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Emanuel Carnevali's Cultural Translation: An Italian in Modernist America

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I, the **Candidate**, certify that the Thesis is all my own work and that I have not obtained a degree in this University or elsewhere on the basis of any of this work.

ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates translingual writing – that is, writing in a language which is not the native one – at the intersection between culture, identity, and translation. The focus is here on Italian American writer Emanuel Carnevali (1897-1942), who worked as both translator and translingual author. Carnevali's relationship with language is analysed in his various texts (poetry, criticism, fiction, memoir, translations), as he used English to represent and challenge cultural constraints relating to both Italian and American cultures.

The first part of the thesis discusses Carnevali's relation to Italian and American cultural constraints, in the attempt to build his artistic identity. The focus is on his emigration to New York in 1914, and his subsequent decision to write in English. Building his individuality as an artist in America, he also discussed various aspects of Italian culture through fiction, criticism and translation into English.

The second part of the thesis deals with Carnevali's use of the English language. He built his style in relation to the language of Anglophone modernism, as well as the language of the American tradition. The notion of linguistic assimilation is on the other hand reductive in Carnevali's case, as he continued handling the English language in a constant dialectic between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

The third part considers Carnevali's works written after his 1922 return to Italy. Ill and hospitalised, he nevertheless continued to write in English. Yet, Italian subject matter and linguistic influences increasingly found their way into his English texts. This phenomenon offers the chance to shed light on the development of translingual writing under changing conditions. By analysing translingualism as an ongoing process, influenced by different cultural constraints and linked with the multiple dimensions of translation, this dissertation intends to provide a systematic reading of translingual writing.

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Abbreviations

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I don't think I will ever be able to thank Anna enough.

Questo merita di essere scritto in italiano: la tesi è dedicata alla mia famiglia.

ABBREVIATIONS

Some titles of primary and secondary sources have been abbreviated in parenthetical reference, according to MLA conventions, to the first two words of the title.

This is the list of the abbreviations for some frequently cited works by Carnevali:

The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali, Compiled and Prefaced by Kay Boyle abbreviated as *Autobiography*

“Five Years of Italian Poetry (1910-1915)” abbreviated as “Five Years”

“Immigration and Importation” abbreviated as “Immigration”

“Our Great Carl Sandburg” abbreviated as “Sandburg”

“Tales of a Hurried Man, I” abbreviated as “Tale I”

“Tales of a Hurried Man, III” abbreviated as “Tale III”

“Tales of a Hurried Man, III (continued)” abbreviated as “Tale IIIb”

“The Day of Summer” abbreviated as “Summer”

“The First God. Part I” abbreviated as “First God”

“Three Poets of Three Nations” abbreviated as “Three Poets”

Abbreviations

“Train of Characters through the Villa Rubazziana” abbreviated as “Rubazziana”

“Train of Characters through the Villa Rubazziana (continued)” abbreviated as “Rubazziana II”

Voglio Disturbare l’America: Lettere a Benedetto Croce e Giovanni Papini ed Altro abbreviated as *Lettere*

EMANUEL CARNEVALI: A TRANSLATED MAN

Introduction

Emanuel Carnevali was one of the first Italian immigrants to America to gain literary recognition by writing in English. An outsider in the New York and Chicago modernist milieu of the 1910s and 1920s, he worked as poet, critic, translator and writer of fiction. His work will be used in the course of this thesis to demonstrate the links between language, cultural constraints and identity in literary translanguaging – that is to say the “phenomenon of authors who write in more than one language or at least in a language other than their primary one” (Kellman ix).

Carnevali’s prolonged engagement with the English language in various expressive forms, as well as his peculiar standpoint in the American and Italian cultures makes him an exemplary case for a study of translanguaging writing as one of the tools that make cultural translation possible. My analysis of Carnevali’s translanguaging work includes the cultural constraints that he navigated to build his literary presence in America, as well as the linguistic strategies that he employed to make it possible. Carnevali worked only rarely as a literary translator, but his work as poet, critic, and fiction writer may be said introduced elements of Italian culture within an American text, re-negotiating both source and target culture in an act of cultural translation. His choice of English to perform this process meant continuous confrontation with a linguistic system that needed to be decoded before it could be used as medium to perform cultural translation.

Translanguaging has only recently started to receive scholarly attention. The study of translanguaging must consider the intersections of language and the individual, the relationship between migrant author and the public of the host country, and the ways in which the author navigates cultural constraints. It involves an understanding of multiple cultural milieus (in this case, Anglo-American modernism, the Italian communities in America and pre-Fascist and Fascist Italy) as well as the specificity of the text. Translanguaging is as old as literature, and yet has come to forefront in an age of migrations and global discourses. Carnevali’s case must be considered in

its own intercultural specificity, as one of the translingual stories that were neglected until recent years: a case that is, in turn, particularly relevant to the definition of transnational modernism and of the Italian America.

Emanuel Carnevali was born in Florence in 1897. Carnevali's troubled childhood was a prelude to emigration. He was raised by his mother, Matilde Piano (who was separated from his father Tullio), moving to Pistoia and then to the Piedmont towns of Biella and Cossato. After his mother's premature death in 1908, Carnevali was left in the care of his aunt, and then of his father. He was sent to a boarding school in Venice in 1911, and then attended school in Bologna. Due to a conflictual relationship with his father, Emanuel decided to emigrate. In March 1914, he left for New York with his brother Augusto.

Carnevali lived in abject poverty in New York, doing menial jobs (waiter, shoveller, dishwasher among them). In 1917, he married another Italian immigrant, Emilia Valenza. He started writing poetry in English, and his first poems were published in 1918; soon he was publishing poetry, short fiction (most notably the series "Tales of a Hurried Man") and criticism in literary reviews. His work appeared in many of the most important literary reviews in the modernist circles of New York and Chicago, including *Poetry*, *a Magazine of Verse*, *The Little Review* and *Others*. After moving to Chicago he was, for a very brief time between 1919 and 1920, the assistant editor of *Poetry*. He also translated a small collection of Italian poets of his time, as well as Croce's *Breviario di estetica* (although the latter was never published). Carnevali rapidly established a reputation as poet and critic among American intellectuals, although he remained an outsider, and quite critical of modernist literature.

Carnevali's health seriously compromised his career. In February 1920 he experienced episodes of paranoia and delusion. Hospitalised, he was diagnosed with syphilis. He spent the following months between hospitals and clinics, with a brief experience living on the Indiana Dunes of Lake Michigan. When he returned to Italy in September 1922, the diagnosis was encephalitis lethargica, a neurological disease which left him affected by

strong tremors for the rest of his life. He was hospitalised in Bazzano, near Bologna, where his father worked. Carnevali's American friends took to helping him financially (paying for example for a room in the Bologna clinic Villa Baruzziana in the years 1924-26). In 1925, his friend Robert McAlmon's Contact Editions published *A Hurried Man*, a collection of his poems, short stories and criticism written until that moment. Carnevali spent most of the following years in Bazzano, bedridden and gradually losing touch with the literary milieu. On the other hand, he kept writing until his death in 1942, always in English, sporadically publishing new poetry and fiction as well as translations from Pound (into Italian) and Rimbaud. The first six chapters of his memoir appeared in the 1932 anthology *Americans Abroad*: he never finished the work, but his friend and editor Kay Boyle collected it in the 1960s. Boyle's compiled Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali saw the light in 1967. In 1978, the poet's stepsister Maria Pia Carnevali (with the help of opera conductor and Carnevali enthusiast David Stivender) collected and translated her own version of the memoir, together with other works by Carnevali, in the volume *Il primo dio*.

A figure as difficult to frame as he is paradigmatic (of the emigrant's poetic aspirations, and of a poet's bohemian life), Carnevali has drawn intermittent interest from intellectuals and scholars. Prezzolini, in one of the essays of his 1963 collection *I trapiantati* (one of the foundational works of Italian-American culture), expressed a desire to rediscover Carnevali, but also lamented the scarcity of sources on him at the time. In the following years, dedicated friends and admirers rescued Carnevali from oblivion: Boyle, Maria Pia Carnevali, Stivender and the journalist and critic Gabriel Cacho Millet, who did a great amount of work publishing Carnevali's letters (*Voglio Disturbare l'America*, 1981) as well as translating material left out by Maria Pia's edition (*Saggi e Recensioni*, 1994; *Diario Bazzanese*, 1994).

Carnevali is often mentioned as precursor in the Italian-American literary canon. Viscusi praises his "mastery of international culture, which has become a lodestar for Italian American intellectuals" (*Buried Caesars* 178). Valesio cast him as quasi-mythical antecedent of the Italian poets of America

(276), while Fontanella symbolically analyses him at the beginning of his study of Italian-American writers (13). There are several ways to look at Carnevali critically: Congiu remarked on the difficulty of framing Carnevali within a single critical interpretation, in virtue of the hybrid and fragmentary nature of his work (“Una Parabola Letteraria” 6). Boelhower dedicated a good part of his study on immigrant autobiographies in the United States to Carnevali’s *Autobiography*, using it as a tool to analyse his complicated relationship with America, and the way in which “mystical affirmation of Carnevali’s poet-protagonist leads him instead to madness, illness” (Boelhower 143). Other scholars have considered his immigrant individuality in relation to the modernity of America (Domenichelli; Buonomo), analysed his relationship with American modernism (Ricciardi; Templeton), or compared him to other migrant authors (Fracassa). Scholarly work on Carnevali so far seems to be inspired in particular by his peculiar life story, narrated in vivid detail in the *Autobiography*, as well as the author’s polemical confrontation with American literature. In this thesis I will analyse Carnevali’s relationship with language, focusing on the textual and stylistic strategies that he used to navigate Italian and American cultural constraints. Carnevali’s English will be considered in its continuous evolution through multiple transatlantic passages, as an object of desire, a tool for literary assimilation, and the repository of Italian linguistic influences.

From his rediscovery in the 1970s, criticism on Carnevali has focused sometimes on his use of English – Fink presented him in Italy by referring to his “travestimento linguistico” or linguistic disguise (86). Viscusi praised Carnevali’s seemingly effortless adoption of English (*Buried Caesars* 178); Fontanella on his part referred to translanguaging in relation to Carnevali’s language, remarking that “il problema, più che di 'autotraduzione' è di natura translinguistica”¹(Fontanella 15, author’s emphasis). Fontanella’s remark points to a translanguaging adoption of the second language that was pervasive and practically complete, implying that this excludes any link with the labour of self-translation. Carnevali’s adoption of English may not have been as smooth as some remarks by aforementioned scholars seem to imply.

¹ “...the issue, rather than 'self-translation' seems to be of translanguaging nature.” All translations in the thesis are to be considered my own, unless otherwise stated.

Translingualism is bound to leave “untidy traces” (Kellman 82), especially for an author as preoccupied with language as Carnevali. He was concerned with the development of his American poetic language as well as with communicating some specific elements of his Italian upbringing, and developed a language that would suit the task. My aim is to insert Carnevali in the latest developments of the studies on translingualism, underlining translingualism's links to the notion of “cultural translation,” through the analysis of Carnevali’s textual, editorial and linguistic strategies.

The idea of “cultural translation” dates back to the 1990s, when translation scholars “began to realise [...] that translations are never produced in a vacuum, and that they are also never received in a vacuum” (Bassnett and Lefevere 3).² The realisation of translation's vital role in the “interaction between cultures” led to the systematic and expanded use of translation as “means of studying cultural interaction” (Bassnett and Lefevere 6). This application of the concept of translation provided a new paradigm with which to study the movement of people, ideas and texts across cultures. Scholars even used the notion of translation to re-discuss the notion of culture as stable and whole entity. Bhabha's 1994 *The Location of Culture* introduced the idea that translation does not happen between stable and distinct cultural spaces, but in a “Third Space of enunciation” where meaning is constructed by being constantly translated and re-discussed. Bhabha’s intuitions allow the conceptualisation of

an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. (Bhabha 38, author’s emphasis)

The model is rooted in the post-colonial world, but it has proved possible to

² Many scholars identify an important antecedent of the contemporary debate on cultural translation in Walter Benjamin’s groundbreaking 1923 essay on the translator’s task (Buden and Nowotny 200). The essay shifted the focus from the matter of fidelity to the role fulfilled by translation, emphasizing the need for a work to be translated in order to continue its existence beyond the time and place of writing: translation “indicates that important works, which never find their chosen translators in the era in which they are produced, have reached the stage of their continuing life” (Benjamin, “The Translator’s Task” 76). The idea has the merit of stressing translation’s transformative qualities, as well as its relevance in the evolving definition of both source and target cultures.

use for the understanding of hybridity in different contexts, as a process of signification that challenges and re-elaborates assumptions of cultural homogeneity, exhibiting the translational specificity of hybrid texts.

Cultural translation has been used as a paradigm of thought for understanding hybrid cultures in an increasingly globalised world, studying the transfer process of “various kinds of practices” travelling “from one cultural context to another and by doing so undergo[ing] processes of meaning-shifting, or rather, of an extension of meaning” (Wagner 57). In the confrontation between the individual and the multiple cultural constraints to which he/she is subject, translation becomes a “means of repositioning the subject in the world and in history” by making “self-knowledge foreign to itself” and taking the citizen “out of the comfort zone of national space” (Apter 6). The study of Carnevali’s work enables an understanding of cultural “repositioning” through the study of more than one textual practice (poetry, criticism, prose), all having the target culture (America) in common, as well as a negotiation of different meanings of Italian culture. The idea of Carnevali as “translated man” may appear metaphorical, but it is rooted in a conceptual redefinition of translation in the expanding field of translation studies.

Metaphorical uses of “translation” in the notion of “cultural translation” have broken ground for innovative views on how translation acts upon the cultural world. A discussion of the relationship between metaphorical uses of the word “translation” and the actual linguistic practice has been called for (Italiano and Rössner 11). Buden and Nowotny suggested that “cultural translation” should not be treated as “a sort of extension or overcoming of the narrowness of linguistic concepts of translation” but rather involves the “cultural dimension” already included in the linguistic act of translating (203). Any study of cultural translation must consider that the effect that a text has upon the construction of a culture is inseparable from the linguistic strategies employed in the text to that effect. As the cultural dimension of linguistic translation is acknowledged, affinities are found with other practices (translingual writing, interpreting, transnational influence, multilingual pastiche) which involve the use of specific linguistic strategies to produce meaning related to more than one cultural environment. We may

speak then of mediators, whose work “exceeds mere translation” to include in their ranks “multilingual authors, self-translators, often active in a variety of intercultural and inter-artistic networks, often migrants, with hybrid identities, who develop transfer activities in several geo-cultural spaces” (Cronin and Simon 123). The investigation of Carnevali’s translingual work enables the study of translingualism as a tool for cultural translation, and of the translingual text as the space in which operations of intercultural communication take place. The investigation initially needs to establish the subject’s operations of positioning with respect to the cultural framework. Then, the text must be analysed in its style and other linguistic features: they bear the trace of all the languages and styles involved, and reveal the strategy used to perform the process of cultural translation.

The root of the translingual text is continuous engagement with an unfamiliar language, which imposes operations of translation taking place within the self, re-defining the relation between self and language:

If migration into a new language requires that a person to some degree recreate themselves, then self must come into being in the first place in an active relation to language. (Besemeres 10)

There is no univocal direction that this recreation of the self through languages may take: Steinitz for example has individuated at least “two distinct models of literary translingualism: as creative refuge and as alienation from the self” (15), each of them working for distinct translingual authors. The present work focuses in particular on translingualism as a means to perform cultural translation in a context of metropolitan immigration, where the translingual is subject to different and often contradictory constraints. The inner workings of translation are well known to the migrant, who experiences the everyday dimension of translation as an understanding of the foreign, and of communication involving a ‘source’ and a ‘target’ language at some point of the communication process. A migrant is always a “translated being”:

He or she moves from a source language and culture to a target language and culture so that translation takes place both in the physical sense of movement or displacement and in the symbolic sense of the shift from one way of speaking, writing about and interpreting the world to another. (Cronin, *Translation and Identity* 45)

The linguistic shift, depending on the continuous negotiation of meaning in

the new environment, has consequences on the literary production of migrants. The translingual author must make him or herself understood by the audience of choice, while building on personal background, motivation and intent: in the case of the migrant translingual, the question is often that of translating “the source language of pain into the target language of the host country” (Hron 39).

The translingual needs to treat matter in relation to new cultural and stylistic constraints, either by contesting or adapting to them: this is how the individual's self is translated, as he/she finds a linguistic strategy to express the self while dealing with the various constraints of the target culture. I believe that Carnevali's work in its evolution (pre- and post- his 1922 return) demonstrates that complete adaptation or total revolt is never the case, and that the translingual author may navigate constraints in different ways in relation to their specific goals in a specific text, contributing to their discussion and re-definition.

This study of cultural translation via translingualism considers Carnevali's work in relation to the theoretical frameworks of modernism and Italian-American literature, to determine his individual stance with respect to canons (even a canon as ‘liquid’ as the modernist canon) and the way in which Carnevali may be used to expand and re-think such theoretical frameworks.

Carnevali was involved in the aesthetic challenges and processes of renewal that characterised modernism, and his relation to the modernist milieu as an outsider enables the discussion of the two critical issues of 'ethnic modernism' and 'Italian modernism.' Carnevali was a recognizable presence in American modernism for the years 1918-1922, writing his way into the reviews that were publishing those who would be regarded as key modernist authors. What is relevant in this sense is not merely Carnevali's presence alongside modernist masters (Carnevali's “Tales of a Hurried Man,” for example, were serialised in *The Little Review* along with Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1920), but his translational specificity in relation to the modernist aesthetics, as he got assimilated into the modernist milieu precisely by exerting his power of critique on the target context.

Carnevali stood in relation to modernism, but modernism was not at the time an identifiable whole, and even nowadays a univocal definition of modernism proves somewhat problematic. Generally, artistic responses to modernity, especially those originating in the early twentieth century and peaking in the 1920s, are taken to 'be' modernism. The link to modernity is usually considered more fundamental to a definition of modernism than the inclusion or exclusion of single authors and movements: "Modernity is a social condition. Modernism was a response to that condition" (Scholes and Wulfman 26). Modernism is inseparable from an idea of modernity: so much so that we can also extend its terms to mark the moment when modernity first 'hit.' The moment involved the artistic recognition of a "sense of the 'fleeting' and 'contingent'" determined by the socio-cultural environment of the bourgeois metropolis, where man is "caught between a cult of 'multiplied sensation', on the one hand, and an impasse of inaction and impotence on the other" (Nicholls 6–8). Emerging as a number of different responses to such challenges and aspirations, the art of the modern

is a perpetually contested practice. It marks out no single zone of value, no single pattern of experience. It is an ill-defined collection of acts and responses – representation and abstraction, engagement and abstention, fascination and detachment, contemplation and critique – that has offered not one value but a region of commitments. (Levenson 9)

When I define Carnevali as an outsider of such an "ill-defined" cultural atmosphere, I indicate his critical relationship with a group of authors that would later be defined as modernists. These authors were all native English speakers, and all of them readily included in the literary and critical discourse of Anglo-American modernity. Carnevali both criticised and appealed to them, dealing with the same issues that they were dealing with, from a position of alterity. Anglophone modernism was highly concerned with tradition: it "appropriated its cultural antecedents," entering into "symbiosis with them, drawing its life-blood from what it came to 'replace', incorporating them in its own 'pattern of timeless moments'" (Smith 20). The variety of English and non-English references included also the Italian tradition, most notably Dante. Carnevali's view of Italian models could not be the same as that of Anglophone modernists; that is true, in a specular manner, of his relation to American modernist models. Similarly, modernism was concerned

with language, and the exploration of its hidden potential, in “an acute awareness of the inadequacy of established literary languages” accompanied by “an unprecedented sensitivity to linguistic and cultural plurality and difference - an awareness, in short, of the condition of Babel” (Taylor-Batty 3–4). Carnevali’s approach to “Babel,” given his newcomer’s relationship with his language of choice, was necessarily different from that of his modernist contacts.

Carnevali’s work within the context of Anglophone modernism is best analysed through the present ‘enlarged’ discussion of modernism. The latest analyses of intertextual origins and disseminations of modernism have expanded modernist studies in ethnic and racial terms (Caparoso Konzett; A. Patterson; Sollors; Ramazani). These “New Modernist Studies” as they have been called, are preoccupied with “local strains in parts of the world not always associated with modernist production” as well as with “situating well-known modernist artifacts in a broader transnational past” (Mao and Walkowitz 739). Modernist aesthetic innovations and urban displacement have been often linked together:

Liberated or breaking from their national or provincial cultures, placed in quite new relations to those other native languages or native visual traditions, encountering meanwhile a novel and dynamic common environment from which many of the older forms were obviously distant, the artists and writers and thinkers of this phase found the only community available to them: a community of the medium; of their own practices. (R. Williams 45)

As scholars began “discussing modernism in the plural, referring to the many alternative and competing discourses of the period” (Caparoso Konzett 5), canonical modernism’s un-housedness and rediscussion of tradition has been put in touch with the minorities of the time. Especially in America, modernism and avant-garde coexisted with the rise of ethnic literature. In the eye of mainstream criticism “modernism became another form of mongrelization, another impurity stirred into the terrifying mixture that America was becoming” (North 27). Authors from ethnic communities responded to the same metropolitan world that mainstream modernist authors were responding to, often focusing on similar themes (Sollors, *Ethnic Modernism* 60); at the same time, actual collaborations between American

modernists and minority artists were rare. The disparities in outlook and world-view between people of different backgrounds, as well as languages “mutilated through experiences of migration and disruption” led literary outsiders to develop their “aesthetics of nonsynchronicity” (Caparoso Konzett 10). The notion of “nonsynchronicity” is related to the aforementioned difficulty in individuating ‘modernity,’ and the different times in which different communities experienced what Western cultures consider ‘modernity.’ Nonsynchronic texts attempt to record the sudden shift in language and world-view by taking on elements of the newly found cultural milieu to discuss elements that do not necessarily relate to the target milieu. Carnevali brought his Italian “non-synchronic” perspective through different operations of cultural translation.

Carnevali’s work is also useful for a definition of “Italian Modernism,” a notion that has been gradually accepted in Italian criticism. Whereas Italian experiences such as Futurism were regarded as part of the modernist cultural climate from the start of the critical debate on modernism (Bradbury and McFarlane), the term itself has encountered difficulties imposing itself in Italy. This is largely due to the presence of a nineteenth-century movement within the Catholic Church, called *Modernismo*. The term has only recently entered the critical debate on Italian literature, providing with its “foreignness” an open category “to access the constellation of cultural phenomena which reflect, in complex and contradictory ways, on the experience of modernity in Italy” (Somigli and Moroni 4). Under the critical shift, authors and movements that were still categorised under the umbrella-term of “decadentismo” or confused with the avant-garde, have been placed within their European context (Luperini). The analysis of Carnevali’s work enables the study of Italian modernism, from the peculiar perspective of an Italian who, in America, individuated some Italian authors who appeared compatible with local modernism, and engaged in translating them for some time.

Gardaphé has warned that “Trying to place Italian American narratives [...] into historical categories such as modernism and

postmodernism can create confusion” (*Italian Signs* 11). The acknowledgement of a specific Italian-American context generating a specific Italian-American literature is vital to its comprehension; yet, Carnevali may be understood only through his simultaneous dealing with modernism and with a literature that is both Italian and American.

Carnevali was retrospectively inserted in the Italian-American canon. He was active before Italian-American literature developed the ability to “think” itself, and an “Italian American vision” grew out of the “innumerable, even involuntary, returns that characterize immigrant Italian narrative as it registers its own passage through time and as it discovers and develops its own characteristic themes” (Viscusi, *Buried Caesars* 142). Carnevali, as we shall see, was mostly disconnected from the debate which originated Italian-American literature and an exemplary case of development of Italian-American literary conscience. He could be recuperated as antecedent for Italian-American poetry exactly in virtue of the specific quality of his in-betweenness:

Ma insomma, la ragione per cui Carnevali merita di essere ricordato come genealogia della poesia italiana contemporanea negli Stati Uniti è il suo aver vissuto e scritto nell’intervallo o interstizio tra diverse compagini sociali; il suo non essere stato né italiano né americano né italiano americano, ma veramente (cioè coerentemente, puramente – anche con la irresponsabilità che spesso si accompagna alla purezza) poeta tra i due mondi.³ (Valesio 277)

Carnevali’s work must be investigated as an individual Italian response to the cultural reality of America. His operation of cultural translation, on the other hand, involved issues that all Italian-American authors face – that is to say, the definition of *italianità*⁴ and its communication to the American public.

Italianità is an umbrella term, expanding across and beyond the Italian peninsula to indicate a continuously re-defined, shifting repository of cultural elements. When Tamburri asked “what exactly is this *italianità* that [Italian-

³ “Finally, the reason why Carnevali should be acknowledged as ancestor of Italian poets in the United States is that he lived and wrote in the interval or interstice between two different social milieus; that was neither Italian nor American or Italian-American, but truly (that is to say coherently, purely – even with the irresponsibility that often goes together with purity) a poet between two worlds.”

⁴ The term would roughly translate into “Italian-ness” and it indicates the quality of being recognizably Italian.

American authors] are interested in re(dis)covering,” he could only conclude that the term

could be language, food, a way of determining life values, a familial structure, a sense of religion; it can be all of these, as it can certainly be much more. Undoubtedly, a polysemic term such as *italianità* evades a precise definition. (Tamburri, *To Hyphenate* 21)

Tamburri's intuition applies to Carnevali as writer of texts featuring many indisputably Italian elements (food, Dante, Italian clerical and anti-clerical discourses, the Florentine modernist of *La Voce*, Fascism and the Little Italies of New York or Chicago) but whose definition of *italianità* is elusive at best. The “polysemic” notion of *italianità* can be realised in the text only through a continuous act of translation, in which Italian culture is not communicated as a whole, but elements are selected, transposed, and put in contact with elements of the target language. Carnevali's reaction to the language and values encountered in America contributed to build and define his shape-shifting *italianità*, allowing us a glimpse into an individual conscience confronting the overwhelming largeness and contradictions of ‘national’ culture.

Carnevali's *italianità* in translation may be instrumental for a re-discussion of Italian-American literature which would go, as in the title of Tamburri's 2003 essay, “beyond ‘pizza’ and ‘nonna’” - that is, beyond the simple reaffirmation of easy-access signs of Italian presence in America. Tamburri on that occasion considered the possibility of using the “arsenal” of post-colonial critique as “source of critical ammunition” (“Beyond ‘Pizza’” 161) for a major reconsideration of Italian-American text within American literature. The translation-based paradigm of literary contact (developed with major contributions from post-colonial scholars) may use Carnevali to contrast the notion of an established hierarchy of major versus minor literatures, as well as re-framing immigrant leitmotifs. The translation-based paradigm accounts for a re-discussion of the logics of major/minor literatures, which is particularly relevant for Italian-American culture. Italian-American authors are caught in the dichotomy between Italian literature representing a major influence over high-brow Western literature and an American milieu in which Italian-American writers have been often relegated within the

constraints of 'ethnic' literature: Carnevali's presence in American modernism enables the re-discussion of such a dichotomy.

Carnevali proves instrumental to a definition of Italian-American literature as composed by Italian authors who crafted a variety of responses to Italian displacement in America. He is in general a crucial figure for a transnational re-definition of Italian studies. Although the scholarly debate on a transnational Italy has developed only recently, the transnational perspective may productively be applied to Italian culture, due to the particular processes of signification that characterised Italian culture both in the Italian peninsula and outside of it:

historically a space characterized by both internal and external transit and movement, Italy itself can be imagined as a hyphenated, in-between space created by the multiple crossings that etch its geographical surfaces and cultural depths. (Bond 421)

Carnevali's story and work should not only be analysed as a unique case within modernist literature, or as initiator of a certain intellectual position of Italian-American artists; he should be inserted in the vast framework of authors, ideas, texts and forms characterised by being both within and without the Italian borders. His attempt at cultural translation may not have been entirely well-received at the time, if not as a peculiar case within the modernist discourse; the analysis of his work is nowadays a source of information on the possibilities and difficulties of inter-cultural contact, in a world that was only then coming to terms with its contemporary global dimension.

The study of Carnevali must establish the many facets of his work. The language of his text needs to be considered as the product of a continuous evolution under multiple factors. To this end, the study of cultural elements must go hand in hand with the study of the textual devices which represent them; and theoretical instruments from comparative literature, philosophy, linguistics and translation studies are needed in turn to investigate all aspects of the text. The thesis consists of three parts: Part 1 investigates Carnevali's background and his various operations of cultural positioning in America; while the second and third parts analyse the linguistic strategies he employed

in his work in America (2) and after his return to Italy (3).

The thesis starts by analysing Carnevali's autobiographical fiction, focusing on his description of linguistic and cultural displacement (1.1). His attitude towards the English language as he adopted it as medium is analysed in relation to his position in the American milieu (1.2). His conceptualization of himself as an Italian in America is considered with respect to his relation with the Italian immigrant community (1.3) as well as his activity as translator (1.4) and critic (1.5).

The analysis of Carnevali's American poetry intends to individuate patterns of linguistic conformity and non-conformity to the language of American poetry, by considering his relationship to modernist free verse (2.1) and the Italian interference in his poetic language (2.2).

In its last part, the thesis focuses on Carnevali's works written after his return to Italy, in order to investigate the development of translingual writing under changing conditions. The focus is initially on the clinical condition that led Carnevali to leave America, and on how he conceptualised it in relation to the development of his poetic language (3.1). The analysis then moves to the town of Bazzano, which Carnevali represented in various works written in his last years, and which provided him with Italian subject matter, to be represented in a different language (3.2). In Italy, Carnevali also became the first Italian translator of Pound's *Cantos*, although the project was not finished: its implications in the development of Carnevali's idiosyncratic language is considered in 3.3. Finally, the thesis analyses Carnevali's last years, and the unfinished project of what would become known as the *Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali*, his legacy and the document of his adventure through languages (3.4).

1.1 TRANSLATING CHILDHOOD, DECODING AMERICA

On the first day of September, 1917, Emanuel Carnevali sent a letter to Harriet Monroe, editor of the Chicago magazine *Poetry, A Magazine of Verse*. She was important in the American modernist community as she “not only gave authors feedback on manuscripts but actually fed them,” providing “hospitality in the office and at home, a sympathetic ear, and, quite often, loans and gifts of cash in emergency” (Parisi and Young 4). Carnevali would often benefit from her support. The letter in question contains a statement that will be crucial in the course of this dissertation:

I want to become an american [sic] poet because I have, in my mind, rejected forever Italy and its standards of good literature: I do not like Carducci and less D'Annunzio.⁵

The declaration of literary allegiance aptly describes Carnevali's spirit as he started writing in English. There are many reasons for Carnevali's shifting allegiance, including literary taste and the desire to be read and accepted in his new country. This section intends to trace the deep personal and psychological reasons that led Carnevali to move from Italy to America, and from the Italian language to the English language once he was in America.

1.1.1 Mother Tongues

The 1917 “American poet” letter contains a short autobiographical paragraph. In a few lines, Carnevali outlines his reasons for emigrating:

Parents separated. I lived with mother till I was ten. Mother died. I was sent to father. Did not agree with any of his views: at sixteen, after much fighting and rebelling and crying, I decided I must go to America...⁶

At the very moment in which Carnevali is crossing the border into literariness, by discussing the publication of his first poems, he is also writing his own

⁵ Carnevali to Harriet Monroe, 1 September 1917, in Special Collections Research Center at the University of Chicago Library, “*Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. Records,” (SCRCC *Poetry* from now on. All material used with permission from the copyright holder.) Box 43, Folder 11.

⁶ Carnevali to Harriet Monroe, 1 September 1917, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 43, Folder 11.

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story for the first time, to a public of one. Monroe did not print the personal details: the March 1918 issue of *Poetry* merely indicated that the poet was “born in Florence twenty years ago, was educated in Italian technical schools, and came to America at sixteen,” and reported his renunciation of Italian literary standards (“Notes” 343). Yet, the letter mentions Tullio Carnevali’s comment on his son’s desire to emigrate: “Father said: ‘A nemico che fugge ponte d’oro’ that is ‘Make a bridge of gold to a fleeing enemy.’”⁷ Carnevali translates the Italian idiom in his early and private autobiographical account, justifying his rebellion by implying that his father saw him as an enemy to be driven away. That impression stayed in the author’s mind, in the story that he kept telling and re-telling, and it would eventually appear in Kay Boyle’s edition of *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali*:

When I saw my father he told me he agreed to my going to America since, and these were his words: “For the enemy in flight we build a golden bridge.” I understood. I was then the enemy of that big beast. (Autobiography 58)

The idiom leaves a trace in the author’s mind, marking his moment of separation from his Italian background. It then gets re-told over the years, up to the posthumous 1967 *Autobiography*. An urge to tell his own story drives Carnevali’s writing, relying on linguistic and cultural background to justify and explain his presence in American literature.

The English of the *Autobiography* – largely written in the 1930s, at the end of his life and career – illustrates views and motifs originating at a time before Carnevali could speak English. The *Autobiography* frequently pays attention to language: one of the titles Carnevali had initially conceived for the book was “*Religious Stammering*” (Boyle 15). The proposed title combines the author’s faith in the divine power of the word with stammering. Gadamer links stammering to foreign language acquisition, as “the obstruction of a desire to speak” which is “thus opened into the infinite realm of possible expression” (16). The book follows the author’s adventure through languages, and the difficult, “stammering” process of acquiring expression.

⁷ Carnevali to Monroe, 1 September 1917, in SCRC *Poetry*, Box 43, Folder 11.

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It is important, when approaching this text, to keep in mind that the story was written by its dying protagonist, and put together by an editor. The 1967 edition of *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali* depends much on Kay Boyle's editorial intervention. She pieced together the autobiographical stories that Carnevali had collected in the 1925 book *A Hurried Man*; the six chapters (called "The First God, Part I") that were included in a 1932 anthology⁸; and the remaining "sections of the book he was trying to write in the public ward of the hospital in Bazzano" (Boyle 15). Boyle worked and reworked Carnevali's text to give it narrative coherence.

Dealing with such a re-arranged text to outline the deep emotional reasons behind Carnevali's literary migration may appear risky. The very status of the book is in question: not only because it contains heterogeneous materials, but also because Boyle's edition "calls itself an autobiography, whereas the Italian translation is presented as a work of fiction" (Buonomo 51). The 1932 publication of the first six chapters of the work bore the subtitle "A Novel" ("First God" 74), and Buonomo concludes that the book is "better described as partaking of the two genres" (51). It is essentially an autobiographical novel, taking the form of a final confession to the reader, and also incorporating fragments of poems and essays. It is the closest approximation to an account of Carnevali's life, and of his linguistic and literary upbringing that we have.

Carnevali's narration invests language with power from the early stages of his life:

[...] when I was six or seven I thought the greatest achievement was to call a woman a whore. That word had something magic and mysterious and deep and profound and philosophic and daring in it. (Autobiography 28)

The prohibited word exerts its fascination, but the profusion of adjectives denotes an interest in language that is beyond simple joy in the forbidden. The child, who would become a poet, discovers the world and affirms his Adam-like name-giving powers, wishing to participate in the hidden powers of

⁸The anthology was *Americans Abroad*, a collection of works by American expats edited in The Hague by Peter Neagoe.

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language.⁹ This is complicated in the *Autobiography* by the fact that the narrative is written in English, and not in the language of Carnevali's upbringing: it was certainly not the English "whore" that Carnevali uttered at six, but one of its Italian equivalents. The *Autobiography* was written in the author's second language, and its narration contains the key to understanding this choice. Translingual authors often report that writing in a second language is beneficial to autobiographical writing,

not only in practical terms, such as access to new and larger audiences, but also in psychological terms, offering writers new, 'clean' words, devoid of anxieties and taboos, freeing them from self-censorship, from prohibitions and loyalties of their native culture, and allowing them to gain full control over their words, stories, and plots. (Pavlenko, "Bilingual Selves" 20)

The modernist canon features several examples of this, such as Beckett's prolonged and proficuous relationship with French. Carnevali's *Autobiography* is, in large part, the story of how he gained new linguistic tools to affirm his individuality.

The translingual memoir moves between languages as well as temporalities. Memory "translates the foreign language of the past into the comprehensible language of the present" (Bartoloni 27) – enabling the past to be arranged. Memory fills gaps in a distant past by interpreting and rearranging memories, discovering connections between them and casting light on hidden meanings, "not so much interested in recalling for the sake of recalling as in recalling for the sake of discovering" (Bartoloni 27). The process is two-fold in Carnevali as he recalls his childhood from his sick bed, arranging his past and rendering it into English. The English language enables such discovery, as a layer between the author and his past, urging him to shape it in the language of his literary production, ultimately discovering and

⁹ Carnevali's insistence on linguistic upbringing matches modernist preoccupations. For example, Joyce has his Stephen Dedalus experience similar interests for language in his childhood: upon hearing a fellow student use the word "suck", he reflects on its meaning, linking its sound to the sound of water going down the basin to confirm his sense that "suck was a queer word" (Joyce 9). This kind of reflection brings the uncanny aspects of language into the author-child's education: "children ponder the meanings of words they don't quite understand; most often the words they don't quite understand are words that are 'not nice', words that are 'queer'" (Johnson xxviii). Carnevali's childhood narrative also involves fascination for words that are "not nice." The two modernist narratives respond to the contemporary interests of psychoanalysis in taboos and childhood, focusing such fascination through the eyes of the artist-to-be, who will one day attempt to master language.

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translating his childhood.

Translingual authors often write about their experience with different languages and cultures as a means to manage and acknowledge the passage, while communicating their unique condition and difference to monolingual audiences. “It is not surprising,” writes De Courtivron in the introduction to her anthology of translingual memoirs, that a number of bilinguals write “language memoirs – all of which echo one another, despite their radically different contexts and histories” (3). Carnevali’s *Autobiography* exhibits the need for representation of the linguistic passage that appears inherent to translingual memoirs, expressing it through established cultural constraints (such as the metaphor of ‘mother tongue,’ as we shall see).

Both translingual memoirs and novels with autobiographical components, in the course of their plots, reflect and dramatise the practical impact of translation on human life. The “struggle over translation” in this kind of text is not only “represented lexically or linguistically [...] but rather thematically” (Cutter 5). Translingual narratives often stage a *mise-en-scene* of the self-translation processes experienced by their authors, even when translation is “not an actual lexical practice” in the text, but “rather a trope – a metaphorical construct utilised to constellate a series of questions about ethnic identities, language practices” (Cutter 5). The present section investigates Carnevali’s early relationship with language, concentrating on his conceptualization of it through narrative tropes.

Carnevali begins his version of the narrative with what seems to be his oldest memory, in a chapter aptly titled “The White Beginning”:

I remember a white room with white sunlight coming in from tall windows; in it my mother and an old lady, a very white old lady, are stooping attentively over me; I may have been from two to three years old. It was in the city of Florence [...]. (“First God” 74)

The passage provides a geographical indication for the reader. Yet, the cultural and literary dimensions of Florence as Carnevali’s hometown are not exploited: not only because Carnevali had hardly any experience of Florence, as his family soon left the city, but because the text is mainly preoccupied with a child’s perception of the world and the textual strategies to reproduce

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it. This is a typical concern of modernism, exemplified by works like Joyce's *Portrait* and catalyzed by modernist interest in Freud (Valentine 42). Carnevali's "First God" chapters take the modernists' interest for the development of language and perception in childhood into an Italian setting.

"The First God" presents Carnevali's existence as precarious from the beginning. His first memory appears to be that of a hospital room, and the first image is one of sickness and death. The two figures standing close to Carnevali's bed are his mother and "an old lady, a very white old lady." The colour white is usually taken as a symbol of purity, but here it evokes void and annihilation rather than innocence – as the colour of hospital rooms, nurses and the old woman's hair. As Buonomo underlined, the use of colours such as white, pink and black in the memoir "sum up in a single sensation the periods of his childhood" as his "evocation of the earliest and remotest phases of his life" seems to mimic basic memory patterns (52). The "White Beginning" is a recollection of brief images, as Carnevali recalls his life in the Tuscan countryside. He presents himself as a pre-verbal being, "the most docile little animal ever" ("First God" 75). The linguistic and artistic aspects of his childhood are also personified by the feminine figures of mother and aunt.

It is relevant that Boyle inverts the order of the first chapters of the *Autobiography*, featuring "Mother" as the first chapter: she thus strengthens the feminine presence in Carnevali's childhood, by giving even more relevance to the person defined by Carnevali as the true source of his art. Carnevali, in the space of the autobiographical narration, turns the descriptions of his mother and father into metaphorical treatments of the ideas of father-land and mother-tongue. The metaphor of mother-tongue is realised in many languages, and it has a place in different treatments of languages and linguistic identity. The image, "évoquant cette idée que la fondation du langage est 'prise' et apprise à travers le sein maternel, avec le lait" is held by psychologists to be "sans doute plus poétique que scientifique" – and yet embedded in the development "du petit être humain qui commence, à l'aube de son développement, par reconnaître la voix maternelle, puis [...] apprend

progressivement à parler" (Amati Mehler, Argentieri, and Canestri 72).¹⁰

Few notions are as concrete and pervasive in human experience as the mother-child relationship. It is no wonder, then, that the language in which one is educated, and with which strong links are usually construed (in terms of emotive, political, cultural and social belonging) is often defined in terms of motherhood. This is an operation of personification, a form of “ontological metaphor” allowing us to “make sense of phenomena in the world in human terms [...] that we can understand on the basis of our own motivations, goals, actions and characteristics” (Lakoff and Johnson 34). The mother-tongue metaphor has become part of everyday language – acquiring a high degree of what Kövecses calls “conventionality” (29) – so much so that speakers do not usually notice that they are using a metaphor. Authors using it in their narratives of linguistic upbringing revive and elaborate on the conventionalised metaphor; a very common use sees the abandonment “of the mother tongue - *Muttersprache*, *langue maternelle*, [...], *lingua materna*, [as if it] were tantamount to matricide” (Kellman ix). The treatment of the mother-tongue metaphor obviously differs from author to author; yet translingual autobiographical narratives seem to have a tendency to discuss the role of the mother in the linguistic upbringing of the child, realising the mother-tongue metaphor through links with mother figures.

Derrida’s *Monolingualism of the Other* briefly focuses on how the translingual writer tends to speak of ‘mother tongue’ in terms of loss. The dynamics of this loss is uncertain on the other hand: “He publishes his words in our language. In order to say of his mother tongue that [...] it has 'lost' him” (Derrida, *Monolingualism* 35). Derrida then casts doubts on the possibility that the “language of the mother” is also “language of origin which has perhaps ‘lost’ [the bilingual writer], but which he himself has not lost” (*Monolingualism* 36). The bilingual writer nevertheless tends to construe the ‘mother tongue’ as the centre of his/her desire for a stable and reliable linguistic identity, seeing the abandonment of this language as a form of

¹⁰ “...evoking such idea that the foundation of language is ‘assumed’ and apprehended through the mother’s milk” is held by psychologists to be “without any doubt more poetic than scientific” – and yet embedded in the development “of the young human being who begins, at the start of his own development, by recognizing the maternal voice, and then progressively learns to speak.”

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irredeemable loss. In *The World Republic of Letters*, Casanova reports an interview with Somalian author Naruddin Farah, where he regrets having become a poet in English, because his mother could never speak that language, while he intended his works to have a strong link with her: “I hope that my work is good enough to serve as a eulogy to my mother” (Casanova 255). Considering the distances in time and space, there are striking echoes with those words in Carnevali’s *Autobiography*: “Listening to the silence that was the life of my mother, I hear the words of my poetry, the words with which I could make a wreath for her head” (*Autobiography* 23). The desire to write poetry is directly linked, by Carnevali as well as Farah, with the mother’s inability to speak for herself. The mother is not a poet, but her “silence,” her forgotten shapeless story, is given the shape of ‘words’ by the son’s poetic conscience. The link is not strictly linguistic, but pre-rational – and for this reason an English text may celebrate and record the existence of Carnevali’s non-English-speaking mother, and of the emotional kernel she represents. These words are inserted in the 1967 text, but are not in the 1932 version of the “Mother” chapter: they are likely to come from one of the many letters that Carnevali wrote to Boyle, from which she subsequently “pieced together [the] story of his life for him” (Boyle 15). She placed these words at the beginning of the book with the rest of the 1932 “Mother” chapter. They were most likely meant to trace the autobiographical narrative directly to the mother figure: “This book contains all of my mother, or at least it should, for I am her son” (*Autobiography* 23).

Carnevali’s mother Matilde was a quite fragile and emotionally unstable woman, who became addicted to morphine and died when Carnevali was eleven years old. The 1932 chapter, as well as the later additions, are construed as Carnevali’s dialogue with his dead mother, associated with sickness and silence. Carnevali links her suffering with his own: “Mother, I would give you now all the affection your misery claimed: but I too am sick and fully engrossed with my own sickness” (“First God” 76). The mother’s silence (“I think of your dead mouth”) mirrors the poet’s inability to find words to amend her silence: “What can I tell you of myself, mother, except that I have wasted in sickness a good half of my real life from fifteen up” (“First God” 77). The passage reinstates the communion of mother and son

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through suffering, while expressing his sense of guilt for a “wasted” life in what he knows to be his literary testament.

Carnevali construes his mother as Catholic saint and earthly goddess. He defines her “Mater Dolorosa,” translating the cult of Our Lady of Sorrows. The link to a weeping Mary, devastated over the death of her son, is significant in relation to Carnevali’s own illness and sense of approaching death. Matilde becomes the private equivalent of the statues of saints that were taken in procession through the streets of Little Italies. The quasi-pagan aspects of the cult of Mary play a part in the use of Catholicism as an element of cultural differentiation in Italian America. As Gardaphé wrote regarding the Catholic tones of Pietro Di Donato’s work, such insistence on the cult of Mary “had its roots in pre-Christian matriarchal worship” (*Italian Signs* 69) and expressed difference from Protestant America. Carnevali, who was not a Catholic but had grown up in a strongly Catholic Italy, was receptive of the cult in his own way.

Matilde is also a pagan goddess, dwelling in hallowed ground:

Your head, in the little cemetery of that little town, rests against the wall. Beyond the wall an unkempt space of tall grass grumbling with all kinds of small and big insects. I saw you dead, you were beautiful with your face color of the earth. You inspired tranquility. (“First God” 76–77)

The mother is of the earth, from which small creatures are born. The impression is reinforced by Boyle as she places an anecdote at this point of the narration, of a “spotless black cat” who befriended the poet’s mother when she lay dying, and who could be “seen going around the coffin, purring most strangely” after her death (*Autobiography* 25). In spite of Carnevali’s diffidence of supernatural events (“they say [...] black cats bring misfortune, and whether I believe it or not...”), his mother becomes a catalyst of all the pagan aspects of Italy, of the primal world in which his difference from America is rooted. Her grave becomes the only holy ground in a country with which the poet had severed all ties, maintaining a pre-rational link with the mother. Her silence is irredeemable, and yet the poet feels the need to establish a conversation. Both Matilde’s morphine addiction and Emanuel’s encephalitis lethargica turn them into living corpses, separate from the living,

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long before their deaths. They are united in their doom, and separated by Emanuel's attempt to transfigure his suffering into art. This would also mean the transfiguration of his mother's suffering in his art, but the attempt is frustrated by the sickness itself. Boyle frames her version of the "Mother" chapter, and the whole book, with the notion that the mother's silence is inherently linked to Carnevali's words. She reports Carnevali's admission that, while his mother was asleep most of the time, he "should have given to that sleep a voice, given a speech to that immobility" (*Autobiography* 23). Carnevali represents his relationship with the mother as central, within the scope of a narrative that is also the autobiography of his language. In the staging of this narrative of the translated man, the "Mother" chapter (in its different forms) features language mainly as silence and impossibility. The *Autobiography* does not simply avoid the mother-tongue metaphor; rather, it represents it as emotional link and a deep-seated fear of oblivion, that needs to be countered by writing.

There is another female figure whom the author links to his linguistic and artistic development: his aunt Melania Piano, who took care of him for more than a year after Matilde's death in 1908. She is represented as a complementary mother figure, and her role as an outsider in Italian society is underlined. In the 1932 autobiographical narration Carnevali stated that Melania "might well claim that she had been responsible for [...] the education of [his] soul," and concluded: "I feel she made of me a poet" ("First God" 81). She had been the subject of the first of his "Tales of a Hurried Man" in October 1919, showing her influence on the poet.

Melania lived in East Africa during Italian colonial expeditions and came back, Carnevali remembers, with "beautiful tales of hyenas, pestilence, devoted negro servants and Ras Alula and Ras somebody else" ("Tale I" 16). Historical memory is rewritten in the personal memories of a woman who crafted "beautiful tales" for children out of the atrocities of colonialism. Still, her own story is by no means one of success and affirmation, including a refused marriage proposal from a "famous explorer," two pregnancies and two subsequent break-ups. In Carnevali's 1919 tale, she appears stricken, but not defeated, by the inevitable stigma towards single mothers at the time:

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“Two children, not brothers, and the mother a lady, proud, now bitterly proud, but proud still like a Queen, poor White Queen”¹¹ (“Tale I” 17–18). The 1919 tale ends up interspersing poetry with prose, discussing Melania's failure and Carnevali's beliefs in the redemptive power of poetry:

There comes the big failure and some bend
their heads
over their chests
like birds in the cold.
[...]
But there are eyes in the world
that see the dance of the absurd,
and always someone
who carefully listens to the great song of it.
 (“Tale I” 19)

Melania's story ends up in failure, but Carnevali includes her in his Whitmanian triumph, among those who “listen to the great song” in contrast to the “big failure” and the “dance of the absurd” of the mainstream. In 1919 he linked his aunt with his desire to write: “This lady, Melany Piano, was my mother's sister, my aunt. I'm in a hurry. I wrote this about her; I am a writer and I write about persons and things” (21). The apparent tautology reaffirms the author's genuine, spontaneous desire to turn his life into literature, while the position of the remark links this desire with the artistic and poetic education he received from Melania. Carnevali then adds “I'm in a hurry:” the main feature of the “Tales of a Hurried Man” is the urge to discuss and translate into English the events of his life, writing his impressions on the “persons and things” that he meets on his course. Melania Piano in this sense is the figure setting the “hurried man” on his course to discover and translate the world. “Tale One” expresses the excitement of a fresh start in a new language, after paying homage to a crucial figure of his intellectual development. Thus, he can conclude the 1919 story with an image of himself accepting the poetic challenge:

I'm on a journey beyond you and your things, you and your colors and words. On the mountains, over this city and that, I am the bird that has no nest, I am the happy stranger, I'm sailing under the sun. (“Tale I” 22)

The myth of the poet as a young outsider is articulated here through images

¹¹ “White Queen” is how her servants addressed her in Eritrea, or so she had told to a young Carnevali (“Tale I” 17).

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that fit the context of Carnevali's adventure through languages. The image of the bird with "no nest" indicates that he is without a homeland, as well as countering the previous simile of "birds in the cold" bending their head in defeat. Melania Piano is a model from his homeland and his family; at the same time, she had thrived outside of Europe (as the "White Queen" of Eritrea) and suffered in Italy. In the new setting Carnevali describes himself as "the happy stranger," content to face the challenges of the new language and context. He is "sailing under the sun," ideally turning the migrant's exile across the ocean into a poetic voyage across the sea of knowledge.

In 1932, recollecting his memories from his deathbed, he wrote a different account on Melania: "I have already written a story concerning my aunt, and therefore I shall find this chapter very hard to write" ("First God" 80). The sick and defeated Carnevali of 1932 does not mention her stay in Africa, or her challenge against society. It is said that she had "two sons, sons of different fathers" and that "she brought up her children as well as she could, but she beat them too often" ("First God" 80). The 1932 chapter ends, like the 1919 story, with Melania's death. This time, however, the image of her death does not lead to Carnevali expressing his poetic ideal, but to the recollection of his marvel at the sight of "terror and fury" in the face of her corpse ("First God" 81).

In the narration, Carnevali's mother and aunt represent the core of his emotional development. They participate in the "mother tongue" metaphor, but do not act it out in full. The mother tongue, the lost language of childhood, often appears in translingual autobiographies as the voice that may "claim a greater 'reality'" than the acquired voice of writing (Besemeres 41). That is due to the assumed naturalness of the universe described by the language of upbringing, to the deep link of that language with earliest memories and perceptions, which results in having the native language "libidinally invested [...] when one lives in a country where a different language is spoken" (Grinberg and Grinberg 90). The "mother tongue" metaphor may conceptualise nostalgia for the native language, idealised as the perfect means of expression and expressing desire for return to a linguistic maternal womb. Carnevali certainly idealises Matilde and Melania Piano, but that does not

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lead to a celebration of the Italian language. The two women embody the “gift of writing” as it “comes from the dead, not only in the writer's personal experience of loss, but also in a more general sense of tradition or inheritance, simply what is passed on to us as writing” (Karpinski 96). The influence of the dead upon the living is articulated through writing, preserving the memory of the dead and attesting their past existences; writing is also cultural inheritance, that the dead have passed on to us. In the case of translingual autobiography, this inheritance must be not only discerned (and in some cases rescued from “silence”), but also translated. This “intergenerational [...] transmission of memory” via the “genealogical function of translation” (Karpinski 97) is central to Carnevali’s autobiographical narrative. He construes the “gift of writing” of his mother in terms of silence and frustration, without investing the Italian language with redemptive powers. The aunt is in turn indicated as responsible for his artistic education, in virtue of having travelled the world and resisted the constraints of Italian society. Mother and aunt represent, more than a lost mother tongue, a lost emotional kernel. The two feminine figures are responsible for his poetic upbringing, but are not linked to a specific childhood language in which he had been able to express himself, before the switch to English. They represent a silence to be redeemed (the mother) and the brief enthusiasm of leaving Italy for another country (the aunt). Their narrative treatment seems to search and aspire to the metaphor of the mother-tongue which has been observed in other translingual narratives. The feminine figure is indeed evoked in relation to linguistic upbringing and the deep reasons for writing, but the metaphor is not carried out to the end, leaving the young Carnevali with a poetic calling but no definite “mother tongue.” This largely depends on Carnevali’s troubled relationship with the Italian cultural establishment and society – epitomised by the complementary metaphor of the father-land.

1.1.2 Leaving the Fatherland

The nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher, arguing against translingualism (“a writer becomes a traitor to his native language by surrendering his verbal life to another”) theorised

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that “if the distinctive mind of the author of a truly scholarly or artistic work is the mother, the native tongue, the language of the ‘fatherland’ is the father” (236). In that century of emerging nations and national canons, paradigms of linguistic identity saw “the foreign as one pole, exterior and other” and the domestic as “internally derived, infinitely supple, and uniquely authentic in subjective expression,” with the result of casting the bilingual writer as “a kind of freak” (Hokenson and Munson 142). While Carnevali’s maternal figures seem to represent the emotive and aesthetic aspects of the mother-tongue metaphor (the “distinctive mind of the author”), beyond its actual realization in a specific language, the language of Carnevali’s father is precisely linked to the “fatherland.”

Tullio Carnevali, the author’s father, is presented at the beginning of the “First God” as “the most ignoble of men” (“First God” 76). A state clerk, he was separated from Emanuel’s mother; he got to know him only at the age of eleven. Carnevali’s narration gives his father quasi-monstrous features, having “a most vicious laugh: he showed his teeth when he laughed, which gave him the aspect of a ferocious beast” (*Autobiography* 41). The ogre-like features are also geographically situated: Carnevali specifies that this was “the Romagnoli’s kind of laugh,” pinning it down to the region where his father brought him after his mother’s death. In the narrative, the father appears to represent the backwards, provincial Italy that the poet left in search of a more stimulating environment. His repulsion for books is explicitly cast against Emanuel’s future career: “he gave me one lire every week and as I often bought books (small books, I mean) he prophesied that I should turn into a poet or a similar beast”¹² (*Autobiography* 40). Tullio Carnevali “prophesied” that Emanuel would become a poet in virtue of their difference. Emanuel, in turn, would base the literary narrative of his father on the same difference: “if there is a man who understands less about poetry than my father, I do not know him.” Tullio’s ignorance of literature has a threatening quality: “He reads so coldly that I fear for my soul when I hear him.” In the

¹²“A similar beast” literally translates the Italian idiom “una bestia del genere” – and that is the translation provided by Maria Pia Carnevali in the Italian edition (*Il Primo Dio* 32). The Italian is commonly used to express ignorance, with undertones of diffidence – but is not particularly derogatory. The effect of the translation on English-speaking audiences increases the derogatory tone of the remark.

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Autobiography, he has the power to stifle his son's emotional kernel, while their difference is seen as a prelude to Emanuel's poetic career.

Carnevali's treatment of his father is concerned with the troubling aspects of their relationship, possibly overlooking moments of affection.¹³ The *Autobiography* has Tullio calling his son "Manolucchio" – a nickname which "was not altogether unsweet" (40). The nickname briefly re-inserts, in the space of the narrative, a version of the name that he was initially given: Manuel Federigo Carlo Carnevali.¹⁴ "It is not unusual for translingual authors to adopt different names to signify a new identity through language" (Kellman 20): Carnevali's use of "Emanuel" might be due simply to aesthetic reasons, although its resemblance to "Emmanuel, [...] the Hebraic 'God with us'" has been noted – hinting at his desire to deal with the divine power of the word (Powell 319).

Emanuel and his brother invest their father with negative connotations, in a language of their own:

We called him Bissolati (a member of the Italian parliament), and made the *iettatura* gesture after him. But we could not love our father. That was our great tragedy. Something had willed forever that our father and we two should never come near to one another. (*Autobiography* 40)

The association of Tullio with Leonida Bissolati, Italian socialist leader of the early twentieth century, is not clear at all, nor it is intended to be. The counter-naming process is relegated in the specific context of Carnevali's childhood, and lost in the translingual, cross-cultural reference. The "*iettatura* gesture" is also culture-specific, and difficult to translate. It is a ritual gesture aimed at a person who is believed to bring bad luck. In the narrative, it is the sign of an opposition to the father figure, still happening within the limits of Italian culture. It is not casual, I believe, that he makes his father speak romagnolo

¹³Letters from the Bazzano years, all signed "Manolo," show that while he was writing in English about the threatening father figure, he had also partially reconciled with Tullio. In a 1923 letter Carnevali shows his concern for his father's health in quite tender words: "Carissimo papà: Ho ricevuto la tua gentile lettera. Non puoi immaginarti quanto mi dispiaccia il saperti ammalato." [Dearest Dad: I received your kind letter. You cannot imagine how sorry I am in knowing that you are unwell.]. E. Carnevali to T. Carnevali, 15 June 1923, in Archivio Comunale di Bazzano (BO), Fondo "Maria Pia Carnevali" (ACB from now on. All material used with permission from the copyright holder.), Folder 4.2.5.

¹⁴Stivender to Boyle, 29 July 1971: "[copyrighted material]." In New York Public Library, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, Kay Boyle collection of papers, 1925-1988 [bulk 1952-1986] (NYPL Boyle from now on).

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dialect, in a narrative whose intended readership did not even speak Italian. It happens when Emanuel breaks some bottles in his father's house during a nervous breakdown, and the father comments: “*I scienta tutt!*” (*Autobiography* 57, author's italics). The sentence is romagnolo dialect for “they break everything:” not only it is lost to an Anglophone readership (Boyle provides no footnote here), but Italian readers as well would have to rely on the translator's note¹⁵ (*Il Primo Dio* 54). One of the features of multicultural, multilingual works, is that their “meaningfulness” is “in large measure a function of their unintelligibility for part of their audience” (Dasenbrock, “Intelligibility and Meaningfulness” 12). Minority authors insert foreign speech in order to be unintelligible to the mainstream readership, thus replicating the misunderstandings and obscurity that is part of multicultural interactions. Such textual devices, on the other hand, are often the sign of an identity to be claimed by the author: a private code which the mainstream readership would have to decode, in order to be granted admission into every aspect of the author's speech. That is not Carnevali's intention in evoking his father's romagnolo dialect. “There was,” he remarks, “great bitterness in that utterance and it gave me pain” (*Autobiography* 57). The dialect is not a key to the author's identity, but to a part of the author's identity which he has decided to suppress upon emigrating. “*I scienta tutt!*” in the English text may only express the author's extraneousness from the father who uttered those words.

The critique of the father, in those chapters of the *Autobiography*, goes hand in hand with Carnevali's critique of the fatherland, as he engages, in his adolescence, with Italian cultural events of the time, and defines his stance as both a writer-to-be and an outsider. Italian culture is embodied, in the chapters relating to Carnevali's teenage years, by the various schools he attends, and the staples of *italianità* against whom he measures his individuality. His idiosyncratic relation to the cultural atmosphere of Italy in those years is narrated in terms of irony and cynicism.

Carnevali's involvement with the “Society for the Redemption of

¹⁵ “Rompono tutto!”

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Trent and Trieste¹⁶” as a schoolboy results in him stealing subscription money (“I collected some money making new members and spent a happy Christmas with the appropriated funds”). That money, he comments, was “almost all [Italy] gave me” (*Autobiography* 61). As for his engagement with Italian literature, Carnevali mentions “a girl schoolfellow whose sympathy I won by defending D’Annunzio against Manzoni,” a critical discussion hardly impaired by the fact that “None of us knew much about the two authors” (*Autobiography* 60). Futurism, the ground-breaking Italian avant-garde group, is received by Carnevali in Bologna on a second- or third-hand account, as he “wore a flowing necktie and was believed to be either an anarchist or a futurist, the two things being strangely linked together” (*Autobiography* 61). Carnevali’s days as a “futurista” apparently consisted mostly of episodes of petty vandalism (*Autobiography* 61). Later on, in New York, he would write articles in which he explained Futurism as a movement “fostered by the hustling of many vacant souls, who made out of these exaggerations, etc. (which were all they could reach), a theory and a way of art” (“Five Years” 211).

It is not casual that the literary models he mentions in the early chapters of the *Autobiography* are non-Italian. In boarding school he befriends an attendant who helps him with his “spiritual and ideal education”:

He gave me *The Three Musketeers*, which I read in French, understanding more than one might imagine. It was the first book that I read in French and he lent me the book because its French is extremely easy. But right after that he gave me *Eugenie Grandet*, and *La Dernière Fée*, and he himself read to me the dreary, macabre, fierce poems from *Les Fleurs Du Mal*. (*Autobiography* 44)

French was, more than any other, the language of culture and social prestige in the post-unification Italy in which Carnevali grew up. It is quite natural that it should be the first foreign language with which he would come into contact.¹⁷ The image of the young Carnevali being guided into French literature, struggling with Dumas, Balzac and Baudelaire, seems a prelude to

¹⁶At the time of Carnevali’s childhood, several nationalist associations advocated the “redemption” (hence the name *irredentismo* given to the movement) of the Italian-speaking cities of Trento and Trieste, then part of Austria.

¹⁷Carnevali maintained links with the French language and culture throughout his career. As we shall see, he admired Rimbaud and Laforgue, and translated some of Rimbaud’s poems into English. He also sometimes wrote letters in French to his friend Waldo Frank.

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him engaging with the English language and the Anglophone canon. Carnevali, unsurprisingly, “loved to read” as a boy: his choices denote an omnivorous interest in poetry and fiction. He recalls a peculiar early contact with American culture, reading the adventures of “*Nick Carter, Nat Pinkerton and Buffalo Bill*” along with his French books. In the *Autobiography* he also recalls reading “some terrible appendix novels” (*Autobiography* 44): the phrase literally translates the Italian *romanzo d’appendice*, a form of nineteenth-century cheap serialised fiction, similar to the dime novels he mentions. The calque identifies his understanding of the literary world as being still largely influenced by Italian categorizations, in a narration which precludes the young Carnevali’s linguistic emigration.

There is, on the other hand, one Italian cultural symbol which Carnevali recalls with a sense of belonging: Venice. He spent approximately two years (1911-1913) in the city, studying at a boarding school, the Collegio Marco Foscarini. Decades later, he would illustrate the monuments of Venice (the Canal Grande, the Ca’ D’Oro) to readers of the *Autobiography*, concluding with his appreciation of the city: “Nothing in Venice is unbeautiful. All is resplendent, all speaks of ancient artists...” (*Autobiography* 54). Only there Carnevali “finds a reality commensurate with his poetic vision and form for his concept of beauty and value in human love” (Boelhower 160). The city is construed as a work of art, as the author wonders “how much dreaming was necessary” to “think out” Venice (*Autobiography* 54). As a staple of Italian culture, Venice is set in comparison against the whole of America, which in turn stands for the whole of modernity in metonymic relation: “I would give away all modernity for one look at Venice. I would give away all the unlovely new things for a single look at you” (*Autobiography* 54). He not only states that “the gondola belongs to no one but a poet,” he also affirms its superiority over the automobile (*Autobiography* 55). His description of Venice prepares, in the narrative arc that is constructed by author and editor, for Carnevali’s traumatic impact with New York, which would resist his aesthetic ideal: “his projected dream (New York as a modern Venice) quickly collides with the steel and stone of it” (Boelhower 162–63). It is also linked with the episode which would set Carnevali as an outsider, as he would be expelled from the Collegio Marco

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Foscarini of Venice, for episodes relating to his homosexual relationship with a classmate:

I mixed my love for the Grand Canal with my love for Giovanni Genovali. He and Venice were the two splendours of my life. When I had his hand in mine, I was happy. [...] In short, ours was the ordinary love affair. (*Autobiography* 55–56)

Carnevali's account of his relationship with Giovanni seems to aim at demonstrating that their relationship was pure in its physical and emotional aspects – a revolutionary intent, considering the views on homosexuality in early twentieth-century Italy. The relationship constitutes a moment of personal growth for the poet, and is framed with a literary reference: “I know from *Jean Christophe* [sic] that such love-affairs between boys are frequent, and often are the most innocent and pure things ever.” The reference to Romain Rolland's Nobel-prize winning novel *Jean-Christophe* (1904-12) explains Emanuel and Giovanni's love within the borders of a literary success of the time. This is possibly used by Carnevali as a form of self-defence from social stigma, ‘authorising’ homosexuality in the context of the narrative by the fact that it replicates a famous fictional narration.¹⁸ The English language enables him in the 1930s to write the story he had intended to conceal from the school directors in the 1910s.

Homosexuality appears often in the *Autobiography*, in the form of Carnevali's “pure,” sentimental relationship, as well as taking violent and threatening forms when embodied by other characters. Carnevali's classmates are chastised for their “orgies” associated with their “scoundrelism” (*Autobiography* 56) and the childhood chapters feature “one lurid young man who initiated [Carnevali and his childhood friends] into orgies of a sexual kind,” failing eventually to “pollute” their “purity” (*Autobiography* 29–30). Carnevali's sexual identity is in the constant process of definition and re-definition in the *Autobiography*, as he describes his homosexual experiences to the reader – quite openly, considering the epoch – while sometimes using

¹⁸ It is possible that Rolland stayed in Carnevali's mind as a symbol of homosexual friendship. When writing about his friend poet Louis Grudin, he remembers “[telling] him he resembled Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*” (*Autobiography* 101). There is no evidence that the two ever had an affair, but their friendship was very close, with potential homosexual undertones. In retrospect, Carnevali writes of Grudin “You are a whole sky for my memory, dear Lou. I ate and drank of you, I admired you...” (*Autobiography* 101).

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derogatory terms for homosexuality. The brief sketch about his friend Giomin, placed at the end of the book by Boyle, is an example of this:

I slept one night with him and he endowed me with the sweetest names, but there was nothing pederastic about it, for he was young and strong and loved women very much, and I did too. (*Autobiography* 259)

Carnevali's accounts of his own sexuality often expresses confusion and contradictions, as in the text he attempts to translate and come to terms with his bisexuality, elaborating on the confusions and contradictions that he experienced in real life. He discusses his own homosexual relations and then uses derogatory words ("pederastic") to describe homosexuals. At the same time, the *Autobiography* contains accounts of his relationships with women – and his marriage to Emily Valenza. Judging from his autobiographical accounts, he spent a considerable amount of time, in his teenage years, coming to terms with his evolving sexuality, and the social stigma associated with homosexuality at the time. His bisexuality is part of the personality traits which placed the young Carnevali at a distance from the Italian society of his time, ultimately fuelling his desire to emigrate, and build a new life in a new language – in which he could also discuss his sexuality. The causal link is evident in the narrative, as it was arranged by Boyle: Giovanni's refusal to continue his relationship with Emanuel triggers the latter's "first symptoms of hysteria" (*Autobiography* 57). This results in Carnevali being expelled, reluctantly moving to his father's house and finally writing him a letter: "I said that I was sick of his house, [...] that I had quit school forever and that I wanted to go to America as soon as possible" (*Autobiography* 58). In the 1967 *Autobiography*, Carnevali's bisexuality is the feature which sets his separation from the father-land in motion.¹⁹ It would cause Tullio Carnevali

¹⁹ According to his biographer, Carnevali was expelled from the Collegio Marco Foscarini in Venice in 1913, possibly for his relationship with Giovanni (Cacho Millet, "Cronologia" xix). After that, he moved to Bologna, where he attended another school. Only in 1914, after the new school principal called Tullio Carnevali to tell him that Emanuel was skipping school, father and son finally had an argument, and Emanuel decided to emigrate.

The causal link, in the *Autobiography*, between Carnevali's expulsion from the Collegio Marco Foscarini and his emigration is in large measure a result of the way in which Boyle has arranged Carnevali's autobiographical writings. In the "Kay Boyle papers, 1914-1987" at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale – Special Collections Research Center (SIUC Boyle from now on. All material used with permission from the copyright holder.), there is a version of the chapter ending with Carnevali breaking up with Giovanni (Series 9, Box 86, Folder 3); and another one (closer to the published version) in which the incident is followed by Carnevali falling out with his father and deciding to emigrate (Box 86, Folder

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to utter the sentence which, from the embryonic account in the 1917 letter to Monroe, Emanuel associated with his refusal of the fatherland: *a nemico che fugge, ponti d'oro*. It resurfaces in the narration of the 1930s: “For the enemy in flight we build a golden bridge” (*Autobiography* 58).

The words uttered by his father are translated into English in at least two different versions, as the Italian original utterance is lost. The Anglophone reader may not experience the sense of “irata meraviglia”²⁰ (Ballerini 416) felt by Italian readers in seeing such a proverb used by a father against a son. Translated into English, these words do not belong to the realm of idioms anymore, and maintain a sense of novelty, as if they were uttered for the first time in translation. In 1917, when writing his story for the first time in a letter, Carnevali had translated the idiom as “make a golden bridge to a fleeing enemy.” This was the translation of a young translingual, striving for acceptance in the new language. The 1930s text comes after a long process of learning and adaptation, and refines his 1917 translation. Carnevali’s continuous re-translations and re-telling of his own story tend to consider that utterance as decisive for his separation from the Fatherland. It set a journey in motion, which would lead him to America and to the English language.

1.1.3 Learning the Language of New York

The linguistic predicament of the migrant – every migrant – is that of the “translated being.” Migrants experience life as a continuous decoding of the unfamiliar (at a linguistic as well as cultural level) and a shift in the familiar domain. Consequently, they

will have to learn or perfect their skills in another language in order to function in their new environment; their individual and collective identities will experience a series of transformations as they adjust to the loss of their place of birth and attempt to turn it into a gain. (Malena

8). It is possible that Boyle re-arranged Carnevali’s chapters in a way that would highlight the link between Carnevali’s rebellion and his decision to emigrate. In any case, contrasts between father and son were considered by the author as the main reason for emigration, as stated in the aforementioned 1917 letter to Harriet Monroe.

²⁰ “Anger and puzzlement.”

9)

Migrants embody, in their everyday life, intuitions about understanding as being the key concept of translation. As George Steiner argues, “any model of communication is at the same time a model of translation” as “no two historical epochs, no two social classes, no two localities use words and syntax to signify exactly the same things” and “neither do two human beings” (*After Babel* 47). The disparities in speech and worldview between any two given human beings account for the understanding of the unfamiliar being decisive for both communication and translation; when “the difficulty is great enough, the process passes from reflex to conscious technique” (Steiner, *After Babel* 48). Migrants experience this difficulty daily: their acts of coding and re-coding are continuous, moving towards the acquisition of familiarity and ease of understanding. The “conscious” process of translation gets deeply embedded in their lives (more so than for individuals living in a monolingual community, dealing with different versions of the same language). It is a constant reminder of their displacement and of the cognitive operations that regulate their very existence in the host society. The issue of understanding and making themselves understood turns translation into a “question of real, immediate and urgent seriousness” for migrants as “the ability to translate (autonomous practices) or be translated (heteronymous practices) can in some instances indeed be a matter of life and death” (Cronin, *Translation and Identity* 45).

Carnevali in New York experienced translation as a matter of life and death, as the journey meant not only the abandonment of the oppressive constraints of the father-land, but also implied facing new cultural constraints. Viscusi remarked that Carnevali, although sensitive to the theme of linguistic displacement, “never speaks of his own difficulties while learning English,” and rather “seems not to have experienced any” (*Buried Caesars* 178). The *Autobiography* on the other hand contains passages that underline the linguistic and cultural displacement of Carnevali’s early New York years. Carnevali admits to having very little knowledge of English when he arrived. He gained his fluency by surviving moments of miscommunication, misunderstandings, and a constant threat to his individuality.

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To every Italian immigrant, to some extent, “America first existed as a metaphor,” a compelling yet distant image symbolizing work and opportunities, reinforced by tales of returning migrants: “exaggerated accounts of their successes and failures were created so that through story the myth of America was created and through metaphor the myth was communicated” (Gardaphé, *Leaving Little Italy* 18). Carnevali experiences the deconstruction of this myth upon setting eyes on New York:

This was the long-dreamed of New York, this awful network of fire-escapes. This was not the New York we had dreamed of, so dear to the imagination, so cherished among all the hopes a man may hope: this dream of the dreamless, this shelter of all the homeless, this impossible city. This miserable panorama before us was one of the greatest cities in the world. (*Autobiography* 73)

Thus Carnevali synthesises the clash between the migrant’s expectation and the harsh realities of the host country, with bitter and “smitizzante”²¹ irony (Ricciardi 174). His account subverts many staples of the immigrant narrative, including the vision of the Statue of Liberty from the ship deck, announcing their arrival in the United States. Carnevali does not find much hope in the vision: “one could admire the Statue of Liberty, if one had the stomach to.” Ellis Island, the port of entry, has figured in many immigrant narratives, as the place where the migrant’s hopes were tested, and their encounter with the foreign began. Russian American author Mary Antin identified Ellis Island as “another name for Plymouth Rock”²² (Sollors, *Ethnic Modernism* 202): the founding myth of citizenship for all foreign-born Americans. Carnevali reports instead being annoyed by Ellis Island “officials” who “thought it very fine to ask every immigrant whether he had been to jail” (*Autobiography* 73).

From this moment on, translation enables him to make sense of the unfamiliar and counter threats to his individuality. Such threats come from the host society, which attempts to turn Carnevali into a machine, a non-sentient slave, through menial jobs. Of his first job, as a busboy in a restaurant, he writes: “I gave myself enthusiastically to it, working like a

²¹ Italian: de-mythologizing, deconstructing the myth.

²² Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, is traditionally indicated as the site of disembarkation of the Mayflower pilgrims in 1620.

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horse, and at night dreaming of the piles and stacks of dishes, dishes, dishes” (*Autobiography* 77). Carnevali’s days as a waiter, dishwasher, and gardener, all blur into one image in the narration:

I dragged this weary body of mine, eternally tired, eternally ill, with a certain obstinacy from place to place. I had to live, but I had all of America against me, all this never-ending urge to work. (*Autobiography* 149)

The author’s pain is described as both physical and psychic in the intercultural narration. America is associated, in both passages quoted above, with words conveying weights and burdens. The pain felt by an immigrant, writes Hron, “is not transparent” (40), not easily seen or understood by the host community. In the new environment, they have no language to express their toils. The painful experiences often become conflated with the very image of the host country, as Carnevali does while recalling his sensations from his first months in America (“I had all of America against me”). The *Autobiography* is an interesting document of the migrant’s interaction with the new reality, and also a “translation” of those feelings into the language of the host country: “expressing pain is not a transparent act; yet, neither is it ineffable. Translation does not presume transparency; yet, at the same time, it does counter inexpressibility” (Hron 40). Translingual writing enables the migrant to counter the silence imposed by language differences, and convey at least a version of his/her experience to the readership of the host country. It is not a “transparent” version of the migrant’s experience. Yet, it can be used as a tool to probe the early stages of linguistic and cultural displacement of a migrant. By the time Carnevali writes this “translation,” he is an American author, in possession of a literary language with which to frame and illustrate his suffering.

Carnevali’s story of exposure to linguistic unfamiliarity begins on the ship: there he meets Missio, an immigrant who poses as a nihilist philosopher and who had been a civil servant in the Belgian Congo. Missio was apparently involved in harsh forms of colonialist exploitation, but his tales do not seem to show any regret. Missio teaches Carnevali some words of “the language of those people”: such words (“*soka*”, “*malam*”, “*menemene*”) are left untranslated and only indicated as “obscene.” Carnevali, in retrospect,

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concludes that learning curses and “obscene” words is a crucial part of the learning of a new language:

The first words one learns of any language are always the obscenities and the blasphemies. Because obscenities are half the vocabulary of the people and the thing which interests them the deepest. Organized beastiality [sic] is infinitely more comprehensible than organized beauty. (*Autobiography* 70)

The “beastiality” of language is threatening, but more immediately appealing to newcomers. It grants access to the kind of words that aroused Carnevali’s interest as a child, when he thought that “the greatest achievement was to call a woman a whore” (*Autobiography* 28). His fascination for language often seems to involve taboo words (especially those linked to sexuality) which present themselves as key to a primal and powerful understanding of the world.

Carnevali in New York is acquainted with the “obscene” quality of English as the language of beggars, waiters and prostitutes. Carnevali attempts to create a small circle of friends in the city, all of them linguistic outsiders: a French prostitute, a Dutchman, and most importantly his brother Augusto, who briefly lived in New York²³ before returning to Italy to fight in the War. Still, Carnevali’s narrative shows the trouble he had in decoding the linguistic environment of the city. He recalls finding a room with an Italian landlady on his day of arrival, but that did not prevent him from experiencing his first miscommunication:

The landlady of this one was deaf as a bell, but she was Italian and she was the cook. There was a servant-girl who inevitably asked me if I wanted ‘Awful Pie.’ I tried to write down for her whatever I wanted, but to my surprise and indignation she never understood. (*Autobiography* 74)

The use of misunderstandings for comic effect brings out “what humour theorists would call an incongruity or conflict between different cognitive schemes” (Delabastita and Grutman 18). In this case, the Italian landlady would be able to understand the author, but she is “deaf as a bell” (a literal translation of the Italian idiom *sordo/a come una campana*). The waitress, on

²³ According to Cacho Millet, Augusto and Emanuel Carnevali actually emigrated together in 1914 (“Cronologia” xx). Yet, in the narration of the *Autobiography*, Carnevali tells of how Augusto joined him after some time.

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the other hand, keeps offering what the author understands as “Awful Pie”: the apple pie, a dessert which is often regarded as quintessentially American, is misunderstood by the disillusioned immigrant as “Awful.” Once that migrant has become a migrant-author, he can re-use that misunderstanding for parody and comic effect. The misunderstandings staged in the narration may only be a fraction of the one experienced by Carnevali upon his arrival in New York, but it is likely that they all provoked his “surprise and indignation” at the lack of a common code.

As Cronin underlines, “translating oneself into the language of the host community is not only a way of understanding how that community thinks and functions,” but also a step toward the individual’s inclusion in the community (*Translation and Identity* 53). Carnevali’s early attempts at translating himself are often frustrated. He and his brother are kicked out by a landlord after he had called the landlord’s wife his “mistress,” which turns out to be a remarkable example of mistranslation: “I explained that in Italy women are always addressed as Signora which I believed meant ‘mistress,’ and no one would ever dream of calling a lady by her actual name” (*Autobiography* 91). Carnevali’s mistake depends on earnest will to maintain formality in shifting linguistic systems, and yet he is often left out of the linguistic community.

In the meantime, his literary education progresses together with the acquisition of the English language. Carnevali is immersed in the language of the streets of the city, the language of dishwashers and prostitutes. There is little trace of this in the style of the *Autobiography*, which was written in a literary English when he had been living in Italy for at least a decade; and therefore was more exposed to Italian than to American slang at the time of writing. One might note, on the other hand, that New York characters speak their slang in the few examples of direct speech in these chapters: “she threw her arms around my neck and called me: ‘Brotha’” (*Autobiography* 88). Carnevali engages with the literary form of English, privately, by reading books after work. It is likely that the heterogeneous canon of Anglo-America influences that he indicates to Monroe in his 1917 letter is born at this point: “Of American I have read (pretty well) Poe, Whitman, Twain, Harte, London,

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Oppenheim and Waldo Frank.”²⁴ The formation of this tentative canon is staged in the *Autobiography*, where he also discusses the inherent linguistic difficulties. He recalls “div[ing] fearlessly into George Bernard Shaw” and remembers “[falling] in love with one word” although he did not get its “real significance: *disparagingly*” (*Autobiography* 92). As pointed out by Fracassa, the fascination for this word entails “l’autonomia del significante quale polo d’attrazione per il poeta straniero”²⁵ (144). The narration takes the sound of the foreign word as a symbol of the power of attraction that the foreign language has before its translation into the familiar, precisely in virtue of its compelling difference. In the *Autobiography* it becomes part, on the other hand, of an English narrative, testifying to the accomplished command of the English language, in which he could tell the story of how he conquered the foreignness, reducing it to an italicised English word within an English text.²⁶

The process leading to the start of Carnevali’s literary career is now already in full motion. Carnevali begins writing, although his first experiments are destined to be forgotten. He initially writes scripts – or, as he calls them, “scenarios” – with the help of his Dutch friend. This is particularly relevant as an attempt to master the “latest and most modern form of expression,” with links to the “New World” (Buonomo 56). These scripts, now lost, were apparently indebted to the *grand-guignol*²⁷ tradition, involving “a drastic muddle of love, death, crime, and malefactors” (*Autobiography* 94). They are soon replaced by poems. Carnevali recalls writing his first line ever while shovelling snow in Brooklyn: “As yet I wasn’t a poet, I was only a reader, but there I wrote one line. I wrote: Love is a mine hidden in the mountain of our old age” (*Autobiography* 116). Carnevali’s narrative construes his transformation from reader/learner to poet/producer as initiated by a single line, springing directly from the hardships of immigrant labour – in conformity with an image that he often projected on himself, that of the

²⁴ Carnevali to Monroe, 1 September 1917, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 43, Folder 11.

²⁵ “The signifier’s autonomy as a pole of attraction for the foreign poet.”

²⁶ Also Fracassa (143) points out how the Italian translation has, in this case, the merit of underlining the foreignness of “*disparagingly*” for the young Carnevali, by including it as an English word in an Italian text.

²⁷ In an earlier chapter of the *Autobiography*, Carnevali recalls his fascination for “the Grand Guignol, fierce sort of one-act plays in which there were often more dead men than personages” (59).

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poet who rejects technique and composes solely out of his own sensitiveness.

The beginning of Carnevali's writing is also the beginning of fruitless visits to the editors of reviews, and of rejection slips. A rejection slip from William Rose Benét testifies to his still unaccomplished acquisition of English: "He wrote me that my poems were 'turgid.' I was compelled to lose some precious time going to my dictionary to find out what turgid meant" (*Autobiography* 95–96). Finally, an editor accepts two of his poems: A.R. Orage of *Seven Arts Magazine*. What Carnevali fails to mention in the narration is that *Seven Arts* closed down in 1917 before it had a chance to publish those poems. He then contacted other editors from the same circle, including *Poetry*'s Harriet Monroe: thus began Carnevali's relationship with the modernist milieu of America.

The operation that Carnevali narrates in these chapters of the *Autobiography* ultimately led to his existence as a published American author. He found himself in the situation of pleading for entry and acceptance into a foreign literary canon. Appealing to the audience of the host country, he had to acquire some necessary linguistic tools: the English language, and a working knowledge of American literature. Yet, the process that leads to Carnevali becoming a writer is deeply rooted in his personal life and in his own reasons for finding a language other than Italian, with the mother as 'silent' model and the father as oppressive presence.

The process involves his reaction to Italian culture and its taboos, while coming to terms with the threatening unfamiliarity of America. His fascination for language, in this sense, provides him with a means to translate his suffering into an English text, and a lifelong goal: "to become an American writer."

1.2 ARIEL, CALIBAN AND THE SPLENDID COMMONPLACE: THE POTENTIAL OF ENGLISH AS A NON-FAMILIAR LANGUAGE

This chapter explores the way in which Carnevali, who was just beginning to write in English in the years 1917-1919, articulated his relationship with the host culture, negotiating his presence and developing his relationships with editors and fellow authors.

Carnevali's first short collection of poetry, the six poems of "The Splendid Commonplace" appeared in *Poetry* in March 1918.²⁸ They are Carnevali's introduction to the milieu, and the most relevant result of his first experiments with the poetic form in English. His being an outsider influenced his approach to language: what the native speaker usually takes for granted may be a source of confusion or wonder to the newcomer. Carnevali's early poems are a declaration of poetic intent and the establishment of a literary relationship with the language, influenced by the fact that to a linguistic newcomer even a "commonplace" may sound "splendid."

Carnevali's early works established a complex relationship with the authors of the New York and Chicago modernist milieus, building on his display of cultural difference. Contemporary criticism, both written by Carnevali and about him, expressed this relationship in terms of linguistic, aesthetic and ethnic boundaries. Carnevali's discussion of linguistic outsiders often includes more or less open references to the cultural symbols of Ariel and Caliban in his criticism and fiction. In the study of minority literatures, Caliban has gone beyond his appearance as a character in Shakespeare's *Tempest* to become (with or without Ariel) a symbol of provocative use of language made by the linguistically dominated against the dominant. While Carnevali's use of Ariel and Caliban does not articulate in full the significance that the symbol would later have in post-colonial texts, it nonetheless discusses similar issues and constraints.

²⁸ Preceded by the January 1918 publication of the poem "Colored Lies" in the magazine *The Forum*.

1.2.1 The Newcomer and the Splendid Commonplace

Language gains “a less self-evident quality in the company of speakers of another language” (Cronin, *Across the Lines* 59). A newcomer in an unfamiliar linguistic environment, the migrant finds himself or herself in the situation of struggling with elements of language – grammar, vocabulary, idioms – that native speakers take for granted and that the migrant may access only through processes of translation. Translingual writing engages directly and continuously with such processes: the resulting text involves a translator’s perception of the world. Kellman explains this aspect of translingual writers by relying on Shklovsky’s idea of *ostranenie*, the “defamiliarization” that is inherent to art:

It is hard to take words for granted when writing in a foreign language. Translinguals represent an exaggerated instance of what the Russian formalists maintained is the distinctive quality of all imaginative literature: *ostranenie*, “making it strange.” (Kellman 29)

According to Shklovsky, art implies the defamiliarization of the common, the “removal of [the] object from the sphere of automatized perception,” causing “estrangement” and a “long and laborious” perception (6). In the case of the translingual writer, the textual object – his or her medium – is automatically out of the “sphere of automatized perception.” The resulting text may or may not present a “strange” language to the monolingual audience: that depends on the degree of linguistic deviance employed by the author. The translingual author, on the other hand, works in a permanent condition of estrangement with respect to medium. In this respect, I find Carnevali’s relationship with everyday English – and especially with the concept of ‘commonplace’ – particularly revealing of the complex relationship between the translingual and the linguistic medium.

The word “commonplace” is an integral part of Carnevali’s language – a language that, as we shall see, often used the same terms, words and phrases to express key concepts, as the author insisted on his newly formed lexical repository. He used “commonplace,” in the *Autobiography*, to describe his

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first sight of New York:

These famous skyscrapers were nothing more than great boxes standing upright or on one side, terrifically futile, frightfully irrelevant, so commonplace that one felt he had seen the same thing somewhere before. (*Autobiography* 73)

As noted in the previous chapter, his first impression of New York challenges the typical autobiographical narrative, substituting awe with disappointment. Boelhower places this passage at the core of his analysis of Carnevali's failed attempt to create a poetic transfiguration of America. Carnevali appears immune to the "metaphysical appeal so obvious in buildings like the Woolworth;" reducing them to "their function, to a zero degree of semantic charge, the protagonist has no other choice but to dwell on their economic function" (Boelhower 165). The critique of skyscrapers fuels Carnevali's critique of the urban environment, devoid of metaphysic power and unable to support the migrant's hopes of personal fulfillment. It also has, I believe, a linguistic dimension, as the passage recalls his very first attempt to organise and define the reality of America: in brief, to find a language to make sense of America. That language is the language of the commonplace. America appeared to Carnevali as a succession of basic functional shapes: not only the skyscrapers, but also the elevated railroad station is called an "unpretentious, unassuming little box" (*Autobiography* 74). The insistence on "boxes" may point to the freshly arrived Carnevali's lack of terms to describe and categorise the reality of New York, narratively reflecting in a text written by the older Carnevali – who has mastered the English language but still refers to that first basic impression of "boxes."

Approaching a new language means also to "develop sensitivity to new features, shift prototypes, adjust category boundaries, and in some cases, acquire entirely new categories organized around distinct perceptual properties" (Pavlenko, *The Bilingual Mind* 71). Carnevali's early experience with the Manhattan cityscape initiates the start of a "cognitive restructuring," to put it in Pavlenko's terms, which leads him to resort to conceptual analogy. The result is a sort of defensive *déjà vu*, pinning down the cityscape to the already-known: in recollection, America felt "so commonplace that one felt he had seen the same thing somewhere before" (*Autobiography* 73).

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Making sense of America involves, in the *Autobiography*, dealing with the impenetrable unknown and with the trivial commonplace at the same time: America is a “land of easy mystery (easy because readily solved)” (*Autobiography* 74). The narrative of that first impact informs our understanding of Carnevali’s literary career in New York. Raymond Williams describes the link between modernist abandonment of familiar environments and detachment from familiar modes of expression:

The experience of visual and linguistic strangeness [...] raised to the level of universal myth this intense, singular narrative of unsettlement, homelessness, solitude and impoverished independence: the lonely writer gazing down on the unknowable city from his shabby apartment. The whole commotion is finally and crucially interpreted and ratified by the city of Émigrés and Exiles itself, New York. (R. Williams 34)

Carnevali’s writing deals with the modernist tropes of “unknowable cities” and “shabby apartments;” the linguistic and cognitive mismatches between him and New York City were such that he could enter the world of modernist “Émigrés and Exiles,” and criticise it from the inside. In this view, the commonplace was the fundamental notion to interpret the new environment, articulating the narrative of unsettlement and independence described by Williams through the eyes of a linguistic newcomer. The commonplace became part of Carnevali’s language, appearing in poetry and fiction, building up the discussion on the role of the poet with respect to everyday language.

The first poem of the “Splendid Commonplace” collection (“In This Hotel”) discusses the potential of everyday language when used by someone who does not take it for granted. It is set presumably in one of Carnevali’s workplaces in New York, and describes the headwaiter greeting every hotel guest with the same sentences: “Nice day to-day!” and “It will rain to-day!” This reiterated use of set phrases prompts the poet’s desire to possess and enlarge that very same language:

And I, who do not sleep, who wait and watch for the dawn,
One day I would come down to the world.
I would have a trumpet as powerful as the wind,
And I would trumpet out to the world
The splendid commonplace:
"Nice day to-day!"
And another day I would cry out in despair,
"It will rain to-day!"

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(“In This Hotel” 13–20)

The poem is based on the reception and understanding of everyday English, to be turned into poetry. It is built on the reality of translingual existence, which involves not only the difficulty of “taking words for granted” noticed by Kellman, but also a sense of diffidence towards simple utterances in the second language. Linguists report the sense of “danger of disloyalty to ‘oneself’” experienced by language migrants in “obligingly emitting ‘socially prescribed speech’” (Besemeres 30). In this case, the poet senses that he cannot convincingly replicate the headwaiter’s small talk in the new and alien language. The translingual perspective treats each successful utterance as a success and as advancement into foreign and dangerous territory. This triggers Carnevali’s desire for poetic transformation of everyday speech, turning foreignness to his own advantage. The poet is described as the individual who can utter everyday words and invest them with power (“a trumpet as powerful as the wind”) to create the “splendid commonplace.” The poet may perform such work by focusing on language from the outside, from a different and non-conventional perspective. This marks the origins of Carnevali’s poetry as linked to his translingual experience, while establishing the poet’s creative power as a central theme in his work. Another poem in the “Splendid Commonplace” collection identifies poets as “essences of the people’s beautiful selves,” violins “whose strings quiver [...] even when touched by the world’s rough fingers” (“To the Poets”). At this point, Carnevali’s faith in poetry links it to a special kind of sensitivity for the everyday world, and to the possibility of redemption from that world’s “rough fingers.” This is the genuine belief that he would defend in his arguments against the more technique-oriented modernists.

Attention to the commonplace is present in other poems from the same period, often concentrating on the threatening dimension of the unfamiliar everyday language. “Last Day,” from the 1919 collection “Procession of Beggars,” displays a neurotic episode (“my hands/ afraid/ trembling/ insanely”) which is also a refusal of the city environment: “I am listening to the great appeal of the things that have gone crazy” (“Procession of Beggars” 24). The role of the unnamed interlocutor in this case is to utter “the

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incomprehensible commonplace: / ‘*All is well, / All is well.*’” The commonplace is, in this case, the soothing, everyday language which should reconcile the poet with the city environment, actually underlining his inevitable separation from it and from “the secret out of all this” (“Last Day”). Everyday phrases, heard in the city, become the impenetrable element with which Carnevali struggles to come to terms.

Two 1925 poems inserted in his post-return collection *A Hurried Man* under the title “Commonplaces,” show that Carnevali never ceased to reflect on the hidden potentialities of the commonplace. The first one is titled “How Are You?” and investigates the usually overlooked meaning of the phrase:

I wish that you all be well,
And that the sick ones of you get well;
I want a big, fresh, clean world.
Do you, too?
Is that what you mean
When you say:
‘How do you do?’
‘How do you feel?’
 (“How Are You?” 1-8)

The poet plays here on the distance between a customary greeting and the potential that the utterance has when taken literally by the newcomer-poet. The second poem, “I Am Glad To See You,” plays on the same distance with bitter irony. The expression is taken to mean “My life still missed / One aspect / And here you come / To fill the longing for you...” (2-5). For the speaker, the phrase appears to be made of words “too plain to hide a lie: ‘I am glad to see you’” (8-9). The line implies that these phrases may lose force when uttered carelessly by speakers who are accustomed to it, and therefore become a “lie.” The role of the newcomer-poet is to reaffirm their primary meaning, insisting on plain language, even with the apparent redundancy of the first lines.

The presence of such a theme in poems written after Carnevali’s return to Italy are indicative of the decisive role that the notion of “commonplace” – to be dissected, conquered, and interpreted – has in Carnevali’s relationship with the English language as a poet, and as a translingual. Carnevali combined the linguistic migrant’s “sense of inauthenticity in uttering what passes for idiomatic speech in the second language” (Besemeres 29) with a poet’s

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attitude towards language, seeking poetic value in everyday phrases.

1.2.2 Carnevali, the Other among the modernist *Others*

Carnevali's attitude towards English and the commonplace is visible also in his writings about his relationship with the American modernist milieu, and is reflected in contemporary authors' comments on him. Carnevali defined himself as linguistic outsider in the modernist milieu. In a 1918 letter, in form of a poem,²⁹ to Harriet Monroe, he reflected on his continuous creation and re-discussion of poetic idols ("For hauling several gods / over pedestals I'm all tired out"), linking it with his young age ("Am I a boy?"). He concluded these self-mocking reflections by affirming his will to continue writing:

And I'll go on making confessions
Even tho I don't speak english [sic] well
Even tho [sic] nobody gives a damn...

Half-jokingly, he acknowledged his status as linguistic outsider, although his frequent use of spellings such as "tho" in correspondence implies a degree of familiarity with the informal register of American English. Above all, he claimed his role as disruptive poetic force, intending to continue on his chosen path even if he could be received with indifference. At the time, American modernists elaborated diverse responses to immigrants, ranging from diffidence to cosmopolitan interest as they attempted to "to establish new kinds of communities, foreign both to their (generally middle-class) upbringing and to contemporary consumerist culture" (Miller 455). New York intellectuals identified Carnevali as a poetic force coming from the outside, bringing his uniqueness to the community.

In 1918, he wrote "As He Sees It," an open letter in the form of a poem, which appeared in the correspondence section of *Poetry*. A brief introduction by the author indicates that the poem was a parody of the stylistic clichés of literary modernism, as he observed it in literary reviews ("Here is what I feel

²⁹ Carnevali to Monroe, answered 1 February 1918, SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32, Folder 14.

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sometimes about our own stuff”). The poem satirises the style and theme of some poetic experiments of the time; interestingly, it does so by reflecting on the poet’s “voice”:

V
A voice sings in my throat
And rings like a fever
Through my body
That vibrates with pain.
 (“As He Sees It” 15–18)

Even when not explicitly dealing with linguistic identity, translinguals may appear “painfully cognizant of the fact that in different languages their voices may sound differently even when telling the ‘same’ stories” (Pavlenko, “Bilingual Selves” 3). In this case, it is difficult to resist the temptation of identifying the alien “voice” described by Carnevali with the English language. This exploration of his divided linguistic self also attempts to dominate the language of the commonplace:

It's an old platitude, an old commonplace.
You can't force an artist, what do you think?
Modern
Modernity,
Modernism . . .
I am above my throat,
I have a right to forget . . .
X
Nobody home
The poet has left for the asylum.
 (“As He Sees It” 53–61)

Carnevali links the commonplace to the linguistic attempt to encapsulate art in technical terms. In particular the reference to “Modern / Modernity / Modernism” indicates his awareness of the ongoing debate on modernity and the artistic response to the modern; yet the poetic *I* explicitly avoids the debate, taking refuge in a pre-rational situation. The poem reflects Carnevali’s uncertainties when navigating the multitude of constraints and influences of the new canon, possibly referring to the new language as foreign body within himself.

The “commonplace” is a constant presence in Carnevali’s definition of himself as an American author. In 1919, at a party hosted by poet Lola Ridge, Carnevali pronounced a speech, harshly criticising the poets of New

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York. The speech became an article, which was sent to *Poetry* and rejected.³⁰ Initially deemed too harsh criticism, it was printed for the first time in *A Hurried Man* in 1925, under the title “Maxwell Bodenheim, Alfred Kreymborg, Lola Ridge, William Carlos Williams” – and then in a rearranged version in the 1967 *Autobiography* as “My Speech at Lola’s.” In a letter to Monroe, Carnevali called it “almost my declaration of war to anybody who does not write as I do.”³¹ Literary modernism thrived on the heated critical debate in the magazines, where movements and schools were eager to define themselves, while attacking others: “modernism can almost be defined as those visual and verbal texts that *need* manifestos and exegeses” (Scholes and Wulfman 74, authors’ emphasis). Carnevali’s inclusion in literary magazines as author and critic also meant his association with the milieu. This particular piece of criticism, however, was especially disruptive at an artistic and personal level, questioning Carnevali’s belonging in the milieu.

In the essay, Carnevali relies on strong feelings to support his critical point – a common feature of his criticism. He claims that he wrote the essay “for [his] soul’s sake,” because “what [he] understood by literature was in danger of collapsing” (*A Hurried Man* 248). Carnevali does not hesitate to write the phrase “I hate you” several times in the essay, referring to those whom he calls, sometimes in the same sentence, “my friends” (*A Hurried Man* 253). The issue is that of poetic technique, which he sees as threatening and stifling the poet’s creativity: “I speak of your form, that half-and-half thing, that thing which cannot break loose from the cage of metrical rhythms and which clumsily strives toward the spontaneity of talk” (*A Hurried Man* 257). To the notion of poetic technique, Carnevali opposes the desire to transfigure reality, to write the “Splendid Commonplace.” He advanced the hypothesis that the poet should focus on the simple images as sources of self-sufficient poetry:

The image and my joy for the image is a circle and there is no break for anybody to get in. I want to be what the world misses. Possibly the

³⁰ Associate editor Helen Hoyt wrote on the envelope “Wonderful stuff but not to be put in Poetry or any magazine.” In SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32.

³¹ Carnevali to Monroe, March 1919, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32.

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beauty that is man against the ugliness that is man. (*A Hurried Man* 251)

This statement, Carnevali claims, expresses his “objection” to technique by framing it with a “blessed commonplace.” The language of commonplace enables him to counter the sophistications of poetic technique with sheer creative power. Carnevali attributes divine qualities to poetic language as he calls himself a “god seeking around the world what there is need to create” (*A Hurried Man* 252).

Disgusted with the present poetic debate (“If you are poets, as they say, I don’t want to be a poet,” 264), Carnevali questions the very artistic milieu in which he had just entered, attempting to carve a niche for himself in virtue of his belief in the poetic power of the commonplace:

I am the glorifier and the creator of the commonplace that made and make the world – I say, in the beginning there was the commonplace... I am a death and a resurrection, I am the same torment that is called everchanging life. I am a voice for the big sorrows of New York city. (*A Hurried Man* 266)

This incarnation of the “commonplace” testifies to the author’s achieved confidence in using the unfamiliar language of America, to create art and express his disruptive interpretation of poetry. The commonplace assumes poetic power in the etymological sense of *poïesis*, creation – while being linked to the “big sorrows” of a city of outcasts and immigrants.

Following his own artistic agenda, Carnevali came to represent a linguistic outsider in an artistic milieu, which existed alongside the immigrant communities of New York, but often failed to engage with them. In this sense, the first relevant critical appraisal of Carnevali’s presence in modernist America comes from the review *Others*. This short-lived review (1915-1919) was edited by Alfred Kreymborg in New York, and was particularly sensitive to *avant-garde* modes and themes: “publishing the most unbridled free verse, *Others* earned a reputation not only for technical innovation, but also for social rebellion and sexual transgression” (Churchill 6). The review has also been identified as attentive to minority cultures, engaged in a “performative restaging of modernist identity and poetry with reference to New York’s immigrants” and in particular to the Jewish community (Miller 457).

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Carnevali collaborated to the review in its final months, and – if William Carlos Williams’ words are to be taken literally – accelerated its demise.

In March 1919 Carnevali published an article on Rimbaud in *Others*, which established the French poet as one of his poetic models in the form of a quasi-mystical adoration. The essay refuses explicitly to be criticism:

This paper will not be criticism. Critics are dead leaves lying still while the hurricane sweeps by high above. To utter something while enraptured in the hurricane, that is the only way to compensate to me my not being the hurricane; and the only way to criticize a poet. (Carnevali, “Arthur Rimbaud” 20)

Renunciation of critical objectivity on Carnevali’s part is a prerequisite for his discussion of the myth of Rimbaud. The essay considers the stylistic qualities of Rimbaud only briefly, to celebrate his status as ideal poetic persona. He is the personification of youth – a word that appears a great number of times in the essay – of youth as a vital force that defies social and moral conventions: “Rimbaud is the Advent of Youth. Almost everything else in the world is unbelief in Youth” (Carnevali, “Arthur Rimbaud” 20).

Rimbaud is a totemic figure that signifies the union of art and life.³² As noted by Domenichelli, “through Rimbaud, Carnevali found that the achievement of poetry is the achievement of life that consists in knowing the ego and possessing it” (85). The link originated indeed in the biographical myth: an exile, torn between cultures, bisexual and estranged from his family, Carnevali turned to Rimbaud for an example of the perfectly lived poet’s life. In his view, this would lead automatically to the creation of beauty: “Rimbaud is, in me, a prayer to things more beautiful than I, the perfectly soul-less things, the unconscious, beautiful things” (“Arthur Rimbaud” 24). Burt includes Carnevali’s essay within the framework of Rimbaud’s influence on American modernism, and on Hart Crane in particular – establishing Carnevali as one of the “failed candidates” for the “post” of “archetypal

³² In the early 1930s, Carnevali translated some of Rimbaud’s poems into English. His translations of “Veillées” and “À une raison” appeared in *Poetry* in 1931 as “Wakes III” and “To One Reason.” Carnevali also sent manuscripts of other translations (including “Fleurs”, “Antique”, “Phrases”) to Pound; the manuscripts are now kept in the Ezra Pound Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Yale Beinecke from now on. All material used with permission from the copyright holder.), Series IV, Box 143, Folder 6280.

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young poet” in modernism (Burt 26). At the time, critics used the framework of youth and of the *poète maudit* myth together with that of cultural otherness, to attempt to understand and categorise the disruptive force that Carnevali represented in their milieu.

Others' final issue appeared in July 1919, bearing the words “For Emanuel Carnevali” in bold letters on the front cover. Carnevali was one of the main contributors to the issue (with the poem “Serenade,” the short story “Bogey Man” and “Leavetaking,” a translation of Papini), and the editorial by William Carlos Williams explains the closing down of *Others* through his presence. The essay describes Carnevali as unrestrained poetic force, regardless of his poetic accomplishments:

What do I care if Carnevali has not written three poems I can thoroughly admire? Who can write a poem complete in every part surrounded by this mess we live in? The man is smashed to pieces by the stupidity of a city of s**tas**s. He will not allow me to take a line out of a poem... He is right. I am wrong when I yell technique at him. (W. C. Williams, “Gloria!” 3)

Williams identifies Carnevali's function in the New York milieu as that of showing the superiority of life over poetry. His “aestheticization of suffering” and “glorification of dissipation [...] both attracted and repelled the older poet, who must have seen in Carnevali a specter of his younger self” (Churchill 127). The essay was possibly influenced by Carnevali's recent speech at Lola Ridge's party, or by a similar performance on his part.³³ It constructs a lexical dichotomy between Williams, Kreymborg and the *Others* on one side and Carnevali on the other. The former are linked to poetic technique and old age: “we older can compose, we seek the seclusion of a style, of a technique” (W. C. Williams, “Gloria!” 3). Carnevali, on the other hand, is “young” and that is precisely the reason why “his poems will not be constructed, they cannot be.” Referring to Carnevali's violence, and to the *avant-garde* origins of *Others*, Williams concludes that the review must close down, because it “has been blasted out of existence” (3). Of course, Carnevali

³³ In a passage, Williams mentions Carnevali going into “an acute mania” after receiving a rejection slip from *The Dial*, “attack[ing] insanely not the proprietor but an editor and say[ing] ALL the true things that should be said about an editor of such a magazine” (“Gloria!” 4).

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could not single-handedly cause the end of the review. Churchill reports that Kreymborg sought collaborations with other circles, causing a rift between him and the original group until “Williams seized the editorial controls and issued the July 1919 number, in which he pronounced *Others* dead once and for all” (58). Carnevali functioned as catalyst: Williams perceived himself and his contemporaries as “too comfortable, complacent even, with the state of modern verse,” intending to “not just [...] move outside of his comfort zone, but to raze it to the ground,” and “Carnevali’s critique [...] gave Williams the nudge he needed” (Templeton 149).

Williams presents Carnevali as “the black poet, the empty man, the New York which does not exist” (“Gloria!” 3). There seems to be no intent of racial connotation, and yet he defines Carnevali as “black” while linking him to the New York of tenement life, which did not “exist” literarily and that the authors of *Others* could experience only through the work of immigrant authors such as Carnevali. Williams reiterates his definition of Carnevali as “black” later in the essay: “Jesus, Jesus [...] Since he cannot appeal to an intelligence that does not exist give him the only alternative of being consciously a black man” (“Gloria!” 4). It is true that the racial identity of Italians in America was in contention, as “racial discrimination and prejudice aimed at Italians” at the time “questioned Italians’ whiteness on occasion” (Guglielmo 30). The matter here is different, however: it touches the situation of Italians in New York only marginally, while using the notion of alterity to frame Carnevali as outsider. Williams refers to Carnevali’s embracing of primitive impulses. The word may carry racial overtones, however unconsciously, as Williams employs it to draw a line between the literary world of America and the newcomer who embodies “the New York which does not exist” (“Gloria!” 3). Williams was of Puerto Rican descent, and he had to deal himself with the critics’ habit of finding “his crassness, his dissonance, [...] his bluntness, his primitiveness ingrained in his very bones and blood” (North 149–50). In the 1920s, as Carnevali disappeared from the American scene, Williams was increasingly interested in blurring the distinction between modernist challenges and ethnic challenges to the literary establishment, incorporating the language of African Americans as raw

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material in his attempt to renovate American poetry.³⁴ American modernists' subsequent attempts (often only timid suggestions) to involve ethnic artists in their challenges to the literary establishment would fail. Carnevali was involved in an embryonic form of this sort of dialectics before it came into existence. Without any claim to representing anything more than his own vigorous opposition, he functioned briefly as a sign of the expressive potential of the ethnic and linguistic minorities inhabiting New York side by side with renewal-obsessed modernists. In that capacity, he was later appreciated and remembered by his colleagues.

Carnevali's friends would edit and publish his writings (including the polemical speech at Lola Ridge's) in the 1925 *A Hurried Man*; in the preface, Dorothy Dudley commented on the many friendships Carnevali had made and lost, saying that he had "a genius for intimacy and a genius for estrangement" (Dudley 3). She also reported Carl Sandburg's words on Carnevali: "He seemed sometimes to be throwing himself at the sun. [...] he must write because he was a writer" (Dudley 7). The representation of Carnevali as a strong and pure, if sometimes misdirected, poetic force, is recurrent in his colleagues' accounts. Williams wrote fondly of his friendship with Emanuel and Emily Carnevali in his autobiography. He remembered eating polenta in their apartment, "talking of Em's life with his eccentric father in Italy, of the young Italian writers of that time" and concluded: "This was New York at its best, the highest potential which you saw there with a catch in your throat, knowing it was almost certainly doomed to destruction" (*The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* 266). Decades after their friendship, Williams remembered Carnevali fondly, acknowledging him as a genuine poet, linking him with an environment that was both full of potential and "doomed."

1.2.3 Carnevali as Ariel, Carnevali as Caliban

Carnevali argued for his existence as linguistic outsider; my hypothesis is that he also dramatised his status as literary newcomer in his

³⁴ In the 1923 *Spring and All*, Williams "breaks his language away from the standard, but he also wants that language to serve as the basis for a new American unity" (North 155).

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early fiction and criticism through the symbol of Caliban. Ariel, Caliban and other Caliban-like figures are present in his prose and criticism around the year 1919, the same year in which he launched his personal attack on the literary milieu of New York.

Caliban is one of the most remarkable examples of a character that, over the course of the centuries, has gone far beyond his original appearance. Innumerable critical readings of Shakespeare's *Tempest* have demonstrated that "in the relationship between Prospero, Miranda, Ariel and Caliban we find demonstrated in dramatic form some of the most fundamental features of the colonial enterprise" (Ashcroft 17). It has been widely accepted that Caliban stands for the native as debased and linguistically dominated by colonial domination. His harsh "you taught me language, and my profit on't is I know how to curse" (1.2.363–4) resonated in the mind of writers and intellectuals in colonised countries. Assuming *The Tempest* as the foundational moment for their intellectual enterprises, they generally underlined "the starkness of the master/slave configuration, thus making it appear to function as a foundational paradigm in the history of European colonialism" (Cartelli 89), siding polemically with Caliban as they addressed the colonisers in their own language.

The post-colonial use of Caliban is a now well-established paradigm. Carnevali could not have been exposed to the use of the symbol, which was established within the post-colonial frame. In his age, he might on the other hand respond to other treatments of the Caliban symbol, rooted in 19th century aesthetic ideals, such as these lines from Wilde's preface to *Dorian Gray*:

The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.
The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass. (Wilde 17)

Wilde used the Caliban symbol to criticise mainstream interpretations of art. Carnevali might have been familiar with this treatment of Caliban, as Wilde is part of his framework of critical references.³⁵ Caliban also figures in

³⁵ For example, in a 1920 review he compared excessively refined artistic tastes with "Oscar Wilde who wrings new postures and new words out of poor Salome" ("Irritation" 216).

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Giovanni Papini's autobiographical novel *Un uomo finito* (1913) – which, as we shall see, was one of Carnevali's Italian influences. As Papini speaks of the young artist's desire to elevate mankind above the materialistic dimension, he states: "L'umanità era dunque in uno stato di mezzo tra la belva e l'eroe, tra Calibano e Ariele, tra il bestiale e il divino"³⁶ (*Un uomo finito* 154). Papini links this use of the Caliban symbol with the young artist's radical desire to "Uccidere, recidere, estirpare tutto quel che c'era ancora di sottumano nell'uomo per renderlo soprumano"³⁷ (154). Caliban would then be an emblem of materialistic culture. In his writings, Carnevali appears to know this established way of employing the cultural symbol of Caliban, but also creates a series of Caliban-like figures that respond to his own preoccupations with the English language.

The link between Carnevali and the Caliban symbol was first noticed by Ricciardi in her aptly titled article "Le Tentazioni di Calibano: Emanuel Carnevali e il Rinascimento Poetico Americano."³⁸ Ricciardi explored Carnevali's troubled relations with the American literary milieu, stating an analogy between Carnevali and Caliban which she did not pursue to the end:

Egli è, sì, Ariele e non solo quando scrive versi ma anche nei saggi lirici [...]. Più spesso, tuttavia, si compiace della maschera di Calibano [...] come nella recensione a Pound e a Claudel e nell'Ultimatum.³⁹ (Ricciardi 196)

Ricciardi appears to see, in Carnevali's work, a dichotomy between his poetic production and lyrical essays (Carnevali as Ariel) and his polemical criticism (Carnevali as Caliban). Carnevali would then be at times striving for aesthetic fulfilment, and other times he would be using "la maschera di Calibano" for polemical strength. Ricciardi does not explore this dichotomy in full – providing instead a valuable analysis of Carnevali's literary connections. My hypothesis is that, while Carnevali made use of the Ariel-Caliban symbol

³⁶ "Mankind then occupied the middle ground between the beast and the hero, between Caliban and Ariel, between the beastly and the divine."

³⁷ "Kill, remove, eradicate whatever sub-human element there may still be in man, to make him super-human."

³⁸ "Caliban's Temptations: E.C. and the American Poetic Renaissance."

³⁹ "He is, actually, Ariel, and not only in his poetry but in his lyrical essays as well [...]. More often, however, he takes pleasure in donning Caliban's mask [...] as he does in his reviews of Pound and Claudel, and in the Ultimatum."

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according to nineteenth century constraints, he also prefigured the postcolonial use of the Caliban symbols in other works around 1919, discussing his condition as a linguistic newcomer. These works not always refer to Caliban explicitly, yet they refer to linguistically destitute figures as bearers of non-mainstream discourses.

Carnevali's identification with Ariel appears most explicitly in his 1920 review of Conrad Aiken's book *Scepticisms*: "Caliban's Love-Making." Carnevali appears diffident of Aiken's overly technical criticism, claiming that a study of poetry should go far beyond the formal measurement and assessment of single lines: "how does a critic know that a line is an inch short, if he hasn't in his heart or mind the line as it should have been? And if he has, then he is a poet..." ("Caliban's Love-Making" 285). His opposition to criticism that coldly concentrates on the technicalities of art employs the image of Caliban, in a way not dissimilar to Wilde's aphorisms:

We have beheld another performance by Caliban: criticism is creative when it is the art of the arts... Otherwise, criticism is an ugly soul trying to touch a beautiful one [...]. It's Caliban, and Ariel will never have anything to do with him. ("Caliban's Love-Making" 287)

Carnevali instinctively identified with Ariel as a symbol of the non-material quality of art, escaping any attempt to frame and dissect artistic creation. In this sense, it is possible to frame the "Splendid Commonplace" poems within the Ariel-Caliban symbol: Carnevali, approaching language from the outside, attempts to elevate everyday language. Carnevali might be striving toward Ariel when he calls the poets "essences of the people's beautiful selves" in contrast with the "world's rough fingers" ("To the Poets"). One should not underestimate, though, that Carnevali's early poetry was rooted in the newcomer's fascination for a language he did not know, and distrust of poetic technique – which leads him to partially identify with Caliban-like figures. This identification is evident in the conclusion of the speech at Lola Ridge's:

I'm an enormous lady with large feet, such large feet that she can't help but step on your little flowers. I am the same enormous lady crying as sincerely as she can over the beautiful flowers that her feet destroyed.
(*A Hurried Man* 268)

Carnevali situates himself outside of the spectrum of culture and decorum,

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portraying himself as capable of destructive rage and redemptive kindness, but not of elaboration and forward thinking. Carnevali is a poetic Caliban who has been taught language but who refuses to yield to the complexities of the rhetorical power it represents. Instead, he approaches the English language from the outside, treating every expression – even the commonplace ones, especially the commonplace ones – with both marvel and diffidence, hoping to create the “Splendid Commonplace.”

In the summer of 1919, after pronouncing this speech, Caliban-like figures appeared in Carnevali’s fiction. In August 1919, the short sketch “A Sentimental Scheme” appeared in *The Little Review*. This sketch is, unlike most of his production, a symbolic fable and not an elaboration on his life in New York. It features a “ferocious” and “savage” man and a female figure who “is a sweet” (“A Sentimental Scheme” 29). The plot is quite simple: he “wants to drag her, ferociously, into his cave” while she resists and scorns him. The man, we are told, hides during the day and comes out at night, the only time when he dares raise his head to the stars, growing quickly disillusioned with them: “poor boy, he loved the stars and they deceived him, and as he loves them still he frowns at them in the night and shrieks ‘Flirts!’” Coming out from the cave and raising one’s head to the stars, with all the Platonic symbolism of enlightenment that it carries on, does no good to this Caliban figure. In the end, the girl stands naked in front of the cave, and speaks to him in poetry, deriding him and urging him to “Follow, follow / in the cortege / of the Fairy Queen.” The Caliban figure smiles, knowing that “the time for Fairy Queens was shut in the graves of books” and the girl is defeated. The reference to the English Renaissance canon, as well as the fact that she speaks in verse, makes it likely that she stands for English poetry. On the other hand, the Caliban-like figure could be Carnevali himself. He had identified with “an enormous lady” stepping on “little flowers” in his speech from a few months before (*A Hurried Man* 264) and the girl here is portrayed intently observing a “simplified little flower” (“A Sentimental Scheme” 29). The whole sketch could stand for Carnevali as Caliban, desperately trying to access the technique to write poetry in English. It depicts his triumph over technique, out of the knowledge that the time for elaborate poetry was “shut in the graves of books” (“A Sentimental Scheme” 30).

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The issue of *Others* which included William Carlos Williams's celebration of Carnevali as a "black poet" also features Carnevali's short story "Bogey Man," in which he possibly explored his uneasiness with the ambivalent status of Ariel-intellectual and Caliban-migrant. The same issue of *Others* features a short story by Carnevali, "Bogey Man", which tells of an encounter with an immigrant. The story takes place in Carnevali's tenement: as he comes back home, a cleaning lady drops a broom, waking up and angering his Polish neighbour.

He took a book in his hands. Shook the book before my eyes,
- I gotta fon da dichonary book, see!
- Yes well what do you?
- See?
- Do you want to sell it? I don't want to buy it.
- Mabbe I no speak english. Listen . . .
His big teeth appeared and disappeared, monstrously. ("Bogey Man"
22)

The presentation of the fellow immigrant is indeed that of a true Caliban. Big monstrous teeth, and, a few lines above, a "moustache like a threat" define the man as almost inhuman. The immigrant's language is heavily marked, at the grammatical and phonetic level. This sets him apart, not only from the society of native speakers, but also from the other migrant, Carnevali. There is not much, in the text, apart from the author's surname, that marks him as non-American. His language, and the narrator's voice, is standard literary English, which he has acquired over the years. The other immigrant character's speech is on the other hand in broken English.

The detail of the dictionary, in particular, becomes central:

—I gotta fon da dichonary book. Mabbe you good . . . I no say you no good. . . . mabbe. Hu make noise bump me I kick no can shleep. . . . I gib you fon da kick you no stand? I good, you no good, you no see, mabbe, I no say. . . .
And then, with a last great push, with long-bursting expansion:
— I gib you fon da dichonary book.
I understood at last that he wanted to throw it at me. ("Bogey Man" 22)

The dictionary as an improvised weapon helps establish the Pole as a Caliban-like figure. Caliban's low status with respect to language is not exemplified by an inability to speak, but by the fact that his speech is powerless: both "Prospero and Caliban curse each other in the same language," but "whereas

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Caliban's curses remain mere figures of speech, Prospero's figures have the power to literalize themselves" (Cheyfitz 33). The Pole's dictionary should be an instrument of education, a tool for his felicitous linguistic assimilation. Yet, it figures here as tangible sign of his linguistic inadequacy, of the low status in which he is relegated. His linguistic frustration leads him to use it for a threat, paradoxically uttered in broken English.

The Pole's ineffective rage triggers Carnevali's partial identification with him. The authorial voice soon leaves the tenement environment, ideally addressing the Pole as he walks down the streets. Children point at him, calling him a bogeyman. Carnevali pins that down to his linguistic shortcomings, writing a poignant description of linguistic discrimination:

They are all against you. All they who know english [sic]. They enjoy knocking at your door, they who won't see how much you need your sleep, and you must get angry at yourself, because you know these creatures who go to vaudeilles and put on queer neckties on Sunday morning, you know they're awake making a noise which they have a right to make, being more beautiful than you, knowing english [sic]. ("Bogey Man" 23)

In these words Carnevali "shows by reflection that he understands profoundly the position of the linguistic outsider" (Viscusi, *Buried Caesars* 178). Carnevali shows sympathy for the Pole as a linguistic outcast, while casting on him the patronizing look of the partially assimilated: "You have seen one face of truth, it is the whole truth to you who couldn't see any other, and you are snarling at it" (Carnevali, "Bogey Man" 23).⁴⁰ Carnevali reminds fellow

⁴⁰ The same patronising attitude he would show in "Lean Woman," an unpublished 1919 short story (Mitchell Dawson Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago (NLC Dawson from now on. All material used with permission from the copyright holder.), Box 21, Folder 699), much resembling "Bogey Man." This time, Carnevali meets a woman in his building, and helps her open the door: the woman's speech, like the Bogeyman's, is socially marked as a migrant's broken English, in contrast to Carnevali's narrator, who tends to Standard English. As the narrator helps her open the door to her apartment, he also reflects on the contrast between her "[copyrighted material]" and her voice which "[copyrighted material]." The female character in "Lean Woman" is as quintessentially derelict and malnourished as the Bogeyman was almost monstrous in his aggressiveness. The Bogeyman represents a migrant who attempts to exert revenge on discrimination, while the Lean Woman epitomises self-exclusion. While the narrator does little more than hold her things and light a match while she opens the door, she thanks him profusely [copyrighted material].

Both Bogeyman and Lean Woman are immigrant types, hardly characterised in their ethnic specificities, cast by Carnevali in the role to help him prove his point on the immigrant predicament – in this case to speak against the immigrant fear of the unknown. At one point he restrains from giving advice to the Lean Woman because she would "[copyrighted material]"; while he admits: "[copyrighted material]." Carnevali's depiction of immigrants

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outsiders and Calibans that one does not need stay confined in the margins projected upon them by the monolingual mainstream: “You could with some effort become a definite untruth, a pleasant one. You are an uncouth verity now” (23). Carnevali in 1919 was preoccupied about his position between the two poles of artistic refinement and disruptive truth. He had learned and mastered, through a process that was neither smooth nor complete, the language of the host country. “Bogey Man” displays the potential of the linguistic outsider in a more unsettling way, as he imagines the Bogeyman finally learning to “look and touch,” and to use his “uncompromising voice”: “And somebody will stop calling you insane, somebody will stop calling you insane and he won't say one word more for the rest of his life” (“Bogey Man” 23). The immigrant’s “uncompromising voice” is an un-mediated, primal version of the assault launched by Carnevali on American literature.

Caliban is “the place of metaphor, the place of translation, in *The Tempest*” (Cheyfitz 108), standing for two worlds coming (unequally) together, and speaking the same language from an unequal status. Carnevali found himself in the peculiar status of being a newcomer to the language and a member of New York’s artistic milieu at the same time. This led him to discuss his power and role as a linguistic outsider – in uncompromising criticism and symbolic representation. Carnevali’s subsequent dealings with literature followed the pattern of linguistic strangeness established on his entrance into the United States and into American literature. Carnevali worked to achieve his command on a medium that he would never take for granted, and that would always retain a foreign quality for him, evolving in his changing relationship with American and Italian culture.

often casts himself as spiritual saviour, who would be able to redeem immigrants from their silence and inability. The narrator assumes an intellectual status above the migrants with whom he interacts, while several textual clues imply that he shares the same squalid tenement environment as the other migrants he depicts.

1.3 CARNEVALI AND THE 'WOPS': ISSUES OF BELONGING AND REPRESENTATION

Emigrating in 1914, Carnevali joined the Italian community in New York, one of the most important in the city, growing from 145,000 people in 1900 to 391,000 in 1920 (Kessner 17). The majority of immigrants were "impoverished, illiterate southern Italian peasants" after "a livelihood as well as other decencies and comforts of life that their native country had denied them" (Casillo and Russo xxiii). In America, they mostly lived in Little Italies, working low-paid jobs and experiencing different forms of discrimination.

Unlike most fellow migrants, Carnevali emigrated to America for personal rather than economic reasons. While reported illiteracy among Italian immigrants at the time of entry was high (Kessner 40), Carnevali had attended school at least until the age of sixteen.⁴¹ The immigrant community had use for intellectual work as the "illiterate urban villagers" required "a broad range of mediators, from radio to newspapers, [...] all endeavoring to assist immigrants in navigating their adopted society and keeping in touch with the country they left behind" (Haller 130). Carnevali, however, was often unemployed or doing menial jobs, sharing his living situation with the most derelict of his compatriots in New York. His background and peculiar situation within the community influenced his representation of Italian immigrants, accounting for his partial identification with them, and his rare engagement with the themes of 'ethnic' writing.

The category itself of 'ethnic writer' has been re-thought in the past decades of scholarly debate, evolving from the original compartmentalization of 'ethnic' literature as different from the 'mainstream.' In the 1980s, scholars started interrogating the notion in its limits and restrictiveness. Sollors in particular proposed to focus on the shifting notions of *consent* and *descent* competing in each text: "we may be better served [...] by the vocabulary of

⁴¹ Introducing himself to Monroe, Carnevali wrote that he "had studied in Turin, Venice and Bologna: technical schools (I do not know Latin and Greek)." (Carnevali to Monroe, 1 September 1917, SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 43, Folder 11). He saw this fact as a shortcoming with respect to the Italian intellectuals he had in mind, who generally studied Latin and Greek at a *Liceo Classico* (grammar school).

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kinship and cultural codes than by the cultural baggage that the word 'ethnicity' contains" (*Beyond Ethnicity* 39). The idea is that the transnational writer negotiates his or her existence out of multiple constraints, related to kinship (*descent*) or cultural positioning (*consent*). The writer's individuality is continuously measured against a diasporic community, which stands in relation to an absence (the home country) and the challenges of the host country. The 'ethnic' literary agenda is never univocal, having to navigate a range of challenges and constraints.

Carnevali's ambivalent relationship with the community entails a continuous reworking of *italianità* based on his artistic individuality. He worked at a time in which only a few "great beams of light" illuminated a diaspora without poets and storytellers (Marazzi, "What Fodder?" 97)⁴². While "emigration provided for many Italians the first opportunity to express their culture outside of the confines of a nationally sanctioned official language and tradition," in most cases "the preoccupations of survival abroad, the effects of discrimination, and the lack of a formal education" prevented immigrants from finding "a mode of expression" (Verdicchio 51). Outside of the "nationally sanctioned" culture, Carnevali got close to the "mode of expression" of American modernism, adding his own discussion of Italian cultural constraints. As a writer, he dealt with the issues of the Italian-American community only intermittently, and textual evidence (including his use of the derogatory word "wop" to refer to fellow immigrants) indicates that his identification with Italy and other Italians was conflicted.

1.3.1 Carnevali in Little Italy

Although he wrote it well after his return to Italy, the *Autobiography* contains several hints as to Carnevali's relationship with the Italian community in New York. Carnevali experienced New York's immigrant neighbourhoods, the city's translation zones: "areas of intense interaction across languages" where "language relations are regulated by the opposing

⁴² Marazzi cites here some contemporaries of Carnevali: novelist Ciambelli, poet Giovannitti, playwright and performer Migliaccio, activist Tresca.

1.3 Carnevali and the 'Wops': Issues of belonging and representation

forces of coercion and resistance, of wilful indifference and engaged interconnection” (Cronin and Simon 119–120). Carnevali, in later narration, depicts other Italians variously adapting to the politics of urban translation. His preoccupation with his own personal and artistic development, on the other hand, makes his identification with the community only partial.

Carnevali visits Little Italy as soon as he climbs down the ship, invited by one of his fellow travellers to visit his shop. Carnevali describes Mott Street, one of the streets of the community, as “sacred to filth and misery” (*Autobiography* 73). His companion’s opinion is even harsher: “The whole Italian colony of Mott and Mulberry Streets, Oronzo⁴³ Marginati said, was not worth the price of the small amount of dynamite required to blow it up” (*Autobiography* 74). In this case, a migrant with relatively high social status looks down on the less fortunate migrants in the tenements. From the start, the community is experienced as non-homogeneous, in its contradictions and inner conflict.

Shortly after, Carnevali mentions “the first thing that struck our eyes” in America: a boot-black’s box, where he hears “the boss speaking to the little boy in the purest Neapolitan dialect” (*Autobiography* 74). Neapolitan speech is both familiar and alien to the northerner Carnevali. It is a tangible sign of the local specificities of Italy; yet the author may only partially identify with it, as testified by his earlier comments on the Neapolitan song “Funiculi Funiculà” in the text: “Do not let the student of Italian letters be dismayed at these quotations. They are not Italian, they are Neapolitan” (*Autobiography* 43). In America, Carnevali is linked to Neapolitan by the translation process which brings several Italian specificities into one setting. A “literature of contact” dwells on the multilingual character of urban life, turning “the city’s translation zones into productive territories of the imagination” (Simon 160). Carnevali’s memoir finds its translational productivity in partial and temporary negotiation within such “zones,” yet also expresses uneasiness with both the Italian community and the American mainstream. Italian speech, heard while walking the streets of New York for the first time,

⁴³ This Italian name is usually spelled “Oronzo.” It is possible that this was a typo, not recognised by Boyle.

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diminishes the universal quality of the city. Carnevali remembers thinking, while walking in the heart of Little Italy, “that this was no great city but a great village. It lacked the air, the smell, the noise, the atmosphere, of a metropolis” (*Autobiography* 74). The Italian-speaking part of the city precipitates the poet from his expectations of cosmopolitanism into the locality of Italian culture(s).

There is no uniform sense of community in the text, as each Italian in New York is shown adapting to survive a merciless environment. Carnevali's friends Missio and Morea abandon him, leaving him stranded and penniless. He recalls his jobs in Italian restaurants and shops with resentment and contempt. Carnevali reportedly lost a job at a grocery store for telling “the owner, a Sicilian” that he, Carnevali, had “more schooling than he [sic]” (*Autobiography* 84). He describes his colleagues at an Italian restaurant as “a bunch of unmitigated idiots” (*Autobiography* 77). In this environment, Italians exploit other Italians. Any form of cultural identification is inserted into the American logic of profit, as exemplified by the restaurant owner forbidding the Italian girls to sing while at work: “they had tried to stupefy that fine fire that was in the songs of the Italian girls” (*Autobiography* 77). In the meantime, Carnevali lives in a “rooming-house kept by Vincenzo Bevilacqua, a fat moron” with a “recently-imported little sister” (*Autobiography* 97). In the world of tenements described by Carnevali, where lives are regulated by the basic impulses of sex and hunger, human beings are “imported” like objects.

Carnevali's description of Italian migrants in Chicago follows the same pattern. His first employer there, Pasquale, is another example of the conflictual social layers within the emigrant community, in which a lack of mercy seems necessary to rise in the ranks. He is a Presbyterian minister – having abandoned his native Catholicism in order to integrate – and the editor of a newspaper called *The Citizen*. Pasquale is described as an “ugly brute” who “peppered his spaghetti, making it quite uneatable” and who “laughed himself sick” when he saw an Italian being hanged (*Autobiography* 155). The short portrait contributes to Carnevali's depiction of the Italian community in America as a merciless environment, where contact with the home culture is

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easily lost in the name of violent, competitive assimilation. During his short time at *The Citizen*, Carnevali wrote an article “against the Italian gangster element in America,” which he claims almost got him killed as his employer was “in league with bootleggers” (*Autobiography* 155). It is impossible to ascertain the degree of exaggeration in Carnevali’s account. The episode is the only passage, in the text, in which the author acknowledges the presence of the mafia in America. The issue was already central in the representation of Italians in America, especially in popular culture, as “audiences [...] identified Italian Americans with criminal gangs, to which they were supposedly drawn by innate instincts” (Casillo 499). Carnevali only hints at the phenomenon as if it were a small detail: in the economy of the text, even the most important socio-cultural facts of the Italian presence in America are discussed only to the extent that they contributed to the development of the author’s conscience.⁴⁴

Carnevali’s links with Italy while in the United States also articulate themselves through the family circle. His relationship with his brother Augusto changed in America:

My brother was no longer the brute who had beaten me mercilessly, he was no longer my brother even, but my good old friend, my only comrade in this entire city, in this strange city that we no longer acknowledged, so full were we of Italy, our speech and our laughter so full of Italy... (*Autobiography* 85)

Distance and displacement help the poet reframe the relationship with his brother, not in terms of kinship, but of shared background and predicament, as the two face the “strange” city together. Carnevali’s marriage to Emilia (Emily) Valenza also indicates his insertion in Italian-American society to some extent. Emily came from Piedmont, where Carnevali had spent part of his childhood; they got married in 1917. Their troubled marriage is described quite extensively in the *Autobiography*, including painful details such as

⁴⁴ Another anecdote possibly links Carnevali with Italian gangs in New York, although it is virtually impossible to prove. In her preface to *A Hurried Man*, Dudley speaks of the author’s days of poverty, including the time when he went to “the lower end of town” and “found a small place for himself in a gang of crooks, who kept him going until again he had a waiter’s job” (2). The episode is not found elsewhere, and it was possibly a rumour or an exaggeration on Carnevali’s part. If it did happen, Carnevali excluded it from subsequent narrations of his life – while he would usually be quite candid in telling thorny episodes.

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abortion⁴⁵ and infidelity on both sides. They separated in 1919, when Carnevali moved to Chicago from New York. Carnevali's account of their relationship compares her background and lack of education with his own artistic aspirations. She appears disconnected from the literary world: "she was so entirely ignorant that she wondered who Shakespeare was, and I told her that I had just met him in the street" (*Autobiography* 98). Her lack of literary knowledge, which applies to Italian literature as well ("the same was true of Dante"), puzzles the aspiring author. Emily is on the other hand portrayed as having great sensitivity, and a penchant for storytelling like her husband: "she could tell stories of her past in the Italian mountains very effectively, picturesquely, and vividly" (98).

Carnevali's later narrative of encounters and relations with Italians in America is, in its episodic structure, an indication of the contradictory and troubled processes of identification of the poet with the community. This identification is negotiated case by case, as the poet moved between the American unknown and an Italian element he could not fully recognise as his own. The text reflects different cultural stimuli, while failing to produce a definite statement on Italian America. In an episode of the narration, Carnevali even hides his nationality to his German landlady:

There I passed for a Frenchman, because I had come to the conclusion that Italians were not well seen out of Italy. The enormous landlady used to call me 'Frenchsiugno,' and when I was behind in paying the rent she could mutter:
'You will never pay me, nun, Frenchy, you devilish Frenchy'" (*Autobiography* 88)

At that point, Carnevali must have been living in the United States long enough to know that "not well seen" was in many cases a euphemism. Italians in America were subject to social and political discrimination. Carnevali's attempt to pass for French is an attempt to escape the images projected upon Italians, using a nationality with no history of discrimination in America. Subjectivity is largely "shaped by the experience of social recognition" and "includes our sense of self in relation to others and to our various

⁴⁵ There are two mentions of abortion in the *Autobiography*. The first is right after their first encounter ("the result was she got pregnant and I had to have her operated", 97); later, he would refer to "when my wife was being operated on (anti-birth)" (150).

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identifications,” involving a “close connection between how society is organized, what social categories are available, and what subjectivities are possible in a particular historical time, place and situation” (Karpinski 22). Carnevali’s narration of his evolving subjectivity in America responds to the constraints that were projected on Italians, discussing social categories and discrimination in various places in the text. His strong sense of individuality, on the other hand, entails a problematic relation with the community, and his rare moments of identification with Italy in the narration are mostly experienced in emotions rather than society.

Carnevali recalls walking through the streets of New York, looking for a job, overwhelmed by Italian memories: “I walked the streets often in a frenzy of hatred and sang an Italian song sometimes and stopped to cry” (*Autobiography* 75). The unnamed “Italian song” is a tangible sign of identity, serving as a catalyst for the author’s nostalgia, triggered by displacement and frustration. Later, he links his early poetic aspirations with “that poor Italian who wept desperately in the streets of New York remembering Neapolitan songs” (*Autobiography* 85). The “poor Italian” of the anecdote is an ideal migrant, not named like many others he had encountered. Writing in the 1930s, Carnevali links that moment of nostalgia with a sense of community, which is realised ideally, and not in the concrete reality of Little Italy: “There were millions like me, millions, and if these millions had a voice it would be the voice of God” (85).

The *Autobiography* contains hints of the stereotypes and cultural constraints associated with Italians in America; the text also testifies to Carnevali’s uneasiness, and need to escape such constraints by establishing a dialogue with American literature. As he entered American literature in the years 1918-1922, however, he could not avoid completely a discussion of himself as Italian in America.

1.3.2 Representing the 'Wops'

The literary milieu’s reaction to Carnevali has been analyzed in terms of reaction to his uncompromising opposition to the evolution of avant-garde

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poetics; various texts by different authors at the time attempted to explain and process Carnevali's opposition by linking his Italian background to his personality.

Samuel Putnam, a translator and scholar of Romance languages who would later join the modernist crowds in Paris, wrote an article about Carnevali in 1922, titled "The Mad Wop." Putnam introduces Carnevali as being invested with true poetic powers, and also the result of a sort of socio-cultural experiment: "take an immigrant boy, with a fine head [...], and dump him into the murk and maelstrom which is our modern industrial civilization..." (9). He compares the purity of the "immigrant boy" to the whirlwind of stimuli of the American metropolis. Putnam attributes Carnevali's peculiar poetic achievements to cultural mismatch, an immigrant's attempt to make sense of America. With such belief in the power of his vision, he casts Carnevali as the "Mad Wop," as a sign of the Italian's ground-breaking artistic alterity. The word "Wop" is used in the figurative and poetic sense, much like Williams had defined Carnevali as "the black man" in his "Gloria!" ("Gloria!" 4). Still, the tangible sign of this alterity is a word that usually indicated diffidence and discrimination towards Italian immigrants.

Another friend-editor, Ernest Walsh, also linked Carnevali's artistic accomplishment with nationality, by comparing the Italian and the French 'characters': "he is an Italian just as a Frenchman is a Frenchman. A Frenchman is always theatrical when an Italian is dramatic. [...] Carnevali is not French" (327). An unpublished foreword to the *Autobiography*, written by Dorothy Dudley, referred to Carnevali's peculiar "manner of intelligence." She linked it explicitly with primitive, non-Western sensitivity: "it is intellect which is sometimes called Mediterranean; yet it is found near and far; perhaps among Icelanders, probably among Africans; or to the Far East."⁴⁶ Poet and editor Robert McAlmon, who had worked with Williams in New York and established the Paris-based Contact Publishing Company in 1923 (publishing Carnevali's book in 1925), wrote in his memoir that Carnevali had "the

⁴⁶ D. Dudley, "Foreword to *Religious Stammering – An Autobiography*" [unpublished, presumably 1933]. SIUC Boyle, Box 86, Folder 6.

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violence of adolescence” but also “wit and irony, of the Latin order which one gets from the Italians” (*Being Geniuses Together* 152). Four different critics, in essays written after Carnevali’s repatriation, referred to Carnevali as an outsider, using four different labels (“Wop,” “Italian,” “Mediterranean,” “Latin”) which have in common only their geographic nature and the purpose of marking Carnevali as interesting precisely in virtue of his foreign origin.

In 1931, McAlmon published “Fortuno Carraccioli – A Satire:” a parody of Carnevali’s New York poems, reproducing his long lines, confessional tones and plain language. McAlmon uses Carnevali’s Italian origins as a prop for openly exaggerated lines of aestheticised nostalgia for “Firenze”: “nostalgic joy laments within me. / Remembering sweet-sounding names: / Benozzo Gozzoli...” (“Fortuno Carraccioli” 100–102). The parody also represents “Carraccioli” having trouble interacting with other immigrants:

Stopping at the corner saloon to have a beer,
I see the young men old, the old men bitter,
and they don't look at me as only a poor wop.
They are Hunkies, Polacks, Russians,
Fins, Kikes, Dagos, Greasers, and Swedes –
all lousy foreigners themselves.
[...]
They didn't get together with me or the others, though.
 (“Fortuno Carraccioli” 27–32, 36)

The parody does particularly well in identifying Carnevali’s contrasting tensions, as he walks the streets and faces the urban environment, yet is constantly focused on his inner life. McAlmon’s avatar for Carnevali dislikes being considered “only a poor wop,” and cannot engage in true conversation with migrants. The actual Carnevali in the years 1918-1922 appeared more interested in a conversation with the American literati. In the magazines, he responded to ethnic constraints projected on him (as a “Latin” or “wop”), and also showed the contradictions of his relationship with the Italian immigrants.

The condition of being an outsider speaking to an audience is a crucial element of Carnevali’s production in the American years, spanning across his poetry, short stories and criticism. The construction of a representable and communicable identity takes place at various levels in the texts, as Carnevali

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navigates different images and constraints which fail to capture the impossible whole of *italianità*. Bhabha postulated that “to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look or locus” (44). This may apply – outside of Bhabha’s original post-colonial context – to contested spaces, and all instances in which an individual is forcefully invested with the “artifice of identity” (Bhabha 44). Such postulate helps us escape from the “deadlock” of an identity-bound notion of multiculturalism, which conceives society as “a fusion of uniform cultural identities and of communities resulting from these identities” (Wolf 81). The revelatory notion that identity is a representational category – not an inherent or innate one – is crucial for a re-positioning of the migrant author, unbound from the temptations of a stable cultural representation. The simplified category of ‘Italian,’ projected unto him by society and literary milieu alike, forced Carnevali to respond to the many constraints associated with the category in his work for American little reviews. To put it again in Bhabha’s terms, Carnevali was compelled to ‘negotiate’ his own identity in the host society and in the American debate, within the field of the text. In this process, he referred to the contradictory processes of identification and distanciation inherent to his existence as an Italian in America. By attempting to prove himself as an author, he also brought other constraints into the picture, relating to an Italian tradition which he was called to confront. Carnevali voiced his resistance to an unproblematic, essentialist view of identity, negotiating his right to exist in the literary milieu.

No published work by Carnevali deals in its entirety with Italian immigrants in America. Yet, the papers that he left with his Chicago friend Mitchell Dawson include a fragment of a manuscript for an unpublished short story. The fragment, which appears to be a very early draft, presents a character named Marcello, a headwaiter of the Rale Club in New York. Marcello shares some features of his background with the author: he hails from Asti, Piedmont, not far from Biella, where Carnevali grew up. On the other hand, his physical description does not fit with Carnevali, with his “fiercely beautiful black moustache.”⁴⁷ He apparently was a dishwasher and

⁴⁷ This and subsequent quotations are from “Fragments of a short story concerning Marcello at the Rale Club” in NLC Dawson, Box 22.

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waiter in London, Berlin, Paris, Calcutta and Tokyo before becoming headwaiter at the Rale Club. The story insists on the fact that the hardships of emigration did not compromise Marcello's strength – as they did with the author: “but life couldn't put it over on Marcello - he'd washed too many dishes and he knew what people eat in the four corners of the world.” Marcello had learned the languages of the countries where he had lived, “which he spoke equally fluently and equally badly” – as opposed to Carnevali's painstaking assimilation into literary English. Italian enters the story as he thinks about his languages: “he could quizz [sic] and fool life in 6 different languages, per la Madonna⁴⁸!” The insertion of the Italian exclamation signals an imperfect English, learned just well enough to “quizz and fool life.” On the other hand, it somewhat responds to Carnevali's idea of language as empowering the migrant. The story features two other Italians working at the Rale Club: Mr Raggi, the manager, and “a poor little wop with crooked legs” who works under Marcello's command. The fragment changes subject abruptly when Marcello and the “poor little wop” are about to interact – with a flashback on Marcello's childhood in Piedmont – and then has no conclusion. There is no sign left of the interaction between the tough, successful immigrant and the newcomer, but the fragment seems to anticipate the different layers of immigrant society later described in Carnevali's *Autobiography*. Carnevali's attempt at immigrant fiction remained unfinished.

Among the published works, the 1920 “Tale III” (of the “Tales of a Hurried Man”) in particular, voices Carnevali's desire to speak his individuality in relation to America and to his Italian background. The “look or locus” of otherness (Bhabha 44) in the story is the glance of the host community, preoccupied with the migrant's place in society. The narrating voice asserts its individuality in relation to American society, but also in relation to the role of the Italian which he was called to represent. The story's almost non-existent plot – Carnevali walks back home and cooks a meal – is the occasion for the author to reflect on his predicament. The text also features a direct critique of the values of American life, as imposed on the emigrant.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Italian curse: “By the Holy Mary.”

⁴⁹ An earlier version of the following discussion of “Tale III” and of “Immigration and

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Standing on the roof of his building, the author entertains thoughts on suicide as the ultimate artistic performance: "I could touch this intangible air if I sent my body whirling through it, in a spider's dance, to break over the flagstones. I would give a hundred persons at least the thrill of their lives" ("Tale III" 31). Instead, he decides to "walk down to [the] apartment and open the door with a Yale key, just like everybody." To him, conforming to the little everyday rituals of consumerist society equals giving up the search for poetic truth ("And they will not say that I have gone away from them to find the truth"), and leads to Americanisation: "they will admit that I am the most American of the Americans" ("Tale III" 31). Carnevali's critique of the American discourse of assimilation prompts one of his few moments of total identification with the migrant community:

I am an emigrant and I have left my home, I am homeless and I want a home. You look at me with evil eyes, with squinting eyes, you don't look at me, you sneer at me. I am emigrant, waiting, I know millions that are like me. ("Tale III" 31)

This statement assumes a different dimension when inserted in the larger context of the whole passage, which asserted the poet's individuality against the forced conformity of the host society. Existential displacement is somehow linked with the immigrant milieu, yet the link appears as an ideal similarity with "millions" rather than being situated in the social reality of immigration.

The Italian migrants that appear in the story are seen from a distance, blending with the very background as Carnevali walks home: "whitish and greenish the houses, the colors of the wives of the poor wops" ("Tale III" 28). The "wops" are part of the cityscape without being there as recognisable characters. They contribute to an atmosphere of squalor they suffer from, yet are not given a voice to express their feelings about it. The phrase "poor wops" carries a sense of detachment, as if their (economic, spiritual) poverty were something that the author could recognise, but not share. The term "wops" itself is quite controversial: one would not expect an Italian-American writer to use a racially derogatory word to refer to his own community. It

Importation" is included in my article "Emanuel Carnevali's Cultural Translation: Dante, Modernism and the Italian American Experience," *Scritture Migranti*, 7/2013.

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would cause some uneasiness to David Stivender when, more than fifty years later, he helped Maria Pia Carnevali with the translation of her stepbrother’s works. In this case, Stivender felt compelled to warn her in his letters that “wops” is “una bruttissima espressione del gergo”; he advised her to translate it into “dei poveri emigrati italiani”, thus eliminating the possible racial connotation from the translation of the story.⁵⁰ The term is derogatory indeed – yet, it situates the text within the context of immigrant discrimination, while enabling the author to distance himself. Carnevali usually employed the word with a sympathetic and patronising attitude towards his fellow migrants. It provided him with a name to define them, while placing himself at a distance from the community.

Carnevali’s Italian identity, unlike that of the “wops,” is discussed in the text in its complexity. The author uses irony to assert his position within the expanded and uncertain framework of *italianità*. He builds his invective on identity constraints relating to food, prompted by a kitchen scene in the story:

And as for spaghetti and ravioli, let me tell you once for all that parsley chopped fine and one small onion and . . . Yes, people do think that I am interesting! Characteristically an Italian, don't you know. And it's just what they want . . . the local color, that attractive and light way of talking . . . and those very extraordinary neckties . . . oh, perfectly charming! (“Tale III” 32)

The first draft of what would later become “Tale III” presented the author’s Italian identity through cooking, but in quite a different way:

My father was a born cook, and that's what I inherited. And when the friends come you explain to them how the spaghetti should be made, and there follows a conversation about Italy and the canals of Venice. It is not true that there be nothing but canals in Venice. You can *walk* all your way thru [sic].⁵¹

In the draft, the passion for food is deeply rooted in identity, having been “inherited” from a “born cook.” Food has a translational dimension in this account, prompting what seems to be a session of questions about Italy from the author’s friends (not mentioned in the published story). In the published

⁵⁰ “A terrible slang expression” “poor Italian migrants.” Stivender to Maria Pia Carnevali, 26 March 1972, in ACB, Folder 1.17.7.

⁵¹ Carnevali, “My Home,” [presumably] 1919, in NLC Dawson, Box 21, Folder 696.

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story, on the contrary, the author reacts when the image of *italianità* is projected unto him. There, the narrating voice begins the explanation on spaghetti, but suddenly interrupts it to react to the stereotypical image. Carnevali knew that a great part of his power of attractiveness in the New York milieu derived from "local color" and from the fact that he was "characteristically" an Italian.

In "Tale III," Carnevali reacts to the notion of a "characteristic" Italian identity by addressing the symbols that American intellectuals immediately associated with Italian culture: "And, anyway, Dante died quite long ago, and there was a dash of Teuton blood in him, I bet! Cagliostro is more the Latin. And today fierce men a la Cagliostro are out of fashion" ("Tale III" 32). Carnevali did not write this out of disregard for Dante – rather, out of the risk of automatic identification with the most popular Italian author he feels compelled to state that he "died quite long ago." He is willing to give up Dante, the established and universally accessible symbol of Italian tradition, to the "Teutons." On the other hand, he claims for himself the less canonical ancestor of Cagliostro, exploiting the fact that "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" and national signs "can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha 37). The eighteenth-century adventurer and occultist Cagliostro epitomises an Italian stereotype that had some currency in Anglo-Saxon countries: Italy as a land of unhealthy luxury, treachery and murder. The model of Anglo-Italian cultural relations was "confected well in advance of the coming of most Italians to the United States" and yet able to influence "the terms on which Italians were first accepted into American society" (Connell 11). It dates back as far as the seventeenth century, when the changing geo-political and religious situation made popular a cultural representation of Italy "as a land populated by wily and dangerous Machiavels," a "land of violence and sexuality not stabilized by the institutions of family and marriage" (Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians* 2). The pattern of Anglo-Italian relations, alternating fascination with fear and diffidence, produced a fixed, yet re-usable image. This image was projected in literary circles on Carnevali, who polemically embraced it in "Tale III" by re-defining his Italian models (Cagliostro instead of Dante) and insisting on the symbols that separated

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Puritan America from Pagan/Catholic Italy, that is to say food and sex:

Alone with my wife, I have meals that are feasts. Anti-puritan meals. To the eternal glory of the magnificent eaters of my old land, Lorenzo de' Medici, Alessandro Borgia, Leone X, and Cornaro before he had got tired. Crunching a plant of dandelion under my teeth and devouring with my eyes the small space of my wife's breasts that she lets me see; eating a bleeding beefsteak . . . god! ("Tale III" 33)

Italian-Americans, on their part, have been seen to conceive food and sex as directly correlated, similarly epitomizing the dichotomy between Puritan America and Pagan/Catholic Italy (Gardaphé, *Leaving Little Italy* 141). Carnevali, responding to similar constraints in his own way, turns the ready-made image of the Italians as papists and lascivious against its very inventors. He employs cultural discourses of food in his criticism of modern consumerism: "And if, in ten years, people will only chew foodstuff instead of eating, what the hell! We eat and laugh now, we eat and weep together, eh girl" ("Tale III" 33). The category of "foodstuff" relates to America (which is, for Carnevali, the land of the commonplace) while Italian food is associated with lust and vitality.

"Tale III" also compares the drab and alienating cityscape to the Italian landscape:

In Italy I saw houses born white and beautiful; and when they were old and miserable they wore their misery like a soldier his uniform that bullets have tattered. Add grey on grey, brown on brown, masons of the New World, makers of the New World—grey on grey, brown on brown, work for the great blindness to come! ("Tale III" 30)

The Italian landscape is here taken as an example of ongoing historical process of signification, retaining its meaning with the passage of time. Italian architecture and food are set in opposition to the American mainstream and the threat of cultural annihilation in the metropolis. *Italianità* is not employed in the story as a pre-conceived, innate quality; rather, Carnevali's use of *italianità* responds to constraints that have been projected unto him. A pre-conceived and external image of Italy is reversed, and used against the American mainstream – not so much to defend group identity as in order to construe the author's individuality out of contrasting images.

Carnevali's attack on the American mainstream in "Tale III" also

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recuperates the speech of Italian Americans. A proverb, specific to Italian migrants, is framed into his argument and translated for the American audience:

They are still singing the songs of the mountains—and a million Italians [...] well, they say "L'America, donne senza colore e frutta senza sapore"—America, women without colour and fruits without taste. And maybe they are right. ("Tale IIIb" 56)

The saying expresses the migrant's reaction to the alienating and standardised American environment, setting "the song of the mountains" against the modern city. Carnevali translates it into the American modernist text, enhancing his critique of modern life. His partial identification with the "wops" is here employed within a wider argument, as he uses different frames, and elements of a multiform and flexible Italian imagery to assert his own individuality in the American text. This also includes linguistic specimens, taken from the speech of Italians in America, as well as linguistic memories from his childhood. Carnevali includes an Italian nursery rhyme in "Tale III", promptly translated:

[...] an immense lady teacher (more than 250 pounds), long time ago in my childhood, taught me the song:
Casa mia, casa mia,
benché piccola tu sia . . .
(House of mine, house of mine—however small thou art . . .) ("Tale III" 34)

The refrain is well known to Italian children. Translated in the modernist American review, it provocatively asserts cultural difference, becoming part of a vaster Italian signifying process that Carnevali can claim and re-use as his own.

If we assume the typical first-generation ethnic writer to be a spokesperson for his community, driven by the need for a sort of "compulsive representation" (Sollors, *Ethnic Modernism* 42) in order to defy stereotypes, then Carnevali falls out of the paradigm. Yet, he sometimes wrote against the stereotype. In "Tale III" he wrote that "I could have written a tremendously happy treatise to show why the wops break one and every law of the United States" except that "they don't—and it wouldn't have sufficed—and reform is reform and I chose revolution – I quit" ("Tale IIIb" 54). It is not a matter of

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superiority, then, as much as incompatibility between the poet's mission (that is, that of writing the "splendid commonplace" and redeeming everyday life from its brutality) and the role of spokesperson.

Carnevali defended the Italian community once in his criticism. In 1919 T.A. Daly, a columnist and poet, published a collection called *McAroni Ballad and Other Poems*. The supposedly humorous poems were written in an English that was meant to imitate the speech of Italian immigrants. Carnevali wrote a review of the collection for the August 1920 issue of *Poetry*. He started his review with a polemical note imagining that all the Italian immigrants should "throw their pick-axes in the air and dance a tarantella", and sing the *Star-Spangled Banner*, since they "have at last their laureate poet: T. A. Daly" ("Immigration" 278). Carnevali insists on two risks that an immigrant faced in the United States: stereotyping (the tarantella) and assimilation (the American anthem). He then attacks Daly's strategy of representation. Possessing much more insight than Daly, he could notice that "the dialect is untrue, the names are impossibilities (Scalabrarta, Scalabrella, Gessapalena)" and denounce the "shameful and shameless lack of knowledge of even the most obvious facts concerning Italian."

A stereotype is not just a distorted depiction: it is also the stereotyping group's attempt to control what is unfamiliar and strange. It entails the creation of an Other, which is "always constructed as an object for the benefit of the subject who stands in need of an objectified Other in order to achieve a masterly self-definition" (Pickering 168). The Other is constructed independently from its real-life existence (as Pickering remarks, "the location of the Other is primarily in language") in order to be ridiculed or patronised. Carnevali was a member of the stereotyped community, working within the mainstream intelligentsia. He could expose the fiction, and he did so primarily by underlining the essentially linguistic nature of the stereotype, building on his insider's knowledge of the community.

Siding with the Italian immigrants against Daly, nevertheless Carnevali shows a patronising attitude towards his fellow migrants:

O naiveté of my Sicilians and Calabresi! ... And how scared and frightened he would be should he know what tremendous things your purity and naiveté are, in this country of grey and moving pictures !—

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should he know what your smile is, your tremendous smile, in America!
("Immigration" 279)

From his anti-establishment positions, the innocence of the "guineas" is to be defended from discrimination. Yet, for all the positive connotations that he could apply to them, seeing someone as primitive and pure is another form of stereotyping, albeit a positive one. This defence of the Italian immigrant includes the reason why Carnevali could never become a spokesperson for the Italian community. Although he could sense the way they were mistreated, he could never participate in the popular, traditional culture they had brought across the ocean.

Carnevali is now part of the Italian-American canon, although he may have never been willing to engage with Italian-American culture in the traditional, canon-building sense. He was never part of that "public forum" in which "the first communities of immigrants from Italy managed to express their divisions, contradictions, and their unremitting vitality" (Marazzi, "What Fodder?" 98). He drew from the always changing, still nowadays undefined repository of "ethnic, regional, prenational, and national encyclopedias," of "motives and figures available to a literature that could call itself both *Italian* and *American*" (Viscusi, *Buried Caesars* 140, author's emphasis). He knew Italian-American authors well enough to cast his judgement on them: in a 1919 letter to Papini, discussing his project for a magazine, Carnevali made his own list of "ciò che c'è di buono in America," including various American authors (Sandburg, W.C. Williams, Frost, T.S. Eliot), but "né Giovannitti né Ruotolo" (*Lettere* 85–86)⁵². Carnevali engaged almost exclusively with American literature.

Carnevali's discussion of his place in American literature involved the presentation of himself as outsider and newcomer as much as the re-discussion of his *italianità*. Carnevali treated *italianità* as a constructible, shape-shifting identity which could include his uneasy relation with the Italian immigrant community as well as his polemical re-use of Italian tradition(s). Addressing a culture from the point of view of another, Carnevali worked and reworked the notion of culture as unitary entity, demonstrating

⁵² "What is good in America" "neither Giovannitti nor Ruotolo."

1.3 Carnevali and the 'Wops': Issues of belonging and representation

that the artist's individuality necessarily arises from personal re-elaboration of different cultural constraints. As he increasingly engaged with American modernist poetry, the representation of a multiform *italianità* remained a constant of his works – if not always present in the foreground - especially in criticism and translation, as we shall see.

1.4 “SOMETHING OF GOVONI IN FROST”: CARNEVALI’S TRANSLATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN LITERATURE

This chapter investigates Carnevali’s translations of some Italian authors of his time, made mostly in 1919, in order to analyse his position with respect to the Italian literature of his time. Carnevali translated short pieces from different authors for a “Five Years of Italian Poetry (1910-1915)” collection, published in January 1919 in *Poetry*. He translated an essay by Papini for *The Little Review* in June 1919, and a short story by Papini (“Congedo”/“Leavetaking”) for *Others* in July 1919. There are other unpublished translations in the archives, including a long poem by Palazzeschi (“L’incendiario”/ “The Incendiary”) and fiction from Papini (“Mezz’ora”/ “Half Hour”).

Carnevali employed the translation of Italian authors in the construction of his literary career in America, while re-defining his own links with Italy. The texts came mainly from the Florentine review *La Voce*, of which he was a self-declared disciple. Carnevali established epistolary relationships with some of the authors he was translating – most notably Papini. Letters and translations were Carnevali’s most prolonged contact with the Italian literary milieu of his time, in an attempt to create links between American modernism and a specific group of Italian authors.

Translations are inseparable from the context that produced them: “after all, translations always come into being within a certain cultural environment and are designed to meet certain needs of, and/or occupy certain ‘slots’ in it” (Toury 12). Much attention has been paid to the macroscopic transformations, in source and target cultures, achieved through translation. Carnevali’s translations did not have macroscopic effects on the receiving canon. If there existed such a thing as the Translation Index proposed by Eoyang to study “the historical fact of translation and the products of translation as if they were items imported or exported from a point of origin” (17), then Carnevali’s translations would show very little impact on such scale. They did not start recognizable trends, or introduce stylistic models into America; nor were they particularly encouraged by the authors of the source

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texts. There are signs, however, that Carnevali intended the translations to have an impact in the literary marketplace. The project involved Carnevali as cultural mediator between groups of Italian and American literati, with a view to becoming editor of a transnational literary magazine. The project did not succeed, but its specificity and proposed goals make it worthy of investigation, as a translational enterprise intending to establish transnational connections.

1.4.1 Discovering *La Voce* in America

Carnevali’s career as a translator started in 1918, when he was working for Joel Elias Spingarn, a New York-based scholar and activist, with an interest in all things Italian. Spingarn hired Carnevali as secretary, also asking him to translate Croce’s *Breviario di Estetica*. The young translator’s work progressed slowly, and with difficulty. In a June 1918 letter, Carnevali appealed to his employer’s patience, explaining that he was not able to complete the translation before the deadline, listing illness, work, his wife, and even sleep as excuses (“[copyrighted material]”).⁵³ Cacho Millet, in his 1981 collection of letters and translations *Voglio disturbare l’America*, reports a conversation that he had on the topic in 1979 with Carnevali’s friend Louis Grudin. Reportedly, Carnevali worked at the translation with his friends Grudin and Isidor Schneider, but the three quarrelled more often than not, slowing down the pace of the work (“Un discepolo de *La Voce*” 31). The translation was never published and is now lost, although Carnevali apparently finished it, as he wrote to Croce himself: “Ho tradotto, male, per il Sig. J. E. Spingarn, il suo *Breviario di Estetica*...”⁵⁴ (*Lettere* 61). The working relationship between Spingarn and Carnevali deteriorated soon. Edward Dahlberg, in a short memoir on Carnevali, implied that he was fired after stealing his employer’s books:

⁵³ Carnevali to Spingarn, 30 June 1918. Joel E. Spingarn papers. Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, Box 2, Folder 5.

⁵⁴ “I translated badly, for Mr J. E. Spingarn, your *Breviary of Aesthetics*.”

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[copyrighted material].⁵⁵

Dahlberg's allegations are now impossible to prove, but it is quite plausible that Spingarn was dissatisfied with the young Italian's service. One element stands out in this account: Spingarn was known as a cultural mediator, a crucial figure for the introduction of Italian letters in America. Carnevali had a brief chance at playing a crucial role in an Italian-American intellectual and academic relationship. He did not pursue that path by working with Spingarn, but in that period he made a discovery: in the New York Public Library, he found issues of the magazine *La Voce*, and that inspired him to re-consider his relationship with Italian culture.

Carnevali wrote to Croce in August 1918: “nella Public Library ho scoperto tutti i numeri della Voce, e ciò mi ha dato una gran fame di cose italiane”⁵⁶ (*Lettere* 62). *La Voce* would be Carnevali’s strongest Italian reference, and his main source on the timid emergence of literary modernism in Florence. It is important to remember, when speaking of an Italian “modernism,” that the term has been only retrospectively applied to diverse, isolated cultural phenomena dealing with the impact of modernity in Italy (Somigli and Moroni 4). In this atmosphere, the Florentine magazine *La Voce* had a remarkably international inclination with respect to other Italian reviews. Its founders (Papini, Prezzolini, Soffici) “had crucial formative experiences in Paris, imbibing its art and philosophy” and from that experience “they came to appreciate the role of the aesthetic for modern cultural renewal” (Adamson, “Modernism in Florence” 225–6). The *Vocianti*⁵⁷ responded to their experience of Parisian, cosmopolitan avant-garde, and expressed their stance for general renovation of Italian culture. Founding the review in 1908, their intention was “enlisting the best minds of the country to rethink the applications of poetry, morality, the visual arts, political systems, economy, psychological analysis, and sociology” (Harrison 174). The ambitious project involved the diffusion of a cosmopolitan culture

⁵⁵ Dahlberg, Edward. “A memoir [of Emanuel Carnevali] Typescript (copy)”, unsigned and undated. NYPL Boyle.

⁵⁶ “...in the Public Library I discovered all the issues of *La Voce*, and that left me very hungry for Italian stuff.”

⁵⁷ *Vocianti* is the term that usually defines the collaborators of *La Voce*.

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that would enrich Italy without making it forsake its own tradition:

Si tratta di ridare all’Italia non soltanto il contatto colla cultura europea ma anche la coscienza storica della cultura sua, ch’è pur tanta parte della cultura europea.

Io mi contento di poco: Nazionalisti no, ma Italiani sì!⁵⁸ (Papini, “L’Italia risponde” 1)

In the same essay, Papini writes about the importance of “reading... admiring ... translating” the European masters: a renewal of contacts, in part through translation, would result in cultural gain for Italy. *La Voce*, as Prezzolini and Papini intended it, was relatively short-lived: the group broke up shortly after the beginning of World War I, over the magazine’s politicization. Another editor, Giuseppe De Robertis, turned *La Voce* into a purely literary review, before it finally closed down in 1916. Carnevali in 1918 became an enthusiastic admirer of an editorial project that had been dead for two years. His belated discovery, made outside of the context in which the magazine developed and thrived, put him in contact with a version of Italian culture that responded to his needs: an Italian culture that engaged with the modern world, where ethical and aesthetic innovation would go hand in hand. Carnevali asked Croce, with candid enthusiasm, to send him the addresses of the *Vociani* Papini, Prezzolini, Slataper (who was dead three years by then), Soffici and Palazzeschi (*Lettere* 62–63). He corresponded with Papini for about a year, and Papini quickly became his most important Italian contact.

Carnevali’s letters to Papini express his will to become the translator of the *Vociani* as well as the mediator between Italian and American modernisms. He wrote to Papini in a vivid mixture of English and Italian, testifying to the influence that English had on his Italian by then. In a February 1919 letter, Carnevali enthusiastically mentions an essay that he intends to write on him, as well as his project for an anthology of translated Italian poets:

Questo sarà buona réclame per lei – e se qualcuno (forse avrò il tempo di farlo io stesso) tradurrà i suoi libri per una casa editrice americana,

⁵⁸ “It is about giving back to Italy its contact with European culture, as well as the historical awareness of its own culture, which is after all such a great part of European culture. I shall be content with a few words: nationalists no, Italians yes!”

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avrò l'onore di dirle che sono stato io più o meno ad invogliare il pubblico (il)letterario americano⁵⁹ (*Lettere* 67)

In the same letter, he insists on his role as a cultural mediator, asserting that American readers “devono conoscere Palazzeschi, Govoni, Jahier e Soffici. E se non lo faccio io nessuno lo farà”⁶⁰ (*Lettere* 68). Carnevali attempts to capitalise his position as an Italian in New York, carving for himself a niche as translator and editor. He tells Papini of his incumbent position as assistant editor of *Poetry*, asking the Italian author for help in making *Poetry* gain an international dimension.⁶¹ At the same time, Carnevali sends Papini lists of prospective subscribers for the latter's new magazine *La Vraie Italie*.⁶² Carnevali’s interest seems to lie, at the time, in the creation of an international network, to be fuelled by his translations. His letters to Papini refer continuously to his effort and strategy for diffusing the *Vocianti* in America. In May 1919 he expressed his intention to translate Papini's autobiographical novel *Un uomo finito* (1912). Carnevali also laments that “un professoruccio italianescante”⁶³ has blocked publication of his essay on Papini for *The Dial* (*Lettere* 73). In another May 1919 letter, he confirmed that “piccoli disordinati e wretched magazines son tutti pronti e contentissimi d'accettare traduzioni”⁶⁴ (*Lettere* 74). In the meantime, in August 1919 Carnevali starts mentioning his plans for a magazine of his own (*Lettere* 85), inspired by *La Voce*, to be published in America under the title *New Moon* – which would never see the light, due to Carnevali’s sickness. Carnevali intended the magazine to have an international dimension (“Avremo uno ‘scambio’ con

⁵⁹“This will be good publicity for you – and if someone will ever translate your books for an American publisher (perhaps I will have the time to do it myself) I will be honored to tell you that I, more or less, generated the interest among the American (il)literary audience.”

⁶⁰“They need to know Palazzeschi, Govoni, Jahier and Soffici. If I don’t do that, nobody will.”

⁶¹“Fra poco sarò uno degli editori di un piccolo periodico ‘Poetry’ [...]. Lo voglio fare internazionale - Mi aiuti, vuole?” (*Lettere* 68). It is possible that the translingual Carnevali used the words “piccolo periodico” as literal translation of the English phrase “little review.”

⁶²*La Vraie Italie* was a French language journal of Italian culture and literature, edited by Papini with Soffici in the years 1919-1920. It aimed at spreading the latest developments of Italian culture in a major international language, but was rather short-lived. Cacho Millet is of the opinion that Carnevali was not much interested in this review, preferring to focus his efforts on translations from *La Voce*, as the latter presented a more lively critical debate (“Un discepolo de La Voce” 49).

⁶³“A little Italianate professor.”

⁶⁴“Small, chaotic and wretched magazines [in English in the source] are all ready and very happy to accept translations.”

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quei giornali Italiani e Francesi che ci interesseranno”⁶⁵ 86). He also stressed the need to translate any Italian contribution into English, as he intended to market the review to American literati and not to Italian immigrants: as Carnevali explained to Papini, “non vale la pena di lasciarle leggere ai coloni italiani”⁶⁶ (*Lettere* 86). This was likely due to Carnevali’s own complicated relationship with the Italian-American community.

The *New Moon* project, in spite of its failure, is a remarkable attempt at putting the two sides of the Atlantic in contact. That would have hardly been the only case of transatlantic literary contact during the modernist era. Yet, under Carnevali’s direction, it would have taken quite a unique turn: a transnational modernist review, edited by an Italian immigrant with Italian expertise. The 1919 translations alone, on the other hand, are an interesting document of attempted transnational contact.

1.4.2 Carnevali’s representation of Italian modernism

At the beginning of his 1919 “Five Years of Italian Poetry,” Carnevali inserted some critical reflections on Italian poets. He did not only translate the *Vocianti*, but also reflected on their significance in literature, casting himself in the role of the critic who would introduce them to the American public. The small anthology of translated texts is deeply linked to this critical introduction, intending to present the current state of Italian literature.

Lefevere lists, as conditions for a translation to influence the cultural capital of a culture, the “need, or rather needs, of the audiences,” the “patron or initiator of the translation” and the “relative prestige of the source and target cultures” (“Translation Practice(s)” 44). Italian culture held a certain amount of prestige, and readers were probably interested in knowing its latest developments. Carnevali’s work considered such factors, possibly with a mind to bigger projects such as *New Moon*. His work on the *Vocianti* addressed what he perceived as gaps in the target culture. *La Voce* had not

⁶⁵“We will have an exchange with those Italian and French journals that interest us.”

⁶⁶ “They are not worth the trouble to have just the Italian immigrants read them.”

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been very prominent among American critics during its lifespan.⁶⁷ Carnevali’s 1919 article was advertised on the magazine’s first page as “Five Years of Italian Poetry,” purporting to be a general treatment of the whole Italian contemporary debate; only by reading it the reader could realise it was mainly about a group of authors relating to a magazine which had by then closed down.

The introductory essay to Carnevali’s translations starts by relegating Carducci and Pascoli in the past, as well as dismissing D’Annunzio in virtue of his having “reached the appreciation of fat American reviews” (“Five Years” 209). This comment reproduces, with more polemic strength, Carnevali’s public renunciation of Carducci and D’Annunzio in 1918 (“Notes”). Carnevali then tackles the issue of another Italian movement which had received international attention in recent years: Futurism. The Futurists had travelled for years “through the major capitals of Europe, creating astonishment and winning important allies but also inciting vehement reactions” (Levenson 47). Carnevali criticised futurism’s international dimension by quoting *La Voce*’s director Prezzolini:

Marinetti is more grandiloquent, more obvious, and writes noisier classical bombast than any cheap *passatista*.⁶⁸ That’s why they hear him around the world. But Prezzolini, lovable critic, full of strength and cleanness, has fixed him and his gang, in the only intelligent articles on futurism that have appeared in Italian magazines, where pigheaded professors have waged war against it, and nasty ignorant youths have defended it. (“Five Years” 213)

Carnevali chooses the middle path between avant-garde rupture and stubborn defence of Italy’s glorious past. He usually had a tendency to posit his aesthetic opinions as transcending schools and movements: in the same article he claimed that “the first good poem that was ever written started the school of Homer, Dante and Shakespeare” and that every successful poet “belongs to that school and no other” (“Five Years” 209). On the other hand,

⁶⁷ *Poetry* had already dedicated a short article of praise to the Florentine review in 1917. Walter Pach had praised *La Voce*, declaring it the most promising place where to look for heirs to Carducci, D’Annunzio and Pascoli, calling the magazine “distinctly modern in its whole viewpoint” while managing to “combat [...], at least in many instances, the excesses of the futurists” (52).

⁶⁸ Carnevali leaves this difficultly translated term in Italian. It is fundamental to the vocabulary of Futurism, indicating “those who love the past,” often in a derogatory sense.

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Carnevali’s critical stance is made explicit by the reference to Prezzolini, and by his choice of authors to translate, reflecting his admiration of *La Voce*,⁶⁹ and his desire to present Florentine modernism as a phenomenon apart from both “pigheaded professors” and “nasty ignorant youths”.

Once the critical context is established, Carnevali presents the authors in brief biographical vignettes. Carnevali did not know anything about these poets other than what he had read in the issues of *La Voce* found in New York; yet he managed to write convincing pieces about the authors and their literary relevance. These vignettes were heavily audience-oriented, making comparisons with the Anglophone scene, and explaining Italian-specific details when necessary.

The tone is colloquial, almost intimate as he describes Slataper as “a big, hard, and clean boy” from the Carso mountains, and Palazzeschi as having the “simplicity and naiveté of a modern St. Francis of Assisi” (“Five Years” 209–10). Papini is praised: “more than a warrior or a martyr has Papini given his life to his country, his people” (“Five Years” 210). There is perhaps an echo of Carnevali’s reflections of his own transnational experiences as he discusses Soffici’s Parisian influences, and the latter’s difficulties as he “fights his way through French influences to a broken jagged sort of poetry (words at liberty, and lyric simultaneities)” (“Five Years” 211). Di Giacomo, on the other hand, is puzzlingly identified as “the national poet” in virtue of his having “been acknowledged by Croce” (“Five Years” 210). Di Giacomo was never considered much of a “national” poet. He wrote mainly in Neapolitan dialect, at a time in which dialectal poets were generally excluded from the mainstream literary debate. Carnevali’s apparent misstep may be ironic, as he explains Di Giacomo’s Neapolitan poetry by relying on established stereotypes (“short stories and poems of the irremediable sadness and the irrational tragedy of the old Naples”). Carnevali attributes to Di Giacomo’s poetry “a tenderness that is real in Italy because of the climate, etc.; and would be sentimentality in America” (“Five Years” 210). It is possibly a hint to the stereotypical view of the sentimentality of Italian

⁶⁹ Carnevali also mentions another review directed by Papini and Soffici, *Lacerba*, in the article.

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culture: a domesticated, ready-made image for the benefit of the receiving culture. The image is depowered by Carnevali as he fits it into a treatment of Italian modernism, ideally placing the Italian declination of modernism on a level with the English-speaking scene.

Anglophone terms of comparison make their way into the essay, appealing to the readership’s field of view. Carnevali defines Rebora’s style as “imagism,” a term which was likely still circulating in American criticism, but which had no correspondence in Italy as a movement. Govoni’s poetry is described as “the most musical, most humane free verse,” describing “the luridist [sic], obscenest facts in the life of an old Italian city” in a “delicate” voice (“Five Years” 210). Carnevali states that there is “something of Frost in him — or, I should rather say, something of Govoni in Frost” (“Five Years” 210). Govoni and Frost did not probably know each other, let alone take inspiration from each other’s work. Carnevali’s comment is important because of its transnational standpoint – he can compare them because, unlike his audience, he treats both languages as his own. This is highlighted by the inversion in the comment. Carnevali’s acknowledgment of “something of Frost” in Govoni, immediately reversed as “something of Govoni in Frost,” is an attempt to a synchronic approach to Italian and American literature, taking each poet in turn as a familiar reference, a point of comparison in understanding the unfamiliar. At that point, there is no clear-cut distinction between the familiar and the unfamiliar for him: he participates in American literature as an outsider, gained his knowledge of the *Vociani* from America, and dealt with them by presenting them to the American public. The essay expresses Carnevali’s translational attitude as a desire to bridge a gap between different declinations of modernism, while supporting a view of Italian literature that he chose as his own.

This particular standpoint is also expressed in Carnevali’s treatment of Papini, whom he admired: his work on him throughout his career seems to reflect a desire for translational identification. Carnevali’s essay on Papini – eventually published in *The Modern Review* in 1922 – gives indications as to his desire to impersonate and celebrate his model. It opens by describing Papini’s (and Carnevali’s) native Tuscany with words translated from

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Papini’s autobiography *Un uomo finito*:

Born in 1881 in Tuscany – sky so beautiful even when it is ugly, twisted pallor of the olive trees, black spears of cypresses... (Carnevali, “Giovanni Papini” 11)

Intendo questo cielo così bello anche quand’è brutto, questo pallore contorto d’olivi, queste lance [sic] nere dei cipressi... (Papini, *Un uomo finito* 276)

Carnevali appropriates a whole sentence, without indicating that it is a translation: Cacho Millet commented that Carnevali could not describe his own native Tuscany without “borrowing” his idol’s words (“Un discepolo de La Voce” 33). Carnevali attempted to appropriate an image of Tuscany (and of Italy) by turning the words of his favourite Italian writer into his new language of English. In other cases, he appropriated Papini’s criticism via translation, as shown by the 1919 “The Jest at the Plymouth Theatre” and “The Historical Play:” respectively, Carnevali’s introduction to an essay by Papini, and his translation of it. Papini’s essay is a 1914 review of Sem Benelli’s Renaissance-themed play *La cena delle beffe*, which Carnevali translated when the play was performed at the Plymouth Theater in New York. Carnevali translated Papini’s review of the play, in order to convince the New York public to desert the theatre:

I give [Papini’s review] here, translated, with the hope to keep a few worthy fellows from giving their money to that manager [...] and indirectly to that translator who wrote "Jest" instead of "Dinner", etc., with some vague commercial end in view—and indirectly to Benelli—and indirectly to all the imbeciles of the earth who have and make enough money only that they may enlarge their ugliness. (“The Jest at the Plymouth Theatre” 49)

Carnevali’s presentation of the translation aligns with the opinions expressed in the source text as well as underlining his role as translator and mediator. He puts himself in competition with another translator, guilty of having eliminated “Dinner” from a title which should have translated into “The Dinner of the Jest.” He also remarks on the usefulness of his translation, hoping to steer the American public away from a stereotypical, antiquarian representation of Italian culture, and towards the fringes of Italian modernism represented by Papini. Benelli’s play was “the stage hit of 1909” in Florence, leaving Papini discouraged at what “passed for high culture” in his city

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(Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence* 112). In his essay Papini attacked the “dirty industry of heroism in blank verse, [...] of this junk-shopping and mise en scène style thirteen hundred or fifteen hundred (to choose)”⁷⁰ (“The Historical Play” 50). Carnevali’s translation does not dilute Papini’s renowned polemical style, made even harsher by the translator’s choice not to alter the Italian word order: “style thirteen hundred...”, for example, reproduces the Italian expression *stile trecento* without complying with English syntax. Carnevali’s work as translator was based on his views of the Italian debate, and aimed to introduce the American public to a particular idea of Italian literature.

The choice of literary texts in “Five Years of Italian Poetry” reflects Carnevali’s critical views, as well as his personal involvement with some of the translated texts. The small anthology, ideally representing a comprehensive look on Italian poetry of the time, revolves around a few authors and some relevant themes. Carnevali’s translations of the *Vocianti* originate in a second-hand experience of the literary debate, and their execution reflects the difficulty of providing in the short space of the article a translational representation of his chosen text. His translations from Scipio Slataper’s 1912 autobiographical novel *Il mio Carso* (*My Carso*), for example, are very brief excerpts. They are only three paragraphs and two isolated sentences, taken from a “lyric autobiography” (“Five Years” 218), contextualised only by indicating that Slataper wrote about “the Carso mountains” (“Five Years” 210). The second-hand, translated quotations appear as isolated fragments, closer to poetry than prose:

I love the rain heavy and violent...
It comes down tearing off the weak leaves... (“Five Years” 218)

Carnevali’s choice for Umberto Saba is “Il maiale” (“The Pig”), a 1912 poem which Saba would later exclude from his *Canzoniere* once he became a

⁷⁰ English translations of Italian authors, quoted in the body of the present chapter, are from Carnevali. Translations of Italian texts reported in the footnote, for the reader’s comprehension, are mine.

The translations that were included in Carnevali’s “Five Years of Italian Poetry” are cited as part of a whole; pp. 209-214 include Carnevali’s essay, while pp. 214-19 are his translations of Govoni, Di Giacomo, Jahier, Palazzeschi, Saba, Slataper. They are cited under one title, in order to refer to Carnevali’s operation of cultural translation as a whole, comprising of essay and translations.

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nationally famous poet, along with the poems that he judged unimportant for his own personal development (Stara 643). "Il maiale" would hardly be nowadays a choice for representing Saba in an anthology, and yet Carnevali responded to it and decided to translate it. He did not translate the first half of the poem, in which Saba depicted a pig that eats contentedly, unaware that he will be butchered: "che non si chieda perchè lo vuol bello / di pinguedine, e il più pasciuto e sazio / la massaia..." ("Il Maiale" 7-9). Carnevali cut directly to the moment in which the compassionate poet's voice imagines the innocent creature being butchered:

Ma io, se riguardando in lui mi metto,
io sento nelle sue carni il coltello,
sento quell'urlo, quella spaventosa
querela...
("Il Maiale" 12-15)

But if, while looking, I put myself in his place,
I feel down in his flesh the pain of the knife,
hear that scream
that fearful quarrel.
("Five Years" 218)

Carnevali's version is emptied of the original's depiction of an apparently serene country life, leaving only the tormented compassion of its climax. The depiction of rural Italy seems to be an interest of Carnevali's in selecting texts for these translations. Saba's and Slataper's texts, as well as Govoni's "Happiness" ("Felicità"), all deal with the country. Only Slataper's novel is set in a specific locality, the Carso plateau, while the poems by Govoni and Saba are set in a generic Italian countryside. Govoni's "Felicità" in particular sports none of the "obscenest facts in the life of an old Italian city" that Carnevali had mentioned in relation to this poet ("Five Years" 210). Its depiction of country life lacks any form of conflicts, as the poet wakes up in a good mood ("I don't know why, / but I'm happy this morning" 214) and then lists all the possible images that may be responsible for this sudden happiness: whether the "rondinini" ("little swallows") or the "maialino" ("little hog"); the poet's mother feeding the animals or "the wife of the cowherd" taking "rosy crosses of bread" out of the oven." Bucolic images accumulate in the poem, presenting themselves in translation as depiction of timeless,

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uncomplicated lifestyle in the Italian countryside.

The experience of World War I, on the other hand, is hinted at in Palazzeschi’s “The Two Roses” (“Le due rose”) and openly discussed in Jahier’s short prose piece “Reservists” (“Richiamati”). Palazzeschi’s poem addresses a “militare” (“soldier”) pressing “the white rose of the pillow” against his cheek to cover a “red one” – presumably a war wound (“Five Years” 218). Jahier’s text in particular presents the war from a different angle to the American public, offering them a soldier’s view of Italy at war. In “Richiamati,” volunteers are bringing cigarettes and food to the soldiers that were about to leave for the front, when a soldier exclaims “Down with the war!” and throws an orange at them, hitting a young woman. The narrator is an older soldier who writes this ironic apology to the offended lady:

Vedete, questo era un richiamato, e sotto l'uniforme uomo afflitto.
Momento strano, quest'afflizione! che non si posson neanche mangiar
arance e fumar sigarette offerte da signorine! Partir per la guerra –
malgrado le bandiere – gli era serio e grave come andare a morire.
(Jahier 752)

You see this was a reservist, miss, and under the uniform a man of
sorrows. Queer moment, this sorrow! that one can't even eat oranges
and smoke cigarettes offered by young ladies! To go to war - in spite of
all the flags it was grave and serious to him, like going to die. (“Five
Years” 216)

Jahier’s bitter irony is kept in the translation, and reinforced by his reiterated use of “miss” to address the text’s imaginary interlocutor even when “signorina” is absent in the original. Carnevali takes a stance in his translation, transforming the young lady’s “sguardo protettore” (*protective look*) into a “patronizing look” (“Five Years” 217), turning Jahier’s subtle irony into explicit attack. Carnevali’s rendering the Italian debate on war by appeals to the episode’s universal dimension. Jahier establishes a distinction between “abbasso la guerra” (“Down with the war”) and “abbasso la patria” (“Down with the fatherland”), countering claims that opposing the war would be the same as going against one’s country (“Five Years” 216). The reflection on such terms as “war” and “fatherland” proves translatable in English, evoking similar debates. Thus translated, Jahier’s criticism of the rhetoric of war may stand together with other English texts, such as Sassoon’s 1918 poem “Glory of Women,” which used bitter irony to address war propaganda

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and its effect on British ladies (“You love us when we’re heroes, home on leave / Or wounded in a mentionable place...”).

Carnevali’s translations offer a short glimpse of what he deemed relevant to translate from Italian, as well as what interested him and fitted his own agenda. Two translations of Palazzeschi (one published with the rest, and one left unpublished) are relevant especially for their refusal of conventions and institutions, which Carnevali could express in strong, polemical language. The published poem, “L’indifferente” (“Indifferent”), is based on the poet’s detachment from family:

Io sono tuo padre.
Ah sì? ...
Io sono tua madre.
Ah sì? ...
Questo è tuo fratello.
Ah sì? ...
Quella è tua sorella.
Ah sì? ...
(Palazzeschi, “L’Indifferente”)

I am your father.
Is that so?
I am your mother.
Is that so?
This is your brother.
Is that so?
That is your sister.
Is that so?
 (“Five Years” 217)

Palazzeschi’s sharp, declarative free verse lines fit Carnevali’s style, and he probably responded to the sense of uprootedness expressed by Palazzeschi, linking it to his own abandonment of family. In particular, Carnevali sharpens Palazzeschi’s “Ah sì?” lines, which convey ironic scepticism in Italian, by replacing them with the more inquisitive and doubtful “Is that so?”

Carnevali’s unpublished translation of Palazzeschi’s “L’incendiario” (“The incendiary”)⁷¹ also shows his interest for Palazzeschi as author of anti-bourgeois poetry. The poem belongs to Palazzeschi’s futurist period, which

⁷¹ The translation ended up, among other drafts, in NLC Dawson (Box 22, Folder 706). The typescript appears ready for publication, also bearing Carnevali’s New York address at the top of the page – which allows dating the manuscript at early 1919, the time of the other translations.

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Carnevali obscured by eliminating Palazzeschi’s original dedication to Marinetti, “anima della nostra fiamma”⁷² (“Un discepolo de La Voce” 43). Set in an atmosphere of general political and artistic unrest, “L’incendiario” presents an arsonist brought, in a cage, in front of the crowd. The arsonist is not explicitly linked with the political unrest of the time, but rather seems to symbolise it at an artistic, metaphysical level – representing the relationship between poetry and social and cultural upheaval. The first part of the poem is made up of the bystanders’ dialogue, a form which already appeared in Futurist manifestos: Marinetti’s *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna!* (1909) for example, presents a “dialogical” structure, being “organised with a series of imaginary questions from an imaginary public” in which “the narrator speaks [...] to someone in the group, usually to call upon him or to urge him to react” (Guzzetta 84). Carnevali’s work on the first part retains the dialogic structure, using colloquial English to convey the hypocritical façade of law-abiding citizens:

– Ma la sua famiglia?
– Chi sa da che parte di mondo è venuto!
– Questa robaccia non à mica famiglia!
– Sicuro, è roba allo sbaraglio!
– Se venisse dall’inferno?
– Povero diavolaccio!
– Avreste anche compassione?
Se v’avesse bruciata la casa
non direste così.
– La vostra l’è bruciata?
– Se non l’è bruciata
poco c’è corso.
 (“L’incendiario” 24–35)

-What about his family?
-Who knows from what part of the world he is!
-That sort of filth hasn't any
-Sure, he's a hobo!
-And if he came from hell?
-Poor old devil!
-And you would pity him?
Had he burnt your house
you wouldn't talk like that.
-Was it yours, he burnt?
-If he didn't really burn it, he almost did.
 [“The Incendiary,” typescript]⁷³

⁷² “The soul of our flame.”

⁷³ Carnevali, “The Incendiary,” translation of Palazzeschi’s “L’incendiario.” Unpublished

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The translation keeps much of the original’s tone, reframing it in contemporary American society. As an author interested in the outsider’s condition, Carnevali translated “Questa robaccia (*bad stuff/ bad sort*) non à mica famiglia” with “that sort of filth hasn’t any [family],” making the crowd even more violent in its rejection of the outsider. His translation of Palazzeschi’s “roba allo sbaraglio” - literally a ‘wayward sort’ – into “hobo” reframes the poem more precisely into the American social landscape. The poem changes with the sudden apparition of a Poet, who declares his admiration for the arsonist, and finally celebrates him in a sort of parody of the holy mass:

Quando tu bruci
Tu non sei più l’uomo
Il Dio tu sei!
(Palazzeschi, “L’incendiario” 157–159)

When you burn
You’re no more the man
The God you are!
[“The Incendiary,” typescript]

The texts translated by Carnevali responded to his interest as well as to the desire to present an uncompromising image of contemporary Italy. The small anthology of “Five Years of Italian Poetry” encompassed, in its rather short span, questions such as World War I and political unrest, as well as the representation of rural Italy, which was not usually given a voice in the American literary scene. The way in which Carnevali handled the texts, giving them new life in the American magazine, testifies to his will to connect to the experience of Italian modernism.

1.4.3 On translating into the second language

The style of the translation indicates Carnevali’s closeness to the source language: facing the difficult task of translating into his second language, he appears unwilling to go far from the Italian source, even when there is a risk

typescript, probably 1919, NLC Dawson, Box 22, Folder 706.

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that the resulting text may sound odd to the non-Italian speaking audience.

Carnevali was a harsh critic of others’ translations in his reviews for *Poetry*. In 1920, reviewing three books of translations from the French, the Greek and the Swedish respectively, he lamented that Kostas Palamas’s “gorgeous symbolism which, in order to succeed, demands the full strength and precision of pure words” was “wasted by the correct [...] but cold and limp English of the translation” (“Three Poets” 49–50). Carnevali in the review seemed to be against translations that act as “masks” imposed on the source; he cites as an example his own experience of reading Carducci in English translation, wondering “how few were the chances that an American who does not know Italian would ever get the beauty of his work” (“Three Poets” 50). Carnevali’s critical stance on the task of the translator seems to be in favour of showing the features of the original, without imposing constraints on the target language. In a 1922 essay, he stressed the importance of the special bond between poets who translate each other:

Mere scribblers ought to leave the poets of other nations alone, they ought to let dead poets sleep the sleep of the just in their cool tombs. Only a poet, and a good one, may translate adequately the work of another poet. (Carnevali, “Asia” 348)

The passage contains another hint of Carnevali’s ideal of translation: “It is this fact that makes works of art of Fitzgerald’s translation of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, Baudelaire’s translations of Poe’s tales, etc.” (“Asia” 348). The mention of Edward Fitzgerald’s work on Persian poetry is particularly noteworthy, as Fitzgerald’s translation has come to occupy a specific place in the history of translation. The *Rubaiyat* translation showed a high degree of what is called ‘domestication,’ significantly departing from the source text and being influenced by elements of the target culture, such as “Byronism [and] the Orientalism in Romantic culture” (Venuti 165). Carnevali’s appreciation of domesticating translations from Fitzgerald and Baudelaire seemingly contradicts his earlier statement that translations should not “mask” their source; on the other hand, he probably appreciated those works in particular, as they took their legitimation from being made by poets (“only a poet, and a good one...”).

In terms of style, however, Carnevali’s own translations from Italian

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seem to avoid domestication, reflecting the preoccupations of the 1920 essay for translations that “put a mask on [the poet’s] face” (“Three Poets” 49). Carnevali’s translations stay within the confines of English, but they most notably present features of Italian rhythms and cadence. If we look at the passage quoted above from Jahier’s “Richiamati”/ “Reservists,” the word order is hardly changed from the source, with rather odd results in the target. The structure of the Italian exclamation “che non si posson neanche...” is rendered as “that one can’t even...” – a structure that in written English cannot form a sentence of its own. At the same time, Carnevali seeks similarity of rhythm and sound as sentences like “partir per la Guerra [...] gli era serio e grave” become “to go to war [...] it was serious and grave to him.” In the aforementioned poem by Saba “quella spaventosa querela” is rendered as “that fearful quarrel” in spite of “querela” being closer to ‘protest’ than ‘quarrel.’

Closeness to the rhythms and structure of the source language is regarded in translation studies as ‘foreignization,’ that is the opposite of domestication. Foreignizing translation intends to bring the reader as close as possible to the experience of reading in the source language. Its goal is, in Venuti’s definition, to “restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation” and counter hegemonic tendencies hidden behind the “illusion of transparency” of domesticating translations (Venuti 16). In this particular case, however, the status of the translator with respect to source and target languages is important. Carnevali was translating into his acquired language.

Translation into the second language is a peculiar challenge, and it requires skills that are specular with respect to translation into a native language:

In translating from a second language, the main difficulty is in comprehending the source text [...]. In translating into a second language, comprehension of the source text is the easier aspect; the real difficulty is in producing a target text in a language in which composition does not come naturally. (Campbell 57)

The ability to translate into the second language depends, generally speaking, on the translator’s competence in the target language; in particular, textual competence is crucial, that is to say the ability to produce natural-looking

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texts. Carnevali’s textual competence in English had developed rapidly, and tended towards linguistic assimilation: there are no grammatical or syntactical mistakes in Carnevali’s translations. On the other hand, his attitude towards language, and towards the American literary milieu, was not one of compromise: Carnevali believed in the strength of his own speech, a language that was English and at the same time depended on his Italian background – as we shall see in more detail in the following parts of the thesis. When it came to translation, this attitude generated target texts that did not domesticate its source, resulting in odd-sounding English that would not be easy on American readers unacquainted with Italian. The translator’s attitude towards the American public certainly contributed to the outcome: it is hard to imagine Carnevali, the “beast with a bone in his throat” (W. C. Williams, “Gloria!” 4) of the New York milieu, shielding the American readership from the difficulties of the foreign. Another important factor is Carnevali’s admiration for the texts and authors that he translated: feeling a deep connection to them, which represented the Italian literature that he appreciated, it is understandable that he did not want his translation to depart much from the original, attempting to reproduce in English his own experience of enthusiastic reader. In this sense, he probably intended to avoid the outcome of the English translation who had made “palaver and doggerel out of Carducci’s beautiful *Ode alle Fonti del Clitumno* [sic]” (“Three Poets” 50).

The most evident marker of Carnevali’s closeness to the Italian source is the word order. Inversions of verb and subject are usually the result of the translator’s following of the original Italian – where such inversions are more easily tolerated. Carnevali’s awkward “There on my bench *where was born / my book*, as for a benediction” depends on his adherence to Palazzeschi’s “Là sopra il mio banco *ove nacque, / il mio libro*, come per benedizione” (*L’incendiario* 78). In the translation of Jahier, this leads to a translation that has, much more than the original, the tone of oral speech. That is due to the presence of sentences with no verb, a practice that is common in Italian, but is usually relegated to oral speech in English: “But he was a reservist. Aged. Many things are already irremediable” (“Five Years” 217). Sometimes the Italian word-order leads to poetic effect: Slataper’s “Amo la piovra pesa e

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violenta” (33) is rendered, in Italian fashion, as “I love the rain heavy and violent” (“Five Years” 218). The lady in Jahier’s “Richiamati” is compared to “Italy over the buildings of the exposition” (“Five Years” 216) – that is, a statue of the traditional feminine personification of Italy towering over the buildings of an international exposition. In this case, the lack of contextual explanation may even prejudice the reader’s understanding of the text. The source text did not require contextual explanations in Italian; Carnevali did not believe necessary to provide a context for his translation, or rearrange the word order so that American readers would understand more easily.

Italian influence is evident in the translation of Palazzeschi’s “Incendiario.” In the source text, the Poet’s lines are irregularly rhymed, while the citizens’ speech is reported as generic speech, with no rhetorical artifice. This feature is lost in Carnevali’s translation, but his declamatory tones are not:

Largo! Sono il poeta!
Io vengo di lontano,
il mondo ò traversato,
per venire a trovare
la mia creatura da cantare!
Inginocchiatevi marmaglia!
Uomini che avete orrore del fuoco,
poveri esseri di paglia!
(Palazzeschi, "L'Incendiario" 91–98)

Gangway! I’m the poet!
I come from far,
I have crossed the world
to come and find
my man to sing!
Kneel down, refuse!
Men who have the fire in horror,
poor things of straw!
[“The Incendiary,” typescript]

Carnevali’s rendering of Palazzeschi poses some problem as he attempts to keep the poet’s grand tones. In his word-for-word adherence, Carnevali exhibits some idiosyncratic choices, like “I come” when “I have come” would better suit the context; or “sing” for the Italian “cantare,” which in this case means *to celebrate*. More importantly, the noun “refuse” is used to render “marmaglia” (*rabble*), not considering that in English this may lead to confusion with the verb “to refuse.” The very title of the poem undergoes the

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same treatment, as Palazzeschi’s “incendiario” becomes an “incendiary” (usually an adjective) instead of a more usual “arsonist.”

Keeping as close as possible to the Italian, Carnevali uses English words with etymological closeness:

T’anno coperto d’insulti
e di sputacchi,
quello sciame insidioso
di piccoli vigliacchi.
(Palazzeschi, “L’Incendiario” 118–121)

They threw insults at you
and spittle,
that treacherous swarm
of little cowards!
[“The Incendiary,” typescript]

Quegl’insetti immondi e poltroni,
sono lividi di malefica astuzia
(Palazzeschi, “L’Incendiario” 124–125)

those putrid lazy insects
are livid with malignant shrewdness.
[“The Incendiary,” typescript]

The choice has its strengths: Carnevali’s translations appear awkward and convoluted at times, but they also transmit the uncompromising specificity of the language. In translation, Carnevali provides Palazzeschi’s polemical, violent free verse with an added layer of linguistic violence, facilitating as little as possible the American reader’s comprehension.

Carnevali’s close relationship with Papini may explain the fact that his translations of Papini’s short stories show almost no effort to produce a palatable English text. Carnevali’s 1919 translation of Papini’s “Congedo” renders the source’s accumulation of lyrical images with painstaking fidelity, almost prejudicing the audience’s comprehension:

Notti di seta nera con accompagnamento di fiumi e di gelosie
napoletane. (Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 101)

Blacksilk nights with accompaniment of rivers and neopolitan [sic]
jealousies. (Papini, “Leavetaking” 20)

Sopra le terrazze che danno sui prati gli occhi dei bambini si specchiano
nei giaggiòli e monta l’odore borghese delle rose di velluto rosso.
(Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 101)

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Over the terraces facing the fields the eyes of children are reflected in the irises and the bourgeois odor of red-velvet roses is arising. (Papini, “Leavetaking” 20)

Al tempo degli antichi romani le donne eran forse più corpulente. (Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 102)

In the time of the ancient Romans women were perhaps more corpulent. (Papini, “Leavetaking” 20)

The source accumulates images and similes to set the mood of the story (the narrator bidding farewell to a woman); the target text hardly attempts to arrange them and make them accessible to the target audience. Carnevali employed nouns and adjectives with an etymologic kinship with Italian (“accompaniment,” “corpulent”), even when more common English words would have been available (e.g. *fragrance* or *smell* for “odor”). This happens even when there is a risk of confusion – as in the case of “irises,” which are unmistakably flowers in Italian, while the context (“the eyes of the children are reflected in the irises”) makes the reader wonder whether the phrase is about flowers or the human eye. The language is often harsh on the audience’s ear, in the uncompromising reproduction of Papini’s direct language, including the social critiques and sexual allusions in the text:

Andremo sulle colline. Ritorneremo fra le ginestre che hanno appena un ciuffino inodoro in cima al gambo lungo già floscio! (Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 103)

We will go over the hills. We will go back to the furzes that have only an odorless tuft at the top of the long stalk, already flabby! (Papini, “Leavetaking” 21)

Both language and tone befit the inclusion of the translation in the July 1919 issue of *Others*, which celebrated Carnevali in his irredeemable primitiveness, as foreign body in American modernism.

In its painstaking fidelity, Carnevali’s translations sometimes appear closer to a “crib,” a literal translation in need of further work, rather than an accomplished text. His work on Papini provides a chance to test this hypothesis, as the translation of another Papini piece, “Mezz’ora” (“Half Hour”) survives both as manuscript in Carnevali’s notebook and as typescript. The analysis of the stages, and of the interim versions of a translation may offer only a small glimpse of the mental processes of translation, which

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happen mainly in the translator’s mind (Toury 181). In the case of Carnevali’s translation of Papini’s “Mezz’ora,” the combined analysis of notebook and typescript makes it possible to advance the hypothesis that much of his first word-for-word rendering of the text made it to the final version, but that he nevertheless re-thought some of his choices. The notebook version was likely a first understanding of the text, a very early draft, as testified by the many words that are crossed out or added on the margins, and by the blanks where he did not have an English equivalent ready:

Una città senza case — nient’altro che sotterranei e botole ... (Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 96)

A city without houses – nothing but basements and (botole)... [“Half Hour,” notebook]⁷⁴

...una poesia più vicina e più intelligibile del fiocco di seta vaporosa che da una grondaia all’altra — via lattea del giorno — taglia come un ponte di bianchezza il fiume fusciasca del cielo... (Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 96)

... a poetry nearer and more intelligible of the flake of vaporous silk which from one eave to the other – milky way of the day – cuts like a bridge of whiteness the (fusciasca) river of the sky... [“Half Hour,” notebook]

These are the most evident indication that Carnevali’s word-for-word translation derives primarily from an almost impromptu approach to the unfamiliar target language, coming from the familiar of the Italian text. Not only some words are left untranslated, but a grammatical mistake (“del” in “più intelligibile del fiocco” treated as a possessive instead of a comparative) underlines that the translation is initially born of a word-for-word approach. This approach is later corrected in the typescript, which appears ready to be sent to a magazine for publication (bearing Carnevali’s New York address at the top): there, “more intelligible of the flake” becomes “more intelligible than the flake.” The typescript presents, in many cases, a further stage away from Italian and towards English:

“Regnare sopra un paese di questo genere, in un tempo così scientifico!” (Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 97)

⁷⁴ Carnevali, “Half Hour,” manuscript translation of Papini, “Mezz’ora,” in NLC Dawson, Box 22, Box 703.

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“To reign over a country of this kind in a times so scientific!” [“Half Hour,” notebook]

“To reign over a country of this kind, in such scientific a time!” [“Half Hour,” typescript]⁷⁵

“...ragionevolezza di questi ultimi confini...” (Papini, *Cento pagine di Poesia* 97)

“...reasonability of these last confines...” [“Half Hour,” notebook]

“...reasonableness of these extreme boundaries...” [“Half Hour,” typescript]

The second excerpt in particular shows how Carnevali worked from the Italian “confini” towards “boundaries,” passing through “confines,” which is more Italian-sounding but less apt in meaning. The most relevant aspect of this analysis is that, in spite of evidence of progressive passage from a word-for-word reading to an edited typescript, the typescript still contains Italianate expressions and word-for-word renditions:

...questa piazza-trapezio dove non si metton bandiere che per l' assassinio del re. (Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 95)

... this trapezium square where they hang out flags only on the assassination of the king. [“Half Hour,” typescript]

...all'amico meridionale vestito di mandorla pelosa verdina che sta scrivendo il libro di seicento e più pagine. (Papini, *Cento pagine di poesia* 96)

... to the southern friend who wore a suit of hairy greenish almond, who is writing that book of six hundred and more pages. [“Half Hour,” typescript]

Carnevali’s typescripts, ready to be sent to editors, presented many signs of Italianate language even after the most idiosyncratic elements had been amended. These features all showed in all of Carnevali’s published translations. The whole process testifies to Carnevali’s difficulty with English in a task that required native-like textual competence in the target language. Yet, the translations were edited to be published, which means that Carnevali considered the final texts acceptable; the Italianate forms in this case may

⁷⁵ G. Papini, “Mezz’ora,” translated by Carnevali as “Half-Hour.” Unpublished typescript. NLC Dawson, Box 22.

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represent his deliberate unwillingness to bring the style of Italian authors whom he admired close to his adopted language.

The rare moments in the translations which present the language going in the opposite direction – towards domestication, towards plain English with no traces of Italian – must also be read under the light of textual competence, and the difficulty of translating into the second language. Sometimes, context-related or dialectal words of the original are replaced with generic English words. Di Giacomo’s Neapolitan specificity is evidently lost:

No... Di': ca i' sto chiagnenno
Dille ca stongo ardenno ...
Dille ca sto murenno! ...
Ma portammillo cà ...
("Arietta all'Uso Antico" 13–16)

The Neapolitan words “chiagnenno,” “murenno,” “portamillo” create a specific rhythmic pattern, that Carnevali attempts to preserve by forsaking his own convictions about rhymed poetry:

No... tell him that I'm crying...
tell him I'm burning... see...
tell him I'm dying, dying ...
But bring him here to me.
("Five Years" 215)

Carnevali’s translation has none of the force of Neapolitan dialect, as well as no linguistic mark that the translation was made from a Neapolitan instead of standard Italian source. Carnevali avoided the conventional, stereotypical rendering of Southern Italian that he chastised in his review of Daly’s *McAroni Ballads* (“Immigration” 278); yet the result shows only few elements of colloquial English, without putting the audience in contact with Neapolitan culture.

Govoni’s vocabulary of the Italian countryside is lost in “Felicità”/“Happiness”: for example, a “borgo” is a particular type of medieval village, and yet it becomes just a “village” in the translation. Govoni’s “lupinella” carried by white oxen in a cart, turns into generic “grass” in the translation. When Slataper defines the Carso mountains as “un paese di calcari e ginepri” (97), Carnevali turns the “calcari” (limestone) into generic “stone.” As observed in the notebook, Carnevali sometimes found words for which he did

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not have an immediate equivalent, words that resulted too foreign for his English vocabulary in construction. It is possible that these words were finally rendered by the most generic English word available. The closeness to the source language that made him choose Italianate words when available, made him choose plain words to render Italian words whose English equivalent was too difficult to find.

Carnevali’s translations from Italian suffer from the difficulties of translating into the foreign language. At the same time, Carnevali wrote in favour of translations that made the reader experience the foreignness of the source text; he also liked to exhibit his uniqueness in the American milieu. His literal translations, so close to the Italian originals that they sometimes risk confusing the target reader, are a consequence of his stance within American literature.

In 1920, probably due to the first manifestations of his sicknesses, Carnevali appeared less certain of his projects: “E forse non tradurrò l’Uomo Finito. Perchè prometto sempre?”⁷⁶ (*Lettere* 103–4). Contacts between Papini and Carnevali gradually ceased, possibly due to arguments between the two: “Non s’arrabbi più con me. Se sono stato impudente me ne pento amaramente”⁷⁷ (*Lettere* 105). Carnevali ended up alone and isolated, disconnected from the Italian as well as the American milieu. He kept on translating sporadically, even from his sick bed. He translated, for example, a short story by Carlo Linati, “L’ultima moglie di Barbablu,” for the magazine *This Quarter* in 1925. Carnevali told Linati about the translation in a 1925 letter, in which he thanked the Italian writer for an article that he had recently written about him (*Lettere* 153). The translation took place when Carnevali was already becoming disconnected from the literary world, and was not included in a plan for the dissemination of Italian literature such as the one involving “Five Years of Italian Poetry.” Other isolated efforts included, in the 1930s, a translation of a few poems by Rimbaud into English; and a larger

⁷⁶“And maybe I won’t translate *Un uomo finito*. Why do I always make promises?”

⁷⁷ “Please don’t be angry at me again. If I was insolent, I deeply regret it.” Cacho Millet, in his edition of the letters, expresses his opinion that Papini was angry at Carnevali for having criticised some articles about America in *La Vraie Italie*.

1.4 “Something of Govoni in Frost”: Carnevali’s translations of contemporary Italian literature

project which would have made Carnevali the first Italian translator of Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*, which will be analysed in part 3 of the thesis.

As for the *Vocianti* translations, they were largely forgotten, although in later years at least two intellectuals acknowledged Carnevali’s attempt to establish a translational relationship between Italy and America. Dorothy Dudley wrote in a 1933 unpublished foreword to Carnevali’s *Autobiography* that he “translated from Pallazzeshi [sic], Govoni, Papini, Jahier, Soffici, and introduced their yeast into drawling America.”⁷⁸ Also acknowledging Carnevali’s translational work was Prezzolini’s 1963 book *I trapiantati*. Prezzolini, who moved to New York in 1929 to teach Italian at Columbia University, included Carnevali in his book on Italian Americans, after having researched him out of curiosity.⁷⁹ Prezzolini showed interest in this “nostro fratello sconosciuto, di noi della *Voce*, dico in America”⁸⁰ (288). After discussing Carnevali’s biography and style, Prezzolini praised his critical appreciation of *La Voce*, stating that Carnevali’s essay was “più penetrante di molti professori” especially in relation to the time, in which “si trattava di scoprire dei valori e non di dividerli e approfondirli”⁸¹ (Prezzolini 291). Considering Carnevali’s distance, Prezzolini seems surprised by the level of familiarity that Carnevali showed to the authors of his own group. Prezzolini concludes the essay with a note of pity for this man who “sotto tanti aspetti avrebbe potuto ‘parlare con me’”⁸² (293). In a 1972 letter to Maria Pia Carnevali, Prezzolini even defined Carnevali “[copyrighted material].”⁸³ Prezzolini regrets the absence of an intellectual conversation, which could have put the Florentine modernists and the New York and Chicago groups in contact.

We know, nowadays, that such a conversation was indeed attempted, when Carnevali repeatedly contacted Papini. The conversation between

⁷⁸ Dudley, “Foreword” to Carnevali’s *Autobiography*, [unpublished, presumably 1933], in SIUC Boyle, Box 86, Folder 6.

⁷⁹ Although the collection dates from 1963, the essay on Carnevali bears the date 1954 at the bottom.

⁸⁰ “Unknown American brother of ours – of us from *La Voce*, I mean.”

⁸¹ “[A look] more penetrating than that of so many professors, especially for a time in which the issue was discovering new values and not confirming or following them.”

⁸² “under many aspects [he] could have ‘talked with me.’”

⁸³ Prezzolini to M.P. Carnevali, 8 June 1972, ACB, Folder 1.14.1.

Papini and Carnevali was interrupted by his sickness and possibly the falling out between the two. Carnevali's translational enterprise, intending to present his personal view of the contemporary Italian debate – as well as establishing his role as cultural mediator – had only relative resonance. It nowadays stands, at any rate, as an enthusiastic and passionate attempt at a transnational connection, made by one of the few men who at the time could see “something of Govoni in Frost,” and who struggled to create a language with which he could communicate his experience of Italian literature without compromising with the expectations of the American public.

1.5 CARNEVALI, POUND AND DANTE

As Carnevali entered the American literary milieu, and represented himself as an Italian to his new audience, his relation with the Italian literary tradition became more focused. The present chapter investigates Carnevali's conceptualization of the Italian literary canon by analysing his representation of Dante, considering it within the framework of modernist transnational influence.

Carnevali referred to Dante in his early fiction, and wrote an essay on the sixth centenary of his death. "Dante – and Today" appeared in *Poetry* in 1921. This essay can be fruitfully compared with a 1909 essay by Ezra Pound, "What I Feel About Walt Whitman." The essays, both written by poets in their twenty-fourth year of age, show similarities and differences in their ideas of the canon. Pound voiced his uneasiness with Whitman, while twelve years later Carnevali reflected critically on Dante's legacy. The choice of Pound for the comparison is not casual: he and Carnevali shared modernist allegiances (for example, they both collaborated with *Poetry*), and built a solid relationship over the years. Carnevali was initially highly critical of Pound, but the two would get closer in the 1920s and 1930s, as Carnevali fell ill and Pound supported him both financially and artistically. Despite differences in their approach, the analysis of their essays outlines the common ground in their efforts to establish literary identities by complicating their identification with a national tradition.

How a young poet chooses to identify with and reject tradition is central in the modernist era. T.S. Eliot published his influential essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in 1919, claiming that the historical sense is "nearly indispensable to any one who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year" and that it "involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" (4). The modernist search for a stable tradition existed alongside avant-garde desire for rupture, often propagating in waves along the same forums. In all instances, the re-definition of tradition was a main concern of the literary debate of the time. Carnevali approached it from an outsider's point of view, moving between canons and

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appealing for entrance into a tradition that was not his by birthright. Yet, modernist authors, in their search for a tradition that would have an impact on the present, often constructed it by exploring the possibilities given by other canons.

Bloom's 1973 exploration of Anglophone poetry introduced the concept of "anxiety of influence," based on a notion of poetic tradition as a series of understandings and rewritings of the past, as "strong poets make [...] history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves" (5). Tradition is viewed as dialectic entity:

For the poet is condemned to learn his profoundest yearnings through an awareness of other selves. The poem is within him, yet he experiences the shame and splendor of being found by poems – great poems – outside him. (Bloom 26)

Bloom's dialectic view of the canon may account for differentiation within continuity, ensured by the phenomenon of identification and revolt to the literary "fathers." It has been more recently criticised by scholars of world literature, for its insistence on conflict and national boundaries: a literal application of Bloom's model risks bringing forward a notion of "literature as agonistic warzones" (Prendergast 7).

The canon is indeed – or is construed to be – a supra-individual entity, where individual contributions are dialectically inserted. Far from being a homogeneous, mono-national (or monolingual) flow, driven by deterministic forces, the canon is the result of a continuous operation of re-writing of literary history by authors and scholars alike. The canon that is constructed ultimately serves the purpose of justifying the beliefs and poetics proposed within such rewriting of literary history, postulating certain elements of the canon as literary tradition. A poetics "tends to posit itself as absolute, to dismiss its predecessors (which amounts, in practice, to integrating them into itself)" and "see itself as the necessary outcome of a process of growth" (Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting* 35).

Carnevali and Pound's essays responded in different ways to tradition. They offered different readings of the Italian and American tradition, according to their own aspirations, which ultimately served to position

1.5 Carnevali, Pound and Dante

themselves. Their treatments of the home tradition include their interest for other canons. In Carnevali's case, that happened in the context of a communication, to a foreign audience, of the home tradition. In Pound's case, the proposed reshaping of the home tradition involves borrowing and incorporating alien models.

Analysis of literary influence needs to take into account the transnational properties of influence, realised through the movements of people, texts and models. Transnational influence is not limited to modernity, although, as Ramazani argues, the "massive number of cross-national influences upon and appropriations by the modernists" established a paradigm shift, crucial in subverting "the usual dynastic narratives of compatriot X begetting compatriot Y begetting compatriot Z" (25). The comparative analysis of Pound and Carnevali in their youth allows an understanding of how the transnational outlook of modernity challenged such mono-cultural assumptions in different, yet related ways. Végső underlined that, while 'high' modernism expressed aspirations to a universal tradition, contemporary migrant authors dealt with universal aspirations by moving from dislocation and lack of national belonging to the specificity of the new canon (29). Végső's study of the meeting point between these two literary modes puts Pound in comparison with Jewish American novelist Anzia Yezierska. My study of the similarities and differences between Carnevali's and Pound's statements on tradition adds to such discussion, by focusing on two authors who not only faced the same challenges, but also referred to the same authors – from opposite viewpoints – when defining their identity.

1.5.1 Tradition and the Identification from a Distance

There are echoes and similarities between Carnevali's "Dante" essay and Pound's "Whitman" essay, which are all the more fascinating in virtue of the fact that Carnevali could not possibly have known about Pound's essay: the latter, written in 1909, was first published in 1955 (*Early Writings* 388).

Both essays open with a statement on the canonical relevance of the 'founding father' in question. Pound claims that Whitman "*is* America" ("Whitman"

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187); Carnevali reminds the reader that, on the sixth centenary of Dante's death, "the whole world is thinking of him," while his spirit "seems to be questioning the changes of six centuries" ("Dante" 323). On the other hand, both poets immediately display their troubled belonging to the traditions that Whitman and Dante represent. Pound's essay, being a more personal text, is more direct and personal in expressing the dialectics of identity. Carnevali's essay, on the other hand, is a form of public celebration, and attempts to keep to this purpose; yet, repeated links to the contemporary literary scene, together with his typically strong statements on art and the artist, testify to Carnevali's personal investment in the matter.

Pound admits to reading Whitman "with acute pain" ("Whitman" 187). Identification is stated through difference: "mentally I am a Walt Whitman who has learned to wear a collar and a dress shirt (although at times inimical to both)" ("Whitman" 188). Pound's interest in the elite of European tradition are epitomised by the different clothing, meaning entrance into different literary circles. The metaphor of identity clearly indicates, however, that Pound identifies with the American tradition enough to speak of himself in the first person as "a Walt Whitman." His erudition and insistence on classical modes takes the form of ornament over his American/Whitmanian self. Pound attempts a reading of Whitman with a view to his own desire of having a place in the canon: "I honour him for he prophesied me while I can only recognise him as a forebear of whom I ought to be proud" ("Whitman" 187). There is here, if not an aggressive 'misreading' in Bloom's terms, a re-reading of a figure from the past as preparation for the young poet's work, which in turn is destined to overrule the past. The essay is not on the other hand confined to the American tradition, as Pound lists the influence of other canons and ages as an important factor in the construction of his identity, mentioning his "more congenial ancestry – Dante, Shakespeare, Theocritus, Villon," while calling Whitman his "spiritual father" ("Whitman" 188). The young cosmopolitan modernist constructs his identity through an opposition between what he perceives as literary heritage and the promise of universality of a transnational tradition.

Both the authoritative tradition and the liberating shift towards the

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unfamiliar are movements between cultural constructions, brought into existence by the very presence of authors ‘moving’ between them as if they were an essential given. Cultural difference “problematizes” the clean-cut division between cultures, times, traditions; but the problem lies in the very process through which the traditions are created. As Bhabha suggests,

in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic. (Bhabha 35)

The construction of a national tradition calls a past into being. The process gives rise to patterns of identification and revolt. Such patterns are articulated within the context of the artistic enunciation, as artists trespass “boundaries of national and regional community” and “forge alliances of style and sensibility across vast distances of geography, history, and culture” (Ramazani 24). The conceptual boundaries of the national canon, in modernism, are trespassed in the name of “a new cultural universality” to be created through the “necessary fiction of the Tradition,” a supra-national tradition destined to become “the *lingua franca* of modernity” (Végső 28). Modernists such as Pound, Joyce and Eliot appealed to the “necessary fiction” of a universal tradition to overcome a perceived narrowness in the home canon (moving freely in terms of influences and linguistic experimentations, but not confronting a foreign canon directly). Carnevali, on his part, appears caught between tendencies towards a universal tradition and the specific challenges of his position as Italian modernist in America. He found himself in the uncomfortable position of being the Italian who attempted to ‘bury’ Dante for the American audience, while acknowledging his canonical relevance.

Carnevali’s engagement with Dante in “Dante – And Today” is linked to Carnevali’s own operations of positioning between Italian and American culture.⁸⁴ He is preoccupied with Dante’s distance from his present, and the questions of identity posed by such distance. He speaks of Dante as an

⁸⁴ An earlier version of the discussion on “Dante – And Today” appeared for the first time in my article “Carnevali’s Cultural Translation: Dante, Modernism and the Italian America.”

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“aristocrat and monarchist,” although he acknowledges that “he was of too immense stature not to have deeply humane sympathies” (“Dante” 323). While answering to the modern mind-set first – prompting him to identify Dante as “aristocrat and monarchist” – he reframes the founding father within reassuring ideological boundaries as he writes of Dante’s “humane sympathies,” underlining that “his work was not for the elect” (“Dante” 323).⁸⁵ His preoccupation lies in justifying Dante’s relevance to the present time, re-using him as reference in his discussion of modernity. Carnevali often discusses Dante in relation to his own artistic ideal, as did for example in the 1921 essay “The Book of Job Junior,” where he described Dante “chased like a homeless dog from one town to another,” building his hell and calling Italy “not a city woman / but a whore” (*Furnished Rooms* 12). This rewriting of Dante’s exile, together with the translation of his line “non donna di province, ma bordello!” (*Purgatorio* VI, 78) served Carnevali in “The Book of Job Junior” to criticise current aesthetic tendencies, reframing it into his own aesthetic preoccupations.⁸⁶

Carnevali mentions Petrarch (for whom he uses the original “Petrarca”) and Boccaccio together with Dante: the three medieval authors are often indicated as the founding figures of Italian literature. Boccaccio is taken to epitomise the “artist who works to entertain and amuse his public” (“Dante” 323). Petrarch is indicated as more focused on the inner world – “in whose trail a thousand outcasts, egocentrics, morphinomaniacs, came” (“Dante” 323). Dante, finally, “embodies the greatest tradition — that of those who through literature judge men and the times” (“Dante” 324).

Carnevali’s judgements do not correspond to an organic, critical sense of Italian literature as much as to his own desire to position himself with respect to it. The essay thus articulates a pattern of distancing and appropriation: Carnevali insists on the fact that “Today his ethics are dead,” but at the same time constitute “the skeleton around which the beautiful

⁸⁵ Carnevali uses the most direct translation available of the Italian *eletti*, responding to Italian categories while addressing an English-speaking public.

⁸⁶ Carnevali also re-elaborates Dante’s lines in translation. The original “donna” is translated as “woman,” like it would be in the case of the modern Italian “donna.” Dante was on the other hand using the word in the medieval sense of *lady/ruler* (*feminine*). What was translated, for example, as “Lady [...] of provinces” by Longfellow becomes in Carnevali’s translation a “city woman,” losing its medieval connotations.

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immortal flesh of Dante's words was cast" ("Dante" 324). Carnevali on the other hand construes the sound of his poetry as "immortal," with the sound component constituting an element of continuing and reaffirmed presence, as the words can be quoted and read aloud. Carnevali signals his national identification by claiming the privilege of reading an untranslated Dante, whose "magical beauty" may be appreciated only by an Italian, "and a good Italian."⁸⁷ Carnevali assumes the stance, in the American milieu, of the repository of the *Commedia*'s "magical beauty." He does not provide samples in the essay, translated or untranslated; yet an oral anecdote from the time indicates that Carnevali willingly assumed the role of impromptu translator of Dante for his American friends. In a note to his edition of Carnevali's criticism, Cacho Millet reports a conversation that David Stivender had with Carnevali's friend, Isidor Schneider, in 1971:

Ricordo che Carnevali andava matto per Dante, aveva una vera e propria passione per lui; io avevo provato a leggere Dante nelle traduzioni allora esistenti, compresa quella di Henry Wadsworth Longfellow e non vi avevo trovato quella grandezza che si supponeva. Allora Carnevali fece una cosa interessante; camminando per le strade di New York traduceva per me e fu un'esperienza sorprendente, perché la versione che lui ne faceva era migliore.⁸⁸

There is no translation of Dante by Carnevali left to confirm Schneider's statement of value. The oral dimension is significant: it testifies Carnevali's knowledge of Dante (he was apparently able to quote and translate him by heart) as well as his desire to communicate his work to American friends. The anecdote presents Carnevali as mediator between Dante's work and twentieth-century New York; the essay performs the same relationship with Dante in another dimension. Carnevali appears to consider Dante as fundamental to the definition of his own identity, while relegating him into

⁸⁷ Pound interestingly echoes this statement in *The Spirit of Romance*: "Certain of Dante's supremacies are comprehensible only to such as know Italian and have themselves attained a certain proficiency in the poetic art" (*The Spirit of Romance* 154).

⁸⁸ "I remember that Carnevali was mad about Dante, he had true passion for him; I had tried reading Dante in the translations that were available then, including H. W. Longfellow's one, and had found none of the supposed greatness in it. So, Carnevali did a surprising thing; walking through the streets of New York he would translate for me and it was a surprising experience, because his version was better." 1971 telephone conversation between David Stivender and Isidor Schneider. The conversation was reported in Italian, with no English original, by Cacho Millet in a footnote of his own translation of "Dante – And Today" in Carnevali, Emanuel. *Saggi e Recensioni*, p. 38. The translation in this footnote is mine.

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the past.

The treatment of the founding figures by both Carnevali and Pound alternates between recognition of literary descent and the attempt to maintain their distance. The distance is temporal as well as spatial: Carnevali writes for an American magazine, while Pound specifies that he writes “from this side of the Atlantic” (“Whitman” 187). The issue of literary language in relation to the language of the people seems to interest both as they negotiate their ideas of tradition. Carnevali gives Dante credit for having written “in what was called *il volgare*, the language spoken by the *volgo*, the people” (“Dante” 323). He comments, almost in Whitmanesque tones, that this “points out again that all great things have their foundations in the *volgo*, as all buildings in the earth” (“Dante” 323). Carnevali’s consideration of the Italian tradition ultimately leads him to express his views on the popular, everyday roots of art.

Pound also likens Whitman’s speech to Dante’s *volgare*: “like Dante he wrote in the ‘vulgar tongue,’ in a new metric. The first great man to write in the language of his people” (Pound, “Whitman” 188). Dante’s desire to provide Italy with a national, literarily dignified language articulated itself in his poetry and in the treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, which would be taken as a model “much later by writers who found themselves in a structurally similar position” (Casanova 55). Carnevali’s reading is etymological, referring to the origin of *volgare* as relative to the *volgo*/people, and bending it to serve his own democratic view of art. Pound’s reading serves to connect the purported object of his essay, Whitman, with an important member of his “congenial ancestry.” The reference to the “vulgar tongue” echoes Pound’s work in Romance philology, which was indebted to *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and preoccupied with the creation of a canon of “ancestors,” ultimately leading to Pound’s own work (Riobó 202). The insistence on *volgare* in both essays underlines how the two young authors were concerned with similar issues as they appealed to tradition in a transnational perspective: the creation of a language that would have an impact on social reality. Yet, they considered the issue from different points of view, ultimately coming up with two very different approaches to the unfamiliar in language – as we shall see.

1.5.2 Criticising the Modernist Dante

Pound's interest in Whitman was personal, but the comparison with European references such as Dante indicates that canon-building was among his priorities:

And, to be frank, Whitman is to my fatherland (*Patriam quam odi et amo* for no uncertain reasons) what Dante is to Italy and I at my best can only be a strife for a renaissance in America of all the lost or temporarily mislaid beauty, truth, valour, glory of Greece, Italy, England and all the rest of it. ("Whitman" 188)

Catullus's famous love lyric "Odi et amo" is quoted and expanded to indicate Pound's love (*amo*) and hate (*odi*) for his fatherland (*patriam*). The young Pound often used translation and quotation from the past in essays and poetry, to transcend the present and express his troubled relationship with the contemporary world. Pound's education indicates that "Dante entered his consciousness very early" (Moody 22), and retained a central role in Pound's network of transnational influences throughout his career. To the young Pound, Dante represented an escape from American models, and was a constant reference in the work of his life.⁸⁹ In his early criticism, he often poised him against Whitman, and not only in the "Whitman" essay. In the *The Spirit of Romance* (1910), Pound argues against the "disciples of Whitman" who "cry out the 'cosmic sense'" while Whitman "has never so perfectly expressed the perception of cosmic consciousness as does Dante" (*The Spirit of Romance* 155).

In the 1907 poem "In Durance," he claimed: "I am homesick / After mine own kind that know, and feel / And have some breath for beauty and the arts" (1-3). The 1908 "Histrion" similarly refers to canonical authors,

⁸⁹ Moody's study of Pound's earliest, aborted attempts at a long epic suggest that Dante's influence appeared on what seems to be a Whitmanian palimpsest in the young poet's drafts. Pound's "The First Great Song of All the World," with its long lines and assertive tone, is largely "after Whitman" but its "claim to be the voice of the people is directly contradicted by the declaration of allegiance, not to the American land and its people, but 'to them of the spirit / Whose word I am'" (Moody 46).

Dante's use of history, politics and theology later became an inspiration for what Wilhelm calls an "epic of judgement": the *Cantos*, which attempt at encompassing the Western body of wisdom in a similar way as the *Divina Commedia* did. Pound's mind was "saturated with Dante" and in his masterpiece he used the "Italian master almost the way that a painter uses his colors: for emphasis and for dramatic effect" (Wilhelm, *Dante and Pound* 113).

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including Dante, to discuss Pound's relationship with tradition and the present:

And yet I know, how that the souls of all men great
At times pass through us,
And we are melted into them, and are not
Save reflexions of their souls.
Thus am I Dante for a space and am
One François Villon, ballad-lord and thief
("Histrion," 2-7)

Pound's early poetry expresses the need to "empty himself of identity, until he becomes an achromatic medium, an ectoplasm on which the souls of the great dead can take shape" (Albright 71). It is not a passive identification, but a prelude to a vast transformational and translational poetic enterprise. Pound's perceived clash between the poet's aspirations and the expectations of the present is linked to his criticism, and instrumental to a body of poetic work that scrutinizes the present through a variety of traditions.

Pound attempted to come to terms with Whitman in a 1913 poem: "I make truce with you, Walt Whitman - / I have detested you long enough" ("A Pact" 1-2). The poem is imbued with metaphors of genealogy, as Pound calls himself a "grown child" and Whitman a "pig-headed father," while acknowledging that they have "one sap and one root." Seen in the light of Pound's 1909 reluctant identification with the American tradition ("mentally, I am a Walt Whitman..."), the poem expresses his progressive acceptance of it as part of his identity.

Other key figures of modernism (Joyce, Eliot, Synge, Beckett) shared Pound's admiration for Dante, and his interest in Italian culture. The Italian tradition figured prominently among the past traditions entering the artificially synchronic space of modernism, which conflated preoccupations for the modern world with the representation of textual influence from the past, "making the transformative act of translation, adaptation, repetition its real content" (Smith 6). Modernist Anglophone authors had strong links with Italy, concentrating on both contemporary Italian culture and its artistic tradition: "for them, Italy was both present and past, both a living force and an emblem of the past" (Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians* 104). Within this framework, Dante was "read (and misread) in a variety of ways by the great

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modernists,” his influence on them “continually changing” but very often present in some form (McDougal x). The recuperation of the Italian medieval heritage happened within an atmosphere of artificial synchronicity, leading Pound to consider the Italian past and present together, using Italian literary tradition to decode present-day Italy: “Italian Fascism and Italian Ghibellinism, Mussolini's Italy and Dante's Italy: [...] for Pound, though for almost no one else, these two Italys were one” (Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians* 187).

This view on Dante had been developing for some time when, twelve years after Pound's essay on Whitman, Carnevali was called to write about Dante in *Poetry*. His potential audience for the article was interested in the topic: to them, it was relevant not only to the history of literature, but also to the present literary debate. As seen in the analysis of “Tales of a Hurried Man,” the New York and Chicago milieus were keen on identifying Carnevali with the Italian tradition, while he felt the need to dismiss their claims by reminding them that “Dante died quite long ago” (“Tale III” 32). In the summer of 1921, when he wrote “Dante – And Today,” Carnevali was experiencing precocious decline at twenty-four. As of April 1920, shortly after the first signs of illness had appeared, he was no longer the associate editor of *Poetry*. In spite of the crisis, Carnevali could still write poetry (mainly reflecting his concerns with mental health) and criticism. The latter presents his usual polemical strength, so much so that it does not seem to be impaired by sickness. In “Dante – And Today,” Carnevali still had the force to criticise modernist uses of the Italian tradition from an Italian point of view.

The critique of a ‘modernist’ Dante is not explicit in “Dante – And Today.” Yet, Carnevali describes the challenges faced by modernist re-writers of Dante's epic, without calling them directly into question. “We are waiting for the poet who will give us a *Divina Commedia* of our own times” he writes, warning that what “we expect” would necessarily be drastically different (“Dante - And Today” 325). Interestingly, he justifies this statement by arguing that, in the twentieth century, “Hell” is on Earth: “A hell more terrific than the hell of Dante is the hell of modern warfare” (“Dante - And Today” 325). Carnevali insists on the ‘real’ Hellish experience of an

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overpopulated, grey and deforested world, perpetually at war. His article presents a critique of capitalism as anti-humanism that would perhaps have pleased Pound:

And the makers of these are business men who do not see, and workers whom a whirlwind sweeps into this modern tremendous factory, and leaves there like fledglings caught in the blast of an immense furnace. Out of this factory the human soul comes crushed – out of this factory of neurosis, the modern world. (“Dante” 325)

The author considers industrial alienation and alludes to psychological sickness. These two themes are typical of modernism, reflected in many works that showed the effect of the changing economic and social conditions on the human experience of the world: Carnevali was not alone in his preoccupations for the “factory” that “crushed” the human soul. In his comments, Carnevali does not mention the modernist attempts to write a *Commedia* of their days, of which he may have at least heard (*The Waste Land* was to be published soon, some *Cantos* had come out in drafted versions). He seems to be ignoring them, yet to be speaking to them at the same time as he defines the most important difficulty that they were facing: a world that had grown unexpectedly huge, and difficult to grasp with the all-encompassing look of major literature. While “Dante’s conception of his narrow world was centered around two main hypotheses – that of the absolute monarchy and that of the Roman Catholic power,” nowadays a poet was facing the challenge of “gather[ing] together in his thought a world which facility of transportation, and science in general, have made enormous” (Carnevali, “Dante” 326). It is highly unlikely that he did not know that Pound was attempting some sort of *Divina Commedia* of their time, and these words may hint exactly at that – the difficulty of making sense of this enormous world resulting actually in the entangled references, in the multiform language of the *Cantos*. The reference is not direct, but the description of the challenge faced by Pound is poignant.

An outsider at a time in which “virtually all the major modernist writers in English [were] trying to write the *Commedia* of the twentieth century” (Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians* 209), Carnevali raised the issue of the validity of the uses of tradition, while attempting to figure out his own

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literary ascendancy. His essay penetrated the discourse of modernist re-use of the Italian past from a unique perspective for American readers. The essay voiced possible Italian doubts on the “*Commedia* of the twentieth century,” while reaffirming the concerns that generated similar poetic aspirations, such as the preoccupation for the moral and economic pollution of the modern cityscape.

1.5.3 Carnevali vs. Pound

Carnevali seems not to have Pound in high esteem as he wrote for *Poetry*. In 1920 he had written a very harsh review of Pound’s *Pavannes and Divisions*, a 1918 collection of essays, translations and poetry. In spite of their common ground, and of their shared interest in expanding the borders of American literature, Carnevali considered himself incompatible with Pound. The relationship between the two shows us the different forms that transnational modernism could assume.

By 1920, Pound was a widely recognised author and intellectual, and had played the leader’s role in artistic movements such as Imagism and Vorticism. Carnevali questions such status on grounds of originality:

A faith in art which consists of a few don’ts shouted at some imaginary and improbable followers; of repetitions of phrases by old and ancient masters, duly stripped of their original glamour, as all repetitions are. (“Irritation” 212)

Carnevali appears to know Pound’s criticism: the reference to a “few don’ts” alludes to Pound’s 1913 essay “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste.” The Italian poet in particular criticises the sterility of Pound’s claim to tradition; he does not question his ideas, but rather accuses him of expressing “coldly and precisely” the same things that “were screamed without precision, and with blind illogical heat, by Blake, by Shelley, by Nietzsche, by Rimbaud” (“Irritation” 219). Carnevali construes Pound’s use of the literary tradition as the mannerist re-use of age-old ideas, while bringing up his own transnational references (Shelley, Nietzsche, Rimbaud) in the discussion. Carnevali may not have such a wide and systematic framework of references, but he appeals

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to a personal canon of nineteenth-century authors, who have in common, he claims, the prominence of emotion and irrationality against logic and formal composure. In “The Book of Job Junior” he expressed his preference for those “to whom what art is, and whether art is, is a matter of life and death, or [...] a matter of sanity or insanity” (Carnevali, *Furnished Rooms* 3) including Schumann, Blake, Strindberg, Verhaeren. The critical opposition between Carnevali and Pound happens within the use of different models, of individual canons constructed with different goals. Carnevali casts Whitman against Pound: while the former makes him think about “Joy,” the only word that he can conceive about Pound is “Irritation” (“Irritation” 211). Later in the essay, he compares Pound to Oscar Wilde who “refuses to sit down in Whitman’s room for fear of soiling his clothes” (“Irritation” 216). As for French models, Carnevali criticises Pound’s translations of Laforgue on the grounds that “if there is a literature in the world to which Mr. Pound is extraneous and foreign, in feelings and ways, it is the French” (“Irritation” 212). Such comments indicate that Carnevali also saw his criticism of Pound in relation to his own activity as translator and cultural mediator between American modernism and European literatures, claiming the knowledge of European literatures for himself.

Domenichelli explained Carnevali’s criticism of Pound as the attack on a “series of masks (Pound’s idea of the poetic *persona*), a series of *poses*” by a man who “seems to have lived burning the candle at both ends,” a “hurried man” with “no time for paraphrase, lies, masks, and inauthenticity” (86). Carnevali’s “Irritation,” in fact, sets them in contrast on such terms: Carnevali wanted to present himself as “hurried man,” while Pound’s early poetry takes much of its force from “masks” (yet the appropriation of “masks,” and their use in confronting the modern world is what ultimately ‘makes it new’). Yet, the comparative analysis of “Dante – And Today” and “What I Feel About Walt Whitman” underlines the common ground from which they started. The opposition between Carnevali and Pound is between two different ways of looking outside one’s home tradition, of confronting the foreign to build a literary career. Carnevali’s critique of Pound is a poignant re-discussion of modernist transnationalism, but it comes from an author who understood and believed in the transnational dimension of

writing.

Carnevali's energies are directed towards translingual creation, literary translation and discussion of an Italian tradition to the American audience. All this is linked to his experience as a migrant, but at the same time aims at transcending it, to join a literary debate that is posited as supra-national. Pound was never a migrant, but from the start he had aspirations to transcend an American locality and engage with a supra-national tradition. He was never a translingual in the strict sense of the word, but he used multilingual quotation widely, and his translations fuelled his own artistic development:

Pound's translations put foreign texts in the service of a modernist poetics, evident, for example, in his use of free verse and precise language, but also in the selection of foreign texts where a 'persona' could be constructed, an independent voice or mask for the poet. (Venuti 167)

There was a strong link between the authors he translated and his experiments with language and poetic form. In the "Walt Whitman" essay he expressed his desire to revive the "beauty, truth, valour, glory of Greece, Italy, England and all the rest of it" ("Whitman" 188). The practical realization of such desire for foreign difference within the limits of English-speaking literature included translation practice and translation-influenced work. To Carnevali, on the other hand, Pound's translation-infused poetics meant the "damning of our present-day ugliness and the longing for the times of Chivalry and the beauty that was Greece⁹⁰" ("Irritation" 218). Carnevali's critique of Pound depended on a different attitude towards the American present and a different use of transnational elements.

In particular, Carnevali criticised Pound's erudite and translational interest in the Italian past as sterile nostalgia for the times of "chivalry," assuming for once the standpoint of Italian migrant that he was otherwise reluctant to assume. Pointing to the "tangled[ness] and twisted[ness]" of Pound's aristocratic art, he contrasted it with the "exquisiteness" of "an Italian mother [he] saw in Taylor Street biting in a sweet frenzy the mouth of her

⁹⁰ The phrase "the beauty that was Greece" echoes Poe's "the glory that was Greece" in "To Helen" (1845). Carnevali had mentioned Poe among the American authors he had read in a letter to Monroe (1 September 1917), and the phrase may have stuck in his mind, ready to be used as a learned allusion to prove his argument in criticism.

sloppy child” (“Irritation” 216). Carnevali countered what he took to be Pound’s “aristocracy” by construing a sentimental image of immigrant bonding. Carnevali’s poetics developed through his removal from an Italian cultural space, and through an attention on the American present as witnessed by a migrant. He criticised Pound’s use of tradition in the name of modernity, which claimed his almost complete attention in virtue of his own social predicament.

Pound’s first engagements with Italian culture was indeed a recuperation of the past, also at a linguistic level. Inspired by Italian medieval poets such as Dante and Guido Cavalcanti, he translated the latter and turned part of his own poems into medieval imitations.⁹¹ The translations were both a sample of Pound’s philological preoccupations and of the creative possibilities of translation. Not having thirteenth-century English as a viable option for translating thirteenth-century Italian, he crafted a modern English filled with archaisms or “archaic neologisms” (Venuti 171). Such translation of the past was modern in intent, providing the young poet who struggled with the heritage of Whitmanian a way to combine it with a supra-national tradition. Pound’s effort to reproduce Cavalcanti’s rhythm is evident as he replicates the cadence and word order of romance languages, as well as choosing English words with the same root as the Italian ones:

Se fusti in pruova del signor valente
Thou wast in proof of that lord valorous (“Sonnet XXII”)

Onde ti vien si nova crueltate?
Where find you now these novel cruelties? (“Sonnet IV”)

Si parte da lo core un tal sospiro
My heart’s partured a sigh so great (“Sonnet XXX”)⁹²

The archaisms in *Sonnets and Ballate* are “small signs (however disruptive)

⁹¹ Pound inserts himself in Guido and Dante’s circle of friends in the 1909 “Guido Invites You Thus,” a reference to Dante’s “Guido i’ vorrei.” The 1910 “To Guido” expresses a claim for the Italian poet’s importance both in the canon and in his own poetry: “Dante and I are come to learn of thee, / O Messire Guido, master of us all.”

Pound translated the whole of Cavalcanti’s body of work, in various versions. A 1910 translation of a single sonnet was followed in 1912 by *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*, an almost complete translation of the Italian poet’s work. Pound integrated and slightly rearrange some of his translations in 1932.

⁹² All English translations from Cavalcanti are taken from *The Translations of Ezra Pound*. Ed. Hugh Kenner. London: Faber, 1953.

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in the otherwise uniform linguistic register that the poem [...] is not exclusively a contemporary artwork, but is linked inextricably to a past” (West 431). Pound’s links with the past were established in translation, but served to provide material to be adapted and discussed in his original work. He thus set the standards for modernist translation as

comprehensive textual strategy for negotiating between the demands of transmission and transformation, between the authority of tradition and the demands of innovation, between the endowments of the past and the imperatives of the present. (Yao 22)

At a stylistic level, engaging with the language of Dante and Cavalcanti provided him with sounds, rhythms and stylistic artifices to use in his own poetry.

One of these artifices is the *envoi* that often concludes Cavalcanti’s *ballate*, personifying the poem as an independent entity, and a messenger for the poet’s word: “Go! Ballad mine, and when thy journey has won / Unto my Lady's presence wonderful / Speak of my anguish in some fitting fashion” (“Ballata VIII”). The poet may also address the *ballata* itself as if it were his interlocutor (“Because no hope is left me, Ballatetta, / of return to Tuscany...” “Ballata XI”). Pound quotes and re-uses this way of establishing a personal link between poet and medium in his original poetry. His 1913 “Ité” replicates an *envoi*: “Go, my songs, seek your praise from the young and from the intolerant...” The *envoi* form could be used to address twentieth-century youth, as in the 1913 “Commission”: “Go, my songs, to the lonely and the unsatisfied...” Carnevali noticed and criticised this poetic feature for its extreme literariness:

Squalor of unemployed senses, where literature becomes an obsession; wantlessness — as with Ezra Pound, who spends too many pages of his *Lustra* worrying whither and wherefore and when and how his songs go (Do they go?). (“Five Years” 212)

Carnevali, who had the pressing needs of immigrant life as main source of inspiration, wrote against literature that reflected on itself by concentrating on the relationship between its form and tradition.

Pound’s attitude towards Italian has been defined by Valesio (in discussing the variations of poetic experience between Italy and America) as

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“bilinguismo mentale o spirituale” as opposed to ‘actual’ bilingualism (Valesio 260).⁹³ Pound did not write in Italian, but could imagine a version of himself at the centre of the Italian past that he had studied and translated: this is the case in the 1907 “Cino,” set in the “Italian Campagna 1309, the open road” where he impersonates the fictitious troubadour Cino Polnesi:

Bah! I have sung women in three cities,
But it is all the same;
And I will sing of the sun.
 (“Cino,” 1-3)

The medieval Italy that the poem depicts is culturally translated into the twentieth century. As every cultural translation, it is “in fact, a de-contextualization and re-contextualization of a text” (Rössner 40): the text being in some cases the actual poems, and in other cases the cultural mood. By contrast, Carnevali’s cultural translation was linked to daily operations of translation in the attempt to understand the world around him: not a text, but the poet himself was de-contextualised and re-contextualised. At about the same age as Pound when he wrote “Cino,” Carnevali wrote fiction and poetry about himself confronting the hostile New York environment, reflecting on his own exile. His confrontation with the foreign and unfamiliar aimed at representing and transfiguring immigrant realities rather than spiritual belonging.

The matter of language is not secondary in the distinction between Carnevali’s and Pound’s forms of transnationalism. Pound’s abundant use of multilingual and translational elements existed within English, which is both a global language and his own native language; the same global language that Carnevali accessed as an outsider, working towards his own translingual assimilation. A good deal of multilingualism in Pound’s early poetry is limited to themes or poem titles, ideally bringing the reader beyond the present, while keeping the language intelligible for twentieth-century Anglophone readers. Many titles are Italian, and traceable to medieval model, such as “Ballatetta,” “Gentildonna” or “Provincia Deserta.” They often makes use of the same “archaic neologisms” with which he would render Guido’s Italian into English. This form of multilingualism does not renounce its

⁹³ “Mental or spiritual bilingualism.”

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English foundation, but only “add[s] a more or less liberal sprinkling of other languages to a dominant language clearly identified as their central axis” (Delabastita and Grutman 16). A foreign title, in particular, is a common stratagem “to conjure up exotic landscapes” (Delabastita and Grutman 16). A modernist tendency towards multilingualism often implied aestheticism, and ultimately established a distance from the author’s native language, allowing him or her a heightened perception of their native language from the outside (Taylor-Batty 20–21). More rarely, it depicts an actual multilingual reality such as that of immigration.

Carnevali worked in English, but he approached the language from the outside, and worked on acquiring proficiency, from the initial impenetrability until the point in which he considered English his preferred medium of expression, even after returning to Italy. The building of a translingual career is linked to personal developments, to the point that translingual authors may experience doubts about their linguistic self: “is the self who adapts to the new language the same one that preceded linguistic migration or does the process bring into existence a new self?” (Besemeres 19) Carnevali’s relationship with the foreign necessarily impacted on his construction of the self, at a deeper level than Pound’s modernist engagement with multiple languages. If not a distinct and separate “new self,” translingualism provided Carnevali with a whole new set of skills and linguistic strategies to represent his continuously evolving self, that he needed to engage a different linguistic environment, fuelling the construction of his complex transnational persona.

Two anecdotes about Carnevali and Pound’s relationship with language show the difference between translingual transformation and multilingual interest. Pound discusses the matter of his encounter with the Provençal word “noigandres” in Canto XX: the word was in a *canzone* by Arnaut Daniel, but was never found elsewhere in Provençal texts. Puzzled by its opacity, Pound recounts a meeting with German scholar Emil Levy, in an attempt to clarify the matter and improve his translations. The professor’s response was not encouraging: “Noigandres, eh, *noigandres* / now what the DEFFIL can that mean!” (Canto XX, 31–32). Attempting to solve the mystery of “what the devil *noigandres* may mean is a characteristic scholar's perplexity” (Kenner 114). It

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stands as an erudite, high-brow counterpart to the episode of Carnevali reading a G.B. Shaw novel and falling “in love with one word of which [he] did not get the real significance: *disparagingly*” (*Autobiography* 92). As an emigrant, he perceived the distance separating him from even the common words of English, while experiencing a fascination for its foreignness. In the difference between the *noigandres* episode and the *disparagingly* episode lies the difference between the young Carnevali and the young Pound. The immigrant Carnevali, unemployed and almost starved, struggled in front of the difficulties of a language which would serve him for both everyday life and literary career. He paused in awe at the sight of a common enough word, *disparagingly* – knowing that no English word could be common enough for him, having to be conquered and assimilated before it could be used. At the same time, Pound’s scholarly challenges would make him a translator, an erudite, and a centre of attraction for many authors in his time.

This distinction is not clear-cut; as we have seen, Carnevali often used a canon of nineteenth-century literary references in spite of his interest in twentieth-century New York and his claim that he “try not to imitate.”⁹⁴ At the same time, Pound’s relationship with Italian culture became more complex with time, and more grounded in the social and political reality of contemporary Italy as he developed personal ties with the country. Ballerini, in his afterword to the Italian edition of Carnevali’s works, defined Pound’s progressive engagement with Italy a “migrazione da un centro [...] alla periferia mediterranea”⁹⁵ (428). He underlined how Pound’s poetic development brought him ever closer to a world in which a mythical Mediterranean past still had currency – the same world from where Carnevali came – and from which he would draw “frammenti di lingue ai quali il poeta affida la propria ricerca di quel che si può dire”⁹⁶ (Ballerini 428). This development is, Ballerini explains, particularly evident in the *Cantos*, which would develop fully only after Carnevali’s critical essay. Thus, Ballerini links the friendship that would ensue between Carnevali and Pound to Carnevali’s change of critical views. The contacts between the two in the following years (which involved Pound supporting the sick Carnevali, and Carnevali

⁹⁴ Carnevali to Monroe, 1 September 1917, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 43, Folder 11.

⁹⁵ “migration from a centre [...] to the Mediterranean periphery.”

⁹⁶ “fragments of languages which the poet entrusts with his own search for what can be said.”

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translating the *Cantos*) demonstrate that they acknowledged being part of the same milieu.⁹⁷ Discussing with him the possibility of translating the *Cantos*, he would define them as “your modern Divine Comedy, your splendid colossal work” in one of his letters – reversing his critical skepticism of 1921 on the possibilities for a modern Divine Comedy.⁹⁸

Both Carnevali and Pound wrote under the impulse of their dissatisfaction with national, essentialist views of the canon. Oppositions and similarities between them (also noticed by Ballerini and Domenichelli) ultimately appear to overlap in an uncertain pattern in the present comparative analysis of their early criticism. Similarities emerge especially in the critical stance of each poet with respect to the home culture, and in the tension towards the foreign and the unfamiliar in their early years. Their careers become incomparable with each other as the years progressed (too many factors intervene, both personal and literary), while they developed closer personal ties, as we shall see in part 3. The transnational dimension of modernist literature emerges from this comparison as an open field, in which continuous operations of cultural positioning and re-positioning (appealing to whole literary traditions, or translating single words within a text) could set single authors in different relations of similarity and opposition with each other, depending on the angle of analysis.

⁹⁷ Carnevali’s letters to Pound also offer insight on the friendship that developed between the two: Carnevali often begins his letters with words such as “Dearest of friends” or “DEAREST, dear, dear MAN.” He acknowledged that his friend became “greater and greater, under every respect” while he was incapacitated by his illness. Speaking of their respective tones in the correspondence, he commented: “I wish I could imitate you but I am heavy while you are light [...]. I am dark while you are spangling with color.” Quotations taken from various letters, all undated (presumably 1930-1931), Yale Beinecke Series I, Box 8, Folder 344.

⁹⁸ Carnevali to Pound, undated (presumably 1930), Yale Beinecke, Section 1, Box 8, Folder 344.

2.1 FREEING THE VERSE, CRAFTING THE STYLE

Carnevali's development of his style in America involved his engagement, not only with the English language, but also with the poetic models that were available to him in America. In particular, he appeared convinced that the adoption of free verse was a crucial step of his poetic assimilation, on his way to become an American poet.

Through the ages, literary styles and expressive forms have been disseminated in the literary world via translation. Translation fuels

the interpenetration of literary systems, not just by projecting the image of one writer or work in another literature or by failing to do so [...] but also by introducing new devices into the inventory component of a poetics, and paving the way to changes in its functional component. (Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting* 38)

The scope and conceptualization of this influence has not always been the same through the ages. For example, up to the Renaissance “the author’s text was assumed to be predicated upon pre-established models” and translation was intended as akin to literary imitation, a practice “through which the author could establish a unique identity” (Hokenson and Munson 38). After Romanticism and “its vague ideas about poets as beings set apart from other people, divinely inspired and often motivated by a death wish” (Bassnett, “Transplanting the Seed” 57), literature has been considerably more intent on presenting itself as the work of inspired minds alone. This has not prevented authors from borrowing linguistic and stylistic devices from foreign cultures (the “inventory component” mentioned by Lefevere), as well as ideas of the artist's role in the text and in society (the “functional component”). The matter at hand is determining to what extent this idea holds for translingual literature: in translingual writing, the foreign is received and interpreted, but instead of integrating the influence of the foreign into the familiar language the author needs to confront new literary tenets and models in their original environment. Fracassa pointed out rightly that Carnevali in America acquired “riferimenti letterari oltre che linguistici, [...] una tradizione oltre che [...] un vocabolario”⁹⁹ (138). Literary and linguistic references are not however to be

⁹⁹ “... literary references as well linguistic ones, a tradition as well as a vocabulary.”

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considered independent from each other as Carnevali confronted the American forms of poetry. As he adapted his speech to American English, he also faced the choice between reception or subversion of dominant modes of expression in English. Carnevali searched the local tradition for stylistic features (the “inventory component”) and for an ideal of the poet (the “functional component”). In particular, he tended towards free verse: it may not have been “an American invention,” but “at least that is how American poets have seen it, Pound and Williams both tracing their freedoms to Walt Whitman” (Costello 168). Carnevali entered the American stylistic debate as an outsider, identifying free verse of the Whitmanian brand (and of his contemporaries who, like Sandburg, were influenced by Whitman) as the crucial stylistic issue to confront and assimilate.

2.1.1 “Because he was a foreigner”: Carnevali’s Whitmanian assimilation

Carnevali’s 1917 letter to Monroe, expressing his desire to become “an American poet,” also included the statement: “I believe in free verse.”¹⁰⁰ The young Carnevali seems to assume that free verse is an integral part of the writing of truly American poetry. Whitman is mentioned in the letter in a rather composite canon of influences, including also Poe and Jack London, as well as Carnevali’s contemporaries Waldo Frank and James Oppenheim. In his American years, Carnevali would sometimes quote and imitate Whitman; more generally, he reacted to Whitmanian models of free verse as he engaged in discussion with the modernist milieu.

The Whitmanian brand of poetry was adopted as a recognisably American form of art. In stylistic terms, it is easily recognisable in spite of its avowed freedom from constraints – or in virtue of that freedom. Beyers defines it as “long-line free verse” (40), and its most evident feature is the length of the line, frequently exceeding the limits of traditional metre. It tends to sport long lists of elements, together with strong assertions in a prophetic

¹⁰⁰ Carnevali to Monroe, 1 September 1917, in *SCRCC Poetry*, Box 43, Folder 11.

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tone. Such lists help create the vatic pose of the poetic *I*: long-line free verse seems to “encourage [...] enthusiastic and often syncretic religious philosophies” (Beyers 40). This feature – successively updated to fit the cultural context, as in the poetry of Allen Ginsberg for example – usually goes together with the poet’s democratic or universalist beliefs, elevating each element in the list to poetic dignity. To Carnevali, it could also represent novelty, while his American contemporaries had been comparably much more exposed to it, generating a range of responses that went from admiration to revolt. This paradox explains Robert McAlmon’s comment on Carnevali’s Whitmanian fascination:

I concluded that it was because he was a foreigner that he so passionately loved Whitman, and later Sherwood Anderson and Carl Sandburg. Neither Anderson nor Sandburg ever rang true to me. (McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together* 136)

McAlmon implied that, “because he was a foreigner”, Carnevali would perceive quintessentially American poetry as desirable. He noticed Carnevali’s attempt to enter the American literary scene as an outsider, attributing his taste to his non-synchronic approach. Literary non-synchronicity has been identified by Caparoso Konzett in her work on ethnic modernism: in the modern era, the “nonsynchronicity of different cultures existing in various historical temporalities” was exposed and set in creative motion by migration, which “imports nonsynchronicity into the heart of modernity” (Caparoso Konzett 10). Arriving from the outside, Carnevali identified free verse – which he mostly identified with the Whitmanian brand of free verse – with modernity and newness in style.

American modernist poetry has been seen as “at least in part [...] a diverse collective response to Whitman's call” (Trachtenberg 197). Pound was not alone in his uneasiness with the persistent heritage of the poet of *Leaves of Grass*, as other modernists became preoccupied with the search for a different form of free verse. In 1928, Eliot traced a line between his brand of free verse, Pound’s, and that of the “disciples of Whitman” – by claiming that “what Whitman had heralded as a new form of verse was in fact an instance of great prose” (A. Patterson 43). Modernists, as we have seen, looked towards European and Asian traditions in search of poetic models.

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Yet, while “writers like Ezra Pound, H. D., and T. S. Eliot were fleeing American provincialism in favor of European culture and sophistication, Carnevali was running in the other direction” (Templeton 141). He got in contact with the American intellectuals who turned their look towards the landscape and people of America, and followed in Whitman’s tradition. *Poetry*, a crucial element in Carnevali’s literary education, declared its explicit allegiance to democratic aspects of Whitmanian poetics, sporting a quotation from Whitman on its back: “To have great poets / there must be great audiences too.” It expressed the inclusiveness, and manifest democracy of American verse as the editors intended it. Many poets, like Carl Sandburg, who wrote for the magazine, were interested in renewing modern poetry’s links to Whitman. Putnam in 1922 identified Carnevali’s passion for Whitman as originating precisely from Sandburg: in the “constant bobbing up of [...] the every-day word, [Carnevali] is akin to the Sandburg whom he loves – and, beyond Sandburg, Whitman” (Putnam 11). This double connection is present in Carnevali’s criticism, as we shall see, while his poetry responds to their brand of free verse, bending it to his own expressive needs.

In the meantime, the diffusion of Whitmanian free verse was being regulated by a complex pattern of translation and influence, reaching France and then coming back to the English-speaking world. The French fascination for free verse came “from Laforgue's translations of Whitman into French, an event almost as significant as Baudelaire's translations of Poe” (I. Patterson 177). The French in turn had an influence on Anglophone symbolist and imagist poetry, meaning that modernist free verse in English can be said to “derive from the French example as much as from the native tradition” (I. Patterson 177) through the refractions of translation-fuelled influence. In the *Poetry* milieu, evidently sensitive to the issue, assistant editor Alice Corbin Henderson noticed the phenomenon and used it to advocate for a Whitman renaissance in America:

The rhythmic measure of Whitman has yet to be correctly estimated by English and American poets. It has been sifted and weighed by the French poets [:] the connection between his varied rhythmic units and modern *vers libre* is too obvious to be discounted. (Henderson 91)

If the French elaborated enthusiastically on the forms of Whitman’s poetry,

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the Italian reception was somewhat slower. Critics and commentators in Italy appreciated the poetic energy in his work, although the reaction to the free verse form was generally puzzled (McCain 5). The complete translation of *Leaves of Grass* by Gamberale saw the light only in 1907 (smaller selections had been published in 1887 and 1889). Gamberale, “like most critics in his time,” believed Whitman's poetry to be prose; thus he translated it “as if it were [...] prose poe[try] and applied to Whitman's English language text the same method of literal translation typical of translations from Latin and Greek” (Camboni). Whitman was received with general enthusiasm in Italy (especially for his themes and energy), even by poets who would continue to use standard metric, but in the first two decades of the twentieth century the Whitmanian model was still only starting to have a definite influence on Italian poets (Zoboli 30).

As Carnevali moved to America, he had first-hand experience of the linguistic reality of America, confronting the American literary debate from the inside. In this context, Whitman's popularity among immigrant poets in the United States has been sometimes noted:

Ethnic poets who used languages other than English were sometimes more willing to work with the new forms of Whitman [...] than immigrant or native American poets who wrote in Whitman's native tongue. (Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity* 248)

Whitman was viewed as “the formal prototype, the adoptive ancestor, of ethnic modernists” (*Beyond Ethnicity* 258). This was due to the inclusive character of his style: “Whitman meant Poetry, Art, the Canon; but he also meant Brooklyn and the plebes” (Ferraro 12). This model was inclusive and welcoming, and also apparently free of stylistic constraints, with no apparent demands on the rhetorical level. It appears reassuring for its insistence on the lack of high-brow literariness: elements that are listed, juxtaposed and celebrated in long-line free verse may belong to different registers, ranging from literary language to slang: they all receive equal dignity in the poem. The migrant could think it easier to translate into a new language by using a kind of verse that did not count syllables, nor used rhyming lines.

Italians entering the American literary scene, even those disconnected one from the other, were often susceptible to Whitman's influence. Pascal

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D'Angelo's poetry acquired "the universal ambition that makes him first Italian, then American" from models "somewhere between Withman and [Shelley's] Prometheus" (Viscusi, "Son of Italy" 49); Arturo Giovannitti is believed to have taken Withman as a model of social activism as well as "high-flown language" (Marazzi, *Voices* 26). Carnevali's particular relation to such a pattern, more than any other Italian poet's, was shaped by his troubled relationship with modernist milieus.

Carnevali construed his choice of free verse as the choice of a side within the literary debate. In his introductory letter to Monroe, he claimed that he could "decently tell why [he] believe[d] in free verse, but it would take too long."¹⁰¹ He added that "what Aristotle and Matthew Arnold might have said against it does not worry me in the least," and stated his belief that free verse was "necessary." The young, self-taught poet – who often laments his own ignorance in 1917-18 letters to the editor – writes with the enthusiasm of one for whom free verse is a recent discovery. A few months later he wrote to Monroe again; among other things he claimed to be "building an efficient philosophy against rhymed art and people who still insist."¹⁰²

Picking a side in the stylistic debate over free verse (and over the different articulations of free verse) provided Carnevali with a quick way to literary assimilation. In their work on cultural translation, Buden and Nowotny started with a discussion of citizenship tests as a means of cultural translation: they "present a sort of instant canon of features put together with the purpose of drawing a clear boundary line" between alien and non-alien, "thus making possible authoritative control over all movement across this line" (197). Such tests are built on an authoritative narration, a discourse that includes or excludes those who do not comply. Literary citizenship is certainly more permeable than national citizenship; yet it does involve a sense of belonging. Carnevali, as an American poet in the making, seems to be building his own literary citizenship test, responding to stimuli that he picked up from his initial experience of the American debate.

In spite of his enthusiasm for free verse from 1917 on, Carnevali's

¹⁰¹ Carnevali to Monroe, 1 September 1917, in *SCRCC Poetry*, Box 43, Folder 11.

¹⁰² Carnevali to Monroe, answered 1 February 1918, in *SCRCC Poetry*, Box 32, Folder 14.

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Autobiography explains that his very first poetic experiments had been “rhymed poems at first, absurd, rhymed poetry which [he] sent to more than twenty magazines, getting nothing but rejection slips in return” (95). These poems were apparently influenced by Romantic clichés: “I even poetized that old drab mask, Pierrot [...] and then the springtime, and several other standard subjects” (*Autobiography* 95). He soon moved on to describe his environment, and the struggles to balance artistic aspirations and immigrant life. Carnevali’s first published poem, the January 1918 “Colored Lies” links the colors of Manhattan (the red of building facades, and the blue, black and grey of men’s suits) to the notion of bourgeois respectability that the poet criticises: the first of several poetic attacks on the urban environment. The poem has many rhyming lines, and a structure that alternates three- and four-stress lines:

The houses in a long row
Have wind-burnt red faces.
These coffins of motionless air
With a fat, silly stare
Beckon at the winds that blow
A joyous insult in their faces –
 (“Colored Lies” 1–6)

Carnevali was moving towards free verse, but his first published poems still denoted the need for a structure, around which the words of his new language were cast, repeating insistently (“faces”) as they built the poetic image.

Some rhymed poems would make it into the “Splendid Commonplace” collection which introduced Carnevali into the *Poetry* milieu. Those poems resemble “Colored Lies” as they build loose schemes, putting long and short lines together through insisted repetition of rhyming words, or whole phrases:

Sweetheart, what’s the use of you—
When the night is blue,
And I’m sad with the whisper of the skies,
And I’m heavy and I’m weary
With my many lies?
There is no music around me—
Not a sound
But the whisper of the skies...
 (“Sentimental Dirge”, 1–8)

These were the vestigial remains of his first experiments in poetry. In 1917, he implied that he would not complain if “Sentimental Dirge” were crossed

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out from his first collection: “it is my first poem in rhyme and my second poem of all, and I wrote it a month after I had begun writing in English.”¹⁰³ His initial appreciation of the possibilities of the new language expressed itself in clichéd forms and topics, before inserting itself in the dialectics of literature. The rapidity of his poetic education implied a very quick evolution in his poetics:

You see, this happens to be the case with young people - one year means a whole lot [:] in one year they can change radically. And I feel I did. So, people reading E. Carnevali of 1917 could not possibly claim to know E.C. of 1918: and I just want to enable people to make such same claim.¹⁰⁴

As Carnevali moved past clichéd vocabulary, he developed a vivid, irregular and assertive free verse, which is already visible in most of the 1918 “Splendid Commonplace” poems. In “His Majesty the Letter-Carrier”, he portrays himself waking up early in the morning to wait for the postman:

Ah, there he is!
Who? . . . The letter-carrier, of course!
(What do you think I got up so early for?)
You never see him run—
He is so proud
Because he's got my happiness in that dirty bag...
 (“His Majesty” 8-13)

The postman obviously fails to deliver to him the cherished letter of acceptance, that “letter from an editor that says / You’re a great poet, young man!” (24-25). The poem ironically elevates the postman to a quasi-mythical figure, while the bits of dialogue with an imaginary audience break any rhythmic pattern, testifying that Carnevali was willing to experiment with the newly acquired stylistic freedom. His modernist parody “As He Sees It,” on the other hand, testifies to a problematic adherence to the stylistic tenets of modernism. In the presentation of the poem, he called modernist verse “our own stuff;” he also mocked some modernist techniques that he had read in the magazines with sharp irony:

I
A wondrous voice is urging me within

¹⁰³ Carnevali to Monroe, 1917 [month and day unknown], in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32 Folder 14.

¹⁰⁴ Carnevali to Monroe, answered 1 February 1918, Box 32 Folder 14.

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And thrills me with a pain, alas! . . .
II
A wondrous voice urges me within
And with a pain thrills me—alas! . . .
("As He Sees It" 1–4)

This is how, from a newcomer's perspective, he replicates the salient feature of some modernist poetry – Gertrude Stein's repetitions, or his New York colleagues Kreymborg and Williams (Ricciardi 186). The poem reflects also his anxiety with free verse:

The throat and the pain,
Which all rhymes with rain;
But if it's a free verse
It doesn't count.
("As He Sees It" 32–35, author's emphasis)

The lines show Carnevali's fascination with the rhythms of English: the realisation that "pain" and "rain" rhyme is expressed with a newcomer's surprise, followed by a consummated critic's comment on the fact that such discoveries matter less in free verse (and possibly a pun on the word "count," which may mean *matter* or *enumerate*). Carnevali appears puzzled with the constraints that may be applied to an apparently constraint-free form. In 1918, he is an eager learner (of languages as well as poetic techniques) driven by the attempt to find his own voice, enthusiastic and cynical at the same time in relation to the different stylistic constraints that he witnessed and absorbed.

In this phase, Whitman is sometimes evoked as model. In his long 1919 poem "The Day of Summer," in which he engages deeply with the city of New York, Carnevali evokes Whitman as predecessor: "O city, there lived in you once, O Manhattan, a man WALT WHITMAN" ("Summer" 251). Writing in his very environment, Carnevali seeks a connection with Walt Whitman as "a kosmos, of Manhattan the son" ("Song of Myself" 497). Carnevali participated in the May 1919 issue of *Poetry* celebrating Whitman's centenary, writing his own homage to the poet. Participation in a collective effort in the celebration of American letters marks an important step towards literary assimilation. At the same time, from *Poetry*'s point of view, the presence of an Italian poet in a Whitman tribute certifies the global impact of his poetry. The poem in question is simply called "Walt Whitman", and at only four lines is quite short for a Whitmanian homage. It does contain

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however both long lines and assertive statements in such a short space:

Noon on the mountain!—
And all the crags are husky faces powerful with love for the sun;
All the shadows
Whisper of the sun.
(Carnevali, “Walt Whitman”)

The poem displays sensitivity for the inherent force of nature that is found in Whitman's poetry, while being absent from the majority of Carnevali's poems, which are more exclusively focused on the poet's inner world in a metropolitan context. A few years later, in 1921 (and when the American stage of his career was almost over), Carnevali wrote that every American poet who does not follow in the path traced by Whitman is destined to a brief life (*Saggi e Recensioni* 45).

Carnevali's poetry has identifiable Whitmanian features from its early stages: the irregular (and often very long) length of the line, and the strong direct language which often contains slang. However, it focuses almost exclusively on the poet's inner world. The poem records the experience of the surrounding environment, foregrounding displacement more often than connection with the American landscape. Carnevali crafted a style that would follow the lesson of the American poets he admired, but was free and open enough to let him express his dissent with respect to the culture and society he was living in. As it happens when a style is disseminated and assimilated via translation, this translangual adoption presents some formal and thematic feature of the forms that it reproduced, while it also exhibits non-equivalent elements.

Carnevali's ambivalent adoption of American free verse in Whitmanian form is perhaps best understood in the light of his later comments on Carl Sandburg. Sandburg was considered at the time to be one of the most convincing successors to Whitman: he “enacted Whitman's idea of language” emanating from the people, as his “use of American idioms [...] suggests that he not only wants to speak *for* the people, he wants to speak *like* them, too” (Redding 684, author's emphasis). Carnevali, in his 1921 review of Sandburg's poetry praised his inclusion of street language into literary

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English as “a purely and originally American language [...] and a language of today” (Carnevali, “Sandburg” 267). He also hailed Sandburg’s Swedish roots, making him a fellow foreigner, working within the mainstream canon.¹⁰⁵ Carnevali’s comments on Sandburg as a half-American poet may offer hints as to his own poetic allegiance. He thought that it would be possible to discern “Carl the Swede” – “grinning... giving only half answer” – from “Carl the American”: “tender”, “sweet”, “motherly” (“Sandburg” 271), not afraid to use “the language of workers and criminals” (267). Sandburg’s American half is direct, and can contain the whole of modern America, including everyday speech: a democratic, inclusive free verse. Carnevali on the other hand links Sandburg’s European half to obscurity, and the poet’s impossibility to give a full poetic affirmation – setting the poet apart from the strong assertions of Whitmanian free verse. He identifies Sandburg as a poet combining Old World attitude with the desire to sing America. The dichotomy between affirmative poetic diction, influenced by common language, and the desire for poetic detachment and obscurity, is a part of Carnevali’s own poetry as well. His poetry considers America, adhering to its rhythms and slang as the translational influence brings Carnevali’s poetic speech closer to local models. The result, on the other hand, cannot help underline the poet’s displacement and imperfect cultural and textual assimilation. Migrant authors “produce something 'new' and at the same time “constantly try to re-position themselves,” and the “allocation of meaning in the course of these operations can be located exactly across the borders, in the transition zones” between cultures (Wolf 78). Carnevali entered American literature, choosing a side in the stylistic debate – yet his texts continued to exist on the border, in the interpenetration of American and non-American elements. He identified such translational borders as a feature of Sandburg’s poetry in his 1921 review: Carnevali’s own poetry foregrounds its existence on transnational borders, provocatively stating its assimilation and resistance to assimilation at the same time.

¹⁰⁵ Some scholars place Sandburg into a broad canon of ethnic American literature, in spite of his undisputed belonging to the mainstream canon. He was not only “second generation by descent” but also “an author of many poems on ethnic themes” (Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity* 242).

2.1.2 The 1919 “Day of Summer” and Carnevali’s New York Poetry

The core of Carnevali’s poetic description of New York is the threat that the city poses to the poet’s individuality, expressed in free verse that records and reproduces the rhythms and images of the city itself. He constructed a style that followed the lesson of the American poets he admired, but was free and open enough to let him express his dissent with respect to the culture and society he was living in.

Carnevali’s New York is a multitude of codes and narratives, all of them perceived through the lens of his Old World background and expressed into American free verse. Urban modernity is to be understood as “an awareness of the plurality of codes, a thinking with and through translation, a continual testing of the limits of expression,” in which “translators are flâneurs of a special sort, adding languages as another layer of dissonance to the clash of histories and narratives on offer in the streets and passageways” (Simon 6). Carnevali engages with the multiple discourse of the urban environment, but his poetry is more often a critique than a celebration of the plurality of cultural codes of modernity:

Not so...
Not so disgusted after all.
O altars of a little comfort, altars of a dyspeptic god gone crazy in
America for lack of
 personality (hamburger steak, Irish stew, goulash, spaghetti, chop
 suey and curry!) O lunch-room counters!
(“Summer” 205–207)

Carnevali uses long-line free verse that lists and presents several elements (not unlike Whitman’s lists), all of them making up the multi-lingual and multicultural reality of New York. Yet, he underlines how the foods from all the world lose their specificity in the melting pot of America. This puts Carnevali’s fascination for Whitman, and for Carl Sandburg “the American” in a new light. He expressed his admiration for the inclusion of slang in Sandburg’s poetry. Diffident of unproblematic assimilation, he also relied on his own Old World difference to expose and criticise the effect of America

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on the migrant's soul. Boelhower observed that Carnevali in the *Autobiography* recalls "the complete indifference of the urban scene towards him, which he can only register and transcribe, not transmute or process" (Boelhower 167). "The Day of Summer" offers a glimpse of the experience as it happened while in America. The poem represents his most evident effort to "process" the reality of New York, combining the transcription and record of the urban environment (in long-line free verse) with the impressions of the poetic *I*.

Carnevali always sees New York through European eyes, as the place where hopes and expectations meet with the dangers of assimilation. It is significant that the only apparently positive image of New York in his early poetry is in his 1919 "Variation" on Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*.¹⁰⁶ Although it purports to be a variation on a play, the poem is not written in dialogue; rather, it gives voice to a single character, possibly the "Playboy" Chirsty Mahon, talking about his dream of moving to New York. Synge hints repeatedly that his character would have to flee Ireland eventually, but never mentions New York as a possible destination. In Carnevali's variation, the character imagines his future life in America: "It's New York I tell you..." (1). Carnevali hints at the transformation that America performs on immigrants as empowering, as the migrant promises to turn into a better version of himself, in a "city that lives / with work / for men stronger than I / with duties / for a different conscience than mine" (12-17). The poem depicts a migrant fantasy and not the migrant's reality: the New York home imagined by the character has "roses / from the roof down" (5). A migrant with some years of experience in the city, Carnevali was aware of the real spaces of the city and of immigrant neighbourhoods – as is evident from the description of tenement life in "The Day of Summer" or the "Tales of a Hurried Man."

The sum of Carnevali's New York poetry is the 1919 "The Day of Summer," a long poem (taking up fourteen pages of the issue of *Poetry* in

¹⁰⁶ Carnevali might have seen the play in New York (the first American tour was in 1911). Considering the role that his father played in Carnevali's desire to leave Italy, it is no wonder that he became interested in the play, whose protagonist attempts (and fails) twice to kill his own father. Carnevali's venture into literature was, in a sense, an attempt to perform a ritual oedipal murder that did not succeed.

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which it appeared) which appeared shortly after he left the city. It is divided into chronological sections (“Morning,” “Noon,” “Afternoon,” “Evening,” “Night”) and is based on the poet’s impressions as he walks through Manhattan, observing the people who rush through the streets. Mentions of poems titled “The Day of Winter” and “Preparations to a Day of Spring” in letters indicate that Carnevali in 1919 was considering writing a series of poems about the experience of different seasons in the city.¹⁰⁷ “The Day of Summer” is the only published one of the series. Alone, it makes up a significant portion of Carnevali’s poetic production while in New York, and his most convincing synthesis of the intimate, short lines of his first poems with the model of Whitmanian free verse. All of the motifs of the early poems (the threatening cityscape, Carnevali’s aspirations to become a great poet, celebration of youth, and the outsider’s critique on bourgeoisie) are brought together in the text.

Extended length, irregularity and the inclusion of several voices from the streets of Manhattan are the apparent Whitmanian features in “The Day of Summer.” Carnevali explored the possibility to break free of the limits imposed by metric – and even by the page, as lines expand into paragraphs. The fact might have puzzled even an enthusiastic Whitmanian like Monroe: we have no comment on “The Day of Summer,” but when he wrote about “The Day of Winter” Carnevali had to beg her not to cut down the long lines of the poem. Interestingly, he considered the longer lines in the poem as “long prose phrases” and instructed his editor to indent the words that did not fit in a single line.¹⁰⁸ This remark testifies that Carnevali considered long-line free verse as sharing some features with prose, or at least as capable of incorporating prose. This type of long line is present in “The Day of Summer”: the line beginning “O altars...,” quoted above, actually runs for the space of four lines in the magazine, but is still indented as one single “long prose phrase”. In the “Day of...” poems, preoccupation with the technique of free verse and the poetic speech of America goes hand in hand with the description of Carnevali’s displacement in the city. Features of

¹⁰⁷ Carnevali to Monroe, 18 March 1919, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32. It has not been possible to locate “The Day of Winter,” while some lines from “The Day of Spring” appear in Carnevali’s notebook kept at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

¹⁰⁸ Carnevali to Monroe, 18 March 1919, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32.

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Whitman/Sandburg's free verse (such as an assertion of the poetic *I*, and inclusion of popular language) are reproduced by Carnevali and bent to his own aesthetic goals. The form of the poem, apparently free of any stylistic constraint, responds to the tradition of free verse in such a way as to symbolise Carnevali's difficult assimilation, and the operation of translation that was taking place line by line.

The beginning of the poem reflects on the city environment as opposed to the poetic ideal, by bringing up a global poetic tradition before any context is provided:

How long ago was it
The dawn pleased Homer?
And Petrarca – was it among flowers
Dew-full, tearful for the love of the dawn,
That he sang his best song
For Laura?
(Carnevali, "Summer" 1–6)

These lines reflect on issues that were also central to urban modernism: a reaction to unprecedented changes in human life, exploring the present using the literary tradition as a tool. Modernism saw art as "the means by which to give structure and value to an otherwise formless modernity" and "restore a context to the chaotic reality of the moment" (Nicholls 173). On a practical level, such attitude fills modernist works with references and quotations. Carnevali expressed a characteristic sense of loss, a painful detachment from a time in which poetic words had a definite meaning and correspondence with the world. The poem symbolises this loss with the abrupt passage from idealised past to traumatic modernity:

In New York,
These summer days,
It's a swollen-faced hour,
Sick with a monstrous cold,
Gasping with the death of an expectance.
(Carnevali, "Summer" 11–15)

This kind of brutal juxtaposition is not dissimilar to Eliot and Pound's use of high culture references to expose a present void of meaning (see Pound's "the pianola replaced / Sappho's barbitos" in "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" or Eliot's clerks likened to Dante's dead souls in *The Waste Land*). Carnevali interprets

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New York from a distance, which Ballerini linked to his Mediterranean, pre-modern background, in which “agisce ancora il mito, o quanto meno, la condizione psicologica del e per il mito” (Ballerini 420).¹⁰⁹ His references to a past tradition do not have the function of bringing tradition back to life, but represent an imperfectly erased Mediterranean background. The Italian “Petrarca,” used instead of the English rendition *Petrarch*, signifies the remnant of an Italian identity – and yet the reference is incomplete, as Carnevali does not mention any particular “song” (which he presumably uses to render the medieval form of the *canzone*).

After appealing to literary tradition, “The Day of Summer” engages with the reality of New York. At a textual level, that means confronting the language(s) of the street, establishing a relationship between the poetic *I* and such language. The sensorial experience of the city demands its own language: “Now has the deep hot belly of the night/ Given birth to noises” (37-38), and the poet finds himself increasingly driven to find an adequate language to represent them. The stimuli increasingly contradict Carnevali’s earlier appeal to literature and introduce fragments of the language of the urban environment:

Stench
Of drenched clothes
And snore
Of married men.
Who shall ask the furnished-room poets to write
A song for the dawn?
 (“Summer” 73–78)

The “furnished-room” is for Carnevali the signifier of a whole life style, that of the lower middle class who lived in rented apartments, economically precarious and alienated. Furnished rooms, representing emotional bareness and the negation of traditional homes, summarised Carnevali’s New York. In a 1918 letter to Monroe, Carnevali called a group of drafts a part of his “furnished-room songs.”¹¹⁰ In the *Autobiography* he would speak of life in New York as “my life in the rooming-house, the furnished-rooms of America” (74). The image stayed in his mind even after his departure from

¹⁰⁹ “Myth is still in action, or at least the psychological condition relating to myth is.”

¹¹⁰ Carnevali to Monroe, 17 April 1918, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32, Folder 14. In 2006, Dennis Barone called his edition of Carnevali’s poetry *Furnished Rooms*.

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the United States, as he wrote a “Furnished Room Rhapsody” in 1928, in which he claimed:

Furnished room, you have held me in your arms;
and what I paid for the embrace,
what I lost,
what I left behind going away,
I alone know.
 (“Furnished Room Rhapsody” 26–30)

The poem underlines the close, emotional relationship between the poet and the environment in which he spent most of his American life (via repetition of “I,” and addressing the room as “you”). This relation, on the other hand, may only underline the precariousness of furnished-room life (“it is a house without being a home” 21).

Carnevali’s language, absorbed in the streets of New York, revolves around his use of a few key terms and phrases, that he received and reused to create his own English. Some of them relate specifically to phrases and words that, by becoming part of his everyday life, shaped his definition and narration of the city. Biographers write with admiration of how he learned much of his English “affascinato dalla scrittura aperta dei giganteschi messaggi pubblicitari e delle insegne dei negozi”¹¹¹ (Ballerini 418). In his letters, Carnevali actually points out that he “learned English by continuous reading” and mentions his study of the grammar.¹¹² It is undeniable all the same, that the urban linguistic environment plays a role in his understanding of America – and consequently in his poetry. The expression “furnished room” is a semantic whole, rooted in the experience of the American metropolis. It is quickly learned by the newcomer, and taken to symbolise the emotional dimension of life in rented rooms.

If “furnished rooms” symbolise emotional precariousness in the house, “free lunch counters,” is the phrase that stands for the precarious eating habits of the migrant. In the *Autobiography*, Carnevali stated: “your free lunch counters saved my life, oh, New York!” (*Autobiography* 75). In “The Day of Summer,” the lunch-room counters have a place in Carnevali’s critique of

¹¹¹ “Fascinated by the open writing of gigantic advertising banners, and shop signs”

¹¹² Carnevali to Harriet Monroe, 1 September 1917, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 43 Folder 11.

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food and culture, as “altars of a little comfort, altars of a dyspeptic god gone crazy in America for lack of personality” and “tripods of a little secure religion, tripods of a little secure beauty” where one may find all the foods brought to New York by immigrants (“Summer” 207–208). Carnevali foregrounds the cultural variety of food on sale in the streets of the city, listing them in Whitmanian accumulation (“hamburger steak, Irish stew, goulash, spaghetti, chop suey and curry!” 207); yet he also frames them within his critique of American multiculturalism. The image of the “dyspeptic god gone crazy” links food with culture and tradition only to underline the loss of value in their accumulation. The comparison of lunch-room counters with “tripods of a little secure religion” sets the language of the streets in conflict with its poetic transfiguration. Making use of Whitman-like lists, nevertheless Carnevali does much in favour of singing “One’s-self [...] a simple separate person,” while showing diffidence towards “the word Democratic, the word En-Masse” (“One's-Self I Sing” 1–2).

The people of the city are present in “The Day of Summer,” but their language and accents recreate a hostile and chaotic environment:

Who threw these kids here among us, them and their fun and war,
"GIMME!—GIMME !" (“Summer” 173)

Work, milk, bread, clothes, potatoes, potatoes...
This is
The big
Beauty rumbling on.
Is this
The world’s music forevermore?
This and the irrevocable peddlers
Who will come in an hour
To hurl loose:
“Pota-a-a-t-o-u-s, yeh-p-l-s, waa-ry meh-l-n”?
 (“Summer” 44–54)

The language of the streets is taken into account and brought into the poem, but graphically marked as being on a different level from the poet’s speech. This is also a constant of Carnevali’s fiction when he reproduces immigrant speech: in “Bogeyman” the Pole exclaims “I gotta fon da dichonary book” (“Bogey Man” 22); in “Lean Woman” the immigrant woman says to the

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narrator “[copyrighted material]”¹¹³ American modernists often played with the dialects of minorities in their works or in correspondence, either to expand their linguistic horizon or as a form of joke (North 9). Carnevali, who was conscious of being regarded as an outsider in the modernist milieu, appears to separate his inner speech (which he intends to write in Standard English) from the dialectal reality that he witnesses and records. If long-line free verse may incorporate street slang as “translated by the speaker’s consciousness” (Beyers 41), Carnevali uses spelling and the arrangement of words along the loose structure of free verse to mark the distinction between the poetic *I* and the speech that is incorporated from outside the poet’s consciousness.

Not only popular speech is included in the poem. Carnevali mocks journalistic language (he mentions “reading the *Evening Journal Sermon on Success*” right before having a nervous breakdown, 303), while the language of a rejection slip is reproduced as a sign of a hostile literary marketplace:

Oh, MAIL!

Ah, beggars:

‘I-am-though-I-refrain-from-saying-it-better-than-you-in-the-end.I-am-perfectly honest-evidently-nothing-up-my-sleeves... It-is-out-of-my-bounteous-goodness-that-I-like-you-a-little-in-spite-of...’

(“Summer” 79–81)

This prompts the poet to reflect on his “scanty rights to live” and on his “stuttering claim” to success. One element of everyday American language is cast in long, irregular Whitmanian free verse, but it is immediately countered by reflective language, which is expressed in short, even rhymed, lines (“so we advance/ at every chance / our stuttering claim and reference” 84-86).

Carnevali’s multiform verse enacts a separation of the poetic *I* and the linguistic environment, which goes against his immediate American references. He was aware that some of his contemporaries (Frost, Sandburg, Oppenheim) developed the democratic tendencies of Whitman’s poetry, taking a political stance via language as they “used the language of the common people” (Redding 685). So Sandburg, in the poems that Carnevali praised in his review, writes his marvel at the language that, in the great

¹¹³ Carnevali, “Lean Woman” [unpublished, probably 1919], in NLC Dawson, Box 21, Folder 699.

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crucible of American industry, men of different nationalities forge out of their difference:

Stammer at the slang of this –
Let us understand half of it.
In the rolling mills and sheet mills,
In the harr and boom of the blast fires,
The smoke changes its shadow
And men change their shadow
A nigger, a wop, a bohunk changes
(“Smoke and Steel” 37-43)

Neutralizing its own racial slurs, Sandburg’s poetry treats the working class with Whitmanian enthusiasm. One of Sandburg’s very first poems, “Happiness”, depicts the poet asking “professors who teach the meaning of life” (1) and “executives who boss the work of / thousands of men” (2) about what happiness is; until one Sunday afternoon he “saw a crowd of Hungarians under the trees with their women and children and a keg of beer and an accordion” (5). Migrants symbolise purity for “Carl the American” as Carnevali called him. Sandburg also cast on Italian migrants a more inclusive look than that of the Italian Carnevali: his Chicago Italians are spontaneous and lively, quarreling children or street vendors. The Italian language, though alien to him, seems to him to possess musical quality in itself in “Clinton, South of Polk”, while the poor and proud Italian matron of “Onion Days” grows in the long lines of the poem to the status of an American socialist heroine. Carnevali praised this inclusiveness in his review of Sandburg:

And one may call him American only if one knows such solid American types as the workers and criminals he sings the language of—the forgotten, submerged world where the oldest essences of life are preserved and continually renovated. (Carnevali, “Sandburg” 271)

Sandburg could look at migrants, including Italian migrants, as fulfilling a precise, positive role in his idea of America. His view is uncomplicated and essentialist: migrants possess certain features, which are inherent to their background, making their incorporation into American society desirable. Carnevali, on the other hand, seems to have instinctive perception of how “the everyday culture of migrants cannot be regarded as a moment of securing tradition and identity,” but rather as “the temporary results of processes” (Wolf 80). The Italian author may have expressed his fascination for the

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apparent inclusivity of American free verse in his essays, but he could never develop an uncomplicated and celebratory notion of assimilation such as Sandburg's. Moving in-between contrasting ideas of culture which threatened to flatten or annihilate his individuality, engaging with a language and style that were unfamiliar to him, he created poetry that foregrounds difference rather than inclusion.

Carnevali's poetry cannot accommodate a notion of communion with the American everyman or with fellow emigrants. In this sense, "The Day of Summer" is the strongest expression of a trend that had started in his early poetry, especially in the 1919 group of poems "Procession of Beggars." The first poem of the group, "Last Day," focuses on Carnevali's inner world as he is "listening to the great appeal of the things that have gone / crazy – this drunkard, that laughter –/ everywhere" ("Procession of Beggars" 22–24). In the mismatch between the self and the urban environment, Carnevali mentions the "call" of the "dead eyes/ in the dead faces/ in the crowd" (25–27). The second poem of the group, "Marche Funèbre" is even more explicit in the separation between the poet and the crowd:

The great corpse
is the crowd.
A whole day
it takes
to bury it.
[...]
I'm here for...
What am I here for?
Oh, to wail
a great
good bye!

Carnevali's poetic *I* flaunts his radical difference from the crowd. The poet dismisses the crowd as a faceless whole, associated with immobility and death. As he explains to an unnamed interlocutor that his role is only that of "wailing" a "great good bye," it becomes clear that he considers ironic detachment the only strategy to deal with a crowd that he does not believe he can redeem. The poetic *I* is not a Whitmanian synthesis with the spirit of America, but the only man alive in a crowd of "dead faces."

What is left of "The Day of Spring" in Carnevali's Chicago notebooks

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starts with a similar image of the American everyman as dead or dying, crushed by the capitalist environment:

The workingman
sings
sings himself to a sweet
to a sad, a sweet death
every morning -
these days
singing
when he walks to his job¹¹⁴

Similarly to “The Day of Summer,” “The Day of Spring” seems to have been intended to criticise the alienating cityscape and its effect on human life, using bleak irony: enjambements are used to counter the reader’s expectations as the “sweet” at the end of a line is ultimately revealed to refer to death. In “The Day of Summer”, this attitude towards the crowd is given more relevance, and the long lines and vivid images express Carnevali’s incomprehension of the capitalist logic bringing crowds of men to work:

This is the hour they go to their work
Eastward and westward—
Two processions, Silent.
 (“Summer” 89–92)

Has the first of them
Found
Down there
Something for his happiness?
And has he telephoned or telegraphed to the others
That they are going,
Without looking around,
Without knowing one another,
ALL
T O G E T H E R
Eastward and westward?
 (“Summer” 100–110)

The block capitals foreground the poet’s puzzled reaction to the synchronicity of the crowd, expressing his own non-synchronic attitude with respect to the city environment. The ironic suggestion that one of them might be leading the “procession” towards happiness (informing the others via telephone or telegraph) sets the poet’s priorities against the clockwork mechanisms of the

¹¹⁴ Carnevali, “from The Day of Spring” [unpublished, probably 1919], in NLC Dawson, Box 22, Folder 703.

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city. Once again, Carnevali uses elements found in Sandburg and Whitman – rhetorical questions, the equation of the American crowd to a single entity moving eastward or westward with the sun – only to subvert them according to his own moral compass. The language of Sandburg and Whitman provided him with features for his stylistic inventory, working as translational influence on the formation of his poetic speech in the new language. The translation did not on the other hand aim for complete equality, as he wrote against total cultural assimilation. Carnevali mentions Manhattan’s “sacred crowds,” but that is just an element of parody as it refers to the poet scouting the railway station for “Not-yet-known breasts and strange thighs” (245–246), reducing the celebration of the crowd to a search for sexual encounters.

Several lines in “The Day of Summer” are very long, but there are also short lines with a different function, that of presenting the inner rhythm of the poet’s self:

I am young,
Nice day,
I look
Straight ahead,
Staccato steps,
Stiff and cool,
I walk.
 (“Summer” 157–163)

Lines like these progress the poetic narration, recreating the “staccato steps” of the poet in the streets of New York – reflecting on the rhythm by means of rhythm itself. The poem accommodates external rhythms; but the inner rhythms of Carnevali’s thoughts play a central role as they mediate between the poetic *I* and the “Street”. They are reminiscent of Carnevali’s early experiment with poetry, in which he expressed his most intimate feeling. In “The Day of Summer” on the other hand they represent the other side of Carnevali’s response to the metropolitan environment as the poem gradually takes the form of a descent into insanity, expressed through fragmentation and obsessive repetition:

My youth is but a regret and a madness
A madness Jesus Christ! I am not old yet, never mind what I have
told you, what I have been!
I have not irremediably committed myself, I am not lost—
For pity’s sake

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Let me go
Let me go free!
For pity's sake
Let me go
With my youth !
("Summer" 128–136)

Hron has individuated a pattern, in the way in which migrant narratives convey the authors' "anger, frustration, or anxiety" in the newly acquired language

through exclamations, rhetorical questions, or repetitive declarative statements, or they may allude to psychological problems, such as trauma, confusion, or alienation, through repetition, fragmentation, or the use of ellipsis. (Hron 48)

The repetitions and trauma vocabulary appear side by side with Carnevali's recordings of the New York environment: together they represent the whole of his urban experience.

As the "Day of Summer" ends, the dialectics of assimilation appear to prevail. Form breaks down, annihilation seems near, and Carnevali decides to "walk with the marionettes" (306). The poem concludes with an unsettling image of assimilation as annihilation:

I have a brain for everything,
I shall dance their ragtime.
Will someone whisper, sometime –
'There is a man who dances
With a strange embarrassment' ?
("Summer" 314–318)

As the typically American music of ragtime plays ("*their* ragtime"), only the slightest "embarrassment" is left. Carnevali had entered the Whitmanian world of the American people and their different voices. In the crowd, he did not find the totalizing vision Whitman had found. Instead, he found his strong individuality trapped in a world of mere things. As Boelhower underlined, Carnevali's poetic achievement may only represent his shortcomings as "reality wins; the transforming power of the inner self proves in the end to be another American myth for the narrator" (143). Yet, his works testify that an attempt to transform urban reality had occurred, polemically addressing American culture and displaying difference from the pages of modernist magazines. Carnevali's reception and re-elaboration of American free verse

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was neither total nor painless, as it implies the intervention of a foreign form to which the original self must adapt. The most notable result was “The Day of Summer,” in which elements of American models were used for an unsettling display of migrant displacement.

2.1.3 “Neuriade” and the poetry of Chicago after the crisis

Carnevali moved to Chicago in July 1919, where he acted as an assistant editor for *Poetry*. He was now closer to the Midwest of Sandburg, which gave him the chance to write his essay on him as “Our Great Carl Sandburg.” In the *Autobiography*, he remembered the city as more welcoming than New York: “New York screamed or shouted at me, but Chicago stammered, it was still so very young” (*Autobiography* 143). It is possible that he saw the move as a chance for a fresh start, but in April 1920 he was forced to resign from *Poetry*. The first signs of sickness appeared in the early months of that year; the crisis left a mark in the poet’s life, which shall be analysed in the following part of the thesis. Carnevali’s illnesses (syphilis, encephalitis lethargica) did not prevent him from writing poetry and criticism: the years 1920-1922 are characterised by Carnevali’s attempts to continue his writing career in spite of his illness. He communicated and dramatised the illness itself in his poetry, while his criticism seems not to have undergone any particular change. Carnevali’s re-elaboration of his American influence did not stop, but adapted to his present condition.

The first result of his attempt to keep engaging with American literature while coming to terms with his own sickness is the short 1921 collection “Neuriade”, published in *Poetry*. “Neuriade” is linked to his Chicago experience, in the same way that “The Day of Summer” was linked to Carnevali in Manhattan. It is a group of twelve poems, most of them quite short. Topics vary, and yet there is a certain link to illness and recovery – the title itself, “Neuriade”, is formed by attaching the Italian suffix *-iade* that distinguishes titles of epic poems (*Iliade*, *Eneide*) to the root *neur-*: that is to say, a modern epic focusing on a modern obsession, the psyche. Although some poems appear to be collected from previous years (the 1919 “Marche

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Funèbre” reappears here as “Funeral March”), there is hardly any trace of the chaotic, unequal rhythm that recreated the discomfort in “The Day of Summer.” The tone is calmer, and more even, in long and colloquial Sandburg-like lines. Some poems are brief vignettes, not unlike those that were present in Sandburg's collections of the time. These brief reflections revolve around one single image, like this “Smoke”:

All the smoke of the cigarettes of dreamers went over to the sky, and
formed that blue vault
you see up there.

There is also room for modernist parody and imitation in the “Neuriade” poems. Carnevali writes a “Sermon” in which modernist use of Oriental imagery is exploited for his own goals. Imagist poets were fascinated with the brevity of haikus, and Pound’s translations of Chinese poetry created “the predominant idiom and image of Chinese poetry in English for Anglo-American Modernism” (Yao 25). Carnevali parodies the poetic fashion by inventing “Chao-Mong-Mu”, a generic Chinese holy man who understands the laws of nature, setting him against the faults of modern man:

Chao-Mong-Mu freely laid his hands over the sky:
You do not know how to lay your hands over the breasts of your
beloved.

Chao-Mong-Mu made the tree dance at his will:
You do not know how to hug a rough tree and say "darling" to it.
 (“Sermon” 1-4)

This 'Oriental' vignette is part of Carnevali’s reception and re-use of modernist styles in a spirit of parody. Carnevali alludes to the same tradition that modernist poets were recuperating and adapting to their poetic needs; he turns it against them to cast doubts on the authenticity of their engagement, and affirm his own belief in simple, poetic truths.

The poems of “Neuriade”, in their varied topics, are a poetic recollection of the moments following trauma. There are explicit links to events of the recent past: most notably to a time in which, after he had his first crisis in Chicago, he lived in a shanty in the Indiana dunes near Lake Michigan. He wrote more profusely about this experience in the *Autobiography*, writing chapters that have been defined “a deranged,

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hallucinated version of *Walden*” (Buonomo 58). They narrate Carnevali’s intention to reconcile with life and nature, yet are placed in a posthumous, fragmentary book, which follows the failure of such attempts:

Here began the last great beautiful days of my life! [...] I found a burnt-down shanty, shrouded in what seemed to be an old sail, and there I went to sleep. I slept utterly alone and unafraid. This night and the nights to come were bitterly cold and I froze but I rejoiced. I trembled, trembled with my illness and the cold, but I was happy. (*Autobiography* 191)

Carnevali in the 1930s recalled getting back in contact with nature, a moment of illusory hope of finding balance in America. The 1921 poem from the “Neuriade” collection describing this experience, “Lake” conveys the same desire. Boyle actually quotes this poem in her edition of the *Autobiography*, juxtaposing it with the author’s later recollection, creating an uncomfortable short-circuit between different stages of self-portrait.

“Lake” is linked to his autobiographical tale, but also to Carnevali’s stylistic development at that stage. Unlike Manhattan, his experience on the lake allows him a vision of nature. The opening of “Lake” is a moment of Whitmanian celebration: “Sitting on a bench facing God's beautiful lake/ A poem to God beautiful” (“Lake” 1–2). In the poem, nature seems to grant the possibility of an allegiance to America, of recovering from both illness and cultural shock. Repeating lines underline the poet’s precarious health (“the love a poor sick body held [...] / a poor sick body gave it all to you” 4–6) and the poem ultimately states the uselessness of his research for stability (“Words die in the fingers of a sick man” 30). Even in the apparent lack of metrical stability, Carnevali’s poetry often finds a way to reaffirm the search for a structure, which would reflect spiritual stability. The natural environment is linked to Chicago, in which he found a more congenial cultural milieu:

Having risen out of your waters,
In front of my great eyes now
There is a mad blur of sunlight,
And the City spread out before me calling from a great curve:
"Come, enter, conquistador!"
("Lake" 9–13)

The city’s invitation is in enthusiastic, Whitmanian tones, while he speaks of

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“my great eyes”: it is a rare occurrence, in Carnevali’s poetry, when he does not ironically downplay his achievements and personal appearance, choosing to celebrate himself instead. The Whitmanian tone is interspersed with European references as he describes himself, bathing in the lake, as a “fresh-water Neptune” (24), while the “water rang little bells / trickling down / along [his] flesh” (25-27). The poet joins a pre-technological, mythical world through a Latin metaphor. The attempt to recover passes through an acceptance of nature and of the American landscape, but that does not eliminate the use of Old World references. Death is present in the poem, as it featured more and more in post-crisis Carnevali: swimming in Lake Michigan, Carnevali “flirted with Death”: yet he also depicts himself “laugh[ing] at Death, as Death’s brother, the devil, would” (“Lake” 18–19). Death is experienced as communion with nature, and the poet seems to believe in the necessity of embracing it, in a quasi-Whitmanian moment of acceptance.

The two last poems of the group, “Old Accustomed Impudent Ghost” and “Invocation to Death,” seem to imply that poetic reconciliation with life was not so easy to achieve. In the latter, Carnevali invokes death, which is personified as a Lady (in the Italian fashion) and linked with the world of furnished rooms that had caused him much distress in New York:

If She would only come quietly,
Like a lady—
The first lady and the last.
[...]
Just not to fear any longer
The landlady.
 (“Invocation to Death” 24-26, 30-31)

His lines start to break and stutter again here, as the impossibility of recovery seems to disrupt the life-affirming mood of “Lake.” Although quite short as a collection, “Neuriade” contains some of Carnevali’s most sincere attempts at a Whitmanian celebration of America, as well as the most evident disruptions of Whitmanian certainty. Carnevali’s confrontation with American free verse was a long process of reception and re-elaboration. It started with the naïve fascination of a self-taught twenty-year old, yet in the space of a few years he was writing criticism and free verse poetry in a major

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poetry review. Carnevali had fastened on the characteristics of American free verse from the beginning, and expressed his admiration for Whitman and for the Whitmanian poets of his time. As he struggled to make the form his own, he used recognizably Whitmanian features to express his cultural difference.

Facing sickness, Carnevali kept engaging with poetics, writing and discussing poetry as much as his condition allowed him. Whitmanian verse, and the negation of it, are still important features in his post-crisis poetry – and he did not stop discussing American poetry in criticism. The months in which Carnevali was presumably writing the “Neuriade” poems saw the publication of his essay on Carl Sandburg. It was then that he made the aforementioned distinction between “Carl the American” and “Carl the Swede.” In the light of his own personal and artistic development, this distinction gains fuller sense: he devised a split between an inclusive American self and an arcane Old World self, as his poetry struggled between Whitmanian influence and the disruption of Whitmanian form. The split that Carnevali devised in Sandburg’s poetry was actually more evident in his own poetry, generating a dialectic between forms and languages in his verses, which enacted the contrast between assimilation and resistance as he faced the American environment.

Carnevali’s American models were present in his mind even after his return to Italy. In the *Autobiography*, Sandburg is a cherished memory and a recognised influence. He is quoted in one of the book’s lyric moments, at the end of a chapter about Carnevali’s childhood in a small Piedmont town:

Goodbye, chestnut-trees of Cossato, if you are there no longer, goodbye, mushrooms and violets and strawberries, goodbye, little cakes of cheese, goodbye, small torrential rivers, goodbye, forests by the rivers – you probably have all gone, gone as all beautiful things go, not one lasts, as says great Carl. (*Autobiography* 30)

Carnevali is here quoting a poem by Sandburg, “Autumn Movement”, in which the opening line “I cried over beautiful things knowing no beautiful thing lasts” precedes an image of the coming and going of seasons (“Autumn Movement” 1). Quoting Sandburg is a way of claiming him as a colleague and companion when he was no longer that. Sandburg is “great Carl” and, by calling him by first name, Carnevali manages to suggest that he belonged to

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American literature for a while. Making explicit references to texts from the canon is possibly the most effective way to help a text make its way into that canon. Sandburg's words, presumably written with the Illinois landscape as an inspiration, resurface in Carnevali's book, where he uses them to frame and comment on his Italian childhood. When describing the landscape of his childhood in his new, adopted language, Carnevali made a reference to a poet who had been treating similar topics in that language.

The process of acquisition of stylistic elements from Whitman and from his heir Sandburg may not have been a smooth process, and – as in any true translation process – the transition to the new language and style was never complete and absolute. Yet it was a deep and felt admiration, a necessary ingredient of the language that Carnevali constructed to address and confront American literature, leaving traces even in the following decades, even after Carnevali had returned to Italy.

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Carnevali was working on the “Day of...” series of poems when he wrote to Monroe, asking that

commas, semi columns [sic], columns [sic] and dashes must be left where they are, as, by now, I have grown into a certain ortograph [sic] that is *my own* and not English, nor Italian, nor *correct* nor incorrect.¹¹⁵

Carnevali’s comment concerns the more formal aspects of orthography, such as punctuation; but it contains the idea that he considered his language to be his own, neither English nor Italian.

The analysis of the previous chapters has demonstrated that the orthography (and grammar) of his work in fact tended to conform to a standard variety of American English. Carnevali saw correct English as necessary for acceptance in the American milieu: as he wrote to Monroe at the beginning of their collaboration, “I am presently busy learning English and becoming less of an ignoramus.”¹¹⁶ Carnevali’s poetry and fiction are written in a newcomer’s English, a linguistic medium used (with Caliban’s rage) to penetrate American literature with a new and uncompromising voice. This newcomer’s English, however, always appears to respect orthographical and syntactical conventions of American English. The occasional misspell or uncertainty in a letter (such as the one above) or early draft is usually corrected in successive versions: in terms of final product, there is no apparent strategy to deviate intentionally from the standards of the literary language that he read in magazines such as *Poetry*. Even when reporting the speech variants of other immigrants in his work (the Bogeyman and the Lean Woman in the eponymous short stories, the street peddlers in “The Day of Summer”), their accents are reproduced via phonetic spelling that implies an English reader, following conventions generally used to represent phonetic variants of English: “[copyrighted material]” (“Lean Woman”).¹¹⁷

Several Italian commentators have implied, in different ways, that

¹¹⁵ Carnevali to Monroe, March 1919, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹⁶ Carnevali to Monroe, answered 1 February 1918, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32, Folder 14.

¹¹⁷ Carnevali, “Lean Woman,” 1919 [unpublished], in NLC Dawson, Box 21, Folder 699.

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Carnevali's English somehow possessed Italian qualities. Linati in 1925 attempted to introduce him to the Italian public by speaking of a "lingua inglese irradiata da una vivacità tutta Latina, e quasi direi fiorentinesca"¹¹⁸ ("Un uomo che ha fretta" 3), while Fink began the critical rediscovery of Carnevali by speaking of a "travestimento linguistico"¹¹⁹ of Italian (86). Cacho Millet appears sure that "dietro al sedicente poeta americano c'era sempre la parola, l'istinto italiano"¹²⁰ ("Un discepolo de La Voce" 9); while Fracassa more recently advanced the hypothesis that Carnevali's poetic speech involved covering his native *langue* (in the Saussurean sense of underlying linguistic structure) with the "fonemi radicalmente alieni"¹²¹ of another language's *parole* (143). The issue is inherent to translingual literature, and linked to the temptation to see an author's native language always present beyond the superficial layer of the adopted language, filtering through the cracks.

The search for an underlying first language beyond the language of writing may have two dimensions: a lexical and grammatical one, looking for the sounds of the first language; and an intertextual and literary one, attempting to link the translingual to writers of his or her first language. In both cases, the analysis has to consider the possibility that two or more languages are at work in the same monolingual text. For translinguals like Carnevali in his American years, who tend towards correction in the adopted language, the presence of an underlying language is a matter of shades, suggestions, rhythms and stylistic influences, rather than tangible linguistic interference.

¹¹⁸ "English infused with a Latin vitality, almost Florentine I would say."

¹¹⁹ "Linguistic disguise."

¹²⁰ "Behind the self-proclaimed American poet there always were Italian words and instinct."

¹²¹ "Radically alien phonemes."

2.2.1 Between Multilingual Influence and Total Assimilation: the Proximities

Looking at Carnevali's drafts and sketches in his notebooks, it seems that he composed all of his poetry and prose directly in English, without passing through Italian – that his thoughts were 'already' in English when he committed them to the page. In the notebooks that Carnevali left in Chicago, the embryonic stages of poems, proses and essays (several of which were never published anywhere) are already in English: the pages appear full of corrections, crossed out words, afterthoughts and uncertainties, but the creative process seems to take place in English, tending towards compliance with standards of syntax and grammar.¹²² Carnevali chose English as his medium and adhered to its conventions with a newcomer's enthusiasm. This did not prevent him from using the medium in a way that articulates his differentiation from American culture.

It has been observed that "assimilated authors [working in a second language] seek by a sort of hypercorrection to make the linguistic traces of their origins disappear" (Casanova 255). This notion cannot be countered simply by setting "assimilated authors" in opposition with "dissimilated authors" who flaunt their cultural difference by creating their own hybrid version of the host language (Casanova 266). Multiple shades of assimilation are in fact involved, and a variety of translingual strategies: translingual authors have in common the use of a second language to address new audiences, but the strategies vary as they face the "complex task of resisting, reformulating, or reproducing prescriptive literary and sociocultural models" (Hron 47). Different strategies depend on context, as well as on the inherent characteristics of bilingualism, which is never a smooth passage between two discrete entities but a continuum of competing elements.

¹²² In Carnevali's notebooks of sketches and drafts (NLC Dawson, Box 22, Folder 703) there are Italian phrases and isolated words among other random jottings – and the fragment of a short poem in Italian, dedicated to a child in his neighborhood ("il bimbo Howard").

Only in one case, however, the Italian phrases appear as the origin of an English work. One piece of writing in the "Orders" notebook bears the crossed-out Italian title "Prolegomeni di un[sic] arte della ribellione" above its English title "Poetic Pragmatism – Prolegomena of an Enacted Art of Rebellion." The poem is left unfinished after six lines, and its Italian title is an exception among Carnevali's drafts (NLC Dawson, Box 22, Folder 703).

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The analysis of the translingual text – especially when the focus is the more obscure relation in the text, the one between the author and the first language – must take into account the specificity of the multiple cultural and linguistic constraints that are resisted or reproduced by the author. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari's 1975 *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure* is exemplary; it has often been quoted as a theoretical paradigm for the study of translingualism, but also contested by comparative literature scholars because of philological or cultural approximations. The book used Kafka, and his position as a Prague Jewish writer composing in German, to analyse a “minor literature” in the sense of “that which a minority constructs within a major language” (Deleuze and Guattari 16). Deleuze and Guattari take the use of German by Jewish writers in Prague as a model for the “revolutionary conditions” encountered by “every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature (18). This approach allows them to dedicate only a few hints as to the linguistic properties of “Prague German that was influenced by Czech” (Deleuze and Guattari 23). Scholars have criticised them precisely on these grounds: “what, after all, is this subversive ‘Prague German’ that Kafka wrote? Deleuze and Guattari offer no philological descriptors at all” (Corngold 274). Corngold warns the reader about the difficulties of claiming that the distinctive brand of German spoken in Prague was recognizable in Kafka’s texts, as he always reportedly intended to write standard German (273).

Without the space to join in the specific debate, I would like to point out what the researcher of translingualism may learn from the case of Deleuze and Guattari. They have the undeniable merit of having underlined how an author’s approach to a major literary language is influenced by the use of it as a second language. Yet, they have been subject to criticism for asserting the theoretical abstraction while failing to engage directly with the author’s language:

although Deleuze and Guattari articulate their theoretical project through an apparently specific geography, history, and writer, they abstract the theory away from a genuine encounter with particular political contexts and historical situations. (Seyhan 27)

The specificity of the context, and the author’s individual intention towards

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the use of language, is crucial in determining the linguistic strategy that the author employed, or at least its visible part in the text. Translingual authors do not necessarily use idiosyncratic variation of the target language, although the translingual text is always the result of an approach to an unfamiliar linguistic reality, and the attitude towards language cannot be the same as that of a monolingual author. In the absence of apparent signs of linguistic difference, the question is the author's attitude regarding the standard variety (in Carnevali's case, his diffidence and admiration for the commonplace) and whether there are elements, in this apparently seamless transition from a language to another, that betray the author's origin. Translingual speech may or may not have a collective dimension: Carnevali's language, for example, has no apparent links to the Italian-American variety of English that he could hear in New York. Moreover, it did not have connections with the English that other writers of Italian descent were crafting in those years, which sometimes elaborated the language of Italian immigrants for artistic purposes.¹²³ Carnevali's English is instrumental to his existence as foreign body within American literature, and his linguistic strategy while in America involves the creation of texts in Standard English, with some stylistic elements that are probably responsible for the impression of familiarity on the Italian commentators' part.

Italian claims to familiarity in Carnevali's English are better understood in the light of a 1976 debate on the language of Puzo's *Godfather*. Then, a critic took phrases such as "she called herself Kay Adams" (with the verb *to call* used in the same way as the Italian *chiamarsi*) as sign of linguistic alterity, wondering "how readers not familiar with this Italian expression [were] interpreting the passage" (Di Pietro 3). Other critics, Sollors reports, argued that "recipes for lasagna [were] generally available in American

¹²³ In particular, Pietro Di Donato's 1939 novel *Christ in Concrete* recreates the "rhythms and sonority of the Italian language" by "recording the broken English which results when the immigrant tries to speak English" and "by translating the immigrants' Italian into English" (Gardaphé, "Introduction" xii). Di Donato's English is rooted, much more than Carnevali's language, into the social reality of emigration. Its links to modernist experimentation have been on the other hand underlined, as the "elaborate layering of multiple translation and self-translation" in *Christ in Concrete* creates "at once a high modernist prose [... and a powerful mix of realist intention and daring experimentation" (Polezzi, "Polylingualism" 140). Di Donato's experiments with language happened, however, when Carnevali was already in Italy, in the final stages of his illness.

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cookbooks,” and “many languages (among them French and Russian) know the reflexive ‘calling oneself’ in the sense of ‘being named’” (*Beyond Ethnicity* 12). Puzo’s appropriation of Italian cultural and linguistic elements does not prevent understanding on the American audience’s part, nor damage the book’s claim to a place in American literature. Nonetheless, a phrase such as “she called herself Kay Adams” has an underlying Italian structure. The choice is not accidental and provides an immediate sign of alterity to be recognised by an informed reader, without impairing the target audience’s understanding. The same applies to Carnevali when he writes sentences like “and as for spaghetti and ravioli, let me tell you once for all that parsley chopped fine and one small onion and . . .” (“Tale III” 32). The sentence does not pose difficulties on the American reader, nor does it deviate from the English norm. It is multilingual, but spaghetti were already becoming a staple of American cuisine (and ravioli were not probably unknown in New York): a safe, non-puzzling multilingual interference. A phrase like “parsley chopped fine” works much like Puzo’s “she called herself Kay Adams:” it hardly deviates from the norm, but it reproduces an Italian structure, translating the colloquial Italian *prezzemolo tagliato fine*, getting closer to it than a more ‘Anglo-Saxon’ structure like “finely chopped parsley.” The translingual origin of the sentence enacts Carnevali’s cultural difference, without impairing the reader’s comprehension.

Carnevali’s English generally follows the norm, but the Italian commentators’ claim that Italian was somehow involved in his language is backed by a close reading of his work, where Italian-sounding rhythms and words are sometimes discernible, suggesting a use of a continuum of lexical proximities between Italian and English rather than actual interference. This does not mean that there is an actual, concrete Italian source text by Carnevali that he translated into English; but the result still may enact “the scandal of translation,” the notion that “the origin is fragmented, that monoglossia is always provisional, that other languages precede, ghost or compete with the dominant idiom in any society” (Cronin, *Across the Lines* 28). The language of Carnevali’s American prose and poetry exploits similarities and proximities between Italian and English, challenging monoglossia by implying the presence of other idioms, rhythms and systems of reference

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alongside with it. These features are part of Carnevali's critique of American culture from within the forms and structures of American poetry. As seen in the previous chapter, passages like this involve the re-use of Whitmanian style to criticise Whitmanian celebrations of America:

This and the irrevocable peddlers
Who will come in an hour
To hurl loose:
"Pota-a-a-a-t-o-u-s, *yeh-p-l-s*, waa-ry *meh-l-n*?"
Little apocalyptic faces...
("Summer" 48–56)

The use of American rhythms in the critique of American society goes hand in hand with the use of words that are not excessively Italianate, but whose Latin roots make them available to him on a different level than the everyday American language. The "world's music" involves the accent of American street vendors, that he records and reproduces, as well as his judgment on them, which is expressed by adjectives such as "irrevocable" and "apocalyptic." The words are not un-English, but they are quite close to the Italian *irrevocabili* and *apocalittiche*, in virtue of their common Latin origin. The history of the English language provides Carnevali with words that are part of a high register of English, but are more familiar to him than many everyday English words because of the Latin or Greek root in common with Italian. The etymon becomes active and fertile for Carnevali, providing him with common ground in the translational operations that mark his passage from unfamiliarity to familiarity in English. At a stylistic level, this common ground expresses the reflections of the poetic *I* in contrast with the language of the American environment.

Carnevali's predilection for words with a common root between Italian and English may be more or less intentional, dictated by choice or by an instinctive sense of familiarity. In both cases, such lexical choices express Carnevali's process of understanding, categorizing and resisting America. The passage from "The Day of Summer" quoted above results in the poet exclaiming "I was born for a sylvan century, may I claim to be left alone?" ("Summer" 57). He casts the word "sylvan" against the "noise" of twentieth-century New York, evoking antique, poetic Italian (*silvano*): the juxtaposition makes its Latin root more evident in contrast with the

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environment. The word enters Carnevali's language, signifying refusal of assimilation: it resurfaces in the late 1920s, in a story about his Italian clinic where he remembers a woman who "in New York, where the whirlwind of grime and dust tries to wrap her around, asks, as I did, for a little sylvan beauty" ("Rubazziana II" 146–147). As Carnevali conforms to American style, he also employs the proximities of English and Italian to express differentiation. The text is not less "American" for this, nor are there any signs that he translated it from an Italian original; yet, it points to the author's Italian origins. The analysis of the use of Italian-English proximities in Carnevali's text enables the understanding of how Carnevali could communicate an Italian point of view without trespassing the linguistic borders of English. This vocabulary casts a judgment on America, conceptualizing the surrounding environment through metaphor or synthesizing the poet's emotions in one word.

A bilingual is "*not* the sum of two complete and incomplete monolinguals," but rather a specific individual whose language is determined by the "co-existence and constant interaction of the two languages" (Grosjean 13). A translingual author is subject to the continuous flow of contrasting influences and stimuli that constitute the bilingual's language, but he or she needs to give it a communicable shape, to address a usually monolingual audience. The textual results are a function of the author's bilingualism, but they may or may not display the interference of other languages: they are ultimately determined by the strategy chosen by the author. Yet, even when multilingual interference is not apparent – as in Carnevali's American years – the two languages are a part of the author's background, and may influence textual decisions even at the least evident level. Carnevali shows a high degree of English proficiency in his early years as a published writer; yet, the influence of Italian may be visible, performing the function of separating the poet from the American surroundings.

"The Day of Summer" dwells constantly on the linguistic proximities as the poetic *I* records the audible reality of Manhattan and then interprets it through words that have roots in common with Italian:

But your faces are faces of rancor:
[...]

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Imbecility is an immense maw, and at noon
It is hungry with a thousand crawling hungers.
So that happy bewildered imbecile of a sun
Looks bewildered at me,
Wondering that I am so utterly disgusted
("Summer" 194; 200–204)

Carnevali's interpretation of the reality of Manhattan dwells on words that have immediate Italian counterparts, and give an Italian flavor to his bitter attack on the existential void of Manhattan (*rancore*, *imbecillità*, *imbecille*, *disgustato*). Carnevali transfigures the crowds of Manhattan using metaphors that largely delve on proximity: they are "grotesques walking / grotesques for no one to laugh at" ("Summer" 95–96). The reference here is both to the grotesque as decorative art and to the ridiculous quality the poet spots in the crowd – a meaning especially pertinent to the Italian *grottesco*. "The Day of Summer" constantly plays with the juxtaposition of such judgements with the description of life in New York. The poet's profession of faith in the word relies on the proximities of Italian and English: "My malediction on the cowards who are afraid of *the word* (*the word* is a kind sweet child, a kind sweet child!)" ("Summer" 210). Carnevali uses the word "malediction," which is less common than *curse* but closer to the Italian *maledizione*, as the poet's judgment on the world becomes final, dividing it between those who believe in "*the word*" and those who do not. The *word* in question is an English word that is linked to Italian by the etymon, the common root that makes it more familiar, and possibly more effective in the poet's view.

In the New York poems, the poet's inner world is represented through words that have roots and sound in common with Italian. In "The Day of Summer" the poets are represented "Hesitating everywhere, hesitating fearfully" as they use their "delicate hands" and walk "unfrequented roads" ("Summer" 211–213). In other earlier poems, more concentrated on the poet's inner world than on the poet-vs.-America dialectic, the words that describe Carnevali's emotions and sensations often have an Italian equivalent ready at hand. "Drôlatique-Sérieux," from the "Splendid Commonplace" series, is a brief impression of sunrays entering the poet's bedroom as he smokes a cigarette. The rays enter the room "with the glad fury / Of a victorious dagger wielded by an adventurous child" ("Drôlatique-Sérieux" 2–3): the simile is

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obtained through an abundance of terms close to their Italian equivalents (*vittoriosa, daga, avventuroso*). At the end of the poem, as the smoke of his cigarette meets the sunrays, he wonders whether this is “blasphemous” (*blasfemo*). At this stage, Carnevali tends to use the last line of his poems to summarise his impressions. At the end of the 1919 “Nocturne,” the poetic *I* comments on the appearance of a small portion of the moon through the windowpanes: “It suffices.” More Latinate than the Anglo-Saxon “enough,” it is closer to the Italian *sufficiente* and enables the poet to confirm the poetic value of an every-day, mundane image. The same happens at the end of “When It Has Passed,” where he sums up the poem’s essence as “the remembrance” (13) – close to the Italian *rimembranza*. At the end of “To the Poets” he likens their voice to “winds that purify and create” (11); “purify,” close to the Italian *purificare*, is employed also in “The Day of Summer” to indicate the poet’s desire of redemption from the pollution of the city: “Nevertheless I go to perform the ceremony / Of purification...” (“Summer” 23–24).

The “Neuriade” collection, Carnevali’s last poetic accomplishment in America, uses the proximities to describe his attempts to come to terms with illness on the shores of Lake Michigan. Carnevali’s description of the lake presents several adjectives, with a Latin root, that he had used to define and categorise New York: “And there stood the tremendous sun” (“Lake” 21). The description of the poet’s inner world follows the patterns individuated in his New York poetry. He speaks of the “cosmic humor / That lets foolish impossibilities, like me, live” (“Invocation to Death” 16-17), and of an “Old Accustomed Impudent Ghost” representing his old, troubled New York self staring at him in defiance (“impudent,” or *impudente*) from the mirror. The language of “Lake” in the “Neuriade” series also exemplifies some idiosyncratic features of Carnevali’s English, as he uses English words as if they were their Italian equivalents, causing a slight shift of meaning in the process. He speaks of Lake Michigan “gilded in the morning” (“Lake” 22), using “gilded” as direct translation of the Italian *dorato*, which means both ‘gilded’ and, as in this case, ‘golden;’ at the same time, he writes “Your absinthe / has intoxicated me” (“Lake” 7–8), and the poem’s context makes it ambiguous whether Carnevali intended “intoxicated” or *intossicato*,

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‘poisoned.’

Carnevali’s choice of words that are etymologically proximate often has a specific function in poetry. They perform this function within a rhythmic pattern that, as we have seen, aimed at aligning itself with certain styles of American free verse. They thus often stand out rhythmically with respect to the Anglo-Saxon words because of their length, which sets the poems further adrift from an already loose pattern:

Heavy morning,
With one friend gone
And two loves ended,
Heavy morning.

Heavy morning,
With all the dust
Accumulated
Over these books.
 (“Morning Song”)

At the bottom of the abyss of sleep
A black cradle rocks.
Pain, slight, with *evanescent* fingers
Pushes it.
Under the cradle is earth,
To cover and stifle you.
 (“Sleep”)

The first example comes from a 1925 poem, showing how Carnevali, already back in Italy, still tried to replicate the structure of American forms. The way in which the first stanza is framed by repeating lines, in a structure of four, is reminiscent of folk music. When the Italianate word “accumulated” is present, it takes up a whole line in the loose four-five syllabic pattern. In the second sample, the poet’s tentative regularity almost creates iambic pentameters – a form so firmly established in English that even Whitman himself used it covertly in his poetry (Finch 32). A word such as *evanescent*, because of its length, resists assimilation into the everyday English of his poetry. The uniqueness of Carnevali’s poetry is typified by loose patterns interweaving colloquial English together with Italianate words that belong to a higher register of English. To Carnevali they were equally accessible, even more familiar than their synonyms of Anglo-Saxon origin. Proximate words appear to perform specific functions in the poems, coming more directly from a part of Carnevali’s vocabulary on which he has a firmer grasp, summing up

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his worldview and recurring multiple times in different texts to perform the same function.

Carnevali's prose does not have the same need of synthesizing in the short space of a line, the poet's view of the world around him, investing single words with power by giving them a special place in his diction. Yet, there are passages in his "Tales of a Hurried Man" where it is possible to find the same Italian-sounding adjectives that are in his poetry:

Opposite there tower the obese gas tanks, dolorous with rust, sick with blotches of grey paint, grotesquely solemn. ("Tale III" 28)

...witness the tranquillity of my feet as they step upon the carpet, witness the farina boiling. ("Tale III" 34)

Sweating in the summer like a degenerate's face. ("Bogey Man" 22)

...many do not know how tremendously, and maybe successfully, sacreligious [sic] skyscrapers are. ("Tale IIIb" 55)

Words like "grotesquely," "tranquillity," "dolorous," "degenerate," relate to Italian, and in some cases are common in his poetry as well (grotesque, tremendous). Their closeness to Italian is signaled in different ways: in choosing the spelling "tranquillity" as it is closer to the Italian *tranquillità*, or by using *degenerate* as a noun, as in the Italian *degenerato*. They represent a component of Carnevali's attitude towards language: even in prose, where the need for synthesis and for the performative and rhythmic quality of words is less important, Carnevali relies on words that express closeness to Italian, signaling the specificity of his world-view within the general linguistic environment of English.

Carnevali's characteristic use of English depends on his bilingualism, but it is not a form of multilingualism. It involves the possibility for two languages of being contemporaneously involved in a text, but not as two discrete entities. Rather, it exploits the fact that

Monolingual cultures, Derrida supposes, always carry with them their silent, deferred twin [...] as well as that silent but always ongoing process of translation that occurs beneath the surface. (Gentzler 10)

The Italian in Carnevali is hardly visible beneath the surface, working as "silent, deferred twin" as he approaches English, resulting in language that is

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English and at the same time enables Italian commentators to look at it and find something familiar in it. The phenomenon implies an author who appeals to the similarities between languages in order to gain more familiarity for his texts, giving the texts the trace of his uniqueness. Carnevali drew his favorite words from the areas of his linguistic repository that were familiar, more easily assimilated and more promptly re-used (also re-used with the Italian equivalent in mind, as in the case of the “gilded” lake quoted above).

In addition to using words influenced by his Italian background, Carnevali’s American work sometimes presents explicit multilingual insertions from various languages (Italian, Latin, French, German). I would contend, however, that this multilingualism is a particular case of the phenomenon that I have just outlined: the foreign phrases in Carnevali’s American texts appear to come from the proximities of English and Italian, as in this example from “The Day of Summer:”

King of the triumphing mood, the iceman cracks easy puns with a
landlady of the dust!
Kaiser of the lightness of the morning, the policeman, swinging his
stick, writes sacred hieroglyphs.
(“Summer” 174–175)

The “triumphing” mood and the “sacred hieroglyphs” are instrumental to the poet’s representation of his understanding of the metropolitan scene, and are drawn from the proximities of Italian and English (especially “triumphing,” which bears here the connotation of “cheerful” that sometimes the Italian *trionfante* may assume). There is also a foreign insertion, neither Italian nor English: “Kaiser.” The German word was fairly common in both America and Italy in the aftermath of World War I: Carnevali used a word that exists as loan word in both English and Italian. The bilingual’s repository of words may experience overlaps as well as proximities: Carnevali quite often used loan words that were not English but would be accepted in English, and had the same status in Italian. To this effect, Spanish loan words appear in poetry and prose:

And the City spread out before me calling from a great curve :
"Come, enter, conquistador!"
(“Lake” 12–13)
I would like to meet the desperado who'd be so desperate as to come
around these quarters to steal! (“Tale III” 29)

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The first example uses the word “conquistador” both for its historical relevance in the American landscape and for its similarity with the Italian *conquistatore*, “conquerer.” The second example establishes an etymological connection between the Spanish “desperado” (also a loan word in American English) indicating a bandit, and the English “desperate,” with faint echoes of the Italian *disperato*. Spanish loan-words may perform the same function as Italian words, being more readily accepted in English. Carnevali also uses Latin to that effect: “the old paterfamilias [sic] who whistle and wheeze and grunt and roar in a regular, rhythmical continuous rage” (“Tale III” 37).

The French language has a special place in Carnevali’s speech, which seems appropriate considering that, as we have seen, he learned French even before learning English, and had a quasi-religious admiration for Rimbaud. French is used for its penetration in the English language: for example, the structure “à la,” widely used in English, may be used to replicate the Italian *alla* in phrases like “and today fierce men a la Cagliostro are out of fashion” (“Tale III” 32). Carnevali also used French for poem titles such as “Drôlatique-Sérieux” (1918), “Marche Funèbre” (1919), “Chanson de Blackboulé” (1919), and “Aubade” (1920). The poems’ style or topic do not particularly relate to French, but the French titles indicate Carnevali’s intention of pointing towards an international dimension, using the language for prestige. In at least one case, his French poetic models enter his poetry in the form of brief multilingual intrusions: the exclamation “(Sweet morning, *sœur de charité!*)” evokes Rimbaud in “The Day of Summer” (164). The reference is to Rimbaud’s “Les Sœurs de charité,” featuring a “jeune homme” who “devant les laideurs de ce monde, / Tressaille dans son cœur largement irrité” and seeks the comfort of a “sœur de charité” (9–12).¹²⁴ The quotation creates a hypertextual link between Carnevali’s own search for self-fulfillment in Manhattan and Rimbaud’s quest, which acts as inspiration.

There are also Italian words appearing in Carnevali’s American works, although they are not particularly frequent and prominent. Many of them are

¹²⁴ Fowlie’s translation of the whole stanza is: “The young man, facing the ugliness of this world, / Shudders in his heart deeply irritated, / And, filled with the eternal inner wound, / Begins to desire his sister of charity” (91).

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Italian terms of common use in America:

And as for spaghetti and ravioli, let me tell you once and for all... (“Tale III” 32)

Every locomotive that passes is a new image in the brain, every fierce puff a different part of the same not unpleasant sonata. (“Tale III” 35)

Staccato steps,

Stiff and cool,

I walk.

(“Summer” 161–163)

These words are as acceptable as the other multilingual insertions in Carnevali’s work: these loan words do not disorient the monolingual reader, relating to semantic fields usually associated with Italy: food and music. The case of the 1919 poem “Italian Song” is slightly different. This poem has the structure of a short folk song refrain – although it is not apparently the translation of an Italian song. The culture-specific word *jettatura* comes up in the second stanza:

Until old age come, girl,

Until the other man come,

Until the *jettatura* get me,

Until God see us:

Until God see us.

The presence of the Neapolitan word for “evil eye” is perhaps the reason why he decided to call this “Italian Song.” It is a brief experiment with the rhythms of folk songs, and with themes stereotypically associated with Italy, such as love and passion. The poem shows how he could evoke Italian themes in his poetry, but would not engage continuously with culture-specific themes, relegating them to *divertissement*.

Carnevali did not use multilingualism in order to express an uncompromising difference; rather, loan words from different languages appear linked to an Italian lexical repository that he could use safely in English: both the proximities and this use of multilingualism are signs of difference in conformity. Under this light, Domenichelli’s claim that Carnevali was trying to write “some *Ursprache*, where he could hear and speak and write the impossible poem in some unheard perfect language” (84) needs to be reframed. We must be careful in handling a term like *Ursprache*. The transcendental essence of speech was devised by Walter Benjamin as pure

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possibility, underlying everyday speech, only glimpsed in translation: “all higher language is a translation of lower ones, until in ultimate clarity the word of God unfolds, which is the unity of this movement made up of language” (“On Language as Such” 74). While Carnevali expressed his beliefs in the power of poetry to turn simple words into statements of truth, he did not so in *Ursprache*, but rather in an English that sometimes revealed the presence of an Italian background, and of other languages. The translatability of languages accounts for fertile connections; however, their simultaneous involvement in the translingual text is the result of an interaction between actual socio-cultural realities. Carnevali’s use of English did not involve an effort towards a perfect language, but the artistic realization of bilingualism as a continuous flow of influences and sounds.

Moving within the spectrum of the two languages, he could make English disturbingly familiar for an Italian, and his adopted language foreign for the locals – making evident the ultimate foreignness of all language to ourselves. Bhabha described the migrant’s attempt to translate himself into the dominant’s language as “one void in the articulation of the social space - making present the opacity of language, its untranslatable residue” (166). As the foreign language, with its practical realization in the text, has been imposed as an “ill-fitting robe” over meaning,¹²⁵ the translator inhabits and exposes the space between languages:

and it is from this foreign perspective that it becomes possible to inscribe the specific locality of cultural systems – their incommensurable differences – and through that apprehension of differences, to perform the act of cultural translation. (Bhabha 164).

Carnevali made use of his foreign perspective from the start of his career as a translingual writer, approaching English from the outside and with a foreigner’s enthusiasm. His speech originated from the specific localities of English and Italian, and in the attempt to bridge the difference and create his own speech he ended up with a language that highlights both connections and differences between them. This language is the language of cultural translation as it transcends linguistic and cultural spaces to express the poet’s

¹²⁵ The definition comes from Walter Benjamin’s “The Translator’s Task,” to whom Bhabha’s reflection is directly linked.

individuality with respect to established systems of meaning.

Carnevali claimed that his English “ortograph [sic]” was “[his] own and not English, nor Italian, nor correct nor incorrect.” It is difficult to ascertain to what extent his use of the linguistic proximities, his reliance on words with a close Italian equivalent was part of a deliberate project, and to what extent those words simply came to be frequent in his language due to their familiar quality. Whatever the degree of intentionality, Carnevali’s use of language in America as a tool of cultural translation appears to result from a specific attitude towards the language of adoption – tending towards conformity, without the preoccupation of hiding cultural difference.

2.2.2 Traces of the *Vociani*?

Considering Carnevali’s enthusiasm for the *Vociani* during his American period, some scholars have seen some of his lines as translations and re-elaborations of lines from Italian poets of the time: the *Vociani* (that he appreciated and translated for American magazines) but also other early twentieth-century poets. As we have seen, Italian critics praised the *italianità* of Carnevali’s English, starting with Linati in the 1920s; Linati also implies the influence of the *Vociani* as he states that Carnevali’s English had “l’emotività, il palpito e l’eloquenza interiore propria della generazione Toscana a cui apparteneva”¹²⁶ (“Un uomo che ha fretta” 3). Cacho Millet introduced his 1981 collection of Carnevali’s letters with an essay titled “Emanuel Carnevali, Un discepolo de *La Voce* in esilio.” The effort to link Carnevali to his Florentine contemporaries is part of the poet’s rediscovery in Italy.¹²⁷ This phenomenon would involve another layer of translational

¹²⁶ “The emotionality, the thrill and the interior eloquence of the Tuscan generation he belonged to.”

¹²⁷ The case of the links between Carnevali and Dino Campana is significant in this sense, indicating how strongly Italian intellectuals have attempted to link Carnevali to his Italian contemporaries.

Campana lived a similar timespan as Carnevali (1885-1932) and many episodes in their lives appear similar. Campana emigrated briefly to Argentina, but returned soon after; back in Italy, he was interned into an asylum, while his only book of poetry remained obscure during his lifetime. Cacho Millet, while pointing out that Carnevali did not know Campana and could not be inspired by him (“il rimando critico a Campana non trova quindi riscontro”) also points out that several reviewers had made the connection between the two when *Il primo dio* came out (“Un discepolo de *La Voce*” 49). Domenichelli puts Carnevali and Campana

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influence in Carnevali's translingualism, related not simply to rhythms, sounds and phrases but to intertextuality; it would show that the authors he read and (in some cases) translated exerted an influence on his original work. Moreover, Italian scholars' tendency to see Carnevali's language as translating and quoting contemporary Italian poets is significant in the light of the poet's positioning within transnational modernism with respect to the Italian canon.

Italian modernists risked being overshadowed by the revolutionary force of the Italian *avant-garde* to the point of being often critically absorbed by the definition of *avant-garde*, while this was not the case in the English-speaking world (Donnarumma 16). As an Italian in American modernism, Carnevali acknowledged critically the Italian modernists, underlining similar concerns from a transatlantic point of view. He translated them and attempted to introduce the American public to them (with limited results, as we have seen). It is possible that the Italian modernists (especially Papini) provided him with examples of a specific literary mood. Yet, due to scarcity of explicit references, it is usually difficult to determine how much of this reflects, via translated quotation, in the words of Carnevali's American poetry. If Carnevali's translations of the *Vocianti* were heavily dependent on the Italian originals (following Carnevali's agenda as a cultural translator), his original writing presents considerably less Italian interference. The Italian interference in the original works is mostly at the level of lexical repository, as he uses words from the proximities of the two languages to voice his reaction to the American environment. In those works, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent Carnevali consciously re-used lines from contemporary Italian poetry. It is possible, however, to point out similarities and influences in terms of literary concerns between Carnevali and the *Vocianti*.

In 1984, Carpi Sartori published an article in which she discussed the "literary influence" of Guido Gozzano in Carnevali. Gozzano was not among

together in a "martyrology of poets", reminding us readers of "the strict connection between the price paid for poetry and poetry itself" (91).

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the poets he translated, although in a 1919 letter to Papini he includes him in a list of names for an anthology of Italian poetry that he had in mind (*Lettere* 77). There is no direct mention or reference, in Carnevali, of Gozzano – Carpi Sartori’s article can only list similarities and parallels between the two. It emerges that they both reacted against the lofty tones of D’Annunzio’s poetry, concentrating on everyday life. They both were “forced to face a changed, debased kind of world, a world that does not favour the growth of poets” and thus focused their attention on “the common things of everyday perceived with sympathy and understanding in order to stress a common destiny of sadness and desolation” (Carpi Sartori 318). Gozzano’s line on the “buone cose di pessimo gusto”¹²⁸ (“L'amica di nonna Speranza” 2) is often taken to describe his poetic ideal, in which the poet takes refuge from the outside world in the description of everyday life, even in its banality. Carnevali’s poetry similarly takes inspiration from everyday objects; yet, it is fuelled by a sense of displacement (also linguistic) and unfamiliarity. Gozzano’s background was the petty bourgeoisie of post-unification Italy, to which the Carnevalis belonged to some extent; but Emanuel mostly wrote about the unfamiliar environment of the American metropolis.

The role of the poet in the industrial, bourgeois society is a concern of European poetry at least since Baudelaire, and

Guido Gozzano’s famous renunciation of the title of poet is certainly related to the loss of the social function of art and to the breach between the aesthetic and the praxis of life which [...] characterizes late-nineteenth-century aestheticism. (Somigli and Moroni 7)

Gozzano and Carnevali shared their preoccupation for the loss of poetic aura with a good deal of poets from their age; their attitudes towards this theme are comparable, yet slightly different. Gozzano’s devaluation of the role of poet mostly conveys a sense of melancholy and detached irony: “Io mi vergogno, / sì, mi vergogno d'essere un poeta!”¹²⁹ (“La signorina Felicita,” 306–307). Carnevali’s re-evaluation of the role of poet is similarly ironic, but more polemical: “Don't insult me calling me ‘writer’ and I won't call you butcher, grocer, waiter, doctor, business man, thief and murderer” (“Tale III”

¹²⁸ “good things of terrible taste.”

¹²⁹ “I am ashamed / Yes, ashamed of being a poet!”

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32). More importantly, it is also rooted in his own experience in New York, as in “The Day of Summer” he asks “Who shall ask the furnished-room poets to write / A song for the dawn?” (“Summer” 77–78). The “Splendid Commonplace” collection alternates candid belief in poetic power (“To the Poets”) and the self-mockery of “His Majesty the Letter-Carrier,” where he makes it clear that editors’ letters of acceptance, and not the poetic ideal, have the power to make a poet. At the same time, while Gozzano and his contemporaries used traditional meters, although they often re-used them ironically to fit their everyday themes and self-mockery (Zoboli 32), Carnevali worked towards assimilation into the American form of free verse.

Fracassa states that Carnevali “riprese nei propri versi, a mo’ di calco, certe celebri movenze della poesia italiana coeva”¹³⁰ (138). Yet, the examples that he uses precisely testify to the difficulty of finding an indisputable trace of Italian modernism in Carnevali, while underlining the presence of similar moods and concerns. Fracassa mentions calques from Sbarbaro and Corazzini:

“I walk in a fog of sleep” (Carnevali, “The Day of Summer”)

“Come in sonno tra gli uomini mi muovo” (Sbarbaro, “Pianissimo”)

“I who die once a day” (Carnevali, “Shorties VI”)

“io che muoio, un poco, ogni giorno” (Corazzini, “Desolazione del povero poeta sentimentale”)

Sbarbaro’s line comes from the 1914 poem “Pianissimo,” which was published by *La Voce* editions, meaning that Carnevali may have read it. Carnevali mentions Sbarbaro in his criticism, although not in particularly flattering terms, deeming “Umberto Saba, Luciano Folgore and Camillo Sbarbaro” as “poets with too definite an attitude — that is, too narrow — sometimes borrowed” (“Five Years” 211): given such premises, it might not seem very likely that Carnevali should take inspiration from him. In fact, Carnevali’s line is not a direct translation of Sbarbaro’s – there is no “fog” in the latter’s line, and Carnevali does not mention the crowd (“fra gli uomini”). Yet, a closer look at the two poems reveals similarities in their mood and

¹³⁰ “Replicated, as a calque, the famous rhythms of contemporary Italian poetry.”

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structure: both “The Day of Summer” and Sbarbaro’s “Pianissimo” are written in free verse of variable measure, in the form of an interior monologue. The monologue in “Pianissimo,” like Carnevali’s, revolves around the poet going out of his own room and meeting the crowd with uneasiness:

Esco dalla lussuria.
M’incammino
per lastrici sonori nella notte.
[...]
Ché la città mi pare
sia fatta immensamente vasta e vuota,
una città di pietra che nessuno
abiti, dove la Necessità
sola conduca i carri e suoni l'ore.¹³¹
 (“Pianissimo” 82–84, 90–94)

Sbarbaro uses the city setting as a means to “misurare la sua distanza dagli altri, per verificare la propria estraneità, per afferrare la riduzione dell’uomo a cosa, a un’esistenza anonima, vuota”¹³² (Coletti 30). The two poets’ mood as they walk around the city is quite similar, and yet the city itself marks the distance between the two poems. While Sbarbaro does not provide information on the seemingly deserted city, Carnevali measures his own poetic *I* against a foreign environment, which impacts on his transition into a different, foreign and (to him) new form of verse.

The lines quoted by Fracassa are both descriptions of the poet’s wanderings, as if asleep, among the crowd. Sbarbaro, on one hand, marks the poet’s intangible quality in his poem as he mentions, but does not describe, the crowd:

Sempre assorto in me stesso e nel mio mondo
come in sonno tra gli uomini mi muovo.
Di chi m’urta col braccio non m’accorgo,
e se ogni cosa guardo acutamente
quasi sempre non vedo ciò che guardo.¹³³

¹³¹ “I come out of lust / I set myself walking / through the noisy pavements of the night/ [...] That the city should look to me / as immensely vast and void / a city of stone, inhabited by/ no one, where Need / alone leads the carriages and rings the hours.”

¹³² “...measure his distance from others, in order to prove his own extraneousness, to grasp man’s abatement to the state of a thing, a nameless, void existence.”

¹³³ “Always absorbed into my self and my own world / *As if asleep I move among men* / I do not notice those who bump into my arm / and, though I look attentively at every thing / almost never can I see what I look at.”

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("Pianissimo" 387–391)

The distance between the poet and the crowd is definite and unbridgeable. That is not the case in Carnevali's similar line:

Over our shoulders
Your noisy anger,
O Elevated!
I walk in a fog of sleep,
Not fearing to be awakened any more.
Something queer to drink,
Or going somewhere else,
Another girl—
These are the last visions of salvation.
("Summer" 217–225)

The "noisy anger" of the Elevated is a definite presence in Carnevali's "fog of sleep," while the "visions of salvation" are brief visions of alcohol and lust, not to be fulfilled but only evoked, possibly hinting at a Rimbaudian persona.

Fracassa also linked Carnevali's "I who die once a day" to Corazzini's "muoio, un poco, ogni giorno." In this case as well, the two lines are close enough to be a translation of each other, but are not exactly equivalent (Corazzini's line translates into "I die a little every day"). Also, there is no mention of Corazzini in Carnevali's translations, or in his letters: there is no indication that Carnevali's 1931 poem takes a line from Corazzini's 1906 one. Corazzini's poem includes the theme of the renunciation of the poet's role (also found in Gozzano): "Perché tu mi dici: poeta? / Io non sono un poeta. / Io non sono che un piccolo fanciullo che piange."¹³⁴ Carnevali's short poem, on the other hand, is exclusively about illness and death: the reason of the striking similarity between the two lines may simply be in the poets' similar predicament. The fact that both Carnevali and Corazzini spent a good part of their poetic careers with the awareness of approaching death (although Corazzini died at twenty-one, while Carnevali spent almost twenty years in sickness) resulted in poems that dealt with sickness – with more than one commentator finding "echi patetici"¹³⁵ between the two (Colangelo 85).

The *Vociani* provided Carnevali with a poetic mood for his age, if not with specific poetic tools to describe America: for the latter, he probably

¹³⁴ "Why do you call me a poet? / I am no poet. / I am only a small child crying."

¹³⁵ "Touching echoes."

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turned to Sandburg and Whitman. Yet, there is a sense of kinship, that Italian scholars have noticed from the beginning, between Carnevali's work and that of the *Vocianti*. This sense of kinship lies mostly, as we have seen, in the focus on the poet's inner world. Also, Carnevali's alternation of poetry and prose, with many of his short stories bordering the definition of prose poem, may have found inspiration in the *Vocianti's* typical form of expression, the lyrical fragment, which enacts a tendency to move from poetry to prose (Nicolaccini 103). In this light, it is possible to state that Carnevali's poetry was "in un suo modo selvatico e sghebo, aggiornata a certi ritmi della poesia a lui contemporanea"¹³⁶ (Valesio 277). "Aggiornato" ('updated') is probably the right word as he had some knowledge of contemporary Italian poets, and deemed it important to present them in translation to the American audience. Carnevali was on a quest to become an American poet, but he also had in mind the Italian poets of 1910-1915 as he was writing in English. This accounts for thematic links between Carnevali and the Italian poets, while he was adapting to American forms and language.

There is, however, one Italian author whose presence via influence and translation in Carnevali's work may be relevant to justify claims such as the ones examined above: Giovanni Papini. He was, as we have seen, Carnevali's most important Italian contact, and one of his favourite authors. There are traces, in Carnevali's writing, of Papini's influence both before and after his 1922 departure, in the form of possible translational echoes (although not always explicitly stated) and of more explicit reference. In the 1919 speech at Lola Ridge's, which originated his programmatic manifesto, Carnevali polemically asked the American poets: "Where are your *Un Uomo Finito's*?" (*A Hurried Man* 260). His "My Home" (draft of "Tale III") acknowledges Papini's influence:

And I have told myself that I write like Papini; whenever I write there is, especially these last days, Charles-Louis Philippe in the way; and Soffici, sitting serenely in the back of my head keeps whispering, 'You damn fool, you liar, you damn fool.'¹³⁷

¹³⁶ "... in its own wild and crooked way, updated to the rhythms of contemporary Italian poetry."

¹³⁷ Carnevali, "My Home," [presumably] 1919, in NLC Dawson, Box 21, Folder 696.

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The texts date from 1919, the time in which he and Papini were corresponding and Carnevali was translating him. This passage, which was eventually crossed out from the published “Tale III,” expresses Carnevali’s doubts about his capacity to live up to his influences, as well as possibly pointing out the influence of Papini’s short prose on “My Home” (such as the ones in *Cento pagine di poesia*, some of which he translated). The story, on the other hand, was heavily modified before it was published, expanding its scope from lyrical fragment *à la* Papini to criticism of American society and of the Italian image that was projected on Carnevali. The passage testifies to Carnevali’s will to engage with Papini as an influence, and with his whole milieu. At the same time, the *Vocianti* influence is always inserted in a framework of international influences: after mentioning Papini, “My Home” discusses Charles-Louis Philippe, Hugo, Rimbaud, Longfellow and Poe in the space of a few lines. When Carnevali contacted Papini, he explicitly praised his international framework of references, and especially the fact that he “parla di Whitman come d'un caro fratello maggiore”¹³⁸ (*Lettere* 80). Carnevali’s appreciation of Papini takes place within an international framework of reference, and of his desire to become part of American literature. Yet this appreciation is also concentrated on Papini, as some lines and sentences in Carnevali’s works can be traced to Papini, in the form of homage or translated quotation – although not all of them are explicitly acknowledged as such.

Sometimes Carnevali explicitly quotes Papini, especially in criticism: for example in “Dante- And Today,” where he traces his definition of Boccaccio as a “writer-buffoon” to Papini:

Among the thousands who follow this tradition are the buffoons, as Papini calls them, the souls sold to the public which the public buys with large sums. (“Dante” 323)

The line appears to refer to Papini’s *Un uomo finito*, in which he defines those who write to amuse the public as the “buffoni salariati del popolo”¹³⁹ (*Un uomo finito* 244). Carnevali often translates Papini’s critical opinions in his essays; there are also lines in his poetry that perhaps echo *Un uomo finito*, a favorite of his at the time. Describing his years as a young writer, Papini

¹³⁸ “... talks about Whitman as a dear older brother.”

¹³⁹ “Buffoons on the people’s payroll.”

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speaks of his disdain for the crowds of the city as composed of mere shadows, “burattini pretensiosi del mio teatro interiore”¹⁴⁰ (*Un uomo finito* 78). The feeling described here possibly has an echo in “The Day of Summer,” in which Carnevali tries to focus on his inner world by repeatedly refusing to acknowledge the crowd of Manhattan, finally giving in: “I will walk with the marionettes / [...] I’ll go talk to them / Now I’m dumb enough” (“Summer” 306–309). Similarly, Papini remembers “quando [...] si guardava la città distesa vigliaccamente sulle sponde del fiume lento e si diceva: sarai nostra”¹⁴¹ (*Un uomo finito* 65); Carnevali’s “Lake” describes Chicago “spread out before me calling from a great curve / “Come, enter, conquistador!”” (“Lake” 12–13). Finally, as Papini concludes his book by stating “ma oggi io mi sento di appiccare un incendio da non potersi più spengere e che dia fuoco al mondo”¹⁴² (*Un uomo finito* 291), the 1967 version of Carnevali’s speech at Lola Ridge’s ends with the line “Quench my fire or I shall set fire to the world” (*Autobiography* 148).

Carnevali’s *Autobiography* presents several passages that may be traced back to Papini’s *Un uomo finito*, which some commentators have seen as an important source of inspiration for Carnevali’s *Autobiography*, “the intertextual model for his own narrative strategy” (Boelhower 145). The *Autobiography* does not have an actual, solid narrative strategy, being a collection of fragments – but several passages in it appear to be translated from Papini’s autobiography. Papini wrote “mi gettai a capofitto in tutte le letture che mi suggerivano le mie pullulanti curiosità”¹⁴³ (*Un uomo finito* 16); a freshly immigrated Carnevali “dived fearlessly into George Bernard Shaw” (*Autobiography* 92). Thus a young Papini: “così feci, una bigia mattina d’inverno, il mio sposalizio con la gloria”¹⁴⁴ (*Un uomo finito* 33); Carnevali seems to reverse this ironically when he defines emigration as his “great marriage with misery, and the offspring of this match was hunger” (*Autobiography* 95). The phenomenon takes on an meta-textual dimension:

¹⁴⁰ “Pretentious marionettes of my inner theatre.”

¹⁴¹ “When we used to look at the city spreading out cowardly on the shores of the slow river and we used to say: you will be ours.”

¹⁴² But now I feel like starting a fire which may not be quenched and may set fire to the world.”

¹⁴³ “I dived head first into all the reading that my proliferating curiosities suggested me.”

¹⁴⁴ “So I, on a grey Winter’s morning, married Fame.”

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Papini illustrates his passion for books by writing “piansi sopra una semplice e nuda vita di Mazzini”¹⁴⁵ (*Un uomo finito* 152), and Carnevali reports weeping “tears of fire” over a chapter of Papini, thus bringing himself to write his first letter to him (Carnevali, *Autobiography* 166). Papini is possibly the only Italian author that Carnevali consciously impersonates in his work, taking phrases from *Un uomo finito* – a book that he would have liked to translate, as he repeatedly stated¹⁴⁶ – to construct his own persona. Considering the nature of the *Autobiography*, written with an American reader in mind, these references take the form of a private intertextual dialogue, where the public is not aware that the author is in constant conversation with an Italian book that had contributed to shape his conscience.

The analysis of the proposed influences of Italian authors in Carnevali’s works is made difficult by the scarcity of explicit reference, but it yields interesting results, especially if applied to Papini. There are passages that lead us to think of kinship and similarities between Carnevali and the *Vocianti*, although the intertextual pattern is not always evident. Carnevali, on his part, was addressing the American public, which he knew had no possibility to acknowledge his quotations, while he explicitly refused to address the Italian public. He presented himself as an Italian in America, choosing the Italian components of his liking for the construction of his Italian persona – from Dante to Papini. He sometimes used these elements as points of reference, using them to flaunt his cultural diversity or emphasise his role as mediator. On the other hand, the intended public of his work could not easily spot similarities with Gozzano or Palazzeschi: if some *Vocianti* stylistic element entered his work without being explicitly referred, it is to be ascribed to a deep-seated influence, to an emotional response to the poets, making its way to the surface of the text. In the case of Papini, the relationship is more personal, almost a private dialogue as he translated words and phrases from *Un uomo finito*. After Carnevali’s rediscovery, Italian commentators were eager to see Carnevali as a *Vociante* from the other side of the Atlantic, and

¹⁴⁵ “I cried over a simple and bare biography of Mazzini.”

¹⁴⁶ See for example *Lettere* 76.

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recognised all possible echoes.

Chapters 2.1 and 2.2 have established the translingual's relationship with literature as a succession of re-negotiations: an attempt to configure a relationship with a previously alien canon while there is always the possibility for the home language and culture to be involved in the text, even to the smallest extent. As literary traditions and stylistic inventories are accessed in a continuously evolving relation, the specific linguistic environment and the possible influence of the linguistic background also contribute to determine the translingual's relation with language.

Carnevali's relationship with language in his American years was articulated within the linguistic borders of English, as he confronted the American debate and attempted to create his own version of the American forms of his choice. At the same time, his language seems to point towards its Italian origin at times, in terms of lexical choices and of a possible influence from Italian sources. Carnevali confronted American literature and culture explicitly; the elements of his language that celebrate or differ from his American models are the sign of an ongoing dialogue with the target culture. Italian influences at this stage, on the other hand, are somewhat more difficult to determine, yet are relevant in terms of understanding Carnevali's position as an outsider. His linguistic repository combines the sound of the American metropolis with words that are drawn from the proximities of Italian and English, used to signal his difference from the linguistic environment. In addition to such lexical peculiarities, some Italian commentators have advanced the hypothesis that there is a translational link between Carnevali's texts and some texts by Italian authors. Such type of Italian link has proved more difficult to prove: while Carnevali's lexical choices, though influenced by Italian, took place within the linguistic environment of English, literary quotation would imply direct translation from other texts. In spite of some thematic similarities with these texts, it has not been always possible to follow such translational link with certainty. The translingual's open discussion is always primarily with the canon that receives his or her message, even when the discussion flaunts the

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translingual's difference.

The combined analysis of Carnevali's relationship with the language of American literature and of the possible traces of his Italian linguistic background ultimately reveals an attitude of difference in conformity. His work, although engaging with the two canons in operations of cultural translation, appears to be within the linguistic and stylistic borders of American poetry; but lexical and stylistic devices express its underlying difference. After his 1920 crisis and his 1922 return to Italy, Carnevali's language would evolve in accord with the context, displaying a higher degree of Italian influence while continuing his dialogue with American literature.

3.1 CARNEVALI'S GODHEAD: TURNING MENTAL DISTRESS INTO LITERATURE

In 1920, Carnevali went through a personal crisis, experiencing episodes of paranoia and depression, and also contracting syphilis. In the following two years, he gradually noticed the symptoms of the fatal encephalitis lethargica appear. As he became ill with encephalitis, the strategies of representation that he had built in the first stage of his career adapted to his evolving personal situation.

Carnevali's works from the late 1920s and the early 1930s present themselves as the products of a weakened and upset mind, but the analysis shows that the degree of intentionality and stylistic purpose was still high. The present analysis necessarily deals with the intersections between the author's clinical history and his intellectual work. Modernism is often linked with developments in psychology and psychoanalysis, and modernist art has been individuated as often expressing a high degree of psychologisation:

[B]oth psychiatric medicine and the creative arts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by a massive 'turn inward' and a thoroughgoing psychologization of their methods, subjects, and intentions. During these years, artists, philosophers and scientists probed beneath the surface reality of reason in order to uncover deeper irrational or nonrational levels of human experience and cognition. (Micale 2)

Modernist authors, such as Woolf, Kafka and Beckett investigated the issue of distress and mental illness in their works. Carnevali's psychic distress demanded more than a simple "turn inward" in his literary work: it influenced and defined twenty years of his life. He was one of the several modernist authors who "were identified as mentally troubled, suffering from alcoholism, depression or neurasthenia" (Valentine 100); and yet rarely did mental distress occupy such a central position in the work of an author as in Carnevali's late works. The texts written during his illness have the illness as their *raison d'être*. They also testify to Carnevali's will to overcome and transfigure sickness by giving it a literary dimension, and continuing his aesthetic and intellectual development as much as it was possible to him. In this light, it is fundamental to analyse the 1920 crisis, which marked the

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beginning of Carnevali's physical and psychological distress, and the literary rendition of the crisis years later in the *Autobiography*.

3.1.1 Displacement, Psychosis and the Literary Canon

In February 1920 a series of events unfolded, including a troubled relationship with a woman called Annie Glick, whom Carnevali met when he and his wife were separated. In the *Autobiography*, Annie is indicated as the author's "greatest love" (*Autobiography* 163) in spite of their brief relationship, and the fact that she hardly returned his love:

Annie, you had no pity for me. You scoffed at my misery and my poverty. [...] I remember you telling me that you had loved me once for two hours. Out of a lifetime, only two hours. (*Autobiography* 164).

At this time, Carnevali started showing signs of paranoid and neurotic behaviour: in one episode, in particular, he believed for some time that he was "the First God, the Only God" and "cried out as loud as possible" his newfound "formula of godhead" (*Autobiography* 176). He was hospitalised, and started moving from one hospital to another, in Illinois and Minnesota – also spending time alone in the Indiana dunes in the summer of 1920, hoping for spiritual as well as physical recovery. The initial diagnosis was syphilis, as he wrote to his friend Mitchell Dawson.¹⁴⁷ Carnevali started depending on the help of Chicago friends, such as Dawson, Harriet Monroe, and Sherwood Anderson. In the meantime, he kept writing and publishing as much as he could. Even if he was no longer assistant editor to *Poetry*, almost every issue between October 1920 and April 1921 features at least an article by Carnevali: mostly critical essays, bearing little trace of the personal episode that had upset him. Many of the essays that were used in the first part of the dissertation to analyse Carnevali's strategies for presenting himself in the modernist milieu, date from 1921: "Dante- and Today" as well as "Our Great Carl Sandburg." In December 1920, months after his first hospitalization,

¹⁴⁷ Carnevali to Dawson, 30 August 1920, in NLC Dawson, Box 4, Folder 273: "Syphilis, hell! – those profane doctors! I have had the most beautiful disease this side of heaven. Tell that to everybody you meet who knows me." Cacho Millet is of the opinion that Carnevali caught syphilis from a prostitute, shortly after his breakup with Annie Glick ("Cronologia" xxvi).

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Harriet Monroe could still write that he was

a capricious young poet and lover, but sure of both vocations; splashing all over the place, but somehow making you believe in him — in his talent and his feeling; saying simple things with a certain freshness and authority. (Monroe 151)

The new phase in his life did not immediately set in motion a radical change in the totality of his writings. Yet, while it did not immediately cause his departure, or the end of his American career, it is safe to state that the crisis marks the start of the process which would lead to his return to Italy in 1922. He was eventually diagnosed with encephalitis lethargica, a disease that affects the nervous system in different ways: patients may suffer from high fever and headaches as well as lethargy, tremors, psychosis and even coma.¹⁴⁸ It was first described when an epidemic spread all over the world between 1917 and 1928, never to be recorded again. The peculiar nature of the disease, as well as the lack of precise clinical records, makes it difficult to ascertain whether Carnevali had suffered from it from the 1920 crisis or developed it later. Written more than a decade after the incident, the *Autobiography* construes the crisis as a turning point: in the narration, illness becomes a central feature of Carnevali's life at this stage, assuming aesthetic significance.

The *Autobiography* narrates Carnevali's delusional transformation into "the First God" as a paradoxical narration, in which attainment of aesthetic perfection is juxtaposed with episodes of neurosis and panic. The god that he claims to represent is a broken, miserable creature: "I believed absolutely now that I was the Only God. But no god was ever humbler than I, and no god ever made worse blunders, and no god was ever as ugly as I was" (*Autobiography* 176). There is an ironic undertone as Carnevali is aware, at the time of writing, that his claim to be a god had been a psychotic episode – that he had been, in his own words, "an utter fool" (*Autobiography* 179). This is the crisis as the 'patient' himself described it, in a book that others compiled afterwards. Focusing on the autobiographical narration, the crisis may be analysed from different points of view. As Buonomo underlined, "the actual, frighteningly 'concrete' diseases he contracted in Chicago [...] lose nearly all physical

¹⁴⁸ http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/encephalitis_lethargica/encephalitis_lethargica.htm

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connotations in the narrative and become a malady of the body, the mind, the soul" (57). Carnevali's suffering has a clinical and psychological dimension, not to be underestimated. Its narration, as it reaches the contemporary reader, seems to possess cultural, emotional, and neurological angles from which it may be examined. Mental health appears in a text in all of its "historical and geographical specificity [...], a specificity that characterises all kinds of experience but perhaps none so emphatically as madness" (Valentine 96). Our understanding of mental distress – medical taxonomies and literary representations alike – evolves in time and space, so that some mental illnesses seem to be more linked than others to specific cultural contexts. Carnevali's crisis is related to a psychiatric diagnosis, while it seems to refer strongly to the cultural-specific aspects of his life.

Carnevali experienced a form of detachment from reality, in which he appears to have walked through the streets of Chicago in a state of delirium. In their study of migration and psychosis, Grinberg and Grinberg underlined that "a depressive or borderline or delayed psychotic state" may appear in migrants even years after emigrating, and after "an apparently conflict-free period" (145). Some parts of Carnevali's narration seem to be echoing psychotic episodes observed in other migrant contexts. The crisis affects Carnevali's comprehension of the surrounding reality: as he drags himself to Sherwood Anderson's house asking for food (in hope, he explains, that a concrete action would help grounding him in reality) and is kicked out after the meal, the environment seems suddenly unfamiliar:

Out in the snow again I said out loud: now that corner is going to stop being a corner, that lamp-post cease being a lamp-post, that gutter no longer run with its burden of dirty water, because the beloved list of understandable things has been inadvertently destroyed, because in this immaculate sky-piece a screw has been loosened, a nut has gone daffy, has gone cuckoo, and the whole machine of reality has jumped the switch. (Carnevali, *Autobiography* 177)

The episode makes Carnevali question the very identity between reality and perception. Migrant victims of psychosis often are seen losing contact with the surrounding reality, trying to process objects "according to the laws of mental functioning" and being surprised "that they obey the laws of nature" (Grinberg and Grinberg 139). As is the case in Carnevali's narration, the

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migrant who experiences such a dissociation between inner and outer world “feels locked into a world of bizarre objects from which he cannot escape since he lacks the consciousness that would provide the key to escape” (Grinberg and Grinberg 139). This is the last description of the American urban landscape in the *Autobiography*. This environment was the setting of Carnevali's struggle to adapt and preserve his identity, but the crisis makes the author question it in its components. The lamp-post, the street corner and the gutter lose their ontological status to become something else, beyond the poet's grasp. The language of the American metropolis becomes, for the last time, a useful tool for interpreting and describing reality. The number of local idioms that he chose to use in the passage is remarkable: in writing that “a screw has been loosened” and “a nut has gone daffy, has gone cuckoo,” he is showing his prowess with the linguistic tools that he has picked up along his journey – while describing a split between himself and the surrounding reality. Carnevali narrates a short-circuit between self and world, as he realised it would be “impossible for [him] ever to grasp reality again” (*Autobiography* 177). In the crisis, he finds a paradoxical response: as he cannot poetically process reality anymore, he will go beyond human language, and speak the language of gods.

The “First God” chapters of the *Autobiography* frame the crisis in relation to Carnevali's preoccupation with the concept of the artist-god (linking it to the myth of the mad genius). Carnevali had already shown interest in the myth in the years before the crisis, but the crisis appears to exasperate it. Carnevali's first move, in the literary transfiguration of his illness, is an appeal to literary tradition. Literary and identity issues are linked in those pages, more than elsewhere in the *Autobiography*. In the same episode in which he is walking through the streets of Chicago, looking for food, he also depicts himself “walking the centuries, looking for [his] face.” Elsewhere in the *Autobiography*, he remarked “my face is hopelessly romantic” (*Autobiography* 50); here, that metaphor is elaborated at a deeper level. The search leaves the poet certain that he “belonged to the nineteenth century more than to any other,” perhaps “entirely, insanely to the nineteenth century” (*Autobiography* 176). His desperate and frustrated search for identity seems to be inseparable from a search for a literary dimension.

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Carnevali's view of the nineteenth century is made of what he calls "masks" – Verlaine, Rimbaud, Schumann, Carducci, Leopardi, Nietzsche and others. These men, who have little in common, are conjured all together in the text for the fact that they were "all more or less crazy, all more or less sick," providing him with identification in the form of cultural reference. That he should look for a "face" through the centuries and come up with "masks" is quite telling. They all participate in the myth of the *mad genius*, an exceptional being who is at risk of being driven mad by the discrepancy between his own greatness and vile reality. The myth originates from the 19th century, rooted in the modern world's materialist challenge to poetry:

One way to meet the challenge was to deny that literature has a truth function or, alternatively, to declare that the epistemological function of literature is situated on a level beyond reason – reason as defined by positivist rationality. (Thiher 206)

Such an evolution in the idea of the poet's role "invited the cultivation of madness" in those who approached poetry in the modern world, as Thiher underlined (206). Carnevali's crisis involves his apotheosis (the possibility of experiencing super-human, non-rational poetic truth) as well as self-abasement (he proclaims himself a "fool" for thinking he was a god). The myth provides a canonical cultural explanation for his trauma, and his unstable identity. Identification with the "masks" of the nineteenth century is sought for, even for its self-destructive power – he remembers thinking "with love" of "Van Gogh's suicide and the philosophy of Nietzsche" (*Autobiography* 176). Carnevali quotes authors that are central to the myth linking madness with creativity – a connection that was renewed by modernists as "this period saw a novel aspiration to madness" (Valentine 99). Nietzsche in particular was a model for those modernists who aspired to participate in the myth of the insane genius. Carnevali appeals to the popularised image and to the canonical status of the "crazy" Nietzsche, Van Gogh, Baudelaire and so forth, in order to justify and give sense to his own distress. He had accused Pound of uttering "coldly and precisely" the same things "that were screamed without precision, and with blind illogical heat, by Blake, by Shelley, by Nietzsche, by Rimbaud" ("Irritation" 219). In the literary rendition of this time of his life, the same critical references are

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conjured as “masks,” right after the author expresses a search for a “face,” as “the losing of [his] reality also meant the losing of [his] face to [him]” (*Autobiography* 176). The extended metaphor describes the loss of a stable identity as well as the literary device that might cover the loss, or stand as makeshift identity. Carnevali's works, even when they appear to be an unfiltered report of the author's mental states, are deliberately replaying a tradition of literary madness, making it new by articulating it through the experience of linguistic displacement.

Carnevali's translingual *Bildungsroman* ends up representing a schizoid, migrant version of the same issues presented and treated by other modernist coming-of-ages. Like Joyce's *Portrait*, Carnevali's *Autobiography* “represents a progressive attempt to build a free self out of the plethora of influences, impulses and discourses which its hero experiences” (Brown 36). Carnevali's *Autobiography* dramatises his navigation of cultural, stylistic and linguistic constraints to build his writer's persona. Like the *Portrait*, it shows the self as “neither integral nor continuous, but a fluctuating plenitude of possibilities-in-anguish” which national and cultural pressures help develop, but cannot shape into definite form (Brown 36). Carnevali's book may have been characterised as “a novel” in its first 1932 instalment, but Carnevali could not create his own fictional alter ego, to be cast in an alternate pattern of affirmation and failure: this is Carnevali actually falling ill, his career actually suffering a fatal blow. Yet, as he dramatised his own demise years later, the resulting text shows the impact of literary “influences, impulses and discourses,” the same that had previously shaped his literary career, and that define Carnevali as the hero of the story of his own rise and fall in the literary milieu.

Another possible reference, in terms of modernist *Bildungsroman*, comes from his Italian model Papini. *Un uomo finito* featured a chapter on “La conquista della divinità.”¹⁴⁹ The episode is told in a more philosophical tone than Carnevali's: there is no psychotic crisis, no sleepless nights spent wandering in the streets of the city. A period of reflection and readings prompts the author's desire to attain a form of divine status. This is generated

¹⁴⁹ “The Conquest of Godhead”

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by an absolute faith in the power of human will: “lo spirito doveva essere padrone di tutto; la potenza della volontà non doveva avere più limiti”¹⁵⁰ (Papini, *Un uomo finito* 185). Papini claims that he thought, at one point of his project, that he believed in everyone's possibility to become a god:

*Esser Dio! Tutti gli uomini Dei! Ecco il sogno grande, l'impresa impossibile, il fine superbo cercato! E lo misi come programma — a me stesso e agli altri. Imitazione d' Iddio: onnisapienza e onnipotenza.*¹⁵¹ (*Un uomo finito* 186, author's emphasis)

Papini's project included the creation of a religion of the “Uomo-Dio” (“Man-God”), and quite interestingly he wanted to found it “nella vasta America settentrionale, dalle indefinite possibilità, dove ogni nuovo è ben accetto, dove ogni credo trova un tempio e ogni Mosè un capitale”¹⁵² (*Un uomo finito* 187). After conceiving this plan, Papini went as far as recruiting companions, learning English and raising funds for what he had imagined as an evangelical mission. He renounced it in the end, having to “riconoscer francamente la mia impotenza”¹⁵³ (Papini, *Un uomo finito* 209). Carnevali's text echoes his old model; yet Papini's tale of apotheosis and self-abasement is a philosophical parable, not a clinical episode. In those pages, Carnevali had read about the possibility that a poet might aspire to godhead – a notion that was also central in other models of his, such as Nietzsche. Critical references precede the psychotic episode, and inform its literary rendition in the *Autobiography*.

3.1.2 Carnevali's Path to Godhead

The literariness of this episode in the *Autobiography* is underlined not only by literary references, but also by the insertion of actual fictional work in the episode. While writing and compiling the *Autobiography*, either Carnevali or Boyle decided to insert a whole 1918 short story, “Dancing as an Art”, in the body of the narration of the crisis. The reader is not told that

¹⁵⁰ “The spirit had to conquer it all; willpower needed having no more limits.”

¹⁵¹ “Becoming gods! Every man a god! Here the great dream, the impossible quest, the supreme goal to be pursued! And I put this as a course of action – for myself and others. Imitation of God: infinite power and knowledge.”

¹⁵² “...in vast Northern America, of infinite possibilities, where novelty is welcome, where every creed finds a temple and every Moses finds a capital.”

¹⁵³ “frankly admit my impotence”

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these words were written at least a decade before the rest of the chapter, appearing for the first time in 1919 in *The Little Review*. It is an allegorical tale, in which a thirty-year old version of the author tells about his meeting with a mysterious dancer, called Mr. Snake. The latter seems to be the personification of art itself, dancing being the ideal of art as harmony:

I enjoyed his dancing and was very much interested in it.
— Mr. Snake, I think I want to learn how to dance.
— My dear man, dancing is art, every art — art.
— That doesn't make much of a difference to me.
— It made all the difference in the world to me. ("Dancing as an Art"
26)

The narrator then attempts to dance, following Mr. Snake's example, but ends up "in the shape of an ugliness, a drifting thing, a walking contradiction" ("Dancing as an Art" 26). He experiences a separation between himself and his form. This older version of the author thinks fondly of the original moment of inspiration, the "road to the splendid somewhere" that he had "conceived one day" and which is now lost ("Dancing as an Art" 27). He finally attempts to move again: "You know there is some greatness in me, you know that I always saw it, the beacon shining very far" ("Dancing as an Art" 28). Yet, the narrator falls and breaks all his bones. The end of the story has him lying on the ground, looking at the skyscrapers of New York in despair. The story deals with the difficulty that the poet perceived in bringing his artistic inspiration into a work of art. It expresses his fear, at the beginning of his career, of ending up as a "warped effort" ("Dancing as an Art" 27) on his road to artistic fulfillment. The story begins with the words "I am thirty" ("Dancing as an Art" 26), even though the poet was only twenty-two years old when he wrote it. "Dancing as an art" is a vision of a future Carnevali, the concrete representation of the young Carnevali's fears of artistic failure. It foreshadowed the crisis, or is anyway made to perform that function in the edited *Autobiography*.

The references to "splendid somewheres" and "beacons" of light shining very far assume a much more concrete significance when placed at this moment in the *Autobiography*. In retrospect, the crisis would be construed as the beginning of the process that thwarted his earlier aspirations towards aesthetic completeness. "Dancing as an Art" had been the description

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of an attempt to achieve artistic perfection, which results in failure; this part of the *Autobiography* also deals with perfection ("Godhead") and ends in failure. It is a reflection on age, and on the uneasy relationship between youthful potential and adult realization, written by Carnevali, the "manic charmer" who was responsible for the "most sustained look at adolescence" in the *Others* group of the 1910s (Burt 25). The editorial decision to insert "Dancing as an Art" at this point of the *Autobiography* juxtaposes the young Carnevali's fears and the sick Carnevali's bitter irony on the moment in which those fears became real.

The preoccupation with the poetic potential of youth had been voiced by Carnevali in his 1919 essay on the poetics of Rimbaud. The "Rimbaud" essay brings forth the idea of a language of "godhead," of which the *Autobiography* episode is a later re-enactment. As noted by Congiu ("Una Parabola Letteraria" 122), that essay already hinted at the poet's transformation into a god. I believe that the correspondences are deep, at a linguistic as well as theoretical level: "I have gone on a great adventure, and I may sometime personify a god I have seen for a moment. I would, as much as I could, personify him" ("Arthur Rimbaud" 20).

Carnevali's fiction and criticism from 1919 both underline faith in his own potential as well as the distance between the young poet and his goal. The short story's "beacon" of light is "shining very far;" the essay's "god" was seen for only a "moment." Carnevali's essay is a defense of Rimbaud as a model of poet-god, in which he states he can merely aspire to replicate Rimbaud's original. The crisis episode in the *Autobiography* responds to this aspiration, bringing it to its extreme consequences. In St. Luke's Hospital in Chicago, he writes, he felt he "must make apostles" – and so he did, "talking endlessly, endlessly to the other patients [...] in the Psychopathic Ward" (Carnevali, *Autobiography* 181). Carnevali, playing the role of the "First God," is here imitating Rimbaud who, he had written, "sought apostles [...] for the beautiful god he built out of his soul" (Carnevali, "Arthur Rimbaud" 23). In the light of Rimbaud's abandonment of poetry as he entered adulthood, it is possible to see the French poet's "utopian madness" as permanently "accompanied by a farewell," which "marks the failure to go beyond

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materialist science and the bourgeois culture” (Thiher 222). Rimbaud's parable of the poet-god contains his own annihilation. Carnevali played out the myth of Rimbaud, as the god that he hoped he might come to “personify” one day would appear to him in a moment of crisis, followed by descent into silence and oblivion. Writing from his hospital bed, preoccupied with his fading and uncertain literary fame, Carnevali evokes a supposedly failed transformation into a poet-god to make sense of his crisis. That “godhead of [his]” had been able to bring him a manic and temporary glimpse of his ultimate poetic goal. This “god, however a fake it was, was a great comfort” (Carnevali, *Autobiography* 182).

The myth of Rimbaud has also linguistic connotations. Rimbaud epitomises the possibility that youth might develop its own language, and that said language could reveal a previously concealed, otherwise unspoken truth. His poems contained the vision of Youth, the vision of the world as seen for the first time. They cast definite poetic judgements on the world. In one word, Rimbaud had attained godhead:

This is the consecration of the trinity, ethic-aesthetic-logic, which is godhead. To achieve liberty, to write perfect poetry, to sense perfectly, to love perfectly, to live—these are vague phrases, meaning to the great but one thing. And that thing, to me, to a man who has no sign from God otherwise than from books, is godhead itself. (Carnevali, “Arthur Rimbaud” 21)

This passage makes it clear that, to Carnevali, the word “godhead” initially had literary connotations – it was included in a vision of deity with poetry as its chief manifestation. He admits his dependence on tradition by depicting himself as “a man who has no sign from God otherwise than from books.”¹⁵⁴ These words assume a more literal meaning if placed next to the image of Carnevali in the midst of a psychotic crisis, looking for his “face” and finding refuge only in the “masks” of the nineteenth century canon.

The “Rimbaud” essay demonstrates that he had always been thinking about poetic godhead, and that he associated it with the language of youth. In

¹⁵⁴ The same dichotomy between bookish erudition and the value of true ineffable genius is to be found in *Un uomo finito*. At the end, Papini wonders if, having believed all his life that he was a man of genius, he could not turn out in the end to be “un letterato che si crede un poeta... un frigido lettore di libri” (“a scholar who believes himself a poet... a cold book-reader” (223).

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Carnevali's own lexicon, built and expanded by reading and writing in his adoptive language, the word "godhead" would assume its own connotations, performing a definite function in both criticism and artistic work – or, more precisely, at their junction. He believed Rimbaud had revealed "axioms of Godhead" to the world in the form of simple statements (Carnevali, "Arthur Rimbaud" 23). This goes accordingly with Carnevali's statement, in the crisis, that "to be a... true god, one must be filled with simple things" (*Autobiography* 176). The "Youths" are believed to be repositories of "godhead": "for this I believe in Arthur Rimbaud, and even in all the distorted and queer and desperate signs of godhead that Youths give the world as they pass" (Carnevali, "Arthur Rimbaud" 23). The universal truth that they communicate, on the other hand, expresses itself only in "distorted and queer and desperate signs." When Carnevali brings up the concept of "godhead" again, it still has linguistic connotations. Yet, instead of the perfect poetic understanding promised by Rimbaudian "godhead" came his contrary: the real outcome of Carnevali's transformation into the "First God" is the impossibility to express and to create. As Carnevali describes the crisis that would lead to hospitalization, he paradoxically refers to his beliefs in poetic godhead, as he had associated it to the Rimbaud myth.

The idea of godhead is brought up to help solve a split between the poet and the surrounding reality. Rimbaudian poetry is born out of an insuperable difference between the self and the world. Rimbaud stands for a poetic conscience in which "disjunction between words and things no longer generates feelings of loss and anxiety" but "provides a sort of mandate for a creative destruction of the world" (Nicholls 29). Nicholls links Rimbaud's detachment from reality with the felt necessity for a poetic transformation of reality. Carnevali turned to Rimbaud for inspiration in the first phase of his career, to develop a poetics of the outsider. In a moment of crisis, he depicts himself trying to enact his own transformation of reality. The episode becomes, in its literary rendition, a moment of apotheosis, in which he turns to nineteenth-century poetry for models of a poet-god, and then attempts to become that poet-god. His attention in this regard turns to the language – the *Autobiography* is a tale of Carnevali's language as much as his life. Carnevali reports having, for a moment, a glimpse of the perfect language in which to

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write the perfect poem:

YES-NO and YES and NO. This is the formula of acceptance and denial, at the same time and at different times, and if simultaneous acceptance and denial could be achieved, then godhead would be at your door. (*Autobiography* 178)

This formula seems to theorise linguistic divinity as the overcoming of difference. Opposite poles, such as acceptance and denial, are experienced from a perspective above the concrete reality of language, in which they possibly coincide. This could entail the creation of divine language, which does not realise only one side of the many dichotomies expressed in everyday language, but all of them at the same time. The formula goes beyond mere coexistence of opposites: it proposes the creation of a language beyond opposites. Its goal is the achievement of "simultaneous acceptance and denial." It takes two basic components of language, two of the most simple components into which the newcomer can break the language. It makes them coexist: "YES and NO." It reveals the degree of similarity, even identity that can be achieved between the two: "YES-NO... NO-YES." As Carnevali envisions himself as "the centre of the earth," with "the whole universe" revolving around him (*Autobiography* 179), he repeats the single simple phrase that could summarise the whole of existence: "Yes and no. Neither yes nor no. Yes or no." This proposition may contain the whole of creation, exhausting all linguistic and logical possibilities within itself. It seems to be a common temptation, for translinguals in the modern era, to "transcend language in general, to be pandictic, to utter everything:" impatient with "the imperfections of finite verbal systems, they yearn to pass beyond words, to silence and truth" (Kellman 16). Carnevali's expression of such aspirations, his attempts to realise pandictism in practical human language, ultimately leads to annihilation. The supposed passing of the limits of human language leaves the poet with only two choices: silence, or the reiteration of the formula. Carnevali writes that he spent the night of the crisis repeating the formula aloud.

The time spent as a "God" separates the poet from common language: "a cyclone had struck me and whirled me from the earth of common-places" (*Autobiography* 181). The word "commonplace" is, as we have seen, quite

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important in Carnevali's vocabulary. Mastering and overcoming the commonplace is the goal of his first years as a poet, the very thing that would turn him from outsider to poet. To him, America was the country of new and strange commonplaces, to master and turn into poetry. The fact that the "formula of godhead" takes him away from the realm of commonplace may have meant a new phase in Carnevali's writing. Writing beyond the commonplace should have been the ultimate poetic achievement, moving from the poetic treatment of American speech to the ultimate poetic language, the language of god. Instead, this part of his life became associated in the narrative with the moment in which Carnevali went from literary assimilation to the traumatic impossibility of assimilation. As he lost control of his literary and linguistic tools, Carnevali began drifting away from the American literary world and the niche he had carved in it for himself, going from outsider to outcast.

3.1.3 Aftermath

The aftermath of the crisis reads like a melancholic anti-climax in the *Autobiography*. In an attempt to recover his still faltering mental health, Carnevali spent some time on the Indiana Dunes, on the shores of Lake Michigan. So begins a section of the *Autobiography* that Buonomo calls "a fascinating wilderness episode, which at times reads like a deranged, hallucinated version of *Walden*" (58). Carnevali tells of his life on the lake as a regression into a state of primitive life, teeming with sensuous experiences. It is, however, far from an idyllic reconciliation with nature. Carnevali admits to an altered psychological state while living his simple life by the lake: "the lake water was my absinthe, but the dunes were tremendous, almost uncanny in their power" (*Autobiography* 192). He depicts himself as a man who tries to live by the elementary laws of nature, while the laws of men seem to apply even to the wilderness:

I had become the real crazy man of the dunes. I walked naked as God made me all over the green of the dunes and the yellow of the sand. I was accused, that is the right word, of feeding on little fishes, of eating them raw. I was suspected of being the murderer of a man whose body

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was found, carbonized, in the dunes. But I was none of these things.
(Carnevali, *Autobiography* 192–193)

At the time, this experience was reflected mostly in the 1921 poems of “Neuriade”. They contained references to Carnevali’s “poor sick body” (“Lake,” 4) as well as the awareness of having “made a mess of it” (“Invocation to Death,” 18). The poems nevertheless continued Carnevali’s experimentations with American free verse. His art and criticism, in the years immediately after the crisis, attempted to resist and adapt to the critical situation. The crisis’s aftermath had a deep effect at the personal and social level, although the major rupture in Carnevali’s writing would happen in Italy. In the *Autobiography* he laments that Chicago’s artistic milieu started treating him differently in his last year there:

Now the access to houses which remained open to anybody was denied to me. I was called ‘Carnevali’ where before I had been simply Em. I had fallen, but I fell from high. This made it all the more painful, although more dignified too. (*Autobiography* 190)

From the point of view of the aging and sick Carnevali, this moment in his career is already part of a form of artistic afterlife, even if his career did not stop suddenly. The narrator of the *Autobiography* seems to regard this as the time in which he stopped living in the realm of infinite possibilities of youth. The procession of visitors in his first sanatorium in Chicago takes the form of a literary funeral, attended by McAlmon, Anderson, Sandburg, Tennessee Williams. Thus started a period of his life mostly spent in hospitals: “hospitals are now the milestones which mark the different stages of my life”(*Autobiography* 183).

In retrospect, Carnevali characterised the immediate aftermath of the crisis as the beginning of death-in-life:

Now I knew I was the master of death [...] I knew he was still far away, and I knew he would not hang around my bed for long, watching me lying there. But once, just once, I certainly did feel his hands go over my body and leave me coldly sweating, rigidity in my muscles, despair in my heart, fear in my mouth, and a new craze in my eyes.
(*Autobiography* 182)

Carnevali is here transformed by closeness to death (“a new craze in my eyes”). His 1920 letters to Dawson from the Indiana dunes show that he had

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actually entertained hopes of recovery at the time: "The Spiritual Man is steadily saving himself – believe that. [...] Life will take me back – I know it now for sure. But I shall fail long & often yet."¹⁵⁵ Death started to appear more and more in Carnevali's works, a sign of his faltering hopes: by the time he was writing the *Autobiography*, Death had become pervasive and omnipresent. It would sometimes be personified as a woman (in the Italian use), and sometimes as a man (as in English). "Neuriade" expresses a certain closeness to death, in the form of "The curiosity of a word:/ Forever" ("Invocation to Death" 22-23) – but also a challenge as the poet "laughed at Death, as Death's brother, the devil, would" ("Lake" 19). An obsessive, almost personal relationship with death would later be an integral part of Carnevali in his Bazzano years. The *Autobiography*, as edited by Kay Boyle, ends with the words "Oh, Lady Death, take me, is now the common refrain of all my songs!" (*Autobiography* 260). As the tragic events of his life unfolded, his production engaged less and less with literary debates or cultural reflections. The man who writes the *Autobiography* in the early 1930s considers himself to be already half-dead, or "making half-hearted love to life" (*Autobiography* 233).

The aftermath of the crisis lasted, in fact, more than twenty years – during which time Carnevali attempted to keep his status as American writer and cultural mediator, as well as continuing to turn the raw matter of his life and suffering into art. His language was not the perfect language of godhead, capable of going beyond the commonplace by containing all the statements as well as their negations; rather, it was the language born out of the "Godhead" crisis. Due to change of context and faltering health, Carnevali's language while in Italy became solipsistic, disconnected from both standard American English and Italian. The language of Bazzano bears the traces of the many cultural constraints that Carnevali had been subject to, instead of being the language of "godhead," existing beyond constraints.

¹⁵⁵ Carnevali to Dawson, 30 August 1920, in NLC Dawson, Box 4, Folder 273.

3.2 A LANGUAGE FOR BAZZANO

In 1922, in constantly increasing need of medical care, Carnevali returned to Italy, moving to Bazzano, a small town near Bologna. He lived in the Bazzano hospital, before his editor Robert McAlmon paid for a sojourn (1924-26) for him in a private clinic at the outskirts of Bologna, the Villa Baruzziana. In following years, he lived in a rented room, again in Bazzano. He moved to Rome briefly in 1936, entering an experimental program for the treatment of encephalitis lethargica. Due to poor results, he went back to Bazzano in 1937, and soon was transferred to the hospital in Bologna. Documents become rarer from that point, as his illness progressed, until his death in 1942.

Author and witnesses alike mention the strength of the tremors that kept Carnevali away from his typewriter most of the time. Ernest Walsh, his friend and editor of the time, wrote in an undated letter to Harriet Monroe that Carnevali's illness was "not easy to witness"¹⁵⁶. Kay Boyle recalls meeting Carnevali in his room, "shaking completely, all over, like a pinned butterfly" (Boyle 16). Carnevali would suffer, for the rest of his life, from a "constant trembling" which he would call "the most absurd, the most awful joke" played on him by encephalitis (*Autobiography* 203). His life became an alternate routine of scopolamine-induced sleep and the "terrible shaking of every limb" that the drugs were supposed to alleviate (*Autobiography* 203).

Despite his illness, Carnevali was as active as he could be as a writer and translator, even though it took him

a day to do a sentence, a week to do a paragraph, for while he shook with the terrible ague of his illness, he would have to hold his right hand in the grip of his left in order to be able to strike the keys. (Boyle 15)

A Hurried Man, a collection of his short stories, essays and poems from the American period, came out in 1925, including also material written in Italy. He wrote autobiographical short stories from this time, describing his illness,

¹⁵⁶ Walsh, editor of the expat literary magazine *This Quarter*, helped Carnevali both artistically and financially, until his own death in 1926. Walsh, who was in poor health himself (suffering from tuberculosis) reported "one feels he is suffering beyond human endurance" in a letter to Monroe (SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 43, Folder 11).

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the clinic and Bazzano: “Train of Characters through the Villa Rubazziana” (1927), the latter’s “Continuation” (1929) and “A History” (1929) were published in *This Quarter. Poetry* published some new poems between 1924 and 1931. In the meantime, he made some translations of Rimbaud and, most importantly, the first Italian translation of Pound's *Cantos* – of which only *Canto VIII* would be published in 1931. He also started writing his *Autobiography*, sending the drafts to his friend Kay Boyle. In 1932 the first six chapters of the *Autobiography* appeared in Peter Neagoe’s anthology *Americans Abroad* under the title “The First God.” Boelhower has defined Carnevali’s life after 1922 as “posthumous, post-modern life” (138), hinting at his precarious health and his distance, both physical and ideal, from the modernist groups he had participated in. Yet, the analysis of his production while in Bazzano and Bologna highlights that Carnevali tried to exert poetic power on the facts of his life, transfiguring his suffering into literature – and proving himself a keen observer of the surrounding Italian reality. At the same time, his language evolved, in relation to the context and to his personal predicament, opening a new chapter in the story of Carnevali’s developing language.

Carnevali kept writing in English in the last twenty years of his life, which he spent in Italy (1922-1942). Clinging to his adopted language, he attempted to maintain his status as an American writer, for which he had actively fought. In America, he had accessed English as an outsider, asserting his difference while conforming to the linguistic norm. This attitude towards language experienced a shift in Italy, where Italian language and subject matter had a greater influence. Translingual writing necessarily has dialectic aspects, as it

explicitly establish[es] a dialogic process between the culture of origin and the host culture by addressing various frames of reference (religion, food, landscape, traditions, etc) and by highlighting common and differing aspects in the two cultures. (Wilson 48)

The Bazzano works register a shift in this dialogic process. As the American culture stops being the “host” culture, becoming a distant target culture, the frames of reference are also addressed in different ways, in an evolving language: a language with more relevant Italian interferences than in his

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American period. This effort did not prove to be enough for Carnevali to keep his status in American literature, nor could he enter Italian literature. Rather, the return brought in-betweenness to the forefront as an essential feature of the author and his work.

3.2.1 Return, Disappearance, and the Problem of the Audience

Carnevali narrated his 1922 return trip to Italy in the 1924 poem “The Return:” a succession of brief descriptions of cities and landscapes in loose free verse, interspersed with the poet’s contradictory feeling at returning to his home country. Carnevali recalls Gibraltar appearing on the horizon “after eight days of the monotony / of sea and sky” (“The Return” 1–2); then Italy appears piecemeal – the Neapolitan coast, Genoa, Bologna and, eventually, Bazzano. “The Return” lacks any word of fondness or admiration for America – which is understandable, in the light of Carnevali’s difficulties as an emigrant. A distraught and disillusioned Carnevali seems to subvert his previous belief in the power of youth: “The Return” presents America as “young” and “pitiless,” looking down on the poet with “hard eyes,” while Carnevali hopes that the eyes of Italian people will be “mellowed by the experience / of two thousand years” (“The Return” 57–59). He juxtaposes America and Italy: a description of “Old Bologna, with her ancient red palaces / Defying the present” (“The Return” 83–84) is interrupted by the poetic I exclaiming “Remember the lake of Chicago?” (“The Return” 86). The comparison between Italian and American cities offers a glimpse of the migrant’s personality as existing in-between: “How everything has grown small since I went away / Since I am away!” (“The Return” 88–89). The changing perspective makes Italian cities look “small” in comparison to New York and Chicago, while the shift in the verbal tense indicates that in 1924 Carnevali still thought of himself as absent in some way (“I am away”). The last lines of the poem have been inserted in emerging canon of Italian-American poetry (Buonomo and Russo 78), for Carnevali’s ability to convey the emigrant’s desperation:

I have come back with a great burden,
With the experience of America in my head –

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My head which now no longer beats the stars.
O Italy, O great shoe, do not
Kick me away again!
("The Return" 114–118)

The poet's bitter comment frames his own troubles into a national context. Due to its geographical shape, Italy is sometimes addressed metaphorically as *lo stivale* ('the boot'). Carnevali uses the metaphor in an English context, by translating it. In his Bazzano years, Carnevali increasingly focused on his personal plights; but he would also continue the conversation with the American public, in which he would discuss, translate and represent Italy for an English-speaking audience. Continuing the conversation with the American public was, after all, the poem's main goal, as he wrote to Monroe: "People still know that I have flown to Italy, but they soon shall forget it. It is good to remind them of this fact, namely, my return to the fatherland."¹⁵⁷

Carnevali was quite isolated in his Italian sojourn. He describes Bazzano as paradoxically relevant for its banal, nondescript quality: "one of the commonest little country towns of Italy" (*Autobiography* 202). The town, he argues in another passage, "deserves to be put on the map" for possessing all the features of a typical Italian village: a belfry and a castle, green fields surrounding it, and "even its own town idiot..." (*Autobiography* 206). The Bazzano works – short stories, poems and drafts for the *Autobiography* – investigate country life from an outsider's perspective, translating the essence of small town Italy into American literature.

While Carnevali attempted to present his Italian experience to the American public, his presence in Italian culture was marginal. Fascist Italy (his stay in Italy coincided almost completely with the length of the dictatorship) was not ready to process the literary and artistic products of emigration. In a country that was taking action politically against the use of foreign words, it was hardly the time for a translingual Italian writer, who was also living in sickness and isolation. Carnevali provoked sporadic interest and curiosity at times, and some journalists wrote about him in national newspapers, considering him from a nationalistic perspective.

¹⁵⁷ Carnevali to Monroe, (probably) 1923, in *SCRCC Poetry*, Box 32.

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Carlo Linati was the only major Italian intellectual to pay attention to Carnevali at the time. Linati “played an important part, in a particularly difficult period, in introducing foreign authors to Italy” via translation and criticism (Guzzetta 113). He introduced Anglophone modernists such as Joyce, Lawrence and Hemingway to the Italian public, while his work was translated for magazines such as *The Little Review*. Linati came to know Carnevali’s American works through *A Hurried Man*, when the poet was already sick in Italy, and celebrated him in the major newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. Linati also wrote to Carnevali, asking him for biographic information. Carnevali replied with deference: “Se Ella non si è ancora pentita di scrivere due parole sul conto del mio libro le offro le seguenti informazioni...”¹⁵⁸ (*Lettere* 151). The two established a correspondence in the following years, with Carnevali more than happy to have an Italian intellectual interested in translating and writing about him.

Linati’s “Un uomo che ha fretta”¹⁵⁹ presents Carnevali’s “vita di ribelle,”¹⁶⁰ admiring his capacity to write in English “con una maestria e una freschezza davvero sorprendente”¹⁶¹ (“Un uomo che ha fretta” 3). A translator himself, he admires Carnevali’s translingualism, praising his command of English. As we have already seen, Linati was the first Italian critic to notice the peculiarities of Carnevali’s language, and assume an Italian origin for those peculiarities (“Un uomo che ha fretta” 3). The insistence on the Italian roots of Carnevali’s English originated from the observation of the language, but it also enabled nationalist overtones (“doni spirituali, tutti propri della sua razza”¹⁶²) that were reprised by all early commentators. The insistence on patriotic elements in early translations of Italian-American texts has been noticed by Polezzi in relation to the 1941 Bompiani translation of Di Donato’s *Christ in Concrete*. In that case, the editor’s celebration of the book as “libro italiano” might have been motivated “by the fact that the translation of Di Donato’s book had been subjected to the attention of Fascist censors”

¹⁵⁸ “If you [Carnevali uses the very formal “Ella”] still do not regret writing a few words about my book, I offer you some information...”

¹⁵⁹ The title of the article is itself a translation of *A Hurried Man*.

¹⁶⁰ “rebel’s life.”

¹⁶¹ “with surprising mastery and freshness.”

¹⁶² “spiritual gift, that are proper of his own race.”

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(Polezzi, “Polylingualism” 141). Linati’s 1925 article and translation was not necessarily compliant to Fascist norms – in the same year Linati signed Croce’s manifesto of anti-Fascist intellectuals. Yet, the insistence on Carnevali’s *italianità* might hint at a common reaction of the Italian cultural establishment to the first samples of Italian-American texts: a temptation to incorporate them into Italian culture at all costs, and turn descriptions of emigrant suffering into celebrations of Italian strength, endurance and adaptability.

“Un uomo che ha fretta” contains Linati’s translation of some paragraphs from “Tale III” and a prose translation of “The Return.” Linati’s translations of “The Return” (he would slightly rework the 1925 translation in 1934) eliminated Carnevali’s puzzled depiction of Italian cities that he hardly recognised, skipping (especially in the 1925 version) directly from Carnevali’s critique of America to the previously quoted appeal to the Fatherland, leaving out pages of poetry in between:

And hunger is the patrimony of the emigrant:
Hunger, desolate and squalid –
For the fatherland,
For bread and for women, both dear.
(Carnevali, “The Return” 41–44)

I have come back, and have found you
All new and friendly, O Fatherland!
I have come back with a great burden,
With the experience of America in my head –
My head which now no longer beats the stars.
O Italy, O great shoe, do not
Kick me away again!
(Carnevali, “The Return” 112–118)

E fame è il patrimonio dell’emigrante, desolata e squallida fame di patria, di pane e di donne... Ma ecco sono ritornato, e ti ho trovata tutta nuova ed amichevole, o Italia. Sono tornato con un grave fardello in me: ho l’esperienza d’America dentro al mio capo. O Italia, o grande Stivale,¹⁶³ non darmi più calci, non allontanarmi più da te. (Linati, “Un uomo che ha fretta” 3)

The translation leaves out the poet’s displacement at finding Italy so “small” on his return – probably to avoid doubts on Carnevali’s national feeling, stressing immigrant hardship and faith in the welcoming fatherland instead.

¹⁶³ Linati could reframe the “boot” metaphor in its original Italian context, and translate “O Italia, O grande Stivale...” using the Italian for “boot” and not “shoe.”

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Linati's translation of "The Return" "rewrites" Carnevali's trip, aiming to create a comprehensible and acceptable "image" of a text for a public with no other access to it (Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting* 5). Although the translation skips the potentially unsettling aspects of his trip (the double displacement of the returning migrant), it nevertheless presents emigrant hardships to the Italian public.

The article had, on the other hand, little impact on the readership.¹⁶⁴

In 1934, Linati wrote another essay on him, for *Nuova Antologia*, where he lamented:

Io non so se tra di noi il suo nome sia noto ad alcuno. Temo che di questo strano poeta non si sia mai fatto cenno in Italia che in un'articolo [sic] ch'io scrissi anni fa nel Corriere della Sera dove cercavo di definire la sua bizzarra personalità di emigrato e di artista.¹⁶⁵ ("Un poeta italiano emigrato" 59)

It is significant that the 1925 essay had in the meantime been reprinted in the 1932 collection *Scrittori Anglo-Americani d'Oggi*.¹⁶⁶ Linati gave Carnevali a place in his treatment of the American canon; at the same time, he indicates Carnevali as "un artista italiano" throughout the essay, asserting his *italianità*. Linati includes translations of excerpts from Carnevali's work in the new essay as well. The translations sometime include English words, with no other apparent motive than to convey the impression of America:

The homes are sitting together in the night, and their horrible Congress is called City. ("Tale IIIb" 54)

E tutti questi *homes* stanno insieme nella notte e il loro orribile congresso si chiama città... (Linati, "Un poeta italiano emigrato" 62)

The word "Wops" also appears untranslated: the choice avoids the discussion

¹⁶⁴ There is at least one account of success of Linati's "Return" translations. The Milan magazine "L'Italia della Domenica" published the 1934 version, claiming that they had received several requests for having the poem printed after it was read on the radio ("Il Ritorno in Italia di un Emigrante"). It is interesting that an unnamed editor referred, in the introduction, to the "brividi di commozione" ("thrills of emotion") of readers who would find an echo, in the poem, of the "sofferenze che essi stessi hanno dovuto sopportare" ("sufferings they had to endure themselves"). Carnevali had a potential audience of returned migrants in Italy, but that audience was not addressed with continuity by mainstream culture.

¹⁶⁵ "I do not know if his name will sound familiar to anyone. I am afraid that no mention of this strange poet was ever made in Italy, apart from an article which I wrote years ago for *Corriere della Sera*, in which I tried to define his bizarre personality as a migrant and an artist."

¹⁶⁶ "English and American Writers of Today"

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on controversial depictions of Italians abroad. Linati shows his doubts about the most effective translation of Carnevali's poetic discourse – was “Splendid Commonplace” to be translated as “Splendida Usualità” or “Splendore di Luoghi Comuni?” (“Un poeta italiano emigrato” 63). While Linati's comments intend to proclaim Carnevali's *italianità*, the translations hint at Carnevali's foreignness. The fact that Linati apologetically doubts his ability to render Carnevali's style effectively in translation, while defending the Italian accents of that same style, casts the poet in a double status.

In 1934, other articles on Carnevali appeared in major Italian newspapers, including *Il Messaggero* and *Il Resto del Carlino*. They generally admit their ignorance about Carnevali (“avevamo a due passi, da oltre un decennio, un grande poeta [...] e nessuno l'aveva mai saputo”¹⁶⁷) and give “il merito della scoperta”¹⁶⁸ to Linati (Silvestri 5). It is particularly interesting to see how they react, with puzzlement and admiration, to Carnevali's linguistic choices. They generally praise, as Linati did, the young Carnevali's ability to learn and master a foreign language, and master it to a point of being accepted in the ranks of American writers. At the same time, praise of Italian intellect, as opposed to foreign cultures, was the norm in Fascist Italy. The journalists reprised Linati's hint of the “vivacità latina” of Carnevali's English, exploiting the connection for nationalist praise. The *Messaggero* article underlined how the young Florentine “seppe [...] conquistare il pubblico Americano con un soffio potente di latinità”¹⁶⁹ (Silvestri 5). The article from *Il Resto del Carlino* featured a brief account on how Carnevali ‘conquered’ America:

Il Carnevali ha un suo fermo e appassionante sogno: essere scrittore. Studia l'inglese; in sei mesi egli è padrone della nuova lingua: grazie, segreti, incanti, armonie. [...] Assalto alle riviste; vittoria rapida e sicura. Arrivano i primi dollari, esplode, nella gioia, la prima sbornia. Curiosità e successo: gl'illustrissimi accolgono e salutano, con lieto stupore, il giovane poeta emigrato. Vibra nella letteratura americana una voce nuova, una voce nostra. (Palmieri)¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ “We have had, for more than a decade now, a great poet living around the corner from us, and nobody ever knew it.”

¹⁶⁸ “The merit of the discovery”

¹⁶⁹ “... was able to win the admiration of the American audience with a powerful breath of Latin soul”

¹⁷⁰ “There, Carnevali has a firm, passionate dream: to become a writer. He studies English;

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The heroic tones in this account reframe Carnevali's story into a story of successful literary emigration. The articles narrate his story as a triumphant Italian conquest of American culture, but also describe the poet's predicament in Bazzano, where he was sick and isolated. There are touching descriptions, in Palmieri's article, of the poet's eyes lighting with delight when the journalist quotes one of his poems, and of Carnevali asking the journalist if he would help him light a cigarette or pour a glass of water.

The newspaper articles also address the matter of Carnevali's possible presence in Italian literature. Palmieri asked him if he could ever write in Italian, now that he was back in his ancestral land. The poet's response was definitive: "In italiano non so scrivere. La lingua è una creatura, sangue, nervi, muscoli: bisogna conoscerla. Non conosco l'italiano."¹⁷¹ The statement is Carnevali's only explicit refusal to write in Italian, indicating that he did not consider his native language as a viable option for his literary works. This attitude towards Italian is rooted in Carnevali's entrance into literature: he considered English as the language in which he had learned to write as a poet, the only one in which he could express himself literarily. He was not confident, on the other hand, that he would be able to build harmony ("una creatura") with the single elements of Italian ("sangue, nervi, muscoli"), which must be familiar to him. The matter of the audience was obviously central as well: it is evident that he considered the English-speaking audience as his natural audience. In a brief autobiographical note for the 1932 *Americans Abroad* anthology, Carnevali stated: "I do not brag of being a major poet, still I believe that I fill a certain space, unique, in American literature" ("First God" 71). His continuous English production intended to maintain that "space." Boyle wrote, in her preface to the *Autobiography*, that his literary works were "the only speech left to him to exchange with the men of his time and kind" (18). The exchange would take place in English, with

within six months he is fluent in the new language: knows its grace, its secrets, its charms, its harmonies. [...] He launches an assault to magazines; his victory is fast and sure. The first dollars come, and drunkenness and joy with them. Curiosity and success; the most illustrious writers welcome and salute, gladly astonished, the young migrant poet. A new voice resonates in American literature, a voice that belongs to us."

¹⁷¹ "I can't write in Italian. A language is a living creature, of blood, sinews, and muscles. One needs to know it. I don't know the Italian language."

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the audience of reviews such as *Poetry* and *This Quarter*. The latter was a transnational, wandering magazine itself, established by Ernest Walsh and Ethel Moorhead. It was published at irregular cadence from Paris, Milan and Monte Carlo for the cosmopolitan Anglophone youth inhabiting the south of Europe in the 1920s. Carnevali's Italian works exist in the cosmopolitan, travelling dimension of 1920s modernism, but his own predicament and background was quite different from the one originating the European works of Hemingway, Pound or Joyce. He chose to keep writing in English, and exist in publications alongside the British and American modernists, but his attitude toward languages was evolving as he wrote from Italy.

The 1929 diary-like short story "A History" has an entry about a man who kept reading "certain lines of a certain book" and got "terribly beautiful dreams" out of it (Carnevali, "A History" 134). The "man" in the story is probably a younger version of Carnevali, doing his best to unravel the mysteries of English by reading as many books as possible. At one point, Carnevali writes, those lines were not enough; the man needed more, and so he "ate words, until he was infected by those black microbes, words."¹⁷² The anecdote construes Carnevali's crisis as a direct consequence of this absorption of English words. The man of the story finds himself "puking words for so many and so many days" until

only a little word, a monosyllable was left for him to dry: and it was an English word, such as love and death, such as big and great, nice and fine, a monosyllable. The beautiful dreams returned...

The monosyllable that gave his dreams back to the man may stand for the simplicity of language, which is capable of returning creative power to Carnevali. The mention of English monosyllables is relevant: it is not an Italian word that is capable of returning his power to him, but one from his adopted language.

Carnevali's attitude toward language in general seems to change in those years, as expressed in another passage in "A History," recalling the start

¹⁷² The concept of words as infective "microbes" was already in "Tale III": "The first line of the first book pulls along all the lines of all the books; I have them all in my blood, these little black microbes—once you read one you're infected and chronic" (36).

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of his adventure through languages:

There was a time, when I did not know English, that English as I saw it written had a very strange effect on me; it appeared to be like freight trains clanging along; the W gave it a most mechanical air. It seems the most modern of languages, the machine language. (Carnevali, "A History" 131)

The migrant's linguistic displacement is recalled in its basic, graphic, dimension. There is nothing apparently "mechanic" about the letter "W" and its sound; but the fact that it is quite common in English, while missing from Italian orthography made it look alien to the young Carnevali. Then, an increased familiarity with English made the language natural and organic to his eye: "now it has gained the look of an Italian dialect" ("A History" 131). Such acquired familiarity places English within the limits of the native tongue, in the subordinate position of a "dialect." The brief excursus on the inner dialectics of language is concluded by this comment: "but! notice that all languages have a similar look" (131). This epiphany contains translingual aspirations to be, in Kellman's terms, "pandictic" (16): it links Carnevali's Italian writings to his 1920 crisis, and the impulse to go beyond the concrete limits of language to become "The First God." In its 1929 version, the statement is rooted in a practical opposition between real-world languages. The passage briefly summarises the evolution of a polyglot conscience through the continuous presence of foreign speech, to which the author needs to adapt. This observation ultimately describes the language of Carnevali's Italian works as the result of multiple language interactions.

Translingual writing enabled Carnevali to write about his life as a sick man, by translating the events and the speech of his life in Bazzano and Bologna into English. "A History" ends with a celebration of the quiet country life in Bazzano, and the declaration, to his American audience, that he would make literature out of the village where he lived:

Too much literature comes from the city and too little from the country [...]. Thoreau believed in the place where he was living and by his belief he made books where the essence of the place in which he lived shines and glitters. A great courage was his and with courage he won. I also believe in the place where I am living. I will have courage too. ("A History" 148)

He had rejected, upon emigration, the culture of small town Italy. His

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rediscovered links with Italy passed through his ruinous experience of the American metropolis, as well as a hint of the celebration of nature that he had found in the American tradition. In Bazzano Carnevali was a returning migrant, a condition that adds further trauma to the shock of emigration. This could represent the return to the backwards, narrow-minded “father-land” that he had fled: he found himself in the Bologna area because his father still lived nearby. He was able, however, to use the town not only as the background for the story of his sickness, but also as basis for a discussion of Italian culture for American readers.

Sickness is at any rate the most present topic in his works from the time, expressing a desperate strain towards life, while surrounded by death. This mood permeates all the characters of the story (in two parts) set in the clinic, “Train of Characters through the Villa Rubazziana.” Doctors, patients and guests pass in front of the narrator’s eyes on the grotesque stage of the hospital, and in the supposedly more welcoming environment of the clinic.¹⁷³ The author tries to oppose meaningless suffering with compassion, and ends in frustration:

I am an awkward gawky creature, otherwise the song of hatred towards the hospital would reach God; it would disturb and bother Him; it would claim the abolition of sickness; and then of hospitals; and the glory and the triumph of health; and the abolition of doctors. (“Rubazziana II” 124)

Doctors, on the other hand, are not immune from misery and insanity. The director of the Villa Baruzziana/Rubazziana is depicted “[leading] the caravan of the cross-myelitics, of the ataxics, the spinal-syphilitics, the polymelitics,” of which he “knows the secret, the watchword and the slogan;” in the end, the story ran that he was “as crazy as the craziest of his patients” (“Rubazziana” 142). Patients and doctors alike attempt to lead as healthy and normal a life as possible, while closeness to death reveals basic desires and impulses. Much detail is given in the “Rubazziana” stories to sentimental and sexual relationships: doctors and patients (including Carnevali) seek to

¹⁷³ The real name of the clinic was, and still is, Villa Baruzziana. “Rubazziana” is a pun to indicate the author’s contempt, explained in “Train of Characters”: “(from the Italian Rubare which means to rob). In fact, they take the shirt off a man’s back as soon as they notice he has one” (“Rubazziana” 141).

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alleviate their misery together, and the Rubazziana becomes “a brothel with a tangle of unplatonic love affairs” (“Rubazziana II” 122).

In this environment, Carnevali laments not being able to write. Describing the room to which he moved after leaving the clinic, he lists his few belongings (“two trunks and three suit cases. O boy! I am a rich man, that I am!”). The small night table is covered with drugs, while the typewriter “sits quietly” (“A History” 128). The poet plays on the title of his 1925 book to describe himself as a “hurried man, forced by sickness to go slow,” expressing the contrast between his original aspirations and the need to re-think his possibilities after his illness. He laments being unable to write most of the time, having to wait for the intervals of his sickness while the typewriter “awaits [his] hands.” As the typewriter and the phonograph give a “mechanistic touch to the face of the room,” he turns into a broken machine as well, with the scopolamine acting as “lubricating oil for [his] wretched joints.” Yet, the poems and short stories of the Italian period are the proof that he worked through his suffering and displacement, to create a literary rendition of his Bazzano life. The works of this period are works of literature, even when they appear as haphazard notes and reflections from a very sick man. A work like “A History” may be organised in a series of diary entries, including observations on trivial things and passing states of mind; yet it was written for publication in *This Quarter* in 1929. The very existence of these works in English implies an English-speaking readership, a target audience for which the author arranges and translates the source material. Titles are indicative: Carnevali’s plights become a “history”, and the doctors and patients become “characters” who pass in a “train” through the “Villa Rubazziana” (existing in the text, independently from real-life Villa Baruzziana). The process requires an audience to recognise the sick writer as a writer still. That audience was the readership of English-speaking modernist magazines – a transnational audience, but in any case an audience that read English and was interested in the development of literature in English. In the process, the whole of Bazzano was reframed into the canon of American literature, and its speech was translated. Through such a process, Carnevali’s writing transcends the tale of his sickness, foregrounding sickness as the condition of the outsider, the dying displaced man observing the living, and

translating their speech for his intended readership. The result presents a whole culture – provincial Italy in the 1920s – from a unique perspective.

3.2.2 Priests, Podestà and Proverbs

The matter of cultural perspective in translingual literature has been found to be comparable to some issues faced by literary translators. The relationship between the task of the translator and that of the post-colonial and minority author (writing in a dominant language) has been theorised by Tymoczko in her essay “Post-colonial Writing and Literary Translation.” She argues that the presentation of a culture to an audience that may be unfamiliar with it is at the basis of both post-colonial writing and translation. The main difference between the two would be in terms of scope: unlike translators, literary authors are “transposing a culture” and not a text (Tymoczko 20). Translation and literary creation may become linked, in Tymoczko’s argument, when representation of unfamiliar cultural elements is involved, and a strategy of cultural representation is needed on the author/translator’s part. The issue is central to Carnevali’s Bazzano writings, although he was not, technically speaking, part of a “minority” at the time. As an Italian writing in English from Italy and about Italy, he was involved with the issues of cultural translation in different ways from when he was in America. These works conveyed an idea of Italy, and the matter of authorial perspective and translational strategy was crucial in this regard.

This type of text ultimately follows the author’s perception of the represented culture, creating a unified image and discourse out of a multiplicity of input and voices. The final text represents the author’s choice and approximations – his/her view of the home culture and what of that view is transposed in the text. A “minority-culture or post-colonial writer will have to pick aspects of the home culture to convey and to emphasize” (Tymoczko 23), and that process is usually carried out with the audience in mind. After picking what characters, rituals and discourses may exemplify provincial Italy, Carnevali reframed them in English, explaining potentially obscure points with an anthropologist’s zeal and a misfit’s attitude of dissent. His

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views of Italian culture are necessarily partial and fragmentary, reflecting his outsider's experience of small towns and hospitals. Yet there is, in the author's communication of this personal experience to the American public, a will to translate the Italian experience, by translating its voices, rites, practices and discourse.

Carnevali's operation of writing Bazzano and the Villa Baruzziana into American literature implies a dialogic element that contrasts and compares cultures, even in texts that would ideally concentrate on the author's inner world. For example, Carnevali starts a paragraph on a game of cards with the words "how noisy are Italians!" ("A History" 133). He then goes on to explain that "four Italians can beat a score of Americans in loud talking" and that a discussion on a card game could make them "more prepotent than Mussolini" and "louder than Niagara" (thus using both an Italian and an American image for his simile). The construction of a foreign audience to whom he is (re)presenting the town allows Carnevali to cast himself as outsider and observer. He speaks of hidden sides of the quiet country town, describing alcoholics and extra-marital affairs, town idiots and loan sharks with vivid expressionistic tones. The style often betrays an outcast's pleasure in exposing the hidden side, as in the case of the anecdote on "young ladies" who "go for long walks with young men" in the countryside and "find after a time themselves possessors of a large belly [...] all because of some long walk in the country with some young man" ("Rubazziana II" 123).

Carnevali's outsider's gaze is particularly evident and penetrating in his translational representation of Fascism and the Catholic church: two institutions that could be criticised by positing oneself as a total outsider, not participating in the social discourse of 1920s Italy. Catholic practices, rituals and beliefs are an integral part of his representation of Bazzano. The 1925 poems collected in *A Hurried Man* cast Carnevali as a disturbing force in the placid certainties of Bazzano's Catholic society. One poem is significantly titled "The talkative Poet follows a Catholic Procession," and it counters the Latin words of "De Profundis" with Carnevali's English. The poet's images of individual desperation and isolation are a dissonant echo to the words of the prayer:

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De Profundis clamavi ad Te Domine.
Out of an inscrutably deep grotto
Comes a white body.
He speaks: 'I have lived under the sea,
The tremor of the surf reached my supine body.'
("The Talkative Poet" 1-15)

The juxtaposition turns into social critique as the reference to law in "*et proper legem tua sustinui Te Domine*" is followed by the image of "diplomats and lawyers" at dinner discussing "theft, raping, white slavery etc. etc." ("The Talkative Poet" 25-27). In "Dolce Cuore" on the other hand, an old man is presented mechanically answering to the words of an ejaculation, repeating "Dolce cuore del mio Gesù, fa ch'io t'ami sempre più."¹⁷⁴ The poem presents rituals of popular Catholicism to an American readership while deconstructing them as superstitious. The old man is described in his religious zeal, trying to live as a saint but ultimately appearing "religious like a bug / that contemplates the ocean / and thinks of crossing it" ("Dolce Cuore" 5-7); while a life of pilgrimages made him "stink of sanctity" (40).¹⁷⁵

Religious institutions, embodied by nuns and priests, are shown in a critical light. In "Catholic Sisters" the "barren" nuns are the unlikely interlocutors of Carnevali's philosophical disquisitions:

I told Sister Claire:
Why was Adam put into the world when God knew beforehand that he
was going to sin. 'That is
a matter of philosophy. Ask our priest!' Thus Sister Claire.
("The Catholic Sisters" 12-14)

Priests in particular are described with a number of anticlerical clichés. Carnevali writes of the priests' sexuality in a way that would have been certainly censored at the time, had he written in Italian. A scandal concerning the chaplain of the Villa, who was accused of having an affair with a married woman, is taken as opportunity by the author to imply the chaplain's paedophilia. The chaplain, he writes, "is very fond of young boys...; perhaps a bit too fond of young boys" ("A History" 127). Carnevali in Bazzano also chastises priests on the basis of their supposed homosexuality, which is an

¹⁷⁴ "Sweet heart of my Jesus, make me love you ever more!" (Carnevali's translation provided in the poem).

¹⁷⁵ The expression plays on the Italian idiom *in odore di santità* (literally, "smelling like sanctity"), designating someone who might be proclaimed a saint by the church.

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anticlerical commonplace: the chaplain, fleeing the scandal, “scuttles by [sic] like any Miss” in his “long black skirt” (“A History” 127). Memories of youth find their way into the Bazzano stories, to recall priests who were “notorious degenerates [...] expelled from the diocese for taking liberties with young people” (*Autobiography* 203). In the *Autobiography*, he wrote about a priest who was his teacher in “the third elementary grade,” and he “would offer you wine and sweets, yet he was not a pederast” (*Autobiography* 156). In parenthesis, the author feels the need to add: “I say he was not a pederast because so many of the priests in my country are.” Addressing an Anglophone readership is instrumental to framing his harsh criticism of Italian religious institutions: the English language is what enables Carnevali to make such disruptive statements.

The advantages of his English writing are even more evident in Carnevali’s translation of the speech and everyday practice of Fascism. While Carnevali’s writings do not extensively reflect on Fascism, the regime makes its inevitable appearance. In the late 1920s, its pervasiveness in Italian society and culture was at its peak. Carnevali lived in a nation in which any “oppositional discourse” to Mussolini risked being silenced, and artistic production implied “condescending attitudes, and the supposed neutrality of art” (Moroni and Somigli 24). Writing in English, for a foreign audience, allowed him to describe and expose Fascism as no other Italian writer still working in Italy could do. While he could not be described as a militant anti-Fascist, he never showed much enthusiasm for the regime. In a 1932 letter to Ezra Pound, he appeared puzzled at the latter’s embrace of Fascism: “What was the interview where you declared that you were fascist: please tell me: I am in too big a bunch of murderers, here in Bazzano to have a heart for fascism.”¹⁷⁶ Ironically enough, Luigi Federzoni, the president of Italian senate, an eminent Fascist politician and intellectual, would be moved by Linati’s articles and help Carnevali be transferred to Rome for an experimental encephalitis cure in 1936.¹⁷⁷ In his literary works, Fascism

¹⁷⁶ Carnevali to Pound, (presumably) 1932, Yale Beinecke, Series I, Box 8, Folder 344.

¹⁷⁷ In a (presumably) 1934 letter Carnevali wrote to Pound that “The president of the senate has deigned to consider that the old Linati has written a fine article on me.” In a 18 April 1936 letter, Carnevali’s Bazzano landlady wrote to Pound that Carnevali was hospitalised in Rome, “per interessamento di S.E. il presidente del senato” (“following interest from His

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appears rarely, and few political issues are addressed directly. Yet, daily life under Fascism is a recognizable component of his Bazzano works. Carnevali exposes the discourse of Fascism by ridiculing its everyday, banal dimension. His critique of provincial life in the 1920s is also a critique of Italian complaisance towards the regime.

In the hospital, Carnevali befriends a young Fascist named Arches, wounded from gunshot, who stands accused of murder. Arches is depicted as pleasant company and a womaniser, but is not held in high esteem by the author: “His tragedy – hidden – was his insignificance” (“Rubazziana” 145). Carnevali’s judgement on this provincial version of male Fascist ideal is that “if Fascists had been better men, that is truly great conquerors of the soul of Italy,” Arches would have become a hero, instead of a “mere invalid” (“Rubazziana” 145). A psychiatric patient of the Villa, an aristocratic woman named Mrs Thighs, is “continually writing to Mussolini” and urges Carnevali to write to the king of England to sponsor his career (“Rubazziana II” 110). By staging Fascism in the life of psychiatric patients and renegades, Carnevali shows his American readership a less-than-grandiose side of Fascism.

The regime, in Carnevali’s view, is a façade which does not change timeless provincialism, and the misery of the typical Italian small town. The impression is strengthened in the paragraph on the *podestà* of the town. *Podestà* was the title of the regime’s non-elective mayors. It comes from the Renaissance since, as Carnevali informs the reader “Mussolini has decided to make Italy look Roman or Medieval” (“A History” 132). The *podestà* of Bazzano is a “fat faced little gentleman” who is “the purest image of doing-nothingness” (“A History” 132). The passage comically underlines the contrast between the daily occupations of the *podestà* (which consist mainly of idling in the streets of the town) and his high-sounding title. The *podestà* holds his position because “Mussolini says so, and the Madonna is satisfied”, symbolizing an Italy in which secular and religious power have always been intertwined, and Fascism only maintains this immutable order. Carnevali remarks that, “like all fascists” the *podestà* is a “man of strong opinions,

Excellency the president of the senate”). Both letters kept in Yale Beinecke, Series I, Box 8, Folder 344.

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borrowed of course from the men who stand higher up above him.” The passage is a short critique of nationalism in the form of anecdote, penetrating what Bhabha calls the “nationalist pedagogy” (145). Such discourse has the “people” of a nation as its primary object, giving the national discourse “an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*” (Bhabha 145, author’s emphasis). Italy’s past, re-narrated in mythical form, and re-enacted in the everyday life of citizens, is the self-justifying tale of the regime. Carnevali underlines the fictional quality of such historical links, exposing the “borrowed” quality of the strong opinions taught by the national pedagogy, its aggressive reutilization of the past, and the underlying system of power that is maintained (Mussolini and the Madonna acting in accordance). Carnevali ridicules the “nationalist pedagogy” aspects of Fascism, calling the podestà a “mask” in “Mussolini’s great bal masqué” (“A History” 132) which begins with the Balilla (“kind of boy-scouts”) and ends with the government. Carnevali’s ironic remarks expose the process of how “scraps, patches and rags of daily life” are turned by an over-imposed Fascist discourse into “the signs of a coherent national culture” (Bhabha 145).

In order to communicate the fiction of Fascism to his American audience, Carnevali needs to convey its specific language; that is the opposite of what he did in America, where he had to learn how to master American speech, and not reproduce Italian speech. A word like *podestà* needs to stay untranslated in the text, to play its role of ancient word inserted in a modern discourse. Other words of Fascist language are translated. Arches was wounded, Carnevali tells us, in a “Fascist punitive expedition” (“Rubazziana” 144). The phrase gains its full meaning as a direct translation of the Italian *spedizione punitiva fascista*: a practice with its own violent ritual, directed at political opponents in the years leading to Mussolini’s rule. Italians of the time knew the expression all too well; translated so that it maintained the closest possible resemblance to the original, it carries an element of Fascist language into English, signifying a precise Italian referent. Sometimes the English language needs to be bent slightly in order to convey such elements, as it is in the case of the “boundary line” used as a threat by the podestà (“he can send you to the boundary line, oh boy!” “A History” 132). Carnevali here refers to the Italian *confino*. The word resembles the Italian for “boundary”

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(*confine*); yet it referred to the Fascist regime's practice of *confinare* ('segregating') dissidents in small villages (not necessarily at the national border) with no connection to the rest of the world. Out of similarities between Italian words, an English word is bent to signify another practice that is relevant to Fascist Italy. Carnevali's play with the language of Fascism also includes mimicry of Fascist rhetoric (the *podestà* speaks of "Italy's fortune and the higher destinies of the Fatherland").

The passage on Fascism underlines the need, for a translational text, to build its own language in order to communicate "a language, a cognitive system, a literature [...], a material culture, a social system and legal framework, a history, and so forth" (Tymoczko 20). Carnevali's American works had operated on the proximities of English and Italian, displaying Carnevali's particular relations with words that had similarities with Italian words – yet, such language tended mostly toward linguistic assimilation. Carnevali's Italian works on the other hand display strong Italian influences, pointing to the development of the author's language as well as to their context. Linguistic strategies, such as the one that Carnevali used to represent Fascist speech, imply that the languages involved in the formation of a translingual text may have different impacts in different contexts. The underlying native language of the author may appear as remnant, pointing to deep-seated connections in the genesis of the text; but the importance of the changing subject matter is not to be undermined. One may argue that, while the streets of New York call Carnevali to respond to American slang, and give his own version of the speech, Bazzano and the Baruzziana present him with the problem of representing Italian speech in English. This is the practical side of the question, but not the only one in Carnevali's case.

Writing in English enables Carnevali to cast himself as an American author: that is, not only to maintain contact with his canon of choice, but to stand as external observer in Italy, a translator of his own native culture as opposed to a participant. Carnevali strives to bring the speech of 1920s Italy towards English, while at the same time bending the words and structures of English (a language that he must have practised significantly less after his return). His conclusion that "all language have a similar look" yields to

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linguistic uncertainty and in-betweenness rather than creating the infinite possibilities of polyglot life. Carnevali's relationship to English and Italian is better described in this sense by the two paradoxical propositions that open Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other*:

1. we only ever speak one language.
2. we never speak only one language. (Derrida, *Monolingualism* 7)

Derrida is concerned here with the relationship between languages in terms of 'property' – in what sense one may claim to a language as his/her 'own,' and what is then the movement across languages. The problem lies in the impossibility to claim a language as one's own, not even for national institutions and colonial masters: "because the master does not possess exclusively, and naturally, what he calls his language" and can only appropriate it "through the rape of a cultural usurpation" (Derrida, *Monolingualism* 23). The matter of a secure hold on language is central in Carnevali after the crisis made him insecure of his language while offering him a vision of infinite linguistic possibilities. In Italy, he is caught between two 'impossible' monolingual speeches, belonging to Italian society and to the American canon. Carnevali did not 'own' either speech, as the oscillations of his literary works show: he lived the paradoxical literalness of Derrida's propositions as he kept building his personal language ("On ne parle jamais qu'une seule langue") out of different languages ("On ne parle jamais une seule langue"). In this fantasy, he fancied himself able to master them all – calling English "an Italian dialect," and even finding Russian similar to Italian, at least "judging from Russian names, which are all I know of Russian" (Carnevali, "A History" 131). Carnevali's struggle with control of the language of his literature responds to the paradox of an impossible monolingualism, as well as giving artistic form to phenomena that have been observed in bilinguals. Bilinguals report being influenced by all of their languages when describing the world,

with each language offering its speakers many different discourses and interpretive frames, that is assemblages of lexical items, metaphors, rhetorical practices and scripts that structure speakers' expectations, assign interpretations to social events, and serve as a kind of memory structure facilitating understanding, encoding, recognition, and recall. (Pavlenko, *The Bilingual Mind* 225)

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Carnevali's peculiar situation, as well as his desire to make sense, through literature, of his predicament, brings life to a text in which "different discourses," "interpretive frames" and "lexical assemblages" of English and Italian compete under the layer of English. Idioms that appear to be freshly translated from Italian are employed by the authorial voice in more than one occurrence, creating expressions such as "the stick-to-lean-upon of his old age"¹⁷⁸ ("A History" 140) or "if they are roses they will bloom"¹⁷⁹ ("Rubazziana" 147). Translations of Italian phrases and idioms may be used to cast judgment on Italian society, as he mentions "women of the vulgus" ("A History" 139), using its Latin antecedent to bring into English the Italian word *volgo*.¹⁸⁰ He uses phrases such as "I detest him cordially" ("A History" 135), which translates the expression *detestare cordialmente*, used to indicate outward respect of someone who is actually despised; or "native town" ("Rubazziana II" 107) instead of the more common 'home town,' to translate the Italian expression *città natale*. At the same time, versions of American English's interpretive frames are evident in the use of certain expressions to interpret Italian reality. The 'sweet sixteen' has no place as a concept in the Italian cultural landscape: yet Carnevali calls a character "as sweet as a sweet sixteen" ("Rubazziana II" 118). This operation of explaining Italy also through concepts learned in America is sometimes made explicit:

Once he tried to stop drinking and smoking, but two days after he had begun his abstinence (after he had gone on the water wagon, to put it more Americanly), he started to have fainting symptoms... ("A History" 145)

"Water wagon" is an expression that has no equivalent in Italian – and actually its more usual English form is 'to go on the wagon.' This use of the expression is the sign of a persistent influence from the English language, even with reduced familiarity and confidence in handling American concepts.

Carnevali's Italian works precede Derrida's post-colonial

¹⁷⁸ This is the painstakingly literal translation of *il bastone della sua vecchiaia*, an idiom which indicates a person who supports another one in his/her old age.

¹⁷⁹ This literally translates *Se son rose fioriranno*, a saying which is commonly used to invite to patience.

¹⁸⁰ In 1921 he had identified Dante's language as "*il volgare*, the language spoken by the *volgo*, the people" ("Dante" 323). Writing from Italy, with a very different perspective on language, he gave up multilingual glossing and came up with an untranslated "vulgus."

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uncertainties by decades, moving between languages that the author can never treat as his own, negotiating his identity through linguistic and cultural constraints. It is worth noting that, while many strategies may be similar to the strategies of post-colonial authors – handling more than one language within the text, using translation to address a monolingual audience – Carnevali does not apparently share the post-colonial authors' attitude towards the linguistic mainstream. Like a post-colonial text, Carnevali's Italian text “comes to encode messages which are not readily decoded by the monolingual reader” unfamiliar with “other referential worlds” (Mehrez 122). Unlike the post-colonial language analysed by Mehrez, his goal is not to “subvert hierarchies [...] by exploding and confounding different symbolic worlds and separate systems of signification” (Mehrez 122). The goal of Carnevali's language is to keep his existence as a literary author – and preferably an American author. In order to do so, he is faced with the task of the translator, while his grasp on language(s) becomes ever more confused in the wake of his breakdown and illness.

There are multiple signs in the text indicating that Carnevali was writing in a language that he did not firmly grasp. Rather, he appears to be writing in an idiom caught in the passage between Italian and English. Literally translated phrases, proverbs and idioms give the impression of everyday life in Bazzano. They also testify to Carnevali's uncertain control of language, giving rise to a unique wording which requires notions of Italian lingua-cultural space to be fully understood: “He started to speak to me: ‘I will tell thee a story.’ ‘How,’ says his daughter, ‘do you thou him?’ ‘Then,’ said the old man, ‘I shall tell us a story. I saw snow in Castelfranco’” (“A History” 135). The dialogue functions on an Italian opposition between the colloquial second person pronoun *tu* and the formal, polite way of addressing interlocutors in the third person (*lei*). Carnevali attempted to convey excessive familiarity, to make readers know that it was a *tu* that the old man used, by using the antiquate English equivalent of a singular *tu*. Such opposition does not have the same currency in English. This is directly related to the “interpretive frames” mentioned by Pavlenko in the passage quoted above. The lack of such an opposition between personal pronouns has been felt as a “conceptual loss” by translingual writers coming from languages in

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which this opposition is present: Besemeres observed it in Hispanic American authors who were bewildered as they went from “inescapable distinction between two forms of address in [their] native Spanish” to “the all-embracing English pronoun ‘you’” (25).

Another passage that implies the presence of colloquial Italian has a hospital patient cursing on his deathbed: “God is a hangman!” (“Rubazziana II” 124). The expression renders into English the blasphemous expression *Dio boia*. Blasphemies have a certain pervasiveness in the colloquial speech of some Italian regions, as well as a “shock value” that is difficult to render pragmatically in English (Bassnett, *Translation Studies* 34). In this case, some of the shock value is kept via literal translation, which inserts a copula that is not present in the original Italian expression. The blasphemous expression is deprived of its Italian socio-cultural subtext, but it works in the narration as a dying man’s expression of revolt against his doom.

Bits of colloquial Italian are especially evident when reporting the speech of other characters. They mark the translational text as English rephrasing of an Italian utterance. Carnevali notes that his nurse and friend, Gilio, talked about the fields in late winter as being “peeled” (“A History” 130). That translates a colloquial expression (*pelato/a*) which could be referred to fruit as well as a bald man, and to things stripped of growth/vegetation/fur in general. Moral judgments and statements are often close to their Italian source in the translational text, as if implying that the social practices of a small Italian town may be translated only together with the phrases expressing such practices. A man who walks in town poorly dressed and with a long beard is bound to be identified by Carnevali’s neighbors as “the man of the caverns” (“A History” 146) – an expression which is closer to the Italian *uomo delle caverne* than ‘caveman.’ Another man, an alcoholic, is described as “alcoholized” (“Rubazziana II” 123) from the Italian *alcolizzato*. In another passage, Gilio swears:

‘That I may become blind and not see my own child anymore. That my child drop dead as I enter the house tonight and that I may bust this very instant, if it’s true that Celia’s baby is my own.’ (“A History” 130)

That type of phrase is commonly used in Italian for solemn oaths (ironically

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undermined by the fact that the character in question is elsewhere described as unfaithful): that of wishing ill fate to oneself or to one's next of kin if what one is saying is not true. Carnevali uses English structures to mimic the Italian verbal tense of *congiuntivo imperfetto*, which can be used for remote or hypothetical occurrences. The transference of everyday speech into English is, of course, not only a matter of morphology. Syntax is bent to this particular use; phrases and expression are translated; culture-specific situations are displayed and, to some extent, explained. These factors together make the trans-cultural performance. The passage on Gilio's marital troubles also contains his wife's threat "to leave her home, to scream in the public square Gilio's infamy, to break up the family" ("A History" 130). The sentence includes a translation of the Italian idiom *nella pubblica piazza*, which does refer to the town square, but also carries the extended meaning of 'openly, in public.' In such a context, taking a fight into the "public square" means a blow to family respectability. In addition to translating Italian colloquial speech, the passage shows the American readership a sample of "*bella figura*, the code of proper presence of social behavior that governs an individual's public presence" (Gardaphé, *Italian Signs* 20, author's emphasis). However, the translation process does not only deal with the speech of the people of Bazzano and the Villa Baruzziana. Some cultural references may also depend on Carnevali's middle class education before emigration. He uses, for example, the phrase "rustic chivalry" to describe the evenings in the streets of Bazzano (*Autobiography* 208). The phrase mimics the Italian *cavalleria rusticana*, popularised by an 1880 short story by Giovanni Verga, dealing with the culture of honor and duels in a small Sicilian village. After featuring in an 1890 opera by Pietro Mascagni, it entered the language as an idiom. Carnevali tries to make an English expression out of it. Popular operas from the time seem to be a source of idioms for him: he also translates some lines from Ruggero Leoncavallo's *I pagliacci* (1892), referring to the "Pagliacci psychology" while rendering the popular aria "Vesti la giubba" in English: "Laugh, O clown / of your broken love..."¹⁸¹ ("A History" 139). Carnevali uses his own Italian cultural references, which appear directly translated in

¹⁸¹ In the original: "Ridi, pagliaccio / sul tuo amore infranto..."

the text, to frame his discussion of Italy.

Such translation is the norm in Carnevali's Bazzano writings, while untranslated Italian words are on the other hand quite less frequent. Minority authors have been found to use "non translation – that is, deliberately leaving a part of the text not translated in order to marginalize the monolingual readers" and undermine the notion of separate homogeneous cultures (Gentzler 143). Carnevali, though, keeps the untranslated Italian sign to a minimum. One of the author's love interests, a young girl from Cairo, rejects him by saying "*Basta!* I don't want..." ("Rubazziana II" 107, author's emphasis) – quite interestingly, the same character is given other multilingual cues, in Italian, English and French ("I went to the door, *et voilà, vous étiez là!*" 107, author's emphasis). On a different note, the Italian onomatopoeia "*kirikiki*" ("Rubazziana II" 116) is used instead of the English "cock-a-doodle-doo." Overt multilingualism seems to be relegated to special cases (onomatopoeia, multilingual characters). In general, Carnevali's multilingualism lies beneath the surface in the Bazzano texts. Even names, which may be used to provide immediate signs of Italian in the text, are sometimes translated into English. Given names like Clelia, Cimbra ("A History" 130) and surnames such as Rossi (131), Andreoli (143) or Degli Esposti (144) may be left untranslated, to provide an immediately recognizable sign of *italianità*. Yet there are almost as many cases of English nicknames given by Carnevali to his Italian characters. They are Italian nicknames and surnames which have been transformed into English. The Rubazziana is populated with people with names like "Professor Komebacks," "Marquis Dumbs," "Fireplaces," "Coast," "Mrs Thighs" and "Nothrills". While "Professor Blacks" of Carnevali's Rubazziana ("Rubazziana" 142) might be Professor Neri, who founded the Baruzziana in 1911,¹⁸² it is usually hard to ascertain which names are nicknames and which are translated surnames. Carnevali's idiosyncratic attitude towards names includes also "Signor Gallese" and "Signorina Testadimoro" ("Rubazziana" 147), the Italian names he comes up with for his editors Ernest Walsh and Ethel Moorhead.¹⁸³ They exist out of Italy, and out of America as well – they

¹⁸² <http://www.linkedin.com/company/private-hospital-villa-baruzziana->

¹⁸³ "Gallese" is actually the Italian for *Welsh*. "Testadimoro" is a translation of *Moor-Head*.

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are all a part of Carnevali's Bazzano language, the language that he created for the purpose of the text, bound to exist in the text alone.

Carnevali's Italian works may present notable Italian influences, but at the same time the resulting language is quite distant from the linguistic reality of 1920s Italy, existing in the text alone. This is particularly evident from the absence of dialect. It is quite likely that dialect had a presence, in Bazzano, as in any other Italian town. Carnevali notes that Bazzano has its own speech, and "its own songs, songs heard nowhere except in Bazzano" (*Autobiography* 206). He translates three of these songs into Standard English, thus keeping the foreign presence to a minimum ("Moretto, Moretto, he has in his hair / The natural wave that comes from water..."). On the other hand, he does not represent dialect in his works. The passage that contains his "all languages have a similar look" epiphany also discusses Italian dialect, contextualised in English. The author writes that he "noticed that Italian language is to the dialect what English written is to American spoken" ("A History" 131). He explains this by comparing the relationship between the Italian *discorrere* and the romagnolo dialect *dscarer*, which he deems the same as the relationship between the word *hot* and a pronunciation such as *haht*. The passage fails to make the crucial distinction between dialect and accent, while the whole text hardly takes into account the emiliano-romagnolo words heard in Bazzano. Dialect is acknowledged, but not present in the text, perhaps because he thought it inferior to standard Italian. He wrote "it is the dialect that resembles the language and not the language that resembles the dialect" ("A History" 131), implying that he gave conceptual preeminence to the standard variety over dialect. There is a recognizable Italian influence in the texts, with many elements of colloquial Italian, but none that is recognizable as dialect.

Carnevali's Bazzano works avoid the challenges of multilingualism, by embracing a form of translational language, which is farther from Italian, but at the same time distant from English – a language born out of the impossibility of being monolingual, and the temptation to affirm that "all languages have a similar look." The resulting language, in order to be Carnevali's own, needs to work through translation instead of presenting the

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English and the Italian speech as irreducible givens. The texts, as products, display what Spivak has proposed to call the “trace,” what may replace the notion of “achieved translation”:

trace of the other, trace of history, even cultural traces [...]. If translation is a necessary impossibility, the thought of a trace looks like the possibility of an anterior presence, without guarantees. It is not a sign but a mark and therefore cannot signify an “original,” as a translation presumably can, especially when assumed as definitively irreducible. (Spivak 105)

The ‘trace’ is the possibility of a textual antecedent, which is still visible. We might think of it as something that appears as it may have transferred from one lingua-cultural environment to the other. It does not guarantee to lead the reader to the rediscovery of a lost original, as its primary role is not that of signifying, but of existing within the target text as it reaches the target audience: it is, at best, a vague remnant. Idioms such as “rustic chivalry” or “the stick-to-lean-upon of his old age” (“A History” 140) do not originate in a recognizable source text, but in the author’s mind as he comes up with ways to use Italian idioms in a text that must be written in English. Phrases like “God is a hangman!” (“A History” 124), or the thee/thou uncertainty (“A History” 135) on the other hand are probably translations of actual speech. Similarly they have no definite source text to indicate (if there was, it existed in the ephemeral realm of orality) and only hint to the presence of another culture in a text that is not a translation and not strictly multilingual. In both cases, the trace is the possibility of the source, without a source.

Born out of the impossibility of achieving a perfect translation, as it moves between linguistic systems whose borders are always in the process of being redefined, the translingual text presents the translational ‘trace’ as textual fact, a source that does not exist in practice and yet may have a perceptible imprint on the resulting text. The trace depends on the bilingual’s predicament, the social and cultural imbalance hinted at by Derrida and registered by the scholars of bilingualism. It is perhaps such trace that we notice when we reflect on the relationship between the translingual trace and a translation. In Carnevali’s American texts, the trace is a faint possibility within the realm of the linguistic norm: not only it lacked a recognizable source, but also it existed on grounds that were shared by the two languages

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involved, a matter of lexical proximity rather than interference. In the Bazzano works, the trace rises to the forefront.

The most evident proof of the existence of such a trace perhaps would manifest itself in any successive attempt to translate it into Italian, a language that is already a component of the text's precarious balance. David Stivender, who in the 1970s acted not only as a re-discoverer of Carnevali's work, but also as a mediator between Boyle and Maria Pia Carnevali, mentioned this feature of Carnevali's English. In a letter to Boyle, he wrote: "[copyrighted material]."¹⁸⁴ The presence of literally translated idioms (which would regain their full significance in Italian), as well as diffuse similarities in syntax and cadence, would make a translator's task supposedly easier. It would also force him/her to suppress one of the most interesting features of the text itself.

Carnevali's English is the perfect medium for telling his story of despair and displacement, of inextinguishable difference, while an Italian translator would be forced to deactivate most of the clusters of foreignness that are so distinctive of the original work. The translation of a multilingual work (even one where the other language is present only as interference) may reduce "the possible tensions between languages and language varieties," often acting as part of a "general homogenizing strategy" (Grutman 22). Grutman argues that this undermining effect becomes "all the more evident when the target language of a translation is none other than the embedded foreign language of the source text" (22). The risk is normalizing a text that had strangeness and multilingual complexity as its constituent – while at the same time an Italian translation of the Bazzano works would perform the noble task of following the translational 'trace' back to its origin, putting the texts back in touch with the environment that generated them.

I do not intend to provide solutions for such dilemma faced by Carnevali's translators:¹⁸⁵ I intend the conundrum simply as final proof of the peculiar nature of the Bazzano texts. The need for a bilingual awareness in

¹⁸⁴ Stivender to Boyle, 4 May 1974, NYPL Boyle.

¹⁸⁵ Largely excluded from the 1978 *Il Primo Dio*, most of the Bazzano works were translated by Gabriel Cacho Millet and published in 1994 as *Diario Bazzanese*. Interestingly, in his preface Cacho Millet remarks only very briefly on the influence that Italian had on Carnevali's English while in Italy (Cacho Millet, "L'altro Carnevali" ix), without providing any remark on the task of the translation itself.

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order to appreciate the text's specificity in full, as well as the conundrum faced by future translators, articulates the multiplicity that is inherent in Carnevali's text. Unlike many multilingual authors, Carnevali probably did not intend explicitly to confuse his readers and translators. The specificities of the texts are a result of his peculiar situation, and they need to be considered as such: as testimony of the existence of a peculiar, isolated idiolect, which was used by a doubly exiled author to address the world of literature.

3.3 THE TRANSLINGUAL RETURNS HOME: CARNEVALI TRANSLATES THE CANTOS

In the early 1930s, Carnevali worked at a translation of Ezra Pound's *A Draft of XXX Cantos*: the first Italian attempt to translate the work. Only his translation of Canto VIII was ever published, in 1931, in the magazine *L'Indice*. It is not certain how many *Cantos* he translated: six other Cantos (II-VII) survive in draft form among the letters that Carnevali sent to Pound. The project also included Carnevali's translation of Louis Zukofsky's essay on the *Cantos*, published in 1931. Translation of successive Cantos, up to XVII, are mentioned in correspondence, but have not been found in the archives. The project was unfinished at the time of Carnevali's death. Even though Carnevali may have been an appropriate choice for this job, for both his background and experience as a translator, the work never saw the light in a publishable and complete form. Contextual, textual and personal factors contributed to this outcome.

Carnevali was appointed as translator by Pound, as a member of a transnational network of collaborators, friends and protégés. This project, as Pound explicitly wrote in an essay titled "Lettera al traduttore,"¹⁸⁶ aimed at renovating the (in his opinion) stagnant Italian culture with the help of the translated *Cantos*. Italian intellectuals of the time – with few exceptions – were usually reluctant to consider Pound and his brand of Modernism as a valuable cultural alternative, despite Pound's presence in Italy since 1925. Carnevali's translation project was conceived in a context in which the need for such a translation was felt only by sectors of the target culture.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Carnevali's language evolved as he became disconnected from the English-speaking world and increasingly stricken with encephalitis. His grasp on English was less and less firm. Years of cultural and linguistic displacement had exposed Carnevali to the uncertainties of linguistic systems which are commonly perceived as closed

¹⁸⁶ "A letter to my translator", published in the magazine *L'indice: Quindicinale di Lettere, Arti e Scienze*, I, 12, October 1930.

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and self-contained, but were increasingly confused in the evolution of his translingual speech. As we shall see, the process affected also his activity as translator. The drafts of the *Cantos* translations, in their gaps and idiosyncratic language, show both the difficulty of translating Pound, and the effect of years of translingual writing on Carnevali's Italian. Just as Italian contextual influences appeared in his English writing, continual use of English had an impact on his return to Italian. Kellman's claim that "translinguals are, by the very fact of not being limited to their native language, better equipped than most others to engage in translation" (33) will be put to the test in the present analysis of the manuscripts as well as the published Canto VIII.

3.3.1 Pound, Carnevali and the "eyetalian licherchoor"

When Pound gave Carnevali the job of translating the *Cantos*, he was also already part of Pound's network of protégés and disciples. Wilhelm lists Carnevali with other impoverished authors to whom Pound was sending money in those years: "Ezra's charity could be as unbounded as his animosity and rage" (*Ezra Pound* 29). Carnevali often mentions a monthly allowance of 200 lire that he received from Pound, in a series of letters which provide valuable insight on this particular relationship of dependence between a translator and the translated author. Pound's letters to Carnevali were lost, reportedly destroyed by Carnevali's landlords after the poet's death in 1942 and before the end of World War II. We therefore have just one side of the discussion: from what we can see, Carnevali hailed Pound as his benefactor. In 1930 he concludes a letter by expressing the hope that he will continue to send "the usual 200", praying "to God that you'llnever [sic] stop, until my death at last which will notbe [sic] late in coming."¹⁸⁷ In another 1930 letter he calls him "positi to vely [sic] the best human being in the wirlld [sic], [...]"

¹⁸⁷ Carnevali to Pound, (probably) 1930, Yale Beinecke, Series I, Box 8, Folder 344. All of Carnevali's letters to Pound are from this folder. The letters are all typewritten; they were not dated, and only some show the year in which they were probably sent, written in pencil (in this case I give parenthetical reference of the year). The spelling of the letters, influenced by the tremors of encephalitis lethargica, is reproduced faithfully.

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AND this is no adulation at all, it is sheer grstitude [sic].” Pound was also one of the few important literary contacts left to Carnevali, especially after Walsh's death. He helped Carnevali keep his presence in the literary scene, for example by including him in his 1932 Italian-published anthology *Profile*, where he figures in a section that was specifically aimed at “introducing and defending younger, less well known poets” (Reed 240). Reed includes Carnevali among the “protégés of questionable merits whom Pound had touted for several years without attracting much interest” (241). This judgment is unreasonably harsh – long before Pound’s patronage Carnevali had established himself as a small yet recognizable presence in American modernism, acknowledged by figures like Williams, Sandburg and Monroe. Still, it points to a common perception: Carnevali’s popularity was waning in the 1930s, and Pound was one of the few people who still helped him maintain ties to the literary milieu. Carnevali, on his part, was emotionally as well as economically dependent on his benefactor. When he is not writing to Pound for money (or books, or clothes), Carnevali is asking him for his opinion on poems and translations: “when you say that someting [sic] of mine is O.K., I feel happy” (1930).

Carnevali expressed his desire to continue translating, sending Pound some of his translations from Rimbaud. He mentions them in a 1930 letter to Pound, and they were subsequently sent as a sample to Caresse Crosby of the Paris-based, English language press *The Black Sun*. Pound had been Crosby's first choice for a Rimbaud translation, but he deemed it “as difficult a job as she could have picked” and suggested she turn to other associates of his (Ford 217). The Rimbaud translations ended up in *Poetry* after Crosby finally chose to focus on other editorial projects. Yet, in the same year Pound assigned another translation job to Carnevali: Louis Zukofsky’s 1929 essay on the Cantos. It appeared in *L’indice* in 1931, months before “Canto Ottavo.”¹⁸⁸ This magazine was published in Genoa, conveniently close to Pound’s house in Rapallo. It was a favorite of Pound’s and, together with its successor *Il Mare*, an important Italian outlet for his work. It was not particularly prominent in the Italian milieu, but Pound was then “content to remain an

¹⁸⁸ I refer to Carnevali’s translation of Canto VIII as “Canto Ottavo”, while using the academic convention of Pound studies for the original *Cantos*.

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outsider, with little contact among prominent writers and critics, appearing only in local periodicals with small circulation” (Bacigalupo, “Pound and Montale” 46). Although it was carried out by a small circle, this operation was intended to have a definite impact on Italian culture.

An admirer of the *signori* of the Italian Renaissance, Pound hoped to find financial patrons who “exemplified what [he] appreciated about the great Renaissance patrons, their interest in bringing new art into being” (Dasenbrock, *Imitating the Italians* 147). If he did not have the economic means or the decisive power to fund many of his projects by himself, he nevertheless was able to play a central role in a system of patronage. His status enabled him to favor or exclude writers, and to create links within a transnational community of authors. This was the 1930s context in which Pound gave one of his bilingual protégés the task of translating his work into Italian, together with an essay that another disciple had written on that work – the whole outcome to be published in an allied magazine.

Pound's attitude toward the Italian translation of his Cantos reflected his status as modernist patron as well as his belief that “a great age of literature is perhaps always a great age of translations” (“Notes on Elizabethan Classicists” 232). He was conscious that foreign influence on national canons worked through patterns of translation and criticism, and could be directed by those with strong enough cultural authority. His 1930 “Lettera al traduttore” expresses his concerns in this sense, in the form of an open letter to his own ideal translator. The latter is unnamed, but the article appeared in *L'Indice*, which was about to publish Carnevali's translations. The essay may or may not have been written with Carnevali in mind, but it certainly referred to the project in which Carnevali was involved. Pound gives some stylistic indications, addressing the translator directly and in the informal second person: “non cercare l'eleganza di espressioni letterarie. Non temere l'aspro” (“Lettera al traduttore” 1).¹⁸⁹ Pound makes a case for the brevity of the translation compared to the original (“Ogni traduzione deve essere sempre più breve dell'originale”¹⁹⁰), in the name of a polished style, lacking the

¹⁸⁹ “Do not seek the elegance of literary expressions... do not fear bitterness”

¹⁹⁰ “Every translation should be shorter than the original.”

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elaborate syntax of Italian (“Non fare complementi a cascate. Sono modi di condensazione tipici dell’italiano.”¹⁹¹). Pound argues that clarity (“chiarezza”), rigorous thought (“il rigore del pensiero”) and a new and effective hardness (“durezza nuova ed efficace”) should spring from the translation of his own poetry and change the very nature of early twentieth-century Italian. He often remarked that he found a certain weakness in the Italian language of his time (Zanotti 376).

Pound’s views on the translation of his own work cannot be separated from his views on the present state of Italian language and literature. The true scope and goal of the translation project becomes evident in this passage: “Naturalmente un forestiero non può condurre tale rin vigorimento della lingua: bisogna qualche autoctono, che forgi la sua lingua natia.”¹⁹² These words are fuelled by the firm conviction that Italian needed renovation, and that such renovation could only happen through the influence of translated foreign work. There is a concern similar to the “Note on the Elizabethan Classicists” in the conviction that there is no innovation in the national canon without the stimulus of the foreign that is incorporated via translation. Pound believed that such a stimulus could be encouraged and directed, and actively tried to play a part. In the essay, he acknowledges his status as a “forestiero” (foreigner), and puts emphasis on the “autoctono” (native). More than a mere mouthpiece, the latter appears as someone who would eventually “forge” his native tongue into something different, using the *Cantos* as an inspiration. Pound directly addressed the plight of this ideal, unnamed young Italian writer. He believed young Italian writers must feel trapped in a provincial cultural milieu: “Naturalmente lo scrittore italiano si sente rinchiuso, vedendo che si dorme, vedendo che le riviste italiane non vanno all’estero.”¹⁹³ (Pound, “Lettera al traduttore” 1).

Pound would phrase these concepts more strongly in a 1935 letter to his Italian contact Carlo Izzo, writing that “the Eyetalian purrfessors” were

¹⁹¹ “Do not generate a cascade of complements. Those are methods of condensation that pertain to Italian.”

¹⁹² “Naturally, a foreigner cannot direct such renovation of the language: one needs a native who will forge his own native language.”

¹⁹³ “Naturally, the Italian writer feels trapped, seeing that everyone is asleep, seeing that Italian reviews do not go abroad.”

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acting as if they were “way back in 1860,” while “eyetalian licherchoor” was “BACK in 1895” (Izzo 129). In 1934, in a letter to the *New England Weekly*, he mentions “three Italys existing side by side”: that is, he considered Mussolini’s idea of Italy more advanced than the backward country of professors and literati (Jung Palandri 42). He evidently saw a translation of the *Cantos* as a means of advancement for Italian literature, one that Italian literati should have welcomed. However, this was not always the case. If, as noted before, “for a translation to have an impact upon the target system, there has to be a gap in that system” (Bassnett, “Transplanting the Seed” 60), there was no consensus among Italian intellectuals (at least until after World War II) on any such “gaps” that would be filled by a translation of Pound’s.

There were Italian authors and intellectuals who appreciated Pound, or gave him concrete help. They include his second Italian translator Carlo Izzo, or Vanni Scheiwiller, who was a tenacious ally in his Italian editorial projects. Carlo Linati wrote an essay in praise of Pound in *Scrittori anglo-america d’oggi* (1932) – a volume that included also the reprint of Linati’s essay on Carnevali. Linati discussed Pound’s early poetry, translating some lines, underlining the multiform character of his activity and the novelty of his style. Linati frequently remarks on Pound’s admiration of Italian medieval poetry, in contrast with the Italian audience’s reluctance to appreciate Pound:

[Pound] è conoscitore squisito dei nostri classici e del nostro paesaggio che gl’ispirò qualcuna fra le sue liriche più colorite. Parrebbero questi dunque titoli sufficienti perch’egli potesse entrare nelle grazie del nostro pubblico.

Ma si sa come, per la generale, vanno queste cose in Italia. I valori spirituali stranieri entrano da noi per così dire alla spicciolata, a casaccio e quasi di straforo, spinti avanti o da una stamburata d’oltralpe o dalla réclame di qualche editore nostrano, per modo che i migliori ne restano sempre fuori.¹⁹⁴ (Linati, *Scrittori Anglo-Americani D’oggi* 95–96)

Linati laments that the general public did not welcome Pound in spite of what he deemed an explosive vitality, fuelled by Italian culture.

¹⁹⁴ “[Pound] is an excellent connoisseur of our own classics, and of our landscape, which served as an inspiration for some of his most colorful lyrics. This should be enough for our own public to appreciate him. But it is well known how things generally go in Italy. Spiritual values from abroad enter, so to speak, in dribs and drabs, in random and almost clandestine fashion; kept up by the beat of the French drum, or by advertisement from some Italian publisher. Eventually, the best ones are always left out.”

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The case of Mario Praz is a perfect example of how the Italian intelligentsia reacted to the *Cantos*. Praz, professor at the universities of Manchester and Rome in those years, wrote a review of Pound's latest edition of the Cavalcanti poems for the Turin newspaper *La Stampa* in 1932. He not only criticised the Cavalcanti book, but Pound's whole work together with his network of literary contacts. Praz criticised his choice of recommended books from *How to Read* (1931), as well as his choice of poets for the 1932 *Profile* anthology: among the "Americans" that he looked upon suspiciously, Praz listed Carnevali. Praz explicitly ridiculed the Italian intellectuals (Linati, Scheiwiller) who supported Pound in Italy. Of Pound's poetry, he claimed to appreciate some early examples (he mentions "The Gypsy" and "Provincia Deserta") but commented harshly on the *Cantos*:

Il resto dell'opera del Pound é abile mimesi di greci, di latini, di cinesi, di provenzali, di stilnovistici, di francesi moderni, arlecchinata universale, macedonia amenissima, aperitiva, stimolante, gustosa, vino mussante senza corpo. Dilettante é parola di suono ingrato, ma temo che definisca appropriatamente la figura del Pound...¹⁹⁵ (Praz, "Ezra Pound" 3)

Praz deemed as non-literature the same re-elaboration of diverse models that Linati had praised. Pound retorted from the pages of *Il Mare* – a much less important publication than the national newspaper *La Stampa*, but one that supported him. On September 3 1932, he wrote a short note in which he responded to Praz by saying "La cosa nuova é sospetta. La condanna non obbligatoria. Si misura una intelligenza vedendola in cospetto di una innovazione"¹⁹⁶ ("Appunti"). Praz again criticised the *Cantos* in a June 5 1933 article, and reiterated the concept on December 13 1933, attacking Pound's "discepoli" (Zukofsky, Hemingway, and Cummings) as well ("Arte D'oggi" 3).

Carnevali was aware, to a certain extent, of being caught in a debate on the reception of Pound's modernism in Italy. He had no strength or authority to make his participation in this debate public, but he kept as

¹⁹⁵ "The rest of Pound's work is skillful imitation of the Greek, the Latin, the Chinese, the Provençal, the *Dolce Stil Novo*, the modern French, a universal masquerade, a delightful fruit-salad, an aperitif - stimulating, tasteful, wine without strength. 'Amateur' is a harsh word, but I am afraid it aptly describes Pound..."

¹⁹⁶ "Novelty is suspicious. One does not need to condemn it. Intelligence is measured in relation to its reaction to novelty."

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informed as he could. He wrote to Pound in 1931:

You must know that a losuy [sic], clerical, (meaning catholic) newspaper of Bologna dared to tell its readers that Italian literati assume amost humble and servile attitude towards you: I have not read the note but I know it is so: ther [sic] was also some filthy allusion to your living luxuriously in the best country town of the Italian Riviera. These losuy newspaper [sic] ours ought to be hung.

Carnevali goes on to remark that the Italian intellectuals were really “honored to have [Pound] as a [sic] inhabitant of this sorowwing [sic] country of ours.”

“Lettera al traduttore,” had indicated that the man charged with the task of translating Pound was called to play a role in no less than the renovation of the Italian language. This ambitious enterprise was destined to be ignored or opposed by the majority of Italian letters, where the critical reevaluation of Pound would take place only later. Carnevali’s faltering health, his peculiar background and his outsider’s attitude were to be tested in a very hard translational task, whose ultimate goal was to have a lasting impact in a reluctant target canon.

3.3.2 Decoding the Cantos

Before fulfilling its socio-cultural implications, a translation is mainly a matter of “nouns and verbs and all kinds of lexical and grammatical patterns,” with which the translator engages in “a detailed process of decoding” (Bassnett, “Transplanting the Seed” 60). Carnevali’s letters to Pound testify to the difficulty of such a process:

Soon I begin working at that tremoendous [sic] job; that of translating your canti. I don’t know that I shall ever be able to do that: some of the canti are teribly [sic] difficult, like must have been to the assyrian sculptor to sculpt those tremendous bulls. But this time they are difficult for appoor [sic] translator (I mean poor comiseratingly [sic] not that I think of myself as a bad translator). (1930)

Carnevali perceived the enormous distance between his latest writings – an expression of his sickness, confessional in style – and the assemblage of language in a work whose “province” is “the entire human race speaking, and in time as well as in space” (Kenner 95).

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In the letters, Carnevali seems to treat the translation as a challenge that he is almost sure to lose. “Yes it will be an exxrcice [sic] in languages my translating of these Cantos,” he wrote in an undated letter. In another one (1930) he complimented Pound on the “superb” Cantos before admitting: “but I must dole it out to myself: I cannot assimilate more than half a Canto a day.” It is interesting that he used a word so similar to the Italian *assimilare*, which expresses the incorporation of the alien into the self, or difficult understanding. With their blanks, mistakes and stylistic peculiarities, the typescript of his Cantos show Carnevali’s extreme difficulties in assimilating the source text, as well as his difficulties in reverting to his native language after years.

The *Cantos* are very difficult work to assimilate without a proper system of reference. Let us take these lines from Canto IV:

Ityn!
Et ter flebiliter, Ityn, Ityn!
And she went toward the window and cast her down,
“All the while, the while, swallows crying
Ityn!
“It is Cabestan's heart in the dish”
.. It is Cabestan's heart in the dish”
“No other taste shall change this ..
(Canto IV 16–23)

After some research, a reader discovers that the Latin words are from Horace, that Itys was the son of the king of Thrace who was killed and cooked by his own mother, and that the Provençal troubadour Guillem de Cabestanh was killed by a jealous lord, his heart served to his own beloved (Terrell 11–12). The “abstruse levels of thinking” and “extraordinary and wide-ranging fields of reference” (Terrell ix) of the work make volumes of glosses and indexes necessary. Until a proper system of reference is used, it is difficult even to attain a syntactic understanding of the text. Abrupt insertions and interruptions often confuse subjects, verbs and objects as sentences pile up. This necessarily has an impact on the work of an uninformed translator like Carnevali, who was detached from the literary environment and lacked the necessary apparatus of glosses and commentaries.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Cacho Millet (“L’altro Carnevali” xii) reflects on Carnevali’s lack of reference for the *Cantos* translation, asking “cosa poteva fare Carnevali a Bazzano, dove c’erano al suo tempo

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Poetry is a naturally “condensed” language, which rarely gives explanations, but it must have “a surrounding and highly active context, a corpus, possibly an entire world of supporting, echoing, validating, or qualifying material whose compass underwrites its own concision” (Steiner, “On Difficulty” 265). Pound’s *Cantos* require, as Steiner puts it, a lot of “homework” of the kind that Carnevali was unable to do. What he did provide was a word-for-word translation: words appear to be translated individually, often without an apparent comprehension of syntactical structures. They appear in precarious balance over the structure of the verse, which is followed to the letter:

Itino
Et ter flebiliter, Itino, Itino
Ed Essa andò verso la finestra e si gettò giù.
Nel mentre, nel mentre, rondini cantanti:
“È il cuore di Cabestano nel piatto.”
“È il cuore di Cabestano nel piatto?”
“Alcun altro gusto cambierà questo.”¹⁹⁸

It almost seems that Carnevali’s servile attitude toward Pound, exemplified in the letters, resulted in translations written with a servile attitude towards the source text. Carnevali did not allow himself any intervention in the translated text, following the English as much as he could.

Pound’s English is one of the “caravans of sound” on which “poetry traverses real and half-real landscapes,” in which “self-signaling sonic textures foreground the linguistic and imaginative construction of poetic travel” (Ramazani 55). Carnevali had crossed geographical and linguistic borders as well. This process had made him dwell for years on the proximities and similarities between Italian and English. In a book which is very much concerned with the figure of the translator as traveler encountering with other cultures, Cronin has outlined the stressful condition of double linguistic bind faced by the translator. While associating with other cultures is often a crucial passage in the education of a translator, it is important never to lose contact with one’s native language:

sei osterie e una biblioteca comunale?” (“What could Carnevali do in Bazzano, where there were six *osteria* and a town library?”).

¹⁹⁸ Carnevali, “Canto IV” (unpublished, date unknown), Yale Beinecke, Series IV, Box 143, Folder 6280. All quotations from Carnevali’s translations of Cantos II-VII from this folder.

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Translation only makes sense if Ithaca is in sight, if there is homecoming in the target language. Translators must then be alive to the full emotional, cognitive and referential range of their mother tongue. (Cronin, *Across the Lines* 99)

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Carnevali in Bazzano had made a further step away from the monolingual certainties that he had struggled to acquire in English, without making decisive steps towards Italian. Carnevali's linguistic uncertainties at the time were responsible for a truly unique language, if sometimes unstable and obscure, in his short stories and poems from the time. Facing a translator's job, whose intended target is usually a stable monolingual product, Carnevali's linguistic contradictions exploded. His illness also had an impact on the amount of time and effort he could devote to the job, due to his tremors as well as the tranquilizing effects of the scopolamine he took to alleviate them.

The translations' word-for-word style reflects Carnevali's familiarity with English as his language of writing, of which he must have assimilated several features as part of his own language. He retained most of those features in the text, as he attempted to make sense of Pound's extremely complex brand of English. At the same time, there are other moments in which it seems English proved to be too difficult to understand. Carnevali sometimes left blanks in the typescripts, which Pound filled in pencil. The study of Carnevali's Cantos draft is a study in translingualism as a never-ending process, hovering between familiarity and strangeness. The transition from a language to another can never be final or total. Many factors intervene: namely audience, fluency, and the nature of texts. The translingual's move into the new language can never make him or her an equal to native speakers. At the same time, such an effort to change one's language cannot fail to make an impact on the native language.

Linguistic confusion characterises the drafts as a document of linguistic in-betweenness. Carnevali's Italian in the translations is highly idiosyncratic at a grammatical, syntactical and lexical level. The typescripts are only a draft of the translation, yet some features of the texts seem to denote a deep-seated linguistic instability rather than a preliminary stage of the work. Even small details such as the typescript's headings indicate an unstable

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language. Where he is simply supposed to write the title and the page number, Carnevali seems to be unable to decide whether to use Italian or English. In Canto II the heading “pagina 2” is followed by “page three,” and in Canto IV “page three” follows “pagina two.” He even comes up with a “pagina una” at the beginning of Canto V (instead of either *pagina uno* or *prima pagina*), and mixes Italian with English in headings such as “Canto Settimo Page First.”

Peculiarities and oddities seem, in most cases, to follow a pattern in the text. The language in continuous transformation assumes varied intermediate forms, but there seems to be some regularity in the way in which Carnevali bends Italian to fit the English original. He has a recurrent, Anglicised way of translating the same words, or constructs – a hint of the fact that those were not simply individual mistakes: he must have deemed those constructions acceptable, at least in the draft stage of his process of rephrasing English into Italian. Such departures from the standard forms of Italian are in many cases linked to English syntax, sentence structures, and even vocabulary.

The phrase “swallows crying” in the example quoted above, is translated as “rondini cantanti” – a choice that, though not strictly incorrect, sounds unconventional to the Italian ear. Modern translators would have “le rondini squittivano,”¹⁹⁹ using a finite form of the verb that is more common in Italian, though not syntactically equivalent to the concise English “crying.” In English, it is normal to use an *-ing* form as an independent clause; but in Italian that clause is generally made explicit with a subject and a verb. When Pound mentions “an old man seated / *speaking* in the low drone” (IV 14-15), Carnevali tries to render the two verbs with two single words (“un vecchio seduto / *parlando* nel ronzo”): *parlando* for “speaking” is an odd choice, which subsequent translators would render with a verb in the finite mood (“un vecchio siede/ e parla con ronzo sommesso,” Bacigalupo). Elsewhere, when Pound writes about “departed locusts / *speaking* a shell of speech” (VII 76-77) Carnevali translates into “locuste partite/ *parlando* un guscio di discorsi [sic],” seemingly ignoring not only that the *-ing* form is not translatable into

¹⁹⁹ For the sake of comparison, Massimo Bacigalupo’s 2012 translation will be used here as example of modern Italian translation of the XXX Cantos.

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one Italian word in that case, but also that *parlare*, unlike its English counterpart ‘to speak,’ may not always be used as a transitive verb²⁰⁰. This occurs even when the result borders on incorrectness in Italian. In an effort to translate “the fauns *chiding* Proteus” (II, 153), Carnevali comes up with “i fauni *ridentesi* di Proteo,” trying to condense in one word a phrase that conventionally would have been *che se la ridono di*. In a 1919 letter to Papini, Carnevali showed a similar linguistic uncertainty when he was writing, in Italian, a sentence that in English would have required the gerund. Not knowing how to render it in Italian, he simply left it in English:

Questa America leggera e poltrona. Co' suoi sforzi al modernismo e l'arte. Vecchia puritana che accorcia oggi la sottana *dust-stinking*, e s'imbellezza all'ombra dei bellissimi-bruttissimi *sky-scrapers*! (*Lettere* 77)²⁰¹

In his ideas about the renovation of Italian through translation, Pound may have expressed a desire for Italian to become more a concise language, following the lead of other languages. Yet, he thought mostly about Latin, with a claim based on the fact that Caesar did not “need” things such as the determinative article when building an empire (Zanotti 378). The conciseness that Carnevali’s Italian displays in the translated Cantos is not an erudite quest for the mythical origins of the language, but springs from prolonged familiarity with English.

Carnevali treats other syntactical features idiosyncratically. For example, the past is expressed in Italian with more tenses than in English. Carnevali’s choices for translating the past tense do not always take into account the possible shades of meaning in the Italian translation. When facing the choice between different Italian past tenses, Carnevali is often uncertain. He often tends to render Pound’s past tenses into the literary *passato remoto*. Pound’s “where tar smell *had been*” (II 76) becomes “dove *fu* l’odore di catrame” in Carnevali (“dove prima *era* odore di pece” in Bacigalupo) and “before the dew *was shed*” (III 8) becomes “prima / che la brina *versò*”

²⁰⁰ *Parlare* is usually transitive only when the object is a language: “parlare italiano”, “parlare francese” and so on. In fact Bacigalupo, in his translation, preferred to change the verb into *pronunciare* (*utter*): “locuste dipartite/ *che pronunciavano* gusci di discorsi.”

²⁰¹ “This light-headed, lazy America. With all her efforts toward modernism and art. An old Puritan lady, cutting her *dust-stinking* gown shorter and putting on make-up in the shade of her wonderful-horrible *skyscrapers*!”

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(“prima che rugiada *cadese*” in Bacigalupo). In at least one case, Pound noticed Carnevali’s awkward use of past tenses. When Carnevali turns “as Poggio *has remarked*” (III 17) into “come Poggio *ha notata*”, Pound suggests to replace it with the historical present as “come *nota* il Poggio” – replicating the academic style of the Italian historians, which he admired (Pound, “Lettera al traduttore” 1).

Approaching the text as if he were afraid of going even a step too far from Pound’s words, Carnevali elaborates new rhythms of discourse that are calques of English rhythms. There is no structure in Italian that would perfectly replicate a line like “flaming as if with lotus” (IV 77), and that is why Carnevali’s painstakingly faithful “fiammeggiante come se con loto” carries with it a sense of foreignness to Italian readers. The effect of disorientation is not necessarily negative, as it may have creative implications. A structure like “male e più male... muove eppur si muove” is not quite common in Italian, but it reproduces the sound of Pound’s “evil and further evil... moves, yes she moves” (II 16-17). The most immediate Italian correspondent of ‘any’ (*alcuno*) does not commonly perform the function of negation on its own: Carnevali uses *alcuno* like an English ‘any,’ as he translates “No other taste shall change this” (IV 23) into “alcun gusto cambierà questo.”

Syntactical uncertainty is not the only salient feature of Carnevali’s drafts. Out of his long acquaintance with English, lexical idiosyncrasies arise as well. The first and most evident result of this is Carnevali’s struggle with compound words. English seems to have a predilection for creating words out of the union of other words, which Italian employs to a considerably lesser extent. In an Italian translation, this would usually be rendered with a single word (whose etymology may or may not be the same as the words that form the English compound) or with a phrase. Carnevali, most of the time, seems not to be in command of the translation of these compounds. A “fish-hawk” (II 149) may be a falco pescatore in Italian, but for Carnevali it was a “falco da pesci.” A “cook-stall” (IV 82) may have no direct equivalent in Italian that is also a compound: it certainly is not “posto-da-cuoco.” The “sea-crest,” (V 30) at the same time, in the absence of an entry in the Italian dictionary, can

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simply become “onde” (‘waves’) as in Bacigalupo’s translation; or, in Carnevali’s attempt to translate both of the words of the compound, it can become “la cresta del mare.” The same happens to “churn-stick” (II 131), for which *mestolo* is a precise translation but Carnevali decided to render both words, resulting in an awkwardly literal “bastone agitatore.” In some cases the struggle to keep the two words of the compound together is underlined by the use of hyphens in the manuscripts. For example, with the use of hyphens, “death-year” (VI 8) becomes the unlikely compound “anno-di-morte.”

English often turns nouns into verbs, a practice that native speakers tend to perform quite independently from the indications of dictionary and grammar. The same does not occur in Italian, in which speakers have limited possibilities for turning nouns into verbs without sounding odd. Carnevali follows the English habit in the *Cantos* translations, with the result of creating neologisms that existed for the brief space of the typescripts, and fell into oblivion with them. In the process of translating Pound’s “moonlit velvet” (V 122), he creates a “velluto lunato” out of the Italian for ‘moon,’ whereas translators usually resort to periphrasis (“velluto al chiaro di luna,” Bacigalupo). In the same way, he invents the unlikely verb *petalare* when Pound uses “petals” as a verb (IV 85) and *pilare* when Pound uses “piled up” (V 63). The conservation of rhythm seems to be the chief motive in Carnevali’s unconventional choices. It may also be the reason he keeps English onomatopoeias (“tick”, or “clic”) and creates linguistic collages like “la sveglia tic-toc e disappare” to translate Pound’s “the clock ticks and fades out” (V 2). In this case, he used onomatopoeia to carry ‘tick’ across into Italian, and coined a verb (*disapparire*, instead of the more common *scomparire*) with a calque from the English ‘disappear.’ Carnevali finds new use for Italian words by attempting to reproduce English sounds. The Italian *sorte* means ‘fortune,’ but Carnevali nevertheless translates “three sorts of blue” (V 19) into “tre sorti di blu.” At the same time, an Italian *duomo* is not a dome but a cathedral, but this does not prevent Carnevali from translating “domed head” (VII 26) into “testa a duomo.” In most cases, the word Carnevali uses belongs to the right semantic field, but the meaning appears somehow twisted. It is the case with Pound’s “little slave money” (II 51) which becomes “poche monete da schiavo”: *monete* actually means ‘coins,’

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and that is why Pound preferred “profitto” when correcting the drafts – less similar in sound, but more in meaning.

Toury has observed that translations may present “linguistic forms and structures [...] which are rarely, or perhaps even never encountered in utterances originally composed in the target language” (207–8). In Carnevali’s case, the rarely occurring forms are peculiar to the point of sounding recognizably English. Toury attributed such phenomena “to the fact that the verbal formulation of a translation is partly governed by a felt need to retain aspects of the corresponding source text invariant” (208). Carnevali’s *Cantos* translations are not, on the other hand, a simple case of “translationese” due to poor or rushed performance (Steiner, *After Babel* 332): they reflect the surprising uneasiness that translinguals sometimes may report feeling when using their native tongue. If the second language usually had felt alien and artificial at the beginning, it nevertheless ends up making a “call for totality” in the bilingual’s speaking self – as languages tend to resist relative status, and are inevitably “experienced as domains of meaning taking themselves as final” (Besemeres 33). In a time in which he reportedly considered English as “an Italian dialect” (“A History” 131), Carnevali wrote English fiction in which the interference of Italian is palpable, while at the same time he crafted translations into Italian which display the influence that English retained in his mind. Together, the two bodies of work document the in-betweenness of Carnevali’s language, which was becoming more and more his own.

Carnevali’s familiarity with English did not prevent him from being unable to understand it at times. The moments in which English proves impenetrable to him are as relevant as the ones in which he shows excessive familiarity with the language. It is significant that words that he could not translate are mostly in Canto II; not only because that was one of his first efforts, but also because of the poem’s specialised vocabulary. Treating the Greek myths of the sea, Canto II is full of specific vocabulary concerning ships, and ancient ships at that. Carnevali’s English was the English of the metropolis. He probably had no idea of how to translate words like “scupper-hole,” “rowlocks,” “oarshafts” or “fore-stays.” True, he writes about an

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English dictionary in his room in Bazzano, sitting on his desk, “like a rock protruding out of the sea” of his letters and other debris of his American life (*Autobiography* 238); but it must not have been of much help. Only in some cases does Pound help by writing down the right word (as in the case of “rowlocks”, for which he writes “maniglia dei remi”). In other *Cantos* as well, uncommon words belonging to the idiosyncratic language of the original result in blanks in Carnevali’s translation: “slivver [sic]” (IV 41), “but on the barb of time” (V 20), “cygnet” (IV 68), “song or land on the throw, and was dreitz hom” (V 60). Carnevali was unable to decode some of Pound’s modified spellings, and bits of foreign languages. The lines of dots that in these cases he leaves on the typescripts symbolise, in visual form, the distance that the reader has to go before he or she is able to understand the *Cantos*: a distance that may or may not lead to complete understanding.

The difficulty in approaching the least conventional passages in Pound’s lines is evident. Carnevali translates “feline leisure of panthers” (II 90) as “tempo darisparmiarmi [sic] di felina pantera.” The odd translation can only be explained if we speculate that the translation of “leisure” depends on a dictionary definition – possibly the same dictionary he wrote about. The odd “tempo da risparmiarmi” is in fact an overly literal translation of ‘spare time,’ which might have been in the dictionary entry for ‘leisure.’ Even though the English language had become a part of his identity, and was even influencing his first language, he nevertheless had to resort to the dictionary to have a (tentative, imperfect) grasp of the meaning of some words. This testifies to his status as a man between languages, treating neither of them as his own property, but making tentative efforts to bend each one to his needs.

There are also a few cases in which the translation is simply and irrevocably wrong, mistaking a word for another. Carnevali writes “tartaruga” (tortoise) for “turquoise” in Canto III and “onda” (wave) for “waste” in the same Canto. Pound had to correct them, circling and crossing them out and writing “turchino” and “guasto” instead. These mistakes, unlike the aforementioned borrowings from English, obviously follow no pattern but are the product of occasional misreading. They are not a consequence of Carnevali’s translingual upbringing, but probably reflect his difficult

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predicament. In the stories written at this time, he describes himself as a “desperate poet who cannot write of his despair” (“A History” 146), underlining that everything he wrote was provisional, and almost improvised in its incoherence. There are, in the letters, phrases that end abruptly; he adds excuses like: “The last unfinished phrase indicates that I am now a prey to scopolamin [sic]. I not only think nonsense [sic] but speak an [sic] write ittoo” (1930 letter). Probably, in a hurry to deliver the translations as soon as possible, in the intervals between crises, he translated almost on the spot. In at least one case (judging by the drafts that we have, which are not the whole work) he corrected himself right in the typescript, when “fanning their hair in the dark” (IV 46) is first translated as “funzionando il loro ventaglio nell’oscurità” and then as a much more viable “sventagliando i loro capelli nell’oscurità.”

In such situations, Carnevali seems to rely on Pound to help him as a fellow translator. In a letter he warns him that the manuscript would be “full of mistakes and badly typed and everything,” concluding “you must work hard and correscy [sic]: you know Italian don’t you?” (1930 letter). Pound had his say on the translations, as the manuscripts show. The degree to which his pencil has intervened on Carnevali’s typescripts varies from Canto to Canto. In Canto II for example, the translator’s misreadings abound, and so do Pound’s corrections. It seems that, in any case, Pound would not give up hope on this translation, at least judging from Carnevali’s responses to his letters. At times, he seems to be dealing with Pound’s impatience about the work’s progress, justifying delays with his health conditions. This also enables us to know that there were other translations, other manuscripts that must have gone lost. In a 1930 letter he apologises for not having sent Canto XII yet, writing “I am delaying because I have been sick, very sick abed.” In 1932 he expresses his delight in knowing that Pound liked his translation of XI. As Carnevali’s illness progressively worsened in the course of the 1930s, his letters contain more and more excuses. The last mention of a completed translation is in a 1933 letter: “hav yu receibed my Canto diciassettesimo²⁰²? Write me ys or no. [sic]” Other sources allow us to know that Pound would

²⁰² “Canto XVII.”

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be quite reluctant to give up hopes on Carnevali. On 28/10/1930 he wrote to Zukofsky about Carnevali's health. There was, he wrote, still "a personality intact in the middle of [his illness]," and he was still a "civilized male reading French, Italian and capable of discussion same" (Pound/Zukofsky 57). He therefore asked Zukofsky to be patient with him: "He can't hold a pen. Typing full of errors."

3.3.3 "Canto Ottavo" and Zukofsky's essay

Only one of Carnevali's Cantos ("Canto Ottavo") appeared in print for *L'Indice*, in November 1931 – with the translator's name erroneously indicated as "F Carnevali." It had been preceded in the same year by his translation of Zukofsky's essay on the Cantos. Zukofsky's essay was both an explanation and a defense of the Cantos, intending to show critics the significance of the poem and to defend its innovative poetics. Translation by Carnevali enabled this essay to perform its function in the Italian debate, where Pound had been received with a mix of admiration and diffidence. Zukofsky had written it in 1929 and had shown it to his mentor. Pound "not only approved of Zukofsky's essay but desired to have it translated into French," as it was probably "too soon" to print it in England or America (Kumamoto Stanley 80). It was to be translated in Italian also. The essay would also appear in English (in 1931, in *The Criterion*), but it seems to have been written from the start with an attention to its translation, as a 8/9/1930 letter from Zukofsky to Pound demonstrates: "I finished the Review of the Cantos for the Indice last night" (Pound/Zukofsky 39). The French version was published by the magazine *Échanges* in 1930. In another letter (dated 8/11/1930), Zukofsky corrects the French translation, adding: "you might send above to E.C. if you have time & thank him for me" (Pound/Zukofsky 70). Later that year, Carnevali asked Pound: "About Echange [sic] what part of that magazine do you wish me to translate: the one by Zukivsky [sic] about you. I am ata [sic] a loss about it."

Zukofsky's critique of the *Cantos* draws on the linguistic novelty it represents as well as its adherence to principles of epic that date back to

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Dante, which enable Pound to move from Odysseus to Sordello, from medieval to modern times. There is continuous reference to critics who were puzzled with so many epochs and texts coexisting in the *Cantos*, failing to grasp the inherent order of the poem:

Critics write of Pound's confusion of eras, when what is really true is that this precious historical past which the critics attempt to keep untouched and separate from present implications about it is to them, at its dearest, a phase of the present known only by nervous and glandular operations. (Zukofsky, "The Cantos of Ezra Pound" 430)

Carnevali translated this essay by adhering as much as possible to Zukofsky's critical language, finding the closest equivalent for the psychological and philosophical terms:

I critici parlano della confusione di epoche che fa Pound, quando a vero dire, questo prezioso passato storico che i critici tentavano di tenere intatto alieno di amplificazioni attuali, non è che un aspetto del presente conosciuto solamente dalle reazioni ghiandolari e nervose. ("I 'Cantos' Di Ezra Pound")

This translation ideally enabled Carnevali to perform, in Italy, the same defense of Pound's work that Zukofsky's criticism did in English. Many of Zukofsky's arguments would have been fit as a counterargument to Praz's articles in *La Stampa*. Praz argued against the *Cantos* by stating that, while Dante needed the philosophy of Aquinas as a companion, merely "cinema, and Freud's interpretation of dreams" were enough to illustrate Pound's work.²⁰³ By arguing that the *Cantos* are the first work to treat the historical past for what we experience of it in the present, Zukofsky/Carnevali illustrate why Praz's supposedly hostile remark actually described the innovative force of the *Cantos*.

In the essay, Zukofsky had inserted several translations from the *Cantos*, which Carnevali translated together with the rest of the essay. They present many of the idiosyncrasies that were already in the drafts (he keeps for example "le rondini gridanti" for "the swallows crying" that were discussed above). At the same time, if we compare the lines from *Cantos* II-VII quoted in the essay, with Carnevali's drafts, editorial intervention

²⁰³ "Se a spiegare Dante è necessaria la filosofia di San Tommaso d'Aquino, a spiegare Pound basta il cinematografo e l'oniromanzia freudiana." (Praz, "Arte D'oggi" 3)

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becomes evident. The editors of *L'Indice*, or Pound himself, corrected most of the drafts' linguistic uncertainties. A quote from Canto II for example, displays some cosmetic changes in the published version with respect to the drafts ("Dio" instead of the more colloquial "Iddio" for "God"). Editorial intervention also solved Carnevali's problems with "and they kicked me into the fore-stays" (II 48). The typescript has "e mi presero a calci dentro al [blank]." Carnevali, as noted above, could not find a meaning for a specific term like "fore-stays." Moreover, "mi presero a calci dentro" is more equivalent to 'kicked me within' than to 'kicked me into.' The edited version corrects the latter imprecision, also filling the gap: "e mi cacciarono a calci sul cordame di prua." Where the drafts present "spesse come un covone" for Pound's "thick like a wheat swath" (IV 61), the edited version replaces "covone" ('sheaf') with the more precise "fascio di grano." When translating Pound's "slim white stone bar" (IV 25) Carnevali had written "barra sottile e bianca" to keep the similarity in sound: the edited version, "colonna di pietra sottile e bianca" may be more precise, but it lacks that foreign quality that was present in the drafts.

These brief quotations offer us a chance to confront the drafts that we just analyzed with what they might have become in print, as we do not have other finalised and edited versions of the drafted Cantos II-VII, and we do not have the draft of the only one that was fully published in *L'Indice*. The drafts are a valuable document of translation in its early stages, as well as the way in which prolonged experience of the source language may influence translation. For reasons of linguistic conventions, they were edited before publication. Gaps were filled, but also peculiar and idiosyncratic elements were eliminated in favor of more common words. We do not have the drafts for "Canto Ottavo", but it is likely that the same process happened in that case as well before its publication in November 1931.

Publication of the translations did not start from the beginning of the *XXX Cantos*, but the choice may not be casual, as Canto VIII one of the most Italianate Cantos. It is the first of the so-called "Malatesta Cantos," dedicated to the *Signore* of fifteenth-century Rimini, Sigismondo (or Sigismundo) Malatesta, warlord and patron of the arts. Out of the fascination for this

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historical figure, Pound evolves his technique of poetic impersonation, which he had been experimenting with from the early years of his poetry. Pound's way of conjuring and displaying the life of the Renaissance hero on the page has been defined as "Pound's most far-reaching experiment with the half-mask" (Albright 72). The story of Malatesta's exploits is not narrated, but shown through a collection of documents – letters, poems, historians' description of his final demise. The poet is "reluctant to feign Sigismundo's voice" (Albright 72) and appears in the background, as editor and translator of Sigismundo's own words:

And Malatesta
Sigismund
Frater tamquam
Et compater carissime tergo
 ...anni de
 ...dicis
 ...entia
Equivalent to
 Giovanni of the Medici,
 Florence
(VIII 4-13)

After this, Pound's collage juxtaposes Sigismundo's diplomatic and military issues together with the instructions for a recently hired painter ("*Maestro di pentore*"). Historical and personal matters of Sigismundo's life are on display, but the poet gives the reader only scattered details (battlefields, numbers of horsemen and soldiers, amounts of money) in the text. Pound's words "do not convey information" but "take certain facts and present them from different linguistic perspectives (formal, florid Italian; broken Italian words; English translation) as if to undercut their historicity" (Perloff 183). Carnevali, presented with the task of translating this collage for an Italian audience, did not have the original manuscripts available to him, and therefore no direct access to the "facts" that Pound presented in his text. In *L'Indice*, the translation was followed by a short editorial note, stating that the translator had not seen the original Medieval document ("Canto Ottavo" 5). Thus the editor, "per verificare la storicità del poema" presented the original document "verificato dal Pound."²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ "to prove the historicity of the poem... verified by Pound"

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Carnevali was to produce, in fact, a translation of a translation, and yet could not take into account the first source text in a chain of originals and reproductions.²⁰⁵ The presence of an alternate (and to him unknown) Italian original, next to his Italian translation, risks undermining Carnevali's status as translator. The question at stake is not the translator's "invisibility" as in Venuti's famous definition (1): Carnevali's translation does not risk disappearing in the name of transparency and the author's primacy, but to become redundant, due to the nature of the text. If he had been able to access the first original, there would be no need for an Italian translation to exist: it would consist of an arrangement of fragments written in Sigismundo's Medieval Italian. It would also bypass a great deal of Pound's work as a translator, conserving only the work he had done arranging the fragments and giving them a more or less coherent shape. Pound's work had been that of presenting Malatesta's words with the help of the English language, the twentieth-century "semiglobal conduit through which poets encounter, advance, and redirect cross-cultural flows of tropes and words, ideas and images" (Ramazani 20). In his manipulation of the linguistic conduit, Pound left bits of Italian on display for the reader, as if the English layer had not been applied uniformly over the Italian surface. The poem's intertextual aspects are exposed provocatively, turned against themselves, providing "a melange of conflicting, competing modes" instead of "affirming a single link with the homogeneous past," creating heterogeneity (Smith 65). The English repeats and complements the Italian, establishing its status as a translation and inventive footnote:

"With his horsemen and his footmen
(gente di cavallo e da pie) etc" (VIII 75-76)

"For two days' pleasure, mostly "*Ia pesca*," fishing." (VIII 112)

Praz had ridiculed this technique in his articles, quoting the lines from the *Cantos* that Pound had inserted in the *Profile* anthology:

Suppongo che il dodicesimo e ultimo frammento voglia dir poco da solo, ma siccome da solo il Pound l'ha dato, eccovelo nel testo

²⁰⁵ In order to solve this problem, and to make the force of the ancient original perceptible also in the Italian translation, Pound would recommend that subsequent translators use the original Malatesta letter – starting from his daughter Mary's 1961 translation (Bacigalupo, "Nota testuale" 32).

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originale: ‘And in August that year died Pope Alessandro Borgia, il papa morì.’ (Praz, “Arte D’oggi” 3)²⁰⁶

To Praz, as an Italian professor of English, the line seemed meaningless in its redundancy. He did not take into account the English-speaking readership, who was exposed, through Pound’s lines, to the linguistic sign of another historical moment, bearing the force of otherness and remoteness. Pound’s English guided the reader towards the comprehension of the general meaning. The line exemplifies a key feature of Modernist poetry, that of “having more than one temporality: the historical temporality of its composition” as well as “the temporality of its sources and originals;” so that translated lines, quotations and allusions ultimately end up “complicating the relations between texts and time, temporality and form” (I. Patterson 176). In the case of Carnevali’s “Canto Ottavo,” they also hugely complicated the relationship between modernist poetry and its subsequent translation. As a conglomerate of times and languages, it takes the form of a speech act bringing together different spatial and temporal identities – but how can a translator negotiate a target text out of the fragments and complexities of the source text?

Carnevali was among the first translators in history facing such a problem. The translator of the *Cantos* has to find a way to come to terms with this kind of language, and convey at least part of it in a translation. Steiner remarked that a translator, in an attempt to “bring different world-pictures back into perfect congruence” must in a sense “re-experience the evolution of language itself” (Steiner, *After Babel* 246). An Italian translator of the *Cantos* is forced to intervene in some points on the roots of the original, the source of the source. The translation shifts the totality of the linguistic space into one that is already heavily present in the original work, in precarious balance with the others. A translator is forced to downplay at least a part of the linguistic collage of the original, juxtaposing the Italian of his/her time with the Italian that Pound quoted. This is what happens to Carnevali’s text, although the effect is redundancy rather than the disappearance of the alien insertions.

One strategy to let the reader know at least that the Italian words were

²⁰⁶ “I suppose that the twelfth and last fragment does not mean much on its own, but since Pound printed it exactly on its own, here it is in the original version: ‘And in August that year died Pope Alessandro Borgia, *il papa morì*.’”

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already in the original is to italicise them – a graphic signal of a foreignness which translation has turned into the familiar language. In some of the drafts, Carnevali had used a red typewriter ribbon (as opposed to his usual blue one) to mark the words that were already in Italian in the original.²⁰⁷ In Canto V he used red ink for Italian quotes like “Se pia / O empia?” (V 80-81) and “Caina attende” (V 89)²⁰⁸; but the original’s Italian words are not graphically highlighted in any form in the published “Canto Ottavo.” Pound’s “And it wd be merely work chucked away / (*buttato via*)” (VIII, 32-33) simply becomes “e sarebbe solamente lavoro buttato via.” The juxtaposition that was in the original disappears, eliminating also the sense of linguistic displacement.

Even when the Italian insertions do not disappear, their role in the text becomes much less evident in the translation. In the original “with his horsemen and footmen / (*gente di cavallo e da pie*) etc” (VIII, 75-76) the Italian insertion performed a function of underlining the strangeness of the source, the journey across time and space that those words had undergone. In the translation, they are puzzling to the reader only because of their redundancy: “con i suoi cavalieri ed appiedati / (*gente di cavallo e da pie*) etc.” Another example, “*la pesca*, fishing / *di cui* (in which) he, Francesco, *godeva molto*” (VIII, 114-115), which becomes “la pesca / di cui (nella quale) egli, Francesco, godeva molto” shows that such redundancy may appear problematic, for the apparent lack of purpose of the words in parentheses. There is at least one attempt on Carnevali’s part to play the card of the unexpected, and revert Pound’s insertions of Italian into his English text by inserting some English. It is when “the respectable man Agnolo Della Stufa” (VIII 65) becomes “l’uomo rispettabile Angel of the Stow” (Agnolo della Stufa’s name is made of words that are common nouns in Italian). That is the only case in which there is an attempt, in the translation, to reproduce the sense of otherness and foreignness that the Anglophone reader experiences

²⁰⁷ Carnevali shows a similar uneasiness with the other languages of the poem. He leaves most of the French, Latin and Provençal phrases in their original version, but renders “Lo Sordels si fo di Mantovana” (II) into Italian as “Lo Sordello ei fu di Mantovana” – thus prompting Pound’s correction, returning the line into Provençal. He also translated a Spanish line from the “Myo Cid” section of Canto III (11): there, “una niña de nueve años” is arbitrarily translated as “una bimba di nove anni.”

²⁰⁸ The former one from Varchi’s 16th century *Storia Fiorentina*, the latter from Dante’s *Inferno*. (Terrell 16)

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by reading the “Malatesta Cantos.” Without the philological reasons that made Pound juxtapose Italian with English, that is to say the existence of an underlying Italian original, the insertion of foreignness into the *Cantos* loses its point. That may be the reason why Carnevali did not usually pursue this technique in the translation.

The interplay of languages in Canto VIII is significantly downplayed, yet that does not mean that Carnevali’s translation is uniformly monolingual. When translating the English parts, the translation tends to adhere to the source text, once again foregrounding the translator’s activity and his closeness to his adopted language. Carnevali reproduces the brevity of English to the extreme, as he had done in the drafts. As had already happened with the *Cantos* quotes in Zukofsky’s essay, the level of uncertainty in the published translation is lower than the one observed in the typescripts – but there are some idiosyncratic episodes. Pound’s beginning, “these fragments you have shelved (shored)” may be a reference to Eliot’s *Waste Land* (Terrell 36), yet Carnevali’s translation is interesting for another reason: in search of a way to render “shored” in modern Italian (the paraphrase *portati a riva* being the most likely option) he gives life to a now defunct Italian verb (*arripare*)²⁰⁹ that enables him to substitute a single English word with a single Italian one: “adriparti.” Pound’s “I shd like to be party to it” (VIII 23) becomes “amerei essere parte di esso” in a use of the Italian *amare* which mimics the English ‘would like.’ The search for a closest equivalent leads him to forge expressions like “verso una forza nemica” in lieu of Pound’s “through an enemy force” (VIII 128; *forza*, unlike the English ‘force,’ does not usually mean ‘army’).

A significant part of the Canto was a translation, in modern and colloquial English (provocatively using abbreviations like “shd” and “wd”), of a very ornate Renaissance Italian. As Carnevali did not have the Italian original, he had no choice but to translate Pound’s modern English into modern Italian. Malatesta’s original “Circha la pratica de la pace tra voi et el re de Ragona” becomes Pound’s “As to arranging peace between you and the

²⁰⁹ The verb comes from the Latin *ad* (to) and *ripa* (shore), being the etymological antecedent of verbs like the Italian *arrivare* and, in a derivative way, the English *arrive*.

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King of Ragona” (VIII 18). At this point, no indication of the Renaissance Italian underneath was available. Carnevali translated the lines into modern Italian: “In quanto riguarda la pace fra di voi ed il re di Ragona.” His work ends up giving centrality to Pound’s translation over Malatesta’s words, elevating it to the status of source text and, consequently, of an original work in its own right. Given that he instructed subsequent Italian translators to use Malatesta’s letter in their translations, this is a centrality that Pound himself probably did not desire.

Carnevali kept working at the translations, but the problems were evident and his health was getting worse. Pound turned to other Italian contacts for help. Carlo Izzo’s translations of some poems by Pound (“Ballad for Gloom”, “Night Litany” and “The Return”) appeared in 1935 in *Nuova Corrente*, together with some lines from Cantos II and III. From a 1937 letter (probably in one of their last exchanges, and the only one in Italian) it seems that there had been a misunderstanding between Pound and Carnevali,²¹⁰ and yet even then the latter insisted: “amico finirei anche di tradurre i trenta canti.”²¹¹ He would never finish his work. There is a difficulty inherent in translating such a complex work, especially at a time in which its innovations had not yet been received by the majority of critics and writers. Carnevali’s attempt had been the very first one, and it was probably due to his failure that Pound decided to give more advice to Izzo (there are letters in which he gives advice on almost every word). A bilingual Italian-English edition would appear in 1961, translated by Pound’s daughter Mary De Rachewiltz, who worked in close contact with her father.

The 1930 project involving Carnevali demonstrates that translation might be treated as a way of spreading ideas, expanding audiences, and conquering new markets, only if we take into account the idea that translation

²¹⁰ It is not possible to ascertain what the misunderstanding really was. The letter starts with Carnevali writing “Andiamo vecchio mio facciamo la pace” (Come on old friend, let’s make up”). It refers to an event in which Pound is accused of having been “orgoglioso e cattivo” (“proud and mean”) and Carnevali admits having been “sanguinosamente offensivo” (“bloodily offensive”). Most importantly, the letter shows Carnevali’s mental health deteriorating, as he unrealistically threatens Pound to have him deported from Italy should he stop sending him his monthly allowance.

²¹¹ “My friend, I would also like to finish the translation of the thirty cantos”

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is first and foremost the way in which we negotiate meaning out of a foreign text. On the one side there was Pound, fighting against an intelligentsia that would not welcome his ideas, on the other was Carnevali, struggling against the text and his own health. The failure that resulted is all the more interesting for the multiple factors that determined it – ranging from relations of power in the Italian press to Carnevali’s faltering lucidity. The analysis of such a failure enables a closer look to the many factors involved when a translation is written with the intention of making a definite impact on the receiving canon, as well as shedding light on the challenges encountered by translingual translators.

3.4 FROM ITALY TO ITALY: THE MAKING OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

This chapter deals with Carnevali's writing of an unfinished memoir, later edited into the *Autobiography*. Throughout the thesis, I have used the *Autobiography* as a major source of clues on the author's personal and linguistic development. It provided indications of how Carnevali construed his movements across language and culture. It is now time to briefly consider the narration *per se*, and to place it at the right stage of Carnevali's development as a writer: that is, at the very end of his career, casting the bitter look of a dying writer on his youth.

In conformity with his predilection for autobiographic narration, in the early 1930s he set out to write the story of his life before, during and after emigration. The project was left incomplete, but Kay Boyle first, and then Maria Pia Carnevali (with help from David Stivender) used it as foundation for their versions of the book: the 1967 *Autobiography* and the 1978 *Il Primo Dio* respectively.

Carnevali mentioned the autobiographical project to Monroe in 1930:

It is hard, very hard for me to write, otherwise I should have long ago begun the story of my life, which should awake the echoes of all America.

I think I shall do something pretty good with it. It is my last hope of earning something by myself for myself. I shall begin one for good, this coming week.²¹²

He implied that the project would be difficult to execute, but he appeared sure of its validity for personal reasons, and for maintaining his status as an American writer ("the echoes of all America"). Only a few chapters of the book saw the light during Carnevali's lifetime, in relatively obscure publications. The first six chapters were published under the heading "The First God (A Novel), Part I" in the 1932 anthology *Americans Abroad*. Kay Boyle, a writer and friend of the poet, was appointed editor of the *Autobiography* in 1933, probably because of Carnevali's faltering health. The

²¹² Carnevali to Monroe, (probably) January 1930, in SCRCC *Poetry*, Box 32.

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agreement between Carnevali and his publisher Harcourt Brace & Co. listed as an “essential condition of this agreement that the work is to be under the editorial supervision of Kay Boyle who is to have full editorial liberty in regard to the manuscript.”²¹³ A reference to Harriet Monroe's death (“Harriet Monroe, I thank you for the bread you gave me [...]. Tireless little woman, you are now dead,” 157) indicates that Carnevali was still writing after his former editor's death in September 1936. At least one other chapter appeared during Carnevali's lifetime, as “Excerpt from Autobiography” (1939) in the British magazine *Kingdom Come*.²¹⁴ Boyle was linked to *Kingdom Come*, and that may explain why an excerpt from the work in progress was published there (Templeton 154). She lost touch with Carnevali in the early days of World War II (Boyle 18), and he died in 1942. Boyle turned to the text again in the 1960s. She pieced together the published chapters and the autobiographical stories that Carnevali had collected in the 1925 book *A Hurried Man*; and completed the book with the remaining “sections of the book he was trying to write in the public ward of the hospital in Bazzano” (Boyle 15). As is evident from the proofs, Boyle worked and reworked Carnevali's text.²¹⁵ She arranged the fragments to form a coherent story, and inserted excerpts from texts published by Carnevali in the 1920s in the body of the 1930s narration.

The fragmentary nature of the book, in the form which reached the general public, is part of its essence. The *Autobiography* is known in English with the provisional title of the 1933 contract with Harcourt, Brace & Co.; the Italian edition *Il Primo Dio* translates the 1932 title for the first chapters of the book, as well as removing all the material from the 1967 edition that had not been written explicitly for the autobiography. In any case, Carnevali's autobiographical fragments “always remain fragments, although all of them

²¹³ “Agreement between Emanuel Carnevali and Harcourt, Brace and Company,” 1933, Watkins Loomis Records, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York, Series V, Box 144. Used with permission from the copyright holder.

²¹⁴ In the 1967 *Autobiography*, the chapter would appear as “Annie Glick.”

²¹⁵ Boyle indicates in the preface that, at the time of putting the book together for the 1967 edition, Carnevali's original manuscript was lost (15). The book's acknowledgements include “a debt of gratitude” to scholar Norman Holmes Pearson “for supplying the typescript of the book, which the editor had made a gift of to him in 1964” (Boyle 8). It is likely that the original manuscript was lost after she lost touch with Carnevali, and that she could put together the book in the years 1964-67, basing her work on the typescript she had made of the manuscript in the 1930s.

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together would seem to form the most complete portrait,” and both editions of the book can only be defined “approximations” (Boelhower 140). The lack of an authoritative text may reflect the content of the narration: the author’s rise from silence to literary American English, and then to the temptation of absolute language, and finally to linguistic confusion and silence again. In the interplay between the sick author, the sick narrator and the posthumous editor, the reality of Carnevali’s life gets transfigured one last time, as a tentative legacy to the world of letters and document of the author’s language in its final stage. The autobiography was written in English, translating into the uncertain English of the Bazzano years both the Italian of his childhood and the quasi-assimilated English of his American years.

Similarities between autobiographic writing and translation have been found on grounds of their nature. They both supposedly point to an “original” - be it the autobiographer's “self” or a “source text” – which is assumed as “transcendental signified, the untranslatable ‘presence’ or the outside referent that arrests the process of supplementation” (Karpinski 9). The analysis of Carnevali’s autobiography on the other hand may only confirm that “translation can be replaced by retranslation just as life narratives are open to retellings and rewritings” (Karpinski 9). Carnevali’s autobiography is one possible telling of his life, the one from the perspective of a sick, dying and isolated Carnevali. It was written in one of the languages of his life – or perhaps in his one true language, the one that he crafted in Bazzano out of multiple passages across languages. Out of such specific constraints, he created fragments that were collected into a single book by Boyle, and into another book by Maria Pia Carnevali. The text gave Carnevali his last chance to exist as an author, to voice his feelings about his short and tormented life and make literature out of it. In order to do so it needed to be ‘translated,’ as Carnevali’s autobiography could only exist in English. Translation into English of his life, his memories and frustrated aspirations, enabled communication between the isolated author and his intended audience. Once again, Carnevali’s last years seem to respond to Derrida’s later intuitions on the links between an author and the language he/she uneasily inhabits. In *The Ear of the Other*, the French philosopher reflected on the need of an audience for the autobiographical text. The autobiography, usually identified closely

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with the self, fulfills its promise only by reaching an audience:

The signature becomes effective – performed and performing – not at the moment it apparently takes place, but only later, when ears will have managed to receive the message. In some way the signature will take place on the addressee's side, that is, on the side of him or her whose ear will be keen enough to hear my name... (Derrida, *The Ear of the Other* 50)

To take Derrida at his word, Carnevali's text owes its existence to the Other. This resonates with its unusual genesis, as it took three people who cared about his legacy to bring the text into existence for the English-speaking and Italian-speaking communities respectively: Kay Boyle, David Stivender and Maria Pia Carnevali. The "ear of the other" is present at the very heart of the process of writing, in the very decision to write in English. Writing in English implies addressing an English-speaking audience, and keeps Carnevali in existence as an American author.

The most evident link between Carnevali in the 1930s and the *Autobiography* is the pervasiveness of the author's illness in the text. From the start of the 1932 installment of the text, Carnevali's tormented childhood, and his mother's sickness, are put in touch with his 1930s sickness. The narration starts from the author's birth in a Florentine hospital, framing his life in a full circle – from the Italian hospital of his birth to the Italian hospital of his impending death. He describes himself as a sickly and weak newborn, adding: "I think all the troubles I caused could have been evaded had I died, and a good riddance too" ("First God" 74).

The chapter he dedicated to his mother is linked to his present condition: "What can I tell you of myself, mother, except that I have wasted in sickness a good half of my real life from fifteen up" ("First God" 77). As we have seen, Carnevali's mother represents in his autobiographical writing an emotional kernel rather than an actual family figure. As he appeals in English to his Italian-speaking, dead mother, this justification may serve more as consolation to the self. The translation of his life into English offers him a chance to write his past and present torments, and ultimately appeal to the literary audience in his language of election. The importance of illness is all

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the more evident in the 1939 “Excerpt,” written as his health aggravated, beginning with Carnevali spreading “wide nets in the sea of [his] memory” and lamenting that “few fish are caught in them” (“Excerpt from Autobiography” 16). As memory starts to fail him, writing becomes a means to affirm his existence, which at this point had become both necessity and torture:

Words, words, words... words which serve only to nail me to my cross, words which serve only to gag me, words which destroy one another and which leave me more lonely and wretched than I was before. (“Excerpt from Autobiography” 16)

Writing is the only activity left to him as he “courts” the “infamous figure of death” and “even she²¹⁶ rejects me.” In what was probably his last work published during his lifetime, Carnevali affirms the necessity of writing as much as its uselessness.

The intimate aspects of the narration are transformed and enriched, though, by the translational forces at work in the different stages of the autobiographical narration. The text has several intercultural, intertextual links offering multiple angles of analysis. The echoes of Papini in the *Autobiography*, noticed by Boelhower (145) and already mentioned in the course of the thesis, need to be framed at this point of the development of Carnevali’s career. The echoes of *Un uomo finito* were not inserted in the text by a young Carnevali, eager to imitate one of his favourite authors; they were the last influence of an old model on an ageing, dying Carnevali.

This intertextual relationship takes on an interesting role if we consider the ending of Papini’s book in relation to the conditions in which Carnevali wrote the *Autobiography*. Papini writes about his youthful struggle for renovation in art and morals; he makes vague plans to emigrate to America but does not leave. He then experiences a crisis, finally returning to his birthplace in a Tuscan village. It is undeniable that, given some obvious differences in the outcomes of the two stories, the “theme is the same and the vision” as “Carnevali’s persona goes to America to become Papini’s first god, to conquer America and celebrate the modern man” (Boelhower 146). I have

²¹⁶ This is another example of Death being personified in the feminine, in the Italian use, by Carnevali.

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outlined the similarities and differences between Papini's and Carnevali's idea of the artist-god (and on the failure of such an apotheosis) in chapter 3.1. Papini's novel considers his failure to produce definite truths ("Ma Dio non vuol parlare colla mia bocca"²¹⁷ 238) by reflecting on his intertextual debt to the history of literature, lamenting his own influences on his quest for originality:

Son tutto impregnato di teorie altrui, imbottito di libri, saturo di articoli, imbuzzato di parole e di immagini. Son figliolo della cultura e degli altri mentre vorrei essere genio e me stesso.²¹⁸ (Papini, *Un uomo finito* 239)

Carnevali's narration of the "First God" episode was also imbued with references to the literary canon, as we have seen; but in the scope of the *Autobiography*, the whole book is an explanation of why he did not attain to the powers of divine speech, while defending his attempts, much like *Un uomo finito*. From his condition of post-authorship, aware that he is losing the fame he had achieved, Carnevali also reflects on his place in literature, with a similar tension between literariness and the myth of originality:

But above all I was, and I am, an envious man, madly jealous of all the writers who have got out more than one book. I was jealous (guess what I am jealous of!) - jealous even of Shakespeare. I was frantically in need of praise, crazy about my being considered a major poet. (*Autobiography* 93)

The difference lies in the context in which these final words are uttered – disillusion and resignation in Papini, bitterness and desire to cling to American literary fame in Carnevali. While *Un uomo finito* closed a phase in Papini's career (which would go on for decades after that), Carnevali's *Autobiography* was Carnevali's final effort before death, silence and oblivion.

Papini had stated that "ognuno di noi che abbia veramente una vita sua" must become "un Adamo che deve rinominare ancora una volta tutte le cose e costruirsi il suo vocabolario e fondare un linguaggio"²¹⁹ (*Un uomo finito* 114). Carnevali's autobiography is the story of such an Adam, testing

²¹⁷ "But God won't speak through my mouth."

²¹⁸ "I am all soaked with other men's theories, filled to the brim with articles, force-fed with words and images. I am the son of culture, of others, while I would only be a genius, and be myself."

²¹⁹ "Each one of us who wants a life *of his own*" must become "an Adam who has to name all things again, build his own vocabulary and found a language."

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his will to discover and name reality anew in the very concrete environment of the streets of New York. The intertextual relation outlined by Boelhower stops at the moment in which Carnevali actually crosses the ocean and, putting “the various aesthetic postures of Papini's protagonist” to the test of American reality, he finds them “wanting as effective epistemological tools for comprehending the metropolis” (Boelhower 149). Then, after experiencing failure, he wrote an autobiography out of an assemblage of languages, memories, influences and confessions. Papini is one of the references that get translated and incorporated into the autobiography – albeit an important one, as Boelhower's analysis suggests.

Multiple elements were translated into the textual fragments, which would later be compiled into more or less coherent book-like entities. Carnevali's book is an intercultural autobiography, a form of text establishing a peculiar relation between the individual and the canon(s):

[It] is an amalgam of two cultures and sundry canons, but the only bridge spanning them is one individual, this singular self with uniquely intercultural perspectives and experience. (Hokenson 99)

The intercultural autobiography owes on the other hand its existence to the “individual” as “bridge” connecting the multiple linguistic and cultural elements. The translational aspects of Carnevali's *Autobiography* set him apart from the Italian lyric autobiographers that he had briefly translated (Papini, but also Slataper) and turn the fragments into a sample of intercultural communication. The *Autobiography* does not simply communicate elements from one culture to another: it was written in English. The first and foremost difference between Papini's and Carnevali's text lies on the level of the language used – a difference at a very basic level, but which entails a series of differences on the stylistic, thematic and emotional level. Papini's book is a communication, in Italian, of his role in Italian modernism. Carnevali's fragments are positioned at the very end of his adventure through languages. They call into being the English-speaking Other which will in turn validate them: “the ear of the other says *me* to me” and “constitutes the *autos* of my autobiography” (Derrida, *The Ear of the Other* 51). The existence of an English readership is the abstract pretext for writing, in correlation to the very concrete pretext of Boyle's “ear.” The choice of language for the memoir

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cannot be dismissed in its centrality. Studies on autobiographical narrations by bilinguals have found evidence that bilinguals “produce different autobiographical narratives in their respective languages, and experience difficulties in translating the same memories and experiences into the other language” (Pavlenko, *The Bilingual Mind* 188). We do not have an Italian version of Carnevali’s *Autobiography* to compare with the one he wrote, but the very choice of English implies overcoming several linguistic constraints, in telling a story that did not take place entirely in English. The language of the *Autobiography* exists in continuous negotiation between the subject matter (Italy as cultural setting, as well as Carnevali’s thoughts and impressions) and the target language of choice.

The translation of Italian speech and cultural elements into English is an important component as Carnevali sets out to write his autobiography, and one that links the text to his Bazzano works. In fact, if

we consider the narrative that articulates the pre-migration self a source text, and the narrated self that emerges from the translating act carried out for their adoptive-language audience the target text, language migrants are translating from the mother tongue to the foreign language. They are translating the self into the other. (Wilson 49)

Wilson’s comment identifies the inherent translational movement of translingual autobiography, while it appears to conflate the “mother tongue” and the “pre-migration self” with the author’s self *per se*. Carnevali’s career, especially in his later years, demonstrates that the “pre-migration self” is far from being a stable source text to be translated as a whole, and that the same applies to the target language of the “other.” His relationship, at the time of writing, with the Italian environment that he intended to “translate” is visible in his work, as well as his appeal to an American readership.

The first installment of the autobiography appeared in an anthology whose foreword declared that the artists in the collection may have chosen Europe for their residences, but “their service [was] dedicated to American art”, and “the results of their arduous efforts” were “America’s” (Neagoe xi). In Carnevali’s case, this results in a dialogue with the American readership: an allusion to the fact that the author and a childhood friend “used to do dirty things together” is followed by Carnevali’s comment that “this is a little thing

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I warn those American prudes who would make of it a big thing” (“First God” 78). The comment acts as paradoxical link between an Italian subject matter and American audience, functioning much like the short stories of the late 1920s (the “Rubazziana” stories as well as “A History”) to present Italian culture to America while assuming the author’s position as outsider in Italian society.

Carnevali’s ongoing dialogue with the American audience in the “First God” takes the form of explanations and contextualization on the life in the small Italian towns in which he spent his childhood. After leaving Florence (of which, as we have seen, the author shows only a “white” hospital room), the narration then moves to less famous towns – Pistoia, Biella, and the small village of Cossato, in Piedmont. This personal geography is explained through similes and brief digressions addressing an English-speaking world. Pistoia is described as a “dead little town,” while the industrial town of Biella in Piedmont is presented with an analogy that British readers might understand: “the Italian Manchester, tremendously industrious and variously industrial” (“First God” 75). Nevertheless, this industrial town is divided into “Biella the High and Biella the Low” (“First God” 79) referring to a common division of Italian towns, between an upper fortified part and a lower modern part. Its geography is translated, as the town is given a street called Independence Street (“First God” 79). Names like “Biella the High” and “Independence Street” do not exist in real-life Biella, but are central in Carnevali’s re-framing of the place in an English linguistic environment.

This translated geography is linked to the notion of a provincial Italy that he had already explored in the Bazzano stories. Catholicism has a place in the narration, with its quasi-pagan rural aspects to be explained to Americans. One of the few images that Carnevali retains from the part of his childhood that he spent in Pistoia is the “congregation of the BROTHERS OF MERCY” (“First God” 78, author’s emphasis). This religious group, which attends funerals in long robes and hoods, is likened by the author to “the great Spanish inquisitioners [...] in the olden days”, using an image that would be perhaps more popular among the English-speaking public. Carnevali’s relationship with religion is always uneasy, in his childhood as in his adult

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life: “these fools scared me stiff every time I saw them.” As in the other Bazzano works, his treatment of Italian Catholicism is irreverent – the Oropa sanctuary near Biella is included as a place “where one may go and stay for fifteen days at a stretch without paying a cent for one’s room” (“First God” 79), as well as the main reason for building a rope-railway which he fears would destroy the countryside (“First God” 80). Catholic rites and customs are part of the small town life that he had been writing about for a decade, and thus presented as unusual and primitive. He writes about “an atrocious habit in some little towns of Piedmont that when one is in agony the bells play a special music to fit the case” (“First God” 77). This custom links life and sickness with death in ways that appear primitive. The image of Carnevali’s mother hearing the bells, and telling her son that her death was near, haunts the poet in his own time of sickness, and provides a starting point for his diffidence of Catholicism. Present and early life, personal and translational reasons blend in Carnevali’s final project.

Catholicism also plays a part in the construction of the language with which Carnevali starts his autobiographical project – a language in which the translational ‘trace’ is as relevant as in the other Bazzano works. Much of the peculiarities of that language are indebted to the Catholic liturgy as heard and received by an Italian boy, and later reframed in English. The mother, the pivotal figure of his childhood, is described with words pertaining to the author’s Catholic background. Her sufferings turn her into a “mother dolorous” (“First God” 76), whose Latin root is unveiled in the following page, when she is invoked as “mater dolorosa” (“First God” 77). Elements from Italian Catholic speech are present in the text, like the “eterno riposo” (*Lat.* “Requiem Æternam”, usually translated in English-language Catholic liturgy as ‘eternal rest’) which appears in the story of Carnevali’s aunt: “surely death had given her no repose” (“First God” 81).

Places are also an important part of the construction of this language. Carnevali always uses “villa” in the sense of ‘country house,’ and uses “pension” (80) to mimic the Italian *pensione*, a kind of boarding house. The sense of being in the presence of a ‘trace,’ whenever the English language is bent to resemble Italian, is as strong as in the Bazzano works. The author’s

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near-death experience shortly after his birth is described as an event which “carried [him] near to the grave” (“First God” 75), an expression that literally translates the Italian *portare (quasi) alla tomba*. The author’s cousins are described as “brigands” (“First God” 81) – in Italian the word *brigante* may mean “brigand” but also ‘scoundrel’ – and the younger cousin is indicated as the “smaller cousin” (“First God” 78), a translation of the Italian *il più piccolo* (*piccolo* meaning ‘young’ or ‘small’ depending on the context). This is the last stage of Carnevali’s translingual journey. Carnevali finds himself within the constraint of a language that was at the same time the alien language (with increasingly loose ties to the English-speaking world) and completely his own: a language in which no one else was writing, forged through two passages across the Atlantic.

This type of language is evident also in the chapters of the *Autobiography* that he wrote after 1932, and that the general public would be able to read only in 1967. An analysis of the 1967 text first needs to take into account the high level of editorial intervention, which is immediately visible in the way Boyle put together material from Carnevali’s American years and new material. For example, a chapter called “Beginning a Literary Career” tells of Carnevali visiting the offices of various New York editors, submitting manuscripts and hoping for publication; the same chapter also includes whole paragraphs from his 1920 review of Ezra Pound. The insertion is justified with a narrative device: “in this room I discovered Ezra Pound. I read his *Pavannes and Divisions*, and I wrote these words about him...” (*Autobiography* 118). Even in such a composite work, however, the language of Carnevali’s Bazzano years finds its way to the surface of the text, showing continuity in terms of linguistic interference.

Many passages of the *Autobiography* are translations of Italian speech by characters, reported in the text. Such is the case of a passenger on Carnevali’s ship, who prays to the “Eternal Father” (*Autobiography* 69): a literal translation of the Italian *padreterno*, a common way to address God. Other cases of linguistic interference result in the translation of Italian idioms to the letter. He defines his younger self “a little lion unchained” (*Autobiography* 44), with “unchained” translating the Italian *scatenato*,

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which has assumed the idiomatic meaning of ‘wild.’ His father’s harsh comment on his decision to emigrate “filled the cup to the brim” (*Autobiography* 58), literally translating *la goccia che fa traboccare il vaso* (an idiom similar in meaning to the English ‘the last straw’). In another passage, the poet courts a young girl in New York, but she leaves him “alone with a fistful of flies” (*Autobiography* 97), which renders an Italian idiom (*con un pugno di mosche*) indicating the condition of being empty-handed. The text sometimes uses elements of the Italian vocabulary, translated into English, for their metaphorical implications – dormant in Italian, where they have been part of the vocabulary for too long, but reactivated in translation. The procedure is sometimes foregrounded and introduced by the authorial voice: “The waves were what one calls in Italian ‘Cavalloni,’ equal to ‘Great Horses,’ so solid they were, large, majestic waves, grey-green” (*Autobiography* 69). Other times their metaphorical meaning is implied as it would be if the text were written in Italian, as is the case when Carnevali recalls reading to William Carlos Williams his “latest parturition” (*Autobiography* 139) – meaning his latest poem, the latest parturition of his brain. In this case the Anglophone reader is left to figure out the metaphorical implications of the word.

The text of the *Autobiography* in its earlier instalments as well as in Kay Boyle’s rearrangement of the whole work, presents elements of tension between Italian and English. While the presence of Italianate phrases and expressions in the 1932 chapters – extensively dealing with Italy – may be dictated by the need to convey an idea of Italy to the intended American public, there are several examples of Italian interference also in the parts of the text that deal with America. In New York, Carnevali recalls receiving “a card from Europe advising [him] that [his] brother was in New York too” (*Autobiography* 85). The meaning of ‘advise’ here is in fact closer to the Italian *avvisare*, “to notify.” At the same time, he defines Harriet Monroe ironically as a “she-professor of English” (Carnevali, *Autobiography* 157), as if he needed to convey the difference between the masculine *professore* and the feminine *professoressa* that could not be communicated with the English ‘professor.’

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Carnevali's language in the *Autobiography* is influenced by Italian when describing and reporting events that took place in Italy; yet the influence invests also parts of the narration that take place in the United States. Carnevali had strong personal reasons for writing his memoir in English, but was immersed in an Italian-speaking environment while writing. Judging from the thematic and stylistic links between his life-writing and testimonies of his life at the time of writing, this environment had an impact on the act of writing the autobiography. Some of the Italianate words in the narration ("Eternal Father" for *padreterno* or "pension" for *pensione*) actually relate to words heard in Italian at the time. Other Italianate expressions, such as idioms, reflect Carnevali's personal reflections on the episodes ("with a fistful of flies"). Their presence in the English text reflects a relationship with the English language that tended to stretch the limits of language in order to include linguistic elements from Italian, confirming the impression of a tormented relationship with language itself that is visible in other Bazzano works.

Carnevali's autobiographical fragments are contemporary to the first 'ethnic' autobiographies following the great wave of migration to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – defined by Karpinski as "literacy narratives." Such autobiographies were linked to "the rhetoric of assimilation that dominated discussion about immigration early in the century" (Karpinski 42). Those early stories of immigrant hardships and determination have the author's successful integration (and acquisition of English) as their goal, representing "a Bildungsroman of acculturation" (Hron 18). Carnevali's *Autobiography* contained the story of how a young man emigrated in search of fulfilment, and became a published poet in New York and Chicago. As I have demonstrated, Carnevali was preoccupied with his status as migrant, but undecided whether he could be placed on the same level with the other migrants he met – whom he significantly addressed as "wops." Most importantly, the book also contains his crisis, failure, and subsequent return – as opposed to the stories of successful integration of other early immigrant autobiographers such as Mary Antin or Constantine Panunzio. The story is told in a language which reflects the author's attitude to language after his sickness and repatriation. The work, from his first 1932 installments, is

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preoccupied with Carnevali's fading status in the literary milieu as much as his status as migrant – and it may even contain a nod to the dormant, unrecognised canon of translingual authors of world literature. As he narrates his first trip across Italy in the "First God," he claimed he saw the sea for the first time. The sick, ageing writer Carnevali recognises the sea of his childhood as already being "the sea of Ulysses and Herman Melville" ("First God" 75). A prefiguration of his own attempt to write that sea into literature, of his own entrance into literature may lie in his identification of the sea also with another translingual author. The sea is "the sea of that bourgeois, Conrad, and my own sea manufactured by my own imagination and by its presence." Conrad, possibly the most famous translingual to write in English in Carnevali's time, is evoked as a rival. We may take this as a hint of translingual dialectic going on, as translingual writers have sometimes been described as constituting a canon of their own, in which they implicitly discuss their condition of "doppelgangers, veritable secret sharers of translingual virtuosity" (Kellman 39)²²⁰. Carnevali's last works cannot fail to signify his peculiar transcultural situation, and the evolution of his translingualism, even if their core is the author's preoccupation with his descent into sickness and oblivion.

Carnevali's life does not progress, but comes full circle as the autobiographic fragments establish a link between the Italy he experienced as a troubled child and the Italy he narrated as a sick returning emigrant, with the American years in the middle. Such circularity is present in the way he frames his childhood, but it is made possible in book form by the effort of his editor – his original "ear" in Derrida's sense of the word. Boyle showed her care for her dead friend by giving shape to the fragmented and multiform narrations of his life. She was in the same years intent on revising another autobiography written by a friend of hers in the 1930s: Robert McAlmon's 1938 *Being Geniuses Together*. In the case of McAlmon's autobiography, she

²²⁰ Kellman's passage relates to another attack on Conrad, on part of another translingual: Igbo-to-English author Chinua Achebe, who gave his "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" lecture in 1975. Achebe's attack on Conrad, writes Kellman, is "all the more severe for the fact that he and the novella's Polish-English author, Conrad" are both translinguals (39). The nature of the debate seems to imply that there are many ways and many points of view from which to interpret translingualism, and that they often clash due to the respective strategies and cultural agendas.

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not only rearranged the original narration in chronological order, but also openly inserted chapters of her own, integrating the narration from her own point of view. Boyle saw her 1968 edition of “*Being Geniuses Together* as a dialogue with her dead friend” (Monk 492); Monk calls it an example of how “writing a community” constitutes “a gesture central to modernism itself” (495). Boyle’s 1967 edition of *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali* does not feature such an open dialogue between editor and author, as much as a collection and chronological rearrangement of texts. It does on the other hand re-open a discussion on the modernist community, by publishing – and most likely saving from definitive oblivion – the last writings of a man who had worked hard to enter the modernist canon.

Boyle’s editorial intervention on the text is open, and quite evident if we compare previously published versions of the same texts. For example, the first chapter of the 1932 “First God” becomes the second chapter of the 1967 *Autobiography*, and bits of its text are moved around:

I may have been from two to three years old. It was in the city of Florence which I had left when I was less than one year old, left for the country following a tremendous bronchitis and pneumonia that carried me near to the grave. (“First God” 74)

It is in the city of Florence where a tremendous bronchitis and pneumonia had carried me near to the grave. I may have been from two to three years old... (*Autobiography* 26)

The 1967 version shortens the passage, rearranging it for editorial purposes. Yet the words are preserved and, more importantly, the peculiar “Bazzano language” of Carnevali’s last years is preserved in expressions such as “carried me near to the grave.” In Boyle’s typescript, some chapters exist in more than one version. The editorial work is still in progress there, although in its final stages, attempting to give shape and direction to Carnevali’s collection of fragments that he had sent Boyle in the 1930s. The book is there sometimes indicated as “Religious Stammering”²²¹ – one of the titles that Carnevali reportedly had in mind (Boyle 15). The chapter subdivision is probably entirely Boyle’s: there are examples in the typescript of material that was moved from one chapter to another. For example a chapter, titled “First

²²¹ SIUC Boyle, Box 86, Folder 4.

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Loves”²²² in its earlier typescript version, contains the chapter that would become “First Love” in the 1967 version, while some pages of it would be incorporated in a chapter titled “The Third Boarding School” in 1967 – which links the Venice period of Carnevali’s life with events that happened the following year. Boyle put in order Carnevali’s autobiographical fragments, and probably wrote the brief sentences that linked them with texts that had already been published (such as in the example above, linking Carnevali’s review on Pound with his reminiscence of literary circles in the 1920s). It is more than likely that her intervention limited itself to this, to “compiling” Carnevali’s work, as indicated on the frontispiece of the 1967 edition. Still, by giving shape and structure to Carnevali’s words, recuperating texts from the 1925 *A Hurried Man* (a book which never had major diffusion) and from magazines, Boyle’s work as editor was fundamental in reinstating Carnevali in the literary canon.

Boyle’s will to rescue Carnevali from oblivion and participate in his work is evident in her foreword, where she outlines a very personal relationship between author and editor. She recalls hearing Carnevali’s name when she was working for the literary magazine *Broom* in the 1920s, and then starting a correspondence with him in 1923. Her account of their 1933 meeting in Bazzano shows the strong impression that the sick poet made on her: “the thing one feels when one walks into that cell and sees the figure on the bed can never be explained” (Boyle 16). Once they had met in person, she reports, the “compiling of his book” became “an obsession” (Boyle 18) which she would realise only three decades later.

In 1971, opera conductor David Stivender wrote to Boyle. He stated that since reading the *Autobiography* he had become obsessed with Carnevali’s story as well, “[copyrighted material].”²²³ In his quest to restore Carnevali’s fame, Stivender came in contact with the poet’s stepsister Maria Pia Carnevali. When the two set out to translate and edit the book for the Italian market, they focused mainly on removing what had been evidently added in Boyle’s text, comparing it with *A Hurried Man* and Carnevali’s

²²² SIUC Boyle, Box 86, Folder 3.

²²³ David Stivender to Kay Boyle, 29 July 1971, NYPL Boyle.

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published material from various magazines.²²⁴

The commitment of a few dedicated people, who had personal relationships with Carnevali – or were fascinated by the figure of the bohemian, uprooted poet that he represented – ensured Carnevali’s presence in literary history. The work of Boyle, Stivender and Maria Pia Carnevali made possible the inclusion of Carnevali in the tentative canon of Italian-American intellectuals, as well as sparkling interest in Italy. Such recognition came because of Carnevali’s unique life story, his claim to transnational dimensions at a time in which such links were still to be recognised between the Italian community in America and the rest of the world. The *Autobiography*, in spite of its composite, fragmented nature, is what carved Carnevali’s relatively small niche in twentieth-century literature. The book is made of auto-fiction, poetry, criticism. It responds to the tropes of immigrant autobiography in the United States, while unsettling them from the point of view of the migrant’s sickness, repatriation and linguistic idiosyncrasies. It attempts to situate Carnevali in the modernist canon, while debating the modernist experience. It provides closure, with its last paragraph (in Boyle’s version) in which Carnevali begs “Lady Death” to come closer, as he wants to “stammer a few words in [her] ear” (*Autobiography* 260). At the same time, the *Autobiography* continues an unfinished and provocative conversation with the canons (the Italian canon, the American canon, the Italian-American canon, the modernist canon and the immigrant canon). The book *is*, in one word, Emanuel Carnevali.

²²⁴ Stivender to Boyle, 31 October 1972: “[copyrighted material].” (NYPL Boyle)

CONCLUSION

Emanuel Carnevali in the 21st century

What does it mean to be writing about Emanuel Carnevali, a little more than a century after he landed in New York? Firstly, it does not necessarily mean to rediscover him: scholars and intellectuals have been ‘rediscovering’ him since the 1970s. At the present time, he is a niche figure in Italian and American cultures, but a recognizable and appreciated one. In 2014, Columbia University organised a symposium in New York dedicated exclusively to Carnevali. In the same year, author and musician Emidio Clementi (who already dedicated a good part of his 2004 novel *L’ultimo dio* to his admiration for Carnevali) used texts by Carnevali for his show *Notturmo Americano*, representing the Italian versions of *Il primo dio* in a work halfway between poetry reading and rock opera. The question now is not how to bring Carnevali to the public; rather, it is necessary to find the real significance of his brief and yet complex career, as well as his place in the areas of interest of Italian studies, Italian-American literature and modernist studies.

In the analysis of Carnevali’s relationship with English and Italian, I have closely followed the evolution of a translingual author’s language, in relation to supra-human entities and cultural constructs such as the Italian and American cultures, literary tradition or the modernist milieu. The focus has been on the creation of a language under conditions of cultural difference. Cultural difference has been acknowledged in the last two decades as opening the possibility for “new forms of meaning and strategies of communication,” as it “interpellate[s] forms of identity which, because of their continual implication in different symbolic systems, are always ‘incomplete’ or open to cultural translation” (Bhabha 162–163). The problem with definitions of cultural translation such as Bhabha’s is that, for their insistence on semiotic systems and cultures as texts, they fail to address “the passage from interlingual translation to cultural translation” (Wagner 64) although they still maintain that cultural translation has a performative quality. The thesis was inspired by the latest scholarly reflections on cultural translation, searching

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for links between the operations of positioning that contribute to the definition of Carnevali's complex identity, and their textual dimension in literary translation and translingual authorship. Although the thesis retains a structure that progresses from the definition of an identity to the analysis of textual strategies (and from there to the evolution of such strategies within the lifespan of an author's conscience), it has been necessary to see linguistic and cultural aspects as interacting with each other.

The analysis of Carnevali's work has demonstrated that all textual strategies relating to cultural translation are determined by operations of cultural positioning within (or against) more than one literary canon. These operations can be rooted in the author's background on a deeply personal level: Carnevali's relationship with his father was instrumental to his decision to write in English, although that also involved a view of Italian culture as backwards. Operations of positioning and re-positioning include criticism as well as a discussion with the literary milieu through fiction and poetry, as seen in Carnevali's different treatments of the linguistic outsider in the various media.

Entering American literature as an outsider, Carnevali challenged the idea of cultural belonging on multiple levels. He made his cultural alterity a recognizable feature of his role in American modernism, while struggling with images of *italianità* that were projected onto him. Carnevali's work while in America poses his Italian identity as an open question, problematizing his relationship with the literary canon as well as the Italian migrant community.

The analysis has demonstrated that the operations of cultural re-positioning, of adaptation to a new context, are interwoven with a number of linguistic and textual strategies, which were all at work in determinate points of Carnevali's career and evolved accordingly to his goal as well as the context. Such textual strategies involve translation in the common sense of the word: Carnevali's work on the *Vociani* intended to make them known in America, while his involvement with the *Cantos* project could have resulted in him having an impact on Italian reception modernism. Carnevali's activity as a translator demonstrates that not only translations are "never produced in

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a vacuum” (Bassnett and Lefevere 3), but that they may be deeply tied to the translator’s aspirations and affected by events of the translator’s life.

The main textual strategy allowing Carnevali to perform cultural translation was on the other hand translanguaging, whose status with respect to translation is somehow debated. Translanguaging is not translation, lacking a recognizable source and being presented as an independent text. Yet, translanguaging is conceptually linked to some of the cultural aspects of translation, relating to the status of the migrant as “translated being” (Cronin, *Translation and Identity* 45) and to the need to address a foreign audience. Also, the translanguaged text appears sometimes to be translation-fueled: Carnevali’s Bazzano works in particular present elements that were heard and encoded in Italian and then rendered into English. Yet, even his American works, while reflecting Carnevali’s linguistic assimilation, present stylistic elements that seem to point towards a common ground between Italian and English, from which he crafted his American language. My treatment of translanguaging has focused on the relationship between literary and cultural factors and the building of a literary language by navigating such factors. The analysis intended to counter totalizing ideas of linguistic assimilation or irredeemable difference, by delving into the complex patterns of assimilation and resistance through which Carnevali entered American literature.

The evolution of the translanguaged language in correlation to a changing context is particularly evident and traumatic in Carnevali, determined as it was by sickness and repatriation; but, as we have seen, it generated texts that never lost touch with their literary and translational goals. The resulting language is evidently a product of the multiple cultural and linguistic border-crossings that generated it; Carnevali may not have been in complete control of his linguistic media at the time (as the *Cantos* translations seem to attest) but the language he created was fertile and unique nonetheless. At the end of his life, he used this language to tell the story of how the language itself came into being, thus coming full circle.

My analysis of translanguaging has focused almost exclusively on Carnevali, and it is important to stress the uncompromising individuality and the specificity of the cultural and personal constraints that generated it.

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Carnevali's language may be best understood as a textual response to a particular cluster of constraints, which are evident in the text as Carnevali navigates the problem of being an Italian among New York modernists, or a returning migrant author in Italy. If the text testifies mostly to the process that led Carnevali to write his own brand of English, it is also true that its analysis enlarges our understanding of a much wider range of critical issues, such as the development of Italian-American literature or ethnic presence in modernism.

Carnevali was involved with the beginning of Italian-American literature, long before the question of its definition was posed. Carnevali did not engage with the collective dimension of the nascent Italian American literature, as seen in his problematic treatment of the Italian-American community. Yet, he mentioned and referred to the possibility of a culture that was both Italian and American even while declining to be its spokesperson. This ambivalent and problematic presence proved enough, over the decades, for Italian poets in America to place him at the beginning of their literary genealogies, as we have seen (Valesio 276; Fontanella 13). The fact that he could be inserted retrospectively into a canon of Italian-American literature means that, although most of his artistic efforts fell into oblivion at the time, their significance could be manifest once a general framework existed where to place him.

Carnevali's progressive rediscovery goes hand in hand with the rediscovery of "African Americans, European immigrants, and members of other minority groups" who "participated in, and significantly advanced, the course of modernism in the United States" (Sollors, *Ethnic Modernism* 12), inserting him into a wider context of ethnic modernisms. As scholars increasingly find connections between canonical modernisms and their minority counterparts, Carnevali assumes significance: not just as the Italian whose work was acknowledged by modernists but as the figure that enables an understanding of American modernism from a migrant's and an Italian's point of view. The same applies to Carnevali's links with Italian modernism, an entity that only recently gained the scholars' attention under this particular denomination, opening up comparisons of early 20th century Italian literature

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with contemporary global modernisms. Carnevali's work represents one of the very few points of contact between American and Italian modernisms, as part of his unique point of view. Even though his work of translational connection did not have a large impact at the time, he can still be used to demonstrate similarities and differences between the Italian and Anglophone brands of modernism.

Carnevali's surviving body of work may be centered exclusively on the personal vicissitudes of the author; but its analysis makes it possible to reconsider several cultural entities as open containers, in continuous definition as Carnevali asserts his individuality with respect to them. Writers who work outside national borders "cannot be bound by national borders, languages, and literary and critical traditions," but rather they "seek to name and configure cultural and literary production in their own terms and to enter novel forms of inter/transcultural dialogue" (Seyhan 4). The analysis of Carnevali's work brings such forms of dialogue to the forefront, enabling us to devise different forms of similarities and allegiances not only in synchronic, but also in diachronic fashion. In fact, part of present-day interest in Carnevali may be linked to the study of similarly bound-less, transnational writers across history.

References to Derrida, Bhabha or Spivak have been inserted in the thesis in full awareness of the mismatch between the environment that gave rise to the post-colonial paradigm and Carnevali's predicament. Yet, this mismatch has proven fertile in enabling a wider understanding of cultural translation, intercultural mediation or translingual creation that takes its inspiration in today's globalised world, and recuperates transnational elements that existed before the post-colonial evolution of the cultural paradigm. Once the scholarly community has acknowledged that it is often "the permanent quantum duality of cultural experience that is the norm rather than homogenous national or imperial continuums occasionally disrupted by foreign adventures" (Cronin, *Translation and Identity* 26), it becomes possible to see Carnevali as one sample in a global flow that exists across time and space. A necessary premise for translingual studies is the acknowledgement that translingual authorship has in fact been the norm for

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millennia (Forster 1); the significance of translingualism in the present debate is on the other hand that of acknowledging the voice of those who live by crossing linguistic and political borders, and find expression in a language that is not perceived as fully “their own” (Karpinski 2).

Thus, Carnevali becomes not an exception, but a figure that demands its status in the global forum (together with the other migrants and translinguals) as well as a role in a transnational understanding of Italian culture. Carnevali stands out in the transnational discussion of Italian studies by virtue of his presence within modernism (as an outsider, and yet a recognizable presence) and of his status within Italian America (a complex pattern of identification and rejection). The space “carved out within a broadened Italian canon for literary texts written by first, second, and subsequent generations of Italian migrants abroad” (Bond 419) is instrumental for a trans-national definition of Italian culture, having links to other seemingly unrelated aspects of the same field such as contemporary migration into Italy and colonialism. This discussion aims to open up the Italian discourse to the discussion of difference, as well as disrupting through Italian the global hegemonic discourses of world literature (Polezzi, “La mobilità come modello”). It acknowledges Italy’s links with the world, which are inherent to its nature as a nation of emigrants and immigrants, a Mediterranean crucible and a nation perennially in the making. Carnevali was just an individual who struggled to find his own voice by renegotiating his Italian identity; but he can occupy a place within a migrating canon that opens up and does not eschew renegotiation (as canons usually do) but rather places renegotiations at its centre.

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