

Letteratura inglese (CdS LETTERE)

Spiriti inquieti alle soglie della modernità

A. VOCI ROMANTICHE

1. I PREROMANTICI. T. Chatterton, *The Tournament: An Interlude*.

THE Tournament begynnes; the hammerrs sounde;
The coursers lysse about the mensured field;
The shemyng armour throws the sheene arounde;
Quayntysed fons depictedd onn eche sheelde.
The feerie heaulmets, wythe the wreathes amielde ,
Supportes the rampyng lyoncell orr bear;
Wythe straunge depyctures, Nature maie nott yeelde,
Unseemelie to all orderr doe appere, Yett yatte
Makes knowen thatt the phantasies unryghte

2. LA PRIMA GENERAZIONE. W. Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802)

The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to chuse incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of the language really spoken by men; and, at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way [...]

Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain maturity, are less restrained, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity.

... the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. [...]

For all good poetry is the *spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings*. [...] For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed representatives to each other we discover what is really important to men

3. LA PRIMA GENERAZIONE. W. Wordsworth, *I wandered lonely as a cloud*

I travelled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.
'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem

To love thee more and more.
Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.
Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed,
The bowers where Lucy played;

And thine too is the last green field

That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

4. W. Wordsworth, [1798-99-1805] *The Prelude, Or Growth of a Poet's Mind* (1850)

Vi sono nella nostra esistenza dei punti di tempo
che con preminenza evidente ritengono
una virtù vivificante, da cui le nostre menti –
deprese da false vedute e pensieri contraddittori
[...] sono nutrite
e invisibilmente risanate:
*una virtù per cui il piacere si accresce,
che penetra, ci consente di salire,
se alti, più in alto, e ci solleva se cadiamo.*

Tale spirito efficace si cela soprattutto
fra quei tratti della vita in cui
Abbiamo sentito più a fondo che la mente
È signora e padrona [...]
Questi momenti, degni di ogni gratitudine,
Sono sparsi dappertutto, risalendo fino al tempo
Della prima infanzia, e forse nella nostra infanzia
Sono più cospicui

5. LA SECONDA GENERAZIONE. P.B. Shelley, *Ode to the West Wind*

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's Being
Thou, from whose unseen presences the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
 Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence stricken multitudes: O Thou,
Who chariotest to their to their dark wintry bed
 The winged seeds where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
 Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:
 Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;

Destroyer and preserver hear, O Hear! (I. 1-14)

[...] O Uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
 The Comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven
As then, when to outstrip they skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven
 As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need,
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
(IV. 47-54)

6. LA SECONDA GENERAZIONE. J. Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady? [...]
 Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! With brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty, - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know'

7. IL GOTICO. M. Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818)

«Such were my professor's words – rather let me say such the words of fate, enounced to destroy me. As he went on, I felt as if my soul were grappling with a palpable enemy; one by one the various keys were touched which

formed the mechanism of my being: chord after chord was sounded, and soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose. So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein – more, far more will I achieve: treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation. *I closed not my eyes that night. My internal being was in a state of turmoil*» (chapter III)

B. S. T. COLERIDGE

1. W. PATER, “Coleridge”, *Appreciations* (1889)

The literary life of Coleridge was a disinterested struggle against the application of the relative spirit to moral and religious questions. Everywhere he is restlessly scheming to apprehend the absolute; to affirm it effectively; to get it acknowledged. Coleridge failed in that attempt, happily even for him, for it was a struggle against the increasing life of the mind itself. [. . .] How did his choice of a controversial interest, his determination to affirm the absolute, weaken or modify his poetic gift.

2. UN’OPERA DI CULTO. The Simpsons 5x8, “Boy-Scoutz 'n the Hood” (1993)

HOMER: Now I have to face stupid reality again!
Flanders! My socks feel dirty, pass me some water to wash ‘em!

FLANDERS: Again?! Homer we have to ration the water carefully, it’s our only hope!

HOMER: OH PARDON ME Mr. Let’s-ration-everything. But what do you think we’re floating

on? Don’t you know the poem? «Water, water everywhere / So let’s all have a drink!»

ALL: Homer no!

HOMER: What does it matter, we’re doomed, doomed!

[a seagull appears].

3. RUOLI COMPLEMENTARI. S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a **faithful adherence to the truth of nature**, and the **power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination**. [...]

The thought suggested itself [...] that a series of poems might be composed of **two sorts**.

- In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency.
- For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such, as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the 'Lyrical Ballads'; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that **willing suspension of disbelief** for the moment, which constitutes **poetic faith**.

Mr. Wordsworth on the other hand was to propose to himself as his object, to give the **charm of novelty** to **things of every day**, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible

4. OMBRE OMERICHE. Dante, *Inferno*

Né dolcezza di figlio, né la pietà
del vecchio padre, né 'l debito amore
lo qual dovea Penelopè far lieta,
vincer potero dentro a me l'ardore
ch' i ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto
e de li vizi umani e del valore; (94-98)

Io e ' compagni eravam vecchi e tardi
quando venimmo a quella foce stretta

dov'Ercule segnò li suoi riguardi
acciò che l'uom più oltre non si metta; (106-109)

«O frati», dissi, «che per cento milia
perigli siete giunti a l'occidente,
a questa tanto picciola vigilia [...]
considerate la vostra semenza:
fatti non foste a viver come bruti,
ma per seguire virtute e canoscenza» (112-120)

5. OMBRE OMERICHE (2). A. Tennyson, *Ulysses*

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: (1-7)

for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths

Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
[...] and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we
are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (48-60)

6. LA RETE SIMBOLICA. W. H. Auden, *The Enchafèd Flood or the Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (1950)

Cielo contrapposto ad acqua = spirito contrapposto a Natura

Ciò che viene dal cielo è una visione spirituale o soprannaturale.

Ciò che giace nascosto nelle acque è la forza sconosciuta della natura. Per esempio:

Gli spiriti angelici mandati dalla luna, o signora del mare, che fan muovere la nave del Vecchio Marinaio togliendole l'aria d'innanzi e lo spirito della vendetta proveniente dalla terra della neve e del ghiaccio che dimora a nove tese sotto la superficie e che suo malgrado trasporta per loro ordine la nave fino all'equatore.

L'Albatro che è collegato alla Colomba dello Spirito Santo, e quindi alla vittima innocente, Cristo; i serpenti d'acqua che sono quegli aspetti della natura, all'esterno o all'interno dell'uomo, per i quali egli prova avversione perché non li può comprendere esteticamente o intellettualmente e che disprezza perché non ne può far uso. Non fosse stato per la Caduta (l'uccisione dell'Albatro), Adamo (il Vecchio Marinaio) non avrebbe mai appreso consapevolmente attraverso la sofferenza il significato dell'*agape*, e cioè ad amare il proprio prossimo come se stesso senza confronti né avidità (la benedizione dei serpenti) cosicché il Vecchio Marinaio può ben dire alla fine, *O felix culpa*

7. C. Baudelaire, Spleen e ideale II. "L'albatro" *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857)

Spesso, per divertirsi, i marinai
catturano degli albatro, grandi uccelli dei mari,

indolenti compagni di viaggio delle navi
in lieve corsa sugli abissi amari.

L'hanno appena posato sulla tolda
e già il re dell'azzurro, maldestro e vergognoso,
pietosamente accanto a sé strascina
come fossero remi le grandi ali bianche.
Com'è fiacco e sinistro il viaggiatore alato!
E comico e brutto, lui prima così bello!
Chi gli mette una pipa sotto il becco,

chi imita, zoppicando, lo storpio che volava!

Il Poeta è come lui, principe delle nubi
che sta con l'uragano e ride degli arcieri;
esule in terra fra gli scherni, impediscono
che cammini le sue ali di gigante

1. UNA BALLATA GOTICA. S.T. Coleridge. "The Wanderings of Cain" (1797) .

The title and subject were suggested by myself, who likewise drew out the scheme and the contents for each of the three books or cantos, of which the work was to consist, and which, the reader is to be informed, was to have been finished in one night! My partner [Wordsworth] undertook the first canto; I the second: and which ever had done first, was to set about the third. Almost thirty years have passed by; yet at this moment I cannot without something more than a smile moot the question which of the two things was the more impracticable, for a mind so eminently original to compose another man's thoughts and fancies, or for a taste so austere pure and simple to imitate the *Death of Abel*? (1828)

2. L'INQUIETUDINE DEL MARINAIO. W. H. Auden, *The Enchafed Flood*

Il vento forte e tirannico che spinge suo malgrado la nave verso la pericolosa terra degli iceberg, della nebbia e della neve

Con le antenne inclinate e con la prora, / come chi se inseguito con grandi urla / calpesti ancora l'ombra del nemico, / china avanti la testa, / la nave si rubava alla tempesta / e fuggiva sempre verso sud

L'uomo, cioè, è spinto da un irresistibile impeto di forze creative che non si aspetta e che lo spaventano perché del luogo in cui lo portano non sa nulla, se non che probabilmente sarà qualcosa di angoscioso. Queste forze, tuttavia, non sono necessariamente malvage. Esse non fanno altro, come poi risulta evidente, che indurlo in tentazione, perché gli iceberg rappresentano quello stato di angoscia che Kierkegaard descrive come la precondizione necessaria alla Caduta.