fiction with his own aim to provide an educative and moral guide to the people? How does he present the novel so that it appears interesting to a public which is unaccustomed to finding entertainment in this form? Dossi, who was an interesting theorist on the relationship between writer and reader, was wealthy enough to avoid the problem in his writings, but as we shall see in chapters 2 and 3 Tarchetti's and Rovani's work testifies to these market-pressures.

Between the writer and reader came the publisher and a range of legislation which, although designed to protect both parties concerned, as usually happens with developing industries offered little protection for the employee. As far as writers' legal position went, an Austrian law of copyright which had come into operation in Italy in 1846 was substituted by an Italian law on the 25th June 1863. For all its eloquence, it was criticized by Cavallotti and others for being substantially less generous than its predecessor. In effect while the Austrian law had given the

author exclusive property rights throughout his life and for thirty years after his death, the new law introduced by senator Scialoja gave the author's descendents a meagre 5% for forty years after the author's death. The crux of the problem was that Italian law sidestepped the question of the author's right to claim the book as his property. Scialoja argued in his relazione that although the individual work is unique, the writer draws heavily from a common cultural patrimony and so he cannot be allowed exclusive rights. His view was shared by the scapigliati's bête noire Manzoni who in a letter to Boccardo wrote:

La proprietà letteraria è un traslato, che come tutti i traslati diventa un sofisma, quando se ne vuol fare un argomento. (42)

But to many other writers the law seemed like an abuse of what they took to be their legal rights, and yet another indication of the downgrading of their role in society. Cavallotti, on the occasion of Billia's new law presented to the Chamber of Deputies in March 1870, addressed to him an eloquent plea on behalf of all writers.

Se gli stimoli della produzione letteraria sono pur troppo in Italia oggidì così scarsi non è in verità una ragione perchè la legge si adoperi del suo meglio a renderli scarsi ancora più. Abbastanza inciampi, retaggio della lunga servitù, pesano ancora sulle menti; abbastanza i commovimenti politici e le condizioni economiche e morali del paese hanno reagito sulla sua decadenza letteraria, senza che si cerchino nuovi deprimenti nelle condizioni già infelici degli autori. In attesa che i milioni di inalfabeti scompajano, in attesa che le scuole, le università ed il tempo facciano il resto, non è troppo domandare per gli ingegni che pensano e che lavorano, il diritto di non essere spogliati, nè in tutto nè in parte dei frutti dell'opera loro. (43)

One of the areas of gross abuse that Billia's law attempted to remedy was the pirating of editions, against which the author had

absolutely no legal protection. Billia argued that the offence should be seen as theft, punishable by a possible prison-sentence of up to six months and a fine of up to a maximum of 1,000 lire. These hardly draconian measures pale into insignificance alongside Tarchetti's more forthright solution to the problem as presented in "Re per ventiquattrore":

... per un caso di pirateria libraria, era proposta la pena della sospensione dei piedi fino a totale estinzione di vita - e credo che fosse poco. (44)

It is indicative that one of Tarchetti's first steps as monarch is to be the introduction of a fifty-clause law (which the reader is fortunately spared) concerning the rights of authors. Writers quite justifiably felt very vulnerable, for the laws that did exist were stacked in favour of the publishers, who also were able to draw off the enormous supply of foreign material available for translation, at a very much cheaper price than that of commissioned indigenous works. Carlo Tenca, writing about the decline of Italian literature in an extremely perceptive article as early as 1846, points to the fact that publishing houses were busy and indeed flourishing but their output was made up mainly of foreign works in translation and the little Italian material was a poor imitation. (45) Although German and English work was translated, the bulk of the literature came from France and this does not take into account the fact that while popular writers such as Sue and Paul de Kock enjoyed the largest number of translations, the quality writers like Balzac would have been read in French.

It was a slap in the face for Italian writers for it meant that their fees were lower than they might otherwise have been and their position even more tenuous. It also meant that the new

'independent' Italy remained culturally at least under foreign domination.

Questa influenza straniera non solo toglie agli ingegni italiani la possibilità di un'industria letteraria fruttifera; ma ci reca nocimento morale ed intellettuale, coll'inoculare negli animi passioni esagerate o strane perchè venute d'altronde, con l'ammortare la gentilezza italiana, coll'oscurare il nostro sole, col far perdere il colpo ai nostri miti affetti e alle soavi immagini rispondenti al nostro cielo e al nostro aere.

I romanzi stranieri ci divergono dallo studio nei nostri costumi; ci fanno perdere la conoscenza di noi stessi, la più necessaria e preziosa all'uomo, secondo il citato oracolo di Delfo...

L'unione dell'ingegno italiano con l'imitazione straniera è peggio che un adulterio; è un attaccamento, una sovrapposizione innaturale impossibile. (46)

Here Faldella's language is perhaps stronger than most, but his sense of moral outrage was shared by his contemporaries who, like him, saw in the French imports evidence of a lowering of standards and an unhealthy interest in the immorally licentious rather than the morally uplifting. There is some truth in this. The expansion of the reading public would have inevitably been accompanied by a broadening of cultural standards which publishers, anxious for good sales-figures, would have been quick to exploit. What is perhaps excessive in the Italian response, among both establishment and anti-establishment circles, is their prudery as exemplified by the sexual metaphor Faldella employs, which seems to say more about moral attitudes prevalent in Italy at the time than the moral standing of the imported French literature.

While translations poured from the Italian presses, publishers continued to harrass their own writers into writing as much as possible, as quickly as possible, for as little as possible. At the time Tarchetti began to write the publishing

industry was still relatively unsophisticated. In Milan there were a number of publishers competing for a limited market, so in their fight to sell and survive they offered their wares at bargain prices, often in form of book-clubs or subscription. It meant that writers without independent means had to work under the combined pressures of economic hardship and paucity of time. In Milan in 1865 the two writer-editors Ratti and Righetti offered the public a series of brand-new Italian novels at 24 lire a year for one volume a week. Edoardo Sonzogno promptly came out with a counter offer, promising, in addition, illustrations by the best of Italian and foreign illustrators, all for the price of 8 lire a year. This kind of cut-throat competition placed an intolerable strain on writers. In a long denunciation of these conditions published in Rivista minima by the journalist and writer Ghislanzoni, he observed:

A noi pare che da questa foga di speculazioni librerie, da questi prodigi del buon mercato, da queste gare disperate di editori, di autori, e di tipografi non sia per emergere verun vantaggio alla letteratura. Questi programmi di associazione gridano sfacciatamente agli autori: bisogna scrivere per cinquanta centesimi al foglio a produrre non meno di cento fogli per ogni settimana. (47)

Tarchetti's own work usually came out initially in journals and was then reissued in book form, most of it appearing after his death. He is for example the principal Italian writer in Treves' list for his "biblioteca amena nuova raccolta di romanzi e novelli, viaggi, drammi, storie e poesie". (48) The books were all produced with an identical format, at 50 centesimi a volume. The prescribed length was 160 pages so Una nobile follia and Fosca each appeared in two volumes. Tarchetti found the pressures intolerable and the obituaries (he died in 1869) attributed his

ill-health in part to the continuous hack-work he was engaged in and quoted his bitterness at having to give himself to "quella letteratura che fu chiamata mercantile". (49) Evidence of the kinds of pressure being talked about can be found in his friend and colleague, Salvatore Farina's autobiography, when he writes about the circumstances that led him to write the central chapter of Fosca. Tarchetti was at the time critically ill and submitted the novel for serialisation with the crucial chapter missing, intending to complete it nearer the publication date for that episode. When Leone Fortis discovered what had happened and that his author was likely to die, he informed Tarchetti that no money would be forthcoming until he received the missing piece. So Farina wrote the chapter passing it off as Tarchetti's work. Later Farina himself clashed with the man who published Fosca in book-form, Treves. It was about a book of his own which, to fit with the Treves format, was to be published as two volumes and Farina was given to understand that he would be paid per volume, in this case one hundred lire each. When he protested at receiving only half the expected amount, Treves was quoted as saying: "Avete ragione, cento lire sono poche, ma voi potete far subito un altro romanzo". (50)

After its annexation in 1871 Rome became an important centre for the Italian book-trade, attracting editors and publishers from other cities including Florence and Milan. One of the first men to start business was a Piedmontese worker called Perino who published an avalanche of material, altering book-titles as suited his needs; he printed for example Dante's Vita nuova in a very handsome format under the title Gli amori di Dante scritti

da lui medesimo. Sommaruga, who as a youth in Cagliari had founded the Farfalla, a journal which strongly identified with the oppositional role of the Milanese Scapigliatura and which saw itself in the avant-garde of the verist movement, also took the road to Rome where, with Carducci's support, he launched the very elegant Cronaca bizantina. He made a lot of money by pedalling scandalous material which other publishers would not touch, such as Pietro Sbarbaro's Fauche caudine and when unable to influence the content he used to present the books in highly provocative covers. In 1884 when he published Il libro delle vergini by D'Annunzio, his decision to

sfruttare il titolo provocando la malsana curiosità delle moltitudini volgari con la inverecondia delle copertina. (51)

led to a final break between the two men. The dishonesty was often more than cover deep. In 1882 Cronaca bizantina reached an agreement with Capitan Fricassa to start up a collana to offer to subscribers. Although advertised as unpublished books they were in reality the unsold volumes of past publications disguised under new covers. Included in the list was Dossi's La desinenza in 'A' (first published in 1878), but now embellished with Villon's misogynistic epigraph, "Craignez les trous car ils sont dangereux". On the credit side Sommaruga was in a sense exceptionally good at his job, which he saw as one of producing as much as possible for a market that he would have to go some way to creating. His lists included Carducci, Panzacchi, Giacosa, Ferrari, D'Annunzio, Chiarini, Guerrini and Dossi. Even though Dossi was one of his poorer sellers, his books nonetheless ran into several editions with a print-run of at least one thousand.

Carlo Dossi himself provides a very interesting example of the struggle to retain the links between author and book. At first he controlled the actual means of production himself by publishing privately in small print-numbers of about one hundred which he circulated among friends, a luxury that most writers of the day could certainly not afford, but it carried with it its own penalties for it was expensive and above all it meant a reliable but very restricted readership. The bulk of his later work he consigned to the publisher Sommaruga, which meant that unlike his Milanese predecessors he was published in Rome and not locally in Milan, so that he had a public which had probably never heard of him, let alone read anything previously by him. (This might well in part explain one of the characteristics of his later books - the long and detailed prefaces addressed to the reader.) Dossi broke with Sommaruga in 1884, over the publication of Sbarbaro's discredited book (52). In 1887 Dossi's last literary work appeared, the third volume of autobiography, Amori. Published privately by "l'Araldo" of Como its author planned every detail and the result was very expensive and quite unique. Here the publisher explains the technique used to produce it:

Il libretto consta di 126 pagine in -16, che danno uno spessore di 4 millimetri e mezzo; il peso del volumetto è di 35 grammi tanta ne è la leggerezza. Si noti che 136 fogli sono doppi, cioè stampati da una parte sola, lasciando bianca la volta, perchè la somma sottigliezza loro non permette l'impressione dalla parte opposta: così, per formare una pagina, ne occorsero due tra loro unite nel labbro laterale. (53)

Conconi designed the cover, a yellow "mimosa pudica" on a black background. The critic Vittorio Pica who felt that Amori was Dossi's greatest book, had the good fortune to read the original and he too feels obliged to describe it:

Il volumetto è di una leggerezza fenomenale, poichè è stampato finissima carta giapponese, ottenuta con la scorza di un gelso appositamente coltivato (brussoneteria papyrifera), e di un aspetto inusitato ed elegantissimo; è infine un vero gioiello del più raffinato giapponismo. (54)

It would be difficult to find a more extreme reaction to commercial publishing than that shown by Dossi. (55)

But Carlo Dossi was the exception, an anachronism perhaps. The scapigliati had to earn their livings and while a few did have other professions - Camillo Boito for example was an architect - most of them combined creative writing with journalism. This too was a fairly precarious occupation. At the end of 1859 there were 54 periodicals being produced in Milan; by the time Tarchetti came to launch Il piccolo giornale in 1867 there were, he observed, 141 journals including his own. None of the major Italian journals of the earlier nineteenth century survived beyond 1860 (Il Politecnico was the exception but even that became a shadow of its former self) and many of the journals published subsequently enjoyed very brief lives. Like Italian publishing, mass journalism was still only in an embryonic phase of development. Daily papers with a large circulation did not begin to emerge until the 1880's; of these Il Secolo of Milan was the most widely read and it was the first to reach a print-number of 100,000. It was then that the new type of journalist emerged - the specialist who concentrated on foreign affairs, parliamentary matters, the arts, etc. At the time of the Milanese Scapigliatura the journalist was, by contrast, often responsible for all aspects of the journal; from the political commentary to local gossip to the latest story to be serialized. Of those journals which were associated with just one name there was Il Pungolo, whose editor, Leone Fortis, was

close to scapigliati circles and who fought an energetic one-man battle for the so-called "terzo partito" (Tenca, Cattaneo, Bertain and Mosca). Fortis was the prototype of the individualistic journalist who could not survive long in the more organized modern press. He was at his best during election time or when a major administrative or economic crisis was brewing, when he wrote exactly as much as he wanted, even though it inevitably meant that the journal came out with enormous delays. The Cronaca grigia was even more extreme in that it was the mouthpiece of just one voice, Cletto Arrighi, who ran it with many interruptions from 1860 to 1882, but perhaps the journal most sympathetic to the aspirations of the Scapigliatura was the Gazzettino rosa, published daily between 1867 and 1873. It was one of the most stimulating journals of the period. It was sympathetic to all manifestations of anti-conformism and it saw literature as being an important part of the battle against aristocratic and bouregois conformism. Their selection of literary texts to serialize and review was guided by this principle and they frequently used texts by the scapigliati, giving the word a socio-political gloss. The journal actually entitled Lo scapigliato was written by Tronconi under the pseudonym he used for the publication of his first two plays, "Dottor Etico". Of its disappearance Tronconi is quoted as saying:

Dopo sei numeri la vita materiale del giornale era assicurata - ma io non ne potevo più ed uno sbocco di sangue mi metteva a letto a meditare sulla morte in prospettiva. (56)

It appears to have been similar in content to the Cronaca grigia which is where subscribers were transferred after it folded.

Rovani had a long career as journalist and author for what until unification was the official Austrian publication in

Lombardy, the Gazzetta ufficiale di Milano (the ufficiale was subsequently dropped). When its editor was fired in 1861, Rovani along with three other Italian journalists took over ownership. It was claimed that it was the journal most read by the middle-classes. Its politics were liberal. Torelli Viollier wrote of it :

il giornale, ben comprendendo che non avrebbe potuto aver voce in capitolo in mezzo agli uomini che formavano il governo e la classe dirigente, se ne stette in disparte, e diè al suo isolamento l'apparenza dell'indipendenza. (57)

Although his taste in music was ultra conservative and cautious (Verdi frightened him with his excess of anti-formalism), Rovani used to write the music column for the Gazzetta and was also editor of a music journal called Italia musicale. But Rovani was unusual in so far as he was a principal shareholder in one of Milan's principal journals.

Only Dossi was in a financial position that enabled him to establish a journal which was not intended, albeit among other things, to make him money. At the precociously youthful age of 17 he set up, along with some of Milan's intellectual élite - Cremona, Primo Levi, Perelli and Rovani, - a new literary journal called the Palestra letteraria artistica which set out to give the rising generation space to publish. It began its three years of life in December 1867. It was different from the other journals of the day in that it addressed itself to future writers rather than to readers. Eschewing the writer-consumer relationship, it established in the first number that its programme was to :

Offrire alla gioventù che ama muovere i primi passi nella letteratura, un campo vergine, esclusivo ad essa, ove provare le proprie forze. (58)

That is to say a space to write rather than a piece to read. It was unusual too in that on the inside cover of each issue was a list of work submitted with accompanying observations made by a body of examiners. It was not sold over the counter, but instead each subscriber paid two lire a month for "azioni mensili". Later in his career, Dossi part-financed in Rome a new journal of Sommaruga's. It was called Rivista paglierina, printed on a very special "chamois" paper; it was extremely expensive. It died an embarrassing death when it became involved in the nefarious activities of one of Sommaruga's more corrupt collaborators, a man called Besana.

Of the three writers Tarchetti's career in journalism is most representative of the problems that beset the scapigliati writers and sympathizers in their attempts to establish an alternative, non-official culture. His journalistic career began in earnest in 1866, the year he left the army, when he was employed at 150 lire a month as a compiler of the cover-page of Spirito folletto and soon afterwards found work too with Ghislanzoni's Rivista minima, Airaghi's Giornale per tutti and Farina and Cavallotti's Scacciapensieri. The following year the publication of Una nobile follia brought him new friends and allies in the shape of Dall'Ongaro of Riforma and Torelli Viollier of L'illustrazione universale as well as journalists closer to the scapigliati circles such as Bizzoni of the Gazzettino rosa. He wrote a political column for the Emporio pittoresco and became involved in a number of short-lived projects. At the beginning of 1867 he took over the Palestra musicale which soon ceased publication, his own Petite revue (written in French) was still-born and a subsequent venture with Ghislanzoni Il piccolo giornale

lasted three days "... lasciando il proprietario direttore e gerente più indebolito di prima". (59) His idea of publishing another journal called Il giornale degli innamorati came to nothing. Tarchetti's attempts at autonomy are emblematic of the condition that 'alternative' cultural channels found themselves in. It was a time which was particularly rich in initiatives and markedly lacking in financial success and the scapigliati initiators usually ended up collaborating on the more solid journals of the day.

1.4 Attitudes to narrative

By the time the Scapigliatura began to publish in Milan, the novel was well-established but under the domination of foreign translations. Both French and Italian observers expressed surprise at the success French writers enjoyed with the Milanese reading-public. In Grandi e piccole memorie Barbiera recollects that an important feature of the town's cultural life in 1835 was the number of French translations in circulation, with Hugo, Dumas and Balzac heading the list. Fifteen years later after a journey to Milan Gautier noted that

on trouve partout les Alexandre Dumas, et ce qui est plus étrange, les romans socialistes d'Eugène Sue, Les mystères de Paris et Le Juif errant. (60)

This encouraged critics to consider the novel sufficiently marginal to mainstream indigenous culture, inappropriate to either the Italian tongue or tradition, to be destined eventually to fade away. It resulted in a serious mis-match between culture and criticism: on the one hand novels were pouring off the presses, on the other critics were able to express perpetual bewilderment

and surprise at their popularity. Committed critical response was therefore, with important exceptions, slow to consolidate.

As for an Italian novel tradition, critics felt able to argue that it did not exist. The extremely influential historical novel had been crucial although ultimately short-lived, and the discussions around it established the pattern of critical debate for years to come. Its success spans the period from the translations of Sir Walter Scott in the mid 1820's to the publication of I promessi sposi in 1827 with a second wave of popularity in the 1830's. Central to the debate that was waged around the concept of the historical novel was the question of truth. Literary criticism was inhibited by an inappropriate terminology and a love for organisation and classification which left it unable to accept the novel's unruliness and 'hybridity'. They worried about the conflict between truth ("storia") and fiction ("romanzo") which the historical novel foregrounded with its claim to narrative and moral truth. Zaiotti, whose very definition of the novel as "ogni racconto d'un fatto che non fosse veramente accaduto" seemed to exclude the possibility of a historical novel as a contradiction in terms, had subsequently because of the undeniable quality of some of the writing to find a way of accommodating it. He praised Scott, for example, for the descriptive value of his work "... somma fedeltà nella rappresentazione de' costumi". (61) (Stendhal only three years later criticised Scott on the same grounds, pointing out that it is much easier to describe appearance than it is to present the human heart. (62)) It was through the novel's didactic value and history's exemplary potential that Zaiotto found his escape clause, but the debate was revived with

the publication in 1845 of Manzoni's *Del romanzo storico e, in genere, de' componimenti misti di storia e d'invenzione* where he argues the need to be able to distinguish between the "vero positivo" and the "cose inventate". Rovani, who was among the first to review Manzoni's essay, writes of the historical novel in his preface to Cento anni as though it were outmoded and discarded but the problems it presents with its mixture of fact and fiction dominate his own novel. Another important innovation introduced by the historical novel and taken up and extended by I promessi sposi is the inclusion of the 'common people'. As early as 1829 in Il falco della rupe, Bazzoni points the readers' attention to the fact that he no longer draws on a repertoire of medieval landscapes, dastardly deeds and aristocrats, but ordinary people and domestic virtues.

Apart from the historical novel, Italy had since about 1840 seen the publication of a number of narrative works, often novelle rather than full-blown novels, which take the 'people' as their nucleus; these were described variously as "domestiche", "popolari" or "sociali". Novel or novella, these works set out to educate their readers into an awareness of the misery and misfortunes of the rural and urban poor. Calummi Camerino describes the result as a new type of folklore "il pittoresco della miseria" (63). She analyses the two incompatible modes in which they present their subject. At one level they are realistic descriptions of the conditions of life that prevail for the poor written in precise, analytical language, but at a second level the characters themselves are presented in a purely idealistic frame, archetypes of modesty, morality and sincerity. In a book such as Carcano's Una povera tosa poverty becomes a guarantor of all that is moral

and modest:

Non a caso tutti i protagonisti di estrazione subalterna proposti al pubblico nelle prime esperienze di letteratura populista sono personaggi totalmente positivi, e lo sono tanto più si fortificano nelle loro doti attraverso il dolore e la supportazione dell'indigenza. (64)

There was controversy over the novella form itself. Calummi Camerino attributes its persistence to the reluctance of prose writers to tackle the complexities of the novel form, which in turn was a product of the lack of interest in form and preoccupation with content. Where some critics felt that unlike the novel the novella was a form which was particular to Italian cultural history and therefore to be encouraged, Romantics such as Foscolo, Borsieri and Pellico objected to its lasciviousness, arguing that it exercised a pernicious influence. Foscolo was one of the writers with whom Tarchetti identified strongly and in his 'Idee minime sul romanzo' we see the same censorious attitude at work, "Io legislatore, avrei condannato alle fiamme il Decamerone" (65).

The preoccupation with the genre's morality can be related to the then current and no doubt correct view that the novel's reading-public was predominantly female. There were sound sociological reasons for such an assumption; middle-class women were enjoying greater literacy and leisure but lacked the cultural openings offered by a classical education. The subject-matter too with its emphasis on the domestic and the intimate seemed to fit perfectly with women's 'natural' preoccupations as Pellico in an important contribution on the subject explained:

Le donne più degli uomini sono dotate del talento di scoprire le minime gradazioni dei caratteri e dei sentimenti: a loro sembra che spetti, se si danno a qualche ramo di letteratura, lo scrivere particolarmente romanzi; - intendo la storia naturale delle passioni segnate dal cuore umano e quella dei piccoli intrighi di società che spesso cangiano la sventura del debole e dell'innocente, ma che sempre ridondano in obrobrio dei malvagi e in lode dei buoni. (66)

From the many asides to their lettrici and from their own critical writings it is evident that the Scapigliatura assumed that a significant proportion of their readers would be female. This introduces a frustrating contradiction, for how does a literature bring its influence to bear on the mainstream of Italian life when its audience is made up of the politically and economically helpless? Writers and critics however responded to the novel's position by arguing that it has the heavy responsibility of imparting different forms of truth and knowledge to its readers. There was first the question of the factually accurate truth for those who had not benefited from a serious education and this is where the historical novel caused much apprehension. But there was also the problem of morality and truth: for example, how can evil be depicted in fiction without being encouraged in fact? The case of Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis is interesting in this respect; it is indeed one of the very few Italian social-psychological novels to be written in the first half of the nineteenth century and it gave rise to few imitations. It disregarded conventions in several ways. Novels were expected to respect their humble origins and refrain from being too intellectual or analytical. It was also felt that a good novel should have plenty of action and drama and as a curious appendix to the 1814 edition notes, Ortis is lacking in both.

Gli avvenimenti tutti che danno principio, progresso e catastrofe all'azione sono sî scarsi e miseri, che ove si prescindia dagli episodj non basterebbero a dar moto a un cortissimo dramma. (67)

But of more enduring significance was the argument that Ortis depicts an individual who is at the mercy of his passions to an audience who in the act of reading is in the grips of the book.

Zaiotti had put novels that offer suicide as the only solution in his list of proscribed books, while Maffei in his history of Italian literature presents a typical critical response,

dichiareremo francamente che esso è un romanzo immorale che tende ad ispirare l'odio alla società, il disgusto della vita, la disperazione ed il suicidio... Questa maniera di scrivere, rotta, contorta, artificiosamente dura, ha appestato la gioventù, come le massime l'invenzione di questo romanzo le han guasto il cuore. (68)

Although many critics were in agreement that narrative was of low status, of foreign extraction and quite unsuited to Italian culture which found its form in the epic and in verse, the journal Rivista Europea, from 1845 on under the direction of Carlo Tenca, made a qualitative leap with a serious appraisal of the state of Italian culture. Tenca, in an article we have referred to called 'Delle condizioni dell'odierna letteratura in Italia', accepts that literature is at a particularly low point but sets out to combat the unquestioned assumption that it has fallen victim to journalism and mass-culture.

Noi non vediamo nel giornalismo se non uno dei tanti mezzi di manifestazione che assume il pensiero attuale, e se a' dì nostri i giornali soprabbondano a scapito fors'anco dei libri, è a cercarsene la ragione nelle mutate condizioni sociali, nella moltitudine chiamata a partecipare nel beneficio delle lettere... Il giornalismo è divenuto oggidì un elemento indispensabile della letteratura, quasi una pubblica necessità; e s'egli è per lo più frivolo e vano da noi, ciò avviene per le medesime cagioni che mantengono povera la letteratura. Piuttostochè adirarci a scagliar l'anatema contro la frivolezza del giornalismo, vorrebboni cercar di dirigerlo, di sollevarlo a dignità di scopo, di renderlo, quel che dev'essere, possente mezzo di educazione pubblica. (69)

The crisis, he argues, lies not in the literature itself but in its relationship with the society that has produced it;

... il concetto letterario non può andare scompagnato dallo spirito pubblico, e dove questo è debole ed incerto anche la letteratura si snerva e si immiserisce. Nella storia sono le ragioni della grandezza e del decadimento delle lettere. (70)

The relationship between the writer and his public has to change, but this would only be accomplished once the writer views his own function differently. Tenca and Correnti, writing in the same journal, argued for the formation of a new intellectual who would be in touch with the reality around him and able to represent it to his readers. At the same time because they believed that literature should be morally uplifting as well as educative, although they championed realism they argued that it should be tempered with an idealist spirit.

Ed anche dopo l'apparizione di due uomini quali sono Dickens e Sue, dubitiamo se convenga offrire al nostro palato un nutrimento così acre. Sebbene molte infamie siano vere ed accadano più spesso di quel che s'immagini chi vive nella quiete d'una mite società, pure ne sembra che, dopo la lettura di quelle feroci istorie, sia quasi impossibile conservare il cuore libero ed aperto a più dolci e più necessarie commozioni. (71)

The articles and reviews published in the Rivista Europea and later in Il Crepuscolo in the decade 1840-1850, continued to focus their attention on the role of literature and the writer in a modern society. An innovative article published in Il Crepuscolo in 1853 made an ideological leap by carving out an important cultural space which was suited specifically to the novel. It argues that the novel's structures were ideally suited to the requirements of a contemporary literature rooted in the representation of the vero, drawing on people and events, thought and action. (72) Noticeably absent from these discussions is the question of the competence of the reading-public and the influence that this in turn would exercise on the quality and form of the narrative produced. Not only was Italy culturally unprepared in comparison with the rest of Europe, ("parrebbe di vivere in un diverso pianeta da quello in cui stanno operando Thackeray e Dickens, Balzac e Stendhal, Goethe e Hoffmann", (73)) but as we

have seen there was also no identifiable bourgeoisie to have a hegemonising effect on cultural production. Portinari has observed that at the time a realist literature was getting belatedly underway with writers such as Tronconi and Valera, Dossi in his own writing was already registering its failure.

È però vero che il paradosso della narrativa italiana, priva di un retroterra quale offerto da Balzac o Dickens, sta nel registrare una crisi del realismo prima che si affermi il realismo stesso. (74)

When the scapigliati writers began to publish, the sense of optimism and cultural unity that pervades these earlier articles had evaporated while the mainstream critical attitude remained fundamentally unchanged. The novel still had a low status and attention continued to focus on content which was treated as a matter for urgent concern. Overall, although the Italian critics were slow to accept the novel, their writing took much the same direction as in France in championing the novel for its value as a source of information and a point of moral and social instruction. But the French were very much quicker in seeing the social factors that lay behind the origins of different genres and the novel in this context was more readily accepted as the genre that could faithfully reflect society and, moreover, because of its flexibility, a society which was constantly changing. Where there was hostility was from that school of thought stemming from Rousseau which saw the novel as symptomatic of the corruption and decadence of modern life and the constant introspection and analysis of emotion that comes from this. But even here it was the society that was in the dock rather than the novel. By 1830 French critics had ceased quibbling about the status of the novel and accepted it

as part of the cultural landscape; the significant increase in the numbers of novels published during the Restoration and the July monarchy led critics to consider not only the content but also the structures of narrative and gradually an idea of the well-made novel emerged which saw it as a unified composition with the scenes leading from one to another to a clearly defined goal. (This led to the view that while I promessi sposi was clearly an outstanding novel it was bursting with structural faults. (75)) In Italy this acceptance of the novel as an autonomous genre which required its own set of critical instruments to probe it was extremely slow in coming, delayed no doubt by the debate on the historical novel and the accompanying preoccupation with content. When critics such as Salfi did discuss the structure of I promessi sposi, they drew indiscriminately on critical criteria, such as unity and proportion, which were inappropriate to the new form. (76) It is perhaps in response to this that the Scapigliatura's critical articles display remarkably little interest in narrative structure while their novels and stories systematically violate established ideas of harmony and unity in the name of immediacy and sincerity of expression. The literary fragment or bozzetto which is particularly common in the Turinese group of the 1870's, was often presented as though the 'well-made' novel were a travesty of artistic truth. Praga in Memorie del presbiterio defends his choice of an impressionistic mode and the violation of the principles of unity by intimating that he is conveying a deeper truth:

io qui non scrivo un romanzo col suo principio, col suo mezzo, col suo fine, colle sue cause, il suo sviluppo e le sue conseguenze, e tutte le belle cose che si leggono nei trattati di estetica; ma bensì raccolgo impressioni di scene e di fatti, sensazioni di luoghi e di persone in cui mi sono scontrato. (77)

In Italy culture was also very much related to the region, so that there were significant differences from town to town. Realism, for example, found its home in Florence first, which as provisional capital between 1864 and 1870 had an intellectual lead coming from the university. While Paolo Mantegazza with his omnivorous interest in every discipline taught anthropology, Comparetti, Rajna and Trezza were part of a new school of literary criticism. Moritz Schiff who introduced the term naturalism to Italy moved from Turin, where De Sanctis had invited him to teach in 1861, to Florence. De Sanctis began to publish his Storia delle lettere in the journal of the Florentine bourgeoisie Nuova Antologia. Capuana who had still intended to be a dramatist when he crossed to mainland Italy began his realist criticism in the columns of La Nazione and here in a review of an epic poem in 1867 he asserted the importance and the relevance of the contemporary novel.

Noi possediamo al giorno d'oggi un'opera d'arte non meno difficile dell'epopea e popolare quant'essa al suo tempo ma più seria, più variata, più efficace, diremmo quasi più eccellente, e questa è il romanzo. Non già il romanzo storico parto ibrido e falso, nato in un momento d'esaltazione archaeologica e morto subito con essa; bensì quello che dipinge caratteri e costumi della società contemporanea. (78)

Milan enjoyed no comparable intellectual lead from its universities, but by the early 1870's it had become a centre for the cultural avant-garde by virtue of its press and publishing-houses.

The first sustained defence of the novel by a scapigliato writer was Rovani's preface to Cento anni which was published separately in 1857 to advertise the forthcoming serial. It does not stray far from the boundaries of contemporary critical debate on the novel. It is addressed to an audience of readers and critics

so a degree of rhetoric and hyperbole is to be expected, but it remains nonetheless a very defensive piece of writing. Rovani's description of the novel aligns it with what would now be called narrative; a piece of writing distinguished by two characteristics, a story and a story-teller.

Intanto i più grandi scrittori del secolo sono romanzieri; Foscolo, Manzoni, Goethe, Byron, Scott, Chateaubriand, Vittor Hugo, Bulwer tradussero in forma di romanzo le più splendide e più consistenti emanazioni della loro mente. Intanto in un libro di un grand'uomo abbiamo letto che l'Iliade d'Omero è un romanzo storico, l'Odissea un romanzo intimo, la Divina Commedia un romanzo enciclopedico, il Furioso un romanzo fantastico, la Gerusalemme un romanzo cavalleresco. (79)

His description resembles those of eighteenth century English writers who, like him, were bereft of a previous narrative tradition from which they could draw, so that their terms of reference inevitably came from other genres. Malcolm Bradbury in a discussion of the contemporary English novel makes this very point:

It goes back to the beginning of the novel in England, in the eighteenth century, when, in a neo-classical season, a new form could only be explained as a mutant from old codes. Novelists like Fielding and Sterne, engaged in generic innovation, had three especial points of reference to turn to: history-writing, drama and painting. Fielding's famous preface to The history of the adventures of Joseph Andrews (1742) borrows from all three sources, turning to Aristotle to give him a formula for the new mutant: it is 'the comic epic poem in prose'. (80)

Like Fielding and the Thackeray of Vanity Fair, Rovani in his description of "this Species of writing" has to borrow from other media. In Cento anni the analogies are mainly visual; writing is describing and reading is seeing, "Cento anni dovremo veder passar di fuga innanzi a noi", (81) followed by an enticing list of the goods on show. In just twenty-eight lines "vedremo" is reiterated

eight times, "ossolveremo" once and "sentiremo" once. The act of reading is not mentioned. The faithful transcription of the visible descends also from the historical novel, but while Scott and Manzoni give Rovani, an ex-writer of historical novels himself, a literary model, the historical novel did not endow the novel with a distinct physiognomy. When Rovani comes to identify the innovations in his own, as yet unwritten, novel, he sees it in the break with Aristotelian principles of unity of time.

Like the critics of the day, Rovani sees the problem of the novel as social rather than literary. It is a vehicle for the democratic transmission of knowledge:

Tutte le verità e della religione e della filosofia e della storia, se hanno voluto uscire dall'angusta oligarchia dei savj, per travasarsi al popolo, hanno dovuto attraversare la forma del romanzo che tutto assume: - la prosa, la poesia, le infinite gradazioni dello stile; ei si innalza, in un bisogno, nelle più alte regioni dell'idea, s'abbassa tra le realtà del mondo pratico. (82)

In subsequent novels Rovani's pursuit of the "utile" leads him to adopt psychological investigation which favours the exceptional, to satisfy the need to portray a total reality. (83) This paternalistic attitude to literature sees in its amorphousness another important asset enabling it like a sponge to soak up high culture and then squeeze it out on those wishing to receive it. The form must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate whatever it has to contain next. But not only could the novel provide education, it could also generate social reform. Rovani belonged to that enlightened tradition which was convinced that ignorance was the root of evil, the belief that knowledge could reform the world. This conviction had inspired much of English literature beginning with Bulwer's Paul Clifford (1830) which was an attack

on the penal code and inspiring a clutch of novels that were published between 1845 and 1850 by Disraeli, Kingsley, Dickens and Gaskell. Rovani takes Dickens as his example :

Carlo Dickens in Inghilterra propose ed ottenne riforme legali, indarno proposte e domandate dalla scienza in toga. (84)

Other scapigliati writers to follow Rovani shared his pre-occupation with the novels' educative value, but they come down on the side of morality rather than knowledge. While Tarchetti in Idee minime sul romanzo (1865) upholds the Berchetian view that the purpose of literature is to educate in a pleasurable way, education has a different set of connotations. Less concerned with the dissemination of knowledge, his is a social humanitarianism which has its roots in writers like Dumas and Sue, Ranieri and Mastriani. The writer is no longer the voice of his age making his own contribution to national and historical progress, but a man at odds with his age who speaks out against and across the context from which he emerges. With so much to condemn, so much to disassociate from, an intolerably heavy moral burden is placed on literature and its producers. Literature is defended in the name of truth but Tarchetti is very clear that his truth is not the truth of realism but a higher or moral truth. Speaking as an individual and not as a representative of a society or culture Tarchetti's narrators have to convince the readers of their integrity. Tarchetti takes literature's custodianship of truth a stage further by denying history any validity. History, the public, and literature, the private, are separated, becoming once again two self-contained spheres set up in opposition to each other, "nel romanzo conobbi l'uomo libero, nella storia aveva

conosciuto l'uomo sottoposto all'uomo". (85) The terms of his analysis take us back to the turn of the century to a review written in 1803 by Tarchetti's adopted forefather Foscolo, in which he argues that the historian and the novelist are working in two very different areas each of which requires its own distinctive attributes and skills:

insomma la storia dipinge le nazioni e loro forme, il romanziere dipinge le famiglie e i loro casi; la storia notomizza la storia dei pochi che governano, il romanziere notomizza il cuore della pluralità che serve; la storia insegna la politica alle anime forti ed agli ingegni astratti, il romanziere insegna la morale a quella classe di gente che serve al governo ed indirettamente serve alla plebe. (86)

But where Foscolo's statement precedes the years of the historical novel, Tarchetti's succeeds it and is born of the loss of confidence in public life and history.

These two documents by Rovani and Tarchetti which we have looked at reveal a persistent preoccupation with literature's role in society, its responsibilities and its function. Although Dossi made generic comments endorsing the view that literature's primary function is social ("Il proprio compito della Letteratura è di correggere il costume. Comincia dove finisce o manca quella della Legge" (87)), as we shall see in successive chapters his real contribution to the cultural debate was to introduce a critical approach which was addressed to the text itself.

Chapter 2.

I.U. Tarchetti: Paolina and Una nobile follia. Popular fiction and political reality.

As a first approach to narrative technique in the scapigliati, I am taking two of Tarchetti's novels, Paolina and Una nobile follia. While the subject-matter is very different, both novels address themselves to moral and political issues. After a discussion on the relationship between text and context, I shall show how in Paolina the presentation of character, setting and plot follows the conventions of the popular social novel discarded in the more experimental second novel Una nobile follia, although the function of the narrative voice(s) remains constant.

2.1 "Paolina": author and narrator

In November 1865, a month after the appearance of his article 'Idee minime sul romanzo', Tarchetti began to publish in the same journal his first sustained piece of narrative. This was a short novel called Paolina (Misteri del Coperto dei Figini). It adheres to the views that he elaborated in his article on the role of the novel and testifies to his own quite extensive reading in the field of the social, sentimental and gothic novel. Its derivative nature suggests that it provided its author with an opportunity to experiment and acquire experience in the craft of writing while using a well-established genre and plot for his base. (1) It was neither a financial success (its author received 200 lire) nor a critical success and even Tarchetti was later to describe it as "abortito... un soggetto che non aveva nemmeno il prestigio della novità". (2)

Written initially for publication in appendice it had to capture the casual reader. Tarchetti set out to do this with an appeal to the familiar and to the sensational. The choice of sub-title was

judicious, for ever since Sue's Les Mystères de Paris had appeared simultaneously in Milan and Naples in 1845, many Italian cities had succumbed to the same treatment, (3) while the reference to the "Coperto dei Figini" on the opening page would have appealed to the periodical's local readership. One of the most visible signs of changing times was the building speculation which transformed the face of many of Italy's cities and towns. The reference here to the passing of the portico, knocked down to enlarge the Piazza del Duomo, was publicly lamented by Praga too, in his poem "Donne e poesia":

L'epica è morta, e del teatro Fiando
Già si minaccia il fato,
E cadrà dei Figini il porticato... (4)

The dedication to a working-class girl driven to prostitution is designed to shock a comfortable, prevalently lower-middle to middle class readership, if not for its explicit statement then for its juxtaposition with Christian imagery: "alla santa memoria/di Celestina Dolci operaia/prostituitasi per fame/e morta/in una soffitta della via di S.Cristina". The moral challenge this presents to the readers follows the pattern of the now famous attack on its public which opens the Goncourt brothers' novel Germinie Lacerteux, which was published in France at the beginning of the same year and which Tarchetti would certainly have heard about if not read. The risk of alienating intending readers is less great than the risk of not acquiring them in the first place and it is worth recalling in this regard Auerbach's analysis of the material conditions which induce the writer to invite confrontation rather than acquiescence.

The writer is a producer; the public is his customer. We can formulate the relationship between the two in other terms, looking at it from another point of view. We can regard the writer as an educator, a guide, a representative and occasionally prophetic voice. But aside from and indeed before all that, our economic formulation of the relationship is perfectly justified, and the Goncourts recognized as much...

It is obvious that in doing so he [the writer] counted upon the sensation which such a preface would cause. For the worst danger for his work was neither opposition, nor ill will on the part of the critics, nor even suppression by the authorities - all these things could occasion annoyance, delay, and personal unpleasantness, but they were not insuperable and often resulted in making the work better known - the worst danger which threatened a work of art was indifference. (5)

Tarchetti similarly, having given up a career in the army to devote himself to journalism and literature (without the benefits of a private income which the Goncourts enjoyed), was clear about the economic aspect of his relationship with his public, referring to his own product in *About's* double-edged expression as "letteratura alimentare".

For one who perceives a writer's task in terms of a "missione" (6) there is little space to accommodate economic considerations and the conditions that this relationship between writer and public impose on the former weigh heavily with Tarchetti as his novel *Paolina* testifies. (7) Of the two characters within the story who are extraneous to the plot, 'Mineu', Luigi's invalid sister, carries the political argument, while the other, an artist, appears briefly to denounce the conditions imposed upon him and those like him by his society. He argues that in order to survive he is compelled to compromise the moral and creative spirit and this too is prostitution. In common with so much of the debate on literature coming from scapigliati writers, 'Idee minime sul romanzo' is much more concerned with principles and questions of morality than it is with problems of technique and narrative writing. In his article Tarchetti had argued that the value of literature should be assessed according to the way in which it influences the reader; if it makes him a better person it is a good novel. (Rovani also, in his prelude to *Cento anni*, warns of the control the author has over the minds and morals of his readers, "...e per l'onnipotenza sua appunto può recar danni funestissimi come vantaggi supremi; ch  tutto

dipende dalla mente che lo governa." (8)) By the same token, Tarchetti argues that an immoral writer can never produce a moral book, for the novel is not so much a product as an emanation of the author himself. After mentioning La Fontaine, Goldsmith and Sterne in his article, Tarchetti continues :

La vita intima di tali autori rimane in un'armonia così perfetta colle loro opere, che il lettore non è tentato di dire a sè stesso: la mia commozione è intempestiva, quell'uomo scriveva per ragionamento; buttiamo il libro che non nacque che dall'ingegno. Tali parole ci vengono pur troppo alle labbra leggendo molti autori italiani: Foscolo ed Alfieri sono invece giganti per questo, che scrissero come pensarono ed operarono come scrissero. (9)

The inseparability of narrator and narrative is a concept which is pursued within the pages of Paolina, for when it came to be published in book-form the following year Tarchetti tells his readers in the preface that he has refrained from tampering with the text so that it remains faithful to the spirit in which it was written. (10) This conceit, which is maintained within the novel proper, - "Non è che una povera storia la mia, una storia che io espongo senza la pompa e senza le attrazioni del romanzo" (11) - equates artistic mediation with insincerity and immediate spontaneous expression with truth. This would have been a familiar rhetoric to his readers, one which they would have experienced no difficulty in accepting even though it is attached to a story of transparent fictionality. (12) Given Tarchetti's view that a reading of the literary text always brings the reader back to the author and given the authorial presence within the text, in the shape of the narrator, it does put a heavy burden on the author to insist upon the incorruptibility and morality of his literary persona. It is doubly important because Tarchetti's defence for the republication of his novel lies, as can be expected,

not with its literary merits, but with its denunciation of the evils and hypocrisies of the society of his day. It is shaped by the view of political thinkers like Fourier and particularly Proudhon, who had had a long study devoted to him in Rivista minima at the time Tarchetti began writing for the journal, and it shares the intentions of the French socialist writer Eugène Sue who in 1843 had written

Notre unique espoir est d'appeler l'attention des penseurs et des gens de bien sur de grandes misères sociales, dont on peut déplorer mais non contester la réalité. (13)

In Paolina the author's priority is to bring to his readers' attention the plight of the poor, the lives they lead and the inequalities they endure and by so doing lay bare the hypocrisies that allow exploitation and corruption to go unchecked. It is no longer the Italy of patriots, a people oppressed by foreigners, but an Italy where one class oppresses and lives at the expense of another; indeed the concept of the patria is now so discredited that to fight alongside Garibaldi is seen as an opportunity to resolve a personal (not a political) tragedy and heroism is concealed suicide. (14)

The book's tone is established by the story-teller, who begins by framing and contextualizing the events he promises to describe, which, consistent with the deference then shown to things Parisian, he first heard of in "La via di Saint-Honorè a Parigi". This signals to the reader that the implied narrator is worldly and well-travelled, but he also establishes his own credentials as "artista e poeta" as well as flâneur of the streets of Milan and observer of the human comedy. In other words, a reliable witness. Tarchetti reinforces the sense of his being a narrator who stands apart from the story he is about to relate by drawing on the language of the theatre. It carries the illusion that the reader is about to receive life as it

is, in all its immediacy, without the mediation of fiction. Nothing though could be further from the truth, for as Barberi Squarotti has observed, everything is 'laundered' through the narrator.

Il Tarchetti tende più a spiegare ciò che egli dà come evento o come carattere o come situazione o come problema psicologica, che a mettere davvero in moto i suoi dati per l'intreccio e lo sviluppo narrativo. Anche le giustificazioni psicologiche, così minuziose, spesso, e insistenti, non sono in funzione diretta del personaggio... ma della riflessione sul personaggio nella parte dell'autore. (15)

The use of the stage as image to conjure up a scene is a commonplace (one need only think of Thackeray's preface to Vanity Fair, Rovani's introduction to Cento anni and the free play Dossi makes with it in his "Sinfonia" to La desinenza in 'A'), but it combines powerfully here with the description of the destruction of the "Coperto dei Figini", for ruins always exercise a peculiar fascination, while with the public gaze directed towards private life the text makes a bid for the reader's voyeuristic instincts. Once out of the frame and into the story itself, Tarchetti continues to exercise the persona of a narrator of high moral principles and clear social objectives with frequent interpellations which serve both as commentary and reminder of his integrity. This latter function can result in superfluous interjections at points where the text speaks the message silently and more effectively. In the transition, for example, from Paolina's impoverished flat to the marquis's decadent palazzo the narrator's need to make clear his disassociation from what is about to follow results in an unwieldy and over-emphatic irony:

Ma lasciamo ora questi affetti rozzi e volgari dell'infima classe sociale; togliamoci a questo lezzo delle soffitte dell'operaio, questo paria della società civile, condannato perpetuamente al lavoro come gli animali che arano i nostri solchi, e a un disprezzo perpetuo, e a una perpetua miseria come il delinquente. Chi s'indurrà mai a credere che l'operaio abbia un cuore, una volontà, de' desideri, delle passioni? Esso è nato pel lavoro forzato, come l'operaia è nata per la prostituzione, e pei piaceri del ricco. Inneggiamo alla ricchezza. (16)

At other moments the narrator uses his privileged position to contextualize the events described in the story by broadening the references to include the state of society as a whole; these tend to take the form of an exhortation or speech, or, in more lyrical-sentimental moments, a meta-commentary, dense with rhetorical questions.

(17) 'Mineu', Luigi's sister, is, as I mentioned earlier, the mouth-piece for much of the political commentary. She is a political visionary, a role that the more worldly narrator cannot adopt for fear of inconsistency, and through her Tarchetti preaches Proudhonianism mixed with Christian humility. Her intellect, her ugliness and her unorthodox views make her potentially a much more interesting and problematical character than the other protagonists and her author acknowledges as much by suggesting at the end of the novel that, "I casi della sua vita formeranno argomento d'un altro mio racconto". (18) Her character and her life, (after the events narrated in the novel, she travels to Paris to become a governess), link her to a different literary tradition. (19)

2.2 Character, setting and plot

The novel has a conventional plot in which a beautiful, orphaned girl engaged to an honest worker is pursued by a corrupt aristocrat, who by dint of trickery manages to capture and rape her. She dies. In the middle of this the reader has meanwhile learnt that her mother in turn was seduced and betrayed by a nobleman and that Paolina is the illegitimate daughter of this union. The death-bed scene reveals that mother and daughter have been victim of the same man. Ghidetti in his introduction to his complete edition of Tarchetti's work writes of this novel that "la polemica sociale costituiva l'ossatura della narrazione condotta sulla falsariga di una peripezia romantica". (20) Indeed one of the main problems with the novel is that the

author's social and political commentary is grafted on to a text which has its roots not in contemporary society, but in the literary genre it imitates without adapting. It is a mixture of the sensational (reproduced here in a very prurient form) and the pathetic, while the characters themselves come almost without modification from the school of melodrama. The book is very short, only 130 pages, the material reason for this being that Tarchetti was paid for the complete work and not per page or, as happened in some cases, per line, but its brevity mitigates against it. It has all the bones of the genre without the disguise of much flesh. The plot leans heavily on Manzoni's I promessi sposi, a debt which Tarchetti makes explicit in his description of the marquis, Paolina's rapist:

Noi ne faremo l'innominato del nostro racconto, e con maggiori motivi che non avesse il celebre romanziere di nascondere il suo. (21)

There are other moments of recall which contemporary readers would have picked up and acknowledged, for example, "i bravi" used by the count in the plan to help his friend and the lyrical farewell that Paolina's mother makes to her native paese which is an immediately recognizable version of Lucia's famous farewell. The relationship between the two books is not only the expression of a literary debt, but is also a symptom of the later novel's political negativism. Tarchetti's is an altogether bleaker vision of the world, where Christian redemption no longer has a part to play, three hundred years have passed and little has changed except for the worse.

Tarchetti is lukewarm in his praise of Manzoni in 'Idee minime sul romanzo', attributing his pre-eminence in Italy to the absence of competition rather than to the master's own intrinsic merits, but he does single out Manzoni's realism in characterisation for praise:

... giova in parte osservare che il Manzoni volle dipingere gli uomini quali sono, non quali dovrebbero essere, e in ciò fu scrittore profondo e accurato . (22)

There are moments of realist detail in Tarchetti's novel, but these touch on conditions not character, as in the references to the wages women then received for sewing. The characters, who are all of one piece, learn nothing as the plot proceeds which can lead to changes or modification in their behaviour or attitudes. The reader leaves them as he found them, unchanged by circumstance. By the time the reader has finished the novel the 'good' characters are in fact all dead, (Paolina, her mother, Luigi and 'Mineu'), while the 'bad' ones are now free to go on to commit other nefarious deeds. The absolutism in the presentation of character dehistoricises the plot, conveying, I think unintentionally, a sense of the impossibility of historical change which turns the political message into a utopian vision. By allowing the characters no head of their own, they all of them, victors and vanquished, are victims of the plot.

The characterisation of Paolina herself belongs to the conventions of the feuilleton; hers is a theme and a fate privileged by the genre; virtue under stress, innocence betrayed. She is, as heroines are wont to be, passive. The point of no return when her fate within the story is sealed comes when she transgresses two absolute, but unspoken, rules for heroines of the genre; she acts of her own accord and she compounds the error by keeping her decision a secret. (23) The reader's first encounter with Paolina is at work (true to convention she is a dressmaker), at her employer's workshop, but a description of her (the main protagonists of the story enjoy the benefits of a physical description, this indicates their importance to the reader and fixes them in their mind's eye) does not accompany her initial entry into the

text. This is because ambience is interpreted as an extension and therefore a confirmation of character. Each of the four main characters is introduced and described within the confines of his or her domestic environment, so the book opens with four scenes arranged to maximize the contrasts between them, - Madama Gioconda's workshop, Paolina's flat, the Marquis' palazzo, and Luigi's attic (24). Not only does the contrast operate at a descriptive-pictorial level, but in the two central scenes it is also present within the action described. Scene 1. Paolina is alone at work in her room. Luigi arrives, to her embarrassment, unchaperoned (his sister is ill). He leaves at midnight, after kissing Paolina chastely on the cheek. It is inferred that this is their first kiss. Scene 2. The marquis is alone idle, a party of people arrive, an orgy develops, they are still there when the others rise from their beds to go to work the following morning. Paolina is formally presented to the reader in her home, and although her eyes are lowered and her head bowed over her work, a pose denoting modesty and humility, a light shining on her head suggests saintliness, the narrator takes licence to describe her features in full.

Il suo viso era un ovale inimitabile; l'epidermide, d'una bianchezza e d'una trasparenza abbagliante, lasciava quasi scorgere in alcuni punti la ramificazione azzurra delle vene; una tinta di rose leggiere e incarnata attestava il vigore della gioventù e della salute: un naso greco affilato, una bocca breve e purissima, le labbra colorite di cinabro, e sempre molli e rugiadose, le sopracciglia esatte e bene arcate, le ciglia lunghe e pieghevoli, le pupille dell'azzurro più puro del cielo'.
(25)

The problem in sustaining such imagery with a necessary degree of consistency is that realism must lose out completely. In the shape of Paolina, Tarchetti wishes to present a Milanese working-class girl of 1865 ("Essa guadagnava circa diciotto soldi al giorno, ciò che è il

massimo guadagno ottenibile in quell'arte..." (26) who also enjoys all the physical attributes of the leisured and pampered; gleaming white teeth, dainty hands and feet... A heroine too of extreme sensibility, an attribute which has to be reconciled in some way with the tougher sensibilities engendered by city life. This is achieved by a modification of circumstance, not of character - Paolina, it is revealed, is the illegitimate daughter of a duke (27). This extract, taken from a much longer description of the heroine, exemplifies too its author's inexperience in his choice of an excessively detailed use of description for the purposes of metonymy. A better writer would have gone for a little-but-often technique or would have judged how much detail the reader would require to complete the description for himself. Should the reader be in full possession of all the features? Gombrich would argue no:

We cannot register all the features of a head, and as long as they conform to our expectations they fall silently into the slot of our perceptive apparatus.

But, as he points out,

... the beholder must be left in no doubt about the way to close the gap; he must be given a 'screen', an empty or ill-defined area on to which he can project the expected image . (28)

Too much information inhibits the imagination. When a writer describes a face, what he in effect is trying to do is induce the reader to imagine one.

To maximise the effect produced by contrast, the marquis' portrait follows Paolina's. Whereas the heroine's suffered from wordiness and detail, the villain of the piece becomes inadvertently comic through the compression and over-loading of the signifiers. Tarchetti here wishes to convey the depths of the man's infamy:

...è sdraiato oscenamente sopra una sofà orientale, fumando tabacco turco in una pipa di Scemnitz dorata . (29)

Faces never lie, although villains are capable of the vilest dissimulation, and the marquis's with the help of phrenology is an excellent indicator of character,

...e le sue guancie smunte ed illividite, e una fronte breve e sporgente, accusano una virilità accelerata dalle dissolutezze, e una vecchiaia precoce . (30)

The same problem of artistic cohesion as that we saw in the case of Paolina applies here, for the marquis straddles two literary codes. On the one hand he belongs to the tradition of black literature and the gothic, an evil, satanic figure whose crimes are so grave that he lies beyond the - albeit bent - arm of the law:

Ma quell'uomo era lì, muto, freddo, impassibile, il suo volto non s'era mutato, l'influenza magnetica del suo sguardo era sempre la stessa; (31)

(Later, for example in his tales of the fantastic, Tarchetti will succeed where he failed here, by abandoning all sociological pretensions and presenting his character in the guise of the outsider.) And yet at the same time he represents the superfluity and vacuity of aristocratic life. The fall of the nobility is epitomized by the squalid exploits of the marquis and the count, and the former's expression of gratitude to his friend is intended as an unconsciously ironic reference to this.

Voi siete un grand'uomo, il più grand'uomo che io abbia conosciuto; uno strategico pari ad Alessandro, e un amico da disgradarne Damone . (32)

The political analysis of the relationship between aristocrat and working-class which is essayed from time to time by the narrator is not translated into the fabric of the story, which in its place presents the class structure in terms of a series of opposites; a battle between youth, beauty, virtue and poverty on the one hand and age, ugliness, vice and wealth on the other. On her way up the social ladder, and by now on the side of the devil, stands the middle-class (middle-aged, middling wealthy, middling ugly and nearly corrupted)

Madama Gioconda:

Mamma Gioconda (e tale era il nome che permetteva le fosse dato dalle sue operaie) era una donna sui cinquant'anni, non piccola, ma pingue e tarchiata, brutta senza essere ributtante;
(33)

In Madama Gioconda, employer and in her turn lackey of the aristocracy, we see how money corrupts.

The schematisation of the characters recurs with the settings (or to return to the theatrical analogy, the backdrops) to the successive scenes. We have seen how domestic interiors are used to complement the characters who occupy them. Tarchetti also juxtaposes scenes to convey mood, as when the bustle of the ball-scene is followed by the swift, silent journey through the night. Instead of showing it to the reader, however, the narrative voice cancels the dramatic effect by spelling out for the reader "Quel passaggio improvviso dal rumore assordante del ballo al silenzio melanconico che regnava per le vie," (34). More efficacious is the internal contrast in the episode at the end of the novel between the noisy, exuberant carnival, described almost telegraphically in brief, terse phrases, and Paolina's bleak funeral. Town and country similarly stand in opposition to each other, this time representing the moral poles of the story. Again they lack realistic detail. The town is curiously unpopulated without any clearly defined physiognomy, it is in effect an ill-defined conglomeration of interiors, while the country, which has no connection with the rural or with agriculture, is an equally ill-defined site for nature and the natural. They stand as metaphors for good and evil fixed inexorably in their idealist attributes. Urban life and all its accoutrements are seen at best as negative, at worst a perversion, while the rural idyll relates the country to innocence and purity. The marquis occupies the former area, Paolina the latter. This nostalgia descends from Rousseau and his own politicisation of the idyllic concept of nature.

Perhaps even more important in its indirect influence upon serious realism is his politicizing of the idyllic concept of Nature. This created a wish-image for the design of life which, as we know, exercised an immense power of suggestion and which, it was believed, could be directly realized; the wish-image soon showed itself to be in absolute opposition to the established historical reality, and the contrast grew stronger and more tragic the more apparent it became that the realization of the wish-image was miscarrying. (35)

This dichotomy is a privileged topos among the writers of the Scapigliatura, so familiar that it is sometimes used as a kind of literary shorthand. In his story "Una partita in quattro", Ghislanzoni spells the analogy out for the reader. His lovers are returning from a day in the country:

Non accusarmi di freddezza se ti parlo il linguaggio della ragione. Fino ad ora noi abbiamo conversato come due esseri che appartengono ad un mondo ideale, dimenticando, nelle estasi del nostro amore, il triste realismo della vita. Noi stiamo per rientrare nella città per riprendere il posto che la società ci ha inesorabilmente assegnato. (36)

In Paolina a day in the country offers readers a temporary respite between the hatching of the deception and its execution, but we are prepared for a change in mood, not only by their re-entry into the town (and the continuation of the plot) but also by a warning from the narrator;

Era l'ultima passeggiata che esse facevano assieme... poverette!... era l'ultimo giorno veramente felice della loro vita; ma esse lo ignoravano, e chi avrebbe potuto predirlo? (37)

The reader is guided through the story not only by the privileged narrator but he is also made ready for the developing tragedy by the generous exploitation of another indicator, the weather. The events are paced by the changing seasons, beginning in spring and ending with Paolina's untimely November death. Weather reports are used both to reinforce the current mood (analogous to the use of environment in respect to character) and as indicator forward to prepare the reader for subsequent events e.g. Tarchetti's opening description of the day which closes with Paolina's rape:

Il domani fu un giorno assai mesto nella natura; il cielo cupo e pesante, la neve cadeva a fiocchi larghissimi, come quegli sciame di falene che aleggiano nelle notti d'estate intorno ai fanali. (38)

Within this framework the plot unfolds, but it is so tightly constructed from the outset that the author leaves himself very little space in which to deviate from or delay the inevitable conclusion. There are no dead ends or false leads to distract the reader from its linear development and, short as it is on sensation and suspense, it suffers from over-determination and predictability. Given the shocking content of the story, not only rape but incest too, the narrator holds back on the reader by adopting the right of censor as well as the role of commentator. This happens in his description of the orgy (which some commentators have seen as evidence of Sade's influence), although the authorial veto is used to justify reference to the material that is to be excluded!

«Nè credo compatibile col carattere del mio racconto una descrizione più estesa di quell'orgia superba e straordinaria, di questi segreti bacchanali della società moderna di cui nulla si trova di più stupendo nell'effeminatezza e nelle lascivie degli antichi.» (39)

Later, when Paolina is about to be raped the episode is cut off in a manner which recalls Manzoni's termination of the Nun of Monza story.

Noi troncheremo qui il racconto di questa scena, noi rifuggiamo dal descriverne il resto. (40)

His resistance to the sado-masochistic intimations of much feuilleton literature is in keeping with the attack he launches on licentious writing and the decline in moral standards in his article on the novel.

In other respects Paolina adheres closely to the structures and codes of feuilleton literature. A plot within a plot is supplied by Paolina's mother's diary in which she records her own tale of seduction and betrayal, the alternative female destiny. As well as padding out the story, it reinforces the prevailing sense of negativism and

hopelessness, for where the text is actually saying to its female readers that the first wrong move leads to irrevocable ruin, it is presenting it in terms of the circularity of destiny; not only does Paolina suffer a fate similar to her mother's, but she is also victim of the same fatal disease. Like mother, like daughter. (41) There is also a conventional death-bed scene and recognition scene collapsed into one, in which the marquis visits the dying Paolina and is identified by her guardian as the very man who seduced her mother. But again over-compression means that the impact of the moment of recognition is mitigated by the information which has to be simultaneously conveyed to the reader.

- Non siete voi il seduttore di Anna, il finto duca di Saint-Aubaine? sciagurato, ecco vostra famiglia!
 - Mio padre! gridò Paolina rialzandosi convulsivamente sul suo letto, e dato un urlo orribile e straziante, ricadde inanimata sul suo guanciale. (42)

Within the confines of the story, Tarchetti experiments with various devices which enable him to transmit the necessary information to the reader, without having to resort to constant asides from the implied narrator. After the principal protagonists have been introduced, the central section is taken up with information and pre-history relevant to the plot's development. This is related in three ways; in the forms of a letter, a diary and a brief conversation. The letter, from Paolina's god-mother, is brief but essential, because it provides a ploy to delay the marriage between Paolina and Luigi by four months (literary convention would require that she be unmarried and a virgin). The diary, which belonged to her mother, is read aloud by Paolina to Luigi and provides (apart from a sub-plot) an explanation of Paolina's circumstances, while the short conversation that ensues between the lovers after Paolina has reached the end of the diary fills in the missing bits. Throughout

this section Luigi has performed the function of being the reader's representative, for relating these details to Luigi is a convenient way of transmitting them to the reader. The conversation is the least satisfactory method in this respect because Luigi's function, asking the reader's questions on his behalf, is too transparent and there is no sense of a dialogue. The third and longest part of the story is taken up with the narration of contemporaneous events. It begins with the details of the plan to waylay Paolina; - these are transmitted to the marquis and therefore to the reader through a letter the count has lodged at Madama Gioconda's workshop. (Again it is the problem of conveying information which accounts for an anomaly in the plot. We are to accept that the marquis who has devoted an entire lifetime to the seduction and/or rape of innocent girls cannot think up a plan to capture this, his next victim.) The rest of the story is taken up with the execution of the plan, with Luigi who, as Paolina's lover had the function of extrapolating information from the other protagonists necessary for the reader's comprehension of the plot, now becomes the marquis's victim and spends the time taken up by the remainder of the story inside prison.

2.3 "Una nobile follia": the "romanzo-saggio"

As I hope to show in my analysis of Una nobile follia the writing of Paolina proved to be a useful exercise and clearing-ground for Tarchetti, for in his next novel he settled on an immediate and controversial subject, and one in which he had personal experience, in a form which came to its support. Una nobile follia (Drammi della vita militare) was first published in Il Sole in 27 instalments, between 12 November 1866 and 27 March 1867. It brought Tarchetti recognition and friends inside and beyond the Scapigliatura ambience, with the republican and socialist press championing the book against the reactionary press of Turin and Florence. At the centre of the controversy was the book's

military thematic, although all the indications are that the author's original intention was the study of "una nobile follia" as the title suggests. For the first three instalments, the book appeared as Vincenzo D*** (Una nobile follia), this was followed by silence for four days and Il Sole meanwhile began publication of La camicia rossa. Episodj di Alberto Mario which then continued to be published intermittently along with Tarchetti's novel. The latter then returned with the title Vincenzo D*** Drammi della vita militare (Una nobile follia) and two days later the title was again switched and the instalment appeared under the banner headline, printed in capitals, Drammi della vita militare, the rest of the title tucked away underneath. This final version comes with the beginning of the protagonist's 'autobiography' and therefore the start of the military theme. (43) When the novel was published in book form in 1868, among the few changes Tarchetti made were to omit the two quotations on the title-page which were relevant to the "nobile follia" section of the title and in the final section of the novel to remove a piece on the extra-sensory and substitute two brief comments on the monarchy and the military.

Given the combination of historical circumstance and personal experience, it is not surprising that he should choose the question of conscription and the army. Tarchetti himself had enjoyed a brief, and towards the end rather inglorious career, as a non-combatant military official and although he never saw active service it had a radical influence on his ideological formation. (44) Tarchetti's change in attitude to the army came with his experiences in Southern Italy between 1861 and 1863 and it helps explain the depths of his political disillusionment and the strong attraction of pacifism. When in 1861 his regiment was transferred to the South, first Foggia, later Lecce, Taranto and Salerno, he had his first real opportunity to witness the

army at work, in this case engaged in an exercise of suppression. Between 1861 and 1865 banditry was at its peak in the South. Although in a depressed and backward region it had been the normal expression of revolt for peasants oppressed by feudal landlords, a combination of poor harvests, general economic crisis and disappointment after the hopes stirred up by the Garibaldian expedition led to an upsurge in their activities. The politics practised by the moderates in the South from 1860 on only served to aggravate the situation for they failed to take any action over the question of the crown-lands in 1861 and provided absolutely no programme of public works to help relieve the critical level of unemployment brought on by the economic crisis. The dissolution of the 100,000 strong Borbonic army did not help, because although the officers could join the Italian army the soldiers could not, but many were called up for national service and rather than obey an alien king and government they chose to become outlaws. The problem was dealt with in a manner which showed no understanding of the conditions which gave rise to banditry. By the year 1863, 120,000 troops were engaged in the battle against bandits, with an increasingly repressive counter-offensive which took harsh reprisals against anyone who had helped or shown sympathy to a bandit. But even the summary executions failed to have the desired effect and eventually a commission was set up to examine the problem, which although initially considered a victory by the Left, showed itself to be totally devoid of any understanding of the conditions in the South and produced such a repressive law that even the government shirked from presenting it in Parliament, and eventually proposed another law which was passed in August 1863. This declared that regions officially labelled as being in a "stato di brigantaggio" would have military tribunals set up to try bandits and their accomplices, which at least helped to bring to a halt the summary

executions, provincial courts which could enforce residence on anybody thought to be aiding a bandit, a ruling which was much abused because no reasons had to be given, and finally it authorised local volunteer squads to fight banditry. This combined with the army's operation eventually brought military success and according to figures which are almost certainly incomplete, between June 1861 and December 1865, 5,212 bandits were either killed in battle or shot and over 5,000 more were arrested. So banditry was suppressed without any steps taken to ameliorate the conditions which gave rise to it. Tarchetti's personal experience in the South made him very conscious of the way in which the army of liberation was being transmuted into a weapon for internal repression. In a letter to his friend Ronco sent from Foggia he observed:

Siamo odiati, rifiutati da tutte le famiglie, i pochi liberali sono uccisi di notte o spariscono senz'altro. Un grande bosco di 80 miglia è interamente occupato dai briganti e non vi si può penetrare. (45)

And although he never wrote specifically on the problem, evidence of his sympathy can be found in his treatment of a group of bandits in an early short story "In cerca di morte". Here they are explaining their philosophy to their captive:

... uccidiamo quelli che guaiscono come le femmine, che ci ricusano la loro borsa, che non vogliono ammettere il diritto che noi abbiamo sulle sostanze dei ricchi, e la missione che ci siamo imposta di migliorare la società, distruggendo la disparità delle fortune... (46)

It is this experience which is clearly the personal source for the pacifist sentiment that sustains Una nobile follia. It marks the end of a period of personal crisis which saw him resign his commission and reject the idea of the conscripted army. Salvatore Farina recalls this period in his memoirs, how the two of them had planned a united attack on the army and how "...un anno prima I.U. Tarchetti ed io avevamo fatto giuramento di combattere insieme gli eserciti permanenti". (47)

which led to Farina producing a brief compilation of military history, political economy and statistics which he published as a pamphlet in 1866 under the title "Tutti militi, pensieri sull'abolizione degli eserciti permanenti", while:

Il mio Ugo Tarchetti si era anche lui messo all'opera con altre armi. In forma di romanzo avrebbe egli detto al sentimento quel che a me pareva di aver luminosamente dimostrato alla ragione. (48)

In his preface to the second edition of 1869 Tarchetti also draws attention to an anti-militarist programme which he drew up and distributed within the army. Most of the copies were subsequently publicly destroyed by military officers and the text appears to exist no longer. (49)

In historical terms the novel was published at a sensitive moment, soon after the humiliating defeats first at Custoza where La Marmora displayed a regrettable inability to command and lost the battle when it could have been won and a month later at Lissa where once again through poor leadership the Italians lost. As an early example of Italy's collective force under a single government and flag, it made people feel bitterly disillusioned for they had borne the burden of putting together, at enormous expense, an army and a navy, yet war was conducted more along the lines of a political intrigue than a military strategy. Cattaneo summed up the mood of the country in a letter he wrote to the senator, Giuseppe Musio, on the 9th October 1866:

Ormai, nella memoria della nazione e delle nazioni - e nella coscienza del soldato - Custoza e Lissa sono parti d'un reato solo. Nessuno ha ormai forza di sciogliere quel nodo. Il Senato è giudice unico e supremo dei colpevoli: può, se vuole, assolver tutti, ma deve giudicar tutti. Anzi, se v'è reato il suo punto culminante è già Custoza, Lissa è il tardo e inutile strascico d'una guerra morta... A Lissa non si vede come a Custoza il proposito sofisticato di vincere senza vincere, non si vede l'umile accordo con lo straniero imperioso, il vile accordo col burbero nemico, non si vede il traffico dell'onore col guadagno, la guerra finta e pur sanguignosa che pone per sempre nel cuore del soldato non la fiducia della vittoria, ma il ghiaccio del sospetto. È per queste arti indegne che l'Italia aveva perduto a memoria nostra l'onore delle armi. (50)

There are two aspects to Tarchetti's anti-militarism as it is given expression in Una nobile follia; on the one hand there is the espousal of pacifism in toto, on the other hand he at the same time concerns himself with a closely argued critique of the modern conscript army. In his close analysis of the techniques used to make a soldier out of a conscript - a process of dehumanisation and brutality - he shows how the conscript, severed from work and productive labour, is initially confused and disoriented but is immediately put through a programme of intense physical activity and strict discipline which is designed to leave him physically exhausted and mentally numbed. This combined with the unfamiliarity of the surroundings and the mechanistic nature of his training leave him unable to grasp what is happening to him. Once the shock has passed, the desire to rebel is soon suppressed by the voice of reason pointing to the absurdity of such a course of action. Tarchetti's exposition is a happy amalgam of personal experience - "Io non sono un uomo che dice: il soldato soffre, ma un uomo che dice: ho veduto che il soldato soffre. Io ho vissuto nella caserma, dirò quali sieno quelle lacrime e quei dolori che vi sono nella caserma: ecco tutto. L'eloquenza dei fatti e delle cifre è incontestabile". (51) - the atmosphere of the anti-militarist scapigliati (Cronaca grigia and Gazzettino rosa were both pacifist), and other writings of the period, for a number of voices were raised against the shape the Italian army had taken. In April 1861 Garibaldi had proposed a new national guard, in which all men would have participated except for the disabled and those unable to for precise family reasons. The plan which eventually passed through was an extremely modified version of this, vociferously criticized by the Left, and with it ended the democratic forces' attempt to influence the military organisation of the unified state.

In pratica Garibaldi proponeva la formazione di un grosso esercito complementare fondato sulla leva di massa, che egli stesso aveva tentato di attuare, senza riuscirci, durante la spedizione nel Mezzogiorno. Ben poco infatti questa guardia nazionale mobile aveva a che fare con la guardia nazionale, istituita nel '48 e riformata nel '50, alla quale Garibaldi faceva riferimento nel 1° articolo del suo progetto. Questa infatti non comprendeva i braccianti, i giornalieri e in genere i nullatenenti; era organizzata in battaglioni; era destinata a servizi di ordine pubblico; era in sostanza una milizia destinata a difendere contro i nemici interni l'ordinamento liberale e la prevalenza della classe borghese; invece l'organizzazione proposta da Garibaldi avrebbe dovuto essere la realizzazione del sogno democratico della nazione armata ed aveva come scopo immediato il completamento dell'unità.

(52)

Tarchetti's opposition to conscript armies was influenced by Carlo Pisacane, who had written a piece on the military question in 1858 called 'Ordinamento e costituzione delle milizie italiane ossia Come ordinare la nazione armata' in which he had considered the issue within the wider perspective of the new state. He concluded that permanent armies arise with the fall of liberty and that militias "dette nazionali" represent an identical structure of oppression. His description of permanent armies as

... scuola di pregiudizi e di errori in cui rinnegasi la ragione, la dignità del cittadino, dell'uomo, rinnegasi la patria; sostegno della tirannide, ostacolo ad ogni grandezza . (53)

is echoed in Tarchetti's description of life within the barracks:

La caserma possiede e favorisce le abitudini e i vizi di tutte le comunanze: il giuoco, la crepula, il vino, la prostituzione del principio morale, la prepotenza, la violenza, l'oppressione del debole, il diritto della forza, la vendetta privata, la collisione pronta e feroce - tutto ciò vive nelle caserme, e vi si perpetua d'individuo in individuo . (54)

Tarchetti also points out that an institution in which a life is ruled by the dictates of one's superior and in which individual ideas must conform to those of the mass is not a democratic institution; it is rather one whose purpose, far from being that of defending the nation as a whole, is to defend the interests of a small sector of that nation against the vast majority of its citizens. It was a point felt

by many of the leading democrats, Cattaneo for example in an anonymous article published in Il Politecnico in 1860 observed:

Armi e ferrovie! Queste sono le due parti della difesa nazionale, l'una delle quali rende necessaria l'altra. La rivoluzione aveva contrapposto ai mediocri eserciti dell'antico despotismo le masse dei circoscritti Allons, enfants de la patrie. I tribuni speravano così d'aver armato la libertà; ma da ultimo s'accorsero d'aver rivelato una nuova fonte di forza al despotismo. Perocchè la disciplina stanziata e gli interessi della carriera militare in breve alienarono dalla causa i figli del popolo. (55)

Carlo Dossi likewise in his Note azzurre has no hesitation on the nature of the army:

Inoltre, l'autorità militare è una pessima compagna di libertà; e gli eserciti non furono mai tanto funesti agli altri quanto ai loro propri paesi. E c'è ancora, in rima osa celebrare i massacri di migliaia di uomini. (56) ch.

But as I indicated above, Tarchetti's anti-militarism went beyond criticisms of the organisation of military life and the conscripted army to a deep commitment to the pacifist cause. Here he might have been influenced by the popular literature he read which tended to proclaim a pacifist sentiment, writers such as Erckmann-Chatrion, Hugo and De Vigny (whose account of the captain Renaud and his misery at having killed a young Russian in the third story of Servitude et grandeur militaires is echoed in Una nobile follia with Vincenzo D's involuntary homicide), while closer home one finds a creeping pacifism developing in Lombard radicals such as Ghislanzoni who in this brief extract 'celebrating' the victory of Solferino, enthuses:

Quarantamila morti! in verità il bollettino non poteva essere più splendido! Chi non ha gustato l'epico entusiasmo di quel grandioso massacro? L'avete voi veduto un campo di battaglia, una pianura di Solferino, dopo una grande vittoria? Quarantamila cadaveri a frammenti di carne umana, orribilmente pestati, confusi, ingrommati di caligine di sangue? (57)

In Una nobile follia Tarchetti explores more fully the ideology of heroism that he first rejected in Paolina:

Nulla di più assurdo del coraggio nelle battaglie, nulla di più comune di un eroe sul campo. (58)

He substitutes for it the courage of the deserter. Written at such a time with such a message, the book was bound to stir up controversy and the gamut of critical response which went from bitter hostility to enthusiastic support depended on the political formation of the reviewer, one of the most enduring replies being Edmondo De Amicis' glorification of army life, Bozzetti della vita militare, which he began to publish after writing an article attacking Tarchetti's novel. (59) (Tarchetti himself never took up the argument with De Amicis, a writer whom he held in the deepest contempt, referring to him in such terms as "il matricolino Edmondo De Amicis", "il vergine sottotenente" and "l'eroe del collegio").

It was not until the 1870's, after its author's premature death, that critics who had until then concentrated on the content, began to turn their attention to form, and found it lacking. Carducci, for example, attributed the earlier enthusiasm for Tarchetti's writing to aesthetic sentimentalism:

Si scambiava il contenuto e l'intento per l'arte: si diceva - Non c'è forma, la prosa è brutta, ma il romanzo c'è ed è bello -; come se senza forma arte ci sia, come se una trovata o un episodio o un frammento sia il romanzo, come se, scrivendo male, si scriva bene. (60)

In both these novels Tarchetti's aesthetic separates the form from the content, saying that in view of the importance of the subject-matter the writing has at times suffered. It again relates to his conviction that literature should be perceived by writer and reader as an instrument of social reform. Of Una nobile follia he writes:

Io l'ho scritto per uno scopo - fu il mio secondo lavoro, e lo raffazzonai in pochi giorni per appendici di giornale - non m'importerebbe gran cosa il raggiungere questo scopo anche a prezzo di qualche errore di forma e di sintassi. Triste la civiltà di quel paese, in cui la letteratura è un'arte e non una missione! (61)

Evidence is to be found in the novel also where priority is given to the exposition or saggio over and above artistic considerations; the twenty pages devoted to Vincenzo D's thoughts (62) contribute a philosophy but detract from the drama; product of an attitude to literature which privileges its public ideological role in an effort to restore its status in the newly unified Italy. Bettini has made the point in reference to the Scapigliatura as a whole that,

... non ubbidiva al semplice stimolo di una volontà individualmente ribellistica e di un'insofferenza prodotta dall'incapacità storica di definire il nuovo ruolo della classe intellettuale, ma mirava al raggiungimento di un obiettivo molto più avanzato e rischioso: intendeva, cioè, mettere in discussione e sovvertire quella concezione che della letteratura la nostra tradizione letteraria e il romanticismo stesso avevano costantemente affermato come momento di integrità spirituale e di attività costruttiva, come sistema di valori sicuri ed incrollabili e, quindi, come visione unitaria, progressiva ed organica della realtà e della storia. (63)

This does not mean however that Tarchetti has made "un canone dell' antiletteratura" (64); on the contrary, the apparent simplicity of Una nobile follia is carefully structured to convey an impression of immediacy and directness.

Portinari in his reading of the novel identified its novelty in its presentation as a "romanzo-saggio" in which the speculative part finds its realisation and demonstration in the plot.

Così, in una struttura di romanzo-saggio non fa meraviglia che gli stilemi siano la sentenza e il discorso diretto. La sentenza è il modulo in cui naturalmente si condensa l'esposizione della teoria e della tesi (nell'ultima parte vi è addirittura tutta una raccolta di pensieri di Vincenzo), mentre il discorso diretto è l'oratorio strumento per chiamare direttamente in causa l'interlocutore-lettore (non mi riferisco perciò soltanto ai dialoghi), in una tensione di perorazione continua. (65)

Already with his first novel Tarchetti had attempted a "romanzo-saggio", but we have seen the problems he experienced in reconciling the two texts, the one the "saggio" which is constructed around the narrator,

the other the "romanzo" constructed around Paolina herself, the two axes, working with different registers, neither supporting nor complementing each other. In Paolina, although we are told in the opening frame that the author heard about the story from another source, which supports its air of veracity, it is only at the end that the source is identified as 'Mineu' herself, one of the protagonists. So in his construction of an implied narrator he chooses a persona which approximates to himself, a figure whom he retains in Una nobile follia (he is even addressed in his own name) while relinquishing his right to the omniscience that he exercised so freely in Paolina. In his last novel Fosca, partly perhaps because here he is drawing on true events, he goes some way to construct a fictionalised narrator, Giorgio, who this time is protagonist in the story he narrates. In Una nobile follia most of the story is recounted at two removes; the author is told the story of a third person by a mutual friend, which he then transcribes for his readers exactly as he heard it without mediation. So the reader reads it as the author heard it (there is in all Tarchetti's work a deliberate ambiguity in his use of hearing/reading and listening/reading which I shall return to in relation to Fosca):

- Tu vuoi che io ti narri la mia storia - mi diceva il mio amico - e forse l'aver tu ascoltata la notizia della mia morte ti fa supporre degli strani avvenimenti nella mia vita... non è la mia storia quella che mi accingo a raccontarti...
(66)

2.4 Narrative voices

The device which gives rise to this narration is a clever variation on a cliché of feuilleton literature put here to felicitous use; a case of mistaken identity in which a man kills himself after assuming the identity of another. The implied narrator's friend Vincenzo D. is saved from a life of debt and debtors by his close friend, also called Vincenzo D., who later commits suicide in his name. Suspense is

created out of the fact that the author who receives a note from this friend he thought dead (having read of the suicide in a newspaper) is only given an explanation for the mystery at the end of the story. It works at a mechanistic level and at a deeper level, serving to underline a point that emerges through the text which concerns both the arbitrariness of life and the ambiguity of identity. This is a decisive step away from Paolina, where the categorisation of character is absolute, towards the concerns manifest in Fosca where attributes of character are completely destabilised. In Una nobile follia the second Vincenzo D. (67) endures a life which is governed to an unusual degree by chance; he neither knows the names of his parents, nor with any precision his birth-place, his original name being taken from the saint's name on his day of baptism, chance leads to him being conscripted, to the involuntary homicide and, after he deserts, to the adoption "per una strana casualità" of the same name as the man he has yet to meet.

Having the story initially related at two removes creates a distancing effect, which can however be abrogated when the author wants the narrative to have a direct impact on the reader's sensibility. This occurs in the long description of Vincenzo's life in the army where the first person narrative is sustained without interruption, but at the end of the account the narrator's friend can endorse the deserter's heroism by describing the singular influence the man had on his own character:

Comprendeva che da quell'istante tutto doveva mutarsi nel mio destino; che qualche cosa si era già mutato nella mia indole: sentiva che io non era più quell'uomo! (68)

The implied narrator who, of the three, is extraneous to the story can in turn testify to the changes in his friend's life and character, thereby conferring on the narrative a stamp of authenticity. The three narrators hold certain characteristics in common, above all a

humanity and a wisdom born of suffering which sets them outside society. The moral and artistic value of personal suffering is a privileged topos in Tarchetti's writing; one sees the beginnings of it in the character of 'Mineu' in Paolina, it is elaborated here in the presentation of the second Vincenzo and later in the three stories known collectively as Amore nell'arte it becomes a dominant and obsessive theme. Lionel Trilling commented on this facet of the artistic persona that:

In the nineteenth century the Christianized notion of the didactic suffering of the artist went along with the idea of his mental degeneration and even served as a sort of counter-myth to it. Its doctrine was that the artist, a man of strength and health, experienced and suffered, and thus learned both the facts of life and his artistic craft. 'I am the man, I suffered, I was there,' ran his boast, and he derived his authority from the knowledge gained through suffering. (69)

Tarchetti establishes his artistic credentials in precisely these terms, "Io non sono un uomo che dice: il soldato soffre, ma un uomo che dice: ho veduto che il soldato soffre..." (70), while confirmation of his friend's reliability as witness comes from his physiomy.

Vincenzo aveva certo subito delle dure prove nel mondo: qualche grande amarezza, di quelle che non si dimenticano più nella vita, doveva averlo travagliato nei primi anni della nostra separazione. Io lessi sul suo viso una storia che mi struggevo di ascoltare dal suo labbro... (71)

The author's first person narration is then handed over to Vincenzo D. who after a few preliminary remarks begins his description of his meeting with the second Vincenzo D.:

Ma veniamo all'essenza del mio racconto: io narrerò dei fatti, non emetterò alcun giudizio su lui: della sua indole, de' suoi principi, del suo fine, eleggo a giudice te stesso. (72)

Then it is the turn of the second Vincenzo D. to explain in his terms the circumstances of his life:

Ma udite la mia storia - ... Voi siete il primo uomo che l'ascolta, e la cui compassione non avrà la triste proprietà di umiliarmi: (73)

Throughout the novel attention is drawn to each transition between narrators, which means that the story is littered with references to the act of telling or narrating. As the linguistic register remains the same, the presence of these references is necessary to avoid confusion, while recourse to the vocative encourages the reader off the text along with the addressee within the text. This device is used quite frequently within the narrative as well and it is given resonance by the use of the ambiguous pronoun "voi":

Io vi ho parlato di un affetto nobile e puro, vi ho
denudata l'anima mia, vi ho mostrato il mio cuore di
quindici anni: io vi ho nulla taciuto, ...
Ma tornerò al racconto della mia vita. (74)

While structured as a novel, most of the text is supposedly spoken, so where the written word is inherently independent of the presence of a speaker, Tarchetti strikes against this by restoring the presence of a fictive speaker. At a contextual level it emphasizes the value of the act of narration, which here is one of revelation and denunciation.

The long introduction which precedes the second Vincenzo D.'s story is important in establishing his character, and given that the book's 'message' is entrusted to him the reader must experience a certain empathy. As he is potentially unreliable and, in his extremism, unsympathetic, the eye-witness account by the other Vincenzo, who perceives not eccentricity, but compassion is particularly important. The reader sees also Vincenzo's changing attitude to the second Vincenzo D. as he moves from an objective clinical stance to one of affection and concern to a deep love. (It must be added that the second Vincenzo D's account is one of extreme lucidity.)

For close on a hundred pages the reader is then engaged with the autobiography of the second Vincenzo D. (which is spoken by his friend) and which like all recognizably traditional autobiographies begins at

the beginning, "Io non conobbi nè mio padre, nè mia madre;...", with his childhood in an orphanage. It is this section of the novel which concerns itself with the question of the military, so it has to find a way of reconciling the particular with the general, the fictive with the historical. This is achieved simply but effectively by dividing the narrative into separate, at times almost self-contained units which have enough indicators forward and points of tension to encourage the reader to keep going. It opens with his story of childhood and first love and stops with the moment of call-up; "Caddi fulminato". (75)

It then contextualizes what is to follow with an essay and denunciation of military life in general (the reader has been warned of worse things to come (76)) and ends with a terse statement of fact; "Il soldato è fatto." (77) From the referential it then moves back to the emotive, in which he relates what has come before to his own circumstances; "Io fui una di quelle vittime;..." (78) This is followed by a description of the Crimea, recounted, it is intimated, at second or third hand, ("Io traeva una strana voluttà dal racconto delle battaglie avvenute nello svolgersi di quel primo periodo della guerra" (79)) which in turn precedes his own eye-witness account of the Crimea. This ends with a direct appeal to the addressee to keep going:

Il passato aveva uccisa la mia felicità, l'avvenire doveva uccidere la mia coscienza. Sentite come avvenne quella morte. (80)

(Death occurs on a real level as well as a metaphorical one.) But the narrative again veers away from the confessional mode to a description of battle (81), before acknowledging that the time of deferral has finally come to an end: "Ma io non v'ho detto ancor nulla di me. Non l'ho osato. Come confidarvi il mio delitto?" (82) and the story ends with his account of the homicide, desertion and incipient insanity. So at a structural level the contextual pieces help heighten the drama

by delaying the climax of the story and fit with the narrator's natural diffidence and hesitation at the thought of proceeding with his personal account:

A questo punto del mio racconto, all'idea degli avvenimenti che io devo evocare e descrivervi, dei dolori che io sto per far rivivere nella mia anima esulcerata ed inferma, io mi sento dubbioso se debba proseguire o arrestarmi. (83)

The climax of the book's anti-militarism comes with the description of the Crimea. Portinari found that the strength of the description of battle lies in the hyper-realism of the narration:

Infatti non è la deformazione lo strumento usato nel momento del massimo impegno ma proprio la somma crescente, eccessiva, l'iperbole mostruosa e orribile del verosimile. Anzi della verità, della realtà, della storia. (84)

The accumulation of detail does however result in a deformation of the material and creatively so, for it is through this process of defamiliarisation that the reader is effectively able to perceive the battle. By the time of Tarchetti's novel battle was such a familiar topos in literature that an author who wanted to express himself through it had to find a new means of doing so. (85) Dominating the three separate descriptions of life and death in the Crimea is nature; its cruelty, its indifference, its ferocity. In the first description of battle nature collaborates with death,

Allorchè la nebbia, dileguatasi un istante, lasciava apparire ai soldati francesi lo spettacolo di quel macello, la sete della vendetta rinasceva in essi più indomata e più atroce. (86)

while the human participants become part of the natural world, they are transmogrified into "monti di corpi corrotti", "montagne di cadaveri", "enormi stalattiti umane", "una valanga umana", "un'onda di cavalli e d'uomini" etc. The whole of the second episode relates to a natural disaster which re-presents in another way the arbitrariness, absurdity and unstoppableness of war. In an earlier description of life in a military barracks for a conscript (this in itself is seen as a microcosm

of society (87)) Tarchetti writes metaphorically in a way which is echoed later in his pages on the Crimea.

Ma il pendio è sì rapido e l'abisso è sì attraente, che non vi ha chi non lo percorra in un tratto, e vi si precipiti quasi volonteroso. Coloro che resistono e si aggrappano all'orlo disperati e convulsi, soggiacciono quasi sempre allo sforzo medesimo della loro resistenza. (88)

At all levels individual resistance is impossible; morally and later physically one is swept along by one's fellow-men. The final description of battle is the most neutral in tone and the most precise in detail: plan of campaign, military tactics etc. are described, so that Vincenzo D.'s personal tragedy, his murder of an enemy soldier, receives our full attention.

At the end of his autobiography, the thread of the story is taken up by his friend who then hands it back to the author. A pause, and then after some equivocation the book continues with extracts from the second Vincenzo's notes. He had earlier promised a diary ("scrivo da due anni il mio diario, e troverete in esso tutto ciò che dovrei aggiungere a voce per completarvi l'idea del mio carattere. Prendete, leggete queste pagine, e giudicatemi." (89) Whether Tarchetti the author then realised what he had committed himself to in terms of length, or whether he wished to play with the codes he was using, or whether he wished to add further verisimilitude to the text, the diaries it turns out have been lost and all that is left are a few pages Vincenzo wrote shortly before his death; of these, we are told, the selection has been dictated by the narrator's memory. These extracts form the tail-end of Vincenzo's story. The narration is then taken over by the other Vincenzo who 'tidies up' and explains the mystery established at the beginning of the story (although the actual plot has a very small part in the story, it gives it a structure and ostensible purpose) and the novel ends in the voice of

the implied narrator. Despite appearances to the contrary, the novel is carefully and symmetrically structured, but this combines with a formal verisimilitude; the story breaks off for the night after having started that morning. Devices such as letters or memoirs left by the dead, which are clumsily exploited in Paolina to transmit information without direct authorial intervention or to give the plot an air of plausibility, recur in Una nobile follia more adventurously and better integrated in the text; for example the use that is made of an extract from a letter at the beginning of the novel. Dialogue is kept on the whole to a minimum, although the initial encounter between the two Vincenzos unashamedly functions as a compendium of the second Vincenzo's politics and convictions.

Una nobile follia is a resourceful novel in its exploration of narrative technique and it goes some way to overcoming two of the problems that dominate Paolina; the reconciliation of private and public, fiction and history in Vincenzo D.'s 'autobiography' and the relationship between implied narrator and text which is resolved by the tripartite narration and the narrator's own more limited role as scribe. Both these problems are evident in Rovani's struggle to write an extensive, and extended, popular novel of didactic value, Cento anni.

Chapter 3.

Rovani: Cento anni. The teller and the tale.

3.1 The novel and history

It was after he had published three historical novels between 1843 and 1846 (1), that Giuseppe Rovani turned his attention to a project which in terms of national cultural history, as well as his personal literary career, was very ambitious; to write a serious and far-reaching popular novel which would span the hundred years from 1745 to 1845. The corner-stone was ingenious: a criminal trial and the social and legal consequences that ensued. Rovani had fully elaborated the parameters of the subject-matter before he embarked on the project. With the emphasis falling on the socio-cultural aspects of the period (the political and the economic are absent except as occasional but often lengthy digressions), the narrator would conduct the reader on a journey through time by way of a narrative which was to be hinged to the nodal points of recent history. (2) In the context of literary tradition he explained that by covering the events of a century, he would introduce an entirely new element, for attention would be transferred from the individual to successive generations of families. (3)

As for the material itself, most of it would come from hitherto unpublished sources, - personal testimonies, records of court-cases, manuscripts, etc., - and these would be used in a continual effort to 'revise' and if necessary correct 'official' history. This takes priority in the novel over other considerations, including the value of entertainment, a point that Rovani often stops to make to his, perhaps flagging, readership. In this example he justifies a long digression on Church and state with the following words,

... per essere fedeli all'intento principalissimo di questo lavoro, che costituisce la sua ragione di essere, ed è quello di pubblicare ciò che si tenne celato o nei manoscritti o in quegli opuscoli coraggiosi e ciò facciamo per rimediare, in parte almeno, alle bugie, alle simulazioni, alle

dissimulazioni di alcune tra le storie più riputate e più lette, e che, protette dalla bandiera della verità, portarono in giro molta merce di contrabbando. - (4)

So the novel becomes the product of a writer who sees his task to be that of weaving together different texts in which the author, as well as being novelist, is also editor, historian and scholar too. In a recently published reading of Samuel Richardson's Clarissa, Terry Eagleton makes a point which is very pertinent for Rovani's Cento anni; he says that Richardson's novels are not primarily literary texts for

... they entwine with commerce, religion, theatre, ethical debate, the visual arts, public entertainment... In short, they are organising forces of what, after German political theory, we may term the bourgeois 'public sphere'. (5)

Through the medium of the novel Rovani is educating a new reading-public both about its history and, importantly for his age, in a secularised morality which finds its roots in the individual conscience, a point I shall return to.

The appeal that the novel held for Rovani as a many faceted genre is consistent with his conviction that the novelist has an important part to play in the representation of history because he has objectives which are distinct from those of the historian, and by enlivening history's aridity with the resources of the imagination and a wealth of information the past can become accessible to a much wider readership. Of Manzoni he wrote:

Adempi alle lacune che lasciò la storia, ricostruendo a forza d'induzione tutta intera una serie di fatti su quelli tramandatici, spogliando l'induzione stessa delle aride forme della scienza; per vestirla di quelle dell'arte. (6)

It was this aspect of Manzoni's work (and his praise relates to all of it, not only I promessi sposi), which he singles out for particular attention both in his monograph on Manzoni and in Le tre arti considerate in alcuni illustri contemporanei. Above all else Manzoni is a great writer because "Manzoni fu poeta e prosatore e scienziato" (7), in his work "c'è tutto il passato d'Italia" (8) and in addition to this he is also an original writer. (9)

It can be noted in passing that in his preface to Cento anni Rovani lays claim to the presence of these features in his own forthcoming novel! All Rovani's novels are historical or biographical and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is considerable ambivalence in his defence of the genre. He ultimately disapproves of fiction and finds himself able to confer status on it only by hitching it on to other forms of writing whose existence and validity derive from their expression of a factual truth. In this context the following metacommentary which he excluded from his revised version of Cento anni, in its transition from appendice to volume, is interesting. In this extract he responds to his critics by launching a counter-attack, reassures his loyal readers that by popular request he will continue with his undertaking and adds,

... diremo dunque, che nostro scopo non è tanto di raccontare avventure saporitamente romanzesche, quanto di mostrare gli atteggiamenti della cosa pubblica in tutte le sue ramificazioni, per vedere come gl'individui ne rimangono modificati e come il dramma domestico si modelli obbediente ad essi... Dobbiamo dire inoltre che noi abbiamo pensato di fare questo lavoro, non già pel desiderio di tornare alle abitudini giovanili in forze delle quali abbiamo scritti tre o quattro romanzi storici; ma anzi, per far nemmeno un romanzo, giusta il volgare concetto onde è definito questa forma dell'arte; ma un libro in cui si raccolgano tutta la nostra esperienza e i nostri studj - esperienza della vita e studj sui libri-. (10)

while in other passages he argues that he will continue with the novel on grounds of its utilità. Unlike the seventeenth-century Richardson however, Rovani is concerned for the implications of including fictional and non-fictional material between the same covers, for if history is verifiable and therefore true, fiction by comparison is invented and therefore untrue. The result is that the text is frequently signalling both in its organisation of material and through its narrative voice this great divide. Within this framework it becomes clear why naturalism and its emphasis on the scientific analysis of character and motivation exercised a strong attraction for Rovani, because in its appeal to a truth beyond the text it confers on his writing the same validity that the historical novel had

earlier in his career. (11)

The position that Rovani held on the novel does of course present difficulties for a contemporary readership. With the shifting sands of intellectual history, Rovani's perception of two poles, history and fiction, and his concern that the latter should not undermine the foundations of the former, is viewed in a very much more problematic light today. The parameters of change in this respect are brilliantly drawn in Frank Kermode's essay The sense of an ending.

The recognition, now commonplace, that the writing of history involves the use of regulative fictions, is part of the same process. World history, the imposition of a plot on time, is a substitute for myth, and the substitution of an anti-historicist criticism for it is another step in the direction of harder satisfactions, in the clerkly rejection of romantic tenements. There is no history, says Karl Popper, only histories... The decline of paradigmatic history, and our growing consciousness of historiography's irreducible element of fiction, are, like the sophistication of literary plotting, contributions to what Wilde called 'the decay of lying'. (12)

The other difficulty experienced by the reader today lies with changes in cultural taste; as Wayne Booth has observed, the appeal of literature as a source of factual information has faded. The service performed by literary realism has now been appropriated by other media.

"Many of the realistic and naturalistic novels which were once popular and which now seem tedious relied somewhat too happily on the sustained appeal of what was often called truth." (13)

This appeal would have been particularly pronounced at a time when national unity was, with difficulty, being constructed, and when the arts were seen as having an important role in its consolidation.

3.2 The constraints of circumstance, time and politics

Before turning to the text itself, I wish to draw attention to the private and public constraints which exercised a negative influence on the writing of the novel. First there was the question of time, for when Rovani began working on Cento anni he had three other jobs - he was

employed at the Brera as a writer, he was editor of L'Italia musicale for Casa Lucca and he was also arts critic for the Gazzetta di Milano. As the novel was serialized as it was written, time for it had to be found, and when the promised regularity of the instalments did not materialize (none of the writing was sub-contracted, an approach which was adopted by some of the popular French novelists) the gaps between chapters lengthened and Rovani lost even loyal readers (14). In frequent attempts to resuscitate flagging interest and scourge his detractors, Rovani published a number of intermezzi in self-defence (15), but these could not counter the extraordinary demand being made of loyal readers, to stay with a serialized novel which was constructed as a continuous piece of narrative and published over a period of more than five years, from 1857 to 1863. Early in its production Rovani showed he was aware of the nature of the problem and he told his readers in August 1858 that he would proceed differently. After revising and publishing in a volume the opening section,

... pel rimanente continueremo con dispense di cento pagine per volta, raccogliendo a lor volta le file che abbiamo lasciato in sospenso nel numero di ieri per riprenderle e intesserle nel canovaccio del successivo periodo. (16)

But even this project was delayed, this time because of economic considerations, and readers had to wait until January 1859 for the publication of the first volume (17). Rovani then decided to continue in appendice and although he claimed that only through periodicals could a novelist acquire a readership, not long afterwards the Gazzetta changed hands, dropped the inclusion of ufficiale in its title and Rovani became part-owner, so that even if the readership was not guaranteed, publication in a very real sense was. By the time the final instalment appeared, the novel was so long that when it was reprinted in book-form it filled five separate volumes, but it must be remembered that unlike La comédie humaine each book does not stand on its own but is dependent on the others for its

sense and cohesion. (18)

The time at which Rovani embarked upon his project presented another problem, this time political; the internal as well as the external constraints that accompany press censorship. The Gazzetta ufficiale di Milano was the daily paper most read by the Milanese bourgeoisie; published in the afternoon, its four pages were primarily concerned with official news, stocks and shares and advertisements; it was also until 1859 the official Austrian publication. After the insurrection of the 6th February 1853 (19) there were tough repressive measures and censorship of the press was tightened up quite considerably. Rovani himself was in a slightly ambiguous position which at different times brought problems from the opposing sides. He had been in Venice at the time of the '48 revolution and after the town fell he went into temporary exile in the town of Capolago in Switzerland (where he became a friend of Cattaneo's and where he wrote and published a study of Manin), but after his return to Italy he came under attack from Italian patriots when he agreed to cover a visit to Lombardy made by the Austrian royal family. Twenty-eight pieces were published between the 11th January and the 2nd March 1857, a sensitive year which saw among other things Pisacane's expedition and the Mazzinian movements in Genoa and Livorno, as well as the beginning of Cento anni (20). Not only would this have meant that Rovani would have had to tread warily in his representations of Italy's past, but it also militates against Rovani's own understanding of the writer's role. In La storia delle lettere e delle arti in Italia he describes the writer as interpreter of his age and people, while in his study of Manzoni he perceives the writer's task to be the moral voice of his age, a voice which will speak out against the current,

... l'ufficio dei grandi scrittori è questo appunto di farsi annunciatori di cose nuove o insolite, quando queste possono servire a diradare un errore invalso: perchè nessun utile può scaturire dal dimostrare che è verissimo quello che tutti e da molto tempo credono vero; e perchè alla difficoltà dell'assunto si associa anche il coraggio... (21)

Now the narrator's freedom in Cento anni is clearly circumscribed by the hostile political circumstances in which he is writing, and the reader soon detects a certain unevenness and ambivalence in the moral voice. While he is able, for example, to condemn the custom of duelling outright, he prevaricates over the more immediately relevant issue of torture. In Book V the reader learns that a request has been made to submit "il Galantino" to torture because he refuses to confess to a crime the reader knows he has not committed. There is then a lengthy delay as the reader is plunged into a digression on the history of the Milanese Senate from 1390 to the present day, before being returned to the meeting which has been summoned to discuss the question. Another deferral occurs and the narrator now takes his reader on a guided tour of the debating-chamber, - frescoes, tapestries, etc. - before finally releasing him to 'overhear' the debate which results in the decision to submit "il Galantino" to 'limited' torture. In the description of the debate, a hitherto garrulous narrator remains silent and it is only in the next instalment that he slips in a condemnatory adjective, "Il marchese Recalcati, d'indole mite, aveva avversione a quella barbara eredità del diritto romano, la tortura." (22) The failure of the narrator to speak out with an uncompromising voice is then compounded in the next scene in which the narrator appears to share the participants' pleasure at the sight of the tortured body, "L'animale-uomo non comparve mai così bello, così sfolgorante, così formidabile nella sua giovinezza come in quel punto." (23)

Later, when he came to revise the text for publication after Unification, although he tended to subtract rather than add to the original, he did on occasion seek to redress the political balance; he added, for example, a section on Carlo VI which attacks the man and his love for authoritarian Spain where "il diritto storico" is given precedence over "il diritto razionale e naturale". (24)

The problem of the book's moral voice nonetheless remains with the final version. The implied narrator carries the weight of the text. He assumes responsibility for the selection and diffusion of knowledge and information as well as being accountable for the book's moral tone, both implicitly in the presentation of character and plot and explicitly in his many commentaries. It is these that make him particularly vulnerable for, as Seymour Chatman has observed :

Speech acts by a narrator that go beyond narrating, describing, or identifying will resonate with overtones of propria persona. Such pronouncements are best labelled comments... Commentary, since it is gratuitous, conveys the overt narrator's voice more distinctly than any feature short of explicit self-mention. (25)

In Cento anni the reader's attention is constantly being drawn to the narrator's presence, which means that he should be reliable, able to win and then maintain the reader's confidence. There are no other "centres of consciousness" or points of view at work within the novel, everything is filtered through the narrator, (26) so a moral inconsistency becomes an aesthetic failure for the success or otherwise of the undertaking depends on the presence of a narrator ^{with} whom the reader, - an implied reader who like the narrator is constructed by the text, - can be confident.

Other alternatives were of course available. Rovani could have brought in a deus ex machina to righten the world's wrongs, or the avenging figure of a Superman to bring justice where it was due, but instead he chooses to use the commentary or homily to explicate the text.

The moral message comes with the telling and not with the tale, so the characters for example become illustrations of the general principle that precedes them. In this brief passage, which was expunged from the final version, the three generations of male descent are introduced to the reader as exemplary of a corrupt nobility.

E vedremo don Alberico, anzi il conte, il marchese e conte
Alberico, a condensare in sè tutte le debolezze e le
frivolezze e le vanità della pessima nobiltà del suo secolo,
a dimostrare i danni di una sterminata ricchezza mal coltivata.
(27)

Without wishing to argue a case for the technical superiority of formal realism, it is debatable that Rovani, in the persona of narrator, adopts a position which is too interventionist and over-explanatory with regard to the text. Two explanations for this offer themselves. One takes us back to the circumstances of the undertaking and the other embraces the much wider question of readership.

On reading Cento anni in its original form, as it appeared in the Gazzetta, it becomes immediately apparent that the narrative voice as employed by Rovani both in his articles and in his serialized novel is exactly the same. Moreover the text bears a very strong resemblance to the Cronaca di Milano which in its absence, occupied the same section of the newspaper (28). Both are painstaking in their depiction of fashion, the arts are very prominent, particularly theatre (in Cento anni it has been calculated that three-quarters of the action is situated in theatres), and both employ informed 'chatty' narrators. It is perfectly possible that many readers read the novel, when it appeared, much as they read the Cronaca, for the occasional pieces of intriguing gossip, the odd insight, and the pleasure of painlessly learning something new. As the image Rovani creates for himself is the same in both his journalism and in his novel, it suggests that he gave little consideration to the wider implications of the construction of a self in relation to the reader.

3.3 The reader and the text

Umberto Eco in an analysis of Sue's Les mystères de Paris addresses himself to the problems which are particular to the serialized novel.

After opening with the premiss that:

The author of a popular novel never expresses his own problems of composition to himself in purely structural terms (How to write a narrative work?), but in terms of social psychology (What sort of problems must I solve in order to write a narrative which I intend will appeal to a large public and arouse both the concern of the masses and the curiosity of the well-to-do?). (29)

he comes down firmly on the side of "the determining influence of the market" in deciding the structure of the serialized novel,

... which by reason of its piecemeal publication, is forced to keep the reader's interest alive from week to week or from day to day. But it is not only a question of a natural adaptation of the novel structure to the conditions peculiar to a particular genre (within which differentiations might also be made according to the particular type of serial publication adopted.) The determining influence of the market goes deeper than this. As Bory also observed, "success prolongs the novels". New episodes are invented one after another, because the public claims that it cannot bear to say goodbye to its characters. A dialectic is established between market-demands, and the plot's structure which is so important that at a certain point even fundamental laws of plot construction, which might have been thought inviolate for any commercial novel, are transgressed. (30)

Rovani, who must be unusual in that on the 11th April 1857 he printed a reply to a reader's query about Cento anni before he had even begun publishing the novel, was fully aware of the need for a readership to allow him to continue and complete the work; "Il punto più difficile è solo che tutti i lettori desiderino la continuazione." (31) His asides show him to be cognizant of the limitations of the genre; he refers to its perishability, "appendice fuggitiva", and writes about the problem of conveying information which the reader needs to retain from episode to episode (32). Like Henry James he believed that the only fair demand a reader can make of a book is that it be interesting, and in response to negative criticism, he replied that he could take all manner of abuse save that he sent his readers to sleep.

This did not detract from a professional expertise that allowed Rovani to see that once embarked upon, the novel itself would make its own narrative demands of the narrator,

... from the moment in which the execution of the text begins, the freedom of the writer is progressively conditioned by the generative structure of the text. As the constructive laws of the work gradually take form, it is the work itself that imposes its will upon the author, a fact to be considered in any theory of the implied author. (33)

Ma qui sta il punto: l'affar più serio è incominciare. Sono venti giorni che andiamo in cerca della prima riga, per breve del nostro romanzo, ch'è una prima riga, per breve che sia, è un sistema d'idee da cui tutte le altre devono sgorgare necessariamente. - Guai a chi la pianta in falso - tutto l'edificio è in pericolo. (34)

Yet despite his acknowledgement of the limitations incurred by the opening itself, he imposed upon himself serious restraints by elaborating the structure of the book, and communicating his plans to his readers, in advance. It is this predicament that Carlo Dossi must have had in mind in "Prefazione generale ai Ritratti umani" when he proposed the afterword so that the writer does not fall victim to his own promises;

Ma, una volta che la bugia è detta, e che un autore s'è compromesso col pubblico, i suoi successivi lavori, guadagnando anche in arte o in iscopi, perdono in novità e freschezza. Del serico filo, che - nuovo baco - ei produsse, comincia a tessersi una camicia di forza, e, non rado, un laccio strangolatojo. (35)

Aware of the demands emanating from both reader and text, Rovani appears reluctant to concede too much to the reader. This must in part stem from the very low opinion that writers of this period had of their reading-public. Borrowing Maria Corti's useful concept of the reader's "competence", there would appear to be some sociological foundation for the blame so commonly attributed to the public by writers and critics alike. Corti points out that:

The literary genre is, however, also a symptom of a culture and of the social group that produces, receives and distributes it; hence the importance of considering the notion of the competence of the addressees, a consideration undervalued up to now in histories of literature. (36)

Petronio, in a Marxist analysis of the problems confronting post-Unification writers, argues that there was a gap between superstructure and infrastructure, a "dislocazione storica" attributable to the fact that while as a country Italy was socially and economically behind the rest of Europe, at a cultural level it had become a province of Europe. It was, in other words, receiving ideas from elsewhere without having the material conditions which generated these ideas (37). When applied to the demands made of a novelist addressing himself to a newspaper-reading public, it would mean that a great deal of explanation was needed, little in terms of literary topoi and types could be assumed. Seymour Chatman makes a very relevant point in this respect with regard to Balzac (who was writing for a more culturally prepared audience than that enjoyed by Rovani) and Thackeray.

This overfacility at finding explanations clearly indicates an uneasy transitional stage in literary history. It marks a style requiring traditional realism but not commanding an adequate consensus about reality upon which to base it. It supplies its own stereotypes to explain actions that otherwise would seem unclear or unreasonable because the traditional codes have been subverted by history. Balzac and Thackeray constructed verisimilitude artificially to compensate for what could no longer be silently pre-empted from the public domain. The topoi were up for grabs. Writers needed generalisations because motivation was not clarified by known codes. (38)

The effect this has on narrative can be seen in Cento anni in the problems Rovani experiences with the construction of character. Like Balzac, Rovani wants to portray an epoch in all its aspects and to convey this his characters are intended as types personifying both the transcendental truths about human nature and those contingent aspects which depend upon the age in which they live. He rarely allows a formal realism to carry his analysis, but precedes it, punctuates or accompanies it, with the narrator's own commentaries. This happens with the scion of degenerate nobles referred to above and again, more systematically, with the figure of Suardi, who is illustrative of a nouveau riche parvenu, whose

speculative skills have enabled him to exploit the economic and administrative system of the duchy of Milan while the breakdown in the class-caste system has allowed him to climb the ladder of social mobility. But his creator, who is trying to present a relatively new social type without much of a literary past, has to battle to prevent him being relegated to the ranks of the corrupt and evil. The way the reader chooses to interpret him has important consequences not only for the point that is being made about the relationship between character and environment, but also for the plausibility of the plot. In this extract Rovani has to make Ada's incipient love for Suardi psychologically comprehensible, so he prepares the reader with a summary of the man's past, the general observation that, like the curate's egg, character is not uniform and a tag on the beneficial influence of love on character.

Ora, siccome le facce del poliedro umano sono tante, e fu già dimostrato dalle prove e riprove de savj che un uomo non è mai tutt'affatto cattivo nè tutt'affatto buono, e che anche nel sangue più guasto, sapendo adoperare, nell'analisi di esso, la virtù degli agenti e reagenti chimici, si rinviene sempre qualche dose più o meno abbondante di buon sangue, così il Suardi, nelle contingenze amorose, recava spesso una gentilezza, che, quasi, potea dirsi quella di un gentiluomo squisito. (39)

In contrast to this, a character such as Giunio Baroggi who has his origins in the Werther-Ortis tradition, can be sketched in with a few lines, the force of familiarity completes the picture. (Baroggi is taken by Dossi to be Rovani's self-portrait and is used by him as such. Exceptional, intelligent and alienated, his badge of excellence being his suffering, he is typical of Scapigliatura iconography and as a type frequently appears in Tarchetti's writing.)

Dossi's reading of Cento anni identifies the conflict between author and reader as being the main innovation, but his analysis is stripped of any sociological leanings, (he implies that the readers suffer from an

innate mental deficiency, "... gente spesso di dura cotenna, cui bisognava dire otto perchè capissero due." (40)) So important is this relationship to the history of narrative writing that he traces a literary genealogy which travels from Manzoni via Rovani to himself in terms of their changing relationship to their readers.

Manzoni dice le cose sue, come il lettore vuole - Rovani, come il lettore non vuole - Dossi parla per suo conto...
Della nuova letteraria vendemmia fatta coll'uva d'Alfieri, Parini, Foscolo, ecc. Manzoni è il vino - R. è il torchiato, D. la grappa... (41)

In other words Manzoni flatters his readers into believing that he and they hold the same truths in common, Rovani imposes his own set of beliefs on the reader, and Dossi goes his own way :

Il noi di Manzoni vale io e il lettore - il noi di Rovani vale io e ancor io ch'ei vale per due - e l'io del Dossi vale per io sol'io... (42)

Of the three relationships as perceived by Dossi, the imposition of the author upon a reader who has no contractual obligation to succumb, must be the most difficult to sustain. But given that Dossi sees this aspect of the novel as a lynchpin in cultural history, (and his own critical notes rarely discuss narrative as though it were as separate and as enclosed as the binding that encases it,) his loving assemblage of all the 'out-houses' of Rovani's novels which he collected but never published in his lifetime, becomes something more than an act of retrieval. Occasional factual pieces, more frequently meta-commentaries constituting an important part of the relationship Rovani established with his readers, these extra-textual pieces once reintegrated and read as a part of the text change one's perception of the text itself so that it becomes an anarchic assembly-plant in which anything left lying around can potentially become incorporated in the machine/text. Despite Rovani's intentions, Cento anni does not improve with the pruning, and with the restitution of the circumstantial pieces the process of writing itself,

a delicate matter perched between a garrulous narrator and an intrusive reader, can be re-incorporated. It is this dimension which Dossi retrieved and which, as we shall see later, occupied an important place in his own writing.

3.4 The narrator and the text

The narrator's role in Cento anni is less innovatory than Dossi's diachronic summary of recent Italian literature would suggest, for far too many of the interventions are bound by the structural needs that generate them. A part of the predicament comes, as Dossi saw, from that initial commitment, which was made publicly before the book was begun.

The time-span itself works negatively on the novel's 'chemistry', and the problem is compounded by allowing the plot to depend more on the passing of time than on the presence of character. The schema is better suited to a chronicle than to a novel for the plot is governed by the span of time it is required to cover. In his introduction Rovani had noted that he would select

... i punti salienti dove le prospettive si trasmutano allo sguardo, e dove si presenta qualche elemento nuovo di progresso o regresso, di bene o di male, che dalla vita pubblica s'infiltri nella privata... (43)

and though this may make good historical sense, it leaves unanswered the question of narrative cohesion. The problem moreover of chronological time versus narrative time presents itself at an elementary level when Rovani, fifty chapters into the novel, stops to comment that, with only three months and a few days considered so far, it would require a further 20,000 chapters to continue and complete the novel at his present pace. As his intention was to restrict himself to between 120 and 140 chapters he proposes to confine himself to two or three months of certain significant years,

un mese, qualche volta due mesi per ciascuno di questi anni, ci basteranno, come punti eminenti, onde valutare col distanziamento i grandi spazi interposti. Così cento anni per la più ardita delle formule algebriche, sono eguali a dodici mesi. (44)

As a result, the author has to resort to frequent summaries to bridge the gaps in the plot as well as to indicate events that precede or parallel the plot but which stand outside its confines, and these come in addition to the aids needed to refresh the reader's memory as to the events and characters at work within the parameters of the story. A disproportionate amount of the text is taken up with these interventions so that the narrative breaks up into two parts.

Narratives establish a sense of a present moment, narrative NOW so to speak. If the narrative is overt, there are perforce two NOWS, that of the discourse, the moment occupied by the narrator in the present tense ("I'm going to tell you the following story") and that of the story, the moment that action began to transpire, usually in the preterite. (45)

The Wilkie Collins recipe for success, "make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait", requires what Chatman describes as the "incorporation of the dramatic principle into the narrative." In these scenes story-time and discourse-time are of roughly equal duration and their usual characteristic is plenty of dialogue and overt physical action. Cento anni suffers no shortage of such scenes, but they carry with them a penalty, because historical time and fictional time must keep pace with each other. This means that with a hundred years to be covered, the narrator must either elide stretches of time (and here the virtues of brevity conflict with the demands of didacticism), or summarize. Here is one example among the many which illustrates the problems Rovani has in pacing his novel while helping the reader to fall in step. After 373 pages devoted to events, public and private that took place in the year 1750, Rovani records how for his purposes the year is at a close:

E qui ci conviene tagliar crudelmente il filo del racconto, e dare un addio all'anno 1750; perchè un altro periodo, secondo noi, abbastanza curioso della storia della città nostra, c'intima di affrettarci, essendo ben lungo il compito che ci siamo assunto. (46)

Two pages then seek to encapsulate the following 16 years before returning to the story.

Along with the struggle to keep a plot turning over without allowing the narrative to collapse into a chronicle, Rovani had to balance readers' demands for an absorbing plot, with his own wish to write a serious book for a mass audience. Wayne Booth has noted that,

... every literary work of any power - whether or not its author composed it with his audience in mind - is in fact an elaborate system of controls over the reader's involvement and detachment along various lines of interest. (47)

In Cento anni the checks and controls are conspicuous and manipulative as they seek to link the enticements of an exciting serial with serious lessons - lessons in history, morality and culture. Rovani does not intend to allow his readers to find their own meanings and so the narrative is punctuated with stratagems designed either to control the reader's gut responses to the characters and their actions or to assist the reader in a correct interpretation of the events laid out before him. It is this aspect of the novel that Nardi, like Dossi before him, identified as representing a definitive break with tradition, but Portinari, while acknowledging its importance, decides in the end that it comes down on the side of compromise and not innovation.

Il bello e il nuovo dovrebbe stare nel gioco rovaniano di costruire, veramente, una tensione, comica o drammatica, per romperla subito e di continuo, così come di continuo è rotto il tessuto narrativo, la trama, in virtù di una disinvoltura divagante, magari appresa dai modelli maggiori d'oltrealpe (da Sterne a Richter a Dickens...) ma impiegata con prodigalità anche eccessiva, in un perdersi e ritrovarsi tra un pettegolezzo gustoso, un saggio erudito, un aneddoto brillante... (48)

The ambivalence one feels about the manipulation practised by the narrator

in Cento anni derives in part from the inequitable division of power that is overtly established with the reader. It comes back to Dossi's appraisal, "... il noi di Rovani vale io e ancor io..." and the way in which this is put into practice. When Rovani prefaced his book by saying, "Stampare significa credere bellissimo e utilissimo all'umanità quello che si è pensato e scritto" (49), he intended his readers to be guided by the intellect and not the heart. But as the stuff of popular fiction is powerful, authorial control must be correspondingly tight, hence the battery of checks and controls that are brought into play. This leaves little space for the reader to participate in bringing out the meaning of the story. The narrative should produce the space necessary for the reader to construct both the characters and the episodes which go into the production of the plot as well as the novel's underlying system of values and ideas. But here the controls are so explicit and the guidance so firm that the reader is justified in feeling that the narrator's manipulative skills are being exercised to his disadvantage. In a process similar to that described by Combrich in the previous chapter Iser (50) has observed that to activate the reader, the novel must leave him something to do and this is most efficaciously achieved by creating a hiatus or a gap in the narrative. A point, taking one of Portinari's examples, that Sterne concedes readily enough in Tristram Shandy.

Writing, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is), is but a different name for conversation: As no one who knows what he is about in good company would venture to talk all; - so no author who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding would presume to think all. The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.

For my own part, I am eternally paying him compliments of this kind, and do all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own. (51)

When the narrator of Cento anni on the other hand clears a gap for his

readers, it is offered by way of being a concession not a right, the word permesso inscribes the ill-judged portrayal of this fundamental relationship between narrator and reader.

Ma, per nostra fortuna, la moda delle descrizioni interminabili è passata; onde, lasciando ai lettori il permesso di dipingersi il fondo, ci occuperemo soltanto delle macchiette e dei gruppi che staccano su di esso. (52)

The terms of the narrator's role are however, dictated as much by the text, particularly the plot, as by the contextual questions discussed above. The problem is that the plot is inescapably a pot-boiler, bubbling with juicy morsels, love and intrigue, incest and necrophilia, and this ill-fits the historical dimensions of the story. Indeed there is a conflict between register and ideology which is contained within the plot itself.

The unfolding of Cento anni occurs with the premiss that the space Rovani accords to private lives is justified on the grounds that the personal, for example love, can change the course of history, a position which he again defends in his introduction to La Libia d'oro. Most of the ramifications of the plot in the earlier novel are the direct product of love. In a long digression in Book I, viii, Rovani establishes the metaphor and with it the register that he intends to pursue through the novel: a 'medical' register which presents love in terms of a virulent and unfortunate disease, infectious and with its own symptoms and remedies. It allows him to exploit the excitements of sensationalist novels without encouraging the false sensibility that he, like Dossi, perceived to be the most dangerous feature of popular literature. (53)

A tale of the torrid can be presented as a homily on human nature. In the story of Count Achille's passion for a young girl, young enough to be his daughter (... she is his daughter), the register changes decisively from the end of the preceding instalment when the count learns the

identity of the girl:

Se non che quella parola pronunciata tolse il conte dall'affannoso stupore in cui trovavasi, e, senza alcun riguardo, mandando un grido, che era tra l'esclamazione dell'uomo e il fremito della fiera, respinse di forza la figlia, che cadde stramazzone sul terreno, ed egli fuggì. (53)

to the opening of the next, where after declining the benefits of omniscience, the narrator engages the reader in a speculation upon the medical consequences of such a discovery, "... possiamo assicurare che la conflagrazione del suo cervello fu tale, che un minimo grado al di là di qualle misura sarebbe bastato per farne un caso interessante per lo studio di un alienista psicologo." (54) As a way of adjusting readers' responses the medical register is efficacious, but it brings with it an inescapable ideological divergence which expresses itself in, on the one hand, public life and history interpreted in terms of an enlightenment view of progress, and on the other hand, private life and the individual seen in terms of the negativism of recent determinist theories.

Mariani has argued that Cento anni falls apart because of the absence of a filo conduttore, compounded by the failure to provide a coherent style and language (55), but his point can be taken a stage further, for the lack of linguistic cohesion is the product of two main conflicting ideologies at work within the text. While the narrator observes towards the end of the novel that a fair and rationally organized society must take into account the fact that man, "... ha delle tendenze che non dipendono dalla sua volontà, ma dall'economia fisiologica del corpo umano..." (56), he cannot find a way within the story itself to illustrate how such a society can be forged, given his assumptions about human nature. He rarely shows the mutual inter-action between individual and society because with the importance he attributes to the emotions in private life history itself becomes a dangerously arbitrary matter. The episode which is structural around Prina's death brings momentarily to

view a different idea of history, one which argues that history repeats itself because the human psyche in all its blindness is a constant.

Prina's death itself

... è avvenuto non per altro che perchè una moglie non plebea ebbe un bacio fuggitavo da un amante regio, (57)

and this, the narrator prefaces, is not surprising:

Di molte guerre e catastrofi di popoli, la storia più volte registra che la prima causa impellente è stato un bacio fatto scoccare in un cattivo momento, un'infideltà, una gelosia, ecc. (58)

Cento anni testifies to the latent conflict between an enlightened risorgimento spirit and ideology and a post-unification historical negativism which finds expression in a crude model of determinist theory. When Rovani wrote his last novel La giovinezza di Giulio Cesare, the past is no longer examined as "prehistory to the present"; instead Ancient Rome is seen as a parallel to modern Italy, and the author moves freely between the two. Lukacs has pointed out how, after the events of '48, history was either presented as unique, or it was modernized, which meant that motives, ideas and emotions of the present were applied directly to the past. History becomes a pictorial frame within which a modern story is unfolded. He attributed this to a loss of an inner relationship with history.

They believe that the spatial and temporal manifestations of human feelings and ideas are simply a matter of externals and costume, while the feelings and ideas themselves lie outside the historical process and hence may be transferred forwards or backwards to any age without serious alteration. (59)

In Cento anni the narrator frequently contrasts or compares past with present, as in the opening proper of the story at the Regio Ducal theatre in Milan in 1750 where he draws on the readers' assumed knowledge of the present to bring his depiction of the past to life. There can be no disagreement with such a device. More problematic at a structural level are the conflicting pulls of the text; the steady progress of history which

finds its source in the depiction of character so that it becomes at worst arbitrary and at best circular. In La giovinezza di Giulio Cesare, which was published in 1873, Rovani resolves the conflict by adopting an anti-historicist stance in which past and present are presented in terms of the parallels they offer, a position which was redolent of a general sense of historical negativism and one which was identified and lauded by Dossi.

La storia antica restituita alla verità e raffrontata alla moderna (Torino 1865) di Cristoforo Negri, è uno dei migliori libri che siano stati scritti in quest'ultimo mezzo secolo - Essa figlia dal sistema comparativo di Machiavelli e di Vico ed ha l'onore di avere generato La giovinezza di Giulio Cesare di Rovani... A Rovani la gloria di aver completato il suo maestro - Dalla storia di Negri noi non solo apprendiamo la storia passata, ma la futura. Essa è eterna come il cuore dell'uomo; è un romanzo intimo. (60)

In addition to the need for the narrator to intervene to bridge the passing of historical or 'real' time which the fiction cannot accommodate and to link the two ideologies that threaten to make two books of one, he is also required ironically to intrude into a plot which by virtue of its adept handling of the clichés of pulp fiction threatens to take over. The plot with its ramifications is so efficacious that the narrator draws from an arsenal of tactical ploys to disrupt or undermine it, to force through a break in the reader's cathartic immersion in events which threaten to become an end in themselves.

Rovani might have expected the overall structure of the book to contain the appropriate instructions for the reader. Its cyclical study of successive generations should theoretically resist the false sensibility referred to earlier, as the principal protagonists grow older and die, leaving their children to carry the narrative forward, and there is no unifying hero, for Giocondo Bruni's presence is rare and his personality neutral while Galantino, the Ariadne's thread through the story, is the best-realized character by virtue of his defects; even his name

carries a negative charge. To heighten the reader's awareness of the role and function of character as product of the narrator's art, Rovani's reference to attori in the introduction is sustained through the novel. For example, at the beginning of Book 2 by drawing a comparison with an equestrian circus act Rovani draws attention to the artifice of the narrative act.

Ed ora che abbiám fatto sfilare la maggior parte degli attori del secondo atto, imitando i direttori delle compagnie equestri che, allorchè danno spettacolo nell' arena, prima d'incominciare fanno caracollare in giro i cosí detti artisti che devono prodursi sulla corda, sui cavalli e sulle bighe. (61)

But these distancing devices, while operative for the overall structure, do not impinge on the reader's involvement in the plot during its narrative duration, so the narrator uses direct action, a set of disruptive measures designed to put the reader on his guard.

With regard to character we have noted how frequently Rovani uses a medical register to promote, among other things, a sense of disassociation between reader and subject. The presentation of the characters themselves as actors playing out their pre-scripted roles carries additional weight when it comes to their relationship with the implied narrator, of whom they are unaware. The narrator's role outside the story, accompanying it and constructing it, means that at any given moment he is in possession of knowledge that his protagonists do not share and which he might or might not impart to his readers. Once the reader is made beneficiary of this privileged position his close relationship to the protagonist in question is jeopardized. In the novel's first long study of one of its protagonists, the contessa Clelia, the narrator conjectures as to why a woman of superior education and intelligence should fall in love with the tenor "Amorevole" and among the conclusions he offers is the following general observation on human nature :

Non tutte le creature umane raggiungono la maturanza a un punto medesimo. L'abitudine agli studi severi, quel non riposarsi mai su pensieri e desiderj erotici, aveva ritardato il completo sviluppo della contessa. (62)

The spurious superiority afforded to the reader by his ability to 'read' her character is then confirmed some years later and many pages of suffering on when the contessa herself attributes her disgrace to the very reason that reader and narrator have known from the start.

To break the pleasurable grip that plotting has on the reader, Rovani in his guise as narrator interrupts, diverts or digresses at moments of gathering tension. The long digression at the beginning of Book I, viii, which establishes the medical register referred to above brings in its wake the story of donna Paola Pietra, who like the Nun of Monza is made to take the veil against her will. This parenthesis of twenty-two pages disrupts the story of contessa Clelia's secret meeting with "Amorevole", his subsequent arrest and her silent jealousy. Although this is the first long digression, it is by no means the first interruption. An early example of such a break comes after the secret meeting between contessa Clelia and "Amorevole" which results in the latter being mistaken for a thief who has just stolen valuable documents from a nearby residence. At the moment of high tension, the narrator breaks into his story with protestations to the truth of the episode,

... s'udirono a non molta distanza più voci che gridavano all'accorr'uomo, al d'agli d'agli. - Davvero che se quello che stiamo per dire non avesse altro documento che la relazione orale e solitaria del nonagenario da cui raccogliemmo tanto cumulo di fatti, noi non avremmo il coraggio di esporre un avvenimento, che siccome abbiam detto, non parrebbe verosimile. (63)

and wanders off into an explanation of his sources. This could equally have been included at the beginning or end of the episode, but by introducing it at this particular point the spell breaks and history is allowed to establish its precedence over fiction. Later in the same sequence of events after the contessa Clelia has sought advice from donna Paola, the reader's expectation of seeing a sequel in the next

episode, (published a week later) is cut short with the opening sentence:

Se il lettore desiderasse di tener dietro alla povera contessa Clelia, per conoscer tosto le sue risoluzioni e le conseguenze di esse, noi ci troviamo nella necessità di non poterlo accompagnare,... (64)

This is harsh treatment indeed for in the serialized version the preceding episode ends on a note of speculative premonition, "Or che sarà per far ella davvero? Strani timori ci conturbano." (65)

Along with the stratagem aimed to disrupt the plot are the devices designed to maintain the reader's interest. The episodes are liberally stocked with pointers forward, such as, "... per quello che poi saprà il lettore" (66) and most of the instalments end on an anticipatory note as in "... il che vedremo domani" (67), or, as here, after a snatch of verse, the oblique warning, "Questi versi coi quali abbiamo fatto pausa al racconto la penultima volta, non furono riportati a caso, - " (68) These endings were usually left out when the novel was published as a book. The narrator also uses his independent position to anticipate but not reveal, "... Però andiamo avanti coraggiosamente anche perchè, se il fatto è strano, riuscì poi fecondo di conseguenze gravissime" (69), particularly in regard to character. Here he writes of the first violinist, Lorenzo Bruni, who "... a tutti nascosto, dall'umiltà del suo posto, era destinato a gettar fuoco e fiamme nella polveriera di questo dramma. Ma non è tempo ancora ch'ei si faccia innanzi." (70) He makes promises to his readers which, even when proffered in an ironic mode, are nonetheless an acknowledgement of the reader's appetite for excitement, "... dovrà uscire un risolvete drammatico più possente di quanti ne uscirono dal laboratorio chimico di Dumas..." (71) and he does not hesitate to disarm his reader by voicing a disgruntled response, "Ma, che noja! ci par di sentir a dire; ma che strana idea di regalarci qui una pagina lacera dell'elenco della confraternita de' pittori del 1750? -". (72)

And never does he either reveal the outcome of a particular piece of plotting in advance or leave a plot incompleting.

A further barrier is erected between the reader and the text by the narrator's sustained use of irony. The text is haunted by the ghost of the unwritten novel that it threatens to become and when it looks as though it is about to materialize, the narrator wards it off with either an ironic nod in the direction of that which his novel is not or with the ironic inclusion of traditional topoi. In his introduction to Venice for example he is quick to parody the connotations evoked by the transfer of the story to Venice.

Or lasciamo per poco Milano, la Babylo minima di Ugo Foscolo, e rechiamoci a Venezia, la città adottiva del chiaro di luna, del romanticismo convenzionale e degli amori pseudo-platonici. (73)

Character too is sometimes delineated in terms of difference:

Questo salutare fenomeno era quello che ad onta delle molte fatiche di campo e di camera, gli conservava quella vivacità e freschezza di colorito, il quale, forse, un quarto di secolo dopo, gli sarebbe stato ascritto a difetto e quasi a colpa dalle donne sentimentali, che, nell'Ildegonda di Grossi e nel Tu vedrai la sventurata di Bellini, appresero a mettere in voga i colori sepolcrali e la tisi tubercolare. (74)

This does not preclude Rovani from exploiting this cliché elsewhere in the text in the figure of Giunio Baroggi. Conventional plotting and therefore readers' expectations are likewise held up for examination, found wanting and then promptly used. The narrator here argues that the "morale di convenzione" should at all costs be avoided,

... perchè se l'arte dee riflettere i fenomeni del mondo e della vita, sarebbe costretta ad alterare la verità ogni qualvolta non trovasse che nella vita e nel mondo i galantuomini siano premiati e i perversi puniti. - La moralità sta nell'ordine delle idee e non nel campo dei fatti; (75)

a comment that precedes a ruthlessly conventional ending "... che non possiamo assolutamente levare d'a questa storia, a dispetto de' nostri principj d'arte." (76)

This irony, developed at the expense of previous literary conventions and topoi, continues in Dossi's autobiographical novels, but it is only a minor aspect of why Dossi, to the perplexity of some critics, always claimed Rovani as his literary father. One of the main areas that we see explored in the pages of Cento anni is the textual relationship between writer and reader which is then developed both creatively and theoretically in Dossi's work. This is an aesthetic priority even though the material conditions and circumstances of publication have been radically revised in that Dossi published privately for a very small, culturally prepared and hand-selected readership.

In his "Margine alla Desinenza in 'A'", Dossi identifies two prototype texts: in the one the plot dominates as an end in itself, so the reader is hauled along at breakneck speed by what he calls the many "ruffianesmi" designed to lubricate and sustain the reader's interest. The other is the text which encourages the reader to hesitate and meditate in which the plot, if it exists, is present as only one aspect of the work. Of his own book La Desinenza in 'A' Dossi argues that it is the very relationship between writer and reader that has been inscribed in the text as part of the plot. Through the colloquy conducted between the two implied protagonists the breakdown in narrative sequence can be taken a stage further.

Chapter 4.

C. Dossi: L'altrieri and Vita di Alberto Pisani. Narrative constructions of self.

4.1 Carlo Dossi and autobiography

Carlo Dossi's first book, an autobiography called L'altrieri (1) was written and published when he was only eighteen. His age alone precluded any possibility that it would share in the preoccupations of other autobiographical writing of the period, which fell into two broad divisions. The memoir, part of a Risorgimento tradition which aimed to document and inform the public about the events which had led to the formation of a unified Italy. An important example of this is Nievo's Le confessioni d'un italiano, which was published a year earlier in 1867 and whose title conveys the author's perception of himself as a representative figure, a man of his time, a perspective which is emphasized early in the book.

Ecco la morale della mia vita. E siccome questa morale non fui io ma i tempi che l'hanno fatto, così mi venne in mente che descrivere ingenuamente quest'azione dei tempi sopra la vita d'un uomo potesse recare qualche utilità a coloro, che da altri tempi son destinati a sentire le conseguenze meno imperfette di quei primi influssi attuati. (2)

Indeed L'altrieri makes no reference at all to the public or political domain, for it provides its readers with no facts, no dates, no place-names or family-histories or the like - even the geographical locations are not specifically identified. Dossi's next book, Vita di Alberto Pisani (3), does on the other hand offer a reading of the protagonist as a representative figure of his age, but in this case he represents the negative consequences of history, the psychological scars that historical events have left on non-participants such as Alberto, who came to age after Unification. Nor does Dossi belong to that other area of autobiographical writing as represented by a figure admired by Dossi, Alfieri. Alfieri described his own autobiography as a response to what he saw as a natural curiosity among the reading public about the

individual behind the author :

Avendo io oramai scritto molto, e troppo più forse che non avrei dovuto, è cosa assai naturale che alcuni di quei pochi a chi non saranno dispiacute le mie opere... avranno la curiosità di sapere qual io mi fossi. (4)

This position is incompatible with Dossi's own general views of autobiography, for he found it overly self-conscious, and unable to allow for honest - perhaps disingenuous - self-revelation (in his notes, for example, he attacks Stendhal's autobiography for its vanity, hypocrisy and suppression of facts). It is not however in his view a question so much of the character of the autobiographer as of the nature of the genre, as the narrator in Vita di Alberto Pisani slyly observes:

Al diavolo le autobiografie! in esse, lui che si pinge è troppo occupato a porre in rilievo le sue virtù, i suoi nei, e, poniamo anche, i vizi, per dimostrarsi qual è; in un romanzo, invece, egli si apre ingenuamente a ogni frase. (5)

Other commentators have since discussed the implications of the genre's self-consciousness; Paul Delany for example in his study of 17th century autobiography also assumes it is intrinsic to the exercise,

... an autobiography, since it is almost invariably written to be read by someone else, cannot be a piece of pure and disinterested self-expression. Rather it is a 'performance' staged by the autobiographer for the benefit of his audience. (6)

The reason why Dossi interprets this negatively is that he is interested in the expression of self, not to delineate difference, but to give voice to a common inner experience:

Si ama uno scrittore che parli ne' suoi libri di sè, quando egli si limita a studiare il suo interno, perchè allora studia insieme anche il nostro. Odioso invece è colui che non si occupa se non dell'esterno - il che non è noi. (7)

His interest in autobiography reaches back to a much earlier example, to Dante's Vita nuova. Just as in the Note azzurre where the author swims into focus by way of the books he reads and his responses to them, so the reader is introduced to the protagonist of Vita di Alberto Pisani

by way of the library he is in the process of reorganizing. Alberto pauses in his task and takes up a small volume:

Ecco Alberto entrare in quella spiritica vita, dove òdonsi bizzarri suoni, baluginano strani chiarori, illuminelli di specchi e riflessi di àqua; èccolo dolcemente sorpreso da quella eròtica malinconia sotto la quale l'adolescente Allighieri si coricava, angosciato, in làgrime come un pargoletto battuto. (8)

The Vita nuova is for Alberto a book that he experiences without mediation, for its author in speaking of himself speaks for everybody. It is to this universality that L'altrieri aspires, in its expression of the common, but for most people lost, experience of childhood in which the imagination is the dominant medium for knowledge.

4.2 "L'altrieri": "Lisa", early childhood and the imagination

L'altrieri does not reconstruct its author's past, but is a highly subjective and selective account of three childhood episodes, related in chronological order without any bridging of the transitions(9), and the whole held together by the presence of the narrator. The writing, which gives a privileged place to memory and childhood, is to be located within the Romantic tradition while the three moments evoked are by now a familiar topos in a familiar genre - the autobiography of childhood.

The melancholic opening of L'altrieri, "I mièi dolci ricordi!", establishes that the book is an autobiography in which protagonist and narrator are one. In the first paragraph the reader learns that the author seeks to escape from both the present and the future back into the past, "ciò che fu", so tension is set up between present and past. This is echoed in the title of the volume, which relates it to one of the most important topoi of the scapigliati writers, that of precocious disillusionment, of experience prematurely burnt out (10). Each of the three sections that constitute the book represents a moment in the

development of the child's consciousness and each change is a loss.

In Tarchetti's novel Una nobile follia, there is a hiatus in the narration which comes between the account of Vincenzo's life and the extracts from his diary. Evening has fallen and the two friends go for a walk. The time of day combined with the sights and smells of nature take Tarchetti back to childhood:

- Che ne è ora di tutto ciò? di me, di essi, di quegli anni, dell'avvenire vagheggiato in quegli anni?... E non scrivo io per avvicermi alle mie memorie, per trattenere il passato che fugge, per ritogliere all'oblio inesorabile le care rimembranze della mia vita trascorsa. (11)

Dusk is a privileged time for Dossi too, when "il giorno fòndesi nella notte" (12), tiredness throws up past memories they are memories of childhood. For Tarchetti the catalyst is a physical return to the landscape of his past, for Dossi it is a kiss which activates, not only the memories, but the experiences of the past:

Ma, col sangue che questo bacio attira, vien, pelle pelle, ogni ricordo dei tempi andati. È la paletta che sbraccia il caldano. Spiccatamente io comincio a vedere, io comincio a sentire. (13)

It is through the senses that Dossi initially evokes moments of childhood; sights, (the pristine quality of the environment, "candidissima mappa," "lucenti cristalli," "scintillante argenteria,") and sounds ("striduli suoni," "sfiatato istrumento," "fruscio metallico") and these epiphanies gradually give way to the story of Lisa.

In the chapter called "Lisa" past events are recounted in the light of present knowledge. Rousseau, whose writings Dossi knew well, had shown novelists in his Confessions that even with the literal identity of subject and narrator the span of time which separates the two provides the necessary distance to allow for all the potentially ironic divergence between them that the novelist could require. In other words he showed that time was a significant dimension in the conception of character.

At this stage in his narrative Dossi simply evokes the past in the light of the present, structurally exploiting the benefits of hindsight. When the chapter reaches its emotional climax, - during the evening and night preceding Lisa's death, the 'mature' writer removes his presence and lets the child's experience dominate; the description is of a succession of sensations devoid of the stamp of logic or mental organisation which is imposed by an adult in the desire to give sense and continuity to life. This way of seeing and experiencing struck the writer and critic G.A. Borgese as quite exceptional:

Carlo Dossi riuscì una volta tanto a realizzare il miracolo di un uomo che pensa come un fanciullo; riuscì a disorganizzarsi e a ripensare la vita con un processo che si potrebbe dire di divisionismo. L'altrieri è slegato e nello stesso tempo perfetto come un sogno... Quest'arte singolarissima, contraddicendo alla vita, finiva per contorcerci, e, nello sforzo del contorcimento, si sbriciolava. E un giorno periva oscuramente sul sepolcro chiuso dell'infanzia lontana... (14)

The piece is dominated by the child's exclusion, he is an innocent voyeur who watches and listens, "...udivo lo scricchiare degli stivali e degli intavolati, i pispigliamenti, il cigolar degli armadi, il frusciare della sèrica gonna di mamma che passava e ripassava..." (15). But the recuperation of childhood as it was then experienced is combined with a narration which in its referents is, visibly, highly self-conscious and cultural. It is a literary evocation of Dante's "libro de la mia memoria". When Berto meets Lisa in L'altrieri, the encounter is so significant that it disrupts from then on the tone of his life, "... allorchè io, la prima volta, la vidi. Fu tra il chiaro ed il bujo". (the first edition described the time of day, extravagantly, as "tra sale e pepe",) and the description rests on her eyes:

Gli occhi di lei lucentissimi, lasciavano, per così dire, lo sguardo dove fissavano. (16)

Lisa's death, like Beatrice's, is preceded by signs and premonitions of cataclysmic dimensions:

Allora i bei fiorelli essiccàronsi, impallidì il raggio del sole, appannàronsi i canalucci. (17)

... e pareami vedere lo sole oscurare, sî che le stelle si mostravano di coloro ch'elle mi faceano giudicare che piangessero; pareami che li uccelli volando per l'aria cadessero morti, e che fossero grandissimi tremuoti. (18)

With its evocation of the Vita nuova, the young protagonist's experience is seen as a parallel to, not an imitation of, Dante's. The moment is universalized, conferring on it a mythic dimension which operates outside the realm of historical time.

Dossi's predilection for childhood lies in his perception, and experience, of it as a time of immense creativity in which the imaginary and the real are part of the same continuum. The price one pays for entering into adulthood is, as we shall see, the loss of the imaginary. The chapter opens with a way of seeing "I vecchi Re Magi" which is, simultaneously, a means of experiencing them, which the adult vision cannot encompass. Attention is again drawn to the gap between these two forms of experience when Nencia, the maid, tries to tell Berto a fairy-story but flounders and cannot get past the opening. She had hoped to distract him from the reality of Lisa dying nearby, but just as the child cannot shut off what he knows, so his experience of reality is itself an amalgam of the imaginary and the real. The child experiences the events as though they were the conclusion to a fairy story.

Il marchese (Lisa's father) avèa la faccia sbattuta, silenziosamente disperata. Pallido forse al par di colèi che se n'era partita, egli si diresse al suo nero cavallo, raccolse le rèdini, montollo. Poi - di galoppo. Ne mai più l'incontrài. (19)

Dossi's notes show that while at the time of first writing L'altrieri his perception of childhood might well have been instinctive, an ability

to relive the past, he later came to intellectualise the concept along the lines of Richter:

Wisst ihr denn nicht, dass es eine Zeit gibt, wo die Phantasie noch stärker als im Jünglingsalter schafft, nämlich in der Kinderheit worin auch Völker ihre Götter schaffen und nur durch Dichtkunst reden? (ed. (Richter)) Ai bimbi giovano quindi pochissimo i così detti balocchi fabbricati e venduti nelle botteghe. I bimbi hanno ubertosissima la fantasia. Cangiano tutto ciò che vogliono in un balocco - ed ogni balocco in quanto fantasticano. Aber an reicher Wirklichkeit verwelkt und verarmt die Phantasie, mithin sei jede Spielpuppe und Spielwert nur ein Flachsrocken, von welchem die Seele ein buntes Gewand abspinnt. (id.) La fantasia del bimbo vuol migliorare il balocco. Se questo non è migliorabile, essa se ne stanca e lo abbandona. Reicht ihm (dem Knaben) nicht di Eier bunt und mit Gestalten übermalt, sondern weiss; sie werdern sich aus dem Innern das bunte Gefieder schon ausdrücken (id.). (20)

(He does differ from the German Romantics, however, in that he is not interested in parallels between childhood and man's early collective history, limiting himself to the significance of childhood within the time-span of a single life.) Dossi returns to this subject on several occasions (21) in his notes and published a short story called "I balocchi", on the same subject in 1884. Here a little girl receives a doll, which is perfect in every detail. In her parents' eyes its perfection makes it a magnificent gift, for the child it is a bitter disappointment.

Per quanto Fòloe cercasse ridurre quel magnifico automa in un balocco, non ci riusciva... La sua fantasia nulla sapeva donare alla perfetta pupazza, nè un colore, nè un atteggiamento, nè un sentimento. (22)

She throws it out of the window. The caretaker's daughter discovers the mutilated victim lying in the courtyard and immediately adopts it.

La ex-pupazza che colle sue perfezioni odiose, colla sua immigliorabilità aveva stancato l'immaginazione di Fòloe, è diventata il maggior conforto di quella di Beppina, che adora il balocco suo, solo perchè se l'è creato lei stessa. (23)

The story is an illustration of what is practised in L'altrieri. The child's universe is controlled by the imagination, which acts as a filter, accepting those aspects of reality which can be fantasised and

therefore internalised, and rejecting that which, like the doll, is too complete within itself to be subsumed. (24)

In "Lisa", as elsewhere in Dossi's writings, nature is the privileged space of childhood. An antithesis is structured into the story between the interior of the house which is the other, the world of the adult, and the exterior which is the inner and the world of the child. The latter exists both as a verifiable, geographical location, a garden which can be stepped into, and as a space within the child, its boundaries circumscribed by the boundaries of his mind:

La sua Lombardia non è ancorata a nessuna toponomastica, non ha coordinate geografiche; è il paese dell'anima, verso cui muovono i difficili sentieri che si aggrovigliano dinanzi alla dolorosa enquête della felicità perduta, o dell'infanzia edenica. (25)

It is not a Rousseauian nature which can be escaped to beyond the reach of society, for it contains its own seeds of destruction. Initially, the site of idyllic joy, the first omens of Lisa's death occur in the garden: one day Lisa turns pale and shivers, to Berto the air seems to:

appesantirsi come una mola mugnaja, pàrvemi che un nemico invisibile ci seguisse dovunque... (26)

The terror follows the child indoors, in a nightmare his mind is gripped by a vision of nature, a field with flowers and a stream, but soundless; a feature which would have been very important to a child whose way of relating to events is shown to depend on sight and sound:

Ed ecco staccarsi dall'estremo orrizzonte, ecco ingrandirsi una massa informe (qui la memoria mi zoppica) una specie di ragno iperbolico, giallo-limone, macchiato di nero, enfiato, glutinoso, a grumi di sangue, bava, dai mille bracci, che - nel procedere a saltacchioni o dondolandosi sulle anche - altalenava. (27)

Lisa's death comes at the end of a suffocatingly hot day - a day of "nausea", "disagio" and "il peso morto de' corpi inzuppati" (28).

Indeed the portents are so emphatic that the fact of her death is not

at any point stated. The circumstances are the same as those of the death of another Dossian victim, Elvira, whose death comes with the first clap of thunder and long-desired rain:

una giornata quanto mai soffocante; il ciel pioveva fiamme, vampeggiavano i muri; una di quelle giornate, che ti fanno sentire il fastidio della tua soma mortale e ti fan sospirare i monti e il lago. E neppure la notte ci era cortese di fresco; l'ære continuava ad èssere plumbea; il cielo basso. Parèa che tutta la terra stesse, colle fàuci sbarrate, semiuste, attendendo lo scoppio di un temporale, sempre imminente, non risolvèvasi mai. (29)

As much a state of mind as a state of nature, Dossi's espousal of the concept of the anima mundi deriving in his case from the Naturphilosophie of the German Romantics, aligns him with the anti-materialist stance adopted by the scapigliati. The childhood imagination is depicted in its ability to recognize nature as a living organism and man as an inextricable part of that living whole;

... ed è pure per ciò che nell'uomo e specialmente in colui, nel quale il sentimento originario non è affievolito o distratto, si sommove, si risveglia, in presenze di questo o di quel brano di paesaggio, un fondo d'insospettate memorie, un senso, quasi dirèbbesi, di parentela preumana. (30)

Because the ability to live through nature and experience that unity of the individual and the universe is inherent in the state of childhood, as the child in L'altrieri grows older, so the space occupied by nature diminishes and changes. In the first chapter Lisa and Berto are allowed to escape outside one last time before her death and they step into a hallucinatory landscape of surreal effects;

Là c'intorniàvan robinie. L'ombre di esse, una di cui ci copriva, allungàvansi tra le gambe delle panchette, sul suolo, bizzarramente; e, negli squarci da fusto a fusto, scorgèvasi giù sciorinata la campagna, gibbosa, sparsa di villaggi dai lucenti tetti d'ardesia, macchiata da querceti - masse nere, cupe. In fondo, una benda argentina: il Po; al di là, terra terra, un famoso chiarore (esalazioni appestate): una città... (31)

The next time (the next day) when Berto is taken out into the garden, it is the site for exercise not for existence ("Tua madre dice...

dice che non ti muovi abbastanza. Vuole che ti muova..."). The corner has been turned and Berto, in the next chapter, has his first experience of school - seen as a microcosm of adult society. Here in "Panche di scuola" the natural world has vanished, only to be substituted by the conventional expression of an adult's view of nature:

... il lungo mangiatorio dai muri pitturati a convenzionali paesaggi (giardino con lago, cigni e tempietto; bosco con eremita...) (32)

The young Dossi, however, is one of the privileged few able to retain the child's capacity to recognize the natural forces. In the opening of L'altrieri it is the immensity of the night-sky that draws him back into the past and gives him his creative impulse (33); in "Panche di scuola" while his school-companions create havoc behind him, his eyes are turned to the window and the storm raging outside. Even at this stage it brings memories of a world that has ended:

Egli è che cominciavanmi allora i tocchi di una malinconia dolce, profonda, la quale, come non vi sarà nuovo, strinsemi violentissima poi e da cui non mi rifaccio che ora. (34)

But what is it that the young protagonist turns his back on?

4.3 "Panche di scuola", the limitations of learning

"Panche di scuola" is the most socially and publicly oriented of the three episodes. Using the advantages of hindsight, Dossi presents a critique of school as an organisation and as an education. The chapter shows the child's first contact with the reality of social relationships and institutionalised education. Knowledge is shown as having been appropriated by the adult world; it is a commodity, carrying a financial price as well as an emotional one, to be imparted to children deemed old enough to receive it. In the first episode Dossi presented the knowledge acquired by the young child as authentic and creative, the product of a unique ability to harness the imagination to experience. In this

episode knowledge becomes the product of learning, which is perceived as a process of systemisation, categorisation and appropriation whose principal instrument is language.

Dossi had strong views on the evils of formal education. Throughout his life he despised teachers and professors, grammarians and academicians; the only man he acknowledged as a professor, and who of course never was, was Giuseppe Rovani, whose "aula magna" was "all'aperto" in the gardens of the cafes and bars he frequented. Dossi distinguished erudition (seen as false and stemming from schools,) from knowledge (seen as true in that its source is the individual). Study, he argued (and the presence of a room designated as a study in Dossi's writing is always indicative of ignorance and fraudulence), unless handled with the greatest care, is mentally and psychologically crippling, because it destroys the very essence of the student, that unique blend of imagination and experience which is the product of childhood, and to which L'altrieri is witness. Study kills one's unique past. An artist must be particularly sensitive to the danger:

- Ogni artista e spec. un letterato prima di porsi a un'opera originale, dovrebbe intromettere, fra i suoi studi, un anno di distudio. (35)

The profoundly anti-academic message of "Panche di scuola" is conveyed by the wealth of gastronomic-mercantile imagery used to discuss the subject. The college is compared to a shop, its principal to an inn-keeper,

il quale, rotondo come una mortadella, dal frontispizio, fiorito, olioso, con un solo cerchio di barba intorno al mento, pavoneggià vasi là, ... - le gambe aperte, le mani in saccoccia, scuotendo e riscuotendo soldoni. (36)

The materialist associations with commerce and gastronomy are sustained through an extensive use of metaphor and metonymy. Within the institution itself the reader is presented with different aspects of scholastic abuse, all centred around language; an exercise in hypocrisy in which

the children take down in dictation their dutifully loving letter home; an unwittingly absurd exposition on the nature of language, ("Ma che progressi, le lingue! Ora le si piègano ad ogni qualunque bizzarrissima idèa, rièscono ad esprimere i nostri più astrusi concetti..." (37); and an exemplary lesson in etymology. The headmaster, graced with the name "Signor Proverbio", takes as his thesis the word 'apple' (pomo) so-called, originally, he argues, because when it fell off the tree and hit the ground our ancestors heard it make the sound "pu-um". The young protagonist, dissatisfied with the explanation, asks what if it had been a pear, and the disconcerted reply comes back: "Il pero - disse - è una pianta moderna." (38) The centrality of language is underlined by the presence of the busts of Cicero and Horace, two masters of rhetoric, who like everything else in the establishment, are fake, being made of plaster with a marble finish. The criticisms which Dossi makes in this chapter are very close in spirit to Jean Paul's ideas elaborated in his "Doctrine of Education" called Levana (1807), which in turn with their core belief in the innate innocence of children owe an important debt to Rousseau's Émile. Jean Paul argued that before all else must come a perfect and exacting knowledge of one's native tongue. Dossi too takes language, the tools of his own craft to illustrate the devastating nature of scholastic ignorance. Education is portrayed as being either wrong or reductionist. Where the child carries within him his own perception of the inexplicable, the adult mind is driven by a compulsion to control the world by seeking an explanation for each of its manifestations; the absurdity of the reason excogitated is compensated for by the sense of control that accompanies it. Through education children, Dossi felt, acquire an adult mind and thereby deny their innate sense of a far greater reality.

But school is not only responsible for mis-education, it is also

the place where children are initiated into a socially acceptable code of (im)morality; in Levana the word education is reserved for the sphere of moral development and Jean Paul refers to intellectual development as instruction. In "Panche di scuola" the teacher is referred to as the "pettinatore morale", an image which becomes a forerunner to Dossi's portrait of a society based on appearance. In this case the protagonist witnesses the devastating consequences of cruelty as practised by a boy who has been corrupted by circumstance and family, and the school's recognition of his right to behave in such a way. An important social lesson is learnt; the rich are always right. At a contextual level this tale of oppressor and oppressed, the guilty and the innocent, is conventional, but we see here an early example of Dossi scrambling the codes which carry the message. The reader is put on the alert at the beginning of the episode, when he is informed that the author is acting in the interest of truth and not convention:

Se adesso poi io vi presento questo Daniele come un marmocchio costruito coi gomiti, con un viso da tromba, non crediate già che lo faccia per convenzione... - no, è puramente perchè v'è rispettata l'istoria. (39)

The Romantic expectation that the outer self should be a reflection of the inner man is satisfied, but the roles of oppressor and oppressed are reversed. There are two reasons why it would be reasonable to assume that Daniele is to be the victim, first, he is a pupil and a familiar theme in the 19th century novel is the persecution of the innocent (pupil) by the sadistic (school-teacher), but this possibility is pre-empted by the presentation of Ghioldi the teacher: "Ogni uomo è il guancialino da spilli di qualcunaltro; Ghioldi lo era di tutti". Secondly, he is an orphan, the product of an unhappy childhood - a mother who dies in childbirth and a cruel father. But this time it produces a tyrant not a victim.

In the first chapter "Lisa" the young child inhabits his own world and is an uncomprehending witness of the adult world; in "Panche di scuola" the experience of childhood has already become a memory and the young protagonist has become an initiate but not yet participant in the adult world. Although the imaginative and spiritual dimension of early childhood is gradually withdrawn or diminished as he grows older, what is unusual about the protagonist - and thus the source of the autobiography - is his capacity to cling on to that early experience. As a school-boy he is already set apart. There is a harmony between the subject and the narrator which is echoed in the fluency and ease of the text. The last chapter "La principessa di Pimpirimpara" concludes the young protagonist's initiation into society and witnesses his change to participant. It is accompanied by a fragmentation of the text.

4.4 "La Principessa di Pimpirimpara", fracture of the self and fragmentation of the text

Structurally this is the most complicated of the three episodes because the psychological confusion experienced by the narrator is echoed in the representation of events. Narrative sequence is broken up for the first time. "La Principessa di Pimpirimpara" opens on a dramatic note, it is late at night and young Dossi is creeping back to his room after spending the evening out 'in society'. The paragraph ends with a self-encounter in the mirror:

- tant'è vero che, nel rasentare l'ampio specchio della sala,
gricciolài scontràndovi una figura e, con inquietùdine,
guardài se, proprio io, dovèa èssere quel giovinetto pàllido
che con un candelieri veniva verso di mè... (40)

A moment of gothic terror which springs from the temporary non-recognition of self. Lacan, in his elaboration on Freud's work, designated a period in early pre-linguistic infancy as the mirror-stage. This is when the

child takes on a cohesive identity through the mediation of a mirror; the construction of the ego then comes with this moment of misrecognition and the experience of totality, of the self as a unified whole that accompanies it.

Il y suffit de comprendre le stade du miroir comme une identification au sens plein que l'analyse donne à ce terme: à savoir la transformation produite chez le sujet quand il assume une image, - dont la prédestination à cet effet de phrase est suffisamment indiquée par l'usage, dans la théorie, du terme antique d'imago. (41)

The end of the mirror-stage is experienced as the loss of the imaginary unity of the "I", a fragmentation of the body and self that must accompany the entry into language and the "symbolic order", i.e. language as nomination, syntax and sign. Language derives from this sense of the Other (the original perception of the self in the mirror is through the mediation of the Other, usually the mother), of a subject in language, the pronoun "I", and an order outside itself to which it will refer. At one level L'altrieri is a thematic record of three instances in its protagonist's progression towards an awareness of that loss of unity and at another level the very act of writing an autobiography is in itself an attempt to recuperate a sense of totality, for the genre becomes a mirror in which the self is reflected back through the text. (42)

For Lacan the mirror-stage by establishing a relationship between the being and reality lays the foundation-stone for a course of events that results in,

... l'armure enfin assumée d'une identité aliénante, qui va marquer de sa structure rigide tout son développement mental. Ainsi la rupture du cercle de l'Innenwelt à l'Umwelt engendre-t-elle la quadrature inépuisable des récolements du moi. (43)

In Dossi's last chapter the acquisition of a social identity is at the expense of the integrity of the inner self, in the transition from the imaginary to the symbolic, and the loss of ego is conveyed through the projection on to an articulated puppet.

The use of the mirror as a means of representing the protagonist's self-alienation recurs in Vita di Alberto Pisani when at one point in the process of a tortuous self-examination he takes the candle to a mirror,

E il lume, battendogli in viso da lato, gli riempì d'ombra
le occhiaje e gli incavi delle magrissime guancie. Ne
impaurì. (44)

While registering the moment of non-recognition, it also contributes to an accentuation of the gap between Dossi the narrator and Dossi the protagonist. Here the protagonist is unable to relate his sense of self to his appearance of self, the social face to the inner reality. Later, in Desinenza in 'A', the process is shown at a stage further on in its development: the self has been lost altogether. The mirror becomes the means by which the characters control their habitual mask, they no longer identify a self beneath the social mask. Lisa, on her death-bed, sees pallour in her hand-mirror which can be concealed beneath a layer of paint, but she cannot perceive her own imminent death:

- Où est mon miroir?... Comment me trouvez-vous? Trop pâle, n'est-ce pas? Pour l'amour de Dieu, Chantal, passez-moi sur les joues du rose Pompadour... et un peu d'émailline aux lèvres... Merci, Dieu vous le rendra... Laissez-moi voir - e si guardò nel piccolo specchio che avèa potuto râccorre ella stessa, ma per fortuna non vide lo spettacolo orrendo di un dipinto cadàvere... (45)

The deception exercised by the mirror-image is a prerogative of the rich only, as is shown in the two episodes in La desinenza in 'A' called respectively, "Il testamento del signor zio" and "La chioccia dei letterati". Here the two respective protagonists, Gnogno and Umiltà, have ventured out of their impoverished homes, one to a lawyer's office and the other to a literary salon. They both, as they wait for what they hope will be their eventual benefactors, inadvertently catch sight of themselves in the mirror. Again only after the initial shock has passed do they recognize themselves, hunger and suffering showing through their attempts at bourgeois dress (46). Both go away empty-handed. Only the

rich, Dossi suggests, can look at their mirror-images, because the mask they wear is no longer a negation of their inner identity, it has become their identity. They have lost their inner selves under the super-abundance of possessions. Clothes and the way in which people become a part of the clothes they are wearing is a theme which runs through La Desinenza in 'A' and which we shall return to later but which is alluded to for the first time here in L'altrieri as Dossi the protagonist, partaking in the ritual entry into manhood, dons his new adult clothes (47).

The fissure between self and other is apparent in this last chapter at a linguistic level too. The two preceding episodes had, in their verbal exuberance and playfulness, been in part a celebration of the power of language and its ability to collaborate in the re-creation of the author's childhood. The last chapter registers Dossi's sense that language is inadequate. The written word is no longer identified with the nature and extent of experience. Reality, he argues, can elude words. So the problem of incommunicability enters the text for the first time. Whereas previously writer and reader had collaborated in the reconstruction of childhood using language as their medium, language is now felt to be an inadequate tool while the reader may not be in a collaborative mood:

E lì, poggiài sulla tavola i gòmiti: fra le mani la testa... a
scoppiar bolle d'aria.

Che tuttavia contenessero mai, mi duole, mièi cari, di non potèrvelo dire. Punto primo: egli è impossibile di imprigionare - salvo che dentro un rigo da mùsica - certi pensieri che fra di loro si giungono, non già per nodi grammaticali ma per sensazioni delicatissime e il cui prestigio stà tutto nella nebulosità dei contorni: un tentativo di abbigliarli a periodi con il loro verbo, il soggetto, il complemento... so io di molto! li fuga. Punto secondo: avessi io anche la potenza. la quale nessuno ebbe nè avrà mai, di acchiapparli con invisibili maglie, di presentàrveli come vènnero a me, bisognerebbe che voi, per non trovarli ridicoli, per non trovarli bambinerie, foste, leggendo, nella medesima disposizione di spìrito del loro scrittore. Il che, fra noi, non può essere. (48)

Although the inadequacy of language as against the transcendental expressiveness of music is a privileged topos in the writings of the Scapigliatura, Dossi in practice has no problem in the first chapter when he uses language to carry the ineffable sensations of early childhood where, in the boundless egocentricity of the young child, to speak for oneself is to speak for the world. Now as he enters adulthood the protagonist argues that the only possibility left to him is to speak for and of himself. The channels of communication are blocked, all possibilities of identification between both reader and protagonist and narrator and protagonist are at an end. The narrator now distances himself from his literary 'persona' by exploiting the hitherto latent potential for irony which springs from the disparity between his present knowledge and past ignorance. This in its turn creates a distance between the reader and the protagonist as adolescent traumas are reduced to a shopping-list of petty embarrassments. This is because what we are seeing is the young Dossi's metamorphosis as he makes the necessary adjustments to become integrated into the society so detested by the adult Dossi:

Principiavo dunque, intenderete anche, a ingarbugliarmi in quella matassa di stùpide convenzioni sociali piú geroglifiche dei due bottoni che i sarti cuciscono dietro ai sopràbiti a càusa della maggior parte delle nostre piccole miserie... (49)

Contrary to Dossi's affirmation that it is the subject matter that makes his task as writer impossible, for he would simply reveal himself as ridiculous, the irony is used in practice to withstand the reader's inbuilt tendency to empathize with the protagonist's anguish, while the language he uses is reined in to resist the reader's equally natural desire to inhabit the world that is being depicted. Society, we are told, is a place of appearances which relies on its powers of deception;

writing too is constantly playing with appearances and deceptions, so the narrator who wishes to portray his protagonist as he undergoes the deceptions of fantasy refuses to allow his readers the pleasures of the deceptions of the pen.

The narrative sequence is dislocated as well and the reader no longer experiences it as a continuum. The opening moment of self-confrontation is de-dramatized by the prosaic, explanatory, section called "il come" that follows it. It describes the immediate circumstances leading up to the opening episode with the mirror. Instead of carrying the story forward at this point, the author concludes that a further explanation is necessary. This comes under the sub-title "Casa e persona del vostro amico scrittore" and although the jokiness recalls the eighteenth century English novel, particularly a writer like Fielding, it enables Dossi to narrate the problems the protagonist is subject to rather than re-create them through the experiences of their victim as he would have done in earlier chapters. Again this accentuates the gap between narrator and protagonist as well as that between reader and protagonist. It is a marshalling up of detail and information stemming from a wish to 'fill' the reader 'in', which is quite new to Dossi's technique.

In this chapter we see fantasy take the place of imagination. The fantasy with which the book closes stands in direct contrast with the depiction of the imaginary dimension of childhood which we saw in the first chapter, in which the world of the imagination and the world of reality were indistinguishable from one another. Here when the fantasy breaks off, the young Dossi is left with,

... il corpo indolenzito, la lingua allappata, gli occhi mezzo ingommati. (50)

Earlier the reader was allowed to participate in the imaginary; he inhabited the world of Lisa and Guido, he too experienced the mythic

dimension of existence. But now the puppet-theatre comes to life for the protagonist only. The reader is not allowed to share in the dream, he is only allowed to witness it. The reader cannot forget for an instant that what is being described is only a puppet-theatre, scenery is conveyed in the form of stage-directions, the fanfare is only "... di un pèttine vestito di carta velina, e di migliarola entro una scàtola di latta..." (51). On awakening the protagonist uses the opening of his love-letter to complete the conjugation in Greek of the verb "mangiare", an acceptance of the reality principle and a materialist interpretation of life. Throughout L'altrieri the other world, the adult world, is associated with a reductive materialist outlook; - in "Lisa" when Guido overcome by the terror of a nightmare runs to his mother for solace even she resorts to a material explanation for a metaphysical fear:

La buona donna toccatomi la fronte che mi scottava, interrogatomi gli occhi e la lingua, mi scongiurò di non mangiar troppo lamponi. (52)

"Panche di scuola" too is constructed around an identification between food and education, while the actual instruction is shown to be a debased and totally absurd sort of materialism. The ending of "La Principessa di Pimpirimpara" shows the triumph of reality over the imaginary while the choice of the verb mangiare reinforces the reductionism of adulthood.

4.5 "Vita di Alberto Pisani": Dossi the writer and Pisani the protagonist

When Dossi published privately his first book, L'altrieri, he made a gift to himself of one of the hundred copies with the dedication "Al mio simpatico amicone A. Pisani - Carlo Dossi". (53) While here the text establishes itself unambivalently as autobiography, in his second book, published two years later, the two selves are represented separately in the text and both are included in the original version of the title: Vita di Alberto Pisani scritta da Carlo Dossi. (54) The

otherness of his literary persona is moreover underlined on his first appearance in the text by the use of the "questo" which has the effect of distancing the protagonist from the narrator, combined with a distinctly fictional method of constructing character:

E ora, questo Alberto Pisani, che è un brunettino dal viso tanto quanto sofferente, magro, e di un venti anni e coda, quantunque ne dia a vedere al più diciasette... (55)

Writing in the third person about a young man who is nominally himself takes the exploitation of the divergence in time between Dossi-narrator and Dossi-protagonist that we saw at work in the last section of L'altrieri a step further. (56) It frees the protagonist who, severed from his textual relationship with the narrator, can at one level be presented in a biographical mode - indeed the outer casing to Alberto's life fits with a traditional biography, progressing in chronological order from his untimely birth to his equally untimely death. Not only is the conclusion unlikely if not impossible in autobiography, but it also runs counter to the tone inherent in autobiographical writing with its implied optimism: that life, despite moments or periods of tragedy, has meaning - one has only to think of the many autobiographies which conclude with that point in the subject's life at which he has come to terms with himself and thereby acquired an inner tranquillity. Nor can some reference to a "truth" outside the text be used as a criterion for judgement.

With this act of severance, Carlo Dossi author-narrator wins his freedom as well, for he can appear in the text as a complete character in his own right. He is an obtrusive, garrulous narrator with a distinctive literary persona; his is the voice of maturity, intelligence and common-sense who with his sympathy for his protagonist and understanding of his reader is able to build a bridge between the two. It means that when the author wishes to present opinions which are at odds with the narrator's voice of moderation, he can attribute the theory

to his protagonist, as in this attack on the evils of formal education and the hypocritical secrecy which is maintained in sexual matters:

Osserva il mio amico "tu calchi troppo la penna". - Vero; ma quì non sono io che pensa, è Alberto; e, in via morale, ciascuno, vede... quello ch'è predisposto a vedere. (57)

The positioning of narrator and protagonist varies considerably throughout the text. At times when the identification between the two becomes very close, the narrator draws the reader's attention to the fact that he is a separate individual with his own identity and habits (58); at other moments the similarity or rather the ambiguity of the relationship is emphasized, as in a sentence like "Tornando a noi, cioè a dire ad Alberto". Nonetheless he enjoys all the freedoms of the omniscient narrator, able to move in and out of his protagonist's mind at will with the possibility of choosing whether or not to communicate his information to the reader:

E Alberto quì s'affisò in una lunga lunghiera di stranissime idee, giunte a fila di ragno. Sfido la penna a seguirlo! Ma, se anche il potesse, la ratterrei; io non voglio che voi, o lettori, abbiate a lasciarmi in un accesso di disperazione; quindi alla chiusa! (59)

This is a clear example of how he uses his separate narrative identity to control the reader's responses while he plays with the possibilities opened by the narrative form he has chosen. The narrator's paternalism towards his young protagonist, "nostro giòvane amico", "Poetino mio..." extends to include his readers as well, "cari miei", whom he sometimes prompts, "Vi ricordate?", sometimes reassures, by continuing; "se sì, voi, mièi lettori, cui il soprannaturale dà urto, non indispettite: polve di Pimpirlimpina in questo racconto, non ci ha". (60) And sometimes he censors, as in this example: the narrator is on the point of reporting to his readers what the Marquis Andalò has to say about a 'certain woman'. Gossip and intrigue are in the air but the narrator pulls up short:

Andalò volse a lei un'occhiata, e...
 Un momento! un momento! Io, Carlo Dossi, ho quattro cosette
 da dire alle mie signore lettrici. Per voi, lettori uominacci,
 nulla: saltate... (61)

So a direct line of communication is established and maintained over the protagonist's head between the narrator and the reader, often at the protagonist's expense, sometimes at the reader's cost. The relationship enacted by Dossi in respect to his readers is much like Rovani's in Cento anni, a mixture of coercion and flattery. We saw at the end of L'altrieri how the reader had lost the traits of one integrated with the text, Vita di Alberto Pisani again takes this a step further without reaching the degree of estrangement and hostility that one witnesses in his later writing.

Dossi's poetics are permeated with his awareness of the invisible reader, who victim to the text's dictatorial exigencies will transcend his role as passive consumer to achieve the status of active collaborator. His readership is not to be confused with the general public:

"Del pubblico non parliamo: esso è abituato in Italia a ringhiottire ciò che ha appena evacuato - con gran risparmio dei denti." (62)

Gradually in his writing he builds up an identikit of the ideal reader: literate and knowing how to read, imaginative with insight and knowledge, thin-skinned and sensitive (63). And then if this imaginary, ill-treated reader does collaborate with the writer who oppresses him, a dynamic synthesis is created, the reader becomes the writer's collaborator, interpreting and sometimes completing the text. In "Margine alla Desinenza in 'A'" Dossi describes the sort of text, a commentary on his writing, that can result in such a reading:

Uno stile che fosse una rotaja inoliata sarebbe la perdizione de' libri miei. Uno invece a viluppi, ad intoppi, a tranelli, obbligando il lettore a proceder guardingo e a sostare di tempo in tempo - parlo sempre del non dozzinale lettore ossia dello scaltrito in que' docks di pensiero che si chiamano e Lamb e Montaigne e Swift e Jean Paul - segnala cose che una lettura

veloce nasconderebbe. Per contraccambio, le idèe o sottintese o mezzo accennate (...) fanno sì ch'egli prenda interesse al libro, perocchè, interpretàndolo, gli sembra quasi di scriverlo... Aggiungi che una simile illuminazione a traverso la nebbia, facendo aguzzare al lettore la vista dell'intelletto, non solo lo guida nelle idèe dell'autore assai più addentro che se queste gli si fòssero di bella prima sfacciatamente presentate, ma insensibilmente gli attira il cervello - a modo di que' poppatòì artificiali che avviano il latte alla mammella restia - a meditarne di proprie. In altre parole, dall'addentellato di una fàbbrica letteraria, egli trai invito e possibilità di appoggiàrvene contro un'altra - la sua - e, da lettore mutatosi in collaboratore, è naturalmente condotto ad amar l'òpera altrui diventata propria. (64)

In Barthian terminology Dossi is offering his reader a "writerly" (scriptible) text, one in which the passage from signifier to signified is not instantly clear and established and therefore a text which does not allow the reader the comfort of instant consumption. (65) Vita di Alberto Pisani is a book about writing a book; it is also, however, a book about reading a book. An example of the perfect symbiotic relationship between writer and reader is provided at the beginning in the description of Alberto Pisani reading Dante's Vita Nuova, which precedes the account of Alberto's own life. In fact the introductory chapter, chapter 4, by drawing the reader's attention to the act of writing also makes him conscious of the concomitant act of reading. The book's opening with the study of an academic pedant which is then swept away, verbally de-constructed, ("Ma, giuraddiana! ove mai riuscimmo - Fallata ho la strada. Da capo!") makes way for Alberto's study which becomes a metaphor for the text (the academic's being the anti-text) with the ambiguous "quì" referring to both the study and the text:

No, quì non ci ha pericolo d'instupidirsi a furia di sgobbo, quì bisogna pensare col proprio cervello,... (66)

At the same time the exercise in antithesis has taught the reader that literary ground is treacherous stuff and he should never consider himself entirely safe for it is the words themselves that construct the reality:

take them away and the reality is undone. Dossi begins his "life" by reminding the reader of how illusion is created.

We saw in L'altrieri Dossi's subversion of convention, a practice which is continued in the opening pages of his next book. He challenges the expectation that a book begins at the beginning and then continues in sequential fashion to the end by opening with chapter 4. The dislocation is more apparent than substantial though, for the chapter acts as a metacommentary and introduction, while chapters 1-3 inclusive are almost a parenthesis, a summary of the protagonist's history up to the text's fictitious 'present'. As a device it had been exploited before in, for example, Foscolo's Sesto tomo dell'io which also opens with chapter 4, explaining as it does so that:

Il libro che sta fra le mani del candido lettore è il sesto tomo dell'IO, opera annunciata nel paragrafo precedente, che n'è il proemio universale.

Mando innanzi il sesto, perchè gli antecedenti volumi stanno ancora nel mio calamaio, e i futuri nel non-leggibile scarta faccio del fato. (67)

The chapter ends on a note of suspense which suggests that a plot is getting underway: this is emphasized by the sequence of short sentences each indented on a fresh line with two of the sentences trailing off incomplete. ("Passarono alcuni momenti./Trac; la maniglia diede un sobbalzo.../Ne sobbalzò egli pure.../Le imposte infatti si aprivano.") The suspense is knocked flat though when, several chapters later, Dossi takes up the account from the point at which it originally left off.

The separation of narrator and protagonist also makes Alberto's private history more accessible as representative of a generation and an epoch. It is helped by putting his birth in the context of a specific moment in Italian history, the cannons of Novara are heard and Alberto is born as mother and grandmother flee to Montalto:

Egli nasceva, giallo come un limone, tinto dalla paura della sua mamma, e, a pena scalpato, pianse. (68)

His father lies dead in a ditch. The wars of independence are seen in the context of their victims. Depicted in a negative light, their tragic effects are carried forward through to Alberto's mother's suicide and are portrayed as an important component in the making of Alberto's own neurotic psyche. It is an attempt to combine objective and subjective history, so that Alberto Pisani's brief life becomes emblematic of a young man who tries to dedicate himself to literature at a time of cultural and political demoralisation. Dossi's contemporary critics and friends did not hesitate to read the book as a way into the personality of its author, an exercise in reading which is consistent with the then prevalent tendency to treat fiction as very thinly disguised (auto)biography. Luigi Primo, for example, in a long review article of his friend's book, justifies the inclusion of biographical detail

... perchè autore ed opera non sono che un essere solo, due emanazioni riunite - emanazione di doti eccezionalmente privilegiate, l'una, emanazione l'altra di quell'ingegno che si è precisamente a queste doti informato. (69)

After arguing that as a type Pisani is only possible in the sort of times they are living through and after describing the disillusionment and mediocrity of his day, he praises the book for being something more than a book: "E diciamolo innanzi tutto - L'Alberto Pisani non è un romanzo: è qualche cosa di più - non è neppur un libro: è una vita." Although crude, the comment does share some of Dossi's own assumptions about literature which led him to argue that the greatest literature is humorous (writers such as Cervantes, Sterne, and Jean Paul). Dossi identified great literature as that which is marked by the writer's textual presence; the plot is usurped by the writer, who becomes protagonist as well.

4.6 Reality and the imagination

At one level the book continues with the problem that was left unresolved at the end of L'altrieri: the fragmentation of existence into difference spheres, the imaginary and the real. Pisani gives himself up to a world of his own fabrication and his death is the result of his inability to shake off the fantasy (unlike Berto in L'altrieri who accepts the reality-principle), while Dossi in his future work resolutely turns his back on his past. Like his protagonist, Dossi finds it impossible to continue with this double existence, and having written of the dangers of committing one's life to the imagination, resolutely turns to face reality. One of the clearest testimonies of the crisis is to be found in a letter he wrote to his close friend Perelli in 1877 and then included in his writer's diary.

Amico Gigi - Tu puoi ben dirmi, per la monotona imbronciatura delle mie lettere: ma muta suono: io ti posso sempre rispondere: mutami tu l'istrumento. Epperò giudica, se ti pajo ora in istato di riflettere l'iride umano in un libro! Chiamava il libro, S. Agostino, "coscienza scritta" e a ragione. Per quanto un autore falsifichi sè, accattando dagli altri, il suo cuore glielo leggerai sempre attraverso. Così: più le passioni dell'uomo saranno vive e variate, e più lo stile dello scrittore terrà quella vita, quella diversità di motivi, e perfino que' difetti, che irritano soli la sensazioni del gusto. Di ciò mirabile esempio, i Cento anni. Ma in me siede unicamente la grigia noja, la quale non può non trovare l'eco del suo sbadiglio - primamente in chi scrive, poi in chi legge. Come lo fabbrico ora il mio stile appartiene non tanto alla letteratura che alla farmacopea: Vedi classe degli oppi - Or chi me lo sveglia? Io mi desidero a volte un cambiamento totale di vita; di uscire cioè da questo asilo d'infanzia e gittarmi nella giovanil mischia. E lì vorrei viaggiare, ma mi sconsiglia la borsa; e vorrei fare all'amore ma mi sconsiglia lo specchio. - Oppure penso che chi mi opprime la fantasia è la stessa sua madre - Memoria. Io forse ho ingojato più che non potessi concoquere. (70)

The boredom he feels, the desire to escape from his childhood, the obstacles he puts forward to justify his inability to act, memory which has come to deaden his mind - all these delineate his crisis, both his awareness of it and his inability to escape it. But his writings are permeated not only with his inability to enter the mainstream of life,

the present, but also with the shortcomings contained within that same reality.

In the 1880's Dossi published a collection of bozzetti which included some of the raccontini from Vita di Alberto Pisani along with other sketches which he had written from 1868 onwards. Although the subject-matter varies widely, the theme that unites many of these episodes is the limited value of reality and the human need to avoid it or escape it in some way. To take a few examples: in "Viaggio di nozze" an imaginary journey takes away the urge to travel and the young couple spend their honeymoon in their hotel; in "Casetta di Giorgio" a young boy always wants to get to bed early because under the bedclothes lies an imaginary world of his own making; in "Vecchio bossolatojo" the opposition between old and new which found one form in "balocchi" is here expressed in the antithesis between the "sedute fisio-magnetiche del cavalier o del professor Y" and its degeneration into games of "cot-coddek la gallina che fa l'uovo" of a fairground fortune-teller; in "Illusioni" Dossi expresses his regret at having laughed at the religious beliefs of an old man, his only escape from life's miseries. The last story in the collection shows the complete triumph of the imagination over reality. In "De consolatione philosophiae", Arrigo, having been informed by the doctor that his beloved wife is about to die, tries to come to terms with it by imagining the possibilities offered by a new life without her. The dream becomes so seductive that when he hears of her sudden recovery he feels something close to regret. Reality becomes a prison with one possibility for escape which is through the mind, but Dossi is extremely critical of romantic writers' exploitation of this need by creating a false alternative based on false sensibilities. In "Profumo di poesia" Miss Ada Banner of Bannerlodge is one of those

"... assidue frequentatrici del negozietto Aleardi di profumeria poetica" (71) for whom an unfortunately timed stomach-upset brings to an end her romantic dreams. Nor is it only the reader who can fall victim to such myths. Edmondo (72) is a writer who tells his honest and loyal wife Emma that her abilities and virtues drive him mad. He wants disorder, he wants passion in his life. It is only after she has taken his advice and run off with a young man that he realizes the depth of his love for her. The alternative to life's limitations exploited by a second-rate school of writing is dangerous because it is inauthentic and escapist, but at the same time the attempt to recapture the visionary breadth of childhood cannot be sustained. When Carlo Dossi came to write his second book he was already aware of this and tries to find a solution to the crisis by separating himself from his literary persona Alberto Pisani. This means there is no longer any continuity in time, the past is no longer filtered through the present, and furthermore by killing his fictitious self he destroys the possibility of his own future becoming once again a past. Dante Isella, basing his argument on a philological examination of the texts, reaches the conclusion that Dossi's crisis is to be detected in the writing of Vita di Alberto Pisani and that in the rest of his work what he does is to "alimentare culturalmente un processo già chiuso":

A circa vent'anni dunque, quanti ne aveva all'epoca dell' Alberto Pisani, il Dossi ha già conchiuso il suo processo artistico. Dopo di allora non ci sarà più storia per lui, la sua avventura meravigliata nel mondo è compiuta. Già da quel tempo, esaurito il profumo prezioso dei propri ricordi, si sopravvive con sofferenza, da precoce cui sia negata (diverso in questo da altri enfants maudits) la precocità stessa della morte. Natura di ebefrenico, si vorrebbe diagnosticare, ma si restituisca il termine dal corruscante linguaggio luciniano alla sua precisa significazione clinica. A imprimergli un ulteriore processo, gli mancò il grande fatto, l'avvenimento d'eccezione (interiore s'intende), che mette per cammini avventurosianche chi è costretto fra le mura di un "natio borgo selvaggio". La sua vita invece, già tutta scontata agli inizi, si svolge senza sbalzi, monodica. (73)

In Vita di Alberto Pisani the protagonist's imagination is both constructed and defined in terms of what he reads. While fictions form the stuff of his imagination, fictionality is at the root of his existence. The writer, by making the reader conscious of conventions through his violation of them and by tinkering with the reality writing constructs, is confusing the boundaries of art and life, the frontiers of fiction and actuality.

4.7 The fragmented text

While the text shows Alberto's apprenticeship as writer, a substantial proportion of the commentary addressed to the reader by the narrator is taken up with the problems of writing. It is of the same order as that maintained by Dossi throughout his life in his writer's diary, his "Note azzurre" where again he is writing in the third person. Very conscious of the dead weight of literary tradition, he discusses the problems of finding new forms suited to the exigencies of the day. Hostile to imitative literature - "Per fare il Manzoni, èccoci Carcanini!" Dossi is quite definite on where he slots into literary history:

Della nuova letteraria vedemmia fatta coll'uva di Alfieri,
Parini, Foscolo ecc. Manzoni è il vino - R. è il torchiatico,
D. la grappa. (74)

In Vita di Alberto Pisani it is inferred that the public cannot be bothered with new books, for as Enrico says, "Io non leggo... che libreria vecchia, per risparmiar la fatica di tagliare le pagine..." (75) But the text of Vita neither holds fast to the genre which, after the introductory chapter, it adopts, nor is it inhibited by the author's dislike of the intreccio or plot. He does not deny himself the right to tell stories, but he creates a space apart for them by presenting them in a different type-face with titles of their own. This is a deliberate

contrast with the then more familiar preoccupation of realist novelists to stitch the short stories together into a continuous narrative without leaving any of the seams showing. This unpicked narrative in which Alberto's life-history is interrupted by the raccontini, which are ostensibly the product of three sources, Alberto's grandmother, Alberto himself and the narrator, does not, I believe, support Isella's thesis that there are two aspects to the book; the authentic Dossi which is located in the racconti and the inauthentic Dossi which is to be found in the structure:

... i motivi più individuali, più riservati, sono svolti dai raccontini; i motivi più estranei, invece, o addirittura presi a prestito (così l'ipostasi werther-ortisiana del finale), si dispongono intorno a formare la struttura (in senso crociano) del libro. Il Dossi migliore è andato a rifugiarsi in queste zone protette, disinteressate al 'romanzo', dove lavora segretamente i suoi petits poèmes en prose; solo la non raggiunta fiducia nell'autonomia della prosa d'arte lo induce a trovare loro un qualunque generico ricordo. (76)

In my reading of the text the division between racconto and struttura is wilfully more apparent than it is real and depends more on the visual effect of spacing and print-size than on any inherent difference. It is wilful too in the sense that Alberto's life and his supremely literary death, ("Alberto, cade sul desiato corpo di lei, morto".) is an exemplary warning to readers of the dangers inherent in literature. The stories themselves are related to the main text in a variety of ways, the first two, "Il codino" and "Isolina", are provided as examples of the tales told by Alberto's grandmother to stop him from reading! "La cassierina" is the narrator's account of an episode in Alberto's childhood; it is a flashback which relates to the present and indeed the story runs into the main text, but the protagonist is unaware of this. It enjoys the additional irony of being a story taken from the life of a protagonist who can find nothing in his past to turn into literature. With "La provvidenza" the narrator tells his readers about the past history of the

woman Alberto loves; it is told as Alberto sleeps - "Lettori miei; conterò intanto una storia" - although the book does not of course follow real time but works according to fictional time. This résumé is, the narrator claims, the true version of the story Alberto heard but Dossi censored. The story of the house Alberto moves to in the story called "Il mago" is physically set apart but there is no break in narrative voice or structure. The beginning follows directly from the main text and indeed depends on it for its meaning: "Mai non avea potuto nè affittarla nè venderla. Eppure cotesta casa, non avea niente di strano!" (77) (I have not followed the typography of the text here. The first line is in the main text, and the second line opens the story.) It closes in a similar fashion without any break in continuity, "E in quella, 'per paura di morte', morì. E, come il mago non lasciò testamento..." (78) So three episodes are in fact flashbacks relating in turn to Alberto, the woman he loves and his house. "Il lotto" claims to be taken from Alberto's notebook ("Ch il gran mal copiare!"), but the narrative voice remains that of Carlo Dossi ("Non ha copiato ancha lui?" (79) Dossi asks of Pisani), a point which is underlined by the fact that at the end of the racconto the narrator adds his description, now in the main text, of the caretaker's friends. From this point on however Alberto Pisani takes an increasing hand in the construction of the text and the next chapter is handed over to him in the form of extracts from the book that we have seen him struggling to write - the book whose title Le due morali refers back to the discourse on public hypocrisy and private mores which runs through both L'altrieri and Vita di Alberto Pisani. The racconti end here, but the text continues, for it is Alberto's turn to become the protagonist of his own story.

Dal soddisfacimento che a Claudia fosse piaciuto il suo libro, passò all'inquieta speranza che a lei avesse anche a piacerne l'autore, poi, tolte il forse, sen persuase già amato, adorato, e di maglia in uncino, riuscì a trovarsi impacciato della situazione. Altro è scriver romanzi; altro, farne. (80)

So the puppet-self at the end of L'altrieri (the one with the moveable parts "indizio della importanza mia nella commedia") who then becomes Alberto Pisani, but who in his analysis of his relationship with Claudia sees his role as strictly off-stage - "... il posto di lui era in platea;" - finds his vindication in the last chapter in which he is not only transformed from spectator to actor, but he also takes the leading role. This final chapter has the same relationship to the rest of the book as the first, in that it is superfluous; the penultimate chapter would have been a natural conclusion. The last chapter provides a fictional conclusion, an ironic and definitive rejection of the plot as narrative. Many of the elements of the serialised novel are present; the comic realism of the grave-digger Bãrnaba, in the corpse-snatching episode:

- Sono un chirurgo - cominciò a dire, tremando.
Bãrnaba si toccò il calottino con il rispetto dovuto a uno
che dàvagli il pane. (81);

the densely eventful narrative, the macabre plot with its hints of the supernatural ("E... se fosse... non morta?", and the neurotic protagonist's suicide. The narration reverts to the present tense and is carried forward in terse telegraphic sentences through to the supremely literary effect of the last line:

Incendia la gelosia. Attorno a lui, tutto gira. Strappa di tasca una terzette a due colpi, e gliela scãrica contro. Il medaglione, salta in cento frantumi. Poi, volge l'arme a sè. Ci ha un terribile istante, in cui la paura gli aggroviglia le vene: ei serra gli occhi; ma il colpo... parte.

L'arme, piomba fumante, giù dalla tãvola, in una cesta di rose; Alberto, cade sul desiato corpo di lei, morto. (82)

The conclusion, which owes a recognizable debt to Tarchetti's story "Bouvard" from the trilogy Amore nell'arte, is closer to pastiche than to parody in that it imitates rather than subverts, but in adopting the

devices of a genre that the rest of the book condemns it demands a specific way of reading between the lines that establishes itself in this book as the hallmark of Dossi's writing:

Ben sott'inteso, che chi si ha una p̃gina innanzi, abbia actua la vista, legga nelle interlinee, facoltà di pochissimi. Tra i quali, oltre que' due di cui mi tengo sicuro vorrei altri molti de' miei leggitori. (83)

I.U. Tarchetti: Racconti fantastici. Textual freedom and psychological transgression.

5.1 The non-fantastic tales

As we turn our attention away from Dossi's experiments in autobiographical fiction to Tarchetti's five short stories published in 1869 under the collective title Racconti fantastici (1), it might look as though we are moving, in Barthes' typology, from the fertile soil of the scriptible to the unproductive terrain of the lisible. Where Dossi's texts are addressed to the reader, or more accurately re-reader turned collaborator, "Io non scrivo se non per chi legge almeno 3 volte i libri" (2), in which the purpose of the exercise is "de faire du lecteur non plus un consommateur, mais un producteur du texte" (3), Tarchetti's stories through their specification by genre, establish a contract with a public who already know in a general sense what the content will hold for them and therefore they know what they can by right expect. Barthes uses these terms purely in respect of the production of the text; in our case extra-textual considerations point to the same conclusion. The attention to detail and the money that Dossi put into his first editions are indicative of his desire that the volumes should endure (4), while Tarchetti's first contact with his market was in the eminently perishable, and provisional format of the newspaper or magazine. It corresponds to their respective financial positions, but it also tallies with their widely divergent views on the function of literature: from Dossi who argued for writing as writing and described himself as an aristocrat when it came to questions of literature to Tarchetti's democratic and didactic view of the social role of literature which led to his belief that writing is a vehicle for conveying morals and ideas.

Fortunately Barthes spares texts the consequences of his severe system of classification by recuperating them through the act of re-reading, (an anti-commercial habit, he argues, reserved for children,

the old and teachers)

La relecture, opération contraire aux habitudes commerciales et idéologiques de notre société... la relecture est ici proposée d'emblée, car elle seule sauve le texte de la répétition (ceux qui négligent de relire s'obligent à lire partout la même histoire)... (5)

The supernatural like the detective story lends itself particularly well to Barthes' brilliant paradox because its structure depends on one long exploitation of the hermeneutic code, in which the explanation of the mystery is persistently delayed or postponed, while a re-reading is inevitably conducted in the light of the knowledge gained from the final disclosure. Tarchetti's literary career gives the initial impression that it represents in microcosm the succession of narrative genres associated with the latter half of the 19th century, but on closer reading it becomes evident that the demarcation lines cannot be drawn as clearly as that. Outside the collection specifically called Racconti fantastici Tarchetti worked with the themes and theories of the fantastic without bringing the stories within the parameters of the genre, which suggests there is something specific to his tales of the fantastic other than the ostensible subject-matter.

"Storia di un ideale", published in 1868 shortly after Tarchetti developed an active interest in the supernatural, is very interesting in this respect because it adopts the narrative structures as well as the themes of the fantastic. It shares the preoccupations that we saw expressed in Dossi's writings in the previous chapter, namely the irreconcilability of the two spheres of the imaginary and reality. In Tarchetti's tale the protagonist Alfredo (who is one of those "fanciulli adulti" able to retain intact the illusions of childhood), nauseated by the aridity of life and the egotism of society, finds solace by constructing an imaginary existence through the sustained deformation of

his perception. Alfredo abrogates all distinctions between fact and fiction: illusion becomes fact, imagination becomes reality, and he appears to succeed where Alberto Pisani fails. Although creator of a monstrous delusion he is one of Tarchetti's rare sane protagonists and the text insists upon this aspect of his character.

Egli non era dunque pazzo, e tutte le sue singolarità
trovavano la loro giustificazione nella facoltà illimitata
che egli possedeva d'illudersi. (6)

so the boundaries between sanity, understood as having a grip on reality, and madness are obliterated. The fantasy however begins to assume a life of its own and at this stage the story's indicators suggest that it is moving towards a supernatural conclusion. The episode opens with a letter Alfredo sends to the narrator about his imaginary lover: "Sono atterrito da un avvenimento che confonde la ragione. Perla vive". A page later another more insistent letter follows: "Perla non è più una creazione della mia fantasia, un essere immaginario e impalpabile, essa vive" (7). At this point all the textual elements needed to produce the fantastic according to Todorov's study of the genre (8) are present; the reader is hesitating between a natural and a supernatural explanation, a hesitation which is shared by the main protagonist so it is represented in the text and indeed becomes the dominant theme of the text. Finally, the reader has been prepared by the text to adopt the right attitude to the dilemma, so that he or she will not, for example, read it as an allegorical work. The indicators are so definite that it would seem that the implied reader is being prepared for a supernatural development while the possibility of a rational explanation appears to be increasingly unlikely. But readers' expectations are thwarted and the story concludes with an anticlimactic solution in which we learn that a trick has been played on Alfredo which is also therefore passed on to the reader.

The critic Jörn Moestrup responds to what is effectively the literary equivalent of a breach of contract by denouncing it as a cheap dénouement to a shoddy story. (9) "Storia di un ideale" with its interrogation of the nature of reality has its roots in the same ideological subsoil as the fantastic, but by resolutely rejecting the supernatural alternative it appears to be proposing, it remains a portrait of the power of the mind to dominate and deform reality.

Earlier in his writing career Tarchetti had exploited the mysterious or inexplicable event but without making it the centre of his enquiry. The mechanism that sets "La fortuna del capitano Gubart" (1865) in motion is a freak of fortune, a knock on the wrong front door (used again for the chance meeting between the protagonist and Clara in Fosca), which brings in its wake a dramatic reversal of fortune for the impoverished violinist Gubart. Chance is used here to highlight the arbitrariness of class and wealth. The year which saw the publication of the Racconti fantastici saw the appearance of two other short stories by Tarchetti called collectively Racconti umoristici both of which use fantastic themes to a different end. "In cerca di morte", a picaresque tale, focusses on the vicissitudes of a young man who after taking out a life-insurance tries to get himself killed. Between the opening objective and the final outcome the story breaks into two parts; where in the earlier section his adventures leave a trail of corpses behind him, in the later section his path is strewn by the grateful whom he has saved from death. Although fantastic elements are present -

... sono travagliato da un'idea fissa, da un dubbio, da un sospetto che mi atterrisce. Sarei io mai dotato di una natura immortale? (10)

- they remain at the level of narrative potential. Instead the systematic violation of the rules of causality, although perceived fatalistic-

ally, are pursued for their political and moral implications. "Re per ventiquattrore" which is the companion story, uses a common technique of the fantastic, namely the dream in which the information that it is a dream is withheld from the reader until the end when the narrator wakes up and normality is restored. The structures of the genre are used here however for the purposes of political satire. (11)

Contained in the collection Racconti fantastici, the brief tale called "La lettera U" stands outside the genre because in these extracts from the diary of a madman, the reader, while experiencing reality through the perception of another, has his own perception left intact. It is not a common universe that is the subject of the enquiry. "Un osso di morte" is a fantastic narrative in which the author is trying to elaborate a fantastic-humorous mode which devolves from the domestication of the world beyond. The mirror held up to reality therefore reproduces it in its own image. The fantastic as a subversion of contemporary ideas or as the underbelly of realist fiction, does not apply in this story where the unities and structures of this world are confirmed by their survival into the next. This leaves us with three tales in the collection which are product of Tarchetti's philosophy of doubt expressed in the story "Riccardo Waitzen":

La fede è finita: dalle sue basi incrollabili noi possiamo trarre delle conseguenze finite, perciò spesso limitate, monche, imperfette: ma il dubbio solo è grande, sconfinato come l'immenso universo, incommensurabile come l'oceano, profondo e tenebroso come gli abissi dell'anima umana; il dubbio è la rivelazione della scienza, - essa lo cerca immolandogli ogni fede - poichè una sola fede esiste, quella del dubbio. (12)

We shall consider these in the context of their historical and cultural collocation, their own structural properties and that 'specificity' mentioned above which brings the tales within the confines of the genre.

5.2 The fantastic: background

Tarchetti's experiments in narrative and genre were often closely related to what he was reading at the time, which might explain why he was the first Italian writer to adopt the mode of the fantastic. His public, though, for reasons we shall see, would have been prepared for its reception by translated work which was available. Many of the Scapigliatura writers came to experiment with the genre at some stage, the most notable perhaps being Arrigo and Camillo Boito, the Genoese Zena and the Piedmontese Cagna. Although the two greatest writers of the fantastic were German and American, Hoffmann and Poe, it was once again the cultural influence that France had over neighbouring Italy that led to the introduction of the fantastic in Italy.

In France the conte fantastique enjoyed two waves of success. Between 1820 and 1830 Hoffmann rode the crest of popularity, eclipsing in his wake the historical novel. The exploration of the realm of the mysterious spilled over into all the arts, the musical and the visual as well as the written word, but by 1833 Balzac, who was himself by no means immune to the master's art, felt able to assert that Hoffmann's reputation was now inferior to his own and indeed the decade 1830-40 saw a dramatic decline in the quantity of fantastic literature being produced. After 1850, however, the genre revived and enjoyed a second wave of success. It was now less closely related to the pervasive influence of European romanticism and owed much more, in terms of subject and success, to the contemporary positivist spirit and the uneven developments in science. Poe now replaced Hoffmann.

In 1830 Charles Nodier wrote an article called 'Du fantastique en littérature', which figures as a kind of manifesto for the genre and argues that the fantastic brings some consolation and hope to a materialist world:

Ces innovations prétendues sont l'expression inévitable des périodes extrêmes de la vie des nations et, sans elles, je sais à peine ce qui nous resterait aujourd'hui de l'instinct moral et intellectuel de l'humanité. (13)

It was this line that one of the earliest and most enthusiastic of Italian observers took in an article which argued that against the backdrop of an impoverished and limiting reality, writers such as Hoffmann and Poe were needed to stir the imagination. Eugenio Camerini, writing in 1858, had this to say:

Questa letteratura è la Fata Morgana del nostro deserto. Tra gli ardori del suolo e del cielo l'illusione val quasi quanto l'oasi. Io eterizzai spesso i miei dolori con queste letture. Seguendo il precetto un po' napoletano del divino maestro: Nolite cogitare de crastino, io m'attuffava in Hoffmann e in Poe: le larve più orribili erano le benvenute nella mia solitudine; i delitti più atroci non commovevano l'ignudo della mia stanza; e qualche raggio di abbondanza e felicità ideale mi metteva nella corrente indefettibile della fantasia. (14)

A month earlier Camerini had lauded Savino Savini's initiative which led to the creation of a new collana published by Botta of Turin and called Biblioteca delle stravaganze; although it was intended to include Italian authors, Camerini mentions only foreign names. (15)

This was to be the first of several collane which, judging by the titles of the collections and the poor quality of the printing and presentation as well as their low cost, was aiming at a market which would be more attracted by an indication of the book's contents than by the names of its authors. The first Italian translation of work by Poe (it included two of Poe's stories along with a story by Chamisso) was published under the collective title of Storie incredibili but on republication this was changed to the even more downmarket Storie orribili. Another interesting feature of this collection of stories is that like all of Poe's work, it is not translated from its native language but has been 'laundered' through France and it is therefore a translation of Baudelaire's 1856

translation from whose title Histoires extraordinaires the Italian version took its own. It is identical to the French in all features: language, punctuation and even the title ("Il doppio assassinio in via Morgue") comes from Baudelaire and not from the original "The murders in the Rue Morgue". The consequences of Baudelaire's monopoly of Poe are materially present in the translations into Italian and are also culturally significant because of Baudelaire's own perception of Poe. He wrote two essays on Poe, the first of which appeared in 1852 ('E. Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages') and the second in 1857 under the title 'Notes nouvelles sur E. Poe', and in both he assesses the man's life in the light of his writing so that Poe emerges as a rebellious, satanic and doomed outsider, fitting roughly the same mould that had been built for Hoffmann. (Gautier, concerned about the type-casting of his own public image, had in 1836 written an article in La chronique de Paris arguing against the portrait of Hoffmann that he himself had helped construct a few years earlier.) The figurative life-styles and the outsider typology courted by the Scapigliatura and commented on by their friends and enemies alike, clearly owes much to their French predecessors. (16) When Tarchetti was approached by Bizzone and Cavallotti, joint editors of the Gazzettino rosa, for a brief entry, he produced a provocative self-portrait which was clearly designed to scandalize.

Vorrei essere un'iena, addentrarmi nei sepolcri e pascermi delle ossa dei morti. A questo mondo io non vedo che teschi e stinchi. Se una donna mi bacia, io non sento che freddo, se mi sorride vedo i suoi denti a muoversi senza gengive, minacciando di uscirle di bocca, se mi abbraccia non ho che la sensazione di un corpo stringente e pesante come la creta. All'oscuro una fanciulla amante mi sembrerebbe un cadavere che sorge per effetto magnetico come la rana di Galvani, destinato (sic) a cadere subito dopo sotto l'esanime peso. (17)

This macabre and satanic profile co-existed with Farina's portrait of his friend as a gentle and romantic figure (18) and it soon was seen

as emblematic of the scapigliati writers in general.

The success that foreign tales of the fantastic enjoyed in Italy showed that a market was definitely there. The genre also fitted perfectly with the exigencies of the contemporary press because of the form it favours, i.e. the short story. It was not fortuitous that the rise of the fantastic coincided with the development of the short story and a mass press. (In France when the fantastic was at the height of its popularity the reviewers of the Revue des deux mondes and the Revue de Paris were complaining that all they ever received to review were short stories.) The press liked the genre, the public enjoyed it, and for writers for whom literature was their bread and butter, the short story could be written for immediate publication and find a place later in anthologies. But it was not only its length that found it favour, contextually too it put into aesthetic form the intellectual debates of its day. The fantastic presupposes an essentially relativistic perception. (19) Todorov points out too that there is nothing accidental about the time when the fantastic emerged:

The nineteenth century transpired, it is true, in a metaphysics of the real and the imaginary, and the literature of the fantastic is nothing but the bad conscience of the positivist era. (20)

Each culture has its demarcation of reason and absurdity, the fantastic uses these socio-cultural definitions to polemicize and question.

Tarchetti's own writings of the fantastic have been related to the scapigliato challenge to the dominant intellectual trends of the day:

In tutti si sente il segno del fondatore (del genere, in Italia), dello scopritore (di una materia nuova, reale, letteraria), del difensore (della tesi dell'esistenza del soprannaturale), del teorico dimostrare (che porta la prova dei fatti, e quindi racconta). Questo raccontare nasce dunque, all'insegna della scoperta, della difesa, della teoria e addirittura della polemica; quest'ultima specialmente è nel carattere della letteratura scapigliata, nella sua disperata ed ironica ribellione. (21)

His stories do indeed articulate his desire to push beyond and dispute the current tenets of belief and they manifest his own instinctive awareness of a level of consciousness which is distinct from that experienced within the compass of everyday reality. But the popularity of the fantastic must also stem from the fact that although it appears to be subversive with questioning of dominant ideology, it also performs a useful therapeutic function by channelling and containing these alternative currents. In a world today where rationalism and reason have remained pivotal to our structures of thought, the fantastic lives on without leaving dents of any significance in our modes of perception. Indeed in so far as it is an inversion or violation of the dominant ideology, it is of course dependent upon it for its existence.

Castex in Le conte fantastique characterizes the fantastic as an event which brusquely disrupts the familiar world of day to day reality, but which cannot in turn be explained by the rules or laws governing that same world:

Essentiellement intérieur et psychologique, le fantastique ne se confond pas avec l'affabulation conventionnelle des récits mythologiques ou des féeries, qui implique un dépaysement de l'esprit. Il se caractérise au contraire par une intrusion brutale du mystère dans le cadre de la vie réelle; il est lié généralement aux états morbides de la conscience qui, dans les phénomènes de cauchemar ou de délire, projette devant elle des images de ses angoisses ou de ses terreurs... Le fantastique concerne le monde de tous les jours - qui tout à coup se fissure, l'homme dans son état normal - qui malgré lui perd pied, les choses familières et rassurantes - qui sans qu'on sache pourquoi deviennent étranges et hostiles. Il décrit la transformation, le passage, la prise du conscience du bouleversement. (22)

The event itself can fall into one of two categories; either the victim has suffered the effects of an illusion brought on by the senses which can happen for example with drugs or nightmares, or the event has really taken place. When the former case happens normality is then restored at the end of the story and the world and its laws remain untouched by what has preceded, but when the latter occurs the rules of the universe

as we have understood them have failed and are therefore suspect. Tarchetti's stories, like most of those written in an era of encroaching scientism, belong to the second category.

In 1867 both his narrative and his private life reflect Tarchetti's interest in the supernatural and para-psychology. His close friend Salvatore Farina remembers this as the year when Tarchetti introduced him to animal magnetism.

Già Ugo a Torino mi aveva iniziato al magnetismo animale; assistendo ai passi con i quali egli addormentava sua sorella Amalia, udendo le risposte stranissime della veggente, certo avevamo strappato un lembo di quel mistero che non pareva dovesse lungamente nascondere le verità a noi cara. (23)

The long introduction to "Riccardo Waitzen" discusses the issues raised by mesmerism and spiritism, for although animal magnetism had officially fallen from grace it still enjoyed a significant cultural influence. (24) Spawned off the Enlightenment and extended and reinterpreted under Romanticism, the German Romantics were particularly interested in its claims, because if proven it would offer evidence that the world was a living organism with the individual mind in possession of potentially infinite powers. Above all E.T. Hoffmann continually returned to the theme of magnetism, interpreting it as the complete penetration of one person by another and therefore comparable to possession, arguing too that people could magnetize each other unconsciously. Although mesmerism met with greater skepticism in France, it nevertheless again exercised considerable influence in literary circles. Balzac was not only convinced of its truth, and cogently expounds his theory of the will in Louis Lambert but one of the aspects which interested him most, the regard magnétique (which had been a common place in the English Gothic so admired by Tarchetti) appears frequently throughout the Comédie. He dated his own adherence to magnetism to 1832 and felt that he himself

enjoyed the privileges of magnetic powers, a claim that the Milanese doctor-writer Rajberti argues was demonstrably disproved on the occasion of Balzac's visit to Milan in 1838. (25) At the beginning of "Riccardo Waitzen" Tarchetti describes his sense of discovery and excitement on being introduced to magnetism, but like the early German Romantics he shows no interest in its curative powers or its incursions into the subconscious, being concerned instead in what it might have to say about extra-sensible reality and its relationship to spiritualism. This is why his disillusionment is so intense on learning that James Braid had shown that the same results could be achieved by focussing the subject's attention on a shiny object. It meant a step back from spiritualism into the world of materialism. In his description of Mesmer's discovery, Tarchetti appropriates the language of science ("scienza" and "scoperta" both repeated, "fenomeni", "verità" etc.) and puts it to the service of spiritualism, adding furthermore that the credulity with which these claims were initially received was "superstiziosa":

Ma la scienza ha pure rialzato in questi ultimi tempi un lembo della cortina misteriosa. Mesmer, colla scoperta del magnetismo, sembrò aver fatto un passo gigantesco su questa via. I primi fenomeni di quella scienza, arcani, oscuri, confusi, perciò accolti con quella superstiziosa incredulità che affascina tutti gli uomini all'idea dell'incomprensibile e dello ignoto, sembrarono aver afferrato le prime fila per districare tutto quanto il segreto, fino allora inviolato, della natura umana: la fusione delle anime, la trasmissione del pensiero, la chiaroveggenza, l'intuizione, l'unificazione di due, di più individualità, furono altrettante scoperte che parvero assicurarci la conquista di verità prodigiose e infinite. (26)

Tarchetti's own rather disappointing excursions into the field of magnetism were accompanied, as Farina recalls, by a developing interest in spiritualism itself:

Fu meglio quando T. mi mandò La pluralité des mondes abités dove, saltando ogni barriera scientifica, Camille Flammarion ci assicura che l'uomo non è la prima nè l'ultima incarnazione dello spirito pensante. Eravamo dunque preparati alla nuova parola, ma volevamo che questo verbo ci fosse confermato dalla scienza ufficiale. (27)

Although positivism was firmly established in France by 1850 and the world was seen to work according to a system of laws of which the scientist must learn the formulae and recognize the effects, its advances were not so rapid as to oust the role of magicians and occultists who in turn benefited from the positivist spirit by insisting on the thoroughness of their methods and the objectivity of their experiences. Magnetism failed in the end to give him the answers he was looking for, but the supernatural provided Tarchetti with, among other things, the opening for new experiments in form.

5.3 "Le leggende del castello nero"

An article published in Italy in Politecnico in 1865, which was one of a series on "Il romanzo contemporaneo", pointed to the far-reaching changes that the fantastic as a genre introduced into the history of narrative. Concentrating on the popular writers Erckman and Chatrian's short story "Le bourgmestre en bouteille" from their Contes populaires of 1862 (which is interesting because Tarchetti later took it as the model for his own tale "Lo spirito in un lampone"), the author makes the point that the Alsatian writers' influence along with other writers of the fantastic, lies in the important changes they made to the rules of story-telling. The writer of the fantastic he argues, can safely ignore all hitherto accepted narrative structures and he takes the example of magnetism,

... il quale può accozzare i fatti e i personaggi senza riguardo a quelle leggi e a quelle norme a cui è astretta la comune degli uomini. Il magnetismo e lo spiritismo giustificano e assolvono ogni stranezza. (28)

The content too is liberated from the necessity to obey the dictums of realism and can concentrate on the moral and intellectual ideas of the age. The first of Tarchetti's tales of the fantastic, "Le leggende del

castello nero", published separately in 1867, is, as Mariani tellingly says, almost a compendium of the genre as though it were trying out the freedoms on offer:

"Le leggende del castello nero" che potremmo definire una sorte di prontuario, di compendio del conte fantastique nei suoi ingredienti fondamentali. (29)

Although Tarchetti brings to the tale many of the accessories belonging to the genre, he does not travel far down its devious paths. The title, the first contact the reader has with the text, was when it was originally published in Il pungolo "Le leggende del castello nero" which placed it in mainstream Gothic, but when it was republished the following year it was changed to "Il sogno d'una vita. Frammento." This echoes the shift in the cultural climate away from an interest in the fantastic in relationship to the supernatural, towards an interest in the subjectively generated fantastic. The story itself plays with the narrative possibilities opened up by metempsychosis, that is the idea that we have lived a previous existence or existences which the brain periodically and confusedly recalls. Tarchetti believed in the survival of the soul and argued that dreams were indications of that dimension of us which survives the laws of temporality. His interpretation of dream, present in his earliest writing Lettere a Carlotta derives from the German Romantics. He shares their conviction that there is something which lies beyond the present which reveals itself in certain exalted states, one of them being dream. Béguin's summary of Romantic belief encompasses Tarchetti's too.

Ne vivre que dans le conscient, c'est se simplifier jusqu'à l'absurde et réduire notre être, si riche de possibilités et d'avertissements voilés, à une série d'actes jamais compris. (30)

The conscious life of wakefulness is for Tarchetti only part of existence and beyond it lies the absolute life which takes over, for example, when one is asleep:

Noi forse, in un ordine diverso di cose, partecipiamo a fatti, ad affetti, ad idee di cui non possiamo conservare la coscienza nella veglia; viviamo in altro mondo e tra altri esseri che ogni giorno abbandoniamo, che rivediamo ogni giorno. Ogni sera si muore di una vita, ogni notte si rinasce d'un'altra. Ma ciò che avviene di queste esistenze parziali, avviene forse anche di quell'esistenza intera e più definita che le comprende. (31)

The introduction, from which the extract above is taken, establishes the relationship between the tale that is to follow and the then current interest in spiritism. At the same time it prepares the reader by settling him into the right frame of mind for the text. Despite the change in title, the story remains firmly aligned to the tone of the original and through his introduction the author makes a bid for the reader's fearful attraction to the irrational, unreasonable, dark side of life; mistero/terrore/strane/paurose. Only a small part of the explicatory framework is taken up with announcing the discourse that is to follow, but on the occasions it does refer forward, its indications of the content also warn the reader that their accustomed expectations of a narrative are to be turned on their head. As for example:

- Incominciato in quell'età in cui la mente è suscettibile delle allucinazioni più strane e più paurose; continuato, interrotto e ripreso dopo un intervallo di quasi venti anni, circondato di tutte le parvenze dei sogni, compiuto - se così si può dire d'una cosa che non ebbe principio evidente... (32)

Most of this section is concerned with dramatizing uncertainty. The writing is densely hyperbolic and self-referential. Nouns are saturated with significance: the past is "l'abisso che ha inghiottito il passato", traditions are "piene di superstizioni e di tenebre", an event is "pieno di mistero e di terrore" and then reappears as an "avvenimento .
imperscrutabile" which in its turn is described as "un enigma insolubile". (Here the adjective is of course otiose, for were the mystery capable of being resolved it would not be an enigma; it adds nothing to what it describes, the "avvenimento imperscrutabile", which it paraphrases;

and finally within the terms of the introduction it is not true, for the narrator has an explanation for what happened to him). The impenetrability of the event(s) is matched by the circumlocutions of the writing, e.g. of the event itself the narrator says "non sarà possibile a molti rintracciare il filo di un fatto, o desumere una conseguenza, o trovare una ragione qualunque" and soon afterwards the event is again variously described "come un enigma insolubile, come l'ombra di un fatto, come una rivelazione incompleta...".

The tale that follows however is highly structured and the schematization of its frame is in marked contrast with the proliferation of signs that it carries within it. This means that although contextually it breaks with the unities of time, place and character, formally the text continues to respect them and the rigid structure identifies and re-assembles these dispersive categories. The impossibilities that co-exist in the space of the first dream re-enter the sphere of the rational in the subsequent dream when the lady of the castle explains the events to the protagonist. Although at the close, the reader is informed that what he has read comes from the private papers of the protagonist and author of the account, the events are organized and shaped so as to refer outwards to an audience unfamiliar with any of the details. Between the introduction (referred to above) and the story itself which opens in a traditional story-telling mode ("Una sera - lo ricordo come fosse ieri - eravamo riuniti") stands a preliminary exposition of the circumstances surrounding the events that are to follow; where the opening established the pitch and theme, this second introduction sets the scene; "Nel 1830 io aveva quindici anni, e conviveva colla famiglia in una grossa borgata del Tirolo." (33) The tale itself is made up of six segments. The two worlds of "Le leggende del castello nero", that experienced in the life of sleep and that experienced in the waking life, are worked through very

differently, with the enclosed space of the dreams, the Gothic enclosure, marked off typographically from the real world. There is a temporal relationship however. If one takes story-time to refer to a linear succession of events, most of the story occurs over a period of forty-eight hours, in which each of the successive nights, "In quella sera... Nella notte seguente...", is disrupted by a dream. The first dream is a flashback to an event that occurred some centuries before the present narrative opens, the second dream is an anticipation but it creates suspense by giving nothing away until the events it foreshadows are described in the last section. In between there is an ellision of nineteen years. The text carries a number of time-clues which the reader would find difficult to overlook. In the 'real' world, which is rich in empirical and sociological information for the reader to process, there is no gap between signifier and signified, things are what they seem and mean what they say, while in the dream world the steady recourse to the oxymoron means that assumptions are violated, nothing can be synthesized by the reader. The problem is that as long as one has two registers standing alongside each other, the one realistic and the other fantastic, the one does not impinge on the principles of the other. Where the fantastic should problematize what appears unproblematic, "Le leggende del castello nero" does not enter into this dialectic, but structures the fantastic and the real in such a way that they exist alongside each other. In fact although the three unities no longer apply, and indeed that most cherished of unities, unity of character, is under direct attack, this division into narrative blocks results in a schematic, conservative structure.

It is within the dreams themselves that the compendium of the fantastic that Mariani refers to comes into play. The 'additional space' of the fantastic is often narrowed down to an area or enclosure where the

fantastic has become the norm. This is exactly what happens here for the topography of psychic terror which is presented through the dream is isolated from the protagonist's lived life. It is a medieval landscape, the language as well as its scenery draws the reader's attention to this leap in time: ("Le sue torri munite di balestriere erano gremite di soldati, le porte dei ponti calate, le altane stipate d'uomini e di arnesi da difesa..." (34). Within this landscape the dream is structured around two incidents. The first, the meeting with the old man, owes its effect to its oxymoronic structure, the antinomies cut across the accepted definitions of what constitutes and distinguishes life and death;

... sui gradini di un monumento mortuario sedeva un uomo che ne era uscito allora; egli era morto e tuttavia viveva; presentava un assieme di cose impossibile a dirsi, l'accoppiamento della morte e della vita, la rigidità, il nulla dell'una temperata dalla sensitività, dall'essenza dell'altra.
(35)

The nail he has driven through his eyes suggests a fear of blindness which Freud would argue is often a substitute for the fear of castration (36), but the figure also possesses the symbolic compensations that can accompany blindness in that he is all-seeing and all-knowing. The oxymoron, whose violation of realist principles allows it to create an impossible synthesis, is both a common figure of speech in the fantastic and a development of the scapigliato perception of the duality inherent in life which is epitomised in Arrigo Boito's poem "Dualismo" (37). Where the first figure in the dream is associated with death, similarly the second occupies a central place in the fantastic's repertoire, namely the instability of matter or metemorphosis:

Le sue forme piene e delicate che sentiva fremere sotto la mia mano, si appianarono, rientrarono in sè, sparirono; e sotto le mie dita incespicate tra le pieghe che s'erano formate a un tratto nel suo abito, sentii sporgere qua e là l'ossatura di uno scheletro... (38)

This is an image which cuts across Tarchetti's writing and it can be

broken down into two components: there is the disintegration of the body, the terrible but natural decomposition that death works on the body (we see it in a macabre vein at the end of Paolina) and then there is the association with transgression. For the lady of the castle and later for Fosca, it is desire that keeps them alive; once the transgressive desire has been realized, they die. Attention has not been drawn to the similarity that exists between the lady of the castle in Tarchetti's tale and Frankenstein's dream of Elizabeth " - my more than sister - " in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818):

Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of her flannel. (39)

But Bonifazi does use the episode in the second dream in which the blind man gives the protagonist a blood-soaked handkerchief to support his thesis that the lady of the castle is the protagonist's mother and he draws attention to Giorgio's comment on his mother in Fosca: "Non ho mai potuto ricordarmi bene di mia madre che perdetti fanciullo, se non baciando un fazzoletto che mi è rimasto di lei."

So the enclosed space of dreams becomes the site for the free play of social and sexual transgressions, both in terms of the literary constraints of realism and the psychological constraints of the conscious. The main story-line also has pointers as to the nature of the taboos aired in the dreams. There is a recurrent antithesis structured into the tale around the concept of the journey which represents life ("il viaggio doloroso della vita") and the dangerous unknown (the protagonist is killed as he makes a journey) and the sedentary existence of the home and the familiar. But the boundaries between the two are crossed, the unfamiliar disrupts the familiar, (the unheimlich moves into the Heimlich), when the

manuscript is literally hurled over the wall into the grounds of the house while the family is listening to the uncle's tales of past journeys. The manuscript is unreadable, like the unconscious, censored for protagonist and reader alike and it is only when he is beyond the home that the protagonist is able to read, in the eyes of the blind man, what is to be done. When the story opens the protagonist is fifteen and on the threshold of the manhood he will reach along with the lady in the castle in the second dream. There is an inheritance too which will be his upon the death of his elders, uncle and father. Bonifazi develops his interpretation of the lady as the protagonist's mother to present the following socio-psychological reading:

Questo schema archetipico della perdita della Madre a causa del divieto del Padre, che ha caratteristiche tutte particolari nel racconto fantastico e una simbologia e ragioni personali nel racconto di Tarchetti (...) è portato qui su di un'opposizione dell'Io travolto da una paternità non compensatrice, una paternità rifiutata insieme con tutto l'elemento maschile della società, che costringe a una eterna orfanità il soggetto, non sostituisce il suo desiderio, la sua nostalgia, e lascia libero sfogo a un impulso colpevole di autodistruzione (in cui è implicita la distruzione stessa della società falsa dei padri, quella voluta non solo da Tarchetti, ma tutti gli scapigliati in forme e simboli analoghi, anche se la loro genesi personale e l'elaborazione artistica sono in ciascuno diverse e particolari.) (40)

This approach finds a theoretical endorsement in Freud's Totem and taboo which suggests that at some stage fraternal groups banded together to murder and devour the father who had retained the right to keep for himself the women. It is also very close in sentiment to the Scapigliatura's own perception of its position, from Praga's "Preludio", "Noi siamo i figli dei padri ammalati"; (41) to Tarchetti's denunciation not only of society but also of civilisation, "L'umanità è malata, l'uomo individuo è malato, soffrono; una febbre ardente e consuntiva si trasmette di padre in figlio,..." (42)

Although "Le leggende del castello nero" is a very different story

in all its aspects from the one we shall turn our attention to next, the underlying structure is the same; a mysterious delitto which has occurred at an unspecified time preceeding the story, a relationship which revolves around censorship and transgression between an older and younger man who are linked by blood-ties, and a woman whom the younger man desires.

5.4 "I fatali"

Where "Le leggende del castello nero" was assembled from the assorted bones that Tarchetti picked up in his reading in the genre, "I fatali" owes its skeleton to the one short story, Gautier's "Jettatura" omitting the violent duel which dominates the French story. (43) By choosing as his subject the evil eye, that is to say the malignant influence that wittingly or unwittingly can be exercised by one person over others, Tarchetti enters into the mainstream of the literature of the fantastic and, as the introduction testifies, into that curious enclave of nineteenth century culture which sought to bond the supernatural with the scientific. To judge by the publications of the day, both specialist books and periodicals of a general interest (44), while Tarchetti was technically an innovator in this field, he was working over familiar terrain as far as his readership was concerned. His thesis, which precedes the telling of the tale, reminds his readers of the lie of the land. His method of adopting the linguistic register and the empirical procedural methodology of the sciences, only to appropriate them to the spiritualist cause, would have been familiar currency for his contemporary readers. Indeed he has enough confidence in the cultural acceptability of the register that he is using to allow him to draw attention to the part language plays in structuring ideology:

Molti credono schermirsene [i.e. that there are people who can exercise an evil influence over others] asserendo per l'appunto non esser ella che una superstizione, e non s'avvedono che fanno così una semplice questione di parole. (45)

His attitude stems from the position held by most of the anti-establishment writers of his day and which essentially chooses to identify with science when it operates as a revolutionary force pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, but rejects it when it plays a reductionist role in limiting and defining the confines of experience. Umberto Bosco sees this structure as an anticipation of the naturalist movement (46) but it should be noted that, apart from the opening and closing sentences, Tarchetti makes no attempt to conceal the partisan nature of his argument; in the second sentence, for example ("È una verità di cui siamo testimoni ogni giorno, ma che alla nostra ragione freddamente positiva, avvezza a non accettare che i fatti i quali cadono sotto il dominio dei nostri sensi, ripugna sempre di ammettere") the meaning is echoed in the condemnatory use of freddamente. As for the opening and closing sentences, they flatter the reader by suggesting that the decision-making is his, that the author will not assume to decide on his behalf. This initial explicating frame also performs an important function with regard to the narrative that follows in that it gives the reader an entry into the text. By expounding on a general theory that will 'account' for what is going to happen, the reader is educated into how he should read, and therefore make sense of, the story. This is particularly important for the first section of "I fatali" where the story follows no single event, but a sequence of strange coincidences and mysterious connections related to an unspecified, undefined crime. The fantastic depends to some extent on the reader's desire to make connections, close the gaps, and here, even a committed non-believer of the phenomenon, will suspend disbelief as his reading reconstructs the text. Gerald Prince has noted that the basis of any story is that it

'... must have at least two events which not only occur at different times but also are causally related" (47). Taking it a step further, Seymour Chatman's point on the mechanism by which events interconnect to form a narrative, is particularly pertinent to "I fatali":

Improbable actions are permissible as long as they are accounted for or 'motivated' in some way... No matter how ludicrous or arbitrary the explanation itself, the fact that it was proffered was enough to satisfy the need for decorous plausibility. (48)

The problematics of perception, vision and knowledge are part of the preoccupations of much Romantic and post-Romantic thought, and like so much literature of the fantastic, the problem of vision is crucial to "I fatali". In a culture which equates the real with the visible, the unreal becomes that which is invisible, and Tarchetti in his introduction establishes the concept of sight as being on an axis with belief; to see is to believe:

Gli uomini hanno adottato un sistema facile e logico in fatto di convenzioni; ammettono ciò che vedono, negano ciò che non vedono. (49)

Conversely we are later told that to reject the truth is an act of blindness:

... ma parmi cecità il negare cosa che la maggior parte degli uomini ha ammesso, il negare perchè non si comprende. (50)

While the second part of the story is structured around the protagonist's "evil eye", the first section depends on the narrator's ability to see.

The references to sight and seeing are many and insistent - vedere/osservare/guardare/parere/contemplare/sembrare/spiare/manifestare/spettacolo/specchio/occhi/sguardo/spettatori...

In the centre of it stands the narrator:

Il narratore viene collocato in un mondo in cui il vedere, la vista, gli sguardi, le apparenze, il visibile e l'invisibile, la mimica e i gesti, la luce e l'oscurità in tutte le gradazioni possibili sembrarono essere gli elementi privilegiati del vivere e del comunicare. (51)

The Milanese carnival of 1866, the point at which the story proper opens, offers with its reality-effect, a recognizably familiar setting to counter-act the strangeness of what follows. At the same time carnivals themselves, like the fantastic, turn life inside out, violate social proprieties and disrupt social order. In his first novel Paolina the heroine's funeral takes place at carnival-time and the juxtaposition of the two events allows for an elaboration on the pathos of the moment as well as the narrator's thoughts on the symbolic importance of carnivals. Bakhtin in his study of Dostoevsky's poetics argues that writers of the fantastic are direct descendents of a traditional literary genre, the menippea:

Characteristics of the menippea are violations of the generally accepted, ordinary course of events and of the established norms of behaviour and etiquette, including the verbal... Scandals and eccentricities destroy the epical and tragical integrity of the world, they form a breach in the stable, normal course of human affairs and events and free human behaviour from predetermining norms and motivations. (52)

He links this traditional form of fantastic art with the carnival, a ritualized break with the rules regulating daily-life. By 1866 Tarchetti clearly feels that the carnival no longer performs this function ("Queste feste non sono più che una mistificazione"), but that one pleasure and therefore one transgressive gesture remains:

...e si inebbriavano del piacere di guardarsi l'un l'altro nel bianco degli occhi - ciò che costituisce l'unico, ma ineffabile divertimento di questo celebre carnevale. (53)

The opening scene is depicted by a narrator who occupies the position he will maintain throughout the narration of one who is present as observer, not participant. The reader is utterly dependent on him for his eye-witness account. It is he who observes and notes what others do not see, it is he who connects what others perceive as isolated incidents. In other words he is the story-teller. He watches the mysterious young man

and the effect he has on the surrounding crowd:

Si sarebbe detto che da quel giovine emanasse un fluido ripulsivo, una virtù misteriosa atta ad allontanare da lui tutto ciò che lo circondava. (54)

Where others are repelled by the stranger sensing that he is potentially dangerous, the narrator is so attracted to him that he follows him into a nearby bar.

Ci sedemmo di faccia, io a guardarlo, egli a leggere... I suoi occhi erano fissi sulle colonne di quel diario, ma sembravano guardare di dentro piuttostochè di fuori, parevano aver concentrata tutta la loro virtù visiva in sè medesimi... (55)

(The inward gaze was often ascribed to subjects who were mesmerized and/or sleepwalking.) Later that evening when the narrator sees looks exchanged between the young stranger and a girl he confesses that his own curiosity is like that of an intruder and "un pitocco che assista ad un banchetto". He continues:

Mi sono cacciato spesso di notte sotto i viali pubblici, sotto i boschetti di tigli, appositamente per incontrarvi qualche coppia d'innamorati. (56)

So what appear to be attributes fitting for the scapigliato type and for the role of narrator within the tale, that is standing outside social life as a keen observer but a reluctant participant - becomes an admission of voyeurism and paralysis. As the story develops so one becomes aware of the narrator's reluctance to experience life directly and his dependence on other people's experience for his emotional sustenance. Signs of difference rest in his inability to see as others do, "Io non aveva posto occhio nè sulla dote, nè sulla bellezza di Silvia", which he perceives as humiliating: "Questa coscienza della mia inferiorità..."; "e poi mi sono sempre sentito sì meschino dinanzi ad un uomo positivo..." (57). The absence of desire for the beautiful Silvia is replaced with desire for the young stranger who the narrator perceives as having an ambivalent sexuality, "tutta la sua persona aveva qualche cosa di femminile..." "Egli aveva quella specie di bellezza che hanno le donne",

" - bello di una beltà più femmine che maschia". The adjectives too used to describe the stranger are feminine: "Patito/biondo/bellissimo/occhi grandi ed azzurri...". Intimations of sexual ambivalence and transgressive desire can easily 'pass' in the fantastic, a genre which disperses familiar forms of categorisation. Moving to the narrative itself, the weight of the evidence falls on this one ambiguous, neurotic personality and yet it does not impede him from performing his textual role as observer and narrator satisfactorily. For the duration of the story he is believed.

Tarchetti does of course use other devices to obtain the reader's consent. We have looked at the explanatory framework and then the place and date given at the beginning of the story to confer a pure reality effect. This is sustained through the story. Events are dated in relationship to each other, the visit to the theatre is "quella sera stessa", the discussion in the bar is "otto giorni dopo...", etc. while the background itself is given additional solidity through the arbitrary inclusion of superfluous information (we are told not only what is being performed at the Scala that evening but also the programme for the preceding evening). These allusions to reality, verifiable details too, carry with them an illusion of truth which then spills over into the realm of the fantastic:

Fantastic narratives confound elements of both the marvellous and the mimetic. They assert that what they are telling is real - relying upon all the conventions of realistic fiction to do so - and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing what - within those terms - is manifestly unreal. (58)

It has been observed by both Bonifazi and Cesarini that these realist moments are drawn with great efficacy in "I fatali". The description of the suburb of Milan (59) (strongly influenced by the early pages of Dickens' novel Hard Times) is much improved on similar attempts made

in his earlier, social novel Paolina. This must in part be due to the fact that they operate as description without moral or symbolic weighting. So as the story is built around a series of apparently disconnected incidents, some of them minor, which the other characters experience in a fragmented form but which the narrator is able to piece together because of his ability to perceive (and be at the right place at the right time), to give this aspect of the story conviction anything irrelevant is obviously excluded, the coincidental aspects of the story are minimized and time is related to the events themselves.

The story falls into two sections. Using Todorov's rule that the fantastic depends on the inscription of hesitation in the text, only the first section of "I fatali" belongs, strictly speaking, to the genre, where the reader's hesitation is carried by the narrator. The direction adopted in the introduction is reinforced in this early section at a textual level with repeated use of the hermeneutic code. The text slides from supposition to assertion. Returning to the carnival, after a description of how the crowds instinctively form a gap around the mysterious stranger, the reader's uncertainty as to how to read this occurrence is carried through the narrative voice. What follows is first the pragmatic voice - "Non era nulla in ciò di veramente straordinario" - followed by hesitation, "pure...", and concluded by a tentative hypothesis in which within the frame of the conditional the way to read the incident is implanted: "Si sarebbe detto che da quel giovine emanasse un fluido ripulsivo...". Exactly the same technique is adopted after the girl is carried out in a faint at the Scala: first the pragmatism - "Tutto ciò che era accaduto non poteva essere stato che un capriccio di caso" - followed by a moment of qualification, "pure era la seconda volta nel termine di poche ore", followed this

time by an assertive conclusion: "Era evidente esservi in lui qualche cosa di inesplicabile e di fatale". The section (60) concludes with a marshalling of evidence, sufficient to keep the reader's consent, so that the narrator can draw attention to his own unique role in what he has outlined. Where the penultimate paragraph is structured around the absence of everybody else, "Nessuno conosceva... nessuno aveva forse rimarcata la circostanza singolare...", the last paragraph is structured around the narrator's presence and perception; there are four references to seeing before he sums up his understanding of what has happened, "non mi pareva possibile che una pura combinazione avesse dato luogo a questa serie di avvenimenti".

The episode in the bar that follows bridges the two sections. (61) It introduces the "conte di Sagrezwitch" but it also reinforces the correct reading before the second part (whose structure assumes that readers have accepted the interpretation offered to connect earlier isolated events) begins. The real reader's scepticism is entrusted to an audience of disbelievers within the text who initially mock an account of the very events that were presented to the reader: "Inutile dire che si rise di me e che non mi volle prestar fede". (62) A second narrator is now entrusted with the story of the count's past, arguing that where words fail, seeing persuades:

- e desidererei che lo vedeste. Non so dirvi il motivo di questo desiderio, pure mi sembra che al solo vederlo potreste comprendere il perchè di tante cose che io non posso spiegarvi; mi pare che non potreste più dubitare della verità della mia asserzione. - (63)

When this happens, our response is programmed by the positive reaction of the textual audience.

The last part of "I fatali" (64) is much closer to a mimetic novel with its unilinear development carrying us forward from one

episode to the next and the rules of causality firmly in the saddle. The gap between signifiers and signified has closed and the question now becomes one of how the story is going to resolve itself. The story juxtaposes the domestic with the satanic. One of the strangers, the "conte di Sagrezwitch", was named in the bar and we now learn that the other is the "barone di Saternez". Names are deictic and these outlandish, Bohemian names with their aristocratic titles belong to an ethnic and social code that contrasts with the familiar intimacy of a Davide or a Sylvia. They declare that their bearers belong to a different narrative genre (Hoffmann in a similar vein had a propensity for Italian names such as Coppelius and Coppola) and they also intimate the beyond; Sagrezwitch and Saternez (Satana, satanica). When we begin this section we know that the two men are "i fatali" of the title, but hermeneutic gaps are left in the text, - we never know what the relationship between the two men is but we are encouraged to speculate: "Ora quali erano i legami che congiungevano quello due persone e quei due nomi?" (65). Bonifazi in line with his reading of "Le leggende del castello nero" reads this story in terms of a battle between the forces of good and evil, life and death. He assumes the relationship between the two strangers is that between father and son and of the former says:

Egli è simbolo di un male misterioso dell'animo, un istinto maligno come forza oscura distruttiva e autodistruttiva, ancorato biologicamente in una eredità predestinata, ma collegato socialmente all'opposizione, nascosta al di sotto della rivolta politica scapigliata e della sua cultura. (66)

Cesarini does not believe that there is sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that they are father and son, but the text does appear to offer several clues for the reader to collate. We are told that the younger man has lost his family and yet there is no mention of his father, "Gli esseri che più mi amavano avevano incominciato a soccombere;

i miei fratelli, le mie sorelle, mia madre erano morti"; there is the reference to a long-standing relationship between the two men: "Quell' uomo ed io ci conoscevamo da tempo... Tra me e lui corrono dei rapporti che le natura ed il caso hanno posto..."; and finally there is the disparity in age which suggests at the least a symbolic Father. While the mysterious colpa or delitto remains an unspecified enigma external to the story, the transgressive desire around which the second part of the story is organized is realized. The young man goes against the interdiction of the Father and desire is satisfied. His death in the duel after the wedding comes too late.

- La morte - se essa deve colpirmi non ha per me più nulla di amaro e di increpabile: io ho realizzata l'estrema delle mie aspirazioni, e sorrido dell'impotenza di coloro che avrebbero voluto impedirlo...

... queste nozze non sono più che un pretesto dinanzi alla società, che una giustificazione di ciò che l'amore ha già dato spontaneamente. Sylvia fu mia! (67)

Both these stories are structured around prohibition by an older man and transgression by a younger man. Similarly once the sexual desire is realized death follows; it is desire that sustains the lady of the castle in "Le leggende del castello nero", the young count in "I fatali" and the protagonist herself in Fosca, Tarchetti's next novel, where again we see the interdiction of an older male. A further transgressive aspect of "I fatali" which we shall return to in Fosca is the question of sexual identity. This forms the nucleus of the third of the fantastic tales, "Uno spirito in un lampone".

5.5 "Uno spirito in un lampone"

This tale like its source, Erckman-Chatrion's "Le bourgmestre en bouteille", illustrates the theory that one soul is capable of migrating into another be it animal or vegetable. It has been read and interpreted in different ways. Mariani considers Tarchetti's careful analysis of the precise physical location of the doubling of the baron's personality

to be a

... dimostrazione non dubbia di quel positivismo scientifico al quale egli s'era decisamente accostato e che lo spingeva a tradurre in termini di analisi medica le conseguenze di quello sdoppiamento della personalità. (68)

Pancrazi sees its penetration of the human psyche to be Freudian avant la lettre (69) while Ghidetti sees it as a parody of the practice and conventions of metempsychosis; the incident in which the baron vomits the remains of undigested spirit with the help of a hefty emetic for example could be read as a parody of those theories which perceive the psyche as an appendage of the stomach. Such a diversity of readings suggests that the different elements within the story do not produce a coherent frame of reference so that no two readers realize the text in the same way.

One of the most telling, and verifiable, aspects of Tarchetti's story is that where in the original Hippel drinks wine made from grapes which were originally cultivated on the Bürgermeister's grave, Tarchetti changes the sex of the corpse so that the male protagonist assumes the characteristics of the opposite sex. Moreover although one is a baron and the other a servant the potential which opens up with the dichotomy in class and wealth is not explored. The year is 1854 and the location is Calabria but there is a complete lack of social commentary, it is as if the enclave of the fantastic has grown to encompass the entire duration and location of the story. An additional element in the story is the murder and its detection, although the one happens before the story begins and the readers know who is held to be responsible. In a feudal society such as the one, despite the date, depicted here justice would have been dispensed by the baron, which is exactly what he is shown doing in a different manner but with the same results.

So the story concentrates on the subversive possibilities opened up by metempsychosis. The doubling of the baron's personality means that

the psyche develops feminine attributes along with the masculine and his body too slowly acquires a more ambiguous shape. This sexual duality, which leads him also to experience desire for the male sex, gives way to a synthesis whereby he finds in himself the desired other. It is as though he had stepped back through time and the mirror to that early period of primary narcissism and undifferentiated self-love:

... e siccome erano rimembranze di amore, egli comprese in quel momento che cosa fosse la grande unità, l'immensa complessività dell'amore, il quale essendo nelle leggi inesorabili della vita un sentimento diviso fra due, non può essere compreso da ciascuno che per metà. Era la fusione piena e completa di due spiriti,... (70)

Wrapped in an alibi called metempsychosis, this story speaks of a destabilized and non-unified self in which even the nature of sexual identity is put into question and as such it challenges the common perception of character as a contained, rational self formed from a constant and recognizable set of traits.

Chapter 6.

I.U. Tarchetti: Fosca. The instability of character.

6.1 A problematical novel

Dall'incontro di questi due prodotti malsani di una delle esuberanze patologiche della civiltà, il dramma doveva scaturire naturalmente, dramma o farsa, come dall'urto di due correnti elettriche. Giorgio effeminato, effeminato nel senso moderno ed elegante, buon spadaccino all'occorrenza, nel quarto d'ora, e tale da giuocare noncurantemente la vita per un capriccio sino a farne una passione, e solito ad esagerare l'idea della passione sino a renderla realmente irresistibile; fiacco per non aver mai combattuto sè stesso. - Quell'altra con tutti gli impeti bruschi e violenti della passione inferma, vagabonda ed astratta, col cuore di ghiaccio e l'immaginazione ardente. Egli con tutte le suscettibilità, con tutte le delicatezze, con tutte le debolezze muliebri; ella con tutte le veemenze, tutte le energie, tutti i dispotismi virili. (1)

This passage could be read as a summary of Tarchetti's last novel Fosca, published in 1869 (by a happy coincidence even the name Giorgio is the same), but of course it is not. It is the voice of Verga's narrator in his novella "Tigre reale", published in 1872, summarizing another story with other protagonists. At this level of organisation and classification of plot and character, the two stories are inter-changeable, but what is very different is their presentation. In the space of just three years the referents have changed; Tarchetti's magnetism has undergone electrification, effeminacy can be referred to as a recognizable trait and positivism has consolidated its position. By employing a narrative voice that is not implicated in the events Verga's character-types can be easily typified as exempla of the degeneration that sets in when a society declines away from its original natural status towards one of advanced civilisation. Phenomena are related, laws of causality unquestioned and degeneracy accepted. Above all character is knowable, it is a closed construct which can, without any expression of doubt or hesitation, be contextualized, summarised and handed over to the reader. Tarchetti's too are character-types, but as the narrative is entrusted

to them (although it is the narrator-protagonist who has the dominant voice, Fosca's autobiography is included and even some of Clara's letters, as well as 'inadvertent' self-revelation through speech and action), they strain away from cultural typology in their effort to express their individuality. Finally Verga's last sentence in the passage wraps up the point he wants to make and concludes mine. The assemblage of his and her character traits suggest the problem which is then identified in the last sentence, they have the wrong characteristics for their respective sexes. With this the paragraph (and chapter) can end, for the closing sentence completes both the protagonists and the description, which opened with the reference to "questi due prodotti malsani". Exactly the same sex-gender reversal happens in Fosca (the theme, fear or attraction of the sexually aggressive female returns as a common obsession in the latter part of the nineteenth century) but it is never spoken, never directly alluded to. We know this reversal happens because the plot's development runs counter to the cultural assumptions made about a relationship between a man and a woman and because language is imbued with sexual difference, so that when we read that Giorgio in his relationship with Fosca has become "semplice, buono ed affettuoso" we read too the dislocation that exists between the adjectives and their subject's sex. But no conclusive statement is made. It is the inconclusive, problematical approach to the concept of character off the page and character-writing on the page that seems to me to be of particular interest in Tarchetti's last novel.

I have already pointed to the tendency to read Tarchetti's writings as a succession of experiments with different genres. This produces a passive, non-dialectical view of genre itself, as though it were the stand on which the individual author can unpack and display his goods. Consequently much of the debate around Fosca has centred on

the evidence it produces of its author's interest in scientific positivism and its literary equivalent, naturalism. An early critic, Croce, said of Fosca that,

... il racconto stesso potrebbe ben essere la relazione che un uomo intelligente fa a un medico, dei sintomi e delle fasi della propria e altrui infermità. (2)

and Mariani is in broad agreement with this point:

Lentamente poi il gusto del fantastico si dissolverà nella tematica della malattia scientificamente diagnosticata, nell'analisi del cuore (la narrativa del cuore così cara alle sue meditazioni sul romanzo) studiato nel più stretti rapporti con il male fisico (il delirio di Fosca), della follia divorante che s'impadronisce dell'anima e del corpo scattando da un preciso dato patologico (Storia di una gamba). (3)

Portinari's reading, on the other hand, identifies a confusion of registers in Tarchetti's work in general, before looking at the case of Fosca in particular,

... c'è l'acquisto di ciò ch'era stato anomalo e abnorme soprannaturalmente e che la scienza restituisce come caso patologico, razionalizzabile quindi. In Fosca il gioco è scopertissimo: si tratta di un caso dichiarato di isteria, il tema più appariscente del romanzo (ma anche Lorenzo Alviati moriva in manicomio per esempio). Il difetto è che all'anomalo psichico Tarchetti ci arriva con strumenti o inadeguati o vecchi, che non sono nè la psichiatria nè la psicologia nè il simbolismo - nè Gall nè Rimbaud -, ma ci arriva con un compromesso fantastico. E ciò si comprende meglio osservando soprattutto il suo compiacimento per l'orrido - che è il suo limite e che limiterà il suo stile -, per la "cieca fatalità" che muove e dirige le azioni degli uomini (sono le ultime parole del romanzo). (4)

Where Croce and Mariani see in Fosca evidence of a unilinear movement towards a naturalistic presentation of character, Portinari argues that in the novel different genres with their respective codes conflict with each other without producing a satisfactory synthesis. I suggest that rather than read Fosca as a novel which offers the evidence that either Tarchetti is on the right road for naturalism or alternatively that he is lost in the thickets alongside the way, it pays to see the novel as an experiment in which the author is trying out different routes, ones

which run parallel to each other, not new roads built on the foundations of the old.

If we adopt Todorov's blunt but useful distinction between plot-centered narratives and character-centered narratives, Fosca clearly belongs to the second category. Plot here is product of character, it is slight, sufficient to make a novel of a narrative, and simple. The setting enjoys an architectonic starkness with its alternating contrasts of light and dark, spring and autumn, indoors and outdoors. This spareness and clarity is helpful to a reader in a text where character is a concept that slides around, unreliable, disestablished and under interrogation. Before discussing how the de-construction of character is effected outside the enclosure of the fantastic I shall begin by commenting on the incorporation of the structures of transgression within the novel.

6.2 A novel of transgression

Fosca is a reactionary novel at a contextual level. All potentially extraneous matter is rigorously excluded, so that although the setting is of army-life in a provincial town, the army is a pretext without past or context. There is no critique of the military, nor indeed does the reader know anything of the hero-protagonist's daily routine beyond meals and meetings with Fosca. So Tarchetti forgoes his voice as a social and political commentator of his age. At a deeper level too the novel conforms, for order is finally established over the desires and transgressions that threaten to subvert authority and the individual. Very little happens in the plot, which is polarised by the narrator-protagonist's sexual union with two different women, Clara and Fosca: in the first instance he desires while in the second he is

the object of desire. While both break the social code, the first case is made to appear pure and beautiful, the second polluting and monstrous. Although Clara is married, so that she is in fact committing adultery, the potential sinfulness of the act is minimized in several ways. At the time it is only referred to euphemistically:

La pietà l'aveva condotta all'amore; fu l'amore che
la condusse alla colpa.

In quei giorni si unirono le nostre vite. (5)

It is after the event, or in this case events, when their affair has come to an end that adultery is named, thereby throwing a new interpretation over what has gone before but in a way which flatters readers into disassociating (for that moment of reading) from such a base notion. The idea of transgression is only introduced because the narrator names it.

Ciò che noi consideriamo come la più gran colpa possibile
nella donna - l'adulterio - non è spesso che una rivendicazione
dei diritti più sacri che le ha dato la natura, e che la
società le ha conculcato. (6)

Their adulterous relationship abuses no rules of hospitality for it occurs outside the home, indeed away from the city, so that the countryside performs a double function both by adding to the reader's interpretation of Clara's character (7) and by locating the adultery in a place where social laws no longer hold. As Tony Tanner has pointed out, using Deuteronomy 22 as his reference,

The gate to the city becomes, among other things, that
necessary gap in the wall discriminating social from
non-social space, through which violators of the social
space can be excoriated into nonbeing.

The same absoluteness of law does not obtain in the
field, for although there is still voice, there is no
community. Thus the responsibility of the man and woman
becomes more problematical. (8)

Giorgio the narrator explains that he has included the episode with Clara to draw attention to the painful contrast he suffers in regard to his subsequent relationship with Fosca (9), but the construction of

opposites goes beyond character and emotion. While Clara and Giorgio take their pleasure during her husband's absence and where they are beyond the reach of city life, Fosca and Giorgio have sexual intercourse within the very house that he first entered as the colonel's guest and Fosca is under the colonel's care. It is his honour that Giorgio abuses, as the colonel points out,

- Signore, voi avete abusato bassamente della mia fiducia, siete venuto nella mia casa per disonorarla, mi avete reso ridicolo. (10)

By inviting the protagonist to eat at his lodgings instead of the officers' mess, the colonel is drawing him into his private life by way of the meal, which must count as the most symbolically weighted of all domestic arrangements ("Noi facciamo una piccola mensa in famiglia."). Giorgio describes his inclusion in the circle in familial terms, "... io era già quasi considerato nella sua casa come una persona di famiglia". (11) Later the colonel, an ordinary, decent man representative of his class and society feels that Giorgio has offended so deeply against this act of hospitality (even though at this stage sexual intercourse has not taken place), that he resorts to what he himself perceives as an illegal and ludicrous rival to re-establish order. "Abborro questi duelli ridicoli...". To return to Tanner's illuminating reading of the role of hospitality in his study of adultery and the novel:

The conventions and rules dictating or circumscribing the practice of "hospitality" (which etymologically contains within it both guest and host, but also, from the Latin hostis, a stranger and potentially an enemy) were of course absolutely crucial for tribes and city-states, since a mutual recognition of these rules and rituals was the key way of avoiding rupture both within the tribe or state and at its boundaries... It was a ritual of dealienation, in order to mitigate or eliminate the potential danger of the arrival of the unknown "other" within the boundaries or precincts of the tribal territory, the city walls, the hierarchically stable household. For this to be effective, both guest and host had to observe the rules meticulously, of course; any deviation could instantly revive the possibility of some kind of disruption of the previous order, or some terrible retribution or vengeance to be visited on the transgressor - or both. (12)

Because the transgression is committed not against Fosca's body but against the hospitality proffered by the colonel as head of the household, "quella terribile infermità" (transmitted by Fosca) seizes the narrator not as might be expected, on the night he sleeps with her but when he wounds the colonel in a duel. ⁽¹³⁾ Earlier in the narration Giorgio comments with a reference forward,

Se io ho dovuto tradire la nobile fiducia di quell'uomo, e compensarla più tardi d'ingratitude, il cielo mi è testimonia dell'inesorabile fatalità che mi ha trascinato a farlo. Egli sa che di tutte le amarezze che mi provennero da questo amore sciagurato, quella fu la più vera e la più profonda. (14)

This would explain the colonel's complete failure to see the way in which the relationship between Fosca and Giorgio was developing at a time when it was a conversation-piece for their circle of friends. The narrator himself is quite obsessive about the colonel's ignorance,

La sua fiducia non aveva limiti. Quella cecità provvidenziale che la natura ha dato ai mariti e agli amanti, era in lui sì piena... (15)

This can either be explained in terms of the colonel's temperament which is unlikely because he is one of the narrative's few functional characters or it can be seen as a reflection on the seriousness of the transgression Giorgio commits.

The settings of these two relationships offers therefore, not only a contributory reading to the characters of the two women, a structured series of antitheses headed by their 'proper' names Clara and Fosca, but it also unconsciously identifies the nature of the transgression as being a violation of a social code based on the reification and exchange-value of women. The order which is then re-established at the end of the novel is practical and worldly. According to this code that which goes undetected goes unpunished, so Clara finds a future for herself in caring for her husband and child, while the colonel,

Fosca now dead, exits into a 'real', historically located world which exists beyond the book, (he becomes an engineer working on the construction of the Suez canal). Only the narrator-protagonist remains within the world of the book to return to the detested "paese natale" (16), which he writes of in the beginning.

6.3 Text and context

Fosca is a novel which lends itself to a discussion about the question of character because, if we leave aside momentarily the construction of character within the text, the extra-textual sources are easily retrievable from biographical information, contemporary cultural influences and Tarchetti's own literary itinerary. Fosca herself is characterized by her appearance, her illness and her abnormal desire for total possession which is related, like her looks, to her ill-health. She remains in the tradition of the gothic and supernatural with which Tarchetti experimented in the Racconti fantastici (so much so that Sergio Rossi in his article on Poe's influence on Italian literature has argued that it is in the descriptions of Fosca herself that one finds the closest resemblance to some of Poe's women). Fosca's sexual desire would have been doubly transgressive for nineteenth-century readers, for women were supposedly objects of desire not the subjects (while the noun amore covers a multitude of sins in the novel, for it is used differently by each character, Fosca herself is consistent and clear in relating it to sexual desire), and it raises the taboo on sickness and sex particularly at a time when scientists were arguing the case for eugenics. In cultural terms, underpinning Fosca's desire is the vampire theme whose development and metamorphosis into the female has been traced by Mario Praz in The romantic agony. He draws attention to the fact that a particularly common feature of the femme fatale is

that like the praying mantis she kills the man she loves.

The following point must be emphasized: the function of the flame which attracts and burns is exercised in the first half of the century, by the Fatal Man (the Byronic hero), in the second half by the Fatal Woman; the moth destined for sacrifice is in the first case the woman, in the second the man. It is not simply a case of convention and literary fashion: literature, even in its most artificial forms, reflects to some extent aspects of contemporary life. It is curious to follow the parabola of the sexes during the nineteenth century: the obsession of the androgyne type towards the end of the century is a clear indication of a turbid confusion of function and ideal. The male, who at first tends towards sadism, inclines at the end of the century, towards masochism. (17)

But in terms of the literary evolution of a type Fosca also anticipates attributes which Decadents, such as D'Annunzio will later explore, one example being sterility. It in fact forms the climax of Fosca's own narrative, spoken in such a way as to make dramatically clear that it is her own physiological abnormality that killed her son, "mio figlio viveva, ma io non poteva diventar madre". Similarly many of D'Annunzio's women are ill, some like Ippolita in Trionfo della morte are sterile and the relationship between sexuality and fertility in which the latter becomes a justification for the former is true in a less overt form for Fosca as well. Giorgio (the male protagonists of the two novels again bear the same name), perceives his sexual relationship with the sterile Ippolita as a monstrosity: "L'inutilità del suo amore gli apparve come una trasgressione mostruosa alla suprema legge". (18) So Fosca herself is located very firmly within a tradition, those very features which assert her individuality within the text contribute towards her typicality in terms of the literary culture outside it.

Where Praz offers a psychological reading of the evolution of this literary type Tarchetti's novel opens the way to another interpretation. I am not thinking of Fosca's autobiography in which she relates her problems specifically to the limitations concomitant with

being born female but to the references to isolation and seclusion that recur throughout the text. They begin with Giorgio's description of his own withdrawal brought about by the need to recuperate from an unspecified illness, but which in its turn produces a disequilibrium of the psyche and deep depression.

Io mi vedeva isterilire, immiserire, deperire. Fosse effetto della malattia, fosse influenza di quel soggiorno triste ed uggioso, io mi era interamente e miseramente trasformato. Una malinconia profonda, una disperanza piena di gelo e di scetticismo si erano impadronite di me...

Ho pensato spesso, durante questi anni, a quei giorni pieni di desolazione e di sconforto, a quel lungo inverno di cinque mesi trascorso tra le pareti di poche stanze, senza vedere altro volto d'uomo che il mio. (19)

Fosca similarly lives an enclosed life: "Se io potessi dirti ora la vita che ho vissuto in questi quattro anni di isolamento tu ne saresti atterrito". (20) This overlap in the traits that characterize Fosca and Giorgio means that their parallel experience offers a chink of light on the depressive-hysterical state so frequently diagnosed in middle-class women of this period. The problem of the redundant female (redundant in the sense that having borne children, she has no further socio-economic role outside her ideological function as home-maker) is a common literary topos. In Fosca Clara has the same problem, she has nothing to do, although it is not presented like this until the give-away ending when because of a dramatic reversal in family fortunes she is dispatched to care for and possibly even provide for, her husband and son. (21) An early awareness that sexual promiscuity is a dangerous consequence of idleness is to be found in the very first book that Giorgio gives to Fosca. In Rousseau's La nouvelle Héloïse Madame de Wolmar's method to reduce the risk of liaisons "est d'occuper incessamment les uns et les autres; car leurs travaux sont si différents qu'il n'y a que l'oisiveté qui les rassemble." (22)

Fosca also falls into place in Tarchetti's own literary history

as part of his continuing, almost obsessive preoccupation with the nature of desire. Before embarking on his tales of the fantastic, Tarchetti wrote a trilogy of short stories, all concerning musicians, called Amore nell'arte (originally commissioned for the Palestra musicale, they had to take music as their theme) which explore the realm of desire, death and transgression. The main characteristic in all three "love-stories" is an over-riding resentment against the otherness of the loved one accompanied by a desire for total possession. In "Lorenzo Alviati" the protagonist of that name dies in a lunatic asylum after finding in himself the other, the object of his desire. Bouvard's desire in the second story results in an act of necrophilia, while in the third of the trilogy, "Riccardo Waitzen", the protagonist's former lover keeps her hold on him after her death and when he breaks a vow of fidelity by marrying another he dies before the marriage can be consummated. In Amore nell'arte the reader's attention is often drawn to the question of the irreconcilability of spirit and matter, the hindrance of the flesh to the union of souls (sexuality is referred to as "amore brutale", and feelings associated with it are "sazietà", "nausea" and "disgusto"). Women tend to look for physical satisfaction, men turn to the spiritual, but consumption, that most spiritual of illnesses, offers a solution to some at least of Tarchetti's heroines for it is a sign that marks them off from the healthy while it spiritualizes the physical. The one can develop at the expense of the other.

Di mano in mano che la sua malattia affievoliva la sua vitalità, prostrava le sue forze e le sue passioni, la sua anima acquistava una nuova potenza - di mano in mano che si restringevano i limiti della sua vita fisica, si dilatavano, si estendevano quelli della sua vita morale. Io l'amava forse perchè vedeva in lei sparire la donna e formarsi l'angelo... (23)

Fosca shares the same transgressive desire but her irreversible illness

reveals the skeleton that lies beneath the body, not the soul, and it leaves her desiring, not desired. Every aspect of the inroads that consumption makes on Tarchetti's other heroines is reversed in Fosca.

On the page Fosca is constituted out of a cluster of traits which connect both with the cultural topoi of the period and back through the evolution of Tarchetti's own literary itinerary. She also existed, or at least her proto-type did, off the page. Roman Ingarden has cautiously observed of the relationship between psychology, biography and the literary work that,

There is undoubtedly a very close tie between the creative process and the so-called author's personality and his work. It is probable that his work carries, shall we say, the footprints of its creator. (24)

I have no wish to sink those footprints in concrete, but only add (25) that shortly before writing Fosca Tarchetti had an affair with a sick, epileptic young woman from Parma called Angiolina (she survived Tarchetti by many years and continued to put flowers on his grave until she died - or so the story goes). Tarchetti was himself a dying man and judging by the correspondence that he has left, he was in pain, superstitious, and very frightened. Extracts from his correspondence come very close to passages in the novel and particularly relevant is this fear:

Ho una terribile superstizione; parmi che costei mi attiri verso la tomba: parmi di vedere la morte favolosa con la falce e colla clessidra che venga ad uccidermi, a soffocarmi fra le sue spire gelate. Quando le sue labbra toccano le mie, sento il germe della etisia insinuarsi per tutte le mie fibre. (26)

Because of the visibility of the autobiographical influence and because the narrative is cast in an autobiographical frame, there is a tendency to read Fosca as autobiography. Ghidetti, for example, whose reading of it is quite closely directed by the question of its relationship to the 'truth' says of it "... è necessario valutare soprattutto il

fortissimo e prevalente significato autobiografico", while of Giorgio, the protagonist he writes, "Giorgio infatti è proiezione autobiografica dello scrittore in contrasto con il destino avverso e con la società". But there are two separate aspects to the relationship between Fosca and autobiography. There is the extra-textual relationship between what happens in the pages of the novel and what happens in the author's life (whether in this regard it is more or less autobiographical than many other novels written in a different mode is another question) and then there is the literary question of the self-consciously autobiographical mode of narration which it adopts and which descends from the Romantic tradition that is the backbone of the narrator's reading. Resisting the sincerity of the narrator's voice for a moment, the superior strength of the culturally coded over empirical truth is evident from the moment the purchaser of Il Pungolo reads the first instalment of Fosca - in which an artist of Romantic sensibility writes:

Ove l'arte avesse trovato in me valore pari alla grandezza del soggetto, il racconto che mi accingeva a scrivere mi avrebbe forse procurato un successo clamoroso. Nondimeno me ne astenni. Gettare nel fango della pubblicità il segreto de' miei dolori, sacrificarlo alle vuote soddisfazioni della fama sarebbe stata debolezza indegna del mio passato. Io scrivo ora per me medesimo. (27)

It is the text's truth and not the circumstantial evidence that prevails, the reader must be willing to go along with the pretences of fiction.

6.4 The construction of character: Fosca through the doctor's eyes

The characters of the novel then become the meeting-ground for this medley of influences, but these extra-textual sources do not of themselves contribute to our understanding of how character is then constructed within the pages of the novel to become something other than an assembly of already manufactured parts. It has been pointed out that in the nineteenth-century novel the much-lauded richness of characterisation seldom subverts the coherent wholeness of personality.

Psychological complexity is tolerated as long as it doesn't threaten an ideology of the self as a fundamentally intelligible structure unaffected by a history of fragmented, discontinuous desires. (28)

Cixous sees this sense of the unified self as being a purely ideological construct which is both repressive and reductive in its implications.

By definition, a "character", preconceived or created by an author, is to be figured out, understood, read:... In this system, the "character" represents a set of externals. He has referents (real causes that are anterior and exterior to the text: he could be the portrait of a real person) to which he alludes, while he fixes his essential traits so as to preserve them in the book. He is therefore the guarantor of the transmission of sense and of the "true", at once porte-parole, emissary, and idol, indubitably human, at least partially universalizable, and homogeneous.

The ideology underlying this fetishization of "character" is that of an "I" who is a whole subject (that of the "character" as well as that of the author), conscious, knowable; (29)

We have seen how Tarchetti used the fantastic to challenge the concept of the unity of character. In Storia di una gamba he returns to the question in another vein (e.g. what happens to one's sense of integrity of self when one loses a limb, which still, in its absence, can be felt and experienced). In Fosca he continues in his pursuit of "character" and the understanding of it as something given, complete. It has passed unobserved that the concept of carattere is under constant

interrogation in the novel, that it is a struggle to name which defeats the narrator as he tries to pin down Fosca.

Per quanto mi arrovellassi non poteva comprendere la natura di quel carattere, non riusciva a metterlo bene in luce. Egli è che io non ho potuto comprender nulla del carattere di quella donna. Non riesco a spiegarmi la sua condotta, mi trovo di fronte a lei come di fronte ad un mito.

Era ben certo che in fondo a tutto ciò vi era un carattere, ma si poteva meglio indovinarlo che dirlo. (30)

When Fosca comes to describe her husband she too draws the reader's attention, rather enigmatically, to the concept of carattere :

È assai difficile che io possa farti una pittura esatta del suo carattere; mi giovo di questa parola "carattere", perchè è quella che risponde meglio al mio concetto, non già che egli ne avesse uno. (31)

In his earlier writing Tarchetti argued that knowledge of self is uncertain and perhaps impossible, ("Che sono io?": L'Innamorato della montagna) and that contrary to scientific claims the isolation of the individual denies the opportunity of communication, ("I fenomeni che sono successi nel mio spirito non possono essere compresi da voi che non li avete provati...": Storia di una gamba). In Fosca the problem of how we know ourselves or other people is no longer presented at the level of the utterance, it descends into the textual construction of character.

Fosca is not a unified book, it is made up of different registers which jostle for space alongside each other, sometimes conflicting and rarely supporting each other. Taking the particular case of Fosca herself, the reader finds himself moving through different ways of "making sense" of her according to different ideologies and different linguistic registers. The reader is not offered the voice of truth, but different voices of relative truths. For one of the most convincing analyses of how character is constructed we can turn to Barthes' S/Z

where he describes how during the activity of reading different details are combined and interpreted to crystallize as character.

Lorsque des sèmes identiques traversent à plusieurs reprises le même Nom propre et semblent s'y fixer, il naît un personnage. Le personnage est donc un produit combinatoire: la combinaison est relativement stable (marquée par le retour des sèmes) et plus ou moins complexe (comportant des traits plus ou moins congruents, plus ou moins contradictoires); cette complexité détermine la "personnalité" du personnage, tout aussi combinatoire que la saveur d'un mets ou le bouquet d'un vin. (32)

These semes or signifiers charged with the transmission of information related to character can be relayed in a number of ways as formalist writers, concentrating on the primacy of plot, have pointed out.

Tomaševskij usefully summarizes these routes as follows.

La caratterizzazione dell'eroe può essere diretta, cioè essere fornita direttamente dall'autore, delinearli nei dialoghi degli altri personaggi o essere dovuta all'eroe stesso (le confessioni). Spesso essa è indiretta e risulta dalle sue azioni e comportamenti. (33)

Fosca herself is conveyed to the reader through the doctor, who also functions as the plot's catalyst, through Giorgio and, very briefly, the colonel. She describes herself in a "written" autobiography and she speaks of herself in conversation with Giorgio. To a more limited degree, the reader can learn something about her through her actions and behaviour. Tarchetti therefore maximizes (on the number of ways or strategies by which Fosca can be characterized.

Più che l'analisi d'un affetto, più che il racconto di una passione d'amore, io faccio forse qui la diagnosi di una malattia. (34)

This first reference to Fosca is announced by the brief switch in register from romantic subjectivism to a materialist, if not spurious, objectivity. The change is more apparent than real, the forse introduces a note of doubt while the movement of the sentence and the internal rhythm of its structure (analisi/diagnosi) contrasts with the last phrase, whose many consonants "diagnosi di una malattia" contribute

towards its emphatic seriousness. It also, of course, delineates a subject, not a person, but the association between Fosca - "carattere" and Fosca - "malattia" is sustained (by implication, through the summary of Giorgio's life with Clara "serena/giovane/fiorita" healthy and giver of health) through to the colonel's initial description of his absent cousin.

Mia cugina è la malattia personificata, l'isterismo fatto donna, un miracolo vivente del sistema nervoso, come si espresse ultimamente un dottore che l'ha visitata. (35)

Here in the first phrase Fosca is summed up by this single aspect which is the illness, while in the second phrase the hysteria occupies that entire space named woman. When it comes to the doctor's turn to describe his patient, it no longer matters that in his answer to Giorgio's query, the configuration of features could refer to either.

È una specie di fenomeno, una collezione ambulante di tutti i mali possibili. La nostra scienza vien meno nel definirli. Possiamo afferrare un sintomo, un effetto, un risultato particolare, non l'insieme dei suoi mali, non il loro carattere complessivo, nè la loro base. Possiamo curarla come empirici, ma non come medici.
È una malattia che è fuori della scienza... (36)

The colonel, in the extract quoted above, had already referred to one doctor's description of Fosca as a "miracolo vivente", which uses a word, miracolo, which could not be more inappropriate to the code of scientific positivism. The doctor indirectly develops the question of language by pointing his interlocutor's attention to the failure of science to name. Diagnosis depends on the ability to define the symptoms and synthesize the whole. The identification between Fosca and illness means that his failure (or rather the failure of l'arte medica which he stands for) to name and synthesize leads to his inability to intervene effectively with a cure, while at the same time he fails in his function to construct Fosca within a scientific-

positivist frame. The process he describes works as a meta-commentary of the reader's struggle to totalise those traits that he interprets as significant, into the basic outline of a character. Barthes, in his description of how the reader constructs Sarrasine as a character, wrote,

Ainsi commence un procès de nomination, qui est l'activité même du lecteur: lire, c'est lutter pour nommer, c'est faire subir aux phrases du texte une transformation sémantique. Cette transformation est velléitaire; elle consiste à hésiter entre plusieurs noms:... Le connotateur renvoie moins à un nom qu'à un complexe synonymique, dont on devine le noyau commun, cependant que le discours vous emporte vers d'autres possibles, vers d'autres signifiés affinitaires: la lecture est ainsi absorbée dans une sorte de glissement métonymique, chaque synonyme ajoutant à son voisin quelque trait, quelque départ nouveau... l'objet de la sémantique devrait être la synthèse des sens, non l'analyse des mots... (37)

(The power of the medical register is such though, that despite the doctor's acknowledgement of failure, critics occasionally use the doctor's analysis of Fosca almost as though it were an extra-textual dimension that can be referred to, and not itself an assembly of semes; e.g. Mariani at a certain point supports his own argument with a:

"Difatti il medico positivista, al quale l'autore affida le più esaurienti diagnosi sul carattere di Fosca e che è uno dei personaggi risolutivi nell'intreccio, osserva a un certo punto...." (38)

Further on in the story, the doctor's register fails him so completely that he tries to obtain consent on the conflicting grounds that the language of medicine is incomprehensible to those who do not operate within that register, while at the same time the illness in question is too phenomenal to elaborate. He concludes: "Vorrei che mi credeste ciecamente..." (39) On the one occasion when the narrator-protagonist explains why he obeyed the doctor, it was not for his medical ability but for "quella specie di influenza decisiva che il medico aveva esercitato sopra la mia volontà..." (40)

The doctor is always presented in the text in dialogue with Giorgio, Fosca being the site on which they elaborate their respective ideologies of character, essentially the Romantic versus the materialist. The doctor addresses himself to his patient in terms of a synchronic structure, a body that keeps its secrets intact, the narrator perceives diachronic change, so his questions exist in time, they perceive in Fosca a past and a future, not an unending present. The different systems of thought are evident in the questions and answers which are produced at their first meeting.

- Ma come ha potuto buscarsi tutti quei mali?
- Nessuno lo sa.
- Il suo passato?
- Lo ignoro.
- E giovine?
- Venticinque anni. (41)

Those questions which confer a 'history' on Fosca the doctor is unable to answer, but he can respond to those which address themselves to the present. Where the doctor reduces, the narrator adds, situating her in dramas (" - Non credete che essa sia l'amante del colonello?") which are as inaccurate as the doctor is inadequate. From the marks she leaves in the books he has lent her, he again (she is still unknown and unseen) constructs her character, for the protagonist is also a story-teller and within the narrative he elaborates a creature in his own image.

To return momentarily to the figure of the doctor who is himself constructed through what he says about Fosca and illness and through his actions in the plot, it is interesting how his materialist outlook clashes with the narrative demands made of him. Whatever oddities might lurk in his linguistic register, his medical gaze is scrupulously positivist and identifies physiology as being at the base of everything. It is closely aligned with Claude Bernard's book Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale whose opening words are:

Pour embrasser le problème médical dans son entier, la médecine expérimentale doit comprendre trois parties fondamentales: la physiologie, la pathologie et la thérapeutique. La connaissance des causes des phénomènes de la vie à l'état normale, c'est-à-dire la physiologie, nous apprendra à maintenir les conditions normales de la vie et à conserver la santé. La connaissance des maladies et des causes qui les déterminent, c'est-à-dire la pathologie, nous conduira, d'un côté, à prévenir le développement de ces conditions morbides, et de l'autre à en combattre les effets par des agents médicamenteux, c'est-à-dire à guérir les maladies. (42)

Taking as an example Dr. Follini in Capuana's novel Giacinta, one finds that the model of the doctor in naturalistic narrative is very different.

Il Follini, invece, studiava Giacinta con la fredda curiosità d'uno scienziato di fronte a un bel caso - L'eredità naturale, le circostanze sociali glielo spiegavano fino a un certo punto. (43)

The impersonal stance and the dehumanizing language are present, but the medical gaze itself searches out over a much broader terrain, into the past as well as into the present. Follini is engaged in the familiar exercise of fleshing out a character - his patient - she is psychologized/materialized with a past and an environment, doctors are secretly story-tellers too. Tarchetti's doctor on the other hand with his synchronic view stops narrative, the moment is frozen in time. This does not affect the narrative as long as he remains on the sidelines as commentator, but the moment he becomes an actant, the contradictions flow. In Fosca the plot is set in motion by the doctor. The centrality of his function is the consequence of the privileged position that the doctor enjoys in society, then as now. He incorporates the function of the confidant: ("La signora Fosca, la cui salvezza è in questo momento assai dubbia, mi ha raccontato ieri quanto è successo tra lei e voi - è una confidenza che ella mi ha fatto spontaneamente," (44)) and priest (he has access to the patient

at all times of day and night and quite unattended). But his intervention in the structure of the plot carries implicitly with it an acceptance of a rapport between psyche and body and therefore an acknowledgement of the laws of causality. This is registered in the conversation between Giorgio and the doctor, in which the latter is trying to persuade his friend that it would be in his patient's best interests if he were to go to her secretly that night (the turbulent plot that the doctor sets in motion is an archetype of Romantic fiction). The first voice belongs to the doctor,

- pure questo rifiuto ha bastato a dare uno sviluppo decisivo alla sua infermità. Quella donna si lascia morire per voi,...

- Per me! - interrompi io - e si lascia morire... Non si tratta dunque d'una malattia?

- Ma sì - diss'egli impazientemente - di una cosa e dell'altra...

- ..., ma credete realmente che ella abbia sentito per me una di queste passioni serie e inguaribili? (45)

Until now the synchronic analysis conducted by the doctor perceived Fosca as illness (or illnesses), (frozen in time, his medical gaze allowed only for the present), it did not consider a continuum in time, but the moment he becomes party to her secret she becomes in his perception Fosca plus illness and he acknowledges that there are external forces which regulate or precipitate her present state of health. In other words his methodological perspective on the analysis of illness only allows him space as commentator (unless it were to be made the subject of the novel), but narrative exigencies demand of him a function as well and this can come only from a diachronic view of illness.

The contradiction inherent in the doctor's position is that his medical gaze interprets in response to a synchronic structure

which he can modify with the use of drugs and a change of circumstance. But the second option takes him into the realm of diachronic movement which his methodology cannot accommodate. This is why his advice appears to be so conflicting, by concentrating on the immediate effects he first tells Giorgio to visit Fosca and later orders him to leave her. He completely ignores the long-term effect on the two of them so that from his limited point of view his actions appear to be perfectly logical. In synchronic analysis the relationship between the parts of the whole is examined, frozen in time, but this is at the expense of the diachronic changes which regulate that and successive moments. The doctor's system cannot accommodate a relationship between the two and the division is present in his language in the two linguistic registers he uses. The synchronic is contained in the medical and material register, the diachronic is the other language which encompasses a humanistic dimension and which he uses reluctantly and differentiatingly. Here it is present in the word cuore:

- Vi prego anzitutto a non tacciarmi d'indiscrezione se, mio malgrado, sono venuto a conoscenza d'un segreto del vostro cuore - dico del vostro cuore tanto per modo di esprimermi - (46)

6.5 Fosca's own view of herself

In the midst of this, the meeting-point of a clash of codes, stands Fosca herself, as she constructs herself within her own discourse, rejecting, re-interpreting or re-writing those readings of her offered by others. Jonathan Culler has said of the relationship between character and ideology in the literary text that,

The process of selecting and organising semes is governed by an ideology of character, implicit models of psychological coherence which indicate what sort of things are possible as character traits, how these traits can coexist and form

wholes, or at least which traits coexist without difficulty and which are naturally opposed in ways that produce tension and ambiguity. To a certain extent, of course, these notions are drawn from non-literary experience, but one should not underestimate the extent to which they are literary conventions. (47)

She dismisses the soldiers' interpretation of her:

Dicono che sono dispettosa, volubile, ironica, spesso cattiva. Son essi, è il mondo che mi ha fatta diventare così, mi conoscerete. Ho bisogno di essere conosciuta, capita. Voi non potete immaginare come questi uomini che dicono di saper tante cose, che sembrano conoscere il mondo sì bene, e ne ridono, sieno poi tanto ignoranti, tanto superficiali nella scienza del cuore umano. (48)

and apart from this comment and occasional references by the narrator to their horrified awareness of what was happening, they are not used to construct another reading of Fosca's character. Of the doctor's view of her, hardly has she met Giorgio before she interrogates the presentation of her illness and the presentation of her through illness. Her continuing absence at meals had been explained by her poor state of health: ("La malattia continuava a trattenerla nelle sue stanze"), but she denies it: ("Ho voluto tenermi chiusa parecchi giorni nella mia stanza, ecco tutto; ne aveva le mie ragioni"). (49) In The Birth of the Clinic Foucault uses Bernard's doctrine as evidence of medicine's move away from a concept of health toward a concept of normality:

Furthermore, the prestige of the sciences of life in the nineteenth century, their role as model, especially in the human sciences, is linked originally not with the comprehensive, transferable character of biological concepts, but rather, with the fact that these concepts were arranged in a space whose profound structure responded to the healthy/morbid opposition. When one spoke of the life of groups and societies, of the life of the race, or even of the 'psychological life', one did not think first of the internal structure of the organized being, but of the medical bipolarity of the normal and pathological. (50)

The "bipolarity of the normal and pathological" is used by Fosca's doctor, and it is also used by Fosca who promptly turns it on its head, perceiving like him that medical analysis is structured in

language. She argues that where in her case health is abnormal, ill-health being normal, his classificatory system is inapplicable.

L'infermità è in me uno stato normale, come lo è in voi la salute. Vi ho detto che ero malata? Fu un abuso di parole. Ne faccio sempre. Per esserlo converrebbe che io uscissi dalla normalità di questo stato, che avessi un intervallo di sanità. (51)

It is in Giorgio's own character and by extension, his construction of hers that she finds a way of realizing her desire to give expression to her own self-perception. (Her interlocutor does indeed have doubts but these are more an expression of his own lingering and unconscious allegiance to il mondo and its limited mentality than they are product of his image of himself as the suffering outsider; "Quella donna era realmente buona, realmente ingenua? O non era che un essere infinto, astuto, corrotto? (52))

A recurring motif in Fosca's discourse, both in the conversations and in her autobiography, is her need to speak and be understood. Where Giorgio insists (to the absent reader) on the closed nature of his discourse, Fosca is equally emphatic on the importance of the outside interlocutor to hers: "Mio caro Giorgio, tu comprenderai ciò che io ti voglio dire..."; "Ho bisogno di essere conosciuta, capita. Ho qui nel cuore tante cose che mi fanno male, perchè non le posso mai dire". (53) Through Giorgio, Fosca is able to break free of the silence of a woman's life and construct herself through language and in so doing she initiates what by the end of the century would have been recognized as a "talking-cure" in which Giorgio is victim to what Freud and Breuer describe in their Studies on hysteria as "sexual transference". There are indications that through Giorgio, Fosca is re-living her relationship with her ex-husband. Soon after her first meeting with Giorgio she refers to Clara as her rival and offers to try to obtain more leave for Giorgio from her cousin. It is a

re-enactment of the go-between role she previously adopted between her husband and her parents. After Giorgio has taken leave he returns to find her "fredda, ironica, sprezzante", but she soon insists that she must talk with him every day, "... solo con lei nella sua camera, d'onde io non usciva spesso che oltre la mezzanotte." (54) The trajectory is the same as that of Fräulein Anna O. described here by Breuer,

... on the day after her giving verbal utterance to her phantasies she was amiable and cheerful, on the second day she was more irritable and less agreeable and on the third positively 'nasty'. Her moral state was a function of the time that had elapsed since her last utterance. This was because every one of the spontaneous products of her imagination and every event which had been assimilated by the pathological part of her mind persisted as a psychical stimulus until it had been narrated in her hypnosis, after which it completely ceased to operate. (55)

Brief though it is, her autobiography carries with it a sense of gender, self, class, history and motive for writing. In reclaiming or reconstituting herself as a speaking subject she tries to repossess her name: "Le Nom propre fonctionne comme le champ d'aimantation des sèmes; renvoyant virtuellement à un corps, il entraîne la configuration sémique dans un temps évolutif (biographique)." (56)

Questo nome di Fosca che a te sarà parso assai singolare, è comunissimo in quella provincia delle Romagne dove son nata, a me l'avevano dato perchè era stato quello d'una bisavola che non ho conosciuto. (57)

Her attempt at the reappropriation of her name comes too late to usurp in the reader's mind its associations which have been structured into the text through the antithetical relationship between Clara and Fosca. Her autobiography begins by particularizing her illness not in terms of medical nosology but as a disorder of the psyche:

Io nacqui malata; uno dei sintomi più gravi e più profondi della mia infermità era il bisogno che sentiva di affezionarmi a tutto ciò che mi circondava, ma in modo violento, subito, estremo... (58)

Her survey of her early years identifies a terror of death (the cat eats the canary), and of the inanimate (dolls), but above all it is marked by abnormal erotic desires which focus first on a schoolgirl, then on a friend of her father's (although the ambivalence in the relationship seems to be more pronounced on his part than on hers, "egli mi trattava come una bambola, e mi faceva spesso ballare sulle sue ginocchia; le sue carezze e i suoi baci, ogni suo atto di familiarità mi cagionava un turbamento dolce e incomprensibile" (59), and finally she turns to God. Fosca's self-analysis is unlike the other codings of her character because it is oriented towards an external reality and draws on an interplay of circumstance and disposition. It is also unlike the others in that it is dominated by good sense and rationality: "Portare le passioni nella solitudine è lo stesso che volerne essere dominati" is one of her dictums, and it is this attitude of mind that lies behind her Flaubertian polemic on the insidious effects of reading. By representing Fosca as subject and organizing the discourse around her in the form of autobiography, the author frees the reader from the tyranny of a point of view which is constituted either around the doctor's materialism or the narrator's Romantic subjectivism.

6.6 Fosca through the narrator's eyes

In his book The structure of the text Lotman draws the reader's attention to the two processes involved in the act of one character describing another.

Finally, an extremely important element is the fact that a persona may be represented through the eyes of another persona, as he describes him, that is, in his language. The way a persona is transformed when he is translated into the language of another's ideas characterizes both the language-bearer and the one whom he is describing. (60)

Although the doctor is vital to the narrative both as a function, for he puts into motion two kernel events, and as the embodiment of an ideology in whose image Fosca is constructed, he is given no space as a speaking subject, the reader has no access to his unspoken thoughts and he has no personal history. Like the colonel, he carries no name. Giorgio as both narrator and protagonist occupies most of the narrative space and by the time Fosca is introduced into the story Giorgio is well-established, so that the reader can recognize that his projection of her is intimately bound up with his own self-perception. In the two autobiographies contained within the text the subjects are shown to hold very different positions, Giorgio says of his life,

Sarebbe inutile riandare sugli anni che hanno preceduto gli avvenimenti che sto per raccontare. Io non voglio afferrare che un punto della mia vita, non voglio metterne in luce che un istante. Chi oserebbe affacciarsi allo spettacolo intero della sua esistenza, spiare nelle sue pieghe tenebrose, e ritesserne tutta la storia? (61)

Once Fosca has acquired a witness, to whom she frequently turns, and a beginning to her story, she experiences no further difficulty (although silence is demanded of her, "Mio Giorgio - Ti scrivo subito oggi benchè il medico me l'abbia vietato." (62)) Giorgio on the other hand finds the exercise more problematic. The opening paragraph of both Giorgio's narration and of the novel revolves around the relationship between writing and experience. There is a truth (vero) to be expressed, but it can never be fully encapsulated by the word, "... è compito troppo superiore alla potenza della parola" and yet only through writing can one recuperate and retain

one's experience. His solution is to write for himself alone, a closed communication in which addresser and addressee are the same. Throughout this opening section the emphasis falls on the provisional, artisan nature of the means of transcription. There are many references to the actual implements, all pointing to this aspect: "vecchio quaderno", "molte cancellature che non posso più decifrare", "E li svolgo nell'ansietà di leggerli, e osservo con melancolia i piccoli acari della carta che fuggono lungo le loro pieghe ingiallite." (63) These tell the reader that the notes or jottings are sincere, provisional and unmediated; they are not elaborated, they are not literature, they are writing and words, and "scrivere" and "parlare" are used interchangeably ("non scriverò che di un solo di questi amori. Non parlerò dell'altro..." (64)). This belongs of course to a highly elaborated cultural code, which the reader accedes to by not putting down the text in which the narrator introduces himself. Having established his relationship to the written word, he can then write himself into the story beginning, despite what he says, at the beginning. There are no references to names, dates or places, anything which might materialize the individual subject; instead we have a collection of psychological attributes which are descriptive of a Romantic sensibility: "angoscia/sfiducia/passioni/vero/dolori/ansietà/melanconia/solitudine/irrequietezze febbrili". But the strength of the personal pronoun to which they refer, is such as to allow them to add up as a persona.

Dans le récrit (et dans bien des conversations), je n'est plus un pronom, c'est un nom, le meilleur des noms; dire je, c'est inmanquablement s'attribuer des signifiés; c'est aussi se pourvoir d'une durée biographique, se soumettre imaginaiement à une "évolution" intelligible, se signifier comme objet d'un destin, donner un sens au temps. (65)

The narrator constructs Fosca in his own image and her persona is established around a similar constellation of Romantic attributes, but the code only allows for these features in a man and Fosca is a woman who repeatedly draws attention to her womanhood. Giorgio cannot handle it; he moves between a romantically affirmative assessment and a socially condemnatory one. ("Nondimeno quell'aprirmi subito l'anima sua; quell'abbandonarsi così a me nel primo giorno..." (66).) From his earliest contact with Fosca, the reader's attention is drawn obviously by the narrator himself, to the singularity of his response. He is obsessed by her continuing absence at table, but "questa preoccupazione era però esclusivamente mia," he is terrorized by the sound of her screams, but nobody else moves: "Degli altri commensali nessuno si era mosso, o aveva dato il menomo segno di meraviglia." (67); the text emphasizes the gap in reaction between Giorgio and the assembled company, "tutta gente dabbene". Her screams hold him because they transcend the human, they cross the boundary of human life; a point that he makes twice over. (68) Her ugliness likewise is perceived in terms of its association with death and the macabre. When Fosca finally appears, the author needs to present her ugliness as more than the sum of its parts and he does so by organising the description around her mortality. She becomes a memento mori, with two features that escape the association, her luxuriant hair (traditionally associated with strength and sexuality) and her eyes (traditionally associated with love and the soul), thereby heightening the macabre spectacle. (69) Where the doctor perceives Fosca as illness, the narrator perceives her as death incarnate. Yet other textual indicators suggest that she is not mortally ill; just a couple of pages earlier the doctor explained that the screams were "convulsioni isteriche", while the nature of her illness means that

"... la sua macchina è sì debole che non ha forza di produrre una malattia mortale". A point he returns to: "Con una salute come quella si vive spesso fino a ottant'anni". (70) In the Romantic code ugliness has connotations with genius because of the badge of exclusion, of difference which it confers on its subject, but as Fosca is female this has to be recoded so that the exceptionality now allows her to escape the limiting social condition of being a woman. The transition in the description is marked by Certo which removes the speculative nature of the observation; - Giorgio has not yet even spoken to Fosca.

Certo ella aveva coscienza della sua bruttezza, e sapeva che era tale da difendere la sua reputazione da ogni calunnia possibile; aveva d'altronde troppo spirito per dissimularlo, e per non rinunciare a quegli artifizi, a quelle finzioni, a quel ritegno convenzionale a cui si appigliano ordinariamente tutte le donne in presenza d'un uomo. (71)

Giorgio in his capacity as narrator has an advantage over the doctor because where the doctor's analyses are contemporaneous with the events, Giorgio can speak with the benefit of hindsight. They are his memories. The reader's attention is drawn to this aspect of the narrative in the introductory pages but the potential that the two standpoints opens up is not developed. Giorgio also enjoys another privilege for, as his is the dominant discourse, he can accustom the reader to his code and his referents so that through this process of naturalization his construction of Fosca's character can acquire a spurious validity. If one takes for example the association he makes between Fosca and death, the reader has been prepared for it by the many references to death which infiltrate his language at both the level of fact and metaphor, e.g. on the opening page comes the observation: "Un avidità febbrile di morire affatica inconsciamente gli uomini" and a page later his reference to past memories resounds

with images of death: "Io innalzo questo monumento sulle ceneri del mio passato, come si compone una lapide sul sepolcro di un essere adorato e perduto." (72)

There are many aspects to the question of character which are not even mentioned here because I have limited myself to the way in which the text challenges the reader's assumptions about the knowability of character by making visible the way in which narrative constructs a sense of the individual identity. Character is constructed through words, those same words that the narrator at the beginning of Fosca feels to be inadequate. Thus the textual construction of character is shown to depend not on some unitary essentialist view whose referents lie outside the text and are simply transferred, but on who is handling the linguistic register and referents at the time of enunciation. When the study of the individual was being increasingly appropriated by the medical and natural sciences, when answers were being found almost before the questions were asked, a novel like Fosca directs the reader back to the complexities.

C. Dossi: La desinenza in 'A': The structures of misogyny

7.1 "Amori" and "La desinenza in 'A'": androgyny and misogyny

In Tarchetti's novel Fosca the three principal characters are partly constituted through a stable cluster of traits that accompany their proper names through the book and are partly constructed out of a group of floating signifiers that migrate from one character to another. The agent of transmission is illness: Giorgio, beneficiary of Clara's good health, involuntarily donates it to Fosca. In both cases the original carrier falls ill as she or he passes it on. Here the movement is unilinear, but another paradigm presents itself in which the two women, as their names suggest, stand in opposition to each other, each in turn having traits which overlap with those of Giorgio who is positioned between them. An important and constant feature of the traits assigned to each of the three characters is the relationship between gender attributes and the individual's sex. Clara epitomizes femininity (by this I mean femininity understood as a social and cultural construct). Fosca the hysteric is identified with predominantly masculine attributes, and where Giorgio's own masculinity is sustained and reinforced by his affair with the feminine Clara, it is replaced by an essentially feminine position in his subsequent relationship with Fosca. Giorgio has attributes of both sexes (a feature he shares with many Romantic heroes although in their case it has not yet become problematical), and the boundaries between masculinity and femininity are shown to be movable, easily destabilized according to circumstance. The idea that the psychological attributes of both sexes can lodge in one person was explored in Tarchetti's writing in the safe closed-off space of the fantastic: we have seen in "Lo spirito in un lampone"

how the protagonist imbibes the characteristics of the opposite sex in some raspberries which results in his experiencing existence as both male and female until he regurgitates the fruit at the end of the tale.

Dossi too in his last published work Amori concludes with an image of the androgynous ideal. When La desinenza in 'A' was republished (in a new edition) in 1884 Dossi added a "màrgine" in which he promised his critics a "sincera palinodia" of women to offset the accusations of misogyny which had been brought against him. This duly appeared three years later bearing the title Amori di Carlo Dossi. Again as with Tarchetti's fantastic we are in a universe apart as we travel through the seven heavens of the narrator's creation. On the occasion he finds himself back on earth he leaves the reader in no doubt that it is a temporary fall.

Non era la prima volta, nè doveva èsser l'ùltima,
che io fossi riafferrato dalla realtà, ma le mie
catture tra le mani di questa fùrono sempre brevi. (1)

The eulogy to androgyny comes at a time when character was so determinedly constructed along gender lines that the unity of the masculine and the feminine within a single being offered the only possibility of transcending the limits of the partial. Because the concept is dangerous it cannot be addressed directly and the reader is gradually prepared for the climax. Upon his entry into the "sesto cielo" the narrator dismisses the appeal of reincarnation and with it the concept of a succession of personalities through time, in favour of the multiple personality. To communicate this destabilizing notion of self he yokes a psychoanalytical perspective on to an 18th century analogy:

Soltanto, non mi accorderèi con que'signori filòsofi
sulla successività delle diverse nostre esistenze,

essendo queste - a mio avviso - piuttosto contemporanee, paragonabili quindi a più cavalli attaccati, in una sola schiera, ad un unico giogo di cocchio. (2)

Following not far behind the idea of the multiple personality is the assumption that not all the personalities need be dominated by the same gender characteristics and Dossi himself, who can here be interpreted as either victim or subject of late 19th century ideology, offers the reader a physiological confirmation of a psychological insight.

Io non so se tra quella legione di medici che mi sperò e tambussò e pesò, colui che disse, che - aperto e frugato sul tavolaccio anatomico - il mio corpo avrebbe embrionicamente tradito i segni della femminilità, spropositasse. (3)

This is no momentary conceit on Dossi's part for Lucini too in his monograph L'ora topica di Carlo Dossi identifies a psychological split which has its origins in the subject's anatomical anomalies so that were the subject to be cut up his body would reveal "un embrione di femina in arresto di sviluppo" (4). The laws of causality and reciprocity which structure this analysis appear slightly ludicrous today, but the influence anatomical matter exercises over the psyche is central to positivist theory and encourages the total identification of gender characteristics with the individual's sex. Within the parameters of this particular text (Amori), the presence of a physiological endorsement runs contrary to the process of idealization, or beatification, of Woman as a symbol and not as a sex. This is the essential difference between La desinenza in 'A' and Amori, for where in the former for the most part women are presented as real attached in their turn to a specific historical and cultural existence, in the latter they are symbols of those qualities which men consider to be desirable. (5)

In The second sex De Beauvoir notes that men attribute to women ideals that they themselves would like to possess and indeed Dossi's alter-ego is presented as a symbol of creative inspiration, the female Muse. Celeste as she is called begins as a projection of the narrator and she is referred to in the first person " - che allora mi chiamo Celeste - " (6), but the utterance then moves away from the unique subjectivity of the "I" to a generic "we" which embraces the female sex, "noi donne". The transition continues in the next paragraph where the narrator as speaking subject withdraws into a state of omniscience and Celeste moves into the position of the other by being referred to in the third person, "Celeste cerca dunque il suo amante". The lover she looks for she finds in the person of a "giòvane ignoto" whom she turns into a poet. In the next and final heaven we are presented with a roll-call of the women the book has evoked, which ends with the return of Celeste accompanied by a final shift in positionality. The narrator has become, although it is unspoken, the "giòvane ignoto" while Celeste occupies the "you" of the discourse, but we know from our reading that the polarity implicit in the "I" and the "you" is misleading because the opposition here is not between the self and other, but between the two manifestations of the inner self which therefore can end with a celebration of psychological and literary fulfilment: "Nè alcuno ti potrà sciòrre da mè, non tu stessa - perocchè sei la mia ispiratrice Celeste, ànima dell'ànima mia". (7) Amori, a text which sets out to praise women, ends with the androgynous ideal momentarily realized.

Where Amori turns to heaven and the spirit to compose an ideal version of woman as mother and muse, La desinenza in 'A'

addresses itself to earth and the material to present a portrait of woman as lust and greed incarnate who at every turn deceives, betrays and undermines man. So it is appropriate that where the former ends in a dream of androgyny, the addition to the subject of desirable female characteristics, the latter ends in emasculation, the subtraction from the male of his male-ness. The final scene of the last act of La desinenza in 'A' is a conversation between two nameless speakers (the reader understands from the context that they are both men) about a third man called Scioli. The opening introduces the reader immediately to the issue,

- È una donna, credi.
- È io ti dico, che è un uomo. (8)

His life-style and dress, intellect and language, physique and sexuality are all perceived as feminine and therefore to be related to the weak, the base, the trivial, or simply the lack. The absence of difference in this scene is presented as unnatural and also dangerous. For although at one level he is an object of derision and a danger to nobody, "il cui farfallino cervello", "per mè, t'assicuro se avessi una figlia gliela lascerèi seco a letto", (9) at another level he is a threat to socio-economic order constructed largely through an exaggeration of sex difference. He also presents a threat to the very processes out of which the speaking subject is constructed, for the presentation of woman in these two texts depends upon the positionality of the male as the subject of the discourse. This is nodal, because with the male as subject in Amori di Carlo Dossi the idealized woman becomes a projection or emblem of those qualities which man might like to have but which a thrusting capitalist society cannot permit him; those Rousseauian ideals such as sensitivity, nurturance and chastity. The desecrated woman of La desinenza in 'A' on the other hand threatens to usurp the

male as subject by undermining his own identity which is structured and sustained through a process of differentiation. Where the women of Amori maintain the identity of the male subject much as the feminine Clara sustained Giorgio's masculinity, the women of La desinenza in 'A' systematically undermine it, much as Fosca with her intellect and determination changed round Giorgio's own role.

7.2 "La desinenza in 'A'": Carlo Dossi, author and critic

Although La desinenza in 'A' is a narrative of social invective whose target is woman, the singular quality of Dossi's writing has led to critical readings which privilege the signifier over the signified. This falsifies the function of what is a highly engaged text. Dossi's reading-notes also reveal his own deep interest in the political and ideological aspects of literary practice. Such a reading is, however, encouraged by the author for Dossi gives no space to cultural, ideological or historical influences on his work whose meaning is in its turn closed off by the presence of the author. Stephen Heath has written in regard to authorship and film that,

The function of the author (the effect of the idea of authorship) is a function of unity; the use of the notion of the author involves the organicisation of the film (as 'work') and, in so doing, it avoids - this is indeed its function - the thinking of the articulation of the film text in relation to ideology. (10)

Dossi by giving voice to the roles of both author and critic in just such a way switches the reader's attention away from questions arising from the relationship between text and context and redirects it back to the body of his writing. Even here the reader is supposed to prioritize the connections between the texts over the individual work, so that, for the purposes of this chapter, where one book is heavily critical of women this must be seen

alongside the subsequent paean addressed to women.

Dossi classified his writing into two categories, History and Philosophy. The former would appear to incorporate literary realism but it emerges that despite appearances this category eschews objectivity and gives precedence to the subjective.

Una infatti delle mie due grosse spirituali correnti (delle secondarie non parlo) fu ed è quella di narrare le cose e gli uomini del tempo mio, non oso già dire come davvero sono, ma quali appaiono a' miei occhi, forse affetti da itterizia morale. (11)

Contrasting with this is the explanation he gives for his highly inventive and idiosyncratic language which he de-personalises by locating it in an analysis which suggests that it is historically and culturally inevitable :

Gli è, del resto, una fatalità cronologica alla quale nè io nè i miei fratelli in letteratura sapremmo sottrarci. Trascorso la primavera pariniana, la manzoniana estate, il rovaniano autunno, più non ci avanza, del letterario anno che stà per finire, se non l'inverno. (12)

In each of the prefaces to the respective works Dossi materializes as author but also as critic, through whom the text's meaning is on the reader's behalf, constructed and closed off. Foucault in his essay called 'What is an author?' describes the process whereby the literary critic explains away the literary text by evoking the name of its author so that any aspect of the writing can be effectively neutralized or resolved with a reference to the author's biography, maturation or influences etc. (13) This is analogous to Dossi's technique for by maintaining a pervasive presence as both author and critic he is able to direct the reader and close off alternative readings. Dossi assumes in the "màrgine" to la desinenza in 'A' that there will be two potentially controversial or offensive aspects to the text; its spillage into the field of

sexuality (and here he defends himself on grounds of its originality and with a reference back to the body of his work which would identify it as just one book among the other highly moral works of his) and its misogyny which he 'justifies' in terms of his own biography whereby he attributes the writing of it to a time of "disinganno amoroso". These biographical details are also used to put pressure on the reader to concur with the text by arguing that for a successful reading to take place the reader must be predisposed, by virtue of psychological traits or biographical events that reader and author hold in common. So by defending the book on the grounds of its literary innovativeness and by allocating it to the realm of the psycho-biographical Dossi draws the reader away from constructing an ideological interpretation of the text. He does however elsewhere respond to specific accusations of misogyny by denying that there is a direct correlation between author and individual,

Senza prò, infatti, mi sbraccio a fare a tutte comprendere
che ogni vita di artista è zeppa di contraddizioni tra lo
scrittore e l'uomo e che però io non sono (io provino)
quell'odiatore di donne che me si reputa; (14)

Dossi also maintained that a writer and his work are intimately related because writing and living are themselves viscerally connected as a physiological reality as well as a literary conceit. He argued that all creative writing is a self-willed act of self-destruction, consuming blood and brain. This physiological elaboration of the Romantic myth of the artist was based on the belief that the brain is inelastic; from the size of the organ could be calculated the measure of its powers (this is not in its turn related to body size so that women's brains being smaller and weighing less are according to this logic evidence of women's intellectual inferiority). The knowledge that the brain suffers and degenerates through over-use

was a source of untold anxiety for Dossi (Balzac suffered from the same obsession) and he became deeply disturbed by what he interpreted as evidence of his own intellectual deterioration. It was rooted in his belief that the brain requires a vast quantity of blood which in turn needs to be frequently renewed, but the thought-process itself consumes blood or at the very least thins it. He felt that his own position was aggravated by congenital anaemia leading to ischaemia.

È un circolo vizioso da cui non potrò uscire se non colla morte. Per star bene, bisogna che sforzi il sangue al cervello colla volontà di pensare: ma pensando il sangue mi si consuma e torno nello stato fondamentale di abbattimento. (15)

The importance of blood-flows to the thought-process was such that he suggested that their rapport with literary expression would be of interest both to literature and medicine,

Per es. dalla maggiore o minore celerità del circolo sanguigno, dalle sue intermittenze o dalla sua continuità, può ricavarsi il vero ritratto dello stile di uno scrittore. (16)

and he offers the theory as a biological explanation as to why books with small print are, according to him, more intelligible than those with large print, the idea being that the tension of the eye-nerves leads to more blood flowing into the brain. As for the actual thought-process itself, Dossi uses an analogy which draws on Gorini's chemical experiments in vulcanology.

Il modo di formazione di un lavoro mentale ha p. es. rapporti intimi con quello della formazione de' cristalli in una materia plutonica che si solidifica. Lunghi cristalli iniziali attraversano il liquido ricercandosi e formando le prime solide sbarre alle quali si attaccano poi gli altri secondari che vanno dall'uno all'altro cristallo iniziale; così la rete cristallina si forma e la materia si concretizza. E, parimenti, nella fervente massa cerebrale ove il sangue raddoppia la sua plutonicità, formansi le prime idee alle quali si saldano le altre: più la mente va completandosi e più scopre la particolarità delle idee; vievia la maglia de' pensieri s'ispessa - e

finisce a non potere ammetter più filo. Se trattasi allora di un parziale lavoro, è fatto: se trattasi invece del generale processo di una mente, il circolo è chiuso, e l'intelletto è finito. (17)

This developed into the source of deep, personal anguish for Carlo Dossi as he became convinced that he himself was suffering from a gradual, irreversible process of siltification and he observes that where once ideas came easily to him, his mind was gradually becoming blocked with past thoughts which he feared would lead eventually to complete cerebral hypertrophy; the brain reduced to a distended organ of solid matter. His notes both testify to the panic and desperation he at times experienced and, through the record he makes of the stages of exhaustion and mental void that he passed through from the age of seventeen onwards, to his view of himself as a useful subject for a case-study (Dossi was very interested in these monographs and claimed that he was the one who had proposed the idea of a psychological study of Caesar to Lombroso who in turn had passed it on to Mayor who executed the work). In his notes Dossi even issues instructions as to how to proceed with a similar monograph of himself.

7.3 "La colonia felice" and "La desinenza in 'A'": writing and ideology

Before discussing how La desinenza in 'A' succeeds in overcoming the creative limitations that accompany an ideology which reduces the characterization of women to a few crude pen-strokes, I intend to relate the text to the rest of Dossi's work. He had always hoped that the division of his writing into the two categories which he called History and Philosophy would finally produce his masterpiece which would be a synthesis of the two tendencies, but his own political evolution to the Right ended these hopes. He attributes the termination of what he later interprets as youthful

optimism to developments in positivist science which put pay to the conventional philanthropy which found expression in Il regno dei cieli and La colonia felice (18). The latter had found favour in both the cultural and the political world; Carducci in 1875 wrote to Dossi to compliment him on a book which he felt was a great improvement on its predecessor Vita di Alberto Pisani and Luigi Lodi writing in the Domenica letteraria on 15th July 1883 quoted Carducci as having described it to him as "... la più ampia e vigorosa concezione di romanzo che fra noi da molti anni si sia avuta; in a speech given by Tullio Massarini on the Codice penale in the Senate in 1888 Dossi's book was used to support the argument against the death-penalty and by 1895 it had been reprinted six times. Written in 'plain' Italian with a highly conventional plot, it must also have found favour because it presents a Utopia which endorses conventional social structures. Dossi himself introduced a "diffida" in the second edition in which he rejects the theory behind the book on the grounds that then current positivist knowledge had shown that it was impossible to correct man's behaviour even through enlightened self-interest.

The fulcrum of La colonia felice, which is a dramatisation of the theories outlined in Il regno dei cieli, is the family. The thesis behind the story is that man in his egotism would eventually understand that what was to his advantage was similarly to the advantage of others and a society founded on love and justice was in the interest of everybody. The catalyst which converts a group of deported criminals into exemplary citizens is the birth of a child and a man's love for a woman. The men who have been expelled to the island are all guilty of crimes against society, the women on the

other hand, have each of them sinned against the family and motherhood - prostitution, abortion and infanticide (19). As elsewhere in Europe the importance of the family as the site of virtue and morality had increased as its economic value had declined.

... whether a sacred temple or a secular temple, the home as a storehouse of moral and spiritual values was as much an answer to commercialism as to declining religion. Indeed, it might be said that mainly on the shoulders of its priestess, the wife and mother, fell the burden of stemming the amoral and irreligious drift of modern industrial society. (20)

Dossi's Utopia mirrors this, and the moral fate of the community, upon which all else depends, rests on the shoulders of the women :

Ma alla donna è commesso d'indirizzare il minuscolo uomo alla virtù, per cui nasce; nè ciò ingombrargli il cervello di frigide sentenziette, ma col descrivergli invece, e ancor più, col mostrargli, la celeste bellezza della Bontà. (21)

Of the Utopian literature he read, Dossi singled out for particular praise William Morris' News from Nowhere which projects a communist society constructed around an absolute division of labour. Assuming a natural basis for this division, Morris argued that if the politics of status and wealth were removed, women would find contentment in motherhood and waiting on men; a point that clearly impressed Dossi:

Una donna, che in altri tempi si sarebbe chiamata serva, curva sotto il peso dell'umiliazione, sta scopando, nell'Utopia di Morris, felice come una regina perchè sente che scopa per l'umanità. (22)

The significance of woman is subsumed in her dual role of wife and mother, her economic powerlessness equalled only by the weight of the values that she has to carry around with her. The rhetoric of the idealisation of womanhood can only be understood in the context of the ideology of the family. Where Dossi was the only one of the three writers under discussion to elaborate a theoretical model of

the role of the family, Rovani and Tarchetti were both in very different ways working with the subject. For Tarchetti, like Dossi, the monogamous family is a natural, not a cultural entity (this stepping outside history is important at a time when there was considerable distrust and disillusionment with the historical realities). In L'innamorato della montagna Fiordalisa

... era eminentemente donna; nè mai virtù alcune ornarono un animo sì scevro di quei difetti e di quelle passioni che dà alla donna la società, come quello di Fiordalisa. (23)

Through the cultural genealogy which can be traced from the scapigliati writers back to Rousseau, woman's sharply distinct position and function is depicted as that which is natural to her sex. Her nature and her function happily converge. In Dossi's writing the image of the "pèntola" stands for domestic harmony, the hearth and home which he idealises but which is cruelly dependent on women for its existence. While in Utopia, "ciascuno, con la sua donna, ha la pèntola sua, ha le speranze e i timori suoi proprii" (24), on earth it can be nothing other than a cruel reminder of what but for the perfidy of women could be. In his "sinfonia" to La desinenza in 'A' it is used to taunt the hypothetical audience,

Ed ecco, Pùbblico mio, la casa; ecco il piccolo mondo, dove ciascuno possiede il vero suo regno, un regno in cui si comanda a chi amiamo e ci ama; ecco il sacrario del fatale palladio della politica quiete, la pèntola. (25)

This is the flaw, for the subject of Dossi's Utopia is male but he requires the willing and total cooperation of women to realize it. In chapter six, "Stato e famiglia", the two rival factions agree on peace whereupon they reorganize themselves into monogamous family units and partners are allocated to the men by virtue of drawing lots. In a discussion that follows on the question of justice in which it is resolved that every transgression should be punishable by death, rape follows on directly from theft in

that both are perceived as the taking of an object that belongs to somebody other than the thief, " - chi invade una donna non sua - ". La colonia felice is an unusual text for Dossi in that it is written in the third person and the narrative voice is not personalised or foregrounded. It unquestionably posits a male perspective, given to making observations about women which are assumed to be part of commonly accepted knowledge, what Barthes in S/Z describes as the cultural code, as in: "Dove c'è donna c'è lite." (26)

The ideology of separate spheres was wholeheartedly embraced by Dossi who argued moreover that within the division of labour women are the better placed. Feminists he complains are

... domandando a gran grida un invertimento con noi delle parti divise dalla stessa Natura nell'umana commedia, e divise a tutto loro vantaggio, perchè, se nostri sono il giorno e la piazza, la notte è di esse e la casa - quella casa che è il cuore del paese, quella notte che genera il giorno. (27)

It was a theory which received scientific endorsement in positivist research. As a result of work done by Comte and Spencer positivism was now organized around the derivation of principles of social organization from biological models: Spencer for example in The study of sociology accounted for sex differences by assuming that women have an arrested evolutionary development which allows them to conserve energy for reproduction, energy which could be put to intellectual use by men. In the 1870s and 1880s when positivism had become entrenched as the ideology of the bourgeoisie in power, it often lent its weight to the backlash of hostility against women arguing firmly against female emancipation on "scientific grounds". Dossi's notes testify to his own interest in this kind of fraudulent scientism and he frequently makes general observations which then acquire a spurious validity. His conviction that "ci sono

generi nelle donne ma non caratteri" (28) finds confirmation in calligraphy :

Corre assai relazione fra il carattere della mano e quello dell'animo, es. la ineguaglianza de' miei. E difatti le donne tengono quasi tutte una eguale calligrafia, simbolo della pochissima varietà fra i loro intelletti. (29)

The woman question was also developing into a cultural and intellectual issue. In the 1870s a wave of indigenous domestic novels flooded the market reflecting the concern that was felt about the family and woman's role within it; Tronconi who Ghidetti believes is responsible in part for Dossi's misogyny began publishing in 1873 a series of novels on marriage, adultery and sexual freedom and the first novel carried the indicative title Evvelina ovvero il primo romanzo d'una moglie: studio di donne. Books arguing in favour of women's emancipation were being translated and published and 1870 saw the appearance on the market of two editions of John Stuart Mill's La soggezione delle donne. It was also becoming a focus of political debate which was a product of the convergence of feminist influences from abroad and the activities of women who having been active in the fight for Unification now found themselves excluded from the new state. I emphasize this context because La desinenza in 'A' has too often been read as a purely literary text and yet if one wrestles it away from the tenacious grip of its author it becomes apparent how much it is a product of this debate. Feminists were then fighting hard for improved educational opportunities for girls, which found some favour among liberals (along with considerable hostility from other quarters), on the grounds that it would better prepare them for married life in a changing and expanding urban society. The terms of the debate are expressed very clearly in

C. Gallini's seminal book Studi sulla condizione sociale e giuridica della donna (whose publication-date 1872 is in itself indicative of the period):

Spogliamoci dei vieti pregiudizi che la donna, istruendosi, educandosi alla vita civile, venga meno alla sua missione domestica; che di istruzione profonda e di solida educazione ella non sia suscettiva; che dalla sua cultura intellettuale e morale ne possa provenire il disordine nella famiglia e nella società politica: noi che abbiamo fede nel progresso, non possiamo neppure sospettarlo: e quando pur fosse, accetteremo volentieri questa nuova condizione della donna, creata dalla scienza, piuttosto che proseguire nella vecchia strada irta di pregiudizi, di miserie, di ignoranza.

(30)

Doss's opposition to the idea of an academic education for girls is pronounced, manifesting itself initially in Desinenza, act 1 scene 2, "In collegio", and again even more acrimoniously in act 3 scene 8, "In cattedra" in which he clearly sees the feminist movement, as embodied in its protagonists, as being the consequence of women's access to higher education ("... Sofonisba Altamura del Connecticut, laureata in medicina, filosofia, botanica e astronomia"). Education for women is dangerous he argues because of their intellectual inferiority ("Forse l'appartamento c'è, ma la mobiglia è tutta fuori di posto". "... quando si tratta di una, la quale, con una filza di sragionamenti - corridoi che non conducono a nulla -...") (31) and because it in turn leads to the demand for emancipation which sets out to upset the order decreed by Nature and undermines the family, its consequences being as far-reaching and dangerous as the aims of socialism, "tutte propagatrici di un socialismo assassino dell'individuo e della famiglia - " (32). It is a position which Dossi refers to some years later in a review-article he was requested to write on Adelaide Maraini-Pandiani, sculptress.

Tenendo ancora, in quel tempo, nel magazzino del cuore mio parecchi scampoli della letteraria misoginia che mi dettò La Desinenza in 'A', sentivo un'antipatia pronunciatissima contro le donne che vogliono essere o da più o altra cosa di quanto permette il loro sesso. Oltracciò, l'arte alla quale si era dedicata la Maraini, la scoltura, non mi pareva la meglio addatta alla gentilezza, anzi alla gracilità della fibra femminile.
(33)

Although the question of the novel and its influence on a vulnerable female readership was frequently alluded to in the literature of the day, and even in Desinenza Isa's undoing, her elopement with her lover, is an act she undertook "imitando appunto i due protagonisti del parigino romanzo, ultimo uscito" (34), the subject of girls' education is new to this period and reflects a changing social pattern.

The other area of concern for feminists which was shared from a different perspective by the author of La desinenza in 'A' is prostitution. As so often happens at a time of rapid urbanisation and gross exploitation of the working poor prostitution was a form of casual employment which could be used to supplement an inadequate income. During this period at the instigation of Josephine Butler in England, Anna Maria Mozzoni was investigating and campaigning on the problems of prostitution in Italy. We have seen how Tarchetti touched on the question in his social-humanitarian novel Paolina where we witness Paolina's rape after the marquis has unsuccessfully tried to buy her sexual favours. Dossi takes this topos privileged by the popular-sentimental literature of the day with a narrative which often draws on women's vulnerability in the face of male aggression (present similarly in I promessi sposi) and turns it on its head. The two girls "oneste e sartine" who belong to the ranks "di chi non ne ha" do not unlike their literary sisters

defend their virtue to the death but trade it for a diamond brooch. At one level this scene, act 2 scene 4, participates in some of the then current arguments, the anxiety about moral degeneration, the absence of an example from the upper classes and the debasing results of poverty, but at another level the scene privileges the theme of woman as lust, greed and cupidity irrespective of circumstance; the thinness of one of the girls is attributed to sexual and not physical hunger,

Ma la seconda fanciulla, la nera, di cui la selvaggia magrezza o piuttosto asciuttezza delle forme e del volto, tradiva gli intensi insoddisfatti desii. (35)

The same cultural transformation occurs in act 1 scene 2, "In collegio", when a young girl appears at the dormitory window with a physiomy which under Romanticism would have identified her with that most spiritual of diseases, consumption, but which is here reinterpreted as evidence of deviant sexual practice,

... l'èsile forma di una fanciulla, che si appoggiava languidamente al davanzale. Il viso di lei sofferente, peggio che pàllido, giallo, mostrava una trasparenza di opalo, o piuttosto quella pellùcida tinta del baco, quando, ricco di seta, stà per ascèndere ai cùlmiri della trasfigurazione; gli occhi, due pozze di duolo, serbàvano quelle tracce che gli insoddisfatti desii l'àsciano quanto le nauseate soddisfazioni, e gli occhi la giovinetta avèa volti, fisi estaticamente a sòffici anella di nùvole imaginose. (36)

So La desinenza in 'A' is one of the products of an ideological structure based on difference which puts women in the singular position of being carrier and transmitter of values which are perceived as good and decent, but which cannot find a place in society at large. It also articulates a response to the feminist movement then underway (a hostile attitude to women is often indicative of a flourishing feminist movement) and as such it is a text which takes its place in the debate, which was coming from all quarters,

on the woman question (37). It is important, I feel, to recuperate the text's public role as one of the cacophony of voices which were then contributing to this particular debate, additionally so because as a text-tract the reader's freedom to produce alternative meanings is severely controlled and curtailed. To express his anti-feminist stance Dossi inserts himself into a long cultural tradition of literary misogyny which is physically embodied within the text in the shape of Nino Fiore's uncle's library.

La sua particolarità e il suo pregio stanno nel riunirvisi quanti scrittori d'issero chiodi in femminile materia, dall'òpera la più massiccia al più bizzarro pamphlet, e siccome la maggior parte ne disse, così ne segue che la raccolta sia anche voluminosa. (38)

The persona of Carlo Dossi author (not narrator) finds his literary embodiment in Nino Fiore and in the midst of this character-caricature the reader is handed the cultural key that opens the text.

E però cominciài... a leggere i miei misògini autori, a ridonarli, almeno per pochi giorni, alla vita. Ma contagioso è l'ingegno. Tutte quelle ideone e ideucchie, succhiate da Giovenale e Lucrezio, da Pope e Luciano, da Tertulliano e Grisòstomo e vievia, si accoppiavano fra di loro, moltiplicavano nel mio cervello e lo affogavano nel numero... E in verità, l'ira mia congiunta all'ira già in campo, non può non formare un terribile esercito. Scoprirò scelleraggini che le medesime ree non sospettano manco, troverò frasi e parole da incenerirle issofatto. Scandolezzando, meglio! avrò giustamente colpito. (39)

In the wake of the reaction to the book, and the debate over its content continues, there were friends like Primo Levi who argued that the text was not coloured by the author's perception, but was a faithful representation of women who are like that, while friends on the other side of the political arena, most notably and audaciously Lucini, declared that the book opened the way for a new literature by its courageous return to a respectable misogynistic

tradition.

Il breve libro denso, schiaffeggiatore, apriva la carica come un foriero galoppante sopra il miglior cavallo dello squadrone, a Gli amori bestiali del Valera, a Terra Vergine del d'Annunzio, a la fioritura bolognese della Postuma; Egli ebbe il coraggio di riscrivere il vecchiume misogino di venti secoli di letteratura, eroicamente, senza ricopiarlo, saggiandolo al suo tempo, provandone il contenuto colli aspetti che l'epoca sua gli offriva in ispettacolo: aggiunse, all' fisiologia ed alla patologia classica e romantica dell'odio e del disgusto per la femina, la novissima diagnosi delle donne ch'egli seppe e vissero con lui, dal 1870 al 1876, le fermò, indice di costumi sociali, di un agire singolare. (40)

As Lucini observes, literary misogyny has an ancient lineage.

Dossi's own entry into the ranks comes at the end of Romanticism and Claudio Varese has argued that the text has to be seen in the context of the construction of women and love which is particular to Romanticism.

La donna avrebbe dovuto essere il filo che guida nel labirinto della vita, simbolo dell'intelligenza amorosa che salva l'uomo: ma non è: la donna tradisce quella che dovrebbe essere la sua missione romantica. (41)

Nino Fiore, alias Carlo Dossi, enjoys the fruits of a library of classical and medieval misogyny, but a younger version of the same man, Alberto Pisani, was seen at the beginning of his story, restructuring his very much smaller library of Romantic texts, in which Dante's Vita Nuova receives pride of place while Boccaccio drops to the floor. Later in Amori Carlo Dossi tells his readers that he could not love the women of the classics because: "Non conoscèvano il pudore del vizio, nè la modestia della virtù." (42) Moral attributes have now become gender related. Françoise Basch has noted that an inevitable consequence of a culture which makes woman symbol of all it would like to be (but isn't) is that she is

divested of all sexuality and corporality:

Thus the woman, the very ideal of mother and wife, source of all virtue and purity, appeared as the good conscience of Victorian society. Poets, moralists and philosophers embellished the domestic and family role of the woman with a universal and transcendental dimension. But the mutation of the Eve myth into the Mary myth, of temptress into redeemer, implied a fundamental process of de-sexualization of the woman, who was bit by bit deprived of her carnal attributes. (43)

By the same token, woman, object of male lust, then becomes responsible for it. Dossi too directs his pen - instrument of power, both sexual and cultural - first and foremost at female lust, at, in his phrase "Eva, la protoputtana," as he turns on a mob of women

Un'arma solo mi resta - càrica per fortuna, con un
sùbito moto, la sfòdero.

Meraviglia! incanto! Un bràmito di voluttuoso
terrore, di riverenza e di cupidigia, distèndesi di
bocca in bocca. (44)

Le desinenza in 'A' is the underbelly of the cultural and ideological attitudes to women then prevalent. It inverts the passivity and submissiveness of earlier and contemporary heroines in favour of the active sexual aggression of "real" women. (The persecuted virgin was one of the cardinal themes of the novel, e.g. Ranieri-Ginevra, Manzoni - I Promessi Sposi, Tarchetti - Paolina, based on the law of the natural fragility of the female who needs to be protected by the male.) Whereas man is usually predator and the female the innocent and persecuted victim, the roles are now reversed and we have woman as hunter and the male who falls victim to her insatiable appetites. As a text which belongs to a specific transhistorical and transcultural genre, its links are longitudinal rather than contemporary, indeed the demands of the genre run counter to the then-current expectations of the novel. In misogynistic literature - in common with racist literature - the invective reduces

the object to a fixed set of categories in which the similarities are held to outweigh the differences. The categories themselves are usually very limited and are structured around the unspoken relationship that is thought to exist between the subject of the discourse and the speaking subject (misogynistic literature concentrates on sexuality). It makes for a repetitive and limited literature; furthermore, at the time Dossi was writing, although positivism and its literary offshoot naturalism, were engaged in the classification of human types, they were nonetheless constructed around a typology of difference which did not hesitate to enter into minutiae. Misogynistic literature is one of characterisation, - indeed it is in the Margine to Desinenza that Dossi abjures plot on the grounds that it is mere trickery designed to keep the reader at it, so he was faced with the problem of presenting a set of limited and shallow female types to an audience who were becoming accustomed to the sophisticated psychological insights of realism, in a form which would defamiliarize them and make them interesting.

Whereas the text we discussed in the previous chapter Fosca, is probing at various levels the problematics of character, La desinenza in 'A' presents woman as an unproblematic category constituted through definitions - in this case negative - which have already consolidated over the centuries. The reductionist position it adopts is evident already from the title before the reader even opens the book.

Già il titolo, La desinenza in 'A', vuole rappresentare, sotto la specie dell'ironia, un vero e proprio choc per il lettore borghese, e assieme indicare il sintomo di qualcosa che s'è inceppato nell'identità dell'autore. La "desinenza in A" è la donna, ridotta, dunque a pure fenomeno grammaticale; non essere vivente e, in parte, nemmeno nome, ma solo sotto-prodotto del nome,

desinenza, variante in negativo di quel positivo che dovrebbe essere il maschio, se poi non ci accorgessimo che il Dossi esercita la suo ironia acida anche nei confronti dei suoi stessi compagni di sesso. (45)

The question then presents itself as to how character in such circumstances can be presented afresh given that the final product, the text itself will not only be a reflection of meanings previously produced, but will also constitute a point of production for future definitions.

7.4 "La desinenza in 'A'": character and frame

In the discussion that follows on the construction of character in La desinenza in 'A' I have not always used the same conceptual tools as those with which I worked on Fosca. In the latter I drew from the concept of sèmes or traits as developed by Barthes in his reading of Sarrasine, but it is not so helpful in a narrative which does not progressively and cumulatively build up an impression of character within the confines of an internal chronology or "story-time". While there is a tenuous plot in Desinenza (46) based on the reappearance of a few of the characters, the narrative is broken up by being structured into a series of tableaux (described within the text as scenes) so that the humanizing dimensions conferred by a sense of continuity and sequentiality are eliminated. Each scene is complete in itself even where it involves the re-appearance of a character.

The tableau (pictorial, theatrical, literary) is a pure cut-out segment with clearly defined edges, irreversible and incorruptible; everything that surrounds it is banished into nothingness, remains unnamed, while everything that it admits within its field is promoted into essence, into light, into view. Such demiurgic discrimination implies high quality of thought: the tableau is intellectual, it has something to say (something moral, something social) but it also says it knows how this must be done. (47)

The effect this has is to freeze the character within the parameters of the scene so there is no carry-over and each protagonist becomes associated uniquely with the defect she embodies.

La struttura per atti e per quadri garantisce la persistenza di barriere anche all'interno della narrazione stessa: non esiste continuità, cioè vita; ma tutto è interrotto, personaggi, vicende; con un'impressione di terribile distanza, cronologica, emotiva, fra il primo e il dopo: il tempo non ha leggi, ma è ispessito a blocco senza vita, a eternità immobile: i personaggi sono fondamentalmente identici a se stessi e, quando a se tornano in scena, non vivono di alcuna variazione o trasformazione psicologica: dietro la parvenza di vita appare la morte. (48)

The autonomy of the scenes is heightened by narrative difference; there are scenes which tell stories and those which simply describe, there are fables and parodies, there are those constructed purely from direct speech, there are some in which story-time relates to a few minutes and others in which it is a question of years.

In his analysis of narrative structure in 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits', Barthes identifies three categories, "fonctions", "actions" and "narration". The first, which is what interests us here, is sub-divided into "distributionnelles" and "intégratives" and it is for the former that he reserves the term adopted by Propp of "fonctions" i.e. consequential acts which relate to the development of the story. It is in turn the second category that concerns us:

La seconde grande classe d'unités, de nature intégrative, comprend tous les "indices" (au sens très général du mot); l'unité renvoie alors, non à un acte complémentaire et conséquent, mais à un concept plus ou moins diffus, nécessaire cependant au sens de l'histoire: indices caractériels concernant les personnages, etc.; la relation de l'unité et de son corrélat n'est plus alors distributionnelle (souvent plusieurs indices renvoient au même signifié et leur ordre d'apparition dans le

discours n'est pas nécessairement pertinent), mais intégrative; pour comprendre "à quoi sert" une notation indicielle, il faut passer à un niveau supérieur (actions des personnages ou narration), car c'est seulement là que se dénoue l'indice... les indices, par la nature en quelque sorte verticale de leurs relations, sont des unités véritablement sémantiques, car, contrairement aux "fonctions" proprement dites, ils renvoient à un signifié, non à une "opération"; la sanction des indices est "plus haut", parfois même "opération"; hors du syntagme explicite... (le "caractère" d'un personnage peut n'être jamais nommé, mais cependant sans cesse indexé), c'est une sanction syntagmatique. (49)

La desinenza in 'A' is saturated in "indices caractériels" (these refer to verbs or actions as well as adjectives), which are not functional in an operational sense, they do not move the action but which as signifiers work to relate the individual female to the Female as species. From this is derived the text's unity. Just as painting imposes a viewing perspective which positions the viewer in relation to the canvas (Dossi draws the analogy between Desinenza and Hogarth's paintings) so through these "indices" the author positions his reader. The more the text's ideological intention is controlled, the more closely the author has to control the meanings produced by the reader. Much of this work is performed by the "indices caractériels" which implicitly (the reader is educated into what Barthes calls "une activité de déchiffrement") refer to the totality of the work. It is therefore these indices which construct the text's ideology.

As misogyny can neither accommodate a wealth of psychological detail nor can it allow the reader to "get near" the characters, the variety lies elsewhere in the different technical and linguistic forms used to convey the "indices".

The principal technique which Dossi discusses very perceptively in the "màrgine" exploits the semantic interdependence

of person and place, but instead of searching for literary precedents he turns to the visual arts to offer us an exemplary lesson in reading.

Oltracciò, vi ha un altro legame più intimo, che si tentò di celare nel nesso tra la natura ambiente, così detta "morta" da chi non ha fino l'orecchio, e la storia, il carattere, il "momento" degli attori che ne son circondati. Chi conosce il segreto dei pinti romanzi di Hogarth, comprenderà le mie scritte pitture. Il mòbile, la tappezzeria, la pianta, vi acquistano un valore psichico, vi completano l'uomo, e, da semplici attrezzi teatrali, vengono a far parte integrante del ruolo dei personaggi. Gli è il coro dell'antica tragedia ridotto a forma moderna. (50)

Where at one level Dossi identifies what he is doing as being an inevitable consequence of literary evolution from which there is no escape for the individual writer, at the same time he sees this work as being qualitatively different in that it assimilates the techniques of painting. Usually as one reads one travels forward through the text transported by the plot which speeds us on our way faster and faster "a rotto di collo" until we reach the finishing-post. Dossi argues that he has retained plot but in so doing he has displaced it on to the framing device, the link between character and environment, the link between writer and reader and finally through the re-appearance of some of the characters. Although he does not himself say so, this means that it becomes a product of the reading instead of being the formal arrangement of the story. Plot now becomes almost static, acutely self-conscious it has become part of the discours and subsequently acts as a brake on the reader. This reverse process of slowing-down the reader is accentuated by the construction of individual scenes in which some are so short that they are encompassed within the frame of a single location, like a painting or a still, so that the reader reconstructs in terms of

space and not in terms of movement. Character then freezes into that space, past and future become irrelevant as indeed does anything else beyond that frame so that the question of what happens next does not present itself. Mirella Serri in an interesting book called Carlo Dossi e il racconto draws attention to the moral implications of a world in which the individual has become a combination of particulars which vanish only to reappear "... o reincarnato nella materia, e quindi oggetto antropomorfizzato, oppure come individuo privato di "personalità" e reso trascurabile dettaglio dell'universo". (51)

7.5 Construction of character, Act 1 Scene 1

Act one scene one plays with the different possibilities that the relationship between character and environment offers the writer. The process of displacement, of an offloading of human characteristics on to inanimate objects, is initiated in the second sentence, where a familiar metonymic device ("Il palazzo dei Garza si stava abbigliando pel ballo di gala..." (52) is sustained and elaborated throughout the scene. The 'head' of the household, il conte, is written into the text as an individual who is distinguishable only by lack - lack of influence, lack of presence and lack of control - and Dossi, in the few words with which he alludes to him succeeds in drawing attention to his marginality in three ways, by putting the reference and by extension the count in parenthesis, with the inclusion of the superfluous anche and, of course, the final analogy, ("... che la contessa Tullia (c'è anche un marito, ma conta per vetro rotto)...") (53). The reference to glass is picked up further down the same paragraph

when the value of the glass chandelier speaks silently back to the count's own value as "vetro rotto". He is later shown migrating from his study, which is to become a boudoir, because like the furniture he is a displaceable commodity (the use of the indefinite article in "un marito" - the definite article would be more usual - suggests too that he is replaceable) although unlike the furniture he does not have the assistance of servants and the last reference to him again confirms his absence of authority, this time in regard to his seven-year-old daughter.

Where the count is written into the text as, an albeit ineffectual, presence e.g. "... ha dovuto raccôrrre le sue ittèriche carte", the countess is presented as an absence. The count is presented as a ridiculous figure, but he does figure, while against this the absence of the countess, in an ideology which situates the woman's world in the home, is itself an unspoken but implicit condemnation. A very familiar device in 19th century literature (and even more exploited in letteratura di consumo where it becomes a kind of metonymic shorthand) is to introduce and describe a character's 'inner being' through his or her features, clothes, hair-style etc. Dossi appropriates and subverts this so that the possessions do not create an individual, but instead the individual that the label contessa together with a proper name construes for the reader, is collapsed back into her belongings:

... è un guazzabuglio, una arlecchineria di fogge e di colori, di sottanine e di gonne, di sbuffi e volanti, di bindella e cervelli ... dico cioè capellini. Potrei, fossi maligno, osservare che la padrona, a pezzi e a pezzetti, c'è tutta. (54)

The intervention of the narrative voice at this stage signals to the reader the way to interpret the description of the unusual properties of the dress that is being manufactured for her.

E sul tavolone un monte di bava di bachi, spuma
 senza sostanza come la bonne société, che basterebbe
 a parare otto donne, ma non a salvare il pudore a
 una sola, un candidissimo monte, che decresce man
 mano... (55)

So an assessment of the contessa is carried through the description of her dress and nothing more. Similarly, later in the scene, her relationship with her daughter is conveyed through her daughter's relationship with her doll. (Isa, the daughter, is presented as a doll with a "muscoletto linguale".) The displacement of person on to possession is constantly present as the dominant reading of the scene: one from which the reader is not permitted to escape, as for example in the simile included in parenthesis below which returns the reader to the moral intention of the discourse:

... sin contro uno sposareccio cassone, di quelli
 che con le sculture e gli intarsii dissimulano (come
 l'abito bello il cuor brutto) la biancheria sudicia. (56)

The transfer of the properties of one class of nouns (characters) on to another (objects), also operates the other way, again indicators of the disparity between how things should be and how they are: "... là, il lamento di un mobile grave che non voleva mutar domicilio compromettendo la sua emèrita età". (57) Displacement as a literary styleme finds its counterpart at a contextual level in which nothing is as it appears nor serves the function it was intended for: "Poichè la pompa ha ucciso la comodità".

The invective behind this description of "una gran casa in rovina" has a long tradition. Juvenal had associated the corruption of women with the advent of the accumulation of wealth and possessions while one of Dossi's other preferred writers, Tasso, had in La Gerusalemme liberata depicted woman as a carrier of chaos and a subverter of the established order. (58) Although "Le due poppatole"

is built from a set of familiar literary clichés, the crack in the huge mirror ("e di più stelleggia nel vastissimo specchio un gran crepo"), is not a realistic reflection but a dislocated image in which physical properties are deformed. In the introduction Dossi argues the case for a constant transformation or deformation of language,

... che un idioma, come qualsiasi altro mortale frutto, è destinato se non spègnesi in germe, a percorrere l'intero suo ciclo fino alla maturanza completa, fino alla conchiusiva caduta dall'álbero della vita, a che l'único mezzo di evitargli una ràpida morte, è di trasfondergli continuamente umore, (59)

and it is this awareness of the ineffectualness of the habitual which leads him to propound a theory that was later to become central to formalist poetics, as the principle of ostranenie or the art of creatively deforming the familiar. When Shklovsky applied it to the visual by drawing a distinction between 'recognition' and 'seeing' he described a process synonymous with Dossi's in La desinenza in 'A'.

This new attitude to objects in which, in the last analysis, the object becomes perceptible, is that artificiality which, in our opinion, creates art. A phenomenon, perceived many times, and no longer perceivable, or rather, the method of such dimmed perception, is what I call 'recognition' as opposed to 'seeing'. The aim of imagery, the aim of creating new art is to return the object from 'recognition' to 'seeing'. (60)

7.6 Three women: Isa, Elda and Eugenia

The opening scene also introduces the reader to Isa who is one of the three female characters who reappear intermittently through the text. The other two are present in the next scene "In collegio". The description of Isa is effected through her doll "la graziosa Fanny, una fantoccia che le assomigliava come

uovo a uovo", a puppet in other words. Isa, Elda and Eugenia are neither developed nor elaborated as characters, even the sound of their respective names overlaps as much as it differentiates:

... i personaggi sono fondalmente identici a sè stesse e, quando a se tornano in scena, non vivono di alcuna variazione o trasformazione psicologica: dietro la parvenza di vita apparve la morte. (61)

Moreover the indices which could be used to identify Elda and Eugenia (Isa's position is more ambivalent, a point I shall return to) as individuals are intended to connect them to a category, undermining therefore a notional individualism. This leaves Dossi with the problem, inherent also to the psychological or realist novel with regard to minor characters, as to how to remind readers of their previous appearances. Isa is easily identifiable by her restricted linguistic code, an impoverished and inadequate confusion of French and Italian phrases, which signals her presence even before her name. The deictic value of the name itself is exploited aided by the fact that the changes in a woman's surname carry additional information. Isa di Garza, the narrator does not use her father's name, "... che Isa, quand' anche non figlia del conte Gonzalo, di donna Tullia era certo", becomes upon her marriage "la Millerose di Garza" (act 1 scene 5) but when she elopes the author drops her married name and uses only Isa which offers a note of familiarity and even sympathy. Play is then made on the signifying capacity of the proper name in Isa's last appearance (Isa never reaches the last act, she dies at the end of the second act), "una donna ai confini della gioventù a della vita", (62) in that her appearance has undergone such a change that it is only because of the name on the dressmaker's bill that narrator and reader are able to identify her. Thoroughly humiliated and ruined, the mistake in

the spelling of her first name intimates her switch in fortune.

... una faccia peraltro che nuova non ci giungeva
ma che avremo penato assai a raffigurare se alla
memoria non ci fosse soccorso un conto di sarta,
che fra biglietti di pegno e lettere spiegazzate
posava sul comodino, e per indirizzo recava "à
madame la marquise Iza Millerose di Garza". (63)

In the case of Eugenia Ottonieri another of the trio introduced to the reader while at school, the signifier that remains constant along with her first name, is the reference to her greed, "... il cui nome di Eugenia Ottonieri accompagnava la ciccìa di una ragazza barocca..." (64) entitled to the use of her father's name, three scenes later she reappears as "la cicciosa Ottonieri" (65). When late in life she puts in a reappearance as patroness of the arts (act 3 scene 6) the smell of a roast dominates the salon and her expected entry into the scene turns out to be a bowl of soup, "Senonchè la baronessa... non era. Era invece una zuppa" (66). Back at school the third of the trio, Elda Batori, "... dall'occhio umido e grigio e dalla voce che agiva voluttuosamente sul tatto," (67) returns in act 2 scene 8 as the woman of prodigious sexual appetites, whose name has changed but whose face signals the same person, "... duchessa di Stabia, che con un altro cognome ma colla stessa mortezza di viso e gli stessi occhi grigissimi e morsicanti e le tùmide labbra e il seno profondo, abbiamo incontrato più volte." (68) She ends her years as patron of the Church in act 3 scene 5 in which a reference half way through the episode to "casa di Stabia" can easily be overlooked unlike the mention of "Sua Eccellenzadonn'Elda" which closes the scene on a high note of irony.

The principal signifier in each case is the proper name which combines two functions; it establishes the fact, through the

same signifier having already been used, that this is a re-appearance and its permutations confer a sketchy biography on its subject. In addition to this each name carries with it an "indice caractériel" which relates the name to a fixed, culturally immobile, stereotype, it constitutes one manifestation of the subject of the text, "... gli atti di una sola tragicommedia 'La Donna'" (69). What does not occur is the conglomeration of semes, which progressively establish an illusion of solidity, of character. Here there is only repetition, there is no accumulation or transformation. Even their positioning within the narrative as a whole, beyond the mechanical division of the three acts into, broadly speaking, the three ages of woman, is arbitrary and without implication.

Il frammentismo capricciosamente viene legato da tre figure di donna, colte con sparse istantanee in momenti diversi della loro vita: tre incarnazioni di un solo aspetto teorico: (è questo un assillo troppo polemico che presupponendosi ai personaggi li disumanizza) Isa, la frivolezza; Eugenia, il calcolo; Elda, la sensualità insaziabile. (70)

This hostile and oppressive vision of the other sex, one which excludes all possibility of individuality: ("Ci sono generi nelle donne, ma non caratteri", N.A. 543) or even regeneration, as Renata Schira points out in the passage quoted above, is produced through and produces a counter-text. As the realist texts work hard to encode an aura of psychological reality and motivation, a sense of characters enduring beyond the end of the book, a totality which is more than the sum of its parts, so Dossi prevents his characters from becoming more than their meagre allowance of signifiers permits by denying them continuity (their existence is played out within the parameters of each

scene), or 'autonomy' (the reader is constantly being reminded of the narrator's presence and his power). As there are no plots linking the different episodes, but many of the scenes do tell stories, the three connecting characters are further denied an illusion of depth by their re-entry into the text within the confines of isolated and un-connected plots. They therefore are actants, subservient to the plot, rather than personnages, bringing their life with them. Where the history of Eugenia's marriage is narrated in two adjoining episodes ("Gioje del matrimonio" act 1 scenes 8 and 9) the one depicting the baron and his thoughts as he awaits his wife's return, the other embracing the history of their daughter's birth and life to the point at which she runs away from home with her mother's lover, the bleakest view of women is carried by the figure of Elda, "in un medèsimo tempo, sposa, vèdova, erede" (71) who has to bear the full weight of the author's horror of female sexuality. The reader is reminded as to who she is but no attempt is made to delineate a past, instead when she reappears in act 2 scene 8 "Tana di lupa" she is enclosed in a timeless parody of fable as genre in which her one trait, lust, becomes the plot. There is no potential choice or hesitation between the desire and the action.

Of the three friends, Isa, Elda and Eugenia, Isa it seems to me has a slightly different position and this difference in fictional biography finds its roots in the grammar of the text. As such it is of interest with regard to the positioning of the characters in general within the text. The 'biographical' difference rests in the fact that Isa ends her life as a victim, the other two continue as victors, controlling the lives of others. The text itself draws attention to her role as victim; she is

victim of her own bad judgement :("... e quanto ad Azzolino, non era meglio forse di possederlo, stāndosene in casa, che di esserne posseduto, uscēndone?" (72)), victim of letteratura di consumo ("imitando appunto i due protagonisti del parigino romanzo, ultimo uscito" (p. 693)) and victim of her maid, as once dead "Calmissamente, madamigella Chantal le tolse di dito gli anelli" (73). Initially all goes well for Isa, she becomes "moglie ad un Millerose, nobile, ricco, benfatto, e per soprapiù, āsino". (74) until the last scene of the first act "A venticinque anni", which at one level of reading serves as a metacommentary on that very literature which is Isa's undoing. (The drama inscribed in the brief and terse opening assertions, "Era l'alba. Il treno correva velocissimo" which the closing statement again picks up with an additional reference to location. The train, in this genre, being a signifier of, not only travel, but also of running away particularly when coupled with the fact that it's dawn and the carriage is first-class. The episode is also rich in clichés concerning the heroine's doubts, now too late, her thoughts of the past, her solitariness etc.) But the potency of the genre lies also in the positioning of the reader in relationship to the heroine, a point which is neatly illustrated by this scene. In the opening the narrator adopts an external perspective and presents the two protagonists as quite separate from him and therefore from his reader. His description of the two nameless passengers in the first-class carriage is limited to the external in other words to their appearance. The single-sentence paragraph which follows indicates a change of modality, the narrator now reveals that he has more intimate knowledge of his female protagonist, whose name

is also released, bringing with it a moment of recognition for the reader. "E la donna pensava: caso raro in donna e specialmente in Isa". (75) The sentence bridges the transition to the inner perspective which the next paragraph employs in which the narrator moves to an internal view of Isa's thoughts and emotions. Most of the rest of the scene is constructed from Isa's thoughts, portrayed unambivalently in the style and register of the author. There is a moment however when the author comes very close to an inner monologue, when Isa thinks back to her marriage and the clothes she wore on that occasion. (76) This modality creates an intimacy between the reader and the protagonist because it offers the former a privileged reading. This positioning is offered to the reader only in relationship to Isa, and it signals her transformation from victor to victim which is then confirmed in the subsequent and final scene in which she appears (act 2 scene 10) in which however the entry into an internal perspective does not recur. The tale of Isa's undoing, which unlike her peers' stories of success, occupies a space constructed out of historical time with an internal chronology and causality which links the three scenes, does not signify a weakening in Dossi's theoretical position but actually has a different history in regard to the writing of the text. The crucial chapter on Isa's elopement which we looked at briefly above was not originally included in the text by its author, but was substituted after his death in 1913, when Lucini produced an edition of Dossi's writings, on the request of the author's widow who wished to exclude the anti-clerical scene "In monastero" which originally came at the end of the second act.

(77)

This scene, included later and possibly never intended as parody, becomes significant because it marks the protagonist's transition from victor to victim, from subject to object, and it tells a story in which, by changing modalities, the reader's relationship to Isa is altered not only for the duration of this scene but also for the next. If one leaves aside the indices of character or type to look instead at the function of the characters, what they do rather than what they are, it becomes apparent that the female characters are the agents of the actions, the men are the objects and the relationship between the two sexes is invariably one of opposition. Within Greimas's actantial theory the actant need not be just the one person,

... et comme l'actant définit une classe, il peut se remplir d'acteurs différents, mobilisés selon des règles de multiplication, de substitution ou de carence. (78)

This oppositional, paradigmatic structure is elaborated ad nauseam in La desinenza in 'A'. The male victim can be as small as baby Millo (act 1 scene 2) or as huge as Elda's "army" (act 2 scene 8), the female subject is the entire sex; it can be embodied in two, such as mother and daughter (act 1 scene 7) or in many, as in the group of feminists (act 3, scene 8). What is important is that it is a fundamental reversal of the familiar narrative structure of the novel, in which despite the amount of narrative space occupied by women and despite their structural importance to the plot, they are generally positioned as object of the action. Moreover Greimas, who is interested in the homologous relationship between narrative structure and the sentence, does not differentiate between the different possible types of actant, but one could take it a stage further in regard to this text and observe that the female subjects of La desinenza in 'A' are never unwitting agents; their positioning

and actions are the consequence of their intention. If one then looks at the organisation of the scenes in terms of sentence structure, the first two acts tend to follow the familiar order of agent-subject, verb and object, but in the last act the order is reversed so that the actantial role is traced through from the object-victim to the subject. In "Nel confessionario" the reading begins in the confessional, "lo spiritual lavandino" and it is only as the reader proceeds that he realizes that the agent speaking through the priest to the repentant figure is not God, but "Sua Eccellenza donn'Elda" who has replaced him as the prime organising principle, while similarly the subsequent scene "La chiocchia dei letterati" opens with and is organised around the thoughts of Umiltà as he awaits the entry of the patroness of the arts "Donna Eugenia Caprara". The pervasive sense of oppression that dominates a reading of the text, springs not only from the limited and negative indices caractériels (no different, for example, in this respect from the depiction of women in The Thousand and One Nights), but more importantly from the positioning of the women in the text as the witting initiators and agents of the actions. Each scene is an enactment of a variation of the one paradigm in which the female sex occupies the position of subject of actions designed to oppress the male object.

Afterword

The texts that have been discussed in the present thesis share one dominant feature; they each privilege the relationship with the reader and develop a range of techniques whereby a commentary is instigated and sustained. Tarchetti perceived the act of writing as a branch of verbal communication and before putting pen to paper he would repeat the sentences aloud until they sounded like natural speech. Rovani elaborated a relationship with his readers which took precedence over the pretences and subterfuges of story-telling, while Dossi developed this priority still further by proposing that in his writing the rapport between author and reader would usurp the function of the plot.

Of the two parties involved in realizing the literary text, each is present in several guises. The author is grounded in a social, cultural and historical reality which he can do little to change, but in the text he is transformed into the persona of the implied author (who may or may not be the narrator, but in the texts we have discussed usually is), who as with any other fictional character is manufactured out of a compromise between the author's intentions and the text's requirements. The reader on the other hand is partly pre-selected according to the nature of the text, its language, its place and method of publication, its subject-matter, and is partly for the duration of the reading the ideal reader that the text presupposes. The implied author implicitly or explicitly instructs the implied reader as to how the text should be read, and in this way the real author exercises control over the way in which his book is consumed and interpreted. But there is a third face to the reader which can surface upon re-reading (the

re-reader is the creature Dossi specifically requests) who, familiar with the story, character and plot, is freed to bring to the surface the underlying structures that mobilise its meanings.

Re-reading the work of Rovani, Tarchetti and Dossi lends itself to two forms of critical discourse. They are minor writers because they are unable to transcend or turn to their creative advantage (with the possible exception of Dossi) the cultural problems confronting them. But as documents they offer valuable insights into the difficulties facing the writer in this period. Maria Corti has written an eloquent defence of the literary and social significance of such writers:

Ma il tessuto connettivo della letteratura è costituito dagli autori minori, i cui testi si coordinano all'interno dei generi letterari, questi grandi istituti di mediazione fra la coscienza collettiva e le strutture sociali da un canto e le opere di primo piano dall'altro. In letteratura nulla è semplice, il semplice è una nostra semplificazione: lo studio dei minori ne dà prove eccitanti; la loro storia è la storia della società letteraria e di quel suo fitto colloquiare che è la letteratura.

(Principi della comunicazione letteraria, 1976, p. 184)

But because they do confront the cultural problems, they discard old forms in favour of an innovative and experimental literary practice which has much to tell the re-reader about the processes and structures of narration.

Chapter 1.

Political unity and cultural disunity.

1. P. Villari, Le lettere meridionali ed altri scritti sulla questione sociale in Italia, 1872, quoted in A. Asor Rosa, Storia d'Italia, vol. 4. Dall'Unità a oggi, Torino, Einaudi, 1975, p. 825.
2. G. Visconti Venosta, Ricordi di gioventù 1847-1860, Milano, Rizzoli, 1959, p. 131.
3. A. Asor Rosa, Storia d'Italia, p. 833.
4. Illustrazione italiana, 7 gennaio 1877.
5. P. Villari, 'La scuola e la questione sociale in Italia' in Le lettere meridionali ed altri scritti sulla questione sociale in Italia, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1878, p. 104.
6. The middle-class vote was brought in with the reform-bill of 1882.
7. L'Italia radicale. Carteggi di F. Cavallotti 1887-1898, a cura di L. Dalla Nogare e S. Merli, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1959, p. 38.
8. Rivista minima, 30 aprile 1865.
9. ibid., 6 febbraio 1871.
10. I. U. Tarchetti, Tutte le opere, a cura di E. Ghidetti, Bologna, Cappelli, 1967, vol. 1. p. 231.
11. Atti parlamentari, Camera, Discussioni, Legislatura vii, p. 317 quoted in G. Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia moderna vol. V La costruzione dello Stato unitario, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1970, p. 114.
12. "Tavolozza" e "Penombre", a cura di A. Romanò, Bologna, Cappelli, 1963. Tavolozza was first published in 1862 followed by Penombre in 1864.
13. G. Rovani, Cento anni, Milano, Garzanti, 1975, vol. 2, p. 663.

14. C. Dossi, Gocce d'inchiostro, in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, Milano, Garzanti, 1944, p. 351 and p. 352.
15. G. Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia moderna vol. V, p. 367.
16. C. Dossi, Note Azzurre, a cura di D. Isella, Milano, Adelphi, 1964, vol. 1. N.A. 2333.
17. *ibid.*, N.A. 2463.
18. E. Praga, "Alla musa" in Trasparenze in Poesie a cura di M. Petrucciani, Bari, Laterza, 1969, p. 283.
19. I do not chart the history of the Scapigliatura for this has been comprehensively done by G. Mariani in 'Alle origini della Scapigliatura' in Convivium, maggio-giugno 1961 (pp. 280-321) and luglio-agosto 1961 (pp. 423-460).
20. 'Almanacco del Pungolo', dicembre 1858. The extract is reprinted in M. Parenti, 'L'atto di nascita della Scapigliatura', in Ancora Ottocento sconosciuto o quasi, Firenze, Sansoni, 1954.
21. D. Isella, 'La Scapigliatura lombarda: un nome, una definizione', in Mostra della "Scapigliatura", Milano, Società per le Belle Arti, 1966.
22. F. Cameroni, La Bohême. Scene della Scapigliatura parigina di Enrico Murger, Milano, Sonzogno, 1890.
23. Gazzettino, 18 dicembre 1867, and Meglio tardi che mai!!! Strenna del Gazzettino rosa, Milano, Golio Santo, 1872, p. 138.
24. This aspect has been seized upon by subsequent critics. Anceschi, for example, defines the Scapigliatura as the first of the "contemporaneous" or what is more commonly known as decadent groups but he denies their existence as

an organized movement.

Per la stessa indole degli uomini cui il nome si riferisce, e per l'ordine delle idee che essi professarono, con la nozione di Scapigliatura si indica solo il convergere di libere personalità in alcuni motivi comuni di poetica, per altro, con una compattezza tanto salda quanto spontanea. È un convergere di amicizie intorno soprattutto ad alcune comuni insofferenze.

L. Anceschi, 'Protesta e rifugio nell'irrazionale' in Le poetiche del Novecento in Italia, Milano, Marzorati, 1962, pp. 52-3.

25. Tarchetti fu uomo che ebbe lacrime e dolori molti, gioie pochissime, rari sorrisi e fugaci... Egli va annoverato tra quei moltissimi che abituati al dolore, di altro non parlano, di altro non scrivono,
- C. Catanzaro, Cari estinti, Firenze, Tip. del Vocabolario, 1873, p. 35.
26. La Vita Nuova, 1 marzo 1877.
27. Figaro, 7 gennaio 1864.
28. ibid., 14 gennaio 1864
29. In Lirici della Scapigliatura a cura di G. Finzi, Milano, Mondadori, 1965, p. 40. The poem addressed to Manzoni is to be found on page 84 of the same anthology.
30. Figaro, 4 febbraio 1864.
31. Cronaca grigia, 8 dicembre 1860.
32. T. De Mauro, 'Riflessi sociali e linguistici dell'Unità' (pp. 49-51), in Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita, Bari, Laterza, 1963.
33. E. Ragionieri, Storia d'Italia vol. 4, Dall'Unità a oggi, Torino, Einaudi, 1976.

Anche il termine 'ricchi' costituiva senza dubbio una dizione impropria, generica, ma rifletteva il fatto indiscutibile che nell'opinione pubblica la forma tipica dell'arricchimento borghese era per

l'appunto quella speculativa, mentre rimaneva in ombra, in connessione con le caratteristiche oggettive dello sviluppo del capitalismo italiano, l'altra possibilità, quella produttiva.

pp. 1723-4.

34. A. Asor Rosa, Storia d'Italia, p. 841.
35. R. D. Altick, The English common reader. A social history of the mass reading-public, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1957.
36. La Riforma, 18 settembre 1885.
37. G. Carducci, Confessioni e battaglie, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1921, p. 49.
38. I. U. Tarchetti, Tutte le opere, vol. 1, p. 205.
39. B. Croce, 'R. Sacchetti', in Letteratura della nuova Italia, vol. V, Bari, Laterza, 1956, p. 136.
40. R. Sacchetti, Vita letteraria in Milano 1881, Milano, st. dall' Ottino per l'esposizione industriale, 1881, p. 433.
41. C. Catanzaro, Giuseppe Rovani. Profilo critico biografico, Firenze, tip. popolare di E. Ducci, 1875, pp. 11-12.
42. Quoted in F. Cavallotti, Della proprietà letteraria ed artistica e sua perpetuità, in Felice Cavallotti nella vita e nelle opere, Milano, Lombarda, 1898, p. 22.
43. *ibid.*, p. 18.
44. I. U. Tarchetti, Tutte le opere, p. 232.
45. C. Tenca, 'Delle condizioni dell'odierna letteratura in Italia', in C. Tenca, Saggi critici, a cura di B. Berardi, Firenze, Sansoni, 1969, pp. 270-289. Tenca argues that the contemporary writer while emancipated from the protection of the rich, is dependent instead on readers with little education. There was a time when the letterato had a

restricted public which shared his ideas, now he has a mass of readers for whom he has to become interpreter.

46. G. Faldella, 'Genesi di un romanzo giovanile', Tota Nerina, Bologna, Cappelli, 1972, p. 53.
47. Rivista minima, 31 maggio 1865.
48. The Treves brothers' publishing house became around 1880 the most important in Italy and remained so until about 1914.
49. Universo illustrato, 4 aprile 1869.
50. S. Farina, La mia giornata. Dall'alba al meriggio, Torino, S.T.E.N. 1910, p. 98.
51. G. Squarciapino, Roma bizantina. Società e letteratura ai tempi di Angelo Sommaruga, Torino, Einaudi, 1950, p. 206.
52. Sommaruga later attacked Dossi in Cronaca bizantina, 16 ottobre 1884.
- Il signor Dossi ci lascia.
Meno male, non avrò più la seccatura di ricevere ad ogni suo articolo un centinaio di reclami per le sue bizzarrie ortografiche, che danno il capogiro. Il signor Dossi era una fìsima del Direttore. Quanto ha fatto per toglierla, senza mai riuscire; s'è levata da sè. Andiamo a ringraziare gli Dei.
53. From the bibliographical notes on Dossi's work supplied by G. Lucini in Opere complete, Milano, Treves, 1910-1927, p. 136.
54. V. Pica, All'avanguardia. Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea, Napoli, Luigi Pierro, 1890, p. 442.
55. In Vita di Alberto Pisani an important feature of Alberto's library is the relationship between binding and content. Books are not commodities to be consumed and discarded.

Secondo lui, a Tàcito, a Machiavelli stava bene l'in-quarto, il tomo unico, la coperta robusta, sèmplice, seria; Metastasio invece potèvasi ròmperè a volumetti e a molti, caricare di fregi;

Ortis dovèasi lasciare in camicia, molle, pronto a sparire sotto ai quattr'occhi della signora maestra.

in Dossi, p. 75.

56. E. Gara and F. Piazza, Serata all'osteria della Scapigliatura, Milano, Bietti, 1945, p. 44.
57. Quoted in F. Cazzamini Mussi, Il giornalismo a Milano dal quarantotto al Novecento, Como, Cavalleri, 1935, p. 52.
58. Palestra letteraria artistica, dicembre 1867.
59. E. Ghidetti, Tarchetti e la Scapigliatura lombarda, Napoli, Libreria scientifica, 1968, p. 62.
60. T. Gautier, Voyage en Italie, Paris, Charpentier, 1892, p. 53.
61. P. Zaiotti, 'Del romanzo in generale, ed anche dei Promessi Sposi, romanzo di Alessandro Manzoni', in Biblioteca italiana, 47, settembre 1827 (pp. 322-372) and 48, ottobre 1827 (pp. 32-81).
62. The article originally appeared in Le National, 19 février, 1830, quoted, in translation, in Robert Alter, Stendhal, London, Allen and Unwin, 1980, p. 166.
63. M. Colummi Camerino, Idillio e propaganda nella letteratura sociale del Risorgimento, Napoli, Liguori, 1975, p. 147.
64. *ibid.*, p. 152. We shall be returning to this contradiction in our analysis of Tarchetti's novel Paolina.
65. I. U. Tarchetti, 'Idee minime sul romanzo' in Tutte le opere, vol. 2, p. 526.
66. S. Pellico, in a review of Lettere di Giulia Willet, Il Conciliatore, 37, 7 gennaio, 1819.
67. Inscribed London but printed in Zurich the "Notizia bibliografica" is an anonymous 111 page appendix.

68. G. Maffei, Storia della letteratura italiana dall'origine della lingua fino al secolo XIX, Milano, Italia, 1834, pp. 817-8. Tarchetti and Faldella were also to support this attitude.
69. C. Tenca, Saggi critici, pp. 274-5.
70. *ibid.*, p. 281.
71. G. Spini, 'Della letteratura inglese contemporanea', Rivista Europea, febbraio 1845. Quoted in M. Colummi Camerino, Idillio e propaganda, p. 182.
72. Il Crepuscolo, agosto-settembre 1853, p. 667. Quoted in M. Colummi Camerino, Idillio e propaganda, p. 211.
73. F. Portinari, Un'idea di realismo, Napoli, Guida, 1976, p. 28.
74. *ibid.*, p. 214.
75. M. Iknayan, The idea of the novel in France. The critical reaction 1815-48, Genève, Droz, 1961, pp. 89-90.
76. Salfi suggests that the co-existence of characters and events of such a different nature and social status detracts from the novel's unity. Revue encyclopédique, Paris, April 1828.
77. E. Praga, Memorie del presbiterio, Milano, Rizzoli, 1963, p. 35.
78. L. Capuana, Racconti, vol. 1., a cura di E. Ghidetti, Roma, Salerno, 1973, p. xviii.
79. G. Rovani, Cento anni, p. 3.
80. M. Bradbury, 'Putting in the person', The contemporary English novel. Stratford-Upon-Avon studies 18, London, Edward Arnold, 1979, p. 188.
81. G. Rovani, Cento anni, p. 4.

82. *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
83. G. Rovani, 'Preludio' to La Libia d'oro, Milano, Rizzoli, 1962.

Tutte le eccezioni sono un modo dell'esistenza e della vita; rifiutarle e condannarle vuol dire non mostrare che un lato solo del vero; ma la verità si falsa se non la si scopre da tutte le parti.

p. 11.

84. G. Rovani, Cento anni, p. 4.
85. I. U. Tarchetti, Tutte le opere, vol. 2, p. 523.
86. U. Foscolo, 'Saggio di Novelle di Luigi Sanvitale parmigiano' in Prose II a cura di V. Cian, Bari, 1913. Quoted in F. Portinari, Un'idea di realismo, p. 19.
87. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, vol. 1. N.A. 2169.

Chapter 2.

I.U. Tarchetti: Paolina and Una nobile follia. Popular fiction and political reality.

1. This novel can, in a sense, be seen as a part of Tarchetti's literary apprenticeship. Under the pressures of financial need, everything Tarchetti wrote he published using his own name where other writers might have chosen not to publish or to use a pseudonym.
2. D. Milelli, 'Profili letterari. I. U. Tarchetti', Il Convegno vol. III, fasc. iv, aprile 1874, pp. 332-336, quoted in E. Ghidetti, Tarchetti e la scapigliatura lombarda, Napoli, Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1968, p. 102. When the novel was republished in 1875, the author of the preface, who was probably Farina, had the following to say:

... apparsa per la prima volta in mezzo al frastuono delle armi, la Paolina passò inosservata; ben altre vicende drammatiche tenevano ansiosa la curiosità del pubblico; ed ai bollettini, alle corrispondenze dal campo erano insufficienti le colonne dei giornali. Nessuno parlò del nuovo racconto e del nuovo romanziere che in esso si rivelava.

(Milano, Tipografia editrice Lombarda, 1875)

3. C. M. I Misteri di Livorno (1953)
Lorenzini, I Misteri di Firenze (1857)
Sauli, I Misteri di Milano (1857)
anon, I Misteri di Roma (1861)
Despite the title, the genre did not require intimate knowledge of the locality. When Paul Féval visited London after writing his Mysteries of London he expressed his pleasure at finding that the city was as he described it.
4. E. Praga, "Donne e poesia", II. 110-112, in "Tavolozza" e "Penombre" Rocca San Casciano, Cappelli, 1963, p. 60. Regrets over the changing urban and rural landscapes were a common theme with the

Scapigliatura; see for example Praga's attack on the railway in "La strada ferrata" and A. Boito's poem "Case nuove" in Lirici della Scapigliatura, a cura di G. Finzi, Milano, Mondadori, 1965, pp. 76-81 and p. 118 respectively. Their laments over the destruction of the old and familiar and the coming of the new has a strong ring of nostalgia to it. Only Tarchetti and Dossi relate these changes to the material and economic conditions of life, as for example in Dossi's trenchant comments on the new Milanese suburbs:

Nei sobborghi di Milano, sono casoni di operai, subaffittate. Il sublocatore va lui stesso ogni sabato a raccogliere i fitti, qui due lire, là cinquanta centesimi, là 60. Cento stanze, cento famiglie: ogni stanza contiene 5 o 6 persone...

C. Dossi, Note azzurre, a cura di D. Isella, Milano, Adelphi, 1964, vol. 1, N.A. 2537.

5. E. Auerbach, Mimesis, Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1973, pp. 499-500.

6. Il letterato non ha soltanto la missione di scrivere, egli professa una grande religione e la segue, egli si eleva sulla grande famiglia umana per illuminarla e per dirigerla nella via de' suoi destini.

I. U. Tarchetti, Tutte le opere, a cura di E. Ghidetti, Bologna, Cappelli, 1967, vol. 2, p. 531.

7. The figure of the compromised artist is not one which will concern to the same degree the next generation of writers. De Marchi, for example, after his novel Il cappello del prete was published in instalments wrote in the preface to the book (1888),

L'arte è cosa divina, ma non è male di tanto in tanto scrivere anche per i lettori.

Quoted in A. Arslan Veronese, Dame, droga e galline, Padova, CLEUP, 1977, p. 1.

8. G. Rovani, Cento anni, Milano, Garzanti, 1975, p. 4.

9. 'Idee minime sul romanzo', in Tutte le opere, vol. 2, p. 531.

Dossi makes a very similar observation in his own notes.

Io nei libri cerco sempre il loro autore. - Si osservi in un lavoro di Arte se l'anima del suo autore è completa. Può mancare l'ultima mano in un lavoro d'autore d'ingegno completo: mancherà sempre per quanto apparentemente finito, in autore d'ingegno incompleto. -

Note azzurre, vol. 1, N.A. 1975.

10. 'Dovrei tacere come io scrissi questo racconto, con una specie di furore, negli ultimi venti giorni che compiono un periodo assai triste della mia vita, onde la soverchia amarezza che no traspare,...

Paolina, vol. 1, p. 248 in I. U. Tarchetti, Tutte le opere, a cura di E. Ghidetti, Bologna, Coppedì, 1967. All references will be to this edition. Hereafter I shall refer only to the title and the page number(s).

11. *ibid.* p. 253.

12. Such rhetoric was intrinsic to the genre.

13. Le Journal des Débats, 8 février 1843. Quoted in L. James, Fiction for the working-man 1830-1850, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973 p. 163.

14. Thus, after Paolina's death, Luigi on hearing the views of his friend the artist decides to enlist. He dies in battle and is posthumously awarded a medal for bravery.

15. G. Barberi Squarotti, 'Problemi della narrativa tarchettiana' in I. U. Tarchetti e la scapigliatura. Atti del convegno, San Salvatore, Monferrato, 1977, p. 86.

16. Paolina, p. 267.

17. An example of the former is to be found on p. 376 and of the latter on p. 265.

18. *ibid.*, p. 376.

19. 'Mineu' shares many features with Lucy Snowe, protagonist of Charlotte Bronte's Villette (1853). Tarchetti read and translated English novels.
20. E. Ghidetti, 'Introduzione' to Tutte le opere, p. 18.
21. Paolina, pp. 268-9.
22. In Tutte le opere, vol. 2, p. 529.
23. In an interesting book on sensation novels of the 1860's W. Hughes makes the point that these novels ensure that female readers learn that transgression means punishment is inevitable, when she alludes to "... the central confrontation between heroine and villain which tended to focus all the implications of the universal moral conflict between good and evil on the single issue of the heroine's chastity."
W. Hughes, The maniac in the cellar, New Jersey, Princeton U.P., 1980, p. ix.
24. The transitions between these scenes take place without the narrator intervening with the exception of the move to the marquis' residence, see n. 16.
25. Paolina, p. 261. The conventions of the genre, as for example, the heroine's physical attributes, were so stereotyped as to be instantly transferable from one country and culture to another.
26. *ibid.* p. 262.
27. In the death-bed scene father and rapist are identified as the same man.
28. E. H. Gombrich, Art and illusion, London, Phaidon, 1972, p. 148 and p. 174 respectively.
29. Paolina, p. 268.
30. *ibid.*, p. 268.
31. *ibid.*, p. 331
32. *ibid.*, p. 296.

33. *ibid.*, p. 265. Her perverse nature is signified by the love she has for a parrot. Elisa, Paolina's guardian, represents the other face of the bourgeoisie but she is defeated by evil.
34. *ibid.*, p. 343.
35. E. Auerbach, Mimesis, cit., p. 466.
36. A. Ghislanzoni, 'Una partita in quattro', in Capricci letterari to be found in the anthology Racconti della scapigliatura milanese, Novara, EPIDEM, 1973, pp. 128-129. The physical division between town and country remained pronounced in the 1860's, as the following passage illustrates.

Verso l'albeggiare d'un bel mattino, due ragazze ed un giovane uscivano dalla porta di S. Celso, e s'avviavano per i sentieri i più remoti di quei prati che si distendono dalle mura della città fin dove l'occhio può giungere ad ammirarli come un immenso tappeto di verzura.

- Paolina, p. 296. The symbolic value of the country is incorporated more fully in the text of Tarchetti's last novel, Fosca, where he resolves too the contradiction between the image of the town as corrupt and degenerate and its image as site for the creative and artistic.
37. Paolina, p. 304.
38. *ibid.*, p. 331.
39. *ibid.*, p. 371.
40. *ibid.*, p. 347.
41. Verga in Nedda (1874) takes it a generation further; mother, daughter and grand-daughter.
42. Paolina, p. 364.
43. After the first part of the section on the Crimean War had been published, Il Sole made the following announcement,

Tra breve avremo finito il racconto in corsa del signor Tarchetti, il favore con cui fu accolto dai nostri lettori Vincenzo D*** (Una nobile follia), ci ha persuasi a pubblicare nelle nostre collane altri due 'Bozzetti militari' dello

stesso autore, al primo dei quali speriamo poter dare principio alla metà del mese corrente. Ove l'abbondanza della materia non lo impedisca, per tre volte alla settimana l'appendice resterà al racconto del signor Tarchetti...

which is a further indication of the success of the book's military theme.

44. From November 1864 to November 1865 Tarchetti obtained a temporary discharge on grounds of ill-health and on his recall was sent to Parma where, in the same year, in part because of his disagreements with the military bureaucracy, in part because of the scandal resulting from his relationship with an epileptic woman (source of his last novel Fosca), he and the army parted company.
45. E. Ghidetti, 'Introduzione' to Tutte le opere, p. 28.
46. 'In cerca di morte' in Tutte le opere, vol. 1, p. 198.
47. S. Farina, La mia giornata (Dall'alba al meriggio), Torino, S.T.E.N., 1910, p. 97.
48. *ibid.*, p. 98.
49. Published originally by the Tipografia Guglielmini, it is now according to Ghidetti lost without trace.
50. C. Cattaneo, Epistolario, vol. iv, pp. 425-426.
51. Una nobile follia, vol. 1, p. 385, in I. U. Tarchetti, Tutte le opere, a cura di E. Ghidetti, Bologna, Cappelletti, 1967. All references will be to this edition. Hereafter I shall refer only to the title and page-number(s).
52. G. Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia moderna Vol. V: La costruzione dello Stato unitario, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1970, p. 145.
53. C. Pisacane, 'Ordinamento e costituzione delle milizie italiane, ossia, Come ordinare la nazione armata', quoted in P. Pieri, Guerra e politica negli scrittori italiani, Milano-Napoli, Ricciardi, 1955, pp. 244-245.

54. Una nobile follia, p. 453.
55. C. Cattaneo, Opere scelte, vol. 4: Scritti 1852-64, Torino, Einaudi, 1972, p. 208.
56. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, vol. 1, N.A. 2463.
57. A. Ghislanzoni, Abrakadabra. Storia dell'avvenire, in Rivista minima, 28 febbraio 1865. The novel itself is interesting as an early example of science-fiction.
58. Una nobile follia, p. 493.
59. For a full discussion of the controversy see F. Mattesini, 'Tarchetti e De Amicis: ragioni e significato di una polemica' in Letteratura e pubblico, Roma, Bulzoni, 1978, pp. 97-107.
60. G. Carducci, 'Dieci anni a dietro' in the Edizione nazionale delle opere del Carducci Bologna, Zanichelli, 1942 vol. xxiii, p. 247.
61. Una nobile follia, pp. 384-385.
62. *ibid.*, pp. 517-536.
63. F. Bettini, La critica e gli scapigliati, Bologna, Cappelli, 1976, p. 21.
64. F. Flora, Storia della letteratura italiana, Milano, Mondadori, 1965, vol. 5, p. 126.
65. F. Portinari, Un'idea di realismo, Napoli, Guida, 1976, p. 191.
66. Una nobile follia, p. 393.
67. To avoid confusion I shall, where necessary, identify the Vincenzo D. who deserts from the army as the second, this follows order of appearance.
68. Una nobile follia, p. 515.
69. L. Trilling, 'Art and Neurosis', in The liberal imagination, Harmondsworth, Peregrine, 1970, p. 173.
70. Una nobile follia, "Prefazione", p. 385.
71. *ibid.*, p. 393.

72. *ibid.*, p. 394.
73. *ibid.*, p. 419.
74. *ibid.*, pp. 438-439.
75. *ibid.*, pp. 419-444.
76. *ibid.*, p. 444.
77. *ibid.*, p. 455.
78. *ibid.*, p. 457.
79. *ibid.*, p. 465.
80. *ibid.*, p. 476.
81. *ibid.*, pp. 477-492.
82. *ibid.*, p. 492.
83. *ibid.*, p. 444.
84. F. Portinari, Un'idea di realismo, cit., p. 196.
85. Tarchetti himself had read De Vigny, Hugo and the Alsatian writers Erckmann-Chatrion who had written three stories on the question of military service and war, 'Fou Yégof', 'Madame Thérèse' and 'Le conscrit de 1813'.
86. Una nobile follia, p. 466.
87. *ibid.*, p. 453. In an interesting reading of the novel *Marinella Calumni Camerino* takes the army to be a metaphor for life.
- La diserzione dell'esercito in cui culmina la rivolta sociale di Vincenzo D. è metafora di una rottura definitiva con il mondo civile e di una perdita di fiducia nell'ordine razionale a vantaggio del quale si era operata la denuncia del male.
- M. Calumni Camerino, 'La narrativa di Tarchetti tra "ragione" e "follia", in Letteratura e scienza nella storia della cultura italiana, Palermo, Manfredi, 1978, p. 372. Tarchetti in his own description of life in army barracks describes it as a microcosm of what is happening outside: Una nobile follia, pp. 452-453.
88. *ibid.*, p. 453.
89. *ibid.*, p. 514.

G. Rovani: Cento anni. The teller and the tale.

1. Lamberto Malatesta (1843); Valenzia Candiano (1844); Manfredo Palavicino (1845-6).
2. G. Rovani, Cento anni, Milano, Garzanti, 1974, vol. I, p. 5. All references will be to this edition. Hereafter I shall refer only to the title and page-number(s).
3. *ibid.* vol. I, p. 6.
4. *ibid.* vol. II, pp. 786-7.
5. T. Eagleton, The rape of Clarissa, Oxford, Blackwell, 1982, p. 6.
6. G. Rovani, Le tre arti considerate in alcuni illustri contemporanei, Milano, Treves, 1874, vol. I, p. 37.
7. G. Rovani, La mente di Alessandro Manzoni, Milano, Treves, 1873, p. 12.
8. G. Rovani, Le tre arti, p. 10.
9. Un libro come I promessi sposi non solo è destinato a rimanere unica produzione della mente d'un uomo, ma unica produzione eziando di tutto un periodo letterario, e le ragioni di questa unicità stanno appunto nell'originalità sua, nella novità dell'assunto, nell'universalità degli elementi, nello specchio sincero e amplissimo della vita e degli uomini.
ibid. p. 25.
10. in C. Dossi, Rovaniiana a cura di G. Nicodemi, Milano, Vinciana, 1946, pp. 227-8.
11. In The nature of narrative Scholes and Kellogg criticize "a hopelessly novel-centred" view of narrative and go on to offer alternative structures for a history of narrative.

The distinction between fact and fiction, once it is clearly established, forces story-telling to choose the rubric under which it will function: truth or beauty. The result is a separation of narrative streams into factual and fictional, producing forms we have learned to call history and romance.

R. Scholes and R. Kellogg, The nature of narrative, New York, Oxford U.P. 1966, p. 58.

They argue that in Western culture the two traditions re-unite in the novel and what makes this possible is the development of realism. It is along this road that Cento anni would appear to be travelling, although Croce thinks otherwise,

Strano è, soprattutto, parlare di novità e originalità, quando mi pare che basti volgere uno sguardo ai romanzi del Rovani per ravvisare subito in lui nient'altro che un manzoniano della prima epoca, anteriore cioè al discorso sul romanzo storico, seguace della formola di quel romanzo, che consisteva, come si sa, nell'idea di una storia mista di invenzione o rappresentata mercè personaggi e avvenimenti immaginari.

B. Croce, La letteratura della Nuova Italia, Bari, Laterza, 1956, vol. 1, p. 104.

12. F. Kermode, The sense of an ending. Studies in the theory of fiction, New York, Oxford U.P. 1970, p. 43. Recently two novels, D. Fernandez, Dans la main de l'ange, Paris, Grasset, 1982, and T. Keneally, Schindler's ark, London, Hodder, 1982, winners of the Goncourt and Booker prizes respectively, have both defied the divisions of fact and fiction.
13. Wayne C. Booth, The rhetoric of fiction, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961, p. 128. It could however be argued that the appeal for facts has moved to another popular genre, the thriller.
14. I owe much of the information about the circumstances of the production of Cento anni to Beniamino Gutierrez' introductory essay to his edition of the text, "La tragedia spirituale di Cento anni" in Cento anni, Milano, Rizzoli, 1934.
15. The main landmarks in the publication of Cento anni are as follows: the Preludio was published in December 1856; 11th April 1857 Rovani published the first instalment; 9th January 1858 came the Preludio d'intermezzo; 28th January 1859 Rovani announces the publication

of the first volume; 6th June 1859 the Gazzetta is acquired by Rovani and two others; 31st December 1863 the last instalment appears. The erraticness with which the instalments were published became something of an in-joke. Ghislanzoni wrote an imaginary poetic autobiography spoken in Rovani's persona; the stanza on Cento anni goes, "La storia di Cent'Anni/Ad intervalli io scrivo,/ Se un altro secol io vivo/La leggerete un dì."

16. G. Rovani, Cento anni a cura di B. Gutierrez, p. 9.
17. The announcement in the Gazzetta read,

Oggi è uscito il primo volume dei cinque in cui è diviso il lavoro. Se è avvenuto qualche ritardo nella pubblicazione di esso, lo si deve, senza dubbio, attribuire all'autore il quale si trovò nella necessità di aspettare di veder se gli riusciva di raccogliere quel numero di associati indispensabili ad impedire che un'impresa letteraria si converta, secondo la moda del nostro paese, in un disastro economico.

ibid., pp. 9-10.
18. The first three volumes were published at the author's expense, the last two volumes which appeared in 1864 were published by Daelli. Very plain in their presentation, there were no illustrations, decorative cover or frontispiece.
19. Subject of G. Arrighi's novel, La Scapigliatura e il sei febbraio which was serialized in his journal Cronaca grigia, before appearing in volume form in 1862.
20. Dossi gives the example of the artist Gerolamo Induno who turned to Rovani in the middle of his crowded studio to ask, "Che fa ella qui? Questo non è il suo luogo. Ch'el vaga dai so tedeschi." Dossi himself defends Rovani on the grounds that his articles were fulsome in their praise of Lombardy and very lukewarm in their descriptions of the royal family.
21. G. Rovani, La mente di Alessandro Manzoni, p. 64.

22. Cento anni, vol. I, p. 368.
23. *ibid.*, p. 372.
24. This forms part of a larger section which was added later. *ibid.* pp. 60-66.
25. S. Chatman, Story and discourse. Narrative structure in fiction and film, Ithaca and London, Cornell U.P. 1978, p. 228.
26. Pietro Nardi in one of the earliest (1924) and most interesting studies of the Scapigliatura saw in the role of the narrator in Cento anni the most significant feature of the novel. He points out that the reader's attention is drawn primarily to the narrator and an appreciation of his ability, rather than to the plot itself.
- Pertanto, i Cento anni e La Libia d'oro sono sì ancora romanzi storici. Ma in essi la Scapigliatura è già penetrata sotto la specie d'individualismo invadente e demolitore.
- P. Nardi, La Scapigliatura. Da Giuseppe Rovani a Carlo Dossi, Verona, Mondadori, 1968, p. 43.
27. C. Dossi, Rovaniiana, p. 223.
28. The following illustrates the kind of material that was included in this section of the newspaper. Taking four days in April 1857 when Rovani began publishing Cento anni: an article on the 'Nuova piazza. Della cattedrale di Milano', was followed by a piece on the 'Allevamento dei bachi di seta', next came an instalment of Cento anni, followed in turn by the 'Cronaca di Milano' ("pubblicata in ritardo").
29. U. Eco, The role of the reader. Explorations in the semiotics of texts, London, Hutchinson, 1981, p. 130.
30. *ibid.* p. 133.
31. C. Dossi, Rovaniiana p. 215. Guido Baldi in his study of Rovani's writing sees Cento anni as a novel which tries to reconcile what

the author wishes to write with what he has to write, the "romanzo ideale" with the "romanzo reale". ref. G. Baldi, Giuseppe Rovani e il problema del romanzo nell'Ottocento, Firenze, Olschki, 1967.

32. L'altro male poi sta in ciò che nessuno è obbligato a ricordarsi di quello che fu suonato in quella così detta sinfonia, e noi non vogliamo incominciare senza che il pubblico non siasi abituato alle nostre idee fondamentali...
- C. Dossi, Rovaniiana, p. 204.
33. M. Corti, An introduction to literary semiotics, Bloomington and London, Indiana U.P., 1978, p. 33.
34. C. Dossi, Rovaniiana, p. 205.
35. C. Dossi, Opere a cura di C. Linati, Milano, Garzanti, 1944, p. 476.
36. M. Corti, An introduction to literary semiotics, pp. 117-8.
37. G. Petronio, L'attività letteraria in Italia, Palumbo, 1964, ref. Ch. VII, pp. 736-769.
38. S. Chatman, Story and discourse, p. 245.
39. G. Rovani, Cento anni, vol. I pp. 402-3.
40. C. Dossi, Rovaniiana, p. 21.
41. C. Dossi, Note Azzurre a cura di D. Isella, Milano, Adelphi, 1964, N.A. 2305.
42. *ibid.* N.A. 2271.
43. G. Rovani, Cento anni, vol. I, p. 5.
44. C. Dossi, Rovaniiana, p. 220. He identified the following years as being particularly important, - 1750, 1766, 1778, 1796, 1814, 1822, and 1850. The first three months takes up over one third of the book.
45. Seymour Chatman, Story and discourse, p. 63.
46. G. Rovani, Cento anni, vol. I, p. 373. Libro sesto opens with "Sono trascorsi sedici anni." followed by a two page summary which

prepares the readers to meet the same protagonists sixteen years the older as well as a brief summary of events.

47. Wayne Booth, The rhetoric of fiction, p. 123.
48. F. Portinari, Un'idea di realismo, Napoli, Guida, 1976, p. 151.
49. G. Rovani, Cento anni, vol. I, p. 4.
50. "A literary text must... be conceived in such a way that it will engage the reader's imagination in the task of working things out for himself, for reading is only a pleasure when it is active and creative. In this process of creativity, the text may either not go far enough, or may go too far, so we may say boredom and overstrain form the boundaries beyond which the reader will leave the field of play". p. 275. Wolfgang Iser, The implied reader. Patterns of communication in prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett, Baltimore and London, John Hopkins U.P., 1974, in particular ch. 11. "The reading-process: a phenomenological approach".
51. Lawrence Sterne, Tristram Shandy, New York, Signet, 1962, p. 90.
52. G. Rovani, Cento anni, vol. 1, p. 600.
53. A tale illustrating Dossi's view of romantic literature is "Profumo di poesia", one of the Gocce d'inchiostro in Dossi a cura di C. Linati, pp. 329-334. Its heroine, a "Miss Ada Banner of Bannerlodge" belongs to the ranks of the "assidue frequentatrici del negozietto Aleardiano di profumeria poetica;" p. 330. Rovani's attack on sentimental literature at the beginning of Le tre arti takes Grossi's Ildegonda as target and argues that with its publication melancholy became the rage of the peninsula:

... e da quel giorno parve una cosa poco decente e quasi incivile l'abbandonarsi ai moti scomposti dell'ilarità e alle risate sonore; persino i colori vivaci onde la salute e la contentezza infiorarono i cari volti giovanili, caddero di prezzo affatto, e acquistarono invece un valore inestimabile le pallide gote e gli occhi languenti.

- G. Rovani, Le tre arti, p. x.
53. G. Rovani, Cento anni, vol. II, p. 857.
54. *ibid.*, p. 859.
55. Come manca nei Cento anni un tema, una vicenda, una figura (quella del Galantino è soltanto un elemento conduttore della storia) che diano unità strutturale al racconto, in egual modo manca allo stile e al linguaggio del Rovani una coerente articolazione che permetta allo scrittore di conferire ai due elementi che costituiscono l'opera (il narrativo e lo storico-documentaristico) quel rapporto di reciproco scambio cul quale avrebbe dovuto posare l'intelaiatura generale della vicenda.
- G. Mariani, Storia della Scapigliatura, Roma, Sciascia, 1967, p. 161.
56. G. Rovani, Cento anni, vol. II, p. 1223-4.
57. *ibid.*, pp. 704-5.
58. *ibid.*, p. 704.
59. Georg Lukàcs, The historical novel, Middlesex, Penguin, 1969, p. 283.
60. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, N.A. 2073. Rovani's developing belief that man lives as victim of his own passions, which in turn determine and dominate him, is part of a general scapigliato ideology. They display little confidence in concepts such as reason or free-will. Tarchetti, having decided that "La volontà è sempre più debole dell'istinto", and that "l'arbitrio è una menzogna" embarks in his writing upon a search for the forces which do control man which takes him from the socio-environmental (Paolina and Una nobile follia) to the supernatural (I racconti fantastici) to positivist theory (Fosca).
61. G. Rovani, Cento anni, vol. I, p. 381.
62. *ibid.*, p. 31.
63. *ibid.*, pp. 36-7.
64. *ibid.*, p. 86.
65. *ibid.*, p. 85. If these lines had been included in the book, they would have followed the episode's concluding paragraph.

66. *ibid.*, p. 21.
67. *ibid.*, p. 150 Again omitted from the book.
68. *ibid.*, p. 34. This line opens a new episode.
69. *ibid.*, p. 37.
70. *ibid.*, p. 53.
71. *ibid.*, p. 102.
72. *ibid.*, p. 101.
73. *ibid.*, p. 145.
74. *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 702.
75. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 561.
76. *ibid.*, p. 562.

C. Dossi: L'altrieri and Vita di Alberto Pisani. Narrative

constructions of self.

1. C. Dossi, L'altrieri, Torino, Einaudi, 1972. All references will be to this edition. Hereafter I shall refer only to the title and the page-number(s). This is the second version of the book, prepared by Dossi in 1881 for the Riforma of Rome; the first version was written and published privately in 1868. For an exhaustive study of the two editions see D. Isella, La lingua e lo stile di Carlo Dossi, Milano-Napoli, Ricciardo Ricciardi, 1958, in particular the chapter, 'Dal primo al secondo Altrieri'.
2. I. Nievo, Le confessioni d'un italiano, Milano, B.U.R. 1954, vol. 1. p. 9.
3. C. Dossi, Vita di Alberto Pisani in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, Milano, Garzanti, 1944. All references will be to this edition. Hereafter I shall refer only to the title and page-number(s). The novel was first published in 1870.
4. V. Alfieri, Vita, Torino, Einaudi, 1967, p. 5.
5. Vita di Alberto Pisani, p. 163.
6. P. Delaney, British autobiography in the 17th century, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, p. 114.
7. Note azzurre, a cura di D. Isella, Milano, Adelphi, 1964, vol. 2, N.A. 5419.
8. Vita di Alberto Pisani, pp. 76-77.
9. Explanations for changes in circumstance are included, but they are often referred to obliquely, as on p. 73: "... sappiate, i mièi carissimi, che ora gli occhi della nostra pentola vedevano la cappa di una città."
10. See F. Tancini, 'L'altrieri di Carlo Dossi. Contributi a una rilettura dello scrittore scapigliato' ACME, vol. xxx sett.-dic. 1977.

11. I. U. Tarchetti, Una nobile follia, in Tutte le opere a cura di E. Ghidetti, Bologna, Cappelli, 1967, vol. 1, p. 516.
12. "Elvira", in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, p. 295.
13. L'altrieri, p. 10.
14. G. A. Borgese, La vita e il libro. Saggi di letteratura e di cultura contemporanea, Torino, Fratelli Bocca, 1910, p. 96.
15. L'altrieri, p. 31.
16. *ibid.*, p. 16.
17. *ibid.*, p. 25.
18. D. Alighieri, La vita nuova, Firenze, Sansoni, 1968, p. 77.
19. L'altrieri, p. 34.
20. Note azzurre, vol. 2, N.A. 4407.
21. e.g. N.A. 2451 and N.A. 2527, both in vol. 1.
22. "I balocchi", in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, pp. 599-600.
23. *ibid.*, p. 601.
24. It can also be interpreted as a commentary on the act of reading: the need for the reader to have the space to be able to 'complete' the text.
25. L'altrieri, Nota introduttiva di Dante Isella, p. ix. Isella reiterates the point in La lingua e lo stile di Carlo Dossi, p. 90.

Provincia del sentimento, questa Lombardia melanconica e sorridente è il paese dell'infanzia e insieme la stagione edenica: paese-stagione che l'autore rievoca con il sensibile strumento di un suo linguaggio interiore.
26. L'altrieri, p. 25.
27. *ibid.*, p. 25. Tancini in her re-reading of L'altrieri suggests that in the first chapter Dossi is polemicising with popular literature and its exploitation of the macabre-grotesque. She reads this passage as a parody of the gothic. It is an interesting suggestion, although I am not personally conscious of these echoes.

28. *ibid.*, pp. 27-8.
29. "Elvira", in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, pp. 298-299.
30. Amori, in Dossi, p. 397.
31. L'altrieri, p. 29.
32. *ibid.*, p. 43.
33. In his Note azzurre Dossi recorded his admiration for Jean Paul Richter's ability to imprison on the page
- "... quelli già-inesprimibili sentimenti che si affollano in una giovine anima, colma di amore e di malinconia, nell'ora di crepuscolo."
- vol. 1., N.A. 1858.
34. L'altrieri, p. 63.
35. Note azzurre, vol. 1, N.A. 2639.
36. L'altrieri, pp. 41-42.
37. *ibid.*, p. 49.
38. *ibid.*, p. 50.
39. *ibid.*, p. 58.
40. *ibid.*, p. 70.
41. Jacques Lacan, Écrits 1, Paris, Seuil, 1966, p. 90.
42. See Germaine Brée, Narcissus Absconditus. Problematic art of autobiography in France, Oxford, Clarendon, 1978.
43. Jacques Lacan, Écrits 1, p. 94.
44. Vita di Alberto Pisani, p. 109.
45. La desinenza in 'A', in Dossi, p. 747.
46. *ibid.*, p. 733, and p. 738 respectively.
47. His mother tries to calm his feeling of psychological and material discomfort by telling him, "Il cappello nuovo, vedi, è un arnese cui si bisogna assuefare". L'altrieri, p. 71.
48. *ibid.*, p. 78.
49. *ibid.*, p. 74.

50. *ibid.*, p. 84.
51. *ibid.*, p. 80. The episode is presented above all through the dimension of sound. The play itself ironises familiar romantic themes and throughout his literary career Dossi will wage war against a debased romantic tradition which he clearly associates with the popularisation of the novel.
52. *ibid.*, p. 26. Raspberries appear to enjoy singular properties. In Tarchetti's short story, "Uno spirito in un lampone", a baron inadvertently takes in the spirit of a dead girl which is transmitted through the raspberries he is eating.
53. Primo Levi, 'Preludio' to Opere di Carlo Dossi, Milano, Treves, 1910, p. xv.
54. Vita di Alberto Pisani was first published in 1870 by Lombardi of Milan when Dossi was 21 years old. Of the 100 copies, 30 were put on the market at 20 lire each. Carlo Dossi's full name was Carlo Alberto Pisani-Dossi.
55. Vita di Alberto Pisani, pp. 75-6.
56. Even though the gap is closed at the end of L'altrieri when Dossi reverts to the present tense.
57. Vita di Alberto Pisani, p. 105; "... il mio amico" refers to the reader.
58. In the following quotation the narrator's reference to his style of dress increases the reader's sense of his presence.
- Cari miei, altro che libero arbitrio! molte volte si pensa come vuole il nostro àbito! Esempio me. Quando sono a Milano, in cilindro, marsina, guantato, con un sentore di muschio... (pp. 113-4.)
59. *ibid.*, p. 113.
60. *ibid.*, p. 110.
61. *ibid.*, p. 122. Self-censorship, often accompanied by the comment

that it is for the reader's own good, was a common device in letteratura di consumo. Tarchetti, in an episode I have commented upon, breaks off his description of the rape scene in Paolina with, "Noi troncheremo qui il racconto di questa scena." Indeed the marchese Andalò shares some of the characteristics of Tarchetti's marquis; the same moral turpitude, the same love of Oriental luxury and a taste for innocent dressmakers. Dossi makes no mention of Tarchetti's writing in his notes, but he did write to Tarchetti thanking him for his warm appreciation of L'altrieri. By the time Vita di Alberto Pisani was published Tarchetti was dead.

62. Ritratti umani, in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati: "La gente che tiene da conto", p. 500.
63. See Amori, in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati; "In terra", p. 413.
64. "Margine alla Desinenza in 'A'", in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, p. 634.
65. It is within this framework that Dossi's theory of music should be located. Although scapigliati writers often refer to the superiority of music over words, particularly when they want to "... imprigionare... certi pensieri che fra di loro si giungono ... per sensazioni delicatissime" (L'altrieri, p. 78), Dossi developed Rovani's theory of the affinity of the three arts by concentrating on the medium itself and not on its representational capacity:

L.d.B. Rapporti tra i suoni, i colori, gli odori e i tocchi. Verrà tempo in cui si stabiliranno tavole di equivalenza tra essi. Già la letteratura, che nella divinazione precede ogni altra scienza, adopra le immagini di un senso per esprimere gli effetti dell'altro. Così ne' libri si sentono stridere i colori, gli odori concertarsi ecc. I ciechi già toccano i colori. Verrà tempo in cui si suonerà un mazzo di fiori e si udirà un discorso di colori.

Note azzurre, vol. 2, N.A. 5116.

66. Vita di Alberto Pisani, p. 75.
67. U. Foscolo, Scritti didimei, a cura di Giorgio Luti, Milano, Longanesi, 1974, p. 46. The common literary factor is of course Sterne.
68. Vita di Alberto Pisani, p. 82.
69. L. Luigi Primo, 'Carlo Dossi e i suoi libri, Considerazioni bibliografico sociali', Diritto, 15th and 16th April 1872.
70. Note azzurre, vol. 1, N.A. 3922. There is a moment at the end of Alberto's life when the narrator suggests that by living out the fantasy, reality might yet be reached, but the opportunity passes and Alberto is plunged still further into the depths of fantasy. The last book Dossi wrote, Amori (1887), was a celebration of the imaginary:
- E di fantasia in fantasia, avvolgendomi nei labirinti della logica sentimentale, la quale he regole affatto al rovescio dell'altra, finii col persuadermi che tutte le imaginzioni mie non fòssero che realtà...
- in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, p. 432.
71. Gocce d'inchiostro, in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati: "Ritorno d'amore" p. 330.
72. Appendice, Altri ritratti umani, in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati; "Ritorno d'amore", pp. 583-593.
73. D. Isella, La lingua e lo stile di Carlo Dossi, p. 79.
74. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, vol. 1, N.A. 2305.
75. Vita di Alberto Pisani, p. 211.
76. D. Isella, La lingua e lo stile di Carlo Dossi, p. 78.
77. C. Dossi, Vita di Alberto Pisani, p. 142.
78. *ibid.*, p. 146.
79. *ibid.*, p. 158.
80. *ibid.*, p. 212.

81. *ibid.*, p. 216.
82. *ibid.*, p. 218.
83. *ibid.*, p. 163. The conclusion has however been frequently read by critics as a 'straight' piece of writing. Angelo Romanò, for example, feels that the presentation of the episode is too theatrical and Pisani himself hovers on the edge of the ridiculous:

... il giuoco era azzardato (il Dossi stesso ne aveva una pur vaga coscienza); e il rimando a Werther, Ortis, Rolla... potrebbe comprometterlo gravamente.

A. Romanò, Il secondo romanticismo lombardo, Milano, Fabbri, 1958. p. 91.

Chapter 5.

I.U. Tarchetti: Racconti fantastici. Textual freedom and psychological transgression.

1. I. U. Tarchetti, Racconti fantastici, in Tutte le opere, a cura di E. Ghidetti, Bologna, Cappelli, 1967, vol. 2. All references will be to this edition. Hereafter I shall refer only to the title and page-number(s).
2. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, vol. 1 N.A. 2046.
3. R. Barthes, S/Z, Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 10.
4. There is an episode in Vita di Alberto Pisani when the protagonist discovers the first missprint in the first edition of his first published work, which captures the tragi-comic aspects of the situation. Ref: C. Dossi, Vita di Alberto Pisani pp. 194-5.
5. R. Barthes, S/Z, pp. 22-3.
6. "Storia di un ideale", in Tutte le opere, vol. 2, p. 99.
7. *ibid.*, p. 102 and p. 103.
8. Todorov argues that the fantastic occupies the time of hesitation when there has been a break in the hitherto acknowledged order of the universe but the reader and protagonist do not yet know what to attribute this to:

The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.
- T. Todorov, The fantastic, Cleveland, Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973, p. 25.
9. J. Moestrup, La Scapigliatura. Un capitolo della storia del Risorgimento, Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1966, p. 95.
10. "In cerca di morte", in Tutte le opere, vol. 1, p. 178.
11. The trilogy of stories constituting Amore nell'arte (1867 and 1869) also have elements of the fantastic while the tale "Il mortale immortale" uses what Propp calls a "magic auxiliary" (a magic potion) to study the properties of age.

12. "Riccardo Waitzen", in Amore nell'arte, in Tutte le opere, vol. 1, pp. 604-5.
13. C. Nodier, 'Du fantastique en littérature', La revue de Paris, novembre, 1830. Quotation taken from C. Nodier, Oeuvres, vol. 5, Genève, Reda, 1968, p. 79.
14. E. Camerini, 'Corrispondenza del Piemonte', in Il crepuscolo, 22 maggio 1858. Also in I.U. Luca, 'Scheda per la Scapigliatura. Eugenio Camerini' in Critica e storia letteraria - Studi offerti a Mario Fubini, Padova, Liviana, 1970, vol. 1, pp. 755-6.
15. Una buona idea è quella di Savino Savini, felice trovatore di stile fantastico. Egli vuol compilare una piccola biblioteca hoffmanica, dirò così, bizzarra, capricciosa, e raccapricciante. Tutte le larve notturne dell'idea, tutti i folletti dell'immaginazione vi avrebbero luogo; comincierebbe dal suo conte Goth e andrebbe giù giù con Hoffmann, con Poe, e con altri italiani e stranieri che ci svelarono i misteri del bujo...
ibid., 4 Aprile 1858, or p. 756.
16. For Poe's influence on the writers of the Scapigliatura see, C. Appollonio, 'La presenza di E. A. Poe in alcuni scapigliati lombardi', Otto/Novecento No. 1, 1981, pp. 107-145.
S. Rossi, 'E. A. Poe e le Scapigliatura lombarda', in Studi americani, no. 5, 1959, pp. 118-139.
17. G. Mariani, Storia della Scapigliatura, Sciascia, Roma, 1967, p. 788.
18. For a fascinating study of the origins of the Scapigliatura, how they presented themselves and how they were in turn seen, see G. Mariani, 'Alle origini della Scapigliatura', Convivium, maggio-giugno 1961, pp. 280-321 and luglio-agosto 1961, pp. 423-460.
19. See I. Bessière, Le récit fantastique: la poétique de l'incertain, Paris, Larousse, 1974. Bessière argues that the fantastic must be

seen in relation to the real and the rational; it is not about the irrational.

20. T. Todorov, The fantastic, p. 168.
21. N. Bonifazi, Il racconto fantastico da Tarchetti a Buzzati, Urbino, S.T.E.U., 1971, pp. 126-7.
22. P-G. Castex, Le conte fantastique en France de Nodier à Maupassant, Paris, José Corti, 1962, p. 8.
23. S. Farina, La mia giornata (dall'alba al meriggio), Torino, S.T.E.N., 1910, pp. 124-5.
24. See H. F. Ellenberger, The discovery of the unconscious: history and evolution of a dynamic psychiatry, London, Allen Lane, 1970.
25. Rajberti recounts the following anecdote at Balzac's expense: after an evening spent vainly trying to magnetize a servant, Balzac then tries his technique out on a dwarf especially procured by Rajberti for the occasion. Again the experiment fails although the dwarf falls asleep because of the prolonged inactivity. Rajberti uses this incident in his 'Appendice all'opuscolo "Il volgo e la medicina"', which is an invective against what its author identifies as being the most dominant and dangerous myths of the day, among them the interest that magnetism has belatedly excited in Italy:

Il Magnetismo animale è un'altra trappola per pigliare i gonzi, vecchia e già disusata, alla quale l'infaticabile ciarlataneria sta ora scuotendo la polvere della dimenticanza; e pare che molti sieno per cascarsi dentro ai nostri giorni illuminati.
- G. Rajberti, Tutte le opere del medico-poeta, a cura di C. Cossali, Gastaldi, 1964, p. 307.
26. "Riccardo Waitzen", in Tutte le opere, vol. 1, p. 600.
27. S. Farina, La mia giornata, p. 125.
28. Originally the article was anonymous but it has since been

- attributed to De Castro - 'Il romanzo contemporaneo', Politecnico xvi, 1865, later inserted by mistake in C. Cattaneo, Scritti letterari, artistici, linguistici, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1948, vol. 11.
29. G. Mariani, Storia della Scapigliatura, p. 411.
 30. A Béguin, L'âme romantique et le rêve, Paris, Corti, 1963, p. 18.
 31. I. U. Tarchetti, "Le Leggende del castello nero", vol. 2, p. 44.
 32. *ibid.*, p. 41.
 33. *ibid.*, p. 45.
 34. *ibid.*, p. 49.
 35. *ibid.*, p. 50.
 36. S. Freud, "The uncanny", in The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud vol. xvii, London, Hogarth, 1955, p. 231.
 37. A. Boito, "Dualismo" in Lirici della Scapigliatura, a cura di G. Finzi, Milano, Mondadori, 1965, pp. 113-7.
 38. I. U. Tarchetti, "Le leggende del castello nero", p. 51.
 39. M. Shelley, Frankenstein in Three Gothic Novels Middlesex, Penguin, 1970, p. 319.
 40. N. Bonifazi, Il racconto fantastico da Tarchetti a Buzzati, p.100.
 41. Praga, "Preludio", in Lirici della Scapigliatura, a cura di G. Finzi, p. 40.
 42. I.U. Tarchetti, L'innamorato della montagna, p. 123.
 43. In Gautier's story the hero, Paul d'Aspremont falls in love with an English girl, Alicia Ward, in Naples. People are struck by Paul's strange glance and the rumour spreads that he is a jettatore. Alicia begins to spit blood and a nobleman holding Paul responsible, challenges him to a duel. The nobleman dies, Paul horrified by the misery he has caused, blinds himself, but

it is too late. Alicia dies, Paul kills himself.

44. The interest was strong enough to sustain the publication of popular journals devoted to this area of enquiry e.g. La gazzetta - magnetico - scientifico - spiritistico was published in Bologna every fortnight. It first appeared in October 1864. The non-specialist press such as Il giornale per tutti and L'universo illustrato also devoted a lot of column space to the supernatural and the paranormal.
45. "I fatali", p. 7.
46. Bosco argues that in the Racconti fantastici Tarchetti is using the techniques of the "novelliere naturalista" and adopts the "obbiettivismo del romanzo naturalista". See U. Bosco, "Il Tarchetti e i suoi Racconti fantastici", in Realismo romantico, Caltanissetta, Sciascia, 1959, pp. 127-39.
47. G. Prince, A grammar of stories, Paris, Mouton, 1973, p. 26.
48. S. Chatman, Story and discourse, Ithaca, Cornell, 1980, pp. 51-2.
49. "I fatali", p. 8.
50. *ibid.*, p. 20.
51. R. Cesarini, 'A proposito dell'interpretazione psicanalitica di un racconto fantastico di I. U. Tarchetti' in Studi in memoria di Luigi Russo, Pisa, Nistri Lischi, 1974, pp. 248-65.
52. M. Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics, U.S.A. Ardis, 1973, p. 96.
53. "I fatali", p. 10.
54. *ibid.*, p. 11. The question of instinctive apathy is discussed at length in L'innamorata della montagna.
55. *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

56. *ibid.*, p. 15.
57. *ibid.*, p. 25.
58. R. Jackson, Fantasy. The Literature of subversion, London, Methuen, 1981, p. 34.
59. "I fatali", pp. 22-3.
60. *ibid.*, p. 16.
61. *ibid.*, p. 17-22.
62. *ibid.*, p. 17-8.
63. *ibid.*, p. 21.
64. *ibid.*, pp. 22-40.
65. *ibid.*, p. 40.
66. N. Bonifazi, Il racconto fantastico da Tarchetti a Buzzati, p. 78.
67. "I fatali", p. 36.
68. G. Mariani, Storia della Scapigliatura, p.
69. P. Pancrazi, Racconti e novelle dell'Ottocento, Firenze, Sanzoni, 1954,
- ... il racconto che riportiamo, se ne toglia appena qualche battuta, potrebbe essere stato scritto da un novelliere freudiano di oggi 1938.
- p. 411.
70. "Uno spirito in un lampone", p. 82.

Chapter 6.

I.U. Tarchetti: Fosca. The instability of character.

1. G. Verga, "Tigre reale", in Una peccatrice, Storia di una capinera, Eva, Tigre reale, Verona, Mondadori, 1973, p. 355.
2. B. Croce, La Letteratura della Nuova Italia, Bari, Laterza, 1956, vol. 1, p. 286.
3. G. Mariani, Storia della Scapigliatura, Caltanissetta, Sciascia, 1967, p. 395.
4. F. Portinari, Un'idea di realismo, Napoli, Guida, 1976, p. 199.
5. I. U. Tarchetti, Fosca, in Tutte le opere, a cura di E. Ghidetti, Bologna, Cappelli, 1967, vol. 2, p. 255. All references will be to this edition. Hereafter I shall refer only to the title and the page-number.
6. *ibid.*, p. 266.
7. Locations, particularly, are formed out of semes which relate significantly, either by equivalence or by contrast, to the meanings of the characters that inhabit them.

R. Fowler, Linguistics and the novel, London, Methuen, 1977, p. 38. This semantic interdependence of person and place which Tarchetti frequently draws on, has been described at greater length in my reading of Paolina.
8. T. Tanner, Adultery in the novel, Baltimore and London, John Hopkins, 1979, p. 19. Giorgio's affair with Clara is located "fuori di Porta Magenta".
9. Ho voluto accennare brevemente a questa passione d'amore che fu la più vera e la più grande della mia vita, per mettere in maggior luce il contrasto di idee e di sentimenti che quell'affetto doveva produrre nella mia anima in seguito ai fatti che impredo a raccontare.

Fosca, p. 267.
10. *ibid.*, p. 410.
11. *ibid.*, p. 353.

12. T. Tanner, Adultery in the novel, pp. 24-5.
13. Egli riprese la sua posizione, io distesi il braccio, sparai alla mia volta senza mirare; egli vacillò un istante, lasciò scivolare la pistola di mano e cadde rovesciato. Io non so cosa avvenisse di me, in quell'istante...
Quella infermità terribile per cui aveva provato tanto orrore, mi aveva colto in quell'istante; la malattia di Fosca si era trasfusa in me:

Fosca, pp. 425-6.
14. *ibid.*, p. 354.
15. *ibid.*, p. 353.
16. Ho parlato del mio paese natale.
Mi duole che queste pagine non sieno destinate a venire alla luce, per poter render pubblico un odio che conservo da lunghi anni nel cuore,...
- ibid.*, p. 248.
17. M. Praz, The romantic agony, London, O.U.P., 1970, p. 216.
18. G. D'Annunzio, Trionfo della morte, Verona, Mondadori, 1956, p. 278.
19. Fosca, p. 247.
20. *ibid.*, p. 348.
21. Rovesci di fortuna gravi e improvvisi hanno rovinato la mia famiglia. Mio marito è quasi povero. È necessario che tutto sia mutato nel nostro sistema di vita; che io attenda colla mia vigilanza, colla mia assiduità, forse anche col mio lavoro, a quelle economie che mi impone il mio dovere di moglie e di madre.

ibid., p. 404. By being "quasi povera" Clara gains useful employment without becoming the object of our pity.
22. Jean Jacques Rousseau, Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse, Paris, Flammarion, 1967, p. 337.
23. I. U. Tarchetti, "Lorenzo Alviati", in Amore nell'arte, in Tutte le opere, vol. 1, p. 586.
24. R. Ingarden, "Psychologism and psychology in literary scholar-

- ship', New literary history, vol. 5, no. 2, winter 1974, p. 219.
25. Much has been written about Tarchetti's life both by his contemporaries and more recently in E. Ghidetti's very thorough book called Tarchetti e la scapigliatura lombarda, Napoli, Libreria scientifica, 1968.
26. Quoted in E. Ghidetti, Tarchetti e la scapigliatura lombarda, p. 265. Ghidetti uses it to support his argument that there is an extremely close correlation between Tarchetti's life and his writing. He describes chapter XXXIII of the novel as a "transcrizione fedele" of the original. This is true of the sentiment being expressed, but syntax and emphasis have undergone a complete revision.
27. Fosca, p. 241.
28. L. Bersani, A future for Astyanax: character and desire in literature, Marion Boyars, London, 1976, pp. 55-6.
29. H. Cixous, 'The character of "character"', New literary history, vol. 5, winter 1974, no. 2, p. 385. In the same issue, which was addressed to "Changing views of consciousness", John Bayley argues from a very different perspective that the function of character is to "change and habituate".
30. Fosca, p. 308, p. 311 and p. 355.
31. *ibid.*, pp. 338-9. Tarchetti often uses the word carattere and I think the following entry in Salvatore Battaglia's Grande dizionario della lingua italiana ll. comes closest to his use of the word,

9. Figur. L'insieme delle disposizioni psichiche e delle qualità naturali proprie di un individuo, che distinguono la sua personalità da tutte le altre; indole, natura, temperamento (di una persona, anche di un popolo)

His use of the word natura on the other hand refers to what the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary describes as:

The essential qualities of a thing; the inherent and inseparable combination of properties essentially pertaining to anything and giving it its fundamental character.

John Stuart Mills's The subjection of women was published the same year as Fosca (translated into Italian in 1870) and so unfortunately came too late to influence Tarchetti with its own non-essentialist view of what lies behind "woman's nature".

32. R. Barthes, S/Z, Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 74.
33. B. Tomaševskij, 'La costruzione dell'intreccio' in T. Todorov, I formalisti russi, Torino, Einaudi, 1968, p. 338.
34. Fosca, p. 243.
35. *ibid.*, p. 271.
36. *ibid.*, pp. 274-5. Hysteria in women was attracting considerable medical interest and by extension literary interest. Baudelaire in his essay on Madame Bovary, which recommends psychopathology as a means of studying character, writes:

L'hystérie! Pourquoi ce mystère physiologique ne ferait-il pas le fond et le tuf d'une oeuvre littéraire, ce mystère que l'Académie de médecine n'a pas encore résolu, et qui, s'exprimant dans les femmes par la sensation d'une boule ascendante et asphyxiante... se traduit chez les hommes nerveux par toutes les impuissances et aussi par l'aptitude à tous les excès?

C. Baudelaire, 'Madame Bovary, par Gustave Flaubert', in L'art romantique, Oeuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire, Paris, Louis Conard, 1917, p. 404.

37. R. Barthes, S/Z, pp. 98-9.
38. G. Mariani, Storia della scapigliatura, p. 464.
39. Non posso farmi comprendere di più da voi, non siete medico, e d'altronde questo caso è quasi anche fenomenale in medicina.

- Fosca, p. 311.
40. *ibid.*, p. 380.
41. *ibid.*, p. 275.
42. C. Bernard, Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale, Paris, Baillière et fils, 1865, p. 6.
43. G. Capuana, Giacinta, in Racconti, a cura di E. Ghidetti, Salerno, Roma, 1973, p. 209.
44. Fosca, pp. 310-11.
45. *ibid.*, p. 311.
46. *ibid.*, p. 310.
47. J. Culler, Structuralist poetics, London, R.K.P., 1975, p. 237.
48. Fosca, p. 291.
49. *ibid.*, p. 279.
50. M. Foucault, The birth of the clinic - an archaeology of medical perception, London, Tavistock, 1973, p. 36.
51. Fosca, p. 279.
52. *ibid.*, p. 293.
53. *ibid.*, p. 333.
54. *ibid.*, p. 308, and p. 353.
55. S. Freud and J. Breuer, Studies on hysteria in The Pelican Freud Library vol. 3, Penguin, Middlesex, 1974, p. 85.
56. R. Barthes, S/Z, p. 74.
57. Fosca, p. 332.
58. *ibid.*, p. 329.
59. *ibid.*, p. 331.
60. J. Lotman, The structure of the text, Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1977, p. 238.
61. Fosca, p. 245.
62. *ibid.*, p. 327.

63. ibid., pp. 241-2.
64. ibid., p. 243.
65. R. Barthes, S/Z, p. 74.
66. Fosca, p. 293.
67. ibid., p. 274.
68. Non solo quelle grida erano orribilmente acute, orribilmente strazianti e prolungate, ma io non aveva immaginato mai che vi potesse essere qualche cosa di simile nella voce umana...
- ibid., p. 274.
69. Nè tanto era brutta per difetti di natura, per disarmonia di fattezze, chè anzi erano in parte regolari, - quanto per una magrezza eccessiva, direi quasi inconcepibile a chi non la vide; per la rovina che il dolore fisico e le malattie avevano prodotto sulla sua persona ancora sì giovine.
- ibid., p. 278. Later however Fosca claims that she has always been ugly even before her illness.
70. Illness occupies a central place in the text, so much so that Ghidetti identifies it as the principal protagonist.

Ma certamente l'elemento più importante è costituito dal fatto che la malattia di Fosca è già latente in Giorgio e che il suo manifestarsi, dopo la tormentosa relazione con lei, è anch'esso tipico di certe condizioni della malattia; per ricordare la definizione di Josef Babinsky, infatti l'isterismo è "uno stato patologico" che si manifesta con disturbi che si possono riprodurre per via suggestiva in alcuni soggetti, con una esattezza assoluta... Protagonista del singolare romanzo è quindi la malattia nei suoi diversi stadi, nei suoi complicati effetti su due esseri che si trovano coinvolti da uno stesso destino.

E. Ghidetti, Tarchetti e la scapigliatura lombarda, p. 262.

Illness like love shifts in its connotations and implications according to who is using the word. Giorgio suffers from "una grave malattia di cuore" but it is his look of ill-health that wins him his first lover Clara. Even in the pragmatic

atmosphere of army-life, his illness appears to be viewed as a positive attraction, "la mia malattia, i miei casi avevano contribuito a circondare il mio nome di un prestigio...". Fosca too finds his illness makes him singularly attractive, "Come sei bello così - mi disse - se tu non soffrissi vorrei vederti sempre così." (p. 373)

71. Fosca, p. 278.

72. ibid., p. 242.

C. Dossi: La desinenza in 'A'. The structures of misogyny.

1. Amori, in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, Milano, Garzanti, 1944, p. 412. All references will be to this edition.
Hereafter I shall refer only to the title and page-number(s).
Dossi's brief sojourn on earth also includes a reference to an emotional voyeurism which comes very close in concept and image to Tarchetti's narrator in the tale "I fatali".
Dossi writes:

Le briciole degli altrui banchetti amorosi hanno sempre avuto per mè sapori e profumi, insospettati a coloro medèsimi che vi sedevano, ingordi e nauseati.

ibid., p. 419.
2. ibid., p. 440.
3. ibid., p. 445.
4. Gian Pietro Lucini, L'ora topica di Carlo Dossi, Milano, Ceschina, 1973, p. 47.
5. For an analysis of the process whereby when a woman is viewed positively she is represented as symbol and conversely when she is presented negatively she is seen as a real being, see, J. Ferrante, Woman as image in medieval literature, New York, Columbia U.P. 1975.
6. Amori, p. 446.
7. ibid., p. 448.
8. La desinenza in 'A', in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, Milano, Garzanti, 1944, p. 805. All references will be to this edition, unless stated otherwise.
9. ibid., p. 806.
10. S. Heath, "Comment on 'The idea of authorship'". Screen reader 2: cinema and semiotics, London. The society for education in film and television, 1981, p. 184.

11. 'Prefazione generale ai Ritratti umani', in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, p. 477.
12. "Margine alla Desinenza in 'A'", p. 633.
13. See M. Foucault, 'What is an author?', in Textual strategies: perspectives in post-structuralist criticism, London, Methuen, 1980, pp. 141-160.
14. Margine alla Desinenza in 'A' , p. 641.
15. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, a cura di D. Isella, Milano, Adelphi, 1964, vol. 2, N.A. 5074.
16. *ibid.*, N.A. 5002.
17. *ibid.*, N.A. 4764.
18. Il regno dei cieli was first published by Dossi's close friend Luigi Perelli in 1873 and La colonia felice was brought out by the same publisher the following year. Initially only 220 copies of La colonia felice were printed but subsequently it was twice serialized; in ten instalments in La riforma of Rome in 1879 and in sixteen instalments in Il sole in 1894.
19. The importance he attributes to the maternal role has psychological roots. A letter he wrote to his mother at Christmas 1872 shows the difficulty Dossi experienced in coming to terms with adulthood:

Ti ringrazio di cuore dei panettoni, e ancor più del balocco poichè io sono gratissimo a che non vuol ricordarsi che posseggo dei baffi. Ma, oh, fossi bimbo davvero! Ti sarei ora in grembo e appoggerei le mie labbra alle soavissime Tue.

from "Alcune lettere inedite di Carlo Dossi" in R. Schira, Carlo Dossi, Milano, Gastaldi, 1949.
20. Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian frame of mind, New Haven, Yale U.P. 1964, p. 348.

21. Il regno dei cieli, in Dossi, a cura di C. Linati, p. 378.
22. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, vol. 2, N.A. 5649.
23. I. U. Tarchetti, Tutte le opere, vol. 2, p. 167.
24. La colonia felice, p. 254.
25. La desinenza in 'A', p. 647.
26. La colonia felice, p. 248.
27. La desinenza in 'A', p. 792.
28. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, vol. 1, N.A. 543.
29. *ibid.*, N.A. 3678.
30. C. Gallini, Studi sulla condizione sociale e giuridica della donna, Roma, 1872, p. 91, quoted in M. Manfredini, 'Evoluzione della condizione giuridica della donna nel diritto pubblico', in L'emancipazione femminile in Italia: un secolo di discussioni, 1861-1961. Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1963, p. 172. The Legge Casati of 1859 took the first step in eliminating sexual discrimination in education by introducing obligatory primary school education of two years for all children.
31. C. Dossi, Note azzurre, vol. 2, N.A. 4523 and La desinenza in 'A', p. 792.
32. *ibid.*, p. 795.
33. C. Dossi, 'Adelaide Maraini-Pandiani o le origini del trasformismo', in Fricascea critica di arte, storia e letteratura, Como, Ostinelli di Bertolini e Nani, 1906, p. 169.
34. La desinenza in 'A', p. 693.
35. *ibid.*, p. 721.
36. *ibid.*, p. 661.

37. The legal and economic position of women was not improved after Unification and in reading a text like La desinenza in 'A' it is perhaps salutary to recall the reality of women's position. The "codice civile" of 1865 established that woman

è esclusa dall'elettorato attivo e passivo, dall'esercizio delle libere professioni, dal conseguimento dei titoli di studio superiori, è anche esclusa dall'ufficio di arbitro, non può rivestire la funzione di tutore, protutore o curatore... Nell'ambito del diritto di famiglia, il codice del 1865 riserva al marito una situazione di assoluta preminenza nei confronti della moglie, situazione che è consono alla struttura sociale ed al costume dell'epoca.

Il marito è il capo della famiglia (art. 131 c.c.) la moglie ne assume il cognome, ne segue la condizione ed è obbligata ad accompagnarlo ovunque egli creda opportuno fissare la sua residenza.

Non può chiedersi la separazione legale per l'adulterio del marito, salvo che questi mantenga in casa una concubina o ricorrano circostanze tali da far ritenere che il fatto costituisca ingiuria grave nei confronti della moglie.

avv. Ada Picciotto, 'Evoluzione della condizione giuridica della donna nella famiglia', in L'emancipazione femminile in Italia: un secolo di discussioni 1861-1961, p. 196.

38. La desinenza in 'A', p. 717.
39. *ibid.*, pp. 717-8.
40. G. P. Lucini, L'ora topica di Carlo Dossi, p. 151, and p. 156.
41. C. Varese, 'L'arte di Carlo Dossi', in Cultura letteraria contemporanea, Pisa, Nistri-Lischi, 1951, p. 7. Renata Schira on the other hand relates La desinenza in 'A' to the unsatisfactory outcome to Romanticism:

La Desinenza dunque ha una giustificazione psicologica che è anche storica: il romanticismo che va in pezzi prima di farsi limpido equilibrio d'arte, vendica le sue delusioni nell'accredine contro la donna, facile capro espiatorio dai tempi dell'amaro ridente Aristofane.

R. Schira, Carlo Dossi, p. 67.

42. Amori, p. 412.
43. F. Basch, Relative creatures, London, Allen Lane, 1974, p. 8.
44. La desinenza in 'A', p. 642. With all this potency to the pen it is perhaps not surprising that later the official Fascist cultural journal Primato excluded women contributors.
45. G. Pacchiano, 'Approssimazioni alla Desinenza in 'A'', in Giornale storico della letteratura Italiana, CLVI, 1979, pp. 344-5.
46. I shall return to this in greater detail.
47. R. Barthes, 'Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein', in Image-music-text, London, Fontana, 1977, p. 70.
48. G. Pacchiano, 'Approssimazioni alla Desinenza in 'A'', pp. 350-1.
49. R. Barthes, 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits', Communications 8, Paris, Seuil, 1966, pp. 8-9.
50. La desinenza in 'A', p. 635.
51. M. Serri, Carlo Dossi e il racconto, Roma, Bulzoni, 1975, p. 53.
52. La desinenza in 'A', p. 650.
53. *ibid.*, p. 650.
54. *ibid.*, p. 651.
55. *ibid.*, p. 651.
56. *ibid.*, p. 652.
57. *ibid.*, p. 650.
58. In the old days poverty
Kept Latin women chaste: hard work, too little sleep,
.... Now we are suffering
The evils of too-long peace. Luxury, deadlier
Than any armed invader, lies like an incubus
Upon us still, avenging the world we brought to heel.
- Juvenal, The sixteen satires, Middlesex, Penguin, 1967, p. 137.

59. La desinenza in 'A', p. 625.
60. V. Shklovsky, Mayakovsky and his circle, London, Pluto, 1974, p. 114.
61. G. Pacchiano, 'Approssimazioni alla Desinenza in 'A'', p. 345.
62. La desinenza in 'A', p. 746.
63. *ibid.*, p. 746.
64. *ibid.*, p. 659.
65. *ibid.*, p. 670.
66. *ibid.*, p. 786. The text often plays with the relationship between food and sex, lust and greed, beginning with the reference to food implicit in the word desinenza. In the "sinfonia" the narrator describes his task in terms of an imaginary apple which is about to be cut open to reveal the worms festering inside: "Chè io, di tutta sta roba, farò come di un pomo", while it was Eve's desire for an apple which was the undoing of the "promàrtire Adamo". The references to physical and sexual appetites are innumerable and Guglielminetti in a special edition of "Incendio di legna vecchia" (act 3 scene 2) develops a lively thesis on the relationship between food and realism.

L'ipotesi più affascinante potrebbe essere questa: che grassezza e sazietà siano divenuti attributi dell'antirealismo linguaiolo e conservatore, capovolgendosi così totalmente il loro originario significato di fantasticheria popolare su come domare la fame. Se grassezza e sazietà occupano lo spazio del racconto realistico, non determinano solo il trionfo di una materia lessicale capace di sostenersi di per sè, fuori della dimensione della trama. Appartenendo sociologicamente alla fantasia dei poveri e degli affamati, sia pure quale può immaginarsela un letterato della raffinatezza di un Rabelais, grassezza e sazietà contrastano efficacemente qualsiasi pretesa di ridurre l'espressione letteraria alla descrizione del mondo opposto della fame. All'equazione implicita

'realismo-fame' esplicitamente il Dossi oppone quella: 'antirealismo-golosità, voracità, ghiottoneria, e via di questo passo.

in C. Dossi, "Incendio di legna vecchia" con un saggio di M. Guglielminetti, Genova, Il melangolo, 1981, pp. 41-2.

67. La desinenza in 'A', p. 658.

68. *ibid.*, p. 737. Dossi's horror of female sexuality, "Le donne sono tante serrature in cerca di chiave", Note azzurre vol. 1. N.A. 343, makes him draw a sharp division between the female and the feminine, the biological and the cultural,

Chè la donna, per noi, non è che una femmina:
tolto il pudore, l'illusione cessò, e, via
questo, che rimane all'amore?

C. Dossi, Ritratti umani in Dossi, p. 546.

In his notes he occasionally refers to the irreconciliability of love with sex. In Vita di Alberto Pisani the blame is put, not on sexuality itself, but on the illicit transmission of information on the subject to which school-children are subjected. Later his position changes influenced by the consequences of the division between Romantic associations of love with the spiritual and Positivist associations of love with the sexual. By transposing the story of Elda at this point to the realm of the fable, she is extrapolated from historical time and with it from the possibility of change or evolution. She is fixed and defined by this one eternal characteristic. It is this immutability which confers the profound negativism.

69. La desinenza in 'A', p. 635.

70. R. Schira, Carlo Dossi, p. 61.

71. La desinenza in 'A', p. 736.

72. *ibid.*, p. 692.

73. *ibid.*, p. 747.
74. *ibid.*, p. 678.
75. *ibid.*, p. 691. Even here Dossi cannot resist a brief comment which relates the individual to the species so that an ideology which is being simultaneously constructed and perpetuated is made to appear no more than an echo of what is already general knowledge.
76. Ed Isa raffrontava il clanedestino brougham dalle tendine calate, di poche ore innanzi, colla lunga fila delle carrozze di gala che già li avèvano, lei e il suo Ugo, accompagnati alla stazione, ... e si sentiva sul volto i lagrimosi baci delle amiche, che la chiamavan felice e le invidiavano soprattutto il magnifico àbito da touriste, di panno grigio e merletti, capo d'opera dell'Honorine - ...
ibid., p. 651.
77. In the recent Einaudi edition of La desinenza in 'A', Dante Isella, who first published the missing scene in Strumenti critici, 4, ott. 1967, gives a detailed explanation of what happened. Lucini's edition of 1913 takes the 1884 edition but excludes "Il monastero" and substitutes "A venticinque anni". Isella explains:
- Un'operazione filologica, questa, o piuttosto un arbitrio editoriale, che lascia intravedere dietro di sè lo scontro (di cui sono testimonianza anche le lettere di Lucini) tra lo spirito laico e libertario di questo singolare editore di testi, oltre che dei testi stessi divenuti oggetto delle sue cure, e il rigorismo moralistico di donna Carlotta Borsani, vedova del Dossi. La soppressione di "In Monastero" (da cui consegue la necessità di sostituirgli un capitolo nuovo, desunto probabilmente dalla stessa fonte degli Altri Ritratti umani aggiunti in appendice; e lo scambio tra questo e l'ultimo capitolo, o "scena", dell'atto secondo) è verisimilmente il prezzo, discusso e sofferto, ma alla fine dovuto pagare dal Lucini per accordare imposizioni di eredi e impegno col proprio pubblico.
- C. Dossi, La desinenza in 'A', a cura di Dante Isella, Torino, Einaudi, 1981, p. xxxv. In the 1884 edition Isa's

death-scene carries no title but is simply called "Dècima ed ultima scena" which makes the method of conveying her name within the scene even more important.

78. R. Barthes, 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits', p. 17.

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