‘UN ABISSO DI BELLEZZA E DI SCANDOLO’:
A STUDY OF CARLO EMILIO GADDA’S *L’ADALGISA*



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Short abstract

This thesis is a monographic study of *L’Adalgisa. Disegni milanesi* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1944), a collection of narrative-satirical writings by Carlo Emilio Gadda (1893-1973). *L’Adalgisa* is examined from a variety of perspectives and paying attention to different critical issues, and in particular to the question of satire. The critical-interpretative category of satire provides a *fil rouge* unfolding throughout the thesis and is therefore introduced in chapter 1, which lays the foundation for the following chapters by dwelling on the history and theory of satire and on what is the meaning that Gadda assigns to it. Reconstructing the textual history of the collection which was assembled in the early 1940s, chapter 2 tackles the issue of the unity of the book and considers how the texts brought together work both as individual pieces and parts of a whole. The chapter suggests that the satirical representation of the social collective, albeit practiced across a range of varieties and manners, works as a binding factor and serves as a centre of meaning. Chapter 3 analyses how narration is carried out in the different *disegni* and focuses on the meaning of the dive that the author claims to take (‘quasicché a propria volta l’autore si tuffi’) into the water of his characters. The chapter

argues that a mechanism of creation of satirical difference presides over the ambiguous manifestation of the narrative voice in many *disegni*. Chapter 4 explores the function of the 227 authorial footnotes found in the collection. The chapter reflects in particular on how the notes only apparently offer an extradiegetic and non-fictional space, while on the contrary they contribute to an extension of the fictional-diegetic boundaries of the narrative and draw the authorial self in it, incrementing the ambiguity of the satire found in the *disegni*. Chapter 5 brings into focus the significance of the theme of time for the collection, showing that the acknowledgment of time's unrepeatability is part of the principle of truth upon which the satirical judgement of the Milanese community is expressed throughout the collection. Arguing for an understanding of the book through the category of satire, my thesis seeks to shed light on the mechanism of creation of satirical difference recognised as a constitutional part of satirical writing, offering an interpretation of the collection as a book which articulates a consistent, albeit internally diversified, reflection on three main subjects – the city/society, the individual, time – and on how they interact.

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Extended abstract

My thesis is the first monographic study of the collection of narrative-satirical writings titled *L’Adalgisa. Disegni milanesi* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1944) by Carlo Emilio Gadda (Milan, 1893-Rome, 1973). The specificity of my thesis is that it combines together a variety of critical perspectives and focuses on different issues posed by *L’Adalgisa*, showing how questions and themes which may initially appear distant are, on the contrary, interrelated and interlocked with one another. Although it is not the only critical perspective I have put in place, the category of satire represents a common thread for my research, which probes how *L’Adalgisa* can be effectively interpreted through this category.

The application of the category of satire to *L’Adalgisa* is made especially difficult across many of the *disegni* by the involvement of the narrative subject with the world he narrates and satirises: a world which he does not hesitate to attack and represent in a grotesque manner. Acknowledging this difficulty, chapter 1 will first reconstruct a brief history and a theory of satire, and will then consider what satire represents for Gadda, laying

the foundation for the following chapters. Chapter 2-5 each tackle different critical issues but also return, in different ways, to the question of satire.

Chapter 2 examines the problem of the unity of the collection. The *disegni* brought together by Gadda were in fact originally written at different times and come from different sources. As a result of this, some of them have narrative connections with others, yet others are independent and autonomous. The main problem is represented by the inclusion in the collection of two *disegni* coming from Gadda's novel *La cognizione del dolore*, which are set – as is the case in *La cognizione* – in the fictional South American country of Maradagàl and are nonetheless combined together, in the context of the collection, with other *disegni* set in or near Milan. The *disegni* taken from *La cognizione* introduce the melancholic and irascible character of Gonzalo, estranged and isolated by his own pain from the rest of society.

By reconsidering how the world of *La cognizione* relates to the world found in the other *disegni*, and by drawing attention to several points of contact between these two worlds, my chapter argues that the satirical representation of the social collective acts as a principle of unity within the collection, strategically marked by three main pictures of society: the taunting and yet affectionate celebration of Lombardy and its people found in *Quando il Girolamo ha smesso….* (*disegno* number two); the hallucinated and overwhelming vision of the others given in Gonzalo's perspective in *Navi approdano al Parapagàl* (*disegno* number seven); the extraordinarily grotesque picture of the Milanese bourgeoisie attending a concert in *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori* (*disegno* number eight). In finding new connections across the collection, my chapter does not fail to acknowledge that there is a radical difference between the *disegni* taken from *La cognizione* and the other *disegni*, but re-interprets this difference as an element which creates unity. *L'Adalgisa* emerges in this respect as a book which questions not only on the level of the

themes it explores, but also on the level of its inner structure and composition, issues of identity, unity/oneness, and plurality, inviting us to reflect on the productive power of difference for the creation of meaning.

Starting from a simile where the author claims he has taken a dive into the water of his characters in order to better narrate their world ('quasicché a propria volta l'autore si tuffi'), chapter 3 explores the narrative regimes adopted throughout the collection. In the *disegni* set in Milan, the dive expresses the following: the mimetic appropriation of the linguistic and mental habits of the characters on the part of the narrator, creating a narrative polyphony (Mikhail Bakhtin); and the fact that the narrator homodiegetically places himself within the narrated world. In the disegni derived from *La cognizione*, on the contrary, the narrator mostly focuses on and through Gonzalo, the main character, and never becomes a character within the narrated world.

While recognising this difference, the chapter argues that the dive of the narrator in the *disegni* set in Milan is to be reconnected to a mechanism of creation of satirical difference. In Fredric V. Bogel's study, satire is indeed understood as a mode which does not ratify a difference between the satirist and its satirical target, but which instead *creates* that difference by *making* the target different from the satirist. In Bogel's model, satire creates difference starting from a condition of sameness or similarity, which is not erased in the satirical text but is instead reprocessed and revised. In most of *L'Adalgisa*, too, as I will demonstrate, almost any affirmation of satirical difference comes with a 'shadow of connection' (Bogel), and with a form of awareness of a condition of sameness and/or proximity. It is only against this condition of sameness and/or proximity that the satirical difference can be created.

Chapter 4 investigates a distinguishing feature of *L'Adalgisa*: the two hundred and twenty-seven authorial notes which comment on terms and expressions, images, and

references found in the narrative. In the notes we find a voice which seems to be distinguished from that of the main narrative and which often sounds like that of the historical author, Carlo Emilio Gadda. The notes are often presented as an extradiegetic and non-fictional space, where a form of correspondence between the diegetic fiction and what is referred to by the notes as 'reale realtà' – i.e., the non-fictional, extratextual reality existing outside the work itself – is reestablished. As chapter 4 shows, however, the notes also have the effect of extending the fictional-diegetic boundaries of the *disegni* and tend to complicate matters, rather than offer explanations. They give readers the impression that outside the work itself there is in fact a world which the work imitates (albeit with some changes), and draw that external world in the narrative, creating an ambiguous interplay between the real and the invented.

Chapter 5 focuses on the theme of time in the collection, arguing that the book itself is founded upon a reflection on time and temporality, and exploring the connection existing between time and satire. The chapter first observes that an equivalence is established in the collection between several forms of multiplication and repetition (e.g., procreation, industrial production, accumulation of wealth) which keep the bourgeoisie busy, and the grotesque multiplication of the names and images of two deceased characters. All these forms of multiplication and repetition are useless and futile, because they will be swept away by the passing of time, which is represented as a consuming and devouring agent ('tempo spappolatore', 'tempo cuoco di vita') and is marked as unrepeatable ('irrepetibile tempo').

The chapter then moves on to show that it is against the principle of temporal unrepeatability that the bourgeoisie are found to be guilty of repeating and multiplying themselves in the world. Time is ultimately only one of the infinite deformations of the ever-changing system of systems that is reality, and it is only through our limited human perspective that we fail to acknowledge that the forms of repetitions put in place by the

living are in fact as futile and grotesque as the multiplication concerning the aforementioned deceased characters. The chapter finally dwells on memory as a possible form of creative repetition. By re-evaluating the role of memory, the collection also re-evaluates the action of the narrator himself, who is presented – like the character of Adalgisa Borella, after whom the collection is titled – as a subject remembering a now-lost world.

As a result of the multi-focused analysis carried out, my thesis concludes that *L'Adalgisa* is not simply a collection of disparate pieces, but rather a book which accomplishes a form of plural unity. The book works as one organism and is also marked by internal differences which cannot be overlooked and which can even be productive in terms of creation of meaning. At the centre of the book there is a mechanism of creation of satirical difference. This mechanism does not only account for the ambiguous ways in which the narrator presents himself throughout the collection, but also sheds light on how the collection combines *disegni* where there is a form of connection between the narrator and the world he talks about with *disegni* where there is complete opposition between the main character and the social collective. Arguing for a creative-differential notion of satire, my thesis concludes that *L'Adalgisa* can be fruitfully interpreted through a satirical lens, and that *L'Adalgisa* is a work which articulates a consistent, albeit internally diversified, reflection on three main subjects – the city/society, the individual, and time – and on how they interact with each other.

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Abbreviations

Gadda's works

Gadda's works are quoted parenthetically using abbreviations and page numbers from the collective edition of *Opere* directed by Dante Isella for 'I libri della Spiga', Milan: Garzanti, 1988-1993:

RR 1 = *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. I, ed. by Raffaela Rodondi, Guido Lucchini and Emilio Manzotti (Milan: Garzanti, 1988).

RR 2 = *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. II, ed. by Giorgio Pinotti, Dante Isella and Raffaela Rodondi (Milan: Garzanti, 1989).

SGF 1 = *Saggi Giornali Favole e altri scritti*, vol. I, ed. by Liliana Orlando, Clelia Martignoni and Dante Isella (Milan: Garzanti, 1991).

SGF 2 = *Saggi Giornali Favole e altri scritti*, vol. II, ed. by Claudio Vela, Gianmarco Gaspari, Giorgio Pinotti, Franco Gavazzeni, Dante Isella and Maria Antonietta Terzoli (Milan: Garzanti, 1992).

SVP = *Scritti vari e postumi*, ed. by Andrea Silvestri, Claudio Vela, Dante Isella, Paola Italia and Giorgio Pinotti (Milan: Garzanti, 1993).

BI = *Bibliografia e indici*, ed. by Dante Isella, Guido Lucchini and Liliana Orlando (Milan: Garzanti, 1993).

The following singular works are quoted with the following abbreviations:

L'A = *L'Adalgisa. Disegni milanesi* [1944], in RR 1, pp. 283-564.

CDD = *La cognizione del dolore* [1963], in RR 1, pp. 565-772.

CDU = *Il castello di Udine* [1934], in 109-282.

M = *La meccanica* [1970], in RR 2, 461-590.

MM = *Meditazione milanese* [1974], in SVP, pp. 615-895.

VM = *I viaggi la morte* [1958], in SGFI 1, pp. 419-667.

Other works not included in the Garzanti edition or other editions of Gadda's works are quoted with the following abbreviations:

AF = *A un amico fraterno: lettere a Bonaventura Tecchi*, ed. by Marcello Carlino (Milan: Garzanti, 1984).

DM = *Disegni milanesi. San Giorgio in casa Brocchi, L'incendio di via Keplero, Un fulmine sul 220*, ed. by Paola Italia, Dante Isella and Giorgio Pinotti (Pistoia: Edizioni Can Bianco, 1995).

Fu = *Un fulmine sul 220*, ed. by Dante Isella (Milan: Garzanti, 2000).

Int. = *'Per favore, mi lasci nell'ombra'. Interviste 1950-1972*, ed. by Claudio Vela (Milan: Adelphi, 1993).

L'A[12] = *L'Adalgisa. Disegni milanesi*, ed. by Claudio Vela (Milan: Adelphi, 2012).

LAM = *Lettere agli amici milanesi*, ed. by Emma Sassi (Milan: il Saggiatore, 1983).

Further abbreviations

Further abbreviations are used to refer to the following:

QI = *I Quaderni dell'Ingegnere. Testi e studi gaddiani*, old and new series (2001-2007 and 2010-2014).

EJGS = *The Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies*, <https://www.gadda.ed.ac.uk/>.

GDLI = *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, 21 vols., ed. by Salvatore Battaglia (Turin: Utet, 1961-2002), now available here <https://www.gdli.it/>.

The term *disegno/disegni* used by Gadda to identify the texts brought together in *L'Adalgisa* will recur very frequently throughout my thesis. For this reason, I have decided that from here onwards the term will not be given in italics, unless it will be mentioned as part of the subtitle of the collection.

Introduction

This thesis aims to provide the first monographic study of *L'Adalgisa. Disegni milanesi* (1944) by Carlo Emilio Gadda, his third major work following the better-known novels *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (1957) and *La cognizione del dolore* (1963). The questions guiding my research concern the reading we are asked to make by a collection of texts – the 'disegni' – which present themselves as unrelated in some ways and interrelated in others, the narrative voice which speaks in the disegni and its relation to the world narrated, the authorial notes which accompany each disegno, and the connection established in the disegni between the theme of time and the representation of society. The thesis is articulated into five chapters: chapters 2-5 will address each one of the questions mentioned above, and they are preceded by chapter 1, introducing the critical-interpretative category of satire which will provide a *fil rouge*, a common thread running through the rest of the thesis. Arguing for an understanding of *L'Adalgisa* through this category, my study will contribute to a reassessment of the significance of the collection in the creative-literary path of an author considered to be simultaneously canonical and eccentric such as Gadda, and will also further the discussion of Gadda as a narrator and a satirist in more general terms.

1. How we read *L'Adalgisa*, how we read Gadda

Printed for Le Monnier in Florence in December 1943 (with 1944 as the official date of release), *L'Adalgisa* is the product of the assembly of material originally written at different times and coming from different sources. Two disegni were extracted from *La cognizione*

del dolore, published as a serial in the periodical *Letteratura* between 1938 and 1941 (for the first time as a book only in 1963) and therefore already familiar – at the time of the publication of *L'Adalgisa* – at least to a relatively restricted audience. Five disegni stemmed from an unfinished novel on which Gadda had worked in the 1930s and which he had left unpublished and substantially unknown. It was only in the 1990s that the manuscripts from this novel, titled *Un fulmine sul 220*, were discovered and brought back to light by Dante Isella, making it possible to re-situate the disegni that derived from there within their original context and hence better understand the largest part of the collection under a genetic-textual aspect. *L'Adalgisa* thus presents itself, at least in the first instance, as a compilation, a sylloge of pieces from broader narratives, alongside some other independent pieces; all brought together within a common framework whose consistency is put in doubt by not a few scholars.

Given its composite constitution, *L'Adalgisa* may indeed appear to be a miscellaneous book: not in fact a book, but rather a container of disparate writings published together out of expediency, some of which are in some ways narratively connected or have common settings and characters just because they incidentally share a textual ancestor (be it *Un fulmine* or *La cognizione*). Certainly, there are similarities in the general tone and themes explored in the disegni, included the ones taken from *La cognizione*, which – albeit set in a fictional South American country, and not in Milan – are nonetheless taken to refer to Lombardy and Milan via allegory. Amongst these themes there are the nature of society and other social aggregations, including the family; class dynamics and dynamics of conformism, standardisation, and exclusion; the habits and elitist behaviour of the upper social echelons and their pastimes; the structural-architectural changes affecting both private and public spaces in the city and the landscape around it. Nevertheless, it remains in essence unclear why the world of *Un fulmine* is brought together with that of *La cognizione* and a

few other texts, and there are no statements made by Gadda himself to definitively clarify this.

The editorial history of the collection complicates this picture. As we will see in chapter 2, Gadda expunged from the 1945 re-edition of *L'Adalgisa* the two disegni extracted from *La cognizione* together with a third disegno (also not set in Milan), thus showing that he considered those three pieces to be foreign bodies inserted in a collection which appears for the remainder more cohesive, if only because the other disegni are set in or near Milan. However, in the 1955 edition of *L'Adalgisa* for the collective Einaudi volume *I sogni e la folgore*, Gadda reintegrated all the three pieces expunged in 1945, thus confirming – and this time definitively – that the collection was to be transmitted to the future as it was first published in 1944. How, then, should we read this work, which Giuseppe Stellardi has suitably defined 'opera perlomeno bifronte'?[1]

Scholars have attempted to explain in various ways how *L'Adalgisa* is to be read and what relationship exists – provided that they think such relationship exists – between its single parts and the whole they form. Giuliano Cenati argues, for example, that the collection pursues a paradigmatic form of narration: since each one of the disegni set in Milan functions on its own and as a part of a broader background for the others, there is an atypical but nonetheless narrative relationship of interpenetration between all of them. However, albeit thematically and in some ways tonally aligned with the rest of the book, the disegni derived from *La cognizione* are set in a fictional-diegetic world so dissimilar from that found in the other disegni that they cannot be fully subsumed, from a narrative viewpoint, within the whole. Therefore, in Cenati's view, they almost stand on their own, strategically located so as to divide the collection in two specular halves: one closed by the first disegno derived

[1] Giuseppe Stellardi, 'La città che dispare dell'*Adalgisa*', in *City Effects City Defects* (Second EJGS Conference Proceedings), ed. by Federica G. Pedriali and Giorgio Pinotti, EJGS, 7, Supplement 8 (2015).

from *La cognizione* (*Strane dicerie contristano i Bertoloni*, disegno number 5), the other opened by the second one (*Navi approdano al Parapagàl*, disegno number 7).[2]

In the reconstruction given by Federica Pedriali, *L'Adalgisa* narratively reinvents the material from both *Un fulmine* and *La cognizione*, combining them together in a macrostructure which highlights the mistake inherent to the conventional storyline of *Un fulmine*. In devising the highly calibrated structure of the collection, Gadda moves the focus away from the trope of the love affair between Bruno, a former butcher's boy, and Elsa, a young and beautiful woman married to an old and wealthy man, and relegates such trope to the margins, where it is alluded but not developed, in favour of the proliferation of other parallel stories, included that of the protagonist of *La cognizione*, Gonzalo. In so doing, Gadda arouses and then deliberately disregards readerly expectations, creating a new organism whose overall narrative quality derives from the intersection of the unoriginal plot of *Un fulmine* with *La cognizione*.[3] As Riccardo Stracuzzi also remarks, along the same lines as Pedriali, the alternation of pieces derived from *Un fulmine* with other extraneous pieces is not at all inconclusive in a narrative sense: on the contrary, it concludes the storyline hinted at in *Un fulmine* under an air of desire, suggesting that love can only survive, in the modern city, in the form of a frustrated compulsion. *L'Adalgisa* is, to put it in Stracuzzi's words, a *defective* novel – a narrative work which comes very close to being a novel and yet is not a proper novel –, and a result of the clash between a reassuring vision of art and literature established in the cultural environment in which Gadda grew up, on the one hand,

[2] Cf. Giuliano Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini. I racconti di Carlo Emilio Gadda* (Pisa: ETS, 2010).

[3] Cf. Federica Pedriali, '*L'Adalgisa* e le forme del nome', in *Maratona Gadda*, ed. by Rinaldo Rinaldi (Milan: Unicopli, 2010), pp. 27-53 (see in partic. p. 34); Ead., 'Le meraviglie della declinazione lunga. *Adalgisa* e *Pasticciaccio*', in *Un meraviglioso ordegno. Paradigmi e modelli nel* Pasticciaccio *di Carlo Emilio Gadda*, ed. by Maria Antonietta Terzoli, Cosetta Veronese and Vincenzo Vitale (Rome: Carocci, 2013), pp. 287-310 (see in partic. p. 296).

and the critical consciousness of the twentieth-century novel which Gadda came to express with his own writing, on the other.[4]

For the purposes of this thesis, I will necessarily have to return to the issue of the unity of *L'Adalgisa* and offer further reflections on where to find such unity, but it is already possible to identify a first important node, which arises from the scholarly interpretations of the collection summarised above and which will also be in the backdrop of my research. The way in which we read *L'Adalgisa* carries along with itself a question which has troubled the field of Gadda studies from its beginnings: the question concerning the narrative-novelistic quality of Gadda's writing. Indeed, as Cristina Savettieri has recently observed, the vulgate notion of the collection as a literary object born out of the *disiecta membra* of previous novelistic projects often entails a derogatory judgement on the novelistic potential of those projects, as if the fact alone that Gadda excerpted from them a few texts for a new book was in itself a demonstration of their intrinsic fungibility in different contexts and of Gadda's indifference to the novel as an expressive form.[5] In other words, since Gadda turned to *Un fulmine* and *La cognizione* as sources for most of the disegni, these two novels are often understood, from the standpoint of the collection, as 'borrow pits' – an image frequent in Gadda studies[6] – from which Gadda could extract, with almost no difficulty, filling material to be used in a way different from what he had originally planned. While this may describe, to some extent, what happened in the case of *Un fulmine*, which had been abandoned and left unfinished, the situation is different in the case of *La cognizione*, Gadda's masterpiece,

[4] Cf. Riccardo Stracuzzi, 'Il fuoco della favola. Romanzo e città nell'*Adalgisa* di Gadda', *Griseldaonline*, 19, 1 (2020), pp. 59-89.

[5] Cristina Savettieri, 'Il senso di Gadda per il romanzo', in *Gadda: interpreti a confronto*, ed. by Federica G. Pedriali (Florence: Cesati, 2020), pp. 123-136.

[6] Cf. Guido Lucchini, 'Nota al testo' to *L'Adalgisa*, in RR 1 840: '*L'Adalgisa* sembrerebbe a un'attenta lettura costituita con le *disiecta membra* di un romanzo, abbandonato e ridotto a "cava di prestito" di materiali narrativi'.

whose alleged incompleteness has long been the object of an intense scholarly debate revolving around the meaning of the notion of *end* for Gadda and in his works.[7]

The name to mention here is, inescapably, that of Gianfranco Contini, major critic and friend of Gadda, whose interpretative paradigm has for many years set the standard. In his authoritative analyses, Contini famously placed the emphasis on the author's lyrical temperament and on the categories of fragmentism and *poéme-en-prose*, reconnected in particular to Gadda's early debut in the Florentine periodical *Solaria* (active between 1926-1934); at the same time, Contini favoured a linguistically- and stylistically-oriented approach to Gadda's works, understood within a plurilingual and expressionistic literary line which reaches as far back as Dante and even earlier.[8] In spite of the invaluable insights provided, Contini's reading has also in some ways hampered – as is now widely recognised – a full acknowledgement of Gadda's narrative abilities and his interest in the novel as a narrative form. Although in one of his late essays he remarked on Gadda's inventiveness on the narrative level and encouraged an exploration of his work in this direction, Contini's critical legacy remains in fact closely tied to the categories mentioned above, and has contributed to an emergence of a polarisation in the often turbulent field of Gadda studies,

[7] The 1963 edition of *La cognizione del dolore*, which is made up of seven *tratti*, finishes with Gonzalo sending away one of the peasants who comes in his house. With two additional final *tratti*, the 1971 edition – which provides the definitive text of the novel – finishes with an assault on Gonzalo's mother, but still without confirming who committed it. Something analogous happens in *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, where the last chapter is concluded without revealing who killed in fact Liliana Balducci. The interpretations which have long dominated the critical field link the unfinished condition of Gadda's works to two main factors, not infrequently interrelated: Gadda's biographical anguishes and neuroses, making it impossible for him to finish some of his works (especially those deeply concerned with his biography); and Gadda's dispersive need to follow all the directions which open up in front of him when he is writing. In short, Gadda goes in so many different directions that in the end he goes nowhere. This picture is further complicated by Gadda's own declarations, sometimes at odds with one another (cf. for example Int. 149 and 171-172). More recently, there has been a shift in reconsidering the ways in which we should speak of *end* in Gadda's works, acknowledging that the plots of both *La cognizione* and *Quer pasticciaccio* do not have an ending in a traditional sense, but this does not mean that they are incomplete. Unfinished (*non-finito*) does not necessarily mean incomplete (*incompiuto*). For a recent overview of the issue of *end* in Gadda, with a close focus on his early works, see Carolina Rossi, 'Fine e finalità narrativa nei romanzi del primo Gadda', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Valentino Baldi and Cristina Savettieri (Milan-Udine: Mimesis, 2022), pp. 71-100.

[8] Cf. Gianfranco Contini, *Quarant'anni d'amicizia. Scritti su Carlo Emilio Gadda (1934-1988)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989).

where the notion of Gadda as a prose writer – Gadda 'signore delle prosa', as he is called in no less than his epitaph – and that of Gadda as a narrator and novelist have often been at odds.[9] It has not been too long since this latter has taken root and established itself in the scholarly panorama, where Gadda is now finally understood not only in connection to the great Modernist novelists but also, going further back in time, to the classics of nineteenth-century European realism, who were fundamental for his formation as a writer.[10]

Against a backdrop more inclined towards acknowledging Gadda's work as that of a narrator and novelist, Savettieri notes that the disegni extracted from *La cognizione* inevitably recall the novel which is absent in the collection and of which they form an integral part; as *fragments*, they are impaired by their own partiality and fractured state. An almost continuous and unitary reading of *L'Adalgisa* as a whole is possible, then, mainly because most of the disegni are derived from *Un fulmine* and are consequently read as chapters of a ghost novel, reintegrating the fragments of *La cognizione* and re-signifying them in the context of the collection. In this perspective, the disegni hardly hold up to readings as individual and autonomous pieces not because they do not have narrative quality, but because they present us, in substance, with a novelistic discursivity, which is not that of a short story or novella. In Savettieri's view, *L'Adalgisa* does not stand as evidence of Gadda's deficiencies as a novelist; on the contrary, it should be seen as a sign of Gadda's obdurate interest in the novel and of his disposition towards novelistic narration.[11] It is the very act of authorial performance carried out by Gadda, as Savettieri later maintains, that

[9] See in partic. the section 'Fine di un'egemonia' in Savetteri, 'Il senso di Gadda per il romanzo' pp. 123-126. On on how Contini's legacy has hampered a recognition of Gadda as a narrator, see also Ida De Michelis, *Tra il 'quid' e il 'quod'. Metamorfosi narrative di Carlo Emilio Gadda* (Pisa: ETS, 2009), pp. 11-13.

[10] For Gadda and Modernism, see Raffaele Donnarumma, *Gadda modernista* (Pisa: ETS, 2006). For Gadda and the canon of the novel, see Alberto Godioli, *'La scemenza del mondo'. Riso e romanzo nel primo Gadda* (Pisa: ETS, 2011); Id., *Laughter from Realism to Modernism: Misfits and Humourists in Pirandello, Svevo, Palazzeschi and Gadda* (Oxford: Legenda, 2015).

[11] Cf. Savettieri, 'Il senso di Gadda per il romanzo', pp. 131-132: the disegni 'non funzionano non perché poco narrativi ma perché troppo romanzeschi'.

makes a book out of a collection of disparate material. As he neglects to hide inner inconsistencies – as we will see in detail in chapter 2 – between one disegno and the other, Gadda exhibits the operation of disassembly and reassembly through which he created the collection. Especially in the notes, he draws the attention to his authorial *persona*: an 'I' who makes reference to his own biographical vicissitudes outside of the borders of the narrative, as well as to the textual history of the disegni brought together and commented on by Gadda himself in the notes. Thus, readers can catch a glimpse of the multiple lives of the disegni in and out of the collection, and are invited to look at *L'Adalgisa* as *one* while at the same recognising its heterogeneity; a heterogeneity which does not represent, that is, an obstacle to a unitary reading.[12] As is evident in the notes, the authorial presence acts – not without problems and ambiguities, as I will argue in chapter 4 – as a point of convergence for the different narrative perspectives found in the collection. Such presence ultimately is what holds together a book striking its reader as variegated in the inside.

Following this line, and without neglecting to take into account the practical circumstances in which *L'Adalgisa* was born (as chapter 2 will do), my thesis draws away from any conception of the collection of disegni as the mere result of previous failures of novelistic projects and/or of Gadda's narrative deficiencies, and instead considers it as an accomplished work, published as the author intended: a unitary work, as I will also argue, in spite and even in virtue of its inner, undeniable *differences*. Moving forward from the claims made by Savettieri, I will then try to further our understanding of *L'Adalgisa* by offering an innovative consideration of it in the following terms. Firstly, I will interpret the

[12] Cf. Cristina Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, pp. 191-222. Cf. in partic. p. 200: 'Un assemblaggio più centripeto e finalizzato avrebbe nascosto le cuciture e occultato o smussato le disomogeneità tra le parti; qui, invece, la mano autoriale sembra aver lavorato con l'intento di unire e insieme distinguere, chiedendo al lettore lo sforzo duplice di riconoscere il libro come unitario e al tempo stesso di acquisirne la radicale eterogeneità interna […] Le saldature in rilievo stanno a ricordarci tanto la diversità dei materiali messi insieme quanto la presenza di un saldatore che si mostra nell'operazione di saldarli'.

satire practiced therein as informed by a mechanism of difference creation and I will show how this mechanism also informs the deep structure of the book and the ways in which the world of *Un fulmine* relates to that of *La cognizione*, thus looking at satire as a unifying element across the whole collection. Secondly, I will try to explain in a new way how the theme of time is to be seen in close relation to the question of satire, reflecting on how the interweaving of different temporal layers in the disegni and in the notes is to be put in relation with the satirical representation given of the Milanese community.

2. Satire in Gadda and other related problems

Without considering its heterogeneity and oneness as a contradiction, my thesis therefore argues for a reading of *L'Adalgisa* as a *satirical work*, inquiring how the collection as a whole can be effectively interpreted through the category of satire. Satire is one of the predominant modes of discourse in Gadda's writing, a through-line distributing overflowing energy to his works. 'L'istinto satirico' – Raffaele Donnarumma remarks in the entry 'Satira' of the *Pocket Gadda Encyclopedia* edited by Pedriali – 'è uno dei più antichi, dei più radicati e dei più pervasivi nell'opera di Gadda'.[13] The attempts made at providing comprehensive definitions of how satire works in Gadda have nonetheless faced several problems: some of them are connected to the difficulty of demarcating satire and determining its boundaries, also in contrast with other related categories or phenomena which can overlap or be partially intertwined with it (e.g., comedy/comical, irony, or parody, just to name a few); others are linked to the specificity of Gadda as an author and to the specificities of his works. Inflected

[13] Raffaele Donnarumma, entry 'Satira', in *in A Pocket Gadda Encyclopedia,* ed. by Federica G. Pedriali, EJGS, 2, Supplement 1 (2002).

in peculiar ways in accord with the peculiar status of *L'Adalgisa*, these problems will also arise throughout my thesis, and can be presented here, before delving into the analysis of the collection.

In order for it to convey a judgement and/or condemnation, satire is traditionally thought as a form which separates in principle, as we will discuss in chapter 1, the ideal – a quintessential idea of what is right or good – from the real. It is necessary to have a standard, in order to recognise what deviates from it. Relying on a definition famously provided by Hegel, and drawing attention to its intrinsic negative-destructive tendencies, Donnarumma sees satire, for example, as a radical form of opposition between a subject and an object considered to have degenerated. However, unlike classical and ancient satire, modern satire often persists with exhibiting and attacking the ugliness or inanity of its target although it is unable to find anything positive and offer something onto which its readers can hold. In other terms, modern satire tends to destroy the real while being unable to access an ideal which remains unattainable. In Donnarumma's reading, *Un fulmine sul 220* collapses on itselsf as it is too uniformly satirical. As such, it lacks a positive centre of meaning that could counterbalance the negative charge Donnarumma recognises as constitutional of satire. Inhibited in its possibility of being developed as a novel by its own satirical nature, *Un fulmine* finds itself revolving around a vacuum of values, and thus implodes. It is because of satire that *Un fulmine* does not become a novel, but originates instead a collection of pieces, with satire being seen in opposition to the possibility of developing a full novelistic discursivity.[14] We will see that also other factors are to be taken into account for the interruption of *Un fulmine*, but it is significant to note that Gadda himself is afraid of the excessive harshness and destructive power of satire while writing *Un fulmine*: he describes

[14] Cf. Donnarumma, *Gadda modernista*, pp. 85-96.

the novel as 'feroce' and written 'ai limiti estremi dell'acredine: al di là c'è il manicomio, subito', inviting himself to put a limit to its satirical *vis* [LAM 47].

A further problem (not wholly unrelated to what said above) is the conflation of all the viewpoints and linguistic perspectives which concerns the narrative voice of a work such as *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*. Such conflation makes it indeed difficult to identify a single, finite subjectivity which could potentially embody and express a set of values orienting the satirical meaning in one direction. In *Quer pasticciaccio*, Gadda's satire, as Robert Dombroski describes it, 'does not constitute itself (as satire) according to any one point of view or any one particular style'.[15] Since the fragile, precarious borders of the subject blur and fade away, it becomes impracticable to establish – as a classical-traditional understanding of satire would require – any form of clear opposition between a subject and its object.

Debunking the inconsistency of any false appearance, in line with what Gadda's writing aims to do, satire may eventually come to debunk the inconsistency of the subject who performs it and question the very possibility of establishing any kind of opposition between such subject and reality, ultimately pointing out to the meaninglessness of reality altogether. Such thinking can lead to extreme results, with the domain of satire tending to encompass the entire world. This is what happens, according to Alberto Godioli, in *La cognizione del dolore*, marking, for him, the peak of Gadda's satire: 'perseguire la verità', Godioli claims, 'significa smascherare l'idiozia del mondo, rinunciando alla vita'. At its apex, Gadda's satire therefore has, in Godioli's definition, an absolute nature: it is reality itself that becomes a laughing matter in the fullest, most brutal sense.[16]

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[15] Robert S. Dombroski, *Creative Entanglements: Gadda and the Baroque* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1999), p. 55. Cf. in partic. ibid.: 'What distinguishes Gadda from the satirists and macaronics of old, from Swift to Sterne, from Joyce, and from the variants of plurilingualism and humorous writing he could look to in his own native Italian tradition (Dossi, Faldella, etc.) is his practice of dispersing the narrative voice'.

[16] Cf. Godioli, *'La scemenza del mondo'*, pp. 175-198.

What I think lies at the root of the discussion on satire in Gadda is that the principles behind a classical-traditional understanding of such a mode of discourse as a form of pure opposition appear to some extent to be inadequate or insufficient to capture the dynamics at play in many of his texts.[17] Recognizing this, my thesis intends to take a first step along the way of rethinking a notion of satire for Gadda, beginning with the peculiar case of the collection. *L'Adalgisa* lends itself to me as an ideal gateway to start such a process of rethinking also in light of the transitional role attributed to it by scholars, who often describe it as a hinge between different phases in Gadda's writing: a work located on the borderline which distinguishes, in a narrative perspective, *La cognizione* and *Quer pasticciaccio* from any earlier writing, being different from one and the other, and yet having traits in common – I will come back to this in my conclusions – with both.[18]

While foreshadowing *Quer pasticciaccio* for the copious use made of polyphony and pluri-perspectivism, the narrative subject of most of the disegni – at least those derived from *Un fulmine* and a few others – is in fact also configured as an individual historically defined. As such, he is often in some ways involved in the narrated matter, and even presents himself – and not only in the notes – as a narrative-textual projection of the author, giving rise to an interplay between fictional and authorial dimensions. One of the main problems which arises

[17] Cf. for example Donnarumma, entry 'Satira': 'Si incrinano così i principi della satira classica che pone da un lato una realtà degradata e dall'altro un soggetto che difende dei valori'; Godioli, *La scemenza del mondo*, p. 197: 'I codici della satira tradizionale – compresa quella dei narratori ottocenteschi – appartengono al ridicolo che Flaubert ha definito "relativo" […]. La satira di Gadda, viceversa, è di natura assoluta'. To repeat a famous statement by Gadda himself, 'Procedere, conoscere è inserire alcunché nel reale, è, quindi, *deformare* il reale' [MM 863]. Contrary to what one may believe, any act of knowledge entails a deformation also on the side the subject of who knows, so that any kind of separation of a subject from the reality around it is artificial; it is, in a sense, an illusion, a temporary suspension within the infinite and ever-going deformations of reality. In line with Gadda's vision of reality as a system of systems, each system is in fact in relation to the others, and is modified and deformed with the others, as reality continuously modifies and deforms itself as well. Starting from such a vision, how can satire be founded at all on an opposition between subject and object? This question and more in general the relation between satire and knowledge will be discussed in chapter 1 and further on in thesis.

[18] Drawing a map of self-reflection in Gadda's texts, Savettieri places *L'Adalgisa* in a grey area of transition, distiniguishing *La cognizione* and *Quer pasticciaccio* from any other earlier writing. Cf. Cristina Savettieri, 'Self-Reflection and Ambivalence in Gadda's *L'Adalgisa*', *The Italianist*, 35, 3 (2015), pp. 412-425 (cf. in partic. 412-414). Also Stellardi 'La città che dispare dell'*Adalgisa*' remarks on the special role of 'cerniera' and 'spartiacque' of *L'Adalgisa*,

in discussing satire in the collection concerns, then, the ambiguous status of this subject, who undermines from within the very possibility of engendering a purely oppositional dynamic between himself and the social world satirised by portraying himself as part of it. Reflecting this difficulty in establishing such an oppositional dynamic, *L'Adalgisa* is indeed commonly regarded as one of the best expressions of Gadda's satirical repertoire, while also being, very significantly, one of the works where satire is most often put under scrutiny.

If on the one hand Clelia Martignoni refers to it as 'l'opera più compattamente umoristico-satirica del sempre contaminato repertorio gaddiano',[19] on the other hand Guido Lucchini argues – commenting on the use made therein of the Milanese dialect – that the representation of the bourgeois milieu is not properly satirical as it is also veined by emotive participation and a sense of regret for a world perceived and depicted as lost.[20] If the diegetic 'I' indulges in a deformation of the world narrated, that same world is presented especially in the notes, as Savettieri also observes, as so distant that it needs additional explanation in order to be understood.[21] If the caustic, virulent potential of satire is dampened by the *extralocated* posture of the notes and by the nostalgic disposition found in some passages of

[19] Clelia Martignoni, 'Sul sistema delle note in Gadda: lavori in corso', in *Meraviglie di Gadda. Seminario di studi sulle carte dello scrittore*, ed. by Monica Marchi and Claudio Vela (Pisa: Pacini, 2014), pp. 115-136: 125.

[20] Cf. Guido Lucchini, *L'istinto della combinazione. Le origini del romanzo in Carlo Emilio Gadda* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1988), p. 93: 'l'uso dell'espressione vernacolare non significa tanto connotare criticamente un certo *milieu* quanto, in ultima analisi, assolverlo nella memoria. In questa galleria di ritratti di mediocri borghesi, non v'è indignazione, e nemmeno la rabbiosa invenzione linguistica di celebri pagine della *Cognizione*, ma ironica partecipazione temperata dal ricordo di un'epoca che – malgrado i suoi orizzonti siano di gran lunga più angusti e miseri rispetto alla grande stagione portiana – è rimpianta come irrimediabilmente lontana e perduta'.

[21] Cf. Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo,' in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, pp. 210-211, where the identification of *L'Adalgisa* as satirical is not confuted but nonetheless questioned: 'Le note presuppongono un mondo divenuto estraneo a chi ne legge. Questo effetto di mancata condivisione di esperienze, fatti, oggetti, usi quotidiani, impedisce che la satira si attivi in senso pieno: fino a che punto il principio critico e persino corrosivo della satira può funzionare nel momento in cui i referenti di realtà del testo hanno bisogno di essere puntualmente chiariti?'. By bringing attention to the character of Elsa, whose interiority is expressed by the narrator without her becoming the object of mockery, Giorgia Ghersi also questions the satirical architecture of *L'Adalgisa*. The polyphonic insertion of Elsa's voice in the text opens the text, in Ghersi's analysis, to lyrical and meditative tones, which temporarily arrest the aggressiveness of satire. Cf. Giorgia Ghersi, 'La voce di Elsa. Individualità e coralità in *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori* di Gadda', *Allegoria*, 82 (2020), pp. 165-185.

the disegni, how can we read *L'Adalgisa* through the category of satire? And, also, how to reconcile such a nostalgic disposition with the much more violent disegni taken from *La cognizione* and which Gadda himself expunged from the 1945 edition of the collection?

Drawing on from some inputs taken from the theory of satire, and in particular from the study by Fredric Bogel on the notion of satirical difference,[22] my thesis attempts to overcome a classical-traditional understanding of satire dominated by a binary and oppositional logic, so as to reflect on *L'Adalgisa* through the category of satire in a new way. Starting from how the narrative subject takes form in the disegni set in Milan as part of the world narrated, I will argue for a plural and creative-differential understanding of satire in *L'Adalgisa*; a kind of satire where the difference between subject and object as well as the notion of truth, essential for the pronunciation of the satirical judgement, are reprocessed and developed by the satirical discourse, rather than being simply given.

3. Structure and objectives of the thesis

As a result of what was said in the section above, satire will represent for me a fundamental key to access *L'Adalgisa*. As such, it will be discussed from different viewpoints in chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5, each one singularly contending with, however, a different critical issue (as I will better explain in a moment). Given the space and relevance of satire throughout the thesis, it appeared necessary to present in chapter 1 – 'On satire' – some preliminary information on the history and theory of satire, and on how Gadda discussed it in several of his writings in reference both to other authors and himself. Rather than providing a clear-cut

[22] Fredric V. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

definition or abstract model, chapter 1 will only paint an essential background for the chapters that follow by outlining some key problems connected to satire and by evoking, more specifically, what satire may be for Gadda. The chapter is, in this sense, preparatory to the analyses and arguments later in the thesis. The attention I reserve to satire as an interpretative category does not mean to suggest – I think it is important to make this very clear – that *L'Adalgisa* should be examined exclusively under this aspect; on the contrary, I think such a critical attitude would prove reductive, in light of the many other questions and themes that arise from the collection. Such themes and questions will be the object of attention of the four central chapters of the thesis.

Following the premises made on satire in chapter 1, my study will have to return, inevitably, to how the disegni both function as textual units on their own and interact with each other within the whole of which they are part. Reconstructing in detail its textual history and the context in which its assembly was carried out, chapter 2 – 'The Making of *L'Adalgisa*' – will reflect, then, on whether and how the collection works as a unitary book, reconsidering the question around its unity. The chapter will work as a methodological preamble, clarifying how I will consider and approach my object of attention, and how I will make sense of its unitary and yet also internally diversified nature. Given the coexistence of centrifugal and centripetal instances found therein, the chapter will argue for an interpretation of the collection under a notion of *plural unity*, while at the same suggesting that the satirical representation of the social collective – practiced across a range of varieties and manners, nonetheless recomposed as one within the framework of the book – works as a binding factor and serves as a centre of meaning.

From chapter 3 onwards, I will more thoroughly concentrate on the inner functions of the text and analyse it as a narrative through a narrative perspective. Starting from an advisory notice found at the end of the fourth disegno, *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*,

chapter 3 – '"Quasicché a propria volta l'autore si tuffi": Narrative voice and satire' – will examine the configuration of the narrative voice throughout the whole of the collection, first distinguishing between the disegni set in or near Milan from those derived from *La cognizione*, and then comparing the former to the latter. By taking into analysis the ambiguity which distinguishes the manifestations of a narrator 'soaked in the water' of his characters, in this chapter I will start building up a reinterpretation of how satire works in the collection, drawing in particular from Bogel's study on satire as a mechanism for difference-creation.

Chapter 4 – '"Li ammirai stupefatto da ragazzo": The notes and the interplay of the fictional and the autobiographical' – will focus on a distinguishing feature of Gadda's writing and of *L'Adalgisa* in particular; a feature which Gadda shares with many other satirical writers including Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, and Lawrence Sterne: the practice of providing his texts with notes commenting on the narrated matter. The chapter will reflect on how the notes of *L'Adalgisa* only apparently offer an extradiegetic and non-fictional counterpart to the narrative where we find a voice that often sounds as that of the historical author, Carlo Emilio Gadda. As the chapter will argue, the notes often have the effect of extending the fictional-diegetic boundaries of the disegni and draw the authorial self in the textual space, creating an interplay between the fictional-diegetic dimension and reality, and contributing to an increase in the overall level of ambiguity of the collection.

Chapter 5 – 'The unrepeatable time of *L'Adalgisa*' – will connect the satirical representation given of the Milanese society to the concept of time which emerges as typical of this society in the disegni. The chapter will particularly explore how the acknowledgment of time's unrepeatability is part of the principle of truth upon which the satirical judgement of society is founded: it is against the axiom of temporal unrepeatability, as I will try to

demonstrate, that society and the bourgeoisie in particular are found to be guilty of repeating and multiplying themselves in the world. The many and different forms of *multiplications* attempted by the Milanese include biological reproduction, industrial production, and economic growth. These forms of multiplication are however subjected to the power of time, which ultimately proves how all the multiplications performed by the living are multiplications of death. The erosive action of time on Milan, explicitly identified as a 'relitto degli anni' [L'A 326], thus works in parallel with time's effect on the younger generations of Milanese who come together in the eight disegno, *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori*, where they are grotesquely compared to roasted chickens which hang off the spits of time ('come, dagli schidioni del tempo, un gocciolante arrosto' [L'A 461]), while time itself is defined a 'cook of life' ('tempo cuoco. Cuoco di vita' [L'A 449]). Given the centrality of the theme of time in the collection and the crucial role played by time in the formulation of the satirical judgement, *L'Adalgisa* lends itself to us as a reflection on time and temporality, and on how the human experience of time is reflected and embedded in the spaces we inhabit (the city included).

While also returning from different viewpoints to the question of satire as a guiding category, each one of the four central chapters specifically addresses – as I hope this quick overview has now made clear – a different major critical issue. All the chapters together are designed to give a reading as comprehensive as possible of *L'Adalgisa* as a work explored for the first time through multiple avenues of research.

I have previously mentioned that in the field of Gadda studies there has been some contrast between a notion of Gadda as a narrator and Gadda as a prose writer. This first contrast has sometimes been reflected by a further opposition or polarisation, distinguishing a philologically- and textually-orientated tradition of studies – best expressed in the 1988-1993 Garzanti collective edition of Gadda's work directed by Isella which sanctioned the

author's canonisation at the end of the twentieth century – from a diverse array of studies animated by a broader, critical-theorical approach. With a few exceptions and a wide range of shades, it is mainly within this latter area that the understanding of Gadda's work as that of a narrator has been developed. Not infrequently interlaced with dynamics of contraposition between schools, unresolved contrasts and polemical conflicts animate the scholarly debate on Gadda, which has been at times affected even by rigid compartmentalisation.[23]

As a consequence of its composite nature, however, the study of *L'Adalgisa* cannot be complete without also taking into account, at least along general lines, also its textual genesis. Perhaps more than any other work by Gadda, *L'Adalgisa* asks us to overcome traditional boundaries in Gadda studies and combine different approaches. While satire unfolds as a common thread throughout it, my thesis is therefore intended to be hybrid not only for the array of themes and questions it discusses, but also for the integration of a more critical-theoretical approach, concentrated on the inner dynamics of the text (see especially chapter 3, 4 and 5), with a perspective also focused on the genesis and external vicissitudes of the text (see especially chapter 2). It is in this spirit that I have explored *L'Adalgisa*, and it is in this spirit that I think *L'Adalgisa* should be seen. As once declared by Isella himself, 'un'opera sollecita da sé i mezzi più idonei per il suo approccio':[24] as a whole formed by different and yet connected parts, *L'Adalgisa* demands from us a hybrid reading, questioning – by its own very nature and in virtue of the themes it tackles – notions of unity, identity, and difference, on multiple levels of analysis.

A final bibliographical note. Although a sizable number of studies on *L'Adalgisa* is available – albeit almost only in Italian – in the form of journal articles and book chapters

[23] For an overview of the polarised status of Gadda studies, see Federica G. Pedriali, 'Premessa', in *Gadda: interpreti a confronto*, ed. by Pedriali, pp. 9-12.

[24] Dante Isella, *L'officina della* Notte *e altri studi pariniani* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1968), p. 43.

(many of them have been mentioned in this introduction), a monographic study is lacking across both Italian and English. My thesis hopes to lay the first brick for the purposes of filling this gap. What is more, English readers do not have access to a translation of *L'Adalgisa*, unlike *Quer pasticciaccio* and *La cognizione*, which have been available in English since the 1960s.[25] Such a lack cannot but cause surprise, especially as we consider that *L'Adalgisa* is available in French, German, Portuguese, Spanish, and Japanese,[26] and that in 2012 it was republished in Italy by Adelphi, curated by Claudio Vela, with an edition providing new insights into its textual history.[27] My decision to provide a monographic study of the collection in English is intended, then, to support the circulation of such a crucial work for Gadda outside of Italy, with a view to understanding Gadda as a writer against an

[25] In chronological order: *That Awful Mess on Via Merulana*, trans. by William Weaver (New York: Braziller, 1965; London: Secker and Warburg, 1966); *Acquainted with Grief*, trans. by William Weaver (New York: Braziller; London: Owen, 1969); *The Experience of Pain*, trans. by Richard Dixon (London: Penguin, 2017).

[26] French translation: *L'Adalgisa: Croquis milanais*, transl. by Jean-Paul Manganaro (Paris: Seuil, 1987); German translation: *Adalgisa*, trans. by Toni Kienlechner (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1989); Portuguese translation: *A Adalgisa: Quadros milaneses*, trans. by Mario Fondélli (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1994); Spanish translation: *La Adalgisa. Diseños milaneses*, trans. by Juan Carlo Gentile Vitale (Mexico City-Madrid: Sexto Piso, 2018); Japanese translation: *Adarujisa*, trans. by Ken Chigusa (Tōkyō: Shūeisha, 1977). Another factor to take into account to explain the lack of an English translation is the absence of a commented edition (in Italian) for *L'Adalgisa*, while instead we have commented editions of both *La cognizione* and *Quer pasticciaccio*: *La cognizione del dolore*, critical and commented edition by Emilio Manzotti (Turin: Einaudi, 1987); *Commento a* Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana *di Carlo Emilio Gadda*, ed. by Maria Antonietta Terzoli, 2 vols. (Rome: Carocci, 2015). On the occasion of the international conference dedicated to Gadda which took place in Oxford in March 2022 and was co-organized by Serena Vandi and me, Richard Dixon, the author of the 2017 English translation of *La cognizione* for Penguin, brought attention to how essential it was for him to have a commented edition for his translation. He also explicitly declared he would not be able to translate any other work by Gadda without the help of a commented edition. Dixon's contribution will soon be available in an edited volume gathering together essays inspired from the papers presented at the conference. While leaving an in-depth analysis of the non-Italian reception and circulation of *L'Adalgisa* for future study, here I would like to point out that a study of the history of *L'Adalgisa* outside of Italy can be especially illuminating, given the relationship with the reader that satire demands we reflect upon, especially through requiring emotional input or laughter. For the translations of Gadda's works, see Giuseppe Stellardi, 'Gadda tradotto', in *Gadda: miseria e grandezza della letteratura* (Florence: Cesati, 2006), pp. 121-134. For an overview of the international circulation of Gadda and a few crucial considerations on this theme, see *Gadda Goes to War: Translational Provocations Around an Emergency*, ed. by Federica G. Pedriali (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), comprising the first English translation of several selected passages from Gadda's *Giornale di guerra e di prigionia* and *Eros e Priapo*. In this volume, see in partic. the following sections: Cristina Olivari and Federica G. Pedriali, 'Circulation', pp. 7-20; Christopher John Ferguson, 'Translation', pp. 20-26; Federica G. Pedriali, World-Making', pp. 46-58. On Gadda's circulation, with special attention for the Lusophone context, see also Luca Mazzocchi, 'Carlo Emilio Gadda, Fifty Years After His Death', *Electra*, 21 (2023), pp. 156-165.

[27] Cf. L'A[12].

authentically international backdrop, with his connections to the canon of the realistic novel and to Modernism, as well as to the European tradition of humour and satire.

Chapter 1

On satire

In 1957, when Garzanti published *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, Gadda was interviewed by Luigi Tondo for the daily magazine *Paese Sera*. The opportunity for the interview was provided as Gadda had just won the Premio degli Editori, organised by Emilio Cecchi upon learning that *Quer pasticciaccio* had not won the international Premio Marzotto. On the very day of the award, Tondo asked Gadda about the parallelism frequently drawn between him and James Joyce:

> *E quanto all'accostamento che in genere si fa tra lei e Joyce, che cosa ne pensa?*
> Sento tutto il peso di un paragone simile, e nella mia pigrizia cercherei di schivare questa soma piuttosto inusitata: dato il mio temperamento in un certo senso satirico, preferirei un accostamento a Shaw o a Swift. Del resto di Joyce io ho letto *Dedalus*, e la prima parte dell'*Ulisse* nella traduzione francese. [Int. 61][1]

Gadda edges away from the name of Joyce, claiming he has only read his first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man – Dedalus*, as the novel is also known in Italy –, and the first part of *Ulysses* in French translation. Gadda mentions instead two other writers: Bernard Shaw, especially famous for his polemical activism, and Jonathan Swift. It is with them that Gadda would rather be associated in light of his character, which he significantly defines 'in un certo senso satirico'.[2] Seven years earlier, in *Intervista al microfono*, Gadda

[1] For other information on the Premio degli Editori, the Premio Marzotto, and this interview, see Int. 61.

[2] In 1919, Gadda had humorously answered to his friend and former fellow prisoner Ugo Betti that he had not appreciated being compared to Alfredo Panzini, writer and professor of Italian literature when Gadda was at the Politecnico, claiming he would prefer being compared instead to some ancient Roman or English writer: 'Quando mi penso Panzini io, alpino, studente del politecnico, sfidatore di Don Pedro, sacro cuore, con lievi indulgenze per la grappa, ex-prigioniero in riposo, che pelle mi viene! Non potevi trovare qualcosa di meglio, qualche inglese, qualche romano antico?' [LAM 35].

had already referred to himself – as we will see in this chapter – as satirical by personal inclination, declaring he had to limit the register of the invective in his writing. Taking into account these and other occasions in which Gadda mentions satire in reference to himself or others, this chapter provides a quick overview of what satire has been throughout the centuries and of some of the theoretical problems it poses to those interested in its functioning, as well as a discussion of what satire stands for Gadda. In introducing satire, my intention is to shed some light on the ways I will refer to it in the following chapters and to bring to the fore some of the issues related to it that I will also have to grapple with. Presenting the project for a satirical trilogy on Milan which Gadda had considered publishing in the 1930s, the last section will take us to *Un fulmine sul 220*, the interrupted novel from which Gadda derived five of the ten disegni included in 1944 in *L'Adalgisa*.

1.1. Satire as a genre, satire as a mode

The Italian *satira* as well as the English *satire* derive from the Latin *satura*, feminine of the adjective *satur* ('full', 'chock-full') used as a noun, a term that identified a literary genre with specific characteristics practiced in ancient Rome. *Satura* was most probably taken from, or at least connected to, the phrase *satura lanx*, indicating a 'serving dish' (*lanx*) 'chock-full' (*satura*) with a variety of food offered to gods on ceremonial occasions. This suggests *satura* as a literary genre was from its origins metaphorically concerned with notions of abundance, fullness, and inner variety: variety of ingredients used in ceremonial offerings in the case of the *satura lanx*, diversity of themes and styles, perhaps, in the case

of the genre of *satura*.[3] The fourth-century grammarian Diomedes retraced the etymology of *satura* to the satyrs of ancient Greek mythology and to the satyrs' theatrical plays named after them. Although in 1605 the philologist Isaac Casaubon claimed that this derivation was false, as most probably is the case,[4] the relationship between satire and satyrs has proven extremely successful throughout the centuries.[5] Satyrs were imagined to be followers of Bacchus and mischievous revellers; troublemakers, roguish half-human creatures prone to excess and even associated with a demonic imagery especially during the Middle Ages. It must have seemed plausible, then, that a genre based on vilifying and deriding others without restraint was connected to them. Merging human and animal features, the image of the satyr also recalls a notion of hybridity and diversity.

The first records of Latin satire date back to Ennius (239-169 BC), author of a four-book collection titled *Saturae* of which a few fragments have survived.[6] Celebrated by Horace as the *inventor* ('discoverer' and/or 'innovator')[7] and commonly considered the actual founder of satire, Lucilius (148?-102 BC) wrote a thirty-book collection of *Saturae* –

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[3] For satire and its origins as a genre, see John T. Gilmore, *Satire* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017); Jonathan Greenberg, *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018): see in partic. ch. 1, 'What Is Satire?', pp. 3-26 and ch. 3, 'Classical Origins', pp. 55-76, from where some of the information included in the section above are taken; Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); Charles Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*, ed. by Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007). For Roman satire, see Kirk Freudenburg, *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Although the derivation from *satura lanx* is the most widely accepted hypothesis amongst scholars, other hypotheses were put forward in ancient times: *satura* has also been thought to derive from the syntagm *satura lex* (or *lex per saturam*), referring to a set of laws grouping together regulations of different nature; or from a type of sausage, the so-called *satura*, presumedly 'chock-full' with various types of meat. Once again, the emphasis is on the notions of fullness and/or variety.

[4] Cf. Greenberg, *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire*, p. 11.

[5] *Satyr* was a popular alternative spelling for *satire* during the English Renaissance: see Ruben Quintero, 'Introduction: Understanding Satire', in *A Companion to Satire,* ed. by Quintero, pp. 1-11: 6.

[6] As Ennius's *Saturae* survive in a really small number of fragments, it is difficult for us to get a sense of the genre at its very beginnings. As Kirk Freudenburg remarks, Ennius's *Saturae* seem much more similar to 'collections of Hellenistic occasional poems' than to our notion of Latin satire as practiced in the years to follow. For this and other information on the status of conservation of the ancient satirical works mentioned in this section, see Kirk Freudenburg, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*, ed. by Kirk Freudenburg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-30: 3. On Latin satire see also Kirk Freudenburg, *Satires of Rome: Threatening Poses from Lucilius to Juvenal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[7] Horace, *Sat*. 2, 10, 46.

which again only survives in fragments – that established the hexametric verse as the distinguishing formal feature of the genre, marking the beginning of a satirical thread known as *hexametric* or *verse satire*. The three main practitioners of verse satire – Horace (65 BC-8 AD), Persius (34-62), and Juvenal (I-II century) – successfully developed it into an influential genre, which enjoyed a remarkably wide circulation. The different attitudes embraced by Horace and Juvenal towards their satirical targets led to a further distinction, especially popular during the Middle Ages, between *Horatian* and *Juvenalian* satire. Horatian satire is characterised as a gentler, milder variety of satire, while Juvenalian satire is marked as more aggressive. The distinction only refers to the disposition of the satirist; it does not concern the formal aspect of satire, anchored to the use of hexameters. Equipped with a solid classical culture, albeit mostly circumscribed to the canonical authors taught at school, Gadda often expressed interest and particular admiration for Horace, quoting him also in *L'Adalgisa*.[8] He was however also familiar with Juvenal, quoted as well on a few occasions.[9]

Alongside verse satire, another kind of satire was practiced in ancient Rome: *Varronian* or *Menippean satire*, initiated by Varro (116-27 BC) with his collection of *Saturae Menippeae*. The adjective *Menippea* reconnects Varro's work with that of the Cynic

[8] Cf. L'A 467. Gadda seems to be much familiar with Horace's lyrical production – the *Odi* – as opposed to all his other works, including the satirical production: cf. Emanuele Narducci, *La gallina Cicerone: Gadda e i classici latini* (Florence: Holschki, 2003), pp. 114-115. For Gadda and Horace, see ibid, pp. 97-116, as well as the entry 'Gadda' by Augusta Forconi in *Enciclopedia Oraziana* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1998). On the knowledge Gadda had of the ancient word, see – in addition to Narducci – Giuliano Cenati, *Carlo Emilio Gadda e i 'cattivi maestri' latini*, In *Uso, riuso e abuso dei testi classici*, ed. by Massimo Gioseffi (Milan: LED, 2010), pp. 387-405; Enrico Flores, 'Accessioni gaddiane. Strutture, lingua e società in C.E. Gadda' (Naples: Loffredo. 1973); Dante Isella, 'I cari "latini" di Gadda', QI, 1 (2001), pp. 105-115; Antonio La Penna, 'Latino e greco nel plurilinguismo dell'*Eros e Priapo* di Carlo Emilio Gadda', in *Per Carlo Muscetta*, ed. by Novella Bellucci and Giulio Ferroni (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002), pp. 299-316; *Gadda e i classici latini*, ed. by Alice Borali, *Antichi e moderni*, Supplement of *Schede Humanistiche*, XXXIII, 2 (2019).

[9] And the author of a verse that Gadda carved on a walking stick when he was a student at Liceo Parini in Milan. The verse carved reads: *cantabis mecum coram latrone viator* [traveller, you will sing with me in front of the robber], and is an adaptation of Juvenal's original verse in *Sat*. 10, 22: *cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator* [the traveller who travels light will sing with a light heart in front of the robber]. The information is given in Gian Carlo Roscioni, *Il duca di Sant'Aquila. Infanzia e giovinezza di Gadda* (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), p. 81; Narducci, *La gallina Cicerone*, pp. 65-65. On Gadda and Juvenal, see Narducci, *La gallina Cicerone*, pp. 38, 64 and 139-141.

philosopher Menippus of Gadara (first half of the III century BC), considered by ancient critics the founder of the Greek genre called σπουδαιογέλοιον (*spoudaiogeloion*, 'seriocomical'), which blends together serious and comical elements. Varro also adopted a formal feature from Menippus, which would soon come to distinguish Menippean satire from verse satire: the use of the *prosimetrum*, a mixture of prose and verses. Thus, satire is once again linked to a notion of internal diversity.

The two Latin classics of Menippean satire are the *Apocolocyntosis* by Seneca (4 BC-65 AD), narrating the 'Pumpkinification' of the late emperor Claudius, and the (only partially survived) *Satyricon* by Petronius (27?-66), following the adventures of young student Encolpius and his lover Ascyltos alternated with many digressions. Lucian of Samosata (125?-after 180) also contributed to the popularity of Menippean satire with his vast body of work in Greek, including the short novel *A True History*, the account of a fantastic journey taken by Lucian beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and his dialogues. Rather than a distinct genre or subgenre of satire, Menippean satire is generally considered to be a different type or thread of satire, which has existed alongside verse satire and has with it, so to speak, a relation of kinship.[10]

Mikhail Bakhtin has famously reconnected to Menippean satire the origins of a long-standing cultural line which he calls the Menippea. Bakhtin's Menippea does not exactly coincide with the genre of Menippean satire practiced in the ancient times. The Menippea incorporates a dialogical and carnivalistic view of the world. It was particularly prominent during the Renaissance, permeating different aspects of popular culture. As one of its

[10] For a recent and extremely significant discussion of Menippean satire, see Howard D. Weinbrot, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). To my knowledge, Gadda never explicitly mentioned Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* or Petronius's *Satyricon*.

features is the capacity of crossbreeding with other genres, it finally reached its peak, as Bakhtin reconstructs, with the polyphonic novel by Fyodor Dostoevsky.[11]

Written in hexameters or in a mixture of prose and verses, ancient satires were mainly identified as such by their formal structure. Satires written in verses and identified as such by their formal features were also popular in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain. Authors who wrote formal satires at that time include John Donne, John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Percy Shelley. The Restoration and Augustan periods of English literature are indeed often referred to as a new golden age for satire. Some of those writing in these years deliberately harked back to Latin satire and established a parallelism between ancient Rome and modern Britain, looking at the satire practiced by them as a re-enactment of the genre popular many centuries before in Rome. The adoption of a recognisable formal asset for satire at their hands is also to be understood, then, within such cultural context.[12]

Authors who were not strangers to Gadda did not – or did not only – write *satires* in the technical-formal sense of the term, but wrote *satire* in different forms and genres, including novels, theatrical plays, and poems of different kinds. The list includes ancient authors such as the playwright Plautus or the poet Catullus, who certainly did not lack in satirical insights although they did not technically write satires,[13] as well as modern ones. A name coming to mind is, for example, that of Niccolò Machiavelli, who almost took on for Gadda – as this chapter will show – the role of a model in demonstrating that there is a strong relationship between satire and knowledge, and that satire consists in an act of revealing the

[11] Cf. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* [1929 | 1963], ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Id., *Rabelais and His World* [1965], trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968).

[12] Cf. Greenberg, *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire*, pp. 127-156.

[13] Cf. Narducci, *La gallina Cicerone*, pp. 86-96 (Catullus in Gadda) and p. 128 (Plautus in Gadda).

hidden roots of reality.[14] In Contini's reading, Gadda is furthermore associated to other Renaissance authors distinguished by a plurilingual and macaronic style and not unprovided with a strong satirical edge in their poems and theatrical plays such as Ruzzante, Teofilo Folengo, or François Rabelais. Rabelais is remembered, as we will see, in a note of *L'Adalgisa* which explains how and why a butcher, 'Il pantagruelico Fumagalli' [L'A 326], is defined, with reference to a character of *Pantagruel*, 'Oromedonte in camice' [326].[15]

Many more authors ordinarily regarded as satirical and also familiar to Gadda could be mentioned here,[16] but we can stop, acknowledging that satire is written in many forms and ways, and not only in verses or poetic compositions. And, moving beyond the literary field, examples of what we call *satire* include, in fact, talks shows and cabarets, stand-up comedies and theatrical performances, website and accounts on social media. A particularly lively thread of satire is that practiced, often with a political target, in newspapers and magazines, taking not infrequently the form of cartoons drawn in a stylised-caricatural fashion. Gadda himself was a keen reader of the satirical periodical *Il Guerin Meschino*, mentioned a couple of times in *L'Adalgisa*.[17] If we look at the wikipedia pages of films such as *The Great Dictator* (1940) by Charlie Chaplin and *Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned to*

[14] I will return to the significance of Machiavelli for satire in Gadda in this chapter. Another satirical Renaissance author frequently recalled by Gadda is Ariosto, who wrote a book of *Satire* which followed the Horatian example and enjoyed great fortune. A generic reference to Ariosto is in L'A 330.

[15] Both Folengo and Rabelais are remembered in Gadda's *Fatto personale… o quasi* (1947, then in *I viaggi la morte*): 'Cocai' [VI 499] and 'Rablesio' [VI 497]. On Gadda and the Renaissance authors, see Francesco Botti, 'Gadda e il Rinascimento', EJGS, 3, 2003.

[16] Other satirical authors familiar to Gadda are Molière, recalled in an essay on Machiavelli to which I will soon come back, and Swift, mentioned in the interview with Tondo and the author of the satirical novel *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), quoted in L'A 484 as well as a source of inspiration for Gadda's own *Viaggi di Gulliver, cioè del Gaddus*. I will return to both the essay on Machiavelli and Gadda's *Viaggi di Gulliver* in this chapter. Also mentioned in *L'Adalgisa* [L'A 461], with his satirical-didactic poem *Il giorno*, is Giuseppe Parini (see ch. 5.2). Mentioned in L'A 529 and not lacking in satirical spirit is the dialectal poet Carlo Porta. Not mentioned in *L'Adalgisa* but not extraneous to the Milanese atmosphere of the collection and known to Gadda for his satirical-humourist inclination is Carlo Dossi, along with a series of other 'irregulars' of Scapigliatura with whom Gadda has been often associated, starting with Contini.

[17] L'A 363, 376 nd 410-411. The role that the comical-satirical journalistic production has in Gadda's writing has been explored by Godioli, *'La scemenza del mondo*' (cf. in partic. ch. 3, '"Termini moda", pettegolezzi', pp. 147-173. It is not to be excluded that the subtitle 'disegni milanesi' is to also to be intended as an allusion to the satirical cartoons Gadda could find in periodicals such as *Il Guerin Meschino*.

Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964) by Stanley Kubrick, we will find the following descriptions: *The Great Dictator* 'is a 1940 American anti-war political *satire* black comedy film' and *Dr. Strangelove* 'is a 1964 satirical black comedy film that *satirizes* the Cold War fears of a nuclear conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States'.[18] To put it shortly, words such as *satire* and *satirical* have, as we experience every day, a wider scope of application than any distinct literary genre, identified or not by its formal structure; they commonly mark out an attitude or disposition, a form of intentionality, possibly found in different forms of expression and across a variety of media, and particularly informing, today, the internet culture.

Recent satire scholars such as Paul Simpson, Robert Phiddian, and Jonathan Greenberg see satire as a *mode*, recalling the definition given by literary critic Alastair Fowler: a mode is 'a looser sort of category than a genre but still sending "distinct signals" to a reader'. In merely classificatory terms, a mode is conceived of – Greenberg observes – as 'more nebulous than a genre'. Consequently, it is often referred to 'with an adjective rather than a noun: *satirical* rather than *satire*'.[19] Phiddian describes this satirical mode as a 'perception of purpose speaking rhetorically through' a text. Satire, Phiddian continues, 'is only a genre in the loose sense of calling up a body of expectations in an audience,

[18] Cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Dictator>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dr._Strangelove> [last access: 11 April 2023] (italics is mine).

[19] Greenberg, *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire*, p. 10; the reference is to Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 107. Also Conal Condren remarks that it would be better to speak of 'satirical' rather than of 'satire': cf. Conal Condren, 'Between Social Constraint and the Public Sphere: On Misreading Early-Modern Political Satire', *Contemporary Political Theory*, 1 (2002), pp. 71-101. Also Charles Knight makes reference to satire in terms of mode by recalling the definition given by Fowler, and also observes that the nature of the satirical is linked to its capacity of imitating any kind of discourse, so as to stress 'inherent contradictions' and 'the discrepancies between discourse and the appearances it claims to represent, or to unveil the conflicts between those appearances and the deeper reality that they in turn imitate' (*The Literature of Satire,* p. 40). As for the other scholars mentioned above, cf. Robert Phiddian, 'Satire and the Limits of Literary Theories', *Critical Quarterly*, 55, 3 (2013), pp. 44-58; Id., *Satire and the Public Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003).

expectations that are only ever selectively fulfilled'.[20] Some scholars prefer to speak of satirical *tone* instead of mode; others of a *frame of mind*, a *sensibility*, or a *practice*.[21] These terms have different meanings and usages, and some of them have a more restricted scope of application than others, but they all refer to a non-formal concept of satire and are, as such, often mutually exchangeable, both in literary criticism and beyond.

A non-formal understanding of satire also lies behind the use of the term *satire* in this thesis, which will explore *L'Adalgisa* through a variety of perspectives but will pay special attention to how satire works therein as a *mode of discourse* or *communication*; a *form of discursivity* which puts in place several dynamics that I will try to analyse and which functions within a certain horizon of expectations: something less than a genre (as in the definition given by Fowler), and yet something more than an occasional tone or temporary register found in a text. It is in this flexible formulation that satire represents for my study a key to investigate and interpret *L'Adalgisa*. It seemed nonetheless necessary to begin this first chapter with a brief summary of the origins of ancient-classical satire as a genre and of its canonical authors, not only because some of them are mentioned in *L'Adalgisa* and throughout this thesis, but also to retain awareness of what satire has long meant as a historical genre and a cultural-literary tradition – a tradition of which, as we have seen, Gadda was aware –, keeping in mind the centuries-old story the word *satire* brings along with itself even when applied, today, to a meme on the internet.

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[20] Phiddian, 'Satire and The Limits of Literary Theories', 46. In looking at satire, Phiddian particularly relies on Simpson's *On the Discourse of Satire* (see note above) and on a definition of *mode* given by John Frow: see John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 65. Phiddian returns to satire as a mode also in *Satire and the Public emotions*, p. 4.

[21] It is Greenberg himself that speaks of satire as *sensibility*: cf. Jonathan Greenberg, *Modernism, Satire, and the Novel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 2, 9, 13. For a theorisation of satire as a *practice*, see Ashley Marshall, *Practice of Satire in England, 1658-1770* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). For the distinction between *form* and *tone* of satire, see in particular Robert Paulson, *The Fictions of Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967). For satire as a *frame of mind*, see in partic. Knight, *The Literature of Satire*.

1.2. On the functioning of satire

Between the 1920s and 1930s, Vittorio Cian, academic and politician, dedicated two volumes to the history of satire in Italy from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century. At the beginning of the first volume printed in 1923 – around the time when Gadda, returned to Italy after a work stay in Argentina, started taking his first steps as a writer – Cian provided the following description:

> La satira è, in fondo, l'espressione multiforme d'uno stato, d'un atteggiamento e d'un'attività dello spirito, che può variare quasi indefinitamente a seconda dei tempi, degli individui, delle circostanze storiche, sociali, cioè politiche e morali; espressione multiforme, ma essenzialmente negativa, e che può andare dall'invettiva più violenta e violentissima sino al motteggio pungente, dallo scherno amaro sino all'ironia in apparenza leggera, dal sarcasmo all'epigramma, dal lamento quasi elegiaco, dalla tirata sentenziosa, all'allegra, ma non innocua.[22]

Satire is, observes Cian, a multiform expression of an attitude of an author, changing in accord with individuals and historical circumstances across a wide range of shades. Let us now have a look at the entry 'Satire' by William R. Jones in the 2012 *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, a classic reference for a literary student beginning a research on satire:

> Satire is both a mode and a genre of verse and prose lit. that adopts a critical attitude toward its target with the goal of censuring human folly. Satire is an eminently versatile form whose structure, style, tone, and subjects vary across a wide spectrum, but generally intends, as Jonathan Swift states, 'to mend the world' ('A Vindication of Mr. Gay and *The Beggar's Opera*').[23]

The elements mentioned above by Jones are typical of the kind of understanding of satire established since its origins as a genre. In the first of his *Saturae*, Juvenal famously

[22] Vittorio Cian, *La satira* (Milan: Vallardi, 1923), vol. I, p. 1.

[23] William R. Jones, entry 'Satire', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: Fourth Edition*, ed. by Stephen Cushman Stephen Cushman, Clare Cavanagh, Jahan Ramazani, and Paul Rouzer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 1255-1258: 1255.

encapsulated his own notion of satire – prefigurating recurring ideas and statements in the history of satire and of satire studies – in the motto: *si natura negat, facit indignatio versum*.[24] It is the awareness of an outrage, causing indignation, resentment, and anger in the satirist, which functions for the satirist as a source of inspiration, compelling him to write satire. In his 1693 *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, a preface to a translated edition of the satires by Perseus and Juvenal, John Dryden identified in 'the scourging of Vice and Exhortation to Virtue' the animating principle of satire. Along the same lines, in his 1755 *Dictionary of the English Language*, Samuel Johnson defined satire 'a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured'.[25]

Between the 1950s and 1960s, satire was the object of investigation of a series of scholars including Northrop Frye, Alvin Kernan, Robert C. Elliott, Maynard Mack, and Ronald Paulson, often grouped together with the umbrella name *American formalism* (or, with partial overlap, *New criticism*).[26] While taking up some of the key ideas on satire seen above, these scholars cast light on until-then neglected aspects of the mechanism of satire, and thus opened a new phase in satire studies. Their focus was no longer on identifying the historical referents often left encrypted in satirical texts, as had been mostly done by early twentieth-century satire criticism; but rather on understanding how satire functions in more general, abstract terms, regardless of the specific historical context where satire is produced. The seminal works written by these scholars in this span of years contributed to the formation of a model which integrates key ideas on satire established since the beginning of the genre: a vision of satire generally referred to as *New critical* or, more simply, *canonical*

[24] Juvenal, *Sat*., 1, 79.

[25] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the New English Language* [1755], ed. by E.L. McAdam and George Milne (Mineola: Dover, 2005), p. 357.

[26] Cf. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Alvin B. Kernan, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959); Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); Maynard Mack, *The Muse of Satire* (New York: Gordian Press, 1966); Paulson, *The Fictions of Satire*.

or *standard*,[27] whose main tenets are still found at the heart of common assumptions on satire.

Concerned with morals, politics, or aesthetics, in the standard model, satire deals with serious matters. The subjects involved in satire – as visually figured by Fredric Bogel – are generally treated as arranged at the vertices of an imaginary triangle, separate from one another. At one vertex we find the satirist, who expresses his indignation at what he considers bad and/or wrong for a variety of possible reasons. Located at another vertex of the triangle, diametrically opposed to the vertex of the satirist, is the victim of the satirical attack: the satirical target, generally understood as totally different from the satirist, as if target and satirist were almost completely alien to one another. It is in virtue of this diversity that the satirist considers the target repulsive, disgusting, repellent, morally wrong, aesthetically unpleasant, and so on. Located at the last vertex are the receivers of satire: the public, the readers, asked, in a way, to emotively and psychologically participate in the satirical attack as they align themselves with the satirist and are in accord with him in condemning the behaviour and/or qualities that distinguish the individual/thing attacked.

Most typically but not always present in satire, laughter can be imagined as working on the sides of the triangle as a powerful force, a flow of energy keeping the triangle together. Generated by the satirist, laughter is directed against the target to ridicule it, so that readers may laugh at it and express their disapproval and condemnation of it, thus confirming their alliance with the satirist.[28] As already mentioned, Horatian satire differs from Juvenalian

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[27] Cf. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, pp. 1-5 (where the model is referred to as *New critical* or *standard*); Greenberg, *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire*, pp. 13-15 (where the model is referred to as *canonical*). Both Bogel and Greenburg provide a useful and detailed account of the model. See also Gilmore, *Satire*, p. 7.

[28] Cf. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, p. 52: 'From this perspective, one could say that the critically elusive "typical plot" of satire, though not its only plot, is a movement from partial to complete disapproval and rejection, and that this plot pattern has remained elusive for so long because it has been sought in the context of the erroneous belief that approval of and identification with the object of satire play no essential part in the satiric structure'. I will come back in a moment to the issues of approval and identification of satire in Bogel's perspective. For the plot of satire, see Alvin B. Kernan, *The Plot of Satire* (New Have: Yale University Press, 1965).

satire as it is more benevolent than the latter, with laughter being understood in light of what Horace has written in his *Ars poetica* (although not in direct relation to satire but more generally on poetry): *miscere utile dulci*, 'to blend the useful with the sweet'.[29] Considered an instrument rather than a weapon, laughter makes it easier for the satirist to convey a message and for readers to digest it and properly assimilate it, in line with a pedagogical and didactic conception of literature and satire as well. Whether we are speaking of Horatian or Juvenalian satire, the point seems, however, the same: to recognise evil, and to discredit it. 'The etiology of satiric attack', Bogel sums up, 'is taken to be, roughly, "Sighted repellent object, sank same"'.[30]

In order for any satirical opposition to be possible, in order for any attack or judgment conveyed by satire to be delivered, one would imagine necessary to have on the part of the satirist – at least in abstract terms – a benchmark for evaluating what is wrong. A truth against which something can be identified as false. 'How could we believe that something is wrong with the world', asks for example Ruben Quintero, 'without some idea of what the world should be and of how it could be righted? The satirist, either explicitly or implicitly, tries to sway us toward an ideal alternative, toward a condition of what the satirist believes should be'.[31] The stigmatisation, the condemnation typical of satire should ideally rely on some kind of a norm against which something can be judged to be normal and something else – the target – abnormal. This norm may not be made explicit, or the satirist may not want to believe a reform is truly possible, but some form of truth should preside over the satirical condemnation orientating it, allowing the satirist to identify what is instead false and mendacious, and thus to make of it an object of ridicule.

[29] Horace, *Ars poetica*, 342.
[30] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, p. 2.
[31] Quintero, 'Introduction: Understanding Satire', p. 3.

Satire emerges, in substance, as a discourse marked by a bipolar dynamic: it opposes satirist and target, and it attacks and often derides the latter, so as to degrade it (*pars destruens*), judging it against a standard with the reformatory aim of proposing a better alternative in which things could and should be done (*pars construens*); an alternative sometimes left implicit as the contrary of what satire attacks and destroys.

Since the late 1960s, major shifts in thinking in the cultural field – deconstruction, gender studies, decolonisation, etc. – have gradually affected the way in which satire is understood by scholars, challenging some of the tenets of the standard model discussed above. If psychoanalysis and related theories have questioned our confidence in the reliability of satirical judgement and the work of Bakhtin has highlighted the anti-hierarchical and subversive nature of satire, as Greenberg has summed up, feminism and other cultural studies have brought our attention to 'much satirical writing that failed to fit the formulas of Dryden, Pope, and Swift'.[32] Following the fortune that the notion of the death of the author has had, deconstruction has undermined – as Phiddian has observed – the way in which satire scholars can consider authorial intentionality: 'the irony that so often cohabits with satire ensures that there is no requirement of universal agreement, or desire of it on the part of the creators', Phiddian notes, 'but satire does need to be construed as purposive, as intentional. To construe a text as satirical is to construe it as making a point'.[33] A founding principle of the account of satire prevailing until the 1970s, the oppositional relation of the satirist to the target becomes the object of critical rethinking in more recent satire studies.

It is within this wider context that Bogel has provided a particularly compelling account of how we can make sense of the relation between satirist and target in satire. From a sociocultural perspective, paying special attention to its anthropological functions, Bogel

[32] Greenberg, *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire*, p. 17.
[33] Phiddian, 'Satire and the Limits', p. 49.

interprets satire as a cultural form which does not ratify the diversity of the target from the satirist, but rather creates a difference between them, *making* them different on a rhetorical level, and distancing one from the other. In a perspective imbued with Freudian psychoanalysis, and particularly influenced by Freud's account of jokes, Bogel claims that 'the "first" satiric gesture, then, is not to expose the satiric object in all its alien difference but to *define* it as different, as other: to make a difference by setting up a textual machine or mechanism for producing difference'. The satirical spring triggers, so to speak, 'not with the recognition of difference but with anxiety about proximity or sameness or identification and with the consequent production of difference'.[34] By stemming from a moment of partial identification and/or undifferentiation, satire attempts to eliminate any existing connection between satirist and satirical object, but also inevitably presupposes or brings with itself – as is the case with the Freudian process of *undoing* –, a trace of the original continuity. Any satirical 'affirmation of difference', Bogel argues, 'coexists with a penumbral awareness – sometimes wholly repressed – of sameness or connection'; a coexistence which helps us understand why satire is sometimes such a troubling discourse where acts of distancing, rejections, and removals are so often equivocally intertwined with a sense of kinship and complicity.[35]

[34] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, p. 42.

[35] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, p. 70. In reconstructing an ideal genealogy of authors of satire, Horace, recalls that Lucilius was the first 'to rip away the skin by which each one wanders around bright and shining at sight' (*detrahere et pellem, nitidus qua quisque per ora | cederet*), so as to reveal they are 'ugly inside' (*introrsum turpis*): cf. *Sat*., 1, 2, 62-65. Typical of satire from its origins, oppositions such as surface *vs* depth, appearance *vs* reality, falsehood *vs* truth, entail that vice hides itself in society, almost as if it were in disguise. Hence, the need for the satirist to unveil the true face of evil and tear away its external skin, with the result of restoring a state of truth. Such a metaphorical act of unveiling distracts attention, in Bogel's view, from the fact that satire begins from a form of approval and/or a partial identification between satirist and object, rewritten by satire as a phase where vice was disguised: 'not "You wrongly approved of him", but "He deceived you"' (p. 50). If satirist and satirical object were extraneous from one other, there would be no reason, Bogel observes, to oppose them in satire. Bogel notes that one of the 'prominent features' of satire is 'the impulse to convert an initially ambiguous relation of identification and division – whether expressing an internal division in the satirist, or in the community he or she speaks for, or in the value-system he or she espouses, or something else – into one of pure division' (p. 49).

Moving away from the traditional understanding of satire where much emphasis is placed on the oppositional relationship between satirist and satirical object, Bogel presents a theoretical model where satire is understood as inherently double. The specificity of satire as a discourse therefore lies in its capability of creating differences on which it insists with an oppositional logic and a distancing effect, while at the same time reprocessing and revising conditions of identity, similarity, or proximity. In tune with the recent scholarly debate on satire, Bogel puts the spotlight on satire's ambivalence, and on how forms of opposition are inescapably entangled with forms of continuousness.

As I will show in the next sections, Gadda's own understanding of satire is much more in line with the standard, canonical account prevailing in the twentieth century. As I will try to demonstrate in chapter 3, however, Bogel's remarks can offer penetrating insight into the mechanism of the satire of *L'Adalgisa*.

1.3. Gadda discusses satire: antithesis, derision, and debunking

Gadda recognises the binary and oppositional dynamic found at the core of the canonical understanding of satire as a constitutional part of it. Two essays in which Gadda disputes and eventually rejects the identification of other writers as satirical are particularly useful in this regard. The first one is the 1945 essay *Arte del Belli*, dedicated to the nineteenth-century Roman poet Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli and significantly included in 1958 in *I viaggi la morte*, the only collection of critical-essayistic writings Gadda published in his life. In *Arte del Belli*, Gadda claims that Belli dialectically integrated in his poems a plebeian myth of the city – Rome – without turning it into an 'antitesi' to be opposed to his own 'verità':

La verità, la dialessi del Belli, comprende o comporta il mito plebeo della città e de' suoi modi e delle sue genti: lo incorpora nel poema: e non solamente come antitesi, cioè da farne bersaglio d'una possibile o d'una effettuale satira: anzi lo colora e lo promuove a materia epica, cara all'animo nostro pur nella irridente amarezza delle luci o nel sarcasmo del motteggio corrompitore. [SGF 1 559][36]

If that of Belli were satire ('una possibile o […] effettuale satira'), the myth of the city should work as an antithesis of what Belli believes in (his 'verità'). If that of Belli were satire, there would be in it a form of opposition between two visions in conflict with one another. This is not the case for Belli – according to Gadda – as Belli's dialectics incorporate the aforementioned myth of Rome promoting it into an epic form, albeit in a tone that Gadda generally regards as derisive and sarcastic ('nella irridente amarezza', 'nel sarcasmo del motteggio'). In disclaiming the satirical nature of Belli's poetry, Gadda indirectly provides a clue about his own vision of satire, linked to a binary opposition of what is considered good and/or right to what is considered bad and/or wrong.

Another interesting critical piece to take into account is Gadda's review of *Il male oscuro* (1964) by Giuseppe Berto, a novel on the neurosis of the narrator and main character. As with Belli, Gadda rejects the hypothesis of looking at Berto's work as satirical:

Berto non fa della satira, non coltiva come legume nell'orto o come carciofo in carciofaia una premeditata derisione di sé o de' suoi simili. Tutta la realtà registrata porta la propria derisione, o la pietà per sé, in se medesima: il fanatismo d'ogni maniera, la scioccaggine dei molti, degli sbandati, dei creduli: la lunga catena delle manie e il serpeggiare e l'aberrare di una tal catena verso le conseguite disgrazie, verso l'inevitabile catastrofe. [SGF 1 1202]

Berto does not cultivate satire with the care and attention necessary to cultivate a bean or an artichoke grown in a garden. In other terms, he does not deliberately engage and indulge in a premeditated act of derision. His novel, therefore, cannot be understood as

[36] A few lines after this, Gadda also mentions some passages from a critical writing on by Muzio Mazzocchi Alemanni where we can also find some other interesting observations on satire: '"Il contrasto non resta a uno stadio intellettuale – quella tensione dal reale all'ideale, un vago moralismo, insomma la comune considerazione della satira castigante – ma diviene drammatico proprio per l'inseparabilità delle due facce, per quella comunione mostruosa"' [SFG 1 559].

satire. Typical of satire, the key trait of derision rather emerges – Gadda suggests – as the result of the kind of reality represented by Berto, and *not* of Berto's deliberate will to represent it with a mocking attitude. A similar idea is repeated a few lines below, when Gadda claims that:

> Lo *humour* non cercato, non pre-orchestrato, ma semplicemente accettato dalla semplice registrazione dei fatti e delle cartelle cliniche dei caduti 'in hac lacrimarum valle', si depongono sulla pagina dolorante come i colori naturali sugli emblemi del nostro percepire naturalmente investiti dalla luce del giorno. [SGF 1202][37]

Behind the denial of Berto's satirical quality we can catch a further glimpse of Gadda's interpretation of satire: if Berto does not practice satire because he does not intentionally practice derision, satire is to be understood – *e contrario* – as a premeditated act of derision.[38]

It is in three essays written between the 1940s and 1950s, however, that Gadda faces more directly what satire means for him. In the 1952 *Amleto al teatro Valle*, a review of a performance of Shakespeare's Hamlet at the Valle theatre in Rome later included in *I viaggi la morte*, the treatment of the character of Ophelia is defined in some aspects as satirical:

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[37] Further on in the review, Gadda insists again on the element of intentionality: 'Il romanzo di Berto non è opera *intenzionalmente* nichilistica nel senso ch'esso preclude ai lettori, ai concittadini, o ai compagni di sorte, l'immagine di una speranza del bene, di una possibile felicità dell'evento, di un soccorso dell'imperscrutabile Mistero' [SGF 1 1204, italics mine]. As if to say: it is not Berto who is satirical, but it is the mark of satire that is intrinsic to the reality which Berto represents. Gadda seems to apply here a slightly different version of the same conceptual move applied to himself and *La cognizione del dolore* in *L'Editore chiede venia del recupero chiamando in causa l'Autore*, the 'Pseudodialogo' coming with *La cognizione* – as Emilio Manzotti calls it in the *Nota al testo* to the novel, in RR 1 876 – where it is famously claimed that 'barocco è il mondo, e il G. ne ha percepito e ritratto la baroccaggine' [CDD 760]. For a recent and insightful analysis of the *Pseudo-dialogo* with attention for this very conceptual move (and with also some remarks on Gadda's satire), see Valentino Baldi, 'Intenzione di Gadda', now in course of publication in a journal special issue gathering some of the papers presented at the international conference dedicated to Gadda which took place in Oxford in March 2022. The 'Pseudodialogo' and the review of Berto's *Il male oscuro* are similar in many respects, as is noted in Barbara Rejmak, 'Note sulla prefazione autoriale alla *Cognizione del dolore* di Carlo Emilio Gadda', *Acta Philologica*, 59 (2022), pp. 85-94: 89-91.

[38] From this viewpoint, Gadda is in full accord with what claimed by Phiddian: 'satire does need to be construed as purposive, as intentional. To construe a text as satirical is to construe it as making a point'. Cf. the pararagraph above in this chapter. For a discussion on the issue of *intentionality* in Gadda, see the essay by Baldi mentioned in the above note.

Non è da escludere che la vena drammatica, la cognitiva etica e il genio dialettico dello Shakespeare, l'attenzione ai fatti del costume e della storia, il suo intuito di biologo e delatore (dei vizî mentali degli uomini) – non è escluso che tutto il suo spirito 'approfitti' della condizione di Ofelia, di Ofelia l'adolescente, di Ofelia la pura, di Ofelia la ignara, di Ofelia figlia di Polonio: che ne '*approfitti*' per una rappresentazione derisoria e a certi momenti pressoché satirica dello stato di innocenza (d'ogni giovinetta) quale per natura si manifesta, quale era ed è, ahi!, vagheggiato e praticato, ahi!, dalla reclusione educatoria. [SGF 544-545]

The way in which the character of Ophelia is painted seems to be functional to a satirical purpose, because Ophelia serves to show the hypocritical representation of youth as innocent and intact given by a bigoted kind of morality typical of conventual or educational institutions. Satire opposes, we understand, a deceitful representation of youth culturally constructed by society to the real – natural, physiological – impulses experienced by everyone. Indirectly recognised as constitutional to satire in the review of Berto's *Il male oscuro*, the trait of derision ('rappresentazione derisoria e a certi momenti pressoché satirica') also recurs here in combination with the definition of Ophelia's character as satirical, confirming once again the correlation between satire and derision.

The point briefly introduced in the essay dedicated to Amleto is developed with much greater detail two years later, in the 1954 review of a performance of Niccolò Machiavelli's satirical play *La Mandragola* at the Teatro delle Arti of Rome.[39] Not included in *I viaggi la morte*, and not so frequently quoted by critics, the piece contains several key ideas which are very important for our topic, and which would benefit from a more detailed analysis. Gadda writes in the very first section:

Il massimo lavoro teatrale del Machiavelli […] ha in sé tali elementi di rappresentazione del costume e conseguentemente di scandalo ("oportet ut eveniant schandala") e di delazione, se non proprio di satira fustigatrice, da inserirsi palesemente in quella che potremmo chiamarla [*sic*] la 'farmacopea eccellente: la farmacopea, diciamo, della consapevolezza e della chiaroveggenza umana'. [SGF 1 1091-1092]

[39] Carlo Emilio Gadda, 'La Mandragola filtro di giovinezza', *Teatro d'oggi*, II, 1 (January 1954), p. 2; now in *Scritti dispersi* in SGF 1 1091-1095. *La Mandragola* was first represented in Florence in 1526.

La Mandragola depicts the social customs of the time without fear of being considered outrageous, and thus it also publicly acknowledges what is wrong or problematic about said customs. It is similar, in this regard, to an act of public accusation ('delazione') putting the spotlight on malpractice and bad habits. With an epithet commonly attributed to it, satire is defined 'fustigatrice': it whips, it flogs human wickedness, unafraid of causing scandal.[40] Further emphasis is placed on this notion of public accusation a few lines below, where the play is referred to as 'spietata denuncia di una società, dall'intrico dei di cui vincoli emerge lottando il naturale sentimento, il senso incomprimibile della vita, della bellezza' [SFG 1 1094]: a definition modeled on the opposition between society and nature seen also in the *Hamlet* review.

Gadda continues, then, explicitly defining *La Mandragola* as a satire:

> Il Machiavelli ha saputo estrarre dal suo spirito amaro e beffardo, dalla sua spietata curiosità di osservatore fiorentino, dal suo civismo deluso e dalla sua statolatria di funzionario e di filosofo e di teorizzatore politico mal confortato dagli eventi, ha saputo estrarre una sorta di commedia irrisoria che non è frequente nel repertorio comico per la semplice ragione che non è neppur comica e non è nemmeno umoristica. La Mandragola è una satira teatrale, una beffa cattiva maturata sul palcoscenico. [SGF 1 1092]

In line with Machiavelli's personal experiences (including a forced withdrawal from political activity) and his bitter sense of observation of society, *La Mandragola* is permeated by derision and mockery. It is a 'commedia irrisoria': not an ordinary comedy, but in fact a satire. A satire, though, unusually brought to the stage and performed in a theatre. It is a venomous joke, a 'farce' – in Gadda's words – 'reaching ripeness on the stage' ('una beffa cattiva maturata sul palcoscenico'). The target is not represented by the institutions and the

[40] In discussing Belli's poetry, Gadda had quoted a few passages by the critic Mazzocchi Alemanni, where satire had been defined, with another traditional epiteth, as 'castigante': see note above.

social or political bodies *per se*, but by the conditions in which they are found as the result of the consumption of a social milieu lost in empty rhetoric:

> La Mandragola non è dramma polemico, non è una commedia a tesi, per quanto coloro che ritengono (ingiustamente) di esserne colpiti, per ciò solo che uno dei loro è colpito, vogliano ascoltarvi e l'irriverenza e l'ingiuria. Satira è certamente in alcuni punti, beffa o almeno irrisione della umana dappocaggine, alla maniera del Boccaccio, in tono più acre beninteso. Ma la satira non raggiunge tanto le instituzioni o gli instituti nella loro maestà o santità, quanto le condizioni di inefficienza, di invalidità in cui vengono a ritrovarsi per lo svuotamento, per la stanchezza di un'ambiente, di un milieu: e d'altra parte, per la verbosa ipertrofia di un'etica destinata a campare sulle parole. Il Machiavelli raggiunge e scalza la radice della realtà, le operose quand'anche malvage radici dell'uman vivere: sotto il drappeggio dei simboli di superficie gli impulsi veri, i succhi vitali e malefici ad un tempo che allacciano le ragioni della vita alle non-ragioni della morte. [SFG 1 1093-1094].

Machiavelli represents the hidden roots of reality lying below what everyone else sees on the surface. He takes us closer to the bittersweet essence of reality ('succhi vitali e malefici ad un tempo'). He unmasks what Gadda refers to – a few lines above the passage sampled here – as 'le ipocrite forze del costume e della condizione umana: ipocrite sì, ma nondimeno forze: e cause valide e cause efficienti' [SGF 1 1092].[41] Before Machiavelli uproots the plant of reality uncovering its roots from the dirt, we can only see the external part of the plant; we are not aware of the evil below. It is the very act of uprooting which casts light on what was previously unknown and makes us realise that evil – inextricably bound up with good – has always been there; it has simply gone unnoticed, and has now been unveiled. In *La Mandragola*, Machiavelli aims to look at reality as it truly is ('gli impulsi realmente operanti nel costume e nella società' [SGF 1 1093]), beyond what appears at first sight. Delving deeper into human motives and social dynamics, satire emerges, then, as a form of knowledge capable of disproving false appearances.

[41] Cf. also the following passage: 'Con anticipo di fase molto ragguardevole rispetto ad altro teatro e ad altre forme della satira, centocinquant'anni prima di Molière, sono in gioco nella Mandragola, oltre che la beffa del saputo, la satira della medicina, un giudizio reciso e preciso sulle debolezze dei monaci, specie sulla venalità di certo clero pre-conciliare, un'analisi della sessualità reale e delle sue carte e de' suoi titoli reali, di fronte alla schematica impotenza degli istituti conservativi' [SGF 1 1092-1093].

The focus placed on the 'verbosa ipertrofia di un'etica destinata a campare sulle parole' links, furthermore, satire to the exceptional task of exposing the inanity of any bombastic rhetorical apparatus which remains in a state of meaningless talk and does not translate into reality. This is a long-standing theme developed by Gadda since at least the 1937 *Meditazione breve circa il dire e il fare*, focusing on the risk of the 'parlata falsa' [SGF 1 445], and then again linked to satire in another fundamental essay of 1942, *Lingua letteraria e lingua dell'uso*:

> […] i peccatori e i pupilli finirono per istuccarsi con l'andar dei secoli di certe bugie o tiritere de' precettori e de' maestri: e vi furon genti e persone individue che seppero benissimo irridere alle fole con il linguaggio delle fole medesime. Altri vollero semplicemente ridere. Figurano, tra questi, gli scrittori satirici, i comici, i maccheronici, i 'licenziosi'. Allora le filosofie lunghe, le troppo dilatate teologie si sentono rifare il verso in teatro: e così l'epos pallonaro, o l'umanità o la sofistica buggerona. [SGF 1 494]

Satirical writers – together with comical, macaronic, and licentious writers – are listed in passing amongst those who are capable of mocking ('rifare il verso') philosophy and theology, thus debunking any form of 'epos pallonaro' or 'sofistica buggerona':[42] a further confirmation of the power of satire to reveal the deception and contribute to knowledge.

Despite its epistemological mandate, satire can nonetheless represent an obstacle for the development of Gadda's writing. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Gadda attributes to himself the traits of the satirist on several occasions. He significantly does so in the 1950 *Intervista al microfono* (also included in *I viaggi la morte*), where he does not only motivate the 'ira' and 'sdegno' – reminiscent of the Juvenalian *indignatio* – animating his writing as a result of his own experiences, but he also recognises himself as a lyrical and

[42] For 'pallonaro', cf. GDLI, *s.v.* 'pallonaio' (of which *pallonaro* is a regional variant): 'Chi racconta abitualmente fandonie o si ostina a vantarsi senza ragione; chi vuol far apparire qualcosa più importante e più valido di quanto sia, per desiderio di sbalordire'. For 'buggerona', cf. GDLI, *s.v.* 'buggerone': 'Ingannatore, imbroglione'.

satirical writer by personal inclination, claiming that he needed to limit the extent of invectives as he matured as a writer:

> Nella mia vita di 'umiliato e offeso' la narrazione mi è apparsa, talvolta, lo strumento che mi avrebbe consentito di ristabilire la 'mia' verità", il 'mio' modo di vedere, cioè: lo strumento della rivendicazione contro gli oltraggi del destino e de' suoi umani proietti: lo strumento, in assoluto, del riscatto e della vendetta. Sicché il mio narrare palesa, molte volte, il tono risentito di chi dice rattenendo l'ira, lo sdegno. […]
>
> Il forte senso della mia personalità (forte, cioè intenso: non è un merito: è un fatto della psiche) mi traeva a riuscire un lirico, piuttosto, o un satirico: la volontà di comprendere i miei simili e me stesso mi sospingeva all'indagine e a quella 'registrazione di eventi' che forma, in definitiva, il racconto. Capii che dovevo stringere entro più severi limiti la descrizione e l'invettiva, e far posto nelle mie note alla immatricolazione dei 'tipi' umani, dei 'personaggi', umani o mitici o bestiali, e delle loro impagabili vicende. [SGF 1 502-503]

Gadda seems here to be putting his satirical inclination in opposition with his will to understand humankind. In partial contrast with the epistemological value attributed to it in the *Mandragola* review, in the *Intervista*, then, satire does not walk hand in hand with Gadda's desire to investigate human issues and souls – a desire that informs instead, in his view, the 'racconto' – but almost stands on its own, as a distinct driving force of his writing.

Further on in the *Intervista*, Gadda establishes a parallelism between his approach to narration and death, self-mockingly imagining himself as a 'reconciled' writer on his final day: 'Così non sarò più lo scrittore bizzoso e vendicativo che ero in vita: non sarò più l'inchiostratore maligno e pettegolo che avevo l'obbligo di essere per essere un narratore che si rispetti' [SGF 1 504]. He sketches out, then, a self-portrait where he insists on his extraneousness to society: 'Temperamento piuttosto incline a solitudine, inetto a cicalare con brio, alieno dalla mondanità, io avvicino e frequento i miei simili con una certa fatica e una certa titubanza, con più titubanza e con più fatica i più virtuosi di essi' [SGF 1 504].

Naturally irritable and vindictive when it comes to writing, secluded from society in his personal life: this is the portrait, one would be tempted to say, of the perfect satirist.[43]

1.4. Projects for a satirical book: towards *L'Adalgisa*

Moving on from Gadda's discussions of satire and his declarations on his satirical temperament, it is now necessary to shift our attention onto how Gadda turned to satire in reference to some of his texts.

In a letter from May 1932 to his friend and writer Bonaventura Tecchi, Gadda defined as satire part of his short story *La fidanzata di Elio*, rejected by the Florence-based periodical *Pègaso* and then published by *L'Ambrosiano*. Worried that the tone deployed therein might be tedious for the readers, Gadda asks Tecchi for an opinion and then mentions he is considering the idea of assembling a satirical book containing five or six novellas written in the style of his other short story *San Giorgio in casa Brocchi*, which had appeared in *Solaria* one year earlier:

> Ho pubblicato sull''Ambrosiano' una novella breve ('La fidanzata di Elio') che ti manderò in visione, desiderando il tuo sincero giudizio; specie se quel mio tono finisce per stancare. Essa era stata mandata a Pègaso e rifiutata. Ho sfruttato alcuni elementi di una precedente ('Invito a pranzo') che è un mezzo ricordo di Terni, con un mio collega ingegnere di colà e ufficiale degli arditi: il resto della novella è satira milanese.
>
> Potrebbe andare un libro satirico, come 'S. Giorgio in casa Brocchi' – di 5 o 6 pezzi così? Io tenderei a sfaccettare la mia produzione: un libro satirico, uno lirico, uno fantasioso. Dammi un consiglio al riguardo: un libro di 5 o 6 novelle lunghe, umoristico-satiriche credi sarebbe preso in considerazione e potrebbe piacere? [AF 109][44]

[43] Gadda frequently indulges in this kind of portraits in many of his letters, often insisting on the same distinguishing features. Cf. also: 'Sono sempre il Gaddus, sempe più balogio che mai, sempre più merluzzo, sempre più sconclusionato, svirgolato' [LAM 30-31].

[44] The letter is dated 1 May 1932. The short story *Invito a pranzo* (unpublished while Gadda was alive) has been edited and made available to scholars by Liliana Orlando in QI, 3 (2012), pp. 25-38.

Ending with a sexual encounter between a young man from a well-to-do family of Milan, Luigi, and the servant Jole, *San Giorgio in casa Brocchi* falls within the definition of satire that emerged in both the Shakespeare and Machiavelli reviews. The short story proves the prevailing of the biological impulses of youth over any form of bourgeois captivity imposed on Luigi by his mother, debunking the double-faced nature of bourgeois morality and the empty rhetoric of bourgeois pedagogy. The terms 'epos pallonaro' and 'sofistica buggerona' found in *Lingua letteraria e lingua dell'uso* perfecty apply, on the other hand, to the Ciceronian manual written by Luigi's uncle, by means of which Luigi's mother would like to harness his son's sexual maturation.[45]

Gadda had something in mind along the lines of this project for a satirical book a few months after the letter to Tecchi, in September 1933, when he was considering – as reconstructed by Dante Isella – to group together in one volume *San Giorgio* and two other texts he was writing at that time. One is *L'incendio di via Keplero*, one of Gadda's best-known short stories, revolving around the escape of the residents of a burning building in Milan. The other is *Un fulmine sul 220*, on which Gadda had started to work in the early 1930s. The intention of bringing together these texts is attested to by the following manuscript note, taken from the preparatory material of *Un fulmine* published by Isella:

> […] accarezzai sempre la speranza e il desidero di finire questa novella, per poi stamparla in un volume con il 'San Giorgio in casa Brocchi', (novella pubblicata in Solaria nel giugno 1931), e con 'L'incendio di via Keplero', in gestazione.
>
> S. Guarnieri, di cui fui ospite a Feltre dal 20 agosto al 2 settembre 1933, mi incitò a lavorare e a finire intanto questo racconto. Io voglio elaborarlo, definirlo e ultimarlo, profittando di questo scorcio di vacanza÷convalescenza a Longone, da oggi 14 settembre 1933 alla fine del mese. Mi basterebbe aver fissato bene la materia rovente ed informe, chiariti i personaggi, limitato il materiale satirico, definita la tecnica narrativa per il 30 settembre: e poi lavorarvi ottobre, novembre, e aver stampato il racconto per il Natale 1933.– [Fu 307-308][46]

[45] On the satire of *San Giorgio* see Gian Carlo Roscioni, *La disarmonia prestabilita. Studi su Gadda* [1969] (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), pp. 118-119. Cf. also Alberto Godioli, '"Era… un'idea fissa… la sua": sulla satira di *San Giorgio in casa Brocchi*', EJGS, 5 (2007).

[46] The 'S. Guarnieri' mentioned in the note above is Silvio Guarnieri, another friend of Gadda, literary critic and writer.

The 'novella' mentioned in the first line – and a few lines below referred to as 'racconto' – is indeed *Un fulmine*, still being written, in 1933, as a short story. In the years that followed, Gadda tried to develop it into a novel and finally interrupted it, leaving it unpublished in the notebooks where Isella found it only in the 1990s. Here referred to as 'in gestazione', *L'incendio* was published in the Mondadori almanac *Il Tesoretto* almost seven years after this note.

The project of gathering *San Giorgio*, *L'incendio*, and *Un fulmine* was never completed by Gadda, with *Un fulmine* left unfinished and *L'incendio* and *San Giorgio* collected instead in 1953 in *Novelle dal ducato in fiamme*.[47] Nonetheless, in 1995, Gadda's project was posthumously brought forth thanks to the philological endeavors of Isella, who published a part of *Un fulmine* with *San Giorgio* and *L'incendio* in a special volume titled *Disegni milanesi*, inspired by Gadda's note above.[48] The entirety of the material of *Un fulmine* were published – as we will see in the next chapter – only in 2000.

In the 1933 note Gadda was planning ahead in the vain hope of finishing *Un fulmine* by the end of the year. While taking stock of what he had accomplished until then and of what was next to be done, he thought it necessary to contain the satirical bite of the novel ('Mi basterebbe aver […] limitato il materiale satirico'). Anticipating the remarks on satire made in the *Intervista al microfono*, here Gadda also shows himself to be concerned with the corrosive charge he evidently thought typical of satire. In a letter from April 1934 to another friend, Ambrogio Gobbi, Gadda came back to the satire of *Un fulmine* as follows:

> Non so se ti ho mandato 'San Giorgio in casa Brocchi' del 1931. Adesso sto lavorando a una novella del medesimo tipo, ma più lunga, che spererei di finire verso l'estate. Essa risente del mio stato d'animo ed è condotta sui limiti estremi dell'acredine: al di là c'è il manicomio, subito. […]

[47] And then, in 1963, in *Accoppiamenti giudiziosi*: cf. RR 2, 643-698 (*San Giorgio*) and 699-714 (*L'incendio*).

[48] Cf. DM.

P.S. La mia novella in corso è una feroce satira contro gli ingegneri elettrotecnici milanesi. Siccome avrò bisogno di dettagli tecnici ecc. ricorrerò proprio a te. Poi diventerò buono e scriverò un panegirico di Milano. Non temere. La satira salva le anime elette, e tu sei tra queste.

Un abbraccio Gaddus [LAM 47-48][49]

The reference made to the electrotechnical engineers of Milan finds confirmation in *Un fulmine*, where engineers are indeed among the most privileged targets of Gadda's satire.[50] What is especially worthy of note here is, however, Gadda's definition of *Un fulmine*: written 'sui limiti estremi dell'acredine', only one step away from the 'manicomio'. While the trait of 'acredine' recurs as a distinguishing feature of the satirical style also in the *Mandragola* review,[51] the reference to a madhouse expressing the excess of satirical acrimony is a possible point of contact – as Clelia Martignoni and Lorenzo Panizzi note[52] – with Swift, most probably read by Gadda in the 1930s, around the time when the project of *Un fulmine* was developed. Over that same period, Swift was also the explicit inspiration for some other writings including *Viaggi del Gulliver, cioè del Gaddu*s and other material more recently brought back to light by scholars.[53] The 1930s were by all means a prolific period for Gadda the satirist.

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[49] In the same letter Gadda also significantly declares: 'Vorrei essere il Robespierre della borghesia milanese: ma non ne vale la pena' [LAM 46].

[50] The fourth draft chapter of *Un fulmine* is significantly titled 'Nuove battute sul Politecnico vecchio – Ouverture (Il Simposio)' [Fu 199-212]. This attention for the engineers of Milan will pass on to *L'Adalgisa,* with engineers being especially but not exclusively targeted in the sixth disegno (*I ritagli di tempo*).

[51] Cf. 'Acre è il tono del Machiavelli: bisogna riferire questa acredine al carattere fiorentino, alla sua dialettica, alla sua sofistica, all'epoca travagliatissima, alle amare esperienze dell'uomo e del politico' [SGF 1 1904]; 'La perfida acredine del tono' [SGF 1 1094]). Along the same lines: 'amaro o addirittura perfido il tono, la battuta è crudele, la lingua (fiorentina) è tagliente' [SGF 1 1094]).

[52] Cf. Clelia Martignoni, Lorenzo Panizzi, 'La "malattia delle note". Gadda verso satira e Swift', *Strumenti critici*, XXX, 1 (2015), pp. 85-118. Gadda mentions Swift not only in the interview with Tondo mentioned in this chapter, but also in Int. 96, 98-99, and 151. Cf. Clelia Martignoni, Lorenzo Panizzi, 'La "malattia delle note". Gadda verso satira e Swift', *Strumenti critici*, XXX, 1 (2015), pp. 85-118. Gadda mentions Swift not only in the interview with Tondo mentioned in this chapter, but also in Int. 96, 98-99, and 151. Exploring the manuscripts which attest to the making of *Il castello di Udine* of 1934, Francesco Venturi has found out that the fundamental opening text *Tendo al mio fine* (first published in 1931) was at first titled *Tendo al manicomio*. Cf. Francesco Venturi, 'Nel Fondo Roscioni: sinopie, indici, piani di lavoro', in *Meraviglie di Gadda. Seminario di studi sulle carte dello scrittore*, ed. by Monica Marchi and Claudio Vela (Pisa: Pacini, 2014), pp. 47-72: 52.

[53] For *Viaggi di Gulliver, cioè del Gaddus*, cf. RR 2 960-966. An ironic laudation of the Lombard Brianza area which has under the thematic aspect a few points in common with *La cognizione del dolore*, *Viaggi di Gulliver* were written in 1933 and published by Gadda in 1970. They were also gathered with other

Although he never finished *Un fulmine*, unknown to the public for a long time, it was from the material of this novel that in the early 1940s Gadda derived some texts to be converted in disegni for *L'Adalgisa*, as the next chapter will reconstruct in great detail. *L'Adalgisa* thus offers itself to us as an heir of the satirical novel, as well as a successor and continuator of the never-accomplished project for a satirical trilogy on Milan.

writings of similar tone in Carlo Emilio Gadda, *Le bizze del capitano in congedo e altri racconti. Nuova edizione riveduta*, ed. by Dante Isella (Milan: Adelphi, 1994), pp. 11-30. As for the other writings of Swiftian insipiration more recently brought back to light, cf. Carlo Emilio Gadda, *I viaggi del capitano Gaddus. Serie I. Viaggio nella galassia*, ed. by Liliana Orlando, QI, 3 (2012), pp. 5-23, consisting in a few fragments which are also dated to the 1930s and are part of a further project for a 'libro satirico-utopistico', along the lines of *Viaggi del Gulliver*.

Chapter 2

The making of *L'Adalgisa*

2.1. The assembly of the book

The largest part of the collection of disegni goes back to the 1930s laboratory of *Un fulmine sul 220*, initially conceived as a short story or novella in 1931 and subsequently developed into a novel between 1932 and 1935. After an attempt to revise what he had written until 1935 and the drafting of a new first chapter in 1936, Gadda interrupted and left the novel aside, unpublished and almost unknown in its entirety for a considerable amount of time. It was only in the 1990s, twenty years after Gadda's death, that Dante Isella and the team of scholars working with him on the Garzanti edition of Gadda's works discovered, exploring what is now known as the Garzanti archive, two notebooks containing the abandoned novel. After a few anticipations, the 2000 edition provided by Isella on the basis of the autographs made the text of *Un fulmine* available, confirming what was only an impression for the first readers of *L'Adalgisa*: behind some of the pieces included there was indeed an attempt to tell a bigger story, the one Gadda had attempted to tell in *Un fulmine*.[1]

Set in Milan in the 1930s, the storyline found still unfinished in the novel involves the young and beautiful Elsa, married to the old and wealthy chocolate entrepreneur Gian Maria and yet attracted to Bruno, a former butcher's boy hired by Gian Maria as handyman for his chocolate business. Even from the very first draft (the 'primo getto'), the love affair between Elsa and Bruno is bound to end tragically: the lovers are eventually killed by a bolt

[1] The textual history of *Un fulmine* is reconstructed in the 'Nota al testo' by Isella in Fu 225-303.

of lightning in an electric cabin – as alluded to by the novel's title – during a storm. In the plot envisaged for this first draft, the narrative would have started with the police interrogations following the death of Elsa and Bruno, to then reconstruct in an analeptical way what had led to that unfortunate ending.[2] While the work was still in progress and the short story was being developed into a novel, Gadda defined it in his notes and letters – as we have seen in chapter 1 – satirical, claiming that it was being written 'sui limiti estremi dell'acredine' [LAM 47], and portraying himself as the 'Robespierre della borghesia milanese' [LAM 46]. The reading of *Un fulmine* casts new light on details which sound unreasonable if considered in the context of each individual disegno, as they allude to characters or events not introduced or not properly developed; details which instead acquire fuller meaning when considered part of the broader narrative of the novel.

The interruption of *Un fulmine* around 1936 roughly coincided with the opening of the laboratory of *La cognizione del dolore* in 1937. In Isella's view, the main cause for the implosion of the novel was the prominence that the character of Adalgisa – initially meant to have a secondary role as Elsa's confidant – had come to acquire. 'L'Adalgisa attraversa il cammino prefisso del romanzo', Isella claims, 'rompendone senza riguardi l'equilibrio costruttivo. Per proseguire l'autore dovrà scegliere: o salvare il romanzo, mortificando quella creatura d'eccezione, costringendola nei termini di un ruolo strettamente funzionale al progetto originario; oppure abbandonarsi alla foga dirompente dei suoi furori ("L'Adalgisa sono io")'.[3] Throughout the second rewrite of the novel, Adalgisa had not only become more and more important, but had also come to assume a polemical position towards the high class of Milan. Coming from a lower-class background, Adalgisa improves her socioeconomic condition thanks to her marriage with Carlo, but she is never accepted by

[2] For the 'primo getto', see Fu 11-54.
[3] Isella, *Nota al testo* in Fu 293-294.

Carlo's family and social environment, who look down on her as a social climber. Marked by resentment and indignation, Adalgisa's perspective of Milanese society came to partially overlap, in Isella's reconstruction, with that of Gadda: '"il punto di vista" dell'Adalgisa è anche il suo, quello da cui poter finalmente mettere a fuoco il vero oggetto del suo interesse di narratore, che non è ovviamente, o solo in piccola parte, l'affabulazione romanzesca di Elsa e di Bruno […], ma la rappresentazione satirico-grottesca dell'odiosa-amata società lombarda'.[4]

Together with the rising importance of Adalgisa and the problems connected with the already precarious narrative structure of the novel, a crucial biographical fact should be mentioned: the death of Gadda's mother, Adele Lehr, in April 1936, with all that followed (the grief, remorse and depression, as well as practical matters such as the sale of the Gadda family house in the northern-western Brianza area of Lombardy).

There is no doubt that with *La cognizione* Gadda plunged into a project different from the one which had occupied his time until then. Pervaded by a deep sense of tragedy, *La cognizione* exhibits the disturbingly painful relationship between a son, Gonzalo, and his mother. The narrative takes place in the fictitious South American country of Maradagàl, serving as a metaphor for Italy and Brianza.

While *La cognizione* appeared in seven 'tratti' in the quarterly magazine *Letteratura* between 1938 and 1941, Gadda went back to the material of *Un fulmine* to extract from there a part of its third chapter (titled *Un'orchestra di 120 professori*)[5] and publish it – with variants and the removal of a long central section – in *Il Tesoretto* of 1941, the almanac of the Mondadori series 'Lo Specchio', printed in December 1940. Released almost

[4] Fu 296. For the interruption of *Un fulmine*, see also the considerations made by Raffaele Donnarumma, mentioned in the introduction, section 2.

[5] Cf. Fu 93-196. Isella also distinguishes a 'parte prima' of the chapter (Fu 93-111) from a 'parte ultima' (Fu 113-196).

simultaneously with the last 'tratto' of *La cognizione* in the first 1941 issue of *Letteratura*,[6] the piece of *Un fulmine* revamped for *Il Tesoretto* of that year was most probably published as Gadda had not yet decided to include it in a volume. The piece was titled *L'Adalgisa (Disegno su tre fogli espunto dal romanzo inedito 'Un fulmine sul 220')*: while using the term 'disegno' for the first time to identify a piece of writing by Gadda, the subtitle provided in square brackets contains an explicit reference to *Un fulmine*, which does not seem to prefigure the future inclusion of the excerpt in the collection or any other book.

In his *Nota al testo* in the 2012 Adelphi edition of *L'Adalgisa*, Claudio Vela reconstructs as meticulously as possible the genesis of the book on the basis of previously unavailable archival material, drawing attention to an unpublished letter from September 1941 by Giuseppe De Robertis – director of the Le Monnier series titled 'Quaderni di Letteratura e d'Arte raccolti da Giuseppe De Robertis' – inviting Gadda to contribute to the series: 'Io sono un suo antico estimatore, e affezionatissimo all'uomo Gadda (anche se ci vediamo così di rado). […] Ho bisogno di vederla. Sto raccogliendo per la casa Le Monnier certi "quaderni" che spero diventeranno sempre più una cosa importante. Lei può aiutarmi; e gliene sarò grato'.[7] Following this invitation, Gadda probably thought he could return to the material of *Un fulmine* from where a few months earlier he had extracted the piece for *Il Tesoretto* to now extract further pieces for the Le Monnier book.

As he was extracting from *Un fulmine* the future disegni for *L'Adalgisa*, between 1942 and 1943 Gadda also published them in periodicals.[8] By anticipating the disegni on

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[6] 'L'Adalgisa (Disegno su tre fogli espunto dal romanzo inedito "Un fulmine sul 220")', *Il Tesoretto*, 1941 Almanac of the Mondadori series 'Lo Specchio' (Milan: Mondadori, 1940), pp. 449-478. 'La cognizione del dolore (Settimo tratto)', *Letteratura*, 17, V, 1 (January-March 1941), pp. 58-67.

[7] Vela, 'Nota al testo' in L'A[12] 336.

[8] 'Quando il Girolamo ha smesso….' (first episode), *La Ruota*, series III, IV, 2 (February 1943), pp. 34-44; 'Quando il Girolamo ha smesso….' (second episode), series III, IV, 3 (March 1943), pp. 72-78; 'I ritagli di tempo', *Primato – Lettere e arti d'Italia*, III, 5 (15 March 1942), pp. 121-123; 'Un "Concerto di 120 professori" – Disegno su due fogli arancio pallido', *Letteratura*, 23, VI, 3 (July-December 1942), pp. 48-66; 'La benignità' [corresponding to a section of *Al Parco, in una sera di maggio*], *Primato – Lettere e arti d'Italia*, VI, 14 (15 July 1943), p. 253; 'L'Adalgisa. Racconto di Carlo Emilio Gadda', *Primato – Lettere e arti d'Italia*,

which he was already working for the book, Gadda could put to good use the material from *Un fulmine* and multiply the gains from it, while at the same time complying with the requests for new pieces from the periodicals and reinforcing his presence in the literary field. The idea of the book, in Vela's words, served as 'teleologicamente funzionante da attrattore finale dei singoli pezzi che intanto via via vedevano autonomamente la luce'.[9] As we are starting to see, practical reasons and practical circumstances also played a role in the making of the collection, which provided at the same time a good reason to return to *Un fulmine* and extract from there textual material, as well as an ideal destination for the pieces of writing that Gadda was autonomously publishing as he was given the occasion to do so.

In March 1942, Gadda probably had a preliminary agreement with Le Monnier, as then he was assured by the publishing house about the availability of types for printing. In June 1942, Gadda himself informed Einaudi he was busy working on some 'Disegni milanesi' promised to Le Monnier. Throughout the year a few of Gadda's closest correspondents – including Bonaventura Tecchi and Gianfranco Contini – asked him about the future publication, always referring to it – as Gadda did with Einaudi – as 'Disegni' or 'Disegni milanesi'.[10]

An initial index including only eight disegni dated 14 November 1942 – Gadda's birthday – is identified by Vela amongst the material inspected for his edition:

Disegni milanesi

1. *Notte di luna*
2. *Claudio disimpara a vivere*
3. *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*
4. *Strane dicerie contristano i Bertoloni*
5. *I ritagli di tempo*
6. *Navi approdano al Parapagàl*
7. *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professor*i
8. *L'Adalgisa*

III, 18 (15 September 1942), pp. 338-339; 'L'Adalgisa. Racconto di Carlo Emilio Gadda (Continuazione del numero precedente e fine)', *Primato – Lettere e arti d'Italia*, III, 19 (1 October 1942), pp. 360-362.

[9] Vela, 'Nota al testo' in L'A[12] 336.

[10] For more information on these passages, cf. L'A[12] 336-337.

The titles of the eight pieces envisaged for inclusion is grouped under the heading 'Disegni milanesi', a further clue that 'L'Adalgisa' took over as a title only at a later stage while 'disegni milanesi' was kept as subtitle.[11]

Gadda derived the opening disegno – *Notte di luna* – from a further would-be novel, *Racconto italiano di ignoto del novecento*, preserved amongst the papers of the *Cahier d'études* on which he had worked in 1924 and which had soon become a depository of narratological reflections and ideas to develop in the future. *Racconto italiano* was brought back into the light by Isella after Gadda's death in 1983. Set in a suburban area of northern Italy where commuters and workmen come back home after a hard day of work as night falls, *Notte di luna* is different from the following disegni as it is composed with a high literary style soaked with lyrical-elegiacal and sublime tones. As Emilio Manzotti has shown, *Notte di luna* serves as a protasis; an *overture* introducing to the symphony played in the collection, of which it foresees many of the themes further developed throughout. It occupies in all senses a liminal space, metaphorically providing a geographical and also thematical opening for the book.[12]

Claudio disimpara a vivere and *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*, which, as far as we know, did not originate from previously interrupted projects, were presumably written as free-standing pieces with no direct connection with *Un fulmine*. First appearing in the daily newspaper *La Nazione* in the edition dated 14 December 1940, prior to De Robertis's invitation and almost in parallel with the printing of the disegno of *L'Adalgisa* in *Il Tesoretto*

[11] Cf. L'A[12] 348-349.

[12] Cf. Emilio Manzotti, 'Una *Notte di luna*', in *Gadda: meditazione e racconto*, ed. by Cristina Savettieri, Carla Benedetti and Lucio Lugnani (Pisa: ETS, 2004), pp. 159-204. For *Notte di luna*, see also: Ida De Michelis, *Tra il 'quid' e il 'quod': metamorfosi narrative in Carlo Emilio Gadda* (Pisa: ETS, 2010), pp. 105-112; Cristina Savettieri, *Incipit sub specie aeternitatis*, EJGS, 1 (2001). *Notte di luna* was also published in a periodical before being included in the volume: 'Notte di luna – Paese, a guisa di introduzione', *Primato – Lettere e arti d'Italia*, III, 12 (15 June 1942).

1941, *Claudio disimpara* was most probably conceived when Gadda had not yet decided to publish a collection of disegni. Printed in the first 1942 issue of *Letteratura*, *Quattro figlie* was, on the contrary, presumably devised when Gadda already knew about the collection and with the aim to be included therein.[13]

Set outside Milan in a suburban context recalling northern Italy (as is the case with *Notte di luna*), *Claudio disimpara* narrates the impertinence of Claudio Valeri, student of Economics who is invited to a dinner reception by his girlfriend Doralice's uncle, an engineer and professor of building sciences at the Politecnico of Milan. Although he causes embarrassment by accidentally mentioning the collapse of a bridge designed by none other than Doralice's uncle, at the end of the disegno Claudio nestles into Doralice's arms. Given the linear but minimal narrative component of the disegno, Riccardo Stracuzzi efficaciously describes *Claudio disimpara* as an 'apologhetto'.[14] *Quattro figlie* follows the vicissitudes of the de' Marpioni family from their move to via Spiga 21 in Milan to the birth of their long-awaited male heir, Gilberto Gaudenzio. The disegno develops a single narrative thread provided with a beginning (the move) and an ending (the birth of the heir), although also in this case the narrative *ratio* is reduced to a minimum. The more 'complete' status of both *Quattro figlie* and *Claudio disimpara* reflects their separate conceptions as free-standing pieces.

The initial layout of the book also included two excerpts from *La cognizione del dolore*, brought together with the other disegni set in Milan or near it in spite of their metaphorical South American backdrop: *Strane dicerie contristano i Bertoloni* and *Navi*

[13] *Claudio disimpara a vivere*, *La Nazione* (14 December 1940), p. 3. *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*, *Letteratura*, 21, VI, 1 (January-March 1942), pp. 28-40. Cf. Vela, 'Nota al testo' L'A[12] 358: *Quattro figlie* was conceived as a text on its own, 'autonomamente, come disegno per così dire aggiunto a perfezionare la complete rappresentazione dell'ambiente milanese'. For the textual history of *Quattro figlie*, see also Luca Mazzocchi, 'Per *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*. Genesi e primo abbozzo inedito', *Strumenti critici*, XXXIV, 1 (2019), pp. 107-126.

[14] Stracuzzi, 'Il fuoco della favola', p. 84.

approdano al Parapagàl. The former presents the kitsch and dysfunctional rural villas of the San Juan coast and introduces the character of Gonzalo, the son, through the lens of the malicious rumours circulating on him. The latter takes us into Gonzalo's delirious phantasy and offers through his perspective a portrait of the local bourgeois and society. Given that *La cognizione* is printed as a volume only in 1963, *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano* are the first parts of *La cognizione* published in a book, intended to be read by a wider and less specialised audience than the one which was familiar with the serial publication of *La cognizione* in *Letteratura*.[15] It is very important to note that the disegni are included in the earlier version of the index, an element which would suggest their inherence to the project of the collection since its beginnings.

The remainder of the disegni – *I ritagli di tempo*, *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori*, and the piece that gives the title to the whole collection, *L'Adalgisa* – are those derived from *Un fulmine* (third chapter). *I ritagli* is dedicated to the typically bourgeois habit of spending one's own spare time on a Saturday afternoon in the Circolo Filologico Milanese, particularly bringing into focus Gian Maria (Elsa's husband in *Un fulmine*) and the young engineer Valerio (Elsa's nephew). *Un 'concerto'* revolves around a concert taking place at the Conservatorio di Musica 'Giuseppe Verdi' attended by Elsa and Valerio. *L'Adalgisa* narrates of a meeting in Parco Sempione between Elsa herself and Adalgisa, with Adalgisa venting about her suffering for the humiliation inflicted on her by her deceased husband's family.

It was only after the original date attested to by the index, 14 November 1942, that Gadda added two further titles, bringing the overall number of disegni to ten:

[15] Other excerpts of *La cognizione* are published in other volumes. See for example *Una visita medica* and *La mamma* in *Accoppiamenti giudiziosi*: RR 2 715-743 and 745-760.

Disegni milanesi

1. *Notte di luna*
2. *Quando il Girolamo ha smesso….*
3. *Claudio disimpara a vivere*
4. *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*
5. *Strane dicerie contristano i Bertoloni*
6. *I ritagli di tempo*
7. *Navi approdano al Parapagàl*
8. *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori*
9. *Al Parco, in una sera di maggio*
10. *L'Adalgisa*

Some time after the date of the initial layout, Gadda must have decided to extract from *Un fulmine* two further pieces, which – as he did with the others – he also individually published as single pieces in periodicals throughout 1943.[16] He took the first chapter, titled *La crisi domestica*, rewrote it, and turned it into the second disegno of the collection: *Quando il Girolamo ha smesso….* The 'crisi' mentioned in the chapter title was a hyperbolic reference to the failure of the cleaning company 'La Confidenza', after which a longtime employee, Girolamo Zavattari, decides to retire and leaves Elsa and Gian Maria in need of someone else who could sweep the hard wood floor of their flat. While in *Un fulmine* the crisis led to the hiring of Bruno as a handyman and his meeting with Elsa, in the collection the failure of La Confidenza and Girolamo's retirement have less direct narrative consequences: in *Un 'concerto'*, Bruno is indeed presented as already having been hired by Gian Maria without providing explanations on how this happened, and his love affair with Elsa is only insinuated without being properly developed. Taken out of the 'parte ultima' of the third chapter of *Un fulmine*, *Al Parco, in una sera di maggio* was formed by incorporating the sequence of the novel that preceded the meeting of Elsa and Adalgisa with a part of the meeting initially meant to be included in *L'Adalgisa*.[17]

[16] Cf. note 8 above, where we can see that *Quando il Girolamo* e *Al Parco* are indeed the last two disegni to be published in a periodical in 1943, only a few months before being printed in the collection.

[17] Cf. Vela, 'Nota al testo' in L'A[12] 348-350 and 365-366.

With these final additions – which significantly incremented the relative weight of material genetically derived from *Un fulmine* in the overall mass of the collection – the book was ready to be printed, now titled after the character of Adalgisa. As demonstrated by Vela on epistolary evidence, Gadda first sent the manuscript of the disegni to Le Monnier, and then that of the lengthy notes, which – mostly absent in the original context of derivation of the disegni and also in the periodicals – were written in proximity with the publication, uniformly adorning texts coming from different sources.[18]

2.2. Questions of unity

One year after the *editio princeps*, in 1945 Le Monnier reprinted *L'Adalgisa*, but without *Notte di luna*, *Strane dicerie*, and *Navi approdano*. Gadda later linked this decision to two factors: the negative opinions expressed by unspecified critics who had considered those disegni 'poco milanesi' and thus incoherent with the rest of the collection, and the paper shortage affecting the publishing industry in the aftermath of war, making it appealing for the publisher to reprint a reduced version of the book.[19]

[18] Cf. L'A[12] 338-339. Cf. in partic. the letter sent to Gadda by Vieri Paoletti on behalf of Le Monnier on 29 May 1943: 'da tantissimo tempo attendiamo le note per il Vostro volume. Siccome è nostro desiderio portare avanti il volume più rapidamente possibile, onde non trovarsi a pubblicarlo in piena estate con danno per la sua diffusione, e rispondendo questo nostro desiderio ad una inderogabile necessità della tipografia, che ha bisogno di liberare il piombo impegnato da tanto tempo, Vi preghiamo essere cortese di volere sollecitare la consegna delle note, che speriamo avere, dalla Vostra gentilezza, ai primissimi della settimana entrante'. Gadda did follow the timeline suggested to him of Paoletti, as proven by the fact that *L'Adalgisa* was printed only in December.

[19] Cf. L'A[12] 341-342. Leaving for future study an extensive exploration of bibliography on frameworks in collections of short stories and on how 'assembled'/'compiled' texts work, I would like to mention here at least the following classical study: Mary Ann Caws, *Reading Frames in Modern Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Useful remarks on the unity of composite body of works are also in the sub-section 'Unity' of Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* [1987], trans. by Jane E. Lewin, with a Foreword by Richard Macksey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 201-206.

In October 1945, upon receiving copies of the 1944 and 1945 editions, Contini sent his congratulations to Gadda in a still unpublished postcard, looking favourably at the removal of the three above-mentioned disegni:

> ho letto (o piuttosto riletto) con augumentante entusiasmo l'Adalgisa, e per quanto indecente possa sembrarti dir queste cose su una postale e per 'mano' della macchina, mi pare che tanto mestiere a servizio di tanta poesia siete in pochissimi ad averne, forse due, molto diversi, tu e Cecchi; più dei pur diversissimi Bacchelli e Landolfi. Nil melius in te, finora; il libro che ha l'impeto dei tuoi anni giovanili e l'astuzia dei tuoi anni maturi; e le espunzioni praticate nella 2ª ed. credo giovino all'unità tonale (Porta 1945, o piuttosto Proust eroicomico).[20]

In 1946, Walter Binni, also commenting on the reduced edition, observed that the fragments of *La cognizione* had little to do with the other disegni:

> Nella nuova edizione dell'*Adalgisa* scompaiono quei pezzi che nella prima edizione ci sembrarono coabitare un po' per forza con i veri 'disegni milanesi' che corrispondono al sottotitolo del libro non solo per il soggetto milanese, ma anche per un tono veramente di disegno, non […] di affresco movimentato e veramente romanzesco come i brani che si collegano alla *Cognizione del dolore*. Nella riduzione ai veri disegni, il libro diventa così in un certo senso un nuovo libro coerente, unitario, capace […] di dare alla nostra lettura un unico sfondo tonale e il vigoroso piacere di una vicenda stilistica unitaria: anche se i brani raccolti vivono di pretesti narrativi diversi.[21]

In spite of this and other remarks, Gadda reintegrated the three disegni into the definitive edition of *L'Adalgisa* in the collective volume *I sogni e la folgore* published in 1955 for Einaudi: a *summa narrativa* where *L'Adalgisa* is grouped together with two previous miscellaneous collections, *La Madonna dei Filosofi* (1931) and *Il castello di Udine* (1934), one lined up after the other in chronological order. The same applies for the 1960 Einaudi reedition of *L'Adalgisa*, where we find *Notte di luna*, *Strane dicerie*, and *Navi approdano*, definitively reinserted into the collection. The three disegni considered out of tune by many must have appeared, then, not so dissonant to Gadda himself.

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[20] L'A[12] 342.

[21] Walter Binni, '*L'Adalgisa* di Gadda' [1946], in *Poetica e poesia: letture novecentesche*, ed. by Francesco and Lanfranco Binni, with an Introduction by Giulio Ferroni (Milan: Sansoni, 1999), pp. 110-115: 110-111.

The disegni derived from *Un fulmine* and the free-standing pieces *Claudio disimpara* and *Quattro figlie* are set in or near Milan. They essentially cover different aspects of the same subject matter: Milan (and more broadly Lombardy) and its inhabitants, paying special attention to the life of the middle and high bourgeoisie but not exlusively, narrated with a style and intonation which embrace different varieties across what we could call a satirical-grotesque spectrum, but which remain, all in all, reasonably consistent.

On the other hand, as *La cognizione* differs from *Un fulmine*, so the disegni derived from it differ from all the other disegni, and not simply because they are not set in Milan. Partial as they are, *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano* do not fully develop the story of the relationship between Gonzalo and his mother, but open nonetheless, towards the central part of the collection, an extravagant narrative line which remains suspended and is evidently irreconcilable with that of the disegni derived from *Un fulmine* (or with what is narrated in the other disegni set in Milan), bringing in mysterious characters – Gonzalo and his mother – who do not appear elsewhere. What is more, the viewpoint of Gonzalo introduces anger, violence, a sense of exclusion, and tragedy: emotions and registers which are not completely absent in the remainding disegni, but which are distinguished, in the two South American disegni, by a different quality and intensity. Given that the extravagant nature of *Notte di luna* is motivated by its proemial function and that its suburban setting alludes to the nearby presence of the city (although the disegno is not set in it), the main element of discordance in the collection is then represented by the presence of the two disegni cut out from *La cognizione*, not easily linked to the others. How to explain their presence?

As happens in *La cognizione*, so in the disegni derived from it, the names of places and other details in the description of Maradagàl, significantly inhabited by Italian emigrants, bring to mind Italy and the Brianza area of Lombardy. The Milanese nature specified in the subtitle of the collection – 'disegni milanesi' – thus provides a framework

valid for the entire collection: a proper, literal *milanesità* in the disegni set in Milan; a metaphorical, allegorical *milanesità* (or Lombard air) in the South American diptych, whose foreign ambience is decrypted by readers as an exotic representation of their homeland.

Strane dicerie and *Navi approdano* offer a grotesque representation of this South American/Lombard society, animated by a violent attitude whose intensity is unequaled in the other disegni but whose derisive and desecrating spirit has something in common with the scenes of social representation found in the disegni set in Milan. 'Il drastico taglio operato nel volume Le Monnier' – Clelia Martignoni observes, commenting on which parts of *La cognizione* were selected by Gadda to be included in *L'Adalgisa* – 'privilegia con buone ragioni la potente scena satirico-grottesca dei borghesi al ristorante, la più congrua alla vena umoristico-grottesca dell'*Adalgisa*'.[22] 'La visione di Gonzalo da parte della collettività, elaborata in *Strane dicerie*' – Giuliano Cenati argues – 'si specchierebbe nella visione della collettività da parte di Gonzalo, rimuginata in *Navi approdano*. La grandiosità grottesca dell'una […] è complementare al quadro dei *restaurants* tratteggiato nell'altro, sull'onda della distorcente trasfigurazione gonzalesca'.[23] Gadda, in other words, would have looked at *La cognizione* and extracted from it two sequences considered to be in line with the rest of the disegni for their satirical-grotesque intonation and the themes tackled therein; two sequences also connected by a mechanism of reverberation, as the portrait of Gonzalo through the perspective of society in one sequence is mirrored by the portrait of society through Gonzalo's perspective in the other.

This notwithstanding, the diegetic dissimilarity of *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano*, and the exceptional intensity that distinguishes the attack of Gonzalo, have also

[22] Clelia Martignoni, 'Leggere *L'Adalgisa* arretrando a *Un fulmine sul 220*', QI, 5 (2007), pp. 59-83: 172.

[23] Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 24. For Cenati, the distribution of the disegni in the collection is presided over by a form of geometric logic, with the book being divided into two halves: one closed by *Strane dicerie*, the other opened by *Navi approdano*: see ibid., p. 88. See also in my introduction, section 1.

been seen as ultimately irreducible to a full and actual integration of the fragments of *La cognizione* in the collection. One cannot but be surprised – as Martignoni also considers – that Gadda 'non si preoccupi affatto di tagliare i fili con *La cognizione*, come avrebbe potuto fare senza fatica, e lasci persistere in più tratti le drammatiche tracce del tormentoso rapporto madre-figlio e pochi flash della madre in cucina'.[24] The readers of *L'Adalgisa* catch a glimpse of the fading narrative of the novel, which incoherently overlaps with what is narrated in the disegni derived from *Un fulmine*. *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano* 'rendono piuttosto difficoltosa' – Cenati also acknowledges – 'la tenuta del libro in quanto macchina affabulatoria integrata: eccessivo lo scarto d'intonazione e di concezione fantastica rispetto ai "disegni milanesi"'.[25] In other words, the presence of *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano* introduces in the collection an element of internal diversity which is not easy to explain; a diversity undermining its unity from within. The worlds of *Un fulmine* and *La cognizione* are made to coexist as they are brought together by Gadda within a unitary framework, but they coexist therein as distinct: 'macro-regioni', in Cristina Savettieri's words, 'intese come unità intenzionali'.[26] If we now also consider that the collection is opened by *Notte di luna* and that both *Claudio disimpara a vivere* and *Quattro figlie* do not contribute to the storyline partially developed in the disegni derived from *Un fulmine*, we will understand how *L'Adalgisa* can appear as a collection of disparate pieces, rather than a veritable book.

By bringing together texts coming from different strands of his writing, the 1944 Le Monnier collection presents itself as taking stock of what Gadda had been working on in the previous decade or so (with the exception of *Notte di luna* derived from the 1920s *Racconto*

[24] Martignoni, 'Leggere *L'Adalgisa* arretrando a *Un fulmine*', p. 172.
[25] Cenati, *Disegni, bizze, e fulmini*, p. 30.
[26] Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, p. 189.

italiano), significantly following the two previous miscellanies published in the 1930s, *La Madonna dei Filosofi* and *Il Castello di Udine*. It is along these lines that Gadda himself presented the book while promoting it to friends and acquaintances. In January 1944, he wrote to Ferdinando Ballo: 'È finalmente uscito il mio volume di racconti, che era in preparazione da più di un anno. Esso reca la data del 1944, ma raccoglie scritti del decennio, qualcuno poco noto o inedito in parte; con copiosissime note semi-burlesche' [L'A[12] 340]. In the same month, he also informed his cousin Piero Gadda Conti: 'Ora, a fine dicembre (finito di stampare il 22 dicembre) è uscito da Le Monnier nei quaderni diretti da De Robertis, il volume *L'Adalgisa* disegni milanesi, pagine 431, con dieci racconti del decennio' [L'A[12] 340].

Is *L'Adalgisa* to be considered a mere collection of pieces attesting to different and distinct strands in Gadda's writing? Are the connections between some disegni and others to be understood as incidentally caused by their derivation from a common novelistic *avant-texte*? A trivial but perhaps not insignificant detail is that *L'Adalgisa* is not divided into sections or clear-cut parts, nor are the disegni aligned according to a chronological criterion which reflects their different origins. On the contrary, Gadda's book deliberately shuffles the cards on the table, arranging the disegni according to some other principle that has little to do with the inner chronology of his writing, and provides them with a title that directs the reader's attention to one single character, Adalgisa, and a subtitle that identifies all the texts gathered as 'disegni milanesi'.

Moving on from Contini's comment on the unity of the book, the rest of this chapter will reflect on *L'Adalgisa* as a whole, questioning the significance of the book as a collection, and asking if the pieces collected acquire their meaning not only as pieces in their own right but also as parts of the whole. The question arising here concerns, in other words, the unity of the book. In the introduction we have seen that scholars have previously faced

this question, paying attention to how the collection itself works as a narrative organism or even a defective novel.[27] In what follows, I will focus on the narrative connections and narrative incoherence found in the disegni set in Milan, and on several specific points of contact (not previously noted by critics) between *Navi approdano* and two disegni derived from *Un fulmine*, reconsidering to what extent and in which terms the satirical intonation and the representation of society can represent an element of cohesion. In so doing, my intention is to challenge the way in which the collection is often read, and seeing the coexistence of elements suggesting consistency and dispersion as one of its characteristic features.

2.3. Narrative connections and incoherence in the disegni set in Milan

As mentioned above, *I ritagli di tempo* represents the bourgeois practicing foreign languages in the Circolo Filologico, paying particular attention to Gian Maria Caviggioni and his nephew Valerio. In *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori*, Valerio escorts his young and beautiful aunt Elsa, wife of Gian Maria, to a concert taking place at the conservatory of Milan on 'domenica, 28 aprile 1931' [L'A 443]. In *Al Parco, in una sera di maggio*, Elsa meets with her sister-in-law Adalgisa. The last disegno, *L'Adalgisa*, begins immediately with Adalgisa's lamentations, her anger being particularly addressed – as it was the case at the end of *Al Parco* – against Eleonora Vigoni, a relative of Adalgisa's deceased husband.

[27] See in partic. Pedriali, '*L'Adalgisa* e le forme del nome', in *Maratona Gadda*, ed. by Rinaldi; Ead., 'Le meraviglie della declinazione lunga' in *Un meraviglioso ordegno*, ed. by Terzoli, Veronese and Vitale; Stracuzzi, 'Il fuoco della favola', where *L'Adalgisa* is defined a defective novel. See also De Michelis, *Tra il 'quid' e il 'quod'*, mentioned above in this chapter.

The connection between *Al Parco* and *L'Adalgisa* is evident to even the most distracted readers as one seamlessly continues the other: the two of them were indeed contiguous in the narrative of *Un fulmine*, both being included in the 'parte ultima' of the third chapter. Derived instead from the 'parte prima' of the third chapter, *Un 'concerto'* appears at first – despite Elsa's presence – to be less related to *Al Parco* and *L'Adalgisa*, as the concert described has apparently no direct narrative connection with Elsa and Adalgisa's encounter. A connection between the three disegni is nonetheless explicitly affirmed in *Al Parco*, where we are informed that Eleonora was in fact also present at the concert:

> È utile registrare qui che l'eletta gentildonna [donna Eleonora] aveva 'assistito', cioè pòrto (col miglior garbo) le sue membrane timpaniche, al concerto del 28 aprile: quello di cui s'è ragionato poc'anzi, che l'ingegner Valerio, viceversa, ebbe ad accompagnar la zia, 'a farle un po' da cavaliere'. La dama v'era intervenuta: non molte seggiole discosto dalla sella curule […]. [L'A 487]

The concert is also mentioned a few lines below in reference to the gossip spread around on Elsa and Valerio by Eleonora:

> E un altro giorno poi, poco dopo il concerto, donna Eleonora aveva occorso a Valerio e ad Elsa in via Brera, davanti il general comando […].
>
> Da quell'incontro nacque dunque senz'altro – combinatosi poche ore dopo con alcuni giudiziosissimi monosillabi del senatore quella tale diceria che serpeggiò poi per alcun tempo nella nostra città, prima che altri fatti, per quanto incerti, 'venissero in luce'. La diceria si tramutò in una convinzione radicata, e si epicizzò in novità chiara e venusta di motti, secondo il solito: '….che l'Elsa Caviggioni era stata veduta al Conservatorio ecc. ecc.; il giorno del concerto Stangermann ecc. ecc.: insèmma cont el so nevód ecc. ecc.'. [L'A 488-490]

The concert attended by Elsa and Valerio and the meeting of Elsa and Adalgisa happen on the same day in *Un fulmine*: it is directly after the concert that Elsa catches a taxi and heads to Parco Sempione to meet with Adalgisa, with the secret hope of bumping into Bruno as well. In revising and readapting the material of the novel for the collection, Gadda separated the two episodes on the fictional temporal line. In the disegni, then, the concert still takes place in April (in *Un fulmine*, 'domenica 8 aprile 1930, alle ore 15 precise' [Fu

101]; in *L'Adalgisa*, 'domenica, 28 aprile 1931, alle ore 16 precise' [L'A 443]), while the meeting is instead relocated to May. The change is reflected in the previously mentioned layout, where *Al Parco, in una sera di maggio* was at first titled – in line with *Un fulmine* – *Al Parco, in una sera di aprile*.[28]

By distancing one from the other, Gadda made the episodes more autonomous on a narrative level, but also incremented the references to the concert, mentioned, as we have seen, three times.[29] The result is that readers are still made aware that those described throughout different disegni are in fact the same characters, with the concert preceding the meeting on the fictional line of time also in the collection. *Un 'concerto', Al Parco*, and *L'Adalgisa* are thus presented as part of the same diegetic universe, and that between them may be described as a relation of narrative consequentiality, trespassing the ideal diegetic borders of each disegno and connecting them together as it would happen across chapters of a novel. There are, that is, partial connections between certains sections of the collection, but not between others.

What about *Quando il Girolamo ha smesso*…., the other disegno derived from *Un fulmine*? Elsa, Gian Maria, Valerio, and Bruno appear also there, but Gian Maria and his family are surprisingly named 'Cavenaghi' and not 'Caviggioni' as in the disegni above. Mentioned in the very first line of *Quando il Girolamo*, and repeated several times throughout, the surname is hard to miss: 'A lucidare i parquets, in casa Cavenaghi, era sempre venuta la "Confidenza"' [L'A 301]. From the second draft of *Un fulmine* onwards, the family was uniformly referred to as 'Cavigioli'. The onomastic inconsistency, then, does

[28] Cf. Vela, 'Nota al testo' in L'A[12] 349.

[29] The only reference made in *Un fulmine* to the concert is given almost in passing and without informing the reader that donna Eleonora also attended the event: 'La dicerìa si tramutò in una convinzione radicata e si espresse con novità chiara e venusta di molti, secondo solito: "…che la Elsa era stata veduta al Conservatorio insemma all'ingegner Valerio… e poi al Parco… da sola cont i occ ross…"' [Fu 129-130].

not genetically derive from the incomplete novel, but was introduced in the passage from the novel to the collection.[30]

In contrast with the choice taken for the surname, the location of the flat where Elsa and Gian Maria live is unchanged in both *Quando il Girolamo* and *Un 'concerto'*. In *Quando il Girolamo*, the Cavenaghis are said to be living in via Pontaccio, following their move from via Santa Maria Fulcorina:

> I Cavenaghi di cui si parla 'erano poi quelli di Santa Maria Fulcorina', 'che adesso però stanno lì in via Pontaccio', perché in Santa Maria Fulcorina 'gh'han tràa giò la cà'. Il trasferimento (trasloco) era stata una cosa penosa, specie per il N.H. Gian Maria, 'dopo quarantadü ann!'. Una tragedia. Ove si pensi che s'era verificato non soltanto dopo quarantadue anni di pertinace abbarbicamento fulcorino da parte da parte dei Cavenaghi-discendenza, ma, quel che è peggio, a seguito di brusca intimazione dell'Autorità […]. [L'A 317]

In *Un 'concerto'*, the Caviggionis live in via Pontaccio:

> Poco dopo il Bruno in persona era apparso in via Pontaccio come un'ombra già ripentita d'aver appena attraversato lo Stige: insinuatosi in cucina dalla porticciuola di servizio. [L'A 444]

Let us consider *Un fulmine*. In the chapter which offered the *avant-texte* for *Quando il Girolamo*, the Cavigiolis had moved from via Santa Maria Fulcorina to via Spiga:

> I Cavigioli di cui si parla 'erano poi quelli di Santa Maria Fulcorina'. 'Che adesso però stanno lì in via Spiga', perché in Santa Maria Fulcorina 'ch'an traa giò la cà'. Il trasloco era stata una cosa penosa, se si pensi che s'era verificato dopo trentatré anni! e in seguito a brusca intimazione dell'Autorità […]. [Fu 66]

In the chapter which offered the *avant-texte* for *Un 'concerto'*, no reference was provided to the location of the flat:

[30] The surname 'Cavenaghi' appeared indeed for the first time when in February 1943 Gadda published – cf. note 8 above – *Quando il Girolamo* in the periodical *La Ruota*.

Poco dopo, Bruno stesso era arrivato in cucina, dalla porta di servizio, mortificatissimo […]. [Fu 102]

Although they appear to be very small, these changes demonstrate something significant. Gadda first introduced the reference to via Pontaccio while revising the third chapter of *Un fulmine* for *Un 'concerto'*, and then again while revising the first chapter for *Quando il Girolamo*, where indeed the reading 'via Spiga' was corrected to 'via Pontaccio'. With this alteration, a form of diegetic uniformity is created across different pieces in the collection: how should we reconcile this with the onomastic incoherence?[31]

As the surname 'Cavenaghi' remained unchanged in the 1945 and 1955 re-editions of *L'Adalgisa*, where some minor mistakes and misprints were instead corrected, it is highly unlikely that the incoherence still found in the collection was caused by simple oversight. As we have seen, *Quando il Girolamo* was added to the index at a later stage. This slight delay might have allowed Gadda to reflect on whether he wanted to use the same surname used in the disegni that were already part of the collection. Gadda might have decided against the adoption of a single surname only then, so as to create – as Cenati suggests – a later, artificial distinction between *Quando il Girolamo* and the disegni genetically related to it, with the effect of concealing their derivation from the same *avant-texte*.[32] In addition to this

[31] It is also worth mentioning that the servant of Elsa and Gian Maria is explicitly identified in *Al Parco* as 'Maria (quella del rubinetto)' [L'A 494] by making a reference to a specific episode narrated in *Quando il Girolamo*, where Maria had attributed her own pregnancy to the humidity suffered while washing up the dishes. In this case, however, the identification of Maria and the reference to the episode were both included in *Un fulmine* [Fu 134]. A further intertextual reference between different disegni is that provided in the last disegno, where a reference to donna Eleonora made by Adalgisa is explicitly commented by the narrator with a reference to what previously narrated in another disegno: '"Domani sarai una vecchia…. piena di rughe…. come quella che è passata poco fa…. in della soa carrozza…. di temp de Carlo Códega…." (Era donna Eleonora, col Leopoldo in serpa servitore-cocchiere, trainati dall'atassico esemplare equino che ho tentato di descrivere)' [L'A 527]. The comment is not found in *Un fulmine* ('"Domani sarai una vecchia, piena di rughe, coma quella che è passata poco fa…"' [Fu 158]), and was therefore added in the passage to the collection.

[32] Cf. Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 38. One cannot but wonder why Gadda did not do the same with *Al Parco*, also added to the index at a later stage. *Al Parco* maintains obvious narrative relations with both *Un 'concerto'* and *L'Adalgisa*, which in the volume are placed right before and after it, forming a compact block. A possible answer is that in the case of these three disegni the narrative continuity is far too obvious to be even partially concealed with a change of surname.

– Cenati later reflects – Gadda might have intended to remark on the purely exemplary value of the family more frequently referred to in the collection as the typical well-to-do family of Milan, with the effect of undermining any sense of documentary verisimilitude: little does it matter, in other words, if Elsa and Gian Maria are called 'Cavenaghi' or 'Caviggioni'.[33]

While agreeing with both of these interpretations, I nonetheless think – as Cenati also considers – that the incoherence has the potential to unsettle the overall onomastic system within which the characters mentioned in one disegno are identified with characters mentioned in others.[34] What is at stake here are the connections established by each single part within the whole of the collection. Is the universe narrated in *Quando il Girolamo* the same as the one narrated in the disegni with which *Quando il Girolamo* nonetheless retains obvious narrative connections? And, on a more theoretical level, are the disegni coming from the same source to be considered linked by narrative consequentiality, or are they separate stories which happened to be in some ways similar but are potentially independent, as variations made on a common matrix provided by 1920s-1930s Milan? The picture becomes even more complicated as we consider *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*, not derived from *Un fulmine*.

According to a popular rumour reported in *Al Parco,* Valerio Caviggioni is engaged to a girl named Lola De Marpioni:

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[33] Cf. Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 38. This hypothesis seems all the more plausible as we consider that some unidentified Cavenaghis appear indeed between the families convened to the Giuseppe Verdi in *Un 'concerto'* alongside the Caviggionis: 'La tribù dei Caviggioni – Perego – Lattuada – Garbagnati – Ghezzi – Corbetta – Trabattoni – Gavirazzi – Santambrogio – Cavenaghi – Freguglia era al completo' [L'A 458]. No reference to a Cavenaghi family is found in the corresponding passage of *Un fulmine*: 'Ahi! che la tribù dei Cavigioli – Lattuada – Ghiringhelli – Perego – Rusconi – Corbetta – Frigerio era al completo' [Fu 109]. A Cavenaghi family is also mentioned in note number 52 of the disegno of *L'Adalgisa* (absent, as most of the notes are, in *Un fulmine*): '"Guigoni & Bossi": un rinomato "studio (= laboratorio fotografico)" dell'epoca: (1900-1915). I capolavori dell'arte uscivan di "studio" (*sic*) firmati in elegante corsivo […]. Talché sotto il "ritratto di famiglia" dei cugini Borella, (nidiata impagabile: e tutti in pose sempre aggraziate), di che si felicitava il salotto dei Cavenaghi, tu non vi leggevi "Borella", "Ecco i Borella": checché!: te tu sillabavi stupefatto, ascendendo a 20°: "Gui-go-ni e Bos-si"' [L'A 564]. To further muddy the water, 'Borella' is the maiden name of Adalgisa, renamed 'Biandronni' after the marriage with Carlo: 'Adalgisa Borella, vedova Biandronni!' [L'A 548].

[34] Cf. Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 88.

'Che era poi fidanzato…. o in via di fidanzarsi…. be', ma l'uomo è cacciatore…. si sa!.... cont ona gran bela tôsa…. Per quanto, ufficialmente, bisògna fa fìnta de savè nagòtt…. Una magnifica ragazza! Piena di vivacità e spirito….: e sono poi nobili, oltre tutto…. In fato de danée, magari…. de quii ghe n'han minga tanti…. Sigüra…. La Lola De Marpioni,…. la sorella della Maria Filiberta!.... precisamente!.... No,…. quella è la campionessa di pattinaggio….; questa qui no, non ricordo di che cosa sia campionessa…. Gran brava gente!.... che stanno lì domà al principio di via Spiga, in del palazz Brügna,…. ecc., ecc.'. [L'A 490]

The de' Marpioni family portrayed in *Quattro figlie* lives in a flat located in the Palazzo Brugna and the de' Marpioni daughters include two girls named Carolina (Lola) and Maria Filiberta.[35] There is no doubt, then, that the girl mentioned as fiancée of Valerio – although her surname is, with a slightly different graphic variation, 'De Marpioni' – is to be identified with the Carolina de' Marpioni found in *Quattro figlie*.

If we look at the material of *Un fulmine*, in correspondence with the textual passage from which Gadda derived *Al Parco*, we can verify – as first noted by Martignoni[36] – that Valerio was there engaged to some 'Jeanne Garbagnoni'. No reference was made to Lola or any other de' Marpioni girl:

'Proprio un giovane serio, e poi anca fidanzato, benché ufficialmente bisognava fà finta de nagott, di una gran bella signorina: la Jeanne Garbagnoni…

Garbagnoni?…

Proprî… Che hin poeu quei de via Caradoss… cioè no, de Via Giovanni Codosso… Una delle nostre famiglie d'una volta… bon mè'l pan anca lor… e poeu sciori… 'Per quanto però… coi tempi che corrono… mah!...' Venivano dei gran respiri, sospiri. I tempi minavano non tanto le cassette di sicurezza dei Garbagnoni, di formato medio e disseminate un po' per tutte le cave delle banche cittadine, quanto forse la virtù di Valerio.– 'Coi tempi che corrono! Le mani sul fuoco… si sa… il maschio è cacciatore…'. [Fu 130]

Deliberately added when Gadda revised the text of *Un fulmine* when developing *Al Parco*, where Jeanne disappears, the reference to Lola offers proof of an intention to draw *Quattro figlie* into the diegetic orbit of the disegni extracted from *Un fulmine*. It is not a

[35] Cf. in *Quattro figlie*: 'della Lola e della Maria Filiberta: le due figlie maggiori del N.H. Cipriano' [L'A 356]; 'nel 1920, non ostante la tristezza delle annate, s'era traslocato in via Spiga al 21 […] era proprio il palazzo Brügna' [356].

[36] Cf. Martignoni, 'Leggere *L'Adalgisa* arretrando a *Un fulmine*', p. 171.

coincidence that readers and also scholars often think *Quattro figlie* was derived from *Un fulmine* while, in fact, it was most probably conceived as a text on its own.[37] Lola and Valerio's engagement represents, as Martignoni comments, 'un malizioso nodo in più nella già stretta "tribù" endogamica, e nel contempo nella tela narrativa d'insieme venendo a congiungere materiali geneticamente indipendenti per suggerirne l'unità'.[38] A minimal change creates a bridge between disegni genetically unrelated.

How to reconcile the onomastic incoherence of *Quando il Girolamo*, isolated in one way from the other disegni, with the intention of anchoring *Quattro figlie* to a larger group of texts and thus further increasing the overall inner level of narrative coherence and compactness? One of the features of the book, as is becoming evident, is that it contrastingly presents itself as combining centrifugal and centripetal tendencies. It favours dispersion and narrative fragmentation on the one hand while promoting integration and unification on the other. With this in mind, let us turn to the disegni derived from *La cognizione*, where we are presented with something almost entirely different from what seen so far.

2.4. Bruno and Gonzalo: 'here' and 'there' in the collection

Strane dicerie begins with a panoramic description of the rural residencies of the San Juan coast in Maradagàl, amongst which there is villa Maria Giuseppina owned by the Bertolonis. Since rumour has it – the 'strane dicerie' of the title – that the villa is haunted by the ghost of the last tenant, only the gatehouse is rented to the 'colonnello medico Di Pascuale' [L'A

[37] Isella himself refers to Elsa as 'la protagonista del *Fulmine sul 220*' and 'moglie intristita del Nobilis Homo don' Cipriano de' Marpioni' in DM XXIII, but Elsa is never the wife of Cipriano, a character who is only found in *Quattro figlie*. Cf. also Stracuzzi, 'Il fuoco della favola', p. 82. The confusion can also be suggested by the fact that *Quattro figlie* also has other elements in common with the other disegni, such as the presence of dottor Piva in L'A 373.

[38] Martignoni, 'Leggere *L'Adalgisa* arretrando a *Un fulmine*', p. 171.

389], who befriends the local doctor. The routine of this latter – on whom the attention of the disegno moves – is one day interrupted by a servant coming from the nearby villa Pirobutirro, asking him to visit his mistress's son. The doctor heads to the villa while wondering about the gossip circulating about the son. The disegno ends on such gossip, leaving the doctor to continue on his way to the villa.

Separated from *Strane dicerie* by *I ritagli di tempo*, *Navi approdano* abruptly begins with a close-up description of the son:

> Non beveva mai liquori. Non fumava. Non era neppur pensabile che dopo lo stento faticoso de' suoi giorni, così avaramente retribuiti dalla Compañía de Ditribución, ci fosse denaro per gli alcaloidi costosi di cui avevano riferito, fino a quel tempo, i giornali, un po' tutti, sia del Maradagàl vincitore sia del debellato Parapagàl; di cui spiluzzicava anche, non appena le venisse fatto, certa letteratura d'avanguardia tra ribelle e satanica insediatasi nelle edicole delle stazioni. D'altronde egli lavorava, per quanto malvolentieri, proprio come sognano le madri che abbia a lavorare il lor figlio, cioè impartendo ordini ai dipendenti: alle ore d'agio, dopo aver distribuito milioni di chilowattora a tutti i cotonifici del Nevado Bajo, alle fabbriche invitte, allora, trovato un minuto a se stesso, apriva i libri, stanco, senza aver poi modo di arrivare a leggerli interi. [L'A 428]

As the opening of the disegno makes clear, Gonzalo is responsible for the distribution of electrical power in Maradagàl. In the words of a barber's apprentice ('"Permítame, señor ingeniero"' [L'A 438]), Gonzalo is indeed an engineer, like the many found in the disegni derived from *Un fulmine*.[39] The profession practiced by Gonzalo is thus a tenuous connection between him and the characters living in Milan.

The mother has made a soup for Gonzalo, who, unable to sit down and eat, stands by the kitchen table. Looking at the light of the oil lamp, he reflects on how the unwillingness or inability of his parents to provide him with financial security has contributed to making of him a social outcast:

[39] Gian Maria prides himself on the honorary title of engineer; his nephew Valerio has graduated at the Politecnico; Claudio Valeri of *Claudio disimpara*, who is a student of economics, is invited by Doralice's uncle, professor and engineer, to a reception crowded with many other engineers; and so on.

Quel lumignolo così stanco e dimesso […] gli apparve essere tutto quello che la madre concedeva: nella casa abitata dal tarlo, nel fondo della campagna solitaria. Era, in ogni modo, tutto quello che il padre e la madre avevano ritenuto bastevole, dopoché utile, alla vita, al progresso, alla felicità dei figli. Eppure avevano ben conosciuto anche loro, cane il diavolo! quali mai tessere, o biglietti d'invito, qual sorta di pentàcoli o di talismani unti valevano verso le porte, in disserrare ai mortali, e fino ai pitecàntropi-granoturco, i battenti instoriati d'oro e d'avorio massiccio, le girevoli portiere degli Odéons. [L'A 428]

Although they must have been aware of the role of money and social status ('quali mai tessere, o biglietti d'invito, qual sorta di pentàcoli o di talismani unti') in one's acceptance within certain circles and environments, Gonzalo's parents have nonetheless failed – Gonzalo considers – to provide him with what was necessary. Gonzalo feels like someone who is left outside a cinema ('le porte […], i battenti instoriati d'oro e d'avorio massiccio, le girevoli portiere degli Odéons') where others are instead welcomed for their greater wealth.

Also left outside a cinema in Milan is also Bruno in the last scene of *Quando il Girolamo*:

sfiorava cupo gli 'amici': la mezza lingera domenicale ferma davanti il cinema Ticinese alla Vedra, a tirare il ròccolo a una qualche ragazza. Con il pensiero alle difficoltà dell'entrata, lui, Bruno, senza neanche una mezza popolare nel portafoglio: e vedersi passare avanti un po' tutti, tutti! e la facile e disinvolta accessione di quegli otto o nove discoli; che sparivano l'uno dopo l'altro, come la cosa più naturale del mondo, dietro i tendaggi rossi, grevi, della felicità e del mistero. Fino all'ultimo! L'avevano guardato di sfuggita, a occhi socchiusi: con la sigheretta fra i labbri, le scarpe cricchianti sul marciapiede. Parevano irridere, in un sottinteso pieno d'impertinenza o d'una spavalda franchezza, alla sua manifesta 'mancanza di spiccioli', a quella tragica 'penuria di circolante' che lo affliggeva da mesi. [L'A 328-329]

Slimmer and undernourished in *Quando il Girolamo*, Bruno is at other times described as muscular and good-looking. Coming from the lower class, unsophisticated, he is employed as a delivery man by Gian Maria in *Un 'concerto'*. In *Al Parco*, his body captures Elsa's attention. He often complains about the lack of food troubling him, and in *Un 'concerto'* he immediately accepts the offer of a free meal in the Caviggioni kitchen. On the other hand, coming from a much higher social rank, Gonzalo is cultured, melancholic, and irascible; a hypochondriac, he often turns to the doctor to be reassured of his health.

According to the gossip presented in *Strane dicerie*, where he is associated with excess and overeating, he has even risked choking while swallowing seafood (a sea urchin or shellfish).

Almost the opposite of each other in some regards, Bruno and Gonzalo nonetheless face similar experiences. As Gonzalo understands that his economic condition has prevented him from being welcomed in society, so Bruno is left helpless and alone after the closing of the butcher's where he was previously employed. At the end of *Quando il Girolamo*, Bruno watches others entering a place where he is not admitted, reflecting on the importance of money in the society in which he lives, just like Gonzalo imagines himself left outside the 'girevoli portiere degli Odéons'. Thus, the experiences of Bruno and Gonzalo create a link between the world of *La cognizione* and the world of *Un fulmine*: what one suffers in Milan is comparable to what is lived by the other in Maradagàl. As Bruno appears first in *Quando il Girolamo* and then in all the three final disegni, while instead Gonzalo dominates the middle of the collection, Bruno and Gonzalo form a pair of male outcasts, alongside another pair of outcasts, that formed by Elsa and Adalgisa.[40]

A further point to note is that, although he takes up Gonzalo's perspective in describing society, the narrator of *Navi approdano* addresses readers located in the northern hemisphere, whose social standard is that of Italy and/or Europe, and not that of South America. Indeed, with a remark soaked in racism, he specifies that '*even* in South America' – '*e fino* ai pitecàntropi-granoturco'[41] – money and social prestige are essential for social

[40] Cenati argues that Elsa and Adalgisa together act in their own turn as doubles of Gonzalo: cf. Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 88. According to Cenati, the overall compactness of the whole of the collection is also obtained – given the narrative-diegetic incompatibility of the two disegni taken from *La cognizione* with the other disegni – by means of reverberations of images and situations: the rumours on Elsa and Adalgisa recall, for example, the rumours on Gonzalo; the lightning rod which redirects a thunderbolt striking a rural villa in Maradagàl prefigures the lightning rod of a Brianza villa mentioned in a disegno set in Milan; and so on. Cf. Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 88. On the network of '*motivi* ripresi per tutto il macrotesto che corroborano con la loro reiterata rifunzionalizzazione in vari modi contesti, la tenuta stessa del macrotesto', see also De Michelis, *Tra il 'quid' e il 'quod'*, pp. 104-112.

[41] 'Pitecàntropi-granoturco' is explained as follows by Emilio Manzotti in Carlo Emilio Gadda, *La cognizione del dolore*, critical and commented edition by Emilio Manzotti (Turin: Einaudi, 1987), p. 319: 'I contadini Iukonesi, a metà fra la scimmia antropomorfa e il portato d'una rustica poverissima alimentazione'.

integration. The deictic centre, the implicit narrative *here*, is not placed in Maradagàl, which is instead presented, in narrative terms, as the *other* place: as a *there*. In the disegni taken from *La cognizione*, Milan act as an absent centre. Removed from the novelistic context of *La cognizione*, this geographical remark potentially acquires in the collection, where the story of Bruno precedes that of Gonzalo, a new meaning: as happens to Bruno *here*, in Milan, also *there*, in South America, one is left outside a film theatre. That of *Navi approdano* is presented, in the collection, as a world distant, but not at all extraneous to the dynamics of the world familiar to the readers narrated in the disegni set in Milan; on the contrary, the two worlds are in some ways parallel to one another. This becomes even clearer as we plunge into Gonzalo's delirious fantasy, observing from his perspective the social collective from which he feels excluded.

2.5. Three interrelated pictures of society

In *Navi approdano*, society is overwhelmingly perceived and visualised, in Gonzalo's perspective, by making use of a marine and nautical imagery:

> Maree d'uomini e di femmine! con distinguibile galleggiamento di parrucchieri di lusso, tenitrici di case pubbliche, fabbricanti di accessori per motociclette, e coccarde. […] Tempestoso mare addosso le zattere sbatacchiate delle genti sperse, slavate, con sargassi di cinesi o di bracci di negri fuor dal ribollire delle onde: armeni, russi, bianchi e rossi, arabi che s'erano conquistati una scialuppa col coltello alla mano, levantini veri con un carico, sulla spalla, di tappeti finti, di Monza: e sull'effuso mugghiare di quella turba in tobòga senza più né Cristo né diavolo, moltitudine flagellata contro la proda dal precipitare dell'onda, ecco, ecco, alfine! il trionfo blafardo di alcuni impresari di pompe funebri […]! Questo mare senza requie, fuori, sciabordava contro l'approdo di demenza, si abbatteva alle dementi riviere offrendo la sua perenne schiuma, ribevendosi la sua turpe risacca. [428-430]

With allusions to the historical waves of emigration resulting in the formation of Italian diasporic communities in South America, the arrival of immigrants landing in

Parapagàl in search of fortune is associated with the incessant succession of waves and tides of a stormy sea, conveying a sense of moral and intellectual confusion. As immigrants land in Parapagàl hoping to improve their standard of living and as society proliferates and the young generations replace the older ones, Gonzalo's anguished vision channels painful bewilderment and even a sense of death ('il trionfo blafardo di alcuni impresari funebri'). The long transoceanic journey moving bodies of people from all sorts of walks of life turns into a colossal shipwreck. The accumulation of bodies adrift at sea and the raging of the water creates the image of oppressive congestion and engorgement.

The derisive timbre is charged with verbal violence and often marked by outrageous misogyny and racism:

> Femmine! come barchi di cabotaggio rimessi a nuovo, stradipinte, col riso delle bassaridi aperto su trentadue denti fino agli orecchi; una sottanella gualcita, di mezza lana, a tegumentare d'un mistero da diez pesos (cinquantacinque di queste qua) la miseranda meccanica dello sculettamento: il cencio caccoso d'una negra avrebbe avuto più tono. […]
>
> Ragazzi: con gambe come due spàragi. Idioti dentro la capa più che se la fosse fatta di un tubero, infanti una pur che fosse favella: dopo dodici generazioni di granoturco e di migragna dai piedi verdi venuti fuori anche loro dall'Arca bastarda delle generazioni, a cercar di barbugliare una qualche loro millanteria tirchia nel foro: lo sbilenco foro di Pastrufazio! venuti giù, giù, dai formaggini fetenti del Monte Viejo alle più trombose bocciature dell'Uguirre, muti e acefali in castigliano, sordi al latino, reprobi al greco, inetti alle storie, col cervello sotto zero in geometria e in aritmetica, non sufficienti nel tiralinee, perfino con la geometria erano insufficienti! bisognava sfiatarsi per delle settimane, degli anni, a fargli capire che cos'è una carta del vittorioso Maradagàl! e come si fa a far le carte: e ancora ancora non ce la facevano, poveri tesori! [L'A 429-430]

As Stellardi observes, 'il mondo della *Cognizione* (o, più precisamente, quello di Gonzalo) è totalmente privo di carità, e totalmente pervaso (o invaso) da un gesto di pensiero e di giudizio, e quindi da una valenza etica penale e distruttiva, che non conoscono sollievo'.[42] There is little or no space, it seems, for indulgence or tolerance.

[42] Stellardi, 'La città che dispare dell'*Adalgisa*'.

A liquid imagery in some ways similar to the one found in *Navi approdano* is also at the basis of a long sequence in *Quando il Girolamo*, opened by a series of anaphoric invocations to the rivers of northern Italy:

> Oh confortevole aura, salubre terra e clima dell'Olona e del Lambro! oh, Sèveso! oh, pioppi! Oh! plasma germinativo della gente! Dove tu, per quanto minchione te tu sia, o anzi proprio e precisamente per quello, che ci hai nella testa un bel turàcciolo, te tu ti senti tenuto a galla come un papa senza neanche darti pena nuotare: da un clima unto e fraterno, da una pégola vivificatrice. Come una sagace broda: o lardo sfriggente, che si strugga nelle opere, e nella padella de' civili soccorsi. […] Oh! terra e aura, nei mattini di lavoro! A polmoni pieni, udendo battere cianfrini lontani, te tu vi respiri e vi sguazzi in un etere elisio, però sanguigno e luganegone, una specie di etere-lardo. Velato di fantasiose nebbie, o d'una allegante calura: tale una pittura di Tosi. Lieto di ceci e verze. Che bollono e aggallano, passato appena san Carlo, contubernali ad alcune costole di veridico porco, in pentola. [L'A 306-307]

Punctuated by exclamatory accents, the sequence develops into a comical and mocking celebration of Lombardy and its people, including the lower echelons of the working-class. As also indicated by a series of exhortations addressed to the same rivers invoked in the sample above ('vada, vada la nera Olona […]. Vada il Sevèso color caffè […]. Vada, deceda lungo il settembre l'elegia lenta del Lambro' [L'A 307-308]),[43] the syntax is animated by parallel structures. The cumulative rhythm results in the creation of list after list of social subjects and animals. The passage resembles a goliardic hymn or profane prayer: 'Oh! il vecchio facchino dal berretto scarlatto […]! Oh! il garzone del salumiere Freguglia […]. Oh, oh! il sangue vivente delle lavandaie nei mattini gelati! […] Oh! porcelli senza frode della cassina Mornaga, oh! materne vacche, oh! tremuli brumisti!' [308], and so on. Combining liquid imagery with a culinary dimension, the description of Lombardy as a bountiful, salubrious, and steamy land pivots around the recurring image of the 'plasma generativo' with its variants 'pégola vivificatrice' (ancient Tuscan for *pece*, 'pitch') and 'sagace broda' or 'lardo sfriggente'.

[43] On the exhortation addressed to the Olona, see ch. 4.1.

Society is on the other hand represented as a multiform and almost chaotic aggregate of people, expression of a vital instance of proliferation springing up from the fertile soil of Lombardy. It is this soil – understood as the ground of an almost mythical homeland – that insures the ultimate oneness of an otherwise variegated society:

> Un guazzabuglio di tram, un'epifania di meringhe, un rinascimento Bartesaghi, una quasi civile convivenza di salumai uricemici, di bozzolieri onesti, di elettrotecnici mazziniani: e di sballati architetti! Una bischeraggine generosa e totale, una vena romantica e brodolona, una antica luce dalle torri e dai tamburi delle cupole sui poveri morti. Oh! sangue e gente delle stragi e delle ibridazioni lontane, tra ligure e gallico e longobardo e minchione, con quello spruzzo di bugie curuli in coppa a dargli il sapore e la parvenza d'una civiltà, quasi polvere di cannella sulla panna frullata!
>
> […] Qui è il groppo, il nodo, qui è il plasma valido e vitale della gente, come un coàgulo di peccati e di porcelli su verde o bruna terra, sposa al seme: che ha coltre di neve, o di grani: o di fumigante letame. Popolo di pioppi meditabondi, corona di intangibili nevi. [L'A 307-308]

The image of the plasma channels a liquid notion of vitality, reflecting the relation of integration of the subject into his native environment, where the subject feels nourished and nurtured like in a maternal electromagnetic alveum: 'come feeders (barre alimentatrici) da cui ogni derivato circuito ripeta il flusso metallopermanente dell'elettrico' [L'A 307]. The broth of Lombardy sustains its native subjects, all the more so if they are gullible idiots ('tu, per quanto minchione te tu sia, o anzi proprio e precisamente per quello'). The timbre is comical and often derisive ('una quasi civile convivenza', 'una vena romantica e brodolona', 'tra ligure e gallico e longobardo e minchione'), veering towards the grotesque ('vi respiri e vi sguazzi in un etere elisio, però sanguigno e luganegone, una specie di etere-lardo', 'un coàgulo di peccati e di porcelli'), but is also light-hearted, embracing celebratory and commemorative accents, especially when listing different social subjects in the series of parallel invocations.

The liquid imagery expresses, in *Navi approdano*, the sense of besiegement felt by Gonzalo and, in *Quando il Girolamo*, the vital unity of Lombard society. Found in both the disegni, the liquid imagery is declined in a remarkedly different way, reflecting the more

general difference in tone which separates *Navi approdano* from *Quando il Girolamo*. Manzotti suggests that 'la visione allucinata di Gonzalo in piedi presso la tavola – "Maree d'uomini e di femmine! ecc." – andrà intesa per l'essenziale, dopo le immagini di un'improbabile fortuna in Sud America, come l'anti-celebrazione di un "plasma sociale", plasma *vitale* per quanto non *valido*, dal punto di vista di un escluso'.[44]

The liquid imagery expresses the different attitudes evidently adopted in the two disegni, but it nonetheless creates an effect of reverberation, suggesting a relationship of some kind between the maternal broth of *Quando il Girolamo* and the stormy sea of *Navi approdano*. Such a relationship is also visible in some minor and yet interesting lexical choices. If in *Quando il Girolamo* 'te tu ti senti *tenuto a galla* come un papa senza neanche darti pena nuotare', in *Navi approdano* the tides of the sea are marked by the 'distinguibile *galleggiamento* di parrucchieri di lusso'. If in *Navi approdano* there are 'sargassi di cinesi o di bracci di negri fuor dal *ribollire* delle onde', in *Quando il Girolamo* the broth of Lombardy contains chickpeas and cabbages 'che *bollono*, che *aggallano*'.[45] Despite the profound difference separating them by their general attitude, there are also some affinities, then, between *Navi approdano* and *Quando il Girolamo*. In both the disegni we find a large-scale, comprehensive picture of society visualised by bringing into focus with a similar cumulative technique the various components of this society one after the other. As seen in the examples above, the tone is undoubtedly harsher and much more aggressive in *Navi approdano* than in *Quando il Girolamo*, but in the pictures of society of both the disegni we find open derision and a taunting attitude, as well as recurring grotesque images.

[44] Manzotti, 'Una *Notte di luna*', in *Gadda: meditazione e racconto*, ed. by Savettieri, Benedetti and Lugnani, p. 202.

[45] Italics is mine here and in the following quotations from *L'Adalgisa*.

As yet undocumented, a few more specific lexical smilarities are concentrated in the passage of *Quando il Girolamo* where society is described as an eccentric melting pot – 'una quasi civile convivenza di *salumai uricemici*, di *bozzolieri* onesti, di *elettrotecnici* mazziniani: e di sballati architetti!' – dominated by a form of '*bischeraggine* generosa e *totale*'. 'Salumai', 'bozzolieri', and 'elettrotecnici', in fact, also occur in *Navi approdano*, as the image of the floating raft develops into the broader description of Maradagàlian society:

> i salumai grassi, come baffuti topi, insaccatori di topi; torreggianti sul loro marmo alto, con mannaia, i macellai-scimitarra; o paonazzi sensali, nel foro, a bociare sobre el ganado; o bozzolieri in marsina tumefatti dalla prosopopea delle virtù keltikesi al completo, con undici bargigli, se pure inetti a spiccare una sola zeta dai denti: elettrotecnici miopi come carciofi: preti (presbiteriani) in abito di ballo, droghieri brachiscelici dalle brache piene di saccarina contrabbandata; ingegneri cornuti, medici delle budella, e dei rognoni, e specialisti del perepepè: guardie giurate, ladri, gasisti, ruffiane asmatiche, stuccatori e stuccatrici d'ogni risma! [L'A 429]

Both the adjective *uricemico*, 'suffering of gout', and the reference to 'bischeraggine' as a trait common to the whole social body mentioned in *Quando il Girolamo* are also attested to in *Navi approdano*, just a few lines after the list sampled above. Here, too, the trait of 'bischeraggine' is ecumenically presented as a feature distinguishing all:

> La luce del mondo capovolto si beveva le sue folle uricemiche, profumieri in balìa del Progreso, uretre livellate dallo seltz. '¡Mozo, tráigame otro sifón!' Una giuliva bischeraggine animava le facce di tutti; le donne, come si grattassero un'acne, o con gesti di bertucce cui sia data tra mano alcuna cacaruetta, si davan la cipria a ogni piatto: mangiavano minestrone e matita. E tutti speravano, speravano, giulivi. [L'A 340]

This is not the only case where specific lexical similarities are found between a disegno derived from *La cognizione* and one derived from *Un fulmine*. While in *Navi approdano* the delirium of Gonzalo develops into the well-known scene where the bourgeois of Maradagàl are targeted as clients of restaurants, in *Un 'concerto'* the bourgeois of Milan

convene together at the Giuseppe Verdi conservatory, where the narrator has an opportunity to observe them as they gather, like a conformist mass of people, in one single space. Let us first consider *Navi approdano* and the entry of the young generations into society in South America:

> E come a culo indietro discende la nave, così essi, il maggior numero, come nave o gambero, e proprio perché gamberi, a culo indietro, in ragione dei loro non-titoli, discendevano, scivolavano felicemente nel mondo. Pittati di un loro splendore nuovo. E altri, nelle di cui gote floride sotto la lucentezza nardosa de' capegli si percepiva di leggieri un'adolescenza alla flanellina, e al rosbiffe. [L'A 431]

Let us then compare the above passage with the following one from *Un 'concerto'*, focusing on the young as they take their seat in the conservatory of Milan:

> Formidanda fucina di uomini e di energie, ecco offriva sul mercato della vita i suoi nati, con l'orgoglio che il coltivatore una messe o una sementa vivida, sacra al domani. Nel clamoroso teatro il giovane e la giovinetta arrivavano al proprio posto, toglievano il segno d'occupazione, movevano, alzandolo, poi riabbassandolo, il sedile mobile, vi prendevan dentro il lembo della gonna o del soprabito di chi c'era dietro, sedevano: il giovane e la giovinetta dall'animo sereno e puro, dal limpido occhio: e dal cervello sano, come, in cilestri mattini, il granito eminente dell'Alpe. Parevano dei cerbiatti venuti col vintiquàter. Il Luciano e la Luciana dalle floride gote […].
>
> *Tu, forte appoggio delle patrie mura*
> *E tu, soave cura*
> *E lusinghevol'esca ai casti cori.*
>
> Erano giovani robusti, agili: elegantissimi, altri. Un barattolo di brillantina gli si era consunto dentro i capegli dolcemente ondulati e stillanti puro nardo, come, dagli schidioni del tempo, un gocciolante arrosto. [L'A 461]

Nestled in the passage is a quotation from the ode *L'innesto del vaiuolo* (1765) by Giuseppe Parini, remarking on how fundamental it is for society to give birth to children and keep them alive and healthy as they grow up. As here the verses are applied to young men and women taking their place in a theatre, and not to children saved by the dangers of smallpox, the insertion has an effect of comic incongruity. Taken as representative of the entire category of the youth, the Luciano and Luciana are distinguished by the 'floride gote' which are also typical – as noted by Manzotti – of the youth of *Navi approdano*. Even the

specific detail of the shine created by the use of hair gel is common to both *Navi approdano* and *Un 'concerto'*, where the Luciani have indeed '*capegli* dolcemente ondulati: e *stillanti puro nardo*'.[46]

Reunited in restaurants or theatres, in both cases the bourgeois are distinguished by their air of superiority, caught in trivial thoughts and occupations that appear inscrutable to commoners. Compared to a cloud, a small wrinkle becomes visible, in *Un 'concerto'*, on the faces of the Luciani standing in a circle like deities in a council, with the girls becoming the targets of cutting remarks:

> Sulla fronte d'alcuno, sotto a neri e cresputi capelli, ecco ecco una lieve ruga orizzontale pareva nube sottile, corruccio d'una divinità astratta. Intorno a questi, otto primi premi skiatori fungevano da dèi consentes, troppo numerosi di già per raccogliere, ognuno, una bastevole dose di venerazione dalle menti mortali. Nove skiatrici discorrevano con loro a gambe larghe, come se si preparassero a un esercizio ginnico o a una qualche altra manovra di loro esclusiva pertinenza, che richieda di allargar le gambe a quel segno. [L'A 462]

Wrinkles compared to clouds also appear on the foreheads of the bourgeois of *Navi approdano*, as they call a waiter or extract a cigarette from their pockets:

> Non riuscivano a sbucciar la mela. O la mela gli schizzava via dal piatto come sasso di fionda, a rotolare fra scarpe lontanissime. Allora, con voce e dignità risentita, era quando dicevano: 'Cameriere! ma questo coltello non taglia!' Tra i cigli, improvvisa, una nuvola imperatoria. E il cameriere accorreva trafelato, con altri ossibuchi: ed esternando tutta la sua costernazione, la sua piena partecipazione, umiliava sommessa istanza appiè il corruccio delle Loro Signorie […].
>
> Estraevano, con distratta noncuranza, di tasca, il portasigarette d'argento: poi, dal portasigarette, una sigaretta, piuttosto piena e massiccia, col bocchino di carta d'oro; quella te la picchiettavano leggermente sul portasigarette, rinchiuso nel frattempo dall'altra mano, con un tatràc; la mettevano ai labbri; e allora, come infastiditi, mentre che una sottil ruga orizzontale si delineava sulla lor fronte, onnubilata di cure altissime, riponevano il trascurabile portasigarette. [L'A 435-436]

[46] Cf. Manzotti in the critical and commented edition of *La cognizione*, p. 330. *Nardo* is a rare Tuscan word usually referring to tree sap but also more in general to organic liquid with the consistency of a gel (cf. GDLI, *s.v.*: 'balsamo o unguento', 'materia grassa, unta, oleosa'). This passage and more in general the portrait of the bourgeois at the conservatory are analysed in chapter 5.

Cenati has found a few analogies between *Navi approdano* and *Un 'concerto'*, but he has then considered that the portrait of the bourgeois given in this latter disegno is much more similar to the grotesque and yet affectionate picture of Lombardy given in *Quando il Girolamo*: 'L'affresco corale e molteplice di *Un "concerto"* intrattiene legami assai più stretti con la coralità dinamica e diramata di *Quando il Girolamo ha smesso*….', Cenati observes, 'dove l'antecedente primario rispetto al motivo della vita sociale che fluisce e si rinnova, di una comunità composita ma organicamente orientata, è l'inno rivolto al "plasma germinativo della gente"', which is in some ways at the antipodes ('anti-celebrazione', in Manzotti's words) of Gonzalo's vision of society in *Navi approdano*.[47]

While recognising the distance between the two disegni derived from *Un fulmine* from the darker disegno derived from *La cognizione*, I do not agree with Cenati as he belittles the connections between *Navi approdano* and *Un 'concerto'*, which both carry out harsh criticism against the conformism found in the bourgeois lifestyle and both resort to a particularly repellent grotesque imagery. Let us just consider, in *Un 'concerto'*, the equation of the theatre audience to a zoo and a boiling vegetable soup, and even to a graveyard on the day of the Apocalypse.[48] Affected by a speech impediment (like the 'bozzolieri inetti a spiccare una sola zeta tra i denti' encountered in *Navi approdano*), the Luciani spit 'atomuzzi di cara e cuginesca saliva sulla faccia dell'interlocutore cordializzato, e ridente e sputacchiante a sua volta in una Pasqua felice della cordialità' [L'A 461]. Their bodies are

[47] Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 25.

[48] For the zoo: 'Il semiarabo giapponese dal nome cileno fornisce agli imbottiti melomani e melomanesse del Quadronno e del Pasquirolo quel zinzino di scandolo che gli ci vuole, giusto, per potersi decentemente scandolezzare. Nonché indignare, compiacere, inorgoglire. Da potersi congratulare l'un l'altro della propria apertura d'ali. Da poter fremere od allibire secondo grossezza, trasecolare, sudare. Da protestare, zittire, grugnire, bofonchiare, sibilare fra i denti, gorgheggiare, nitrire, starnutire, soppédere di commozione, procurarsi una trombosi, dallo sdegno, un colpo apoplettico' [456]. For the soup: 'Il minestrone era pervenuto a bollore, con grossi sedani, e qualche fenomenale carota' [457]. The image recalls of course the native broth of *Quando il Girolamo*. For the graveyard: 'O forse, data l'occasione del Bartholdi-Stangermann, il nostro monumentale cimitero aveva spalancato gli avelli, i granitici avelli: dischiuso le sue blindate casseforti: come accadrà nel dì novissimo, al primo fa-bemolle degli oricalchi. Aveva risputato verso el vintiquàter, da scoperchiati forzieri, l'Andromèda caparbia di quelle indispensabili novantenni. "Ego sum resurrectio et vita". Per quanto arduo possa apparire, anche ai tecnici di più perizia, uno scoperchiamento del genere' [458].

'gonfi di patatine arrosto fino al collo e alle amìgdale come la rüéra quand'è intasata' [463]. Left at home by their families, the great-grandmothers chew the sticky paste of a biscuit, harass their nurses and curse their younger descendants, 'biasciando tra gencive senza più denti una polta di biscotto disfatto, spappolata a mero amido, ad acqua e glùtine' [464]. The old men lecherously fix their eyes on the young Elsa: 'le manocce in tasca, dondolando una gambetta arzilla sotto il globo del ventre, assaporando la propria lingua come una cótica grassa' [457]. But, above all else, society is defined as a 'fabbrica di bàmboli e bàmbole' [460], capitalistically bringing newborn babies to the 'mercato della vita' [461], while the scene of the funeral of a given 'Grand'Ufficial Dottor Ingegner Maurizio Rinaldoni Senatore del Regno' [466] is functional to show the vacuity, in the face of death, of a lifetime dedicated to the accumulation of wealth. In short, there is, I think, a tonal and thematic proximity between *Un 'concerto'* and *Navi approdano*, both permeated in fact by a corrosive, aggressive attitude.

If we now look at the first chapter of *Un fulmine* from which Gadda derives *Quando il Girolamo*, we will note that the novel moves directly from the complaints of the old Milanese ladies afraid of being robbed of their jewels to the failure of La Confidenza. The sequence dedicated to Lombardy and its people now found in *Quando il Girolamo* is, in other words, entirely absent in the material of the novel.[49] Some traces of the portrait of the bourgeois given in *Un 'concerto'* are instead already attested – albeit in a very preliminary form – in the third chapter of *Un fulmine* from which *Un 'concerto'* is derived. No reference

[49] Cf. 'Ma tutt'a un tratto, che è, che non è, la Confidenza aveva amaramente deluso le vecchie famiglie, le vecchie case e le non dirò vecchie ma giudiziosamente mature signore che adorne di complicati orecchini da 50 mila lire l'uno, dette dal Salgari nocciuole di brillanti, avevano a lei, ai suoi agenti, confidato lor anima, tanto bisognosa di appoggio, dopo la paura vespertina del rincasare all'incontro del lôcch. "Mi ha guardato le orecchie in un modo!", dicevano l'indomani dolcemente rabbrividendo e carezzandosi gli stagionati padiglioni al vecchio lucidatore cointeressato al romanzo dalla imminenza del bicchier di vino. Il Corriere recava tuttodì notizia d'orecchini strappati dai loro lobuli nelle vie solitarie, quando le brume decorano il crepuscolo di malinconie cisalpine' [Fu 60-61]. And then we immediately have a new section: 'La Confidenza! Nessuno crederebbe. Eppure di tutta la baracca non era rimasto che un uscio chiuso e una placca gialla' [Fu 61], and so on. It is precisely here, between these two sections (both developed and expanded in the passage from *Un fulmine* to *L'Adalgisa*), that Gadda inserted the sequence discussed above.

at all is found, however, to the 'floride gote' or the 'nardo' shining through the hair of the Luciani, and no mention is made of the 'lieve ruga orizzontale' becoming visible on the face of the Luciani. The lexical occurrences connecting *Un 'concerto'* with *Navi approdano* appear only in the disegno now found in the collection.[50]

In both the cases of *Quando il Girolamo* and *Un 'concerto'*, Gadda probably worked on *Un fulmine* to extract the disegni from it while having in mind as a reference the vision of society given through Gonzalo's perspective in *Navi approdano,* already included in the earliest preserved version of the index to which *Quando il Girolamo* was added, instead, at a later time. It is not unlikely, then, that it was the very vision of society in *Navi approdano* that led to the insertion and expansion of further scenes of social representation also in *Quando il Girolamo* and *Un 'concerto'*; as a result of which the collection is now marked by three main social portraits, strategically located in the first and second halves (*Quando il Girolamo* and *Un 'concerto'*), as well as in the middle (*Navi approdano*). A disegno coming from *La cognizione* would have in this case partially influenced the rewriting of the material retrieved from *Un fulmine*.

While such a textual-genetic hypothesis cannot be definitely confirmed, the convergence of *Quando il Girolamo*, *Navi approdano*, and *Un 'concerto'* on the theme of social representation is difficult to deny, and it is on this that I think we should turn our attention. Expressed in the use of similar images and rhetorical strategies, and in some cases even with the same vocabulary, this convergence connects parts of the collection which initially appear distant. What does this tell us about the collection as a whole?

[50] The passage in question is preserved amongst autographs dedicated to a rewriting of the material of the 'primo getto'. Let us see here the beginning: 'La tribù Lattuada-Cavigioli-Carugati-Testori-Gavirazzi – formidanda fucina di uomini e di virtù, poteva mettere sul mercato della vita i suoi nati con l'orgoglio d'una messe florida, sacra alla Patria: il giovane e la giovinetta, dal limpido occhio, e dal cervello sano, come il granito dell'Alpe: | Tu saldo appoggio delle patrie mura | E tu soave cura | E lusinghevol esca ai casti cori. | Erano giovani robusti […]' [Fu 246]. In the case of both *Quando il Girolamo* and *Un 'concerto'*, it cannot be excluded, however, that Gadda already wrote at the time of *Un fulmine* the sequences now missing and that the related philological material were then somehow lost, making it impossible for Isella to publish them.

2.6. ‘A battere, anche nel nuovo mondo, il primato della ottusità’: the satirical representation of the social collective as a principle of unity

The scene of *Navi approdano* where people are imagined to be drinking soda takes place in an ‘upside-down’ world: ‘La luce del *mondo capovolto* si beveva le sue folle uricemiche’. In both *La cognizione* and the collection, the phrase ‘mondo capovolto’ is provided with a note explaining: ‘Cioè dell’emisfero australe’ [L’A 439 – CDD 694]. The South American world is *capovolto* in a geographical-astronomical sense, that is, if compared to the northern hemisphere, the implicit standard by which Gonzalo’s world is presented, as we have seen, to readers.

Like in the case of the remark on the ‘pitecàntropi-granoturco’ discussed in section 4, also the identification of Gonzalo’s world as *capovolto* also potentially acquires a new meaning within the collection, where we are faced, in fact, with two literary worlds, *here* and *there*, two different imaginative domains: that of Milan and its surroundings, narrated in the disegni set in Milan (the group descending from *Un fulmine*, plus *Notte di luna*, *Claudio disimpara*, and *Quattro figlie*); and that of Maradagàl, narrated in *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano*. The perspective of Gonzalo introduces in this latter world a sense of exclusion, discomfort, disgust, anger, grimness, and anguish, which are not the exclusive prerogative of Gonzalo’s world, but which do not predominate in the rest of the disegni, mainly tuned along other harmonics. Gonzalo’s world may thus appear *capovolto* also because it entails a ‘reversed’ perspective in both fictional-diegetic and stylistic-expressive terms if compared to the world narrated in the disegni set in Milan.[51]

[51] Cf. Manzotti in the critical and commented edition of *La cognizione*, p. 324: *capovolto* ‘è anche giudizio etico, ovviamente’.

As the twin scenes of the bourgeois at the restaurants and the conservatory suggest, the two worlds act in some ways as counterparts of each other; as symmetrical, mirrored doubles. Although one image reverses the perspective entailed in the other, the object reflected in the mirror is nonetheless the same: it is translated into a different fictional dimension and narrated in different ways, but it also retains some of its basic features. The remark on the 'pitecàntropi-granoturco' clarifies that the same social standards apply to both Maradagàl and Milan, with the effect of bolstering the parallelism between Bruno and Gonzalo as outcasts. Taken from *Navi approdano*, the passage below – where the description of the young develops into a comprehensive social vision preluding to the scene of the restaurants – also potentially establishes a connection between Gonzalo and Bruno's worlds, drawing attention to the trait of 'ottusità' as a common dimension between *here* and *there*:

> Tutti, tutti entravano nella luce: li avvolgeva la luce della vita, versata sulle loro teste unte dai pazienti alternatori della Cordillera. Che ne inaffiano i paradisi di stucco. Tutti, tutti! Turchi, frittellari, circassi, mendicanti ghitarroni d'Andalusìa, polacchi, armeni, mongoli, santoni arabi in bombetta, labbroni senegalesi dai piedi caprigni, e perfino i Langobardòi di Cormanno, immigrati da Cormanno (Curtis Manni), a battere, anche nel nuovo mondo, il primato della ottusità e della mancanza di fantasia. [L'A 431]

The remark provided at the end of the passage – 'battere, *anche* nel nuovo mondo, il primato della ottusità e della mancanza di fantasia' – indicates more clearly than ever that what is said about the new world is also true about Milan. In the disegni set in Milan as well as in those set in Maradagàl, the object of the gaze of the narrative subject is the same: social, human idiocy, observed, represented, and ridiculed in one world and the other. The link between Bruno and Gonzalo comes to fall, then, under a wider parallelism created by the collection, which contains and juxtaposes their worlds as a reflection of one another: the satirical discourse upon Milan and its society is thus inscribed into the satirical discourse upon human society made in *Navi approdano*, while the discourse on human society is corroborated by that on Milan made in all the other disegni.

I do not intend to suggest that we should deny the obvious dissimilarity of *Navi approdano* (and *Strane dicerie*) from the other disegni, nor would it be possible to simply discard the differences existing even between disegni originating from the same *avant-texte*, as is the case with *Quando il Girolamo* and *Un 'concerto'*: the former being much more indulgent towards its narrated object, as we have seen, than the other. Although the worlds and experiences of Bruno and Gonzalo reverberate on one another, with the effect of creating a connection, Gonzalo and Bruno are indeed contrasting characters. The assault perpetrated against the others in Gonzalo's solipsistic perspective reaches peaks of violence and nihilism, and its target is the so-called human 'sciocchezzaio' [L'A 431] in which all individuals are involved, without possibility of escape. In this triumph of stupidity, the satirical judgement is pronounced upon the whole society as such ('Tutti, tutti […] Tutti, tutti!'). Gonzalo is estranged from social life to the point that the difference existing between him and the others is *abyssal*. In the disegni set in Milan, on the contrary, the narrator is also part, albeit not without ambiguity, of the community he derides, and not all the characters he talks about are equally made the object of ridicule. Such a difference does not hinder, however, the convergence of both the disegni set in Maradagàl and those set in Milan on providing pictures of society, pointing out the theme of social representation as a principle of unity for the collection.

We have seen in chapter 1 that variety is inherent to satire as a distinct historical genre from its beginnings. Putting variety into effect, the collection does indeed take snapshots of society across an extensive satirical spectrum or gradient, where *Quando il Girolamo* and *Un 'concerto'* on one side and *Navi approdano* on the other represent extreme opposites, marking in a more benevolent way the first part of the collection and in a more cynical-pessimistic way the second one (which concludes indeed with Adalgisa taking care of her husband's tomb at the Cimitero Monumentale). While the world of *Navi approdano*

is ‘capovolto’ because it entails a reversed fictional and expressive perspective if compared to the disegni set in Milan, the object reflected is nonetheless the same, albeit narrated in different ways and with also less intense invectives: the object is the foolishness of those who take themselves seriously while they are in fact ridiculous, be they in Milan or Maradagàl.

With the exclusion of *Notte di luna*, serving as a lyrical-elegiacal *overture* for the main symphony which follows, all the other disegni can be understood, then, as arranged on a tonal scale, which is satirically orientated and yet spans a wide range of tonalities including polemical tirades, violent invectives, brutal aggression, and almost nihilistic remarks, as well as unthreatening jokes, participant mockery, and melancholic-elegiacal complaints. In chapter 3, we will try to better understand how participation and melancholy do not represent an obstacle for satire, and can in fact be combined with instances of attack and movements of rejection.

Understood along this line, the collection can be regarded as some sort of *summa satirica*, ‘una quasi civile convivenza’ of satirical styles and modes, also comprehending the allegorical or indirect mode practiced in *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano*, where the reference to Milan is hidden by means of allegory, recalling a long-standing tradition of satire where a critical discourse upon society is conveyed in the form of tales about exotic and outlandish places.[52] Obviously different from the other disegni, *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano* do not appear to be, in my view, a foreign body in a collection otherwise compact

[52] A satirical thread making use of metaphorical and allegorical representations to convey a critical discourse on society goes as far back as to *The Birds* by Aristophanes and *A True History* by Lucian of Samosata, and also includes Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. The category of *indirect satire* mentioned above to refer to this thread is drawn from Rachel E. Hile’s study dedicated to Edmund Spenser: Rachel E. Hile, *Spenserian Satire: A Tradition of Indirection* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017). Indirect satire is one ‘that the reader cannot understand *as satire* without this intersemiotic transfer of meaning into the textual interpretation’ (ibid., p. 1). It is interesting to note that the kind of satire practiced by Aristophanes, Lucian, or Swift often makes use of the trope of the inverted world, alluded here in the definition of Gonzalo’s as ‘capovolto’.

and cohesive; they complementarily offer a sample of a satirical mode and style different from the one mainly practiced in most of the other disegni, thus also contributing to the overall picture of society in their own specific way.

These considerations on the satirical variety of the disegni prompt us to also reconsider in a new light the coexistence of changes of separative and conjunctive nature put in place in the disegni set in Milan. Minor inconsistences such as the mismatch of the surname of Gian Maria encourage us to look at the disegni as separate and independent pieces while also stressing the paradigmatic function of the families represented in the collection (be they the Cavenaghis, the Caviggionis, or the de' Marpionis). On the opposite side, the engagement between Lola and Valerio and the other narrative connections inherited from *Un fulmine* overcome the borders of each single disegno and create relations with pieces genetically unrelated on a macrostructural level, suggesting that the world narrated across different disegni is ultimately one and the same. Echoing a definition of the collection given by Gian Carlo Ferretti as *discordia concors*,[53] *L'Adalgisa* can be understood as a work that accomplishes a form of *plural unity*, under both the fictional-diegetic and stylistic-satirical aspects. Infringing by means of its own constitution on the requirements of consistency thought to be essential for the formal understanding of a whole as such, *L'Adalgisa* challenges our very own notions of wholeness and unity on multiple levels, and highlights the productive role of differences.[54] As the society of Lombardy is presented as one but also internally diversified in *Quando il Girolamo*, so the collection combines together oneness and also plurality.

[53] Gian Carlo Ferretti, 'La somaresca tribù', in *Invito alla lettura di Carlo Emilio Gadda* (Milan: Mursia, 1987).

[54] After all, also the Lombard society represented in *Quando il Girolamo* is one but at the same time variegated.

In line with this notion of plural unity, in the following chapters I will distinguish, where it will be necessary for the purposes of my analysis, the disegni derived from *La cognizione* from the other disegni, so as to avoid oversimplification and the risk of creating uniformity where there is in fact a difference to acknowledge. At the same time, however, I will also consider the book as a whole: a whole that invites us to experience the potential that differences have for the creation of meaning.

Chapter 3

‘Quasicché a propria volta l’autore si tuffi’:

Narrative voice and satire

3.1. A narrator soaked in the water of his characters

The notes alongside the fourth disegno, *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*, are preceded by an advisory notice informing the reader that in the disegno the author draws on the languages and mental perspectives of his characters:

> In questo disegno milanese ‘su cartone vecchio’, alla tentata rappresentazione di un ‘interno’ si sono voluti adibire, a tratti, i modi mentali e i modi idiomatici propri de’ personaggi che in quell’interno esagitavano il loro spirto vitale. L’orditura sintattica, le clausole prosodiche, l’impasto lessicale della discorsa, in più che un passaggio, devono perciò ritenersi funzioni mimetiche del clima, dell’aura di via Pasquirolo o del Pontaccio: che dico, dell’impetus e dello zefiro parlativo i quali dall’ambiente promanano, o prorompono. E ciò non soltanto nel dialogato, ma nella didascalia e nel contesto in genere, quasicché a propria volta l’autore si tuffi nella bagnarola e nell’acqua medesime ove poco prima erano a diguazzare i suoi colombi. Quanto all’impeto, è un impeto ricco, nativo, a cui non si sogliono imporre freni accademici o mediazioni teologiche: e vien celebrato nelle cronache quale ‘bella spontaneità’ o ‘bella immediatezza del dire’. E del ragionare e dell’essere, dunque. [L’A 374-375]

The appropriation of the voices of others on the part of the author is expressed in the simile of the dive into the bathtub. The subject referred to in the notice as ‘autore’ – to whom I will now more cautiously refer as narrator[1] – claims he has made himself similar to his own characters as if he plunged into the bathtub and water where they were previously immersed in the form of doves. The narrator thinks and speaks like his characters, as a result of the

[1] Cf. Savettieri, ‘Self-Reflection and Ambivalence’, p. 424, n. 13: ‘Gadda here makes use of the word “autore” with reference to what we would term, more appropriately, “narrator”. We find the same use in the theoretical notes of *Racconto italiano di ignoto del novecento*. If, on the one hand, the term must be historicized as a relic of a pre-narratological age, in which such theoretical distinctions were actually disregarded, on the other, it hints at the fundamental role Gadda attributes to his own self in the creative process’.

dive he takes, not only in the characters' direct speech but even in the 'didascalia' and 'contesto'. The term *didascalia*[2] in particular – and also, more generically, the phrase 'tentata rappresentazione di un "interno"' and the term *dialogato* – might fall within the semantic field of the theatrical or cinematographic representation. The disegno would in this case be comparable to a script or screenplay where a playwright or screenwriter chooses to adopt the same language used for the characters' lines also for his own parts: the scene headings, the stage directions, the parentheticals, and so on.

What does it mean, on a narrative level, that the narrator shares his characters' bath water? In *Quattro figlie*, set in Milan but not derived from the novelistic *avant-texte* of *Un fulmine sul 220*, the narrator frequently takes a first-person singular form and explicitly maintains that he 'knows' the family around which the disegno revolves, the de' Marpionis: 'io ebbi l'onore di conoscerli, nel 1927, e subito dopo di imparare a stimarli' [L'A 372]. Making an ironic point about the intricacies of family relations in Milan, he even speculates he is a distant relative of Giulia de' Marpioni:

> Donna Giulia de' Marpioni nata Pertegati, e cugina dei Borella di Villapizzone, se ben ricordo, che devono essere parenti dei Cavallazzi, e dei Ghezzi di Barlassina, quelli che stanno 'lì' in via Cusani, al nümer vott, e anche dei Novati, che sono anche miei lontani parenti, dopo tutto, dato che 'la' mia bisnonna era una Novati, mentre per parte di madre era legata ai Cavallazzi…. [L'A 364-365]

By ridiculing the architectonical irregularities of the Brügna palace where the de' Marpionis move to in 1920, he states that engineers are 'rinomati […] nella *nostra* indaffarata Milano, per il culto totèmico del trapezio' [L'A 355].[3] Immediately afterwards, with regards to the Brügna palace, he specifies that:

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[2] Cf. GDLI, *s.v.* 'nel testo di un'opera teatrale o nella sceneggiatura di un film: indicazione data dall'autore o dallo sceneggiatore (al principio di un atto o di un quadro; all'entrata in scena di un personaggio; prima di una qualsiasi battuta) circa la scenografia, i costumi, o, più spesso, il tono con cui va detta una battuta, i gesti che devono accompagnarla, ecc.'.

[3] In this and in the following sections of this chapter, italics found in the quotations from *L'Adalgisa* italics is mine.

per quanto al di fuori abbia tutta l'aria d'una catapecchia, tutti mi assicurano invece che era proprio il palazzo Brügna, passato poi col tempo, per via di donne e di doti, ai Condulmari di Asnàgo: e ciò da 'oltre un secolo'. Dacché i miei concittadini, quando si tratti dei Condulmari di Asnàgo, dicono davvero 'oltre' (un secolo) invece del solito 'püssée': (de cent'ann). [L'A 356]

By making use of first-person singular and plural pronominal forms ('*nostra* indaffarata Milano', '*miei* concittadini'), the narrator identifies himself as a member of the Milanese community, a community he appears to be in touch with even at the time of narration, as he claims that his fellow citizens can now assure him – 'tutti mi *assicurano*': present tense – that the one where the de' Marpioni settled was indeed the Brügna palace.[4] In doing so, the narrator places himself *within* the narrated world. He suggests he is made of the same substance as his characters; characters he has met and who were – and sometimes still are – his fellow citizens and even relatives. The dive into the bathtub could be looked at, from this viewpoint, as a dive into the diegesis: dipped into the water where his characters were also bathing, the narrator is himself – 'a propria volta' – part of their fictional, diegetic world.

Statements of the kind seen so far are found not only in *Quattro figlie* but also in the other disegni set in Milan, including the ones derived from *Un fulmine*. In *Quando il Girolamo ha smesso*…., for example, the narrator inscribes himself once again within the Milanese community: 'avidi come siamo di epos, *noi milanesi*' [L'A 310]. In *I ritagli di tempo*, he refers to a charity in Milan with a first-person plural form: 'Famiglia Artistica Meneghina: altro sodalizio *nostro*' [409]; and then he justifies a detail provided on a character remarking it has been reported to him by others: 'si rese anche benemerito, *mi dicono*, "nel campo della cultura e dell'arte"' [409]. The same happens in *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori*, where he mentions that a character owns an expensive car, only then

[4] 'Brügna' – note number 3 informs – 'nel gergo, è l'obitorio: nel dialetto è prugna' [375].

to remark, humorously, that he has never seen it with his own eyes: 'la contessa Stanga, proprietaria d'Isotta, così *mi giurano (ma io non l'ho mai vista)*' [454]; and also in *Al Parco, in una sera di maggio*: 'La bella zia, *mi dicono* i Perego, non poté dunque sfuggire al destino delle consorelle' [488]. The narrator manifests himself as a homodiegetic narrator; and not only placing himself within the diegetic world but also tying to that world by bonds of acquaintance and consanguinity, in light of which he seems to be well informed about the vicissitudes of his characters.

Taking up a formula coined by Riccardo Stracuzzi for the narrator of *Un fulmine sul 220*, the condition of the narrator also in the collection of the 'disegni milanesi' could be defined as latent homodiegesis.[5] The narrator makes no hesitation in presenting himself as part of the world of his characters, especially to tell us he has been informed by other members of that world of a given detail, but then he does not have any active role or is only very marginally involved in the events narrated. He gives the impression that he is well-adjusted within the same world of his characters, but in most cases this does not have any direct consequences on the action or stories told. Lucio Lugnani has perfectly described this condition observing that this narrator stays on the sidelines: 'in disparte, limitandosi a mostrare di occupare una posizione appartata ma molto prossima al proscenio sul quale agiscono i personaggi'.[6]

A dive normally involves a vertical difference between levels; a gap which is closed as the dive occurs. While entailing a distance, without which the dive could not take place at all, a dive results nonetheless in an impact. It results, so to speak, into a status of coincidence between points and/or subjects that were initially separated. As he plunges into

[5] Stracuzzi, *Il fuoco della favola*, p. 64. Stracuzzi also refers to the 'posizione speciale del narratore: interno e insieme come oscurato, innominato, deprivato dello *status* di personaggio del racconto' (p. 87). If in the cases seen above, the narrator presents himself homodiegetically and yet he is deprived of the status of fully fledged character as he only is marginally involved in the events narrated, this will not be the case – we will see this very shortly – in the last disegno.

[6] Lucio Lugnani, *Del tempo. Racconto discorso esperienza* (Pisa: ETS, 2003), p. 90.

their bathtub and finds himself imbued in their water, the narrative subject becomes in fact similar to his characters. He provisionally identifies with them, so as to be able to channel their language and view of the world. As he takes the dive, the narrator does not only break the surface of water, then, but he also blurs the line that distinguishes him from the characters. After the dive, the elements of distinction fade as if dissolving into water, with the consequence that, in *Quattro figlie* as well as in the other disegni mentioned above, the narrative 'I' lends himself to us as one of the characters featured therein.[7]

The water also has an interesting function in the dynamics at play following the dive. It is through the water that the narrator absorbs and assimilates the idiomatic and psychological features of the characters, features which become his own only after he is submerged into their water. Traits belonging to different subjects are transferred through a liquid connector from one another: the acquisition of others' voices on the part of the narrator could in this case be conceived of as an episode of infection or contamination, with water acting as a facilitator of the contamination.[8] As we are beginning to understand, in other words, the imagery around the simile of the bathtub is at the same time founded on notions of distance and convergence; it hilights both the need to draw distinctions and the fading of those distinctions into the water of diegesis. It is an imagery, as Cristina Savettieri has noted, entailing an attitude of 'crucial ambivalence'[9] on the part of the narrative subject towards the object narrated.

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[7] On dives, see the passage of *Quattro figlie* on the bladder weakness of Maria Giuseppa and the consequent flooding of the corridor of the de' Marpioni's flat, when no auntie dares to 'attuffarle i soliti sculaccioni amorosi sul solito cocò' [357]. *Attuffare* is a Dantean verb and is exlusively used in *Inferno* (XVIII, 113). The hellish features attributed throughout the disegno to the de' Marpionis and in particular to the four daughters is in comical contrast with the paradisiacal title of the disegno, taken from Dante's canto VI of *Paradiso*. On Dante and Gadda, see: Serena Vandi, *Satura. Varietà per verità in Dante e Gadda* (Milan-Udine: Mimesis, 2021).

[8] Federica G. Pedriali, 'Fistola in succhio. Chiamate idrauliche per *L'Adalgisa*', in *Altre carceri d'invenzione. Studi gaddiani* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2007), pp. 105-163, notes the frequency of a 'metaforologia idrica' (p. 125) in Gadda's texts and in particular in *L'Adalgisa*. See also ibid. pp. 136-137.

[9] Cf. Savettieri, 'Self-Reflection and Ambivalence', p. 417: 'As claimed in the first note of one of the texts in the collection, *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*, by means of "stage directions" ("didascalie") and descriptions of the context the author plunges "nella bagnarola e nell'acqua medesime ove poco prima erano

In his study of satire mentioned in the introduction and in chapter 1, Frederic Bogel reminds us that a *rival*, etymologically speaking, is one who shares with another the water of the same stream (*rivus*). Starting from this image, Bogel takes into consideration the oppositional logic typically at play in satire, where the satirist opposes himself to his target, a target considered abnormal or degenerated – as already seen in the account provided of the canonical model of satire in chapter 1 – as compared to an ideal standard which can be more or less explicitly declared. Such an oppositional dynamic, Bogel claims, requires, at least in logical terms, a common ground whose opposites can be occupied by satirist and target. If they were incomparable, totally unconnected or unrelated to each other, Bogel continues, there would be no need for the satirist to oppose himself to the target, nor to assault it and make it ridiculous as often happens in satire.[10]

Bogel speaks of streams and not of tubs, but his remarks can help bring into focus the ambivalence perfectly encapsulated also in the simile of the bathtub, and which permeates on a more general level the relation of the narrator to his characters and to the narrated world, questioning the possibility of using the category of satire to define the disegni. The advisory notice of *Quattro figlie* offers, thus, an ideal starting point to address the subject of the nature of the narrator in this collection, taking as a guiding framework for my analysis the category of satire. The fact that *Quattro figlie* was conceived without any connection to *Un fulmine* only increases the interest I have in this notice, most probably

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a diguazzare i suoi colombi". In *L'Adalgisa* this principle is performed more radically: the narrator directly crosses, without discursive mediations, the threshold separating him as a "director" from the "stage" where the characters rehearse. Both these metaphors – narrating as directing and narrating as sharing the "water" of fiction with the characters – hint at a crucial ambivalence, relying on simultaneous implication and detachment'. Savettieri is here referring to the tenth disegno – entitled indeed *L'Adalgisa* – on which I will also focus in the next section.

[10] Cf. Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, pp. 49-50. Bogel is quoted in relation to Gadda also in Ghersi, 'La voce di Elsa', 175; e in Vandi, *Satura*, pp. 55-56. Bogel takes up the reflection on the eytmology of *rival* from a reflection of the critic and theorist of literature Kenneth Burke who worked on identification and division in rhetoric: see Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives and a Rhetoric of Motives* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962). Bogel re-adjusts several of Burke's reflection on rhetoric to the specific case of satire. Burke had in turn taken up the reflection on *rival* from a famous formula by Samuel Coleridge: see Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, pp. 49-50.

written when Gadda already knew that its final destination was the volume: one more reason to think it might offer an interpretative key valid not only for *Quattro figlie* but also – as this chapter will try to demonstrate – for the other disegni.

3.2. Homodiegesis, mimesis and polyphony, super-personality

Quando il Girolamo ha smesso…. begins with the employees of the company La Confidenza cleaning the house of the Cavenaghis, continues with the Milanese old ladies picturing themselves being robbed in the street and with the elegiacal-grotesque picture of Lombardy and its society discussed in chapter 2, to then come back to La Confidenza and its failure. The narrator moves freely sliding from one point inside the narrated world to another. He describes in great detail the many objects found in the house as they are relocated by the employees of La Confidenza, and then concentrates on the employees themselves and on the work trousers they put on in a dark corner of the kitchen while the women turn away, busy with domestic chores and yet secretly excited. His physical vision and, more generally, his perspective on the narrated world are not limited to what a single character sees or thinks, and can follow different characters in different ways and places, alternating viewpoints and very focused scenes with broader pictures such as that of Lombardy discussed in the previous chapter.

As proven when the owners of La Confidenza, the Borlotti brothers, are informed of what has happened to their company by lawyer Cazzuola, the narrator can also share the unspoken thoughts of his characters: 'Perché la vacca milanese, più la mungono, e meglio si sente. Questo l'avvocato Cazzuola non lo disse ai due disgraziati Borlotti della "Confidenza": non lo disse, ma *lo pensò*' [L'A 313]. Further on in this same disegno, when

Elsa is considering seeking medical assistance for her servant Maria and recalls that one year earlier Maria had asked her for a pay raise, the narrator details how exactly Elsa reacted, then, to the request: '"Be', per dieci lire al mese!": e donna Elsa alzò le spalle: (era sola)' [321]. While he often explains his knowledge of the events narrated by claiming that they have been reported to him, the context of Elsa's reaction – she is alone in the room thinking about the request – would suggest that the narrator cannot have been informed about such reaction by others. The narrator knows what Elsa says and how she reacts to Maria's request as he knows what occurs in Cazzuola's mind and many other details provided (including the exact words pronounced by a character on a given occasion) not only because others have told him so, but also because he goes through the narrated world as the typical omniscient narrator who has a greater insight than the other characters. This is, for example, how he describes Elsa preparing for the consultation with *doctor* Piva about Maria's health conditions:

> Donna Elsa pensava a una 'cura jodica', e al dottor Piva, 'il nostro dottore', che sciogliessero le concrezioni articolari incipienti: e che la ragazza dovesse evitare il salame, e i salumi in genere, almeno per un po' di tempo. Pensava, d'altra parte, alla macchina lavapiatti della 'Michigan Kitchen Cooking & Washing Implements Corporation', che aveva visto sciabordare alla Fiera Campionaria, nel padiglione degli utensili domestici e dei pelapatate. Il peptojodone, cioè no, lo jodopeptone Robin (jodio colloidale organico) era quello che faceva al caso. [L'A 322]

And this is how Elsa runs to the doctor trying to remember the name of a nutritional supplement:

> Donna Elsa, con la consueta bontà e con l'impeto consueto, corse dal dottor Piva. Aveva il cervello che le fumigava di vapori jodici: 'jodio colloidale, jodio colloidale', si ripeteva a ogni passo, con martellante insistenza, come il naufrago che non vuol mollare un momento la luce di salvezza. 'Jodio organico…. proteine jodate…. peptone jodico…. peptojodione…. jodopeptone Robin' e vedeva già le gromme clavicolari della Maria disciogliersi come burro in padella. [L'A 322-322]

As in the passage with Cazzuola, the narrator reads his characters' minds as if they were fully knowable for him. In such passages, he falls into the category referred to by Dorrit

Cohn as the typically 'clairvoyant, disincarnated narrator'.[11] As he does not 'incarnate' – in Cohn's terms – in a single character, the narrator is potentially not restricted to a singular, limited perspective, and is thus able to freely move within the narrated world focusing on one character and then another.

In the sequence dedicated to the old ladies afraid they might be robbed of their jewels in the street, the narrator unmercifully defines their thoughts as a form of ranting and raving ('farneticare') when looking at them from his perspective. The fear conceals, in his own view, a desire of a narcissistic and sexual nature, and can be described as a form of fearful and yet wishful thinking ('paura-speranza'): the women fear but also long to be victim of robbery as a substitute for a sexual pleasure denied to them. Let us read the passage in question:

> I 'mè brilànt' e la paura-speranza di sentirseli un dì sradicar d'orecchio – con eventuale lacerazione del lobo – da una mano virilmente predatrice, sono una delle ghiotte, segrete immaginative della gentildonna che risfólgora in brillanti; del suo narcisismo un po' masocone esasperato dal presagio della tenebra. Anche una sessantaseienne gode, gode iteratamente ed a lungo, al fabulare seco medesima, al farneticare per interi pomeriggi che le verrà un giorno incontro, oh sì sì, certo, anche a lei, anche a lei, certo, il maschio repentino e brutale cont el züff in süi oeucc: a farsi laceratore del dilicato e ben costrutto suo lobo, lobo di 'signora', ma nello stesso tempo lobo di 'una povera donna', di una 'creatura impotente a difendersi'. Perché secondo loro, poverine, si sentono anche 'impotenti a difendersi', oltre tutto, se appena appena gli date spago.
>
> L'adorabile farabutto, oh! sì!, oh! no!, si approprierà le due nocciuole con la maniera forte: lo stile perentorio del rapinatore di strada che è: riempirà della sua violenza priva di riguardi la paurosa vertigine del crepuscolo, distillando, dalle lunghe brume degli anni, il fulgore di un attimo paradisìaco. [L'A 304-206]

The narrator not only makes use of phrases enclosed in quotation marks to indicate they are directly taken from their direct speech, but also mixes fragments of quoted direct speech with free indirect speech and has recourse to interrupted syntactic rhythms and exclamative and emotional punctuation integrated in his own speech, such as 'oh sì!, oh no!'. See also the passage below:

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[11] Dorrith Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 5.

Talora potenziavano il proprio orgasmo fino all'acme dello spasimo, romanzando il fattaccio di pimenti estremi, situandolo in congiuntura ferroviaria: scompartimento di prima classe, eran sole, controllore evaporato, entra un tipo: ma di quelli! 'con voeunna de qui facc!': siede rimpetto: guarda: guarda a lungo, 'fissandomi con una strana insistenza', 'e specialmente i brillanti': entra il treno, a sua volta, in una galleria che nessuno se l'aspettava: eccetera eccetera. [L'A 304-306]

The excited turmoil animating the discourse does not seem to be directly attributable to the narrator; it would be better attributed to the old ladies afraid – but also, as the narrator imagines them, hopeful – of being robbed. In his classic studies on novelistic polyphony, Mikhail Bakhtin describes such discursive phenomena as 'intrusion of the emotional aspects of someone else's speech into the syntactic system of authorial speech (ellipsis, questions, exclamations)'.[12] As above when he refers to 'jodopeptone' as 'peptojodone' and then corrects himself in accordance with Elsa ('il peptojodone, cioè no, lo jodopeptone Robin'), here the narrator also *hybridises* his perspective with that of his characters. He partially reproduces their mental-psychological disposition as if it were his own. The possibility of an aggression is contemplated and presented to us through the characters' perspective with a mixture of fear and desire. As he narrates their thoughts, the narrator adopts their perspective; he mimics them in their way of experiencing the narrated world.

Further on in *Quando il Girolamo*, the narrator exhibits false ingenuousness when a causal relationship is established between the articular pain suffered by Maria and the humidity of the sink where she spends many hours washing up the dishes:

[12] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Discourse in the novel* [1975], in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 294-457: 319. And cf. also ibid., pp. 319-320: 'such a form permits another's inner speech to merge, in an organic and structured way, with a context belonging to the author. But at the same time it is precisely this form that permits us to preserve the expressive structure of the character's inner speech, its inability to exhaust itself in words, its flexibility, which would be absolutely impossible within the dry and logical form of indirect discourse. Precisely these features make this form the most convenient for transmitting the inner speech of characters. It is of course a hybrid form, for the author's voice may be present in varying degrees of activity and may introduce into the transmitted speech a second accent of its own (ironic, irritated and so on)'.

La Maria, da più che un paio d'anni al servizio di donna Elsa, proprio in quei giorni del definitivo distacco del Girolamo, aveva principato ad accusare certi disturbi reumatici, conseguenti, è indubbio, all'umidità dell'acquaio: dove soleva accudire le ore interminabili, povero fusto! in un abbandono pieno di eteròcliti fantasmi, di schifiltosi ribrezzi. [L'A 320-321]

Readers discover in a few lines that the pains are due to Maria's pregnancy, so that the effect of the passage is considerably comical. Bakhtin defines as 'pseudo-objective motivation' a motivation provided in such a way that it is formally attributed to the narrative voice but is instead to be reconducted to someone else's viewpoint: 'If judged by the formal markers above, the logic motivating the sentence seems to belong to the author, i.e., he is formally at one with it' – Bakhtin observes – 'but in actual fact, the motivation lies within the subjective belief system of his characters, or of general opinion'.[13] Something similar happens here. The causal link established between the pain and the pregnancy is not to be properly attributed to the narrator, but is rather found on the horizon of thought of Elsa and of some other Cavenaghis, who naively misinterpret – or want to misinterpret – the symptoms experienced by Maria as a generic form of pain. This is also true of Maria's own psychological horizon, as she stubbornly blames the pain on the humidity she has suffered in the kitchen even when she is informed of the official diagnosis: '"Io non lo so. Io non ho fatto niente di male. È stata la grande umidità che ho sofferto…."' [L'A 324]. This creates, of course, a sexual innuendo which contributes to the overall comical atmosphere of the passage. The presentation of the link established between pain and humidity as definite ('conseguenti, *è indubbio*') increases the humorous effect of the passage, but also almost discloses the ironic nuance in the voice of the narrator, who temporarily and pretentiously adopts the prevailing view in the Cavenaghi household, only then to reverse it.

[13] Ibid., p. 305. The intrusion of someone else's emotional aspects into the syntactic system of the narrator and the pseudo-objective motivation are examples of what Bakhtin calls a 'hybrid construction', that is: 'an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two "languages", two semantic and axiological belief systems' (p. 304). Hybrid constructions are therefore typically defined 'double-accented' or 'double-styled' (ibid.).

As shown by Bachtin, the voice of the characters assumes a tone and a colour on the basis of how it is filtered through the voice of the one who narrates. It is from the superimposition of these two voices, it is in this diaphragm, that the adopotion of a voice separate from his own assumes its meaning, generating a different expressive effect according to the narratorial intentionality – either ironic or emphatic – through which it is filtered: 'another's discourse, when introduced into a speech context, enters the speech that frames it not in a mechanical bond but in a chemical union (on the semantic and emotionally expressive level)'.[14] Assuming the viewpoint of the bejewelled old ladies or that of Maria or Elsa,[15] the narrator does not seem to genuinely adhere to the perspective of the characters on an emotional level. He does not always truly empathise with their fears, worries, or desires; nor does he take them seriously. In the examples seen above, the characters' voice is grafted onto the narrator's voice with an effect of more or less marked disparagement of the represented characters. The undertone is distinguished by a clear derision in the case of the old ladies; it rather leans towards a less trenchant comical tone in the case of Maria's pregnancy, although in other passages Maria is openly made the object of ridicule.[16]

[14] Ibid., p. 340.

[15] That of Elsa is, however, a peculiar case in the collection. In *Quando il Girolamo*, the narrator shows of Elsa lexical uncertainty and confusion while she prepares herself for a visit with dottor Piva to whom she is determined to ask advice for the pain of Maria. The narrator here highlights Elsa's naivety and cluelessness, her fearful character, with a comic effect although, I would say, not with an excessively demeaning effect. Ghersi observes that in *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori*, Elsa's interiority is expressed in such a way that the narrator does not make fun of her. The narrator seems to even symphatise with her and lets her voice emerge opening up the text to lyrical-elegiacal tones and intimate-meditative register, within a disegno that for the remainder does not show mercy or piety for the Milanese society. I agree with Ghersi that Elsa is a different character from the others because she is distinguished by a condition of partial extraneousness on a psychological-moral level from the bourgeois class of which she is part; an extraneousness from which she feels a sense of existential unease and discomfort. Considered from this viewpoint, her condition is not so dissimilar to that of the narrator-character represented in the flat of Adalgisa. Cf. Ghersi, *La voce di Elsa*, pp. 176-182. I will come back to Elsa in chapter 5.

[16] Cf. for example: 'Diffidava, in generale, dei frutti non conosciuti, d'una palla di cavoliore: rabbrividiva d'una buccia come d'uno scorpione, o a certi pellecchi, a certe croste di gorgonzola: d'un po' di gorgonzola in credenza era spasmodicamente ghiotta, tanto da averne secrezioni salivari e contrazioni gastriche anticipate solo all'idea, ma ne pativa poi viceversa uno sgomento che dirò antropomorfico, totalmente inibitivo, quasi d'un occhio di Ivan il Terribile tesaurizzato in credenza. Il collo del pollo le dava le vertigini: i bargigli del tacchino si rifiutava di toccarli: e le regaglie di tutt'e due, poi: la violacea viscidità d'un'anguilla, certi venerdì, le incuteva l'orrore del serpente' [320-321].

Nonetheless, mimesis and polyphony are ironically directed and put at the service of this satirical-grotesque portrait of society.

The advisory notice found in *Quattro figlie* informs us that the narrator draws on the 'modi mentali' and 'modi idiomatici propri de' personaggi': 'L'orditura sintattica, le clausole prosodiche, l'impasto lessicale della discorsa, in più che un passaggio' – it is specified – 'devono perciò ritenersi funzioni *mimetiche*'. As if dipped into the water where they were bathing, the narrator mimics and recreates the characters' voice. A *voice* understood in the Bakhtinian sense of the word: the languages spoken by the characters and the semantic-axiological systems of values conveyed by those languages, since any given language always comes, in Bakthin, with its own viewpoint on the world.

In line with the recurring first-person inflections and pronominal forms he uses, the narrator also retains, nonetheless, his own distinct voice and personal perspective. Any comical-degrading effect originates in fact, as seen with Bakhtin, from the unfilled distance between the voices of the characters and the one who recreates them. Different narrative postures thus combine within the narrative composition of the disegni. A latent, peculiar form of homodiegesis is combined with a multi-focused form of superpersonality (i.e., the narrator can adopt the perspectives of different characters and move between them, being 'superior' to all of them), allowing for exceptional linguistic mobility and elasticity of language, viewpoints, and perspectives.

3.3. The narrator as a character in the last disegno

The significance of the tenth disegno has been remarked on by Lugnani, who has called attention to the fact that here we do not listen to the story of Adalgisa 'dalle labbra di lei né

da quelle del narratore di prima', but instead 'da un narratore-personaggio partecipe e coinvolto che ce la racconta alla prima persona'. Along the lines of Lugnani, Savettieri describes what happens here as a *coming out* of the narrator, who finally reveals to be more than just marginally involved in what he recounts.[17] Keeping in mind what emerged in the chapter section above, it is now necessary to turn to the tenth disegno and consider how the narrator manifests himself here as an involved character.

Not unlike what we have seen in the previous section, at the beginning of the tenth disegno the narrator appears in first-person form claiming the love story between Adalgisa and her late husband Carlo was reported to him by others:

> La 'pagina meravigliosa nel breve libro della vita' aveva avuto, per il povero Carlo, un inizio assolutamente imprevisto dall'austerità ironica dei Vigoni, per quanto alcuni, i Tantardini marito e moglie, ad esempio, che ebbero loro pure occasione di commentarmi tutta la storia, lo ritengano invece de' più comuni e direi usuali nella fisica dell'uman genere. [L'A 514]

The emphatically affected expression '"pagina meravigliosa nel breve libro della vita"' is directly taken – as it is declared a few lines before the textual sample given here – from the voice of the noblewoman Eleonora Vigoni,[18] who was ironically referring to the love story of Adalgisa and Carlo. This story, the narrator specifies, has been 'commented' upon to him by the 'Tantardini marito e moglie'. The procedure is the same as in *Quattro figlie* and in the other disegni mentioned in the first section: as if to validate the truthfulness of what is narrated, the narrator relies on the testimony and on the information given to him by other members of the Milanese community, placing himself on the same level as those

[17] Lugnani, *Del tempo*, p. 91. Lugnani brilliantly analyses the scene where the narrator is in Adalgisa's flat which will be also analysed in part in this chapter. Also Savettieri remarks on the singularity of this scene and more in general on this section in the disegno, claiming that here the narrator exceptionally takes the form of an on-stage character: 'the narrator comes out as a fictional character who is not only recounting an old story set in belle époque Milan, unrelated to his own life experiences, but who has also taken part in it' ('Self-Reflection and Ambivalence', p. 416).

[18] Cf. '"Una pagina meravigliosa nel breve libro della vita!" diceva la "strega", cioè donna Eleonora Vigoni, (adoratrice di Longfellow), con molta dolcezza; e con altrettanta perfidia' [L'A 513-514].

who populate the world he creates. Nonetheless, as seen in *Quando il Girolamo*, he also freely moves within that world: he follows Eleonora as she enters Parco Sempione, he knows what she is thinking and focuses on her in a long inner monologue.[19] The same happens with Elsa where the narrator relates her unspoken thoughts as she converses with Adalgisa.

It is approximately in the middle of the disegno that the narrator almost abruptly breaks into the narrative to confirm by means of his own memories how seductive Adalgisa was when she was young, in the years preceding the Great War. An orphan, she had studied singing thanks to the help of her uncle and aunt, and she would walk the streets capturing the gaze of the narrator:[20]

> Era allora una bella e vivace ragazza del nostro popolo, se lo dico potete credermi, per quanto certi sussurroni mi accusino di incompetenza…. La conoscevo di vista, la incontravo per via…. Non alta, ma di buone proporzioni…. Ardita, provocatrice: d'occhi, e di…. Un po' troppo soda, forse, come certe tedesche quando fanno la ginnastica svedese: e davanti, poi, e sulla periferia…. un po'…. un po' troppo…. non saprei come dire…. Era già il tempo che i gusti, anche da noi, principiavano a ingentilirsi…. Alcuni della nostra combriccola, ch'erano ammiratori e recitatori del poeta, e avevano però più in promptu i suoi tipi, i suoi modi, e io stesso che lo amavo e lo amo, prendemmo – non ricordo bene chi fosse il primo a cominciare – cominciammo a chiamarla portianamente la Tettón, nel parlar fra noi, beninteso: o anche, talvolta, più sgangherati, la Tetàscia. Era una sgangheratura affettuosa, sinceramente ammirativa, e direi fraterna…. cioè, un po' più che fraterna…. una cosa tutta diversa, anzi: tipica, comunque, del nostro tono trivialone ed allegro e delle nostre sane risate, in quegli anni. [L'A 529][21]

[19] Cf. L'A 486-487.

[20] In the summer of 1913 or 1914, Adalgisa is not yet married: 'Per lei ci fu un'estate, il 1913, se ben ricordo, o forse il '14 – se ben connetto i millesimi in aristoteloide unità – ci fu un'estate bruciata che il nostro sindaco aveva proprio l'aria di voler ciurlare nel manico' [540]. She becomes a widow in 1921: 'Vedova! Nel 1921' [L'A 548].

[21] A blank line separates the above section from the previous section, thus typographically suggesting a change in tone and almost cordoning off the central part of the disegno from the rest of it. Before including it in the volume, Gadda published – as we have seen in chapter 2 – the disegno in a periodical. The initial and closing sections now found in the book were published together one after the other in *Il Tesoretto*, the 1941 almanac of the Mondadori series 'Lo Specchio'. The central section – roughly corresponding to what I am analysing here – was published almost two years later, in 1942, in the periodical *Primato*, where it was split into two episodes. The choice of excluding the central section from the publication in *Il Tesoretto* is probably to be linked to practical reasons of length of the text. What now corresponds to the whole of the disegno was probably too long for the almanac. It is interesting, however, that Gadda decided to remove the very central section instead of others, and it cannot be excluded that it was the fact itself that the section was already tonally different from the rest of the chapter of *Un fulmine* to convince him to do so. For an analysis of some of the changes affecting the text of *Un fulmine* in the passage from the novel to the collection, see De Michelis, *Tra il 'quid' e il 'quod'*, pp. 114-120.

The narrator – who claims he has seen Adalgisa in the street and clarifies he has first-hand memories of her physique, confirming once again that he is made of the same substance as his characters – enters the scenes as part of a group: a close 'combriccola' of friends united by common passions, including the dialectal poetry of Carlo Porta (hence, the nickname *Tettón* used for Adalgisa). The group regularly attends the musical shows starring Adalgisa in particular at the Fossati and Carcano theatres:

> Andavamo ogni tre o quattro volte, un paio di volte per settimana: ma saremmo andati ogni sera, credo, ove miglior cornucopia ci sovvenisse. Dopo le solite indigestioni di mineralogia o dopo esserci cavati gli occhi per interi pomeriggi nell''aula di macchine': (che i maggiorenti del Politecnico, e forse la paterna sollecitudine degli erari di allora, avevano voluta senza finestre, simile a discreta cantina).
>
> Dopo cena andavamo da lei, voglio dire al Fossati, ad estasiarci di lei, della sua voce, della sua 'passione', della sua tubercolosi.
>
> Com'era simpatica!
>
> Davanti a lei, pigiati fra i garzonacci del Garibaldi, dimenticavamo perfino l'ingegner Bagatto. E dire che in quegli anni, presso la gran parte dei frequentatori de' loggioni, non era pur anco invalso l'uso un po' snob, oggi pressoché generalizzato, di lavarsi di quando in quando anche i piedi: almeno in occasione del Corpus Domini. Tutto dimenticavamo in quegli anni! E di lei finivamo per sognare. [L'A 532]

As the above passage indicates, the years of Adalgisa's youth are also the years of the narrator's youth, now perceived – from the present perspective from which the narrator tells his story and looks back, towards the past – as distant and far; a perception intensified by the recurring use of deictics such as 'allora' and 'in quegli anni'. The 'combriccola' consists of students of engineering at the Polytechnic of Milan,[22] young men born and bred

[22] The narrator had already made a clear – albeit not so evident – reference to his past as student of engineer in *Quando il Girolamo*: 'a' miei anni la sana fatica avente nel suo punto focale […] un "motore con valvole in testa"' [307]. In recalling features evidently common to the historical persona of Gadda, the narrator seems to lend himself to readers as a projection of the author, as if to say that the narratorial voice is to be straightforwardly identified in an authorial voice. The amount of information presented across the disegni in the collection perfectly matches with the biographical profile of Gadda (both the author and the narrator were born and bred in Milan in the same frame of years, both studied engineer, both served in the first world war, and so on). Although I would like to keep a clear and firm distinction between the notion of narrator as a textual function from the notion of the author as the historical persona of Gadda, I nonetheless agree with Cenati that in the disegni there is an interplay between fictional and autobiographical dimensions: 'i riverberi di una pseudo-autobiografia gaddiana, svolta per mano dell'io narrante, conferiscono coesistenza di realtà vera e soda alle figure di fantasia che si muovono nel racconto, mentre la stessa immagine pubblica dell'autore Gadda è assimilata alla dimensione immaginaria dove quelle figure, i suoi personaggi, prendono forma. […] Gadda diventa personaggio di sé stesso, mentre Adalgisa e la sua corte di amicizie acquistano spessore di carne e ossa. È questo uno dei fondamenti di complementarità paradossale su cui si regge la possente composizione

in the Milanese middle class: well-off if compared to the vast majority of society but not excessively wealthy, as suggested by the fact they go to popular theatres, watch Adalgisa's shows from the balcony, and cannot attend them as much as they would like to. Within the entirety generically refered to as 'noi' or 'noi milanesi', a subgroup more precisely defined as 'noi della combriccola' takes centre stage:

> Con noi della combriccola – alcuni erano 'vecchi' amici del povero Carlo, sebbene molto minori di età – con noi fu sempre generosa di sorbetti, di limonate, (dette oggi spremute di limone), di petits-fours, di cocomero in ghiaccio, tutte le volte che ci convitò 'al me quart pian, se vorìi vegnì sü a mangià l'ingüria'. Era questa la formula rituale dell'invito. 'A pacià e bêf e lavà la facia', aggiungeva ridendo, secondo un'antica e divertentissima spiritosaggine di mia gente […]. [L'A 537]

As a member of the 'combriccola', the narrator is also invited to Adalgisa's fourth-floor flat. It is here that we encounter him as a fully-fledged character in the narrative: a character provided with his own limited perspective from which he sees, thinks, and lives – as the other characters do – in the narrated world. The super-personal posture adopted on many other occasions is dismissed. We are faced instead with a first-person narrative bordering on the memoir, where the subject that frequently but fleetingly appears in a first-person form in the other disegni takes shape as a direct witness involved in the scene. Adalgisa offers him some sweets, but he does not dare to look directly at her. He looks instead out of the window, his gaze running across the roofs and chimneys of Milan. Let us consider in full the following passage, essential to understand how the relationship between the narrator and the narrated world is presented here:

> Lassù, in mezzo ai ritratti e alle dolciere, che calda luce! Nelle contrade, la nostra gente viveva. Rideva allegra, felice, la signorina Adalgisa, mi porgeva la coppa delle caramelle: 'com'è incantato lei!', lasciandomi il tempo di prenderne quante volevo, incoraggiandomi anzi nella pesca: 'quale vuole?... aspetti, glie la trovo io…. e la menta? e il ratafià? non le piace il ratafià…. e questa?....' (leggeva)

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dell'*Adalgisa*: tra autobiografismo umoristico d'autore e finzione autobiografico-memoriale' (*Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 62). On the interplay between fiction and autobiography, see also Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, pp. 197-213. I will come back to this interplay, with special attention for the role the notes play in it, in chapter 4.

'….noisette: non le va la noisette?' Un tremito di gratitudine era in me, tanta gentilezza mi affascinava. Ero davvero incantato, non osavo guardarla troppo a lungo. Perché avevo gli occhi di fuori, alla sera: sui tegoli e sui colmigni della mia svergolata Milano; tra i camini e i fili e i pali sbirolenti dei tetti arrossati dal tramonto caldo del luglio, o, poi, del settembre: o nell'ombre, giù, tra le viventi, cicalanti immagini di alcuni 'terrazzini' più prossimi, o lungo le ringhiere dei terrazzi sui tetti: vicini, lontani, fino al lontano tramonto. Vecchie marmitte bleu, rugginose, di ferro smaltato, fiorivano ivi di basilico la bontà perenne dei coppi: ch'è il ruvido, lo scuro mantello del nostro essere, del nostro vivere antico. O li ingemmavano del rifiorire d'una rosa: bianca; o rossa, più rossa d'ogni fastigio sforzesco. Dimesse per acciacchi e ruggine, dopo anni, dal loro ufficio minestrante. Il gran pavese delle mutande, con bindelli, e delle camiciole ad asciugare magnificava la sera, gioioso nel vento; ch'era uno spirare di Maestro. Galliche lame delle nubi, già cenere, nel tumultuato occidente: cirri d'oro: di fuoco. Lontani monti parevano carovane azzurrine, chiudevano il paese della vita. Guardavo ancora, dall'altro lato, ai vecchi coppi d'un tempo, al campanile delle Ore: e, a fianco, ultimo, il sogno alabastrino della mole farsi madreperla ed ombra, sorgere e spiccarsi dall'ombra, come fiamme, le rosse aguglie coi Santi: pretestati dell'ultima porpora. [L'A 537-538]

Singled out from among the group of friends to which he pertains and through which he introduces himself, the narrator includes himself in the narrative focus as a *narrated* character. He does not simply mention an acquaintance or a kinship with another character; nor does he make a generic reference to something in common between him and the characters. He steps forward in a new way. The key word to understand his behaviour is *incantato*, 'dumbfounded', 'stunned' ('"com'è *incantato* lei!"'):[23] the narrator is embarrassed, almost overwhelmed by Adalgisa's presence. He directs his gaze outwards, and it is from his visual perspective as he is looking out of the window that we also view the city ('avevo gli occhî di fuori', 'giù, tra le viventi, cicalanti immagini di alcuni "terrazzini" più prossimi', 'tetti: vicini, lontani, fino al lontano tramonto'; 'lontani monti'; 'guardavo ancora, dall'altro lato').[24] The vision-description of Milan – of which the narrator higlights the shabby, unpretentious beauty in the melancholic light of sunset – is carried out with a

[23] *Incantato* retains here also the meaning of the Milanese dialectal word *incantàa*. See in the Vocabolario Milanese-Italiano del Cherubini, *s.v.*, where *incantaàa* is rendered as 'stupido', 'mogio', 'intronato', 'abbagliato'.

[24] Although the visual perspective is that of the narrator who looks at the city from the window of the fourth-floor flat of Adalgisa, I would also like to note – following a suggestion from Giulia Perosa – that in the passage there also is some form of chronological indefiniteness or vagueness: 'il narratore, con un'intensa tensione partecipativa, somma istantanee diverse dello stesso scorcio; si riscontrano, in altre parole, tempi diversi (ricordi di luglio e di settembre) intrecciati in un'unica descrizione' (Giulia Perosa, *Gadda e il paesaggio: modi, funzioni, prospettive*, Doctoral Thesis, Università degli Studi di Verona, Université de Genève, 2021, p. 240). On July and September, cf. note 35 in *L'Adalgisa*: '"Tramonto…. del luglio,…. del settembre". Gli studenti del Politecnico erano spesso a Milano in quei mesi: (esami; preparazione agli)' [563].

lyric-oneiric style, and not without allowing readers to perceive a note of affection and attachment, as well as a sense of community ('la *mia* svergolata Milano', '*nostro* essere', '*nostro* vivere antico').

The regime of latent homodiegesis seen in the rest of the collection – to adopt and adapt the phrase coined by Stracuzzi – is upgraded into one of *patent* homodiegesis. The narrator encountered in the central section of the last disegno represents a perfect example of what Cohn calls 'incarnated narrators who inhabit the fictional reality they narrate'.[25] Himself part of the narrated world, he narrates it in a first-person account from his own limited perspective as a fictional character. Located at a given point of the fictional line of time, he is as situated as any other character in the fictional world.

As the description of Milan comes to an end, we are brought back inside the flat where the atmosphere is made cheerful by laughter and jokes. When Adalgisa offers lemonade to the narrator, the previous digression on Milan is merely explained with a parenthetical remark – 'con l'animo ai tegoli *(in apparenza)*' – as a diversion, as if by turning his eyes to Milan the narrator was only trying to drive away the unseemly thoughts aroused by Adalgisa's body:

> Rideva, rideva, mi porgeva quell'altro piatto, dei fondants, parlando con cinque o sei alla volta […].
>
> 'Caramelle in ghiaccio!', urlava Remigio con le sue labbra rosse bagnate di sugo di cocomero, con un'ombra appena sui labbri e con due enormi baffi color cocomero traverso le gote fino agli occhi […].
>
> L'Adalgisa, come ho detto, mi porgeva la limonata: con dentro quella interminabile festuca del cucchiarino speciale, che pareva lo stelo d'un garofano: con il piattino sotto: 'stia attento lei, mi raccomando il mio bicchiere…, perché lei, certe volte, mi pare un po' un salame….': e non mollava né bicchierone né piattino finché non fosse ben certa che li avevo presi a mia volta, con tutt'e due le mani. Potete ben capire che cos'era, da lei, una limonata…. dico una vera e propria 'spremuta di limone'! Altro che sorbetti! avevo altro in testa, arrossendo, con l'animo ai tegoli (in apparenza) e ai suoni di fuori, dietro al saettare nero dei voli, allo stridìo delle rondini. [L'A 538-539]

[25] Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, p. 4.

It is at this point that we encounter an interesting passage:

> Io non ero ragioniere: lo capivo: mai, mai, lo intuivo, mai avrei avuto in pugno la via Brisa! E sentivo una strana fitta, a sinistra, vicino al cuore, come se tutto, già allora, fosse tutto perduto. Nessuna 'famiglia di signori' mi avrebbe incaricato di amministrar case: i droghieri zii non mi salutavano neanche. Provavo allora un dolore, una tristezza…. le cose mi sgomentavano…. un senso di umiliazione incredibile…. Avrei voluto avere i baffi del povero Carlo, avrei dato, per quei baffi, per il nastrino della Libia, tutto il pacco de' miei riccioluti integrali. [L'A 539]

By bringing himself to the fore, the narrator also portrays himself – according to Giuliano Cenati – in a self-mocking manner. As if to compensate for the space exceptionally reserved for himself, he presents himself 'come uno dei tanti'; he appears 'in quanto agente, nelle dimesse vesti di figlio di famiglia, cervello di buon senso ma neanche troppo brillante'.[26] He thus discards and almost casts aside, in Cenati's view, any form of primacy he might have in his capacity as narrator, as opposed to the other characters. '"Perché lei, certe volte, mi pare un po' un salame…."', Adalgisa playfully comments on his attitude, making sure he holds with both his hands the glass and dish she passes on to him.

A clumsy student afraid of Adalgisa's beauty, irrelevant in the continuation of her story, the narrator defines himself in opposition to the mature Carlo: 'io *non* ero ragioniere', '*nessuna* "famiglia di signori" mi avrebbe incaricato di amministrar case: i droghieri zii *non* mi salutavano *neanche*'. Compared to Carlo, officer in Libya and now accountant for some commercial activities located in via Brisa in Milan, including the 'merceria' belonging to Adalgisa's uncle and aunt, the narrator confesses he feels inadequate. He points out that a future analogous to that of Carlo is unattainable or impracticable for him. He would exchange, he claims, all of his mathematical knowledge for Carlo's black moustache and medals: a symbol (the moustache) of maturity and virility and hence of a greater experience of the world and of human relationships; a social recognition (the medals) of the value and

[26] Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 60.

prowess showed on the battlefield. The insistence on such details and the way in which he declares he would like to resemble Carlo gives, perhaps, a humorous and/or fanciful quality to this desire, but in the considerations made there is also sadness, anguish, and a sense of exclusion ('dolore', 'tristezza', 'le cose mi sgomentavano').

The narrator's own personal diversity, which he himself highlights compared to Carlo, broadens into a diversity of a more general, abstract nature – 'come se *tutto*, già allora, fosse *tutto* perduto', he explains, claiming he feels a pang in his heart. The past is 'perduto' from the perspective of the present. 'Perduto', essentially, as it is past; 'perduto', more concretely, for the enormity of what has happened since the time of the afternoons spent in the flat of Adalgisa: the first world war, fascism, the outbreak of the second world war; events and changes so epochal that they give the idea that no trace of that past world could have survived until today.[27] The sense of loss, however, is here significantly traced back to the past time. The relationship between the narrator and the narrated world is not only interrupted in the present, a fact which is in itself already important, but was in fact most probably already compromised – '*già* allora' – then. The possibility that there might have ever been an actual integration in the narrated world is put into question. The narrator indirectly attributes to himself a form of diversity and uniqueness which distinguishes him from all the other characters.

As the scene set in Adalgisa's flat ends and the attention moves onto her love story with Carlo, the narrator is no longer present as a character within the main narration, and returns instead to the secluded role seen in the first section, except for when he declares certain details of the story have been reported to him by Carlo himself: 'Così mi raccontò lui stesso, non senza umore, qualche anno più tardi. Lo incontrai durante una licenza di

[27] On the nature of past as 'perduto' to the present inasmuch as it is past, cf. the identification of time as 'irrepetibile' – 'Ogni anima tende a motivare il suo essere: quando il motivo è nell'*irrepetibile* tempo, ogni anima vive nella memoria' [548] – on which I will reflect in chapter 5.

guerra' [L'A 543]. In the central part of the disegno, however, the narrator is sentimentally involved with his characters and discloses more clearly than ever his relation of proximity to what is narrated. At the same time, by attributing to himself a form of diversity and uniqueness, he activates some sort of a distancing mechanism. What does all of this tell us about him as a narrator and character?

In the study already mentioned, Bogel questions a notion of satire as a form which only acknowledges a difference between satirist and satirical target and then builds up the satirical attack on that difference, in favour instead of a notion of satire as a form which rhetorically creates a difference between the satirist and something or someone threateningly close to or not sufficiently separate from him. Satire, in Bogel's terms, 'does not simply register a prior difference between satirist and satiric object and then play out the consequences of this difference'; it 'works to produce a difference between two figures whom the satirist – who is usually one of these two figures – perceives to be insufficiently differentiated'.[28] Never explicitly denied or rejected in this and in the other disegni, the connection between narrator and narrated world in *L'Adalgisa* is undermined from within as the narrator takes shape as a character. As he presents himself as different from Carlo and extends the sense of loss he perceives in the present with regard to the past, the narrator also distinguishes himself from the world narrated. By taking form as an involved narrative subject, he brings himself into the scene but also manages to draw a line distinguishing him from others on an inner, existential level ('lo capivo […], lo intuivo […]'; 'sentivo una strana fitta, a sinistra, vicino al cuore').

Satire creates, according to Bogel, a difference between satirist and satirical target starting from a condition of continuity or original identity which cannot be totally undone. The specificity of satire lies precisely in the fact that it builds rhetorical barriers on which it

[28] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, p. 42.

insists in an oppositional and almost binary way with the effect of creating distance, while at the same time reprocessing the connections and affinities. Placing himself on the same level as his characters, even finding himself in their company in Adalgisa's flat, the narrator distances himself from a part of the narrated world and ultimately from the entirety of the world narrated. He shows himself to us as part of it, while at the same time stressing his own diversity. For the narrator, the past was already lost back then.[29] The dive mentioned in the notice of *Quattro figlie* significantly has its almost complete fulfilment in the last disegno. Finding himself bathing in the water where his characters were also bathing, the narrator cannot but ambiguously inhabit their world by fictionally portraying himself in it as an ambiguous character.

3.4. In *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano*

As explored in chapter 2, *Strane dicerie contristano i Bertoloni* begins with a description of the villas of the San Juan coast in Maradagàl amongst which particular attention is paid to villa Maria Giuseppina. Struck by lightning, the villa redirects the electric discharge to the neighbouring properties thanks to its lightning conductors, so that the discharge 'dives' into the housekeeper's bathtub of villa Enrichetta: 'con uno sparo formidabile, e previo annientamento d'un pianoforte a coda, *si tuffò nella bagnarola* asciutta della donna di servizio' [384].[30] This electrical dive echoes the one mentioned in the notice of *Quattro figlie* (placed in the collection just before *Strane dicerie*), creating a link between the pseudo-

[29] On the nature of satire as a form that combines together proximity and distance, it is interesting to note that the scene set in the flat of Adalgisa is marked by suspension and liminality in many ways, including a physical and atmospheric liminality: the narrator is inside the flat but he looks out of the window with his gaze running on Milan, which is in turn observed in a quintessential liminal moment of the day: sunset.

[30] And some lines above the fact is recalled as 'la scarica della bagnarola' [385].

South American diptych and the disegni set in Milan with which, however, the diptych has little to share in terms of how the narrative is presented to us.[31]

In *Strane dicerie*, the narrator focuses on the local doctor of Lukones, through whose perspective Gonzalo is gradually introduced, as the doctor walks towards villa Pirobutirro to meet with him. The doctor's perspective offers in turn a filter for the rumours circulating on Gonzalo amongst the locals. We are therefore informed of how the doctor reacts and feels about what the servant José and other *peones* tell him:

> Gli altri feudatari e salumai della plaga erano lodevolmente astemi, pensò il dottore mentre seguitava ad andare, sferzandosi il polpaccio destro (che aveva pieno e robusto, e ciclistico) con quel suo bastoncello di ciliegio. Tutto ciò poteva spiegare la evidente indulgenza, e anzi parzialità, del briccone di Manoel Torre nei confronti del Pirobutirro figlio: si sa, gli osti, per loro uno che non beve vino è da mandarlo in galera.… […]
>
> Il medico ridacchiò: gli parve, pensandoci, che il figlio Pirobutirro stesse per troppo a rimuginar malanni, chiuso in sé: malanni omai rugginosi nel tempo: e i pensieri gli attossicavano l'anima, come una spazzatura irrancidita. Certo che intorno a quel suo cliente, così fuori da ogni standard, s'erano andate formando a Lukones le opinioni più strane e correvano, da assai tempo, dicerie di ogni genere. [L'A 396-397]

Moving between perspectives to reconstruct the portrait of Gonzalo, the narrator also adheres to the viewpoint of the *peones*. He also at times remarks that what is narrated depends indeed on their viewpoint, thus distinguishing between the rumours and the doctor's thoughts:

> Dormiva, la mattina, fino alle otto, e anche otto e mezza: e si faceva portare al letto il caffè, dalla Signora, che non finiva più di far scale per quel figlio, povera vecchia! e anche i giornali; per poi leggerli e beverlo fuori a poco a poco, sia il caffè che i giornali, allungato in letto come una vacca: (così diceva il peone): e teneva qualche libro desoravia del cifone, per leggere di tanto in tanto anche quello, come non gli bastasse i giornali, ma in letto. Mentre i contadini, alle otto, sono già dietro da tre ore a sudare, e bisogna rifilare il filo alle falce. Così diceva, e ripeteva poi, la gente. [L'A 393-394]

[31] Cf. the many other reverberations of themes and images which contribute to the unity of *L'Adalgisa* mentioned in ch. 2.4 and in partic. in note 40.

The feasts to which Gonzalo treats himself are imagined with great detail by the fantasy of the locals, to which the narrator conforms by referring to Gonzalo as 'il porco' and 'il sin vergüenza':

> Ed erano, anche queste patate di dentro, come del resto quelle di fuori, estremamente farinose in un primo tatto della sua lingua, dove però non appena ve la cucchiarasse, dacché il cucchiaio vi doveva adibire, il lurco, le si sdilinquivano subito in un'unica pasta tutt'insieme con il loro involto carnoso, cioè l'evacuato e rinfarcito animale, d'un sapore generale di rosmarino, o, a farci caso, di basilico che dava però il passo ben presto, e poi del tutto partita vinta, a quel fuoco dannato del pepe rosso. Poiché maciullava tutt in un vlta, cioè piccioni e patate e cervelli e lardelli e pepe e chiodi (di garofano), il porco, innaffiandoli poi, che non erano neanche arrivati in fondo, coi vini prelibati della regione preandina, e i pesci invece, e la ragusta, ammappelo! […]
>
> […] E dopo questo po' po' di lappa lappa aveva anche la faccia, il sin vergüenza, di cercar briga ogni volta al trattore […]. [L'A 399-400]

As suggested by the use of a Latinism such as 'lurco',[32] evidently not attributable to any popular linguistic habits, the narrator only partially takes on the perspective of the *peones* – to whom we could, in contrast, attribute lexical choices such as 'porco' and 'sin vergüenza' – and instead linguistically *hybridises*, as seen in the disegni set in Milan, his own viewpoint with that of the characters.

Navi approdano al Parapagàl starts straightaway with a description of Gonzalo and then continues with Gonzalo coming down to the kitchen where his mother has prepared a bowl of steaming soup for him. The narrator – as we have seen in chapter 2 – delves into a satirical-grotesque portrait of society which alternates with short sequences taking us back to the kitchen where Gonzalo stands in front of the table and his mother bustles about. Scenes focused on Gonzalo where readers view society through the lens of his consciousness alternate with scenes where we see him from the outside: a body standing nervously in the kitchen, in an atmosphere of growing tension.

[32] Cf. GDLI, *s.v.*: 'crapulone, ingordo, goloso, vorace', 'voce dotta'.

The portrait of society is offered in complete adherence to the perspective of Gonzalo as if the narrator was directly giving voice to his hallucinated, delirious imagination. The following passage takes into particular consideration British immigrants gathered into a club where they celebrate homeland festivities with eccentric parties:

> Taluni poi, nelle feste o nelle ricorrenze patrie della vecchia Inghilterra, apparivano adorni di bottoni di inusitata lucentezza, o in costume settecentesco, con parrucca: due giorni dopo il Fray Mocho pubblicava la gloria e lo splendore magnesiaco del banchetto a ferro di cavallo, fra un subisso di coccarde, fettucce, calici, fiori, alamari, turbanti massonici – (questi però li vedeva solo lui, Gonzalo, nel suo delirio) – con penne di pappagallo amazonico: e le lor donne di uccello di paradiso. [L'A 432]

In a parenthetical remark – '(questi però li vedeva solo lui, Gonzalo, nel suo delirio)' – the narrator clarifies that a particular item of clothing is only imagined by Gonzalo and is in fact not worn in the parties mentioned above, thus disassociating himself from the delusional perspective of his character.

The end of the disegno takes us back to the kitchen with Gonzalo and his mother, to then move into Gonzalo's mind for one last time. Gonzalo remembers what a barber's apprentice had told him a few weeks earlier as he was cutting his hair. The apprentice, we learn, had confessed to his client he would like to have a drink in the city like a real *señor*, watching the others pass by *en la calle*:

> Il figlio, all'impiedi, con gli occhi sbarrati sopra il paralume, ricordò proprio che il giovane del suo parrucchiere, alcune settimane avanti, in Saenz Peña, gli aveva mormorato in un orecchio: 'Come me gustaría, sabe usted señor don Gonzalo…. de asentarme a tomar una copita de licor…. Por la tarde, a una mesa… ese…. del Donisetti…. – (pronunziava così alla, alla spagnola) – ….viendo pasear a las guapase en toda la calle…. los caballeros…. los coches…. sabe Usted, ese beneditcín…. supongo que Usted – volle sorridere – cada dia…. podrà permitirse ese lujo….' [L'A 438]

Although in *Navi approdano* he almost exclusively focuses on Gonzalo and gives almost absolute centrality to his perspective, the narrator of the pseudo-South American diptych is unconstrained to any visual angle or to a limited viewpoint. He can also adopt, as the narrator of the other disegni, a super-personal posture which allows him to switch from

one character to another. As it happens in the other disegni, here, too, the narrator turns to gossip to build up his narrative and introduce the character of Gonzalo. If in the disegni set in Milan the narrator presents his own narrative as a product derived from chatter and hearsay, in *Strane dicerie* the rumors fueled by the locals are on the contrary counterbalanced by the perceptions of the more cautious doctor.[33] In *Navi approdano* they are reversed and almost nullified as the perspective taken on is that of Gonzalo, who views society as a monstrous and grotesque aggregate of stupidity and meaninglessness.

The most striking difference between the disegni derived from *La cognizione* and the others lies, however, in that the narrator of these latter never becomes part of the diegetic world, nor does he portray himself as connected or related in any way to his characters on the diegetic level. While in the disegni set in Milan the narrator dives into the diegetic world breaking the surface of water and finds himself soaked into his characters' bath water, the narrator of *Strane dicerie* and *Navi approdano* remains, so to speak, on *this* side of the water. He inhabits the world narrated differently from what is found in *Quattro figlie*, *Quando il Girolamo*, *L'Adalgisa*, and the other disegni set in Milan.

3.5. An ambiguous coexistence of distance and proximity

Let us return, to conclude this chapter, to the dive of *Quattro figlie* and the scene set in Adalgisa's flat. The dive presupposes a difference and a form of distance between the narrative subject and the milieu represented, but then erases that distance as soon as the dive

[33] It is interesting to note, however, that at least in one occasion the narrator establishes a connection with the present time in terms of what the others say: 'la gran parte giacevano inedita presso le varie case editoriali del Maradagàl, che stentavano, *dicono* (e stentano ancora oggi), a trovar loro uno sbocco sul mercato librario' [387].

itself occurs. Similarly, the scene set in Adalgisa's flat portrays the narrator as a character different from all the others, but nonetheless confirms his consanguinity and connection to the world narrated. Both the dive and the scene introduce an element of difference, and yet the difference does not exclude a contact, either in the form of mimetic appropriation or by disclosing a relationship between narrator and narrated world.

The narrator of the disegni set in Milan places himself within the narrated matter, but he does so in an ambiguous and cumbersome manner, because each of the voices to which he mimetically gives expression is filtered through his own viewpoint, configured in turn as internal to the narrated milieu and in some ways in conformity with it. The ambiguity which characterises his position when he is found in Adalgisa's flat reflects, then, the ambiguity which characterises his narrative posture and the combination of superpersonality and personal perspectives he adopts throughout the narrative. His ambiguity as an involved character is at one with his ambiguity as a narrator.

As it entails a dynamic of both separation and contact and it alludes to the difficulty of making clear-cut distinctions between subjects immersed in the same water, the plunge expresses the simultaneous coexistence of proximity and distance found in the disegni set in Milan; a coexistence which informs the kind of satire practiced therein by Gadda. Proximity, as the narrator who places himself within the narrated world becomes a character: a fellow citizen, an acquaintance, a relative, even a friend of other characters, next to whom we find him in Adalgisa's flat, giving rise to a sense of community and nostalgic attachment. Distance, as he attributes to himself a form of diversity and uniqueness as a character, and as the mimetic appropriation of the voice of his characters is nonetheless often done ironically, with the effect of ridiculing them. Diegetically dipped into the narrated world

where he reproduces and mocks the voice of his characters, the narrator also remains himself.[34]

In this regard, it is not irrelevant to note that the advisory notice exclusively places the emphasis on the mimetic nature of the disegno. As no reference is made to a polemical or critical attitude, the notice suggests that the only goal pursued is to give a realistic representation of the social environment considered.[35] In so doing, the 'autore' protects himself from those who might accuse him of being excessively venomous or aggressive, leaving to readers the task of decoding the irony, and he also increases the overall satirical gradient as the attitude he takes on towards the content of the disegno is even more elusive.

As we compare and contrast the disegni set in Milan with the disegni taken from *La cognizione*, the analysis of the narrative voice allows us to make an important consideration. In spite of a few common traits, there is a profound difference between the world of Gonzalo and the world of Milan also under the narrative profile. If almost no contact is possible between Gonzalo and society, and Gonzalo's character introduces in the collection a form

[34] After all, the simile of the bathtub *per se* does not entail a fully-fledged identification, as it would instead happen with a metaphor. The gap implicit in the simile as such is even increased as the image of the dive is introduced by the conjunction *quasicchè* ('*almost* as if'), expressing the partial adherence of the simile to the mimetic-immersive process put in place.

[35] As it places the emphasis exclusively on the mimetic nature of the disegno, the notice also partially sounds as an attempt on the part of the narrator to offer a justification of the kind of representation given of the social environment in question; representation motivated on the intrinsic features of that social environment. In other words, if the disegno sounds sneering and gives the impression of moving criticism against the characters, this is because the narrator was simply imitating the characters. Any charge of being malevolent towards his characters is rejected as the characters lend themselves in virtue of what they are as a laughing matter. Corrado Confalonieri has observed that this strategy is typical of satire and has named it – taking up the category of 'denegazione romanzesca' discussed by Federico Bertoni, *Realismo e letteratura. Una storia possibile*, Torino, Einaudi, 2007, pp. 143-146 – as 'denegazione satirica'. Cf. 'Lo stile (non) è l'uomo. Satira, retorica e realismo tra Giovenale, Gadda e Montale', *Between*, IV, 7, (2014), pp. 1-25. This rhetorical strategy allows the satirist to 'mettere tutta la propria manipolazione al servizio di una presunta rappresentazione della realtà senza abdicare all'una per mantenersi fedele all'altra. La denegazione satirica rovescia ciò che può essere avvertito come allontanamento dal reale nello sforzo [...] di avvicinarsi a esso' (ibid., p. 17). It is interesting to note, however, that a critical and polemical intention was more explicitly claimed in the periodical *Letteratura*, where *Quattro figlie* was published in 1942 before being collected in the volume (see note 13 of chapter 2 for the bibliographical details). Otherwise unchanged, the notice was concluded in *Letteratura* by an explicit referece to a spiritual-intellectual condition of emptiness: 'E mette capo [l'impeto ricco, nativo] a quella felice condizione dell'anima e della capa che "i filosofi scolàstici", e forse anche l'Evangelista Torricelli, chiamano "vacuum"' (p. 39). On a previous manuscript version, Gadda had even referred to an 'abisso dell'inutilità' (Citati 2/9/3/*v*): cf. Mazzocchi, 'Per *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*', pp. 120-121.

of radical difference, being at a maximum possible distance from the social other, the narrator of the disegni set in Milan is instead in contact – a tenuous contact sometimes, continuously renegotiated and redefined, but still a contact – with the world he narrates. The kind of difference he conveys – and the same applies to Bruno, Elsa, and Adalgisa – is less sharp and definite. As the reflections made by Bogel on how satire works as a mechanism for difference creation help us to understand, almost any affirmation of satirical difference comes with what Bogel calls a 'shadow of connection': 'Though satirists, and readers and theorists of satire, often seem to be devoted to a lucid and purely oppositional single-mindedness, the shadow of connection is always there'.[36] If the narration of the world of *La cognizione* corresponds to a moment of full rejection and denunciation of the idiocy of society, the world found in the disegni set in Milan is one where the shadow of connection grows thick. The dive taken by the narrator can be understood as an expression of such shadow of connection: a way in which the shadow of connection takes form and is rhetorically expressed throughout the narrative.

Proximity and distance are simultaneous not only in the disegni set in Milan, but also in the macrostructure of the collection, where the world of *La cognizione* maintains its own character as it becomes part of a new whole. The analysis of the narrative voice tells us that the encounter between *La cognizione* and *Un fulmine* is extremely productive in terms of meaning, and encourages us to continue our interpretation of the collection under the notion of plural unity introduced in chapter 2. Rethinking satire, not merely as a form of articulation of a difference existing between satirist and target, but as a form that is linked to the creation of difference, can be useful to better understand not only the relationship of the narrator with the world narrated in the disegni set in Milan, but also what happens in more general terms in the book. Rethinking satire not only in oppositional and purely judgemental terms – giving

[36] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, p. 68.

prominence to its creative-productive potential over its aggressive-destructive nature, in the face of a condition of similarity that is never completely removed, and is instead unceasingly revised and reprocessed – helps us give a meaning to the ambiguity inherent to the different forms of subjectivity we see throughout *L'Adalgisa*.

Chapter 4

‘Li ammirai stupefatto da ragazzo’:

The notes and the interplay of the fictional and the autobiographical

4.1. The notes of *L’Adalgisa*

The presence of authorial notes in a collection of fictional and narrative texts such as *L’Adalgisa* may be perceived as a source of wonder, if not as an anomaly or a deviation. In essayistic and scholarly contexts where they are typically found, notes serve the function of providing a space for additional and/or background information on an element or topic not properly developed in the main text for various reasons: because it has, for example, minor importance if compared to what is included in the main text, and/or because its inclusion might draw the attention away from the primary focus or line of argument. Offering a space for anything the author may want to mention but not include in the main text, notes therefore incorporate lateral or collateral arguments, hypotheses not yet tested out, and even polemical remarks. In scholarly contexts, they typically provide bibliographical references pertaining to a quotation, make reference to other authors, and list the literature available on a mentioned element or topic. Animated by explanatory and/or informative aims, notes conventionally have – in essence – an ancillary role in relation to the text to which they are appended; a text they supplement and to which they provide, in some sense, a support or backing, and of which they are an extension of secondary, minor importance.[1]

[1] On notes, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* [1987], trans. by Jane E. Lewin, with a Foreword by Richard Macksey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): see in partic. ch. 12, ‘Notes’, pp. 319-343; Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

Attested to from his earliest writing,[2] Gadda's habit of providing his texts with notes finds its best expression in *L'Adalgisa*. The only other of his works so widely annotated is *Il castello di Udine* (1934), whose first edition had 326 notes. However, in the passage to the volume *I sogni e la folgore* (1955) where *Il castello* was collected together with *La Madonna dei Filosofi* and *L'Adalgisa*, the notes of *Il castello* markedly decreased to 281.[3] Opposingly, the 224 notes found in the first edition of *L'Adalgisa* were all preserved and left substantially unchanged in the passage to *I sogni e la folgore*: a sign of the importance they must have had for Gadda as a distinguishing feature of the collection of disegni milanesi.[4] Furthermore, while the notes of *Il castello* are relatively short and similar to each other as they mostly comment on the meaning of terms and expressions, the notes of *L'Adalgisa* are also very long and – as we will see in this chapter – extremely diversified in terms of typology. The significance of the notes of *L'Adalgisa* in the context of Gadda's production is well known amongst scholars. Stefano Zanzucchi looks at the collection as

University Press, 1997); Sveva Frigerio, *Linguistica della nota. Strategie metatestuali autoriali* (Geneva: Slatkine, 2016).

[2] Starting with the notes found in *Giornale di guerra e di prigionia*, written between 1915-1919, and those found in *Lettere agli amici milanesi*: see in partic. Martignoni, 'Sul sistema delle note in Gadda', in *Meraviglie di Gadda*, ed. by Marchi and Vela. On notes in Gadda, see Manuela Bertone, 'Ai margini del testo', in *Il romanzo come sistema. Molteplicità e differenza in C.E. Gadda* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1993), pp. 125-143; Cenati, 'L'ipertrofia autoglossatoria', in *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, pp. 64-81; Frigerio, 'Metatesti combinati: le note di Gadda', in *Linguistica della nota*, pp. 393-419; Martignoni, Panizzi, 'La "malattia delle note"'; Giovanni Palmieri, 'Quel "diligente notaio" di via San Simpliciano. Le note di Gadda', in *Rinnovamento del codice narrativo in Italia dal 1945 al 1992* (Atti del convegno internazionale, Leuven, Louvain-la-Neuve, Namur, Bruxelles, 3-8 maggio 1993), ed. by Serge Vanvolsem, Franco Musarra and Bart van den Bossche (Rome: Bulzoni; Leuven: Leuven university press: 1995), vol. I, *I tempi del rinnovamento*, pp. 673-693; Giovanni Palmieri, 'In principio era la nota. Motivazioni profonde e origini dell'annotazione gaddiana', *Italogramma*, 5 (2012), pp. 1-21; Giulia Perosa, 'Sulla discorsività della *Meditazione milanese*', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, pp. 13-38 (in partic., *Le note a piè di pagina*, pp. 23-30); Clà Riatsch, 'Autoglossa e autotraduzione', in *Le lingue di Gadda*, Atti del Convegno di Basilea, 10-12 dicembre 1993, ed. by Maria Antonietta Terzoli (Rome: Salerno, 1995), pp. 307-334; Cristina Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, cit., pp. 191-222 (in partic., *Tempo perduto*, pp. 197-213); Stefano Zanzucchi, 'Note e testo in *L'Adalgisa* di C.E. Gadda', *Filologia e critica*, 14 (1989), pp. 383-407.

[3] The notes of *Il castello di Udine* are attributed to a fictional commentator named Feo Averrois. For the introductory text to the collection, also attributed to Averrois, cf. RR 1 115.

[4] The notes of *L'Adalgisa* number two hundred and twenty-seven, if we include in the count the three advisory notices introducing the notes of *Claudio disimpara a vivere*, *Quattro figlie ebbe ciascuna regina*, and *I ritagli di tempo*. As mentioned in ch. 2.1, most of the notes were written in close proximity of the printing of *L'Adalgisa* and their manuscript was sent to Le Monnier after that of the disegni.

'l'opera di Gadda in cui il vario utilizzo delle note di commento al testo narrativo raggiunge un apice, sia sotto il profilo quantitativo che qualitativo, mai più toccato', while Clelia Martignoni defines it 'a tutti gli effetti e stabilmente l'opera prediletta dal chiosatore'.[5]

An illustrative example of the notes of *L'Adalgisa* is note 13 of *Quando il Girolamo ha smesso*…. The disegno makes reference to the Northern-Italian river Olona, invited to flow into the sewage canal of Milan called Vettabbia. Clarifying that in actual fact the Olona does not enter the Vettabbia, the note comments as follows:[6]

> Oh, vada, vada la nera Olona delle tintorie gallaratesi a intrefolarsi nel fiotto decumano della Vettabbia,[13] cui rugginosi pitali decorano, alle due sponde, d'un fiore: il verde e tenero fiore del basilico. [L'A 307]
>
> [13] 'La nera Olona…. a intrefolarsi nel fiotto decumano della Vettabbia'. All'incitamento non corrisponde uno stato di fatto, perocché il fiume Olona, inalveato oggi in canale all'entrar Milano (Piazzale Stuparich), si immette dopo circonvallante percorso nella cosiddetta darsena di Porta Ticinese e per essa nel naviglio di Pavia e dunque e in definitiva nel Ticino. L'intrico dei navigli, canali, rogge, sgrondi e dotti di cloaca nella parte meridionale della città e del suburbio (zona Ticinese) può tuttavia consentire l'immagine: è un intrefolarsi topografico, anziché propriamente idrologico, ove la Vettabbia assurga ad eponimo della scolatura cittadina. La Vettabbia è *ab antiquo* il canale collettore delle acque di pioggia e di scolo della regione Duomo-Ticinese: che occupa la parte 'romana' della città. Per le acque luride valevano altresì pozzi neri, svuotati o almeno alleggeriti semestralmente nei carri-botte, più o meno profumati e più o meno evoluti dietro alla 'évolution de la mecanique'. Li ammirai stupefatto da ragazzo. Decumano, il fiotto, perché si immagina defluito di sotto alla porta decumana dell'ideale 'castrum'. Antichi fognòli d'epoca romana rinvenuti negli scavi della regione Vettabbia.
>
> La città di Milano fu dotata di un sistema di fognature col piano elaborato negli anni 1889-1901 dall'Ufficio Tecnico Municipale, sopraintendendovi l'ingegnere Felice Poggi: piano mandato ad effetto dalle relative delibere del Consiglio Comunale: 1893, poi 1901. Difficoltà gravi per la qualità dei terreni, la scarsa pendenza disponibile, la presenza di cospicue falde acquifere nel sottosuolo. Già da secoli, per altro, la sistemazione idrica della città e del territorio milanese s'era andata formando in quel complesso di aggrovigliate e ragionevoli e servizievoli opere e manufatti, che è non meno caro al pensiero di quanto non sia necessario alla vita, della vivente città: canali detti navigli, disciplina di sorpassi e di comunicazioni fra essi, salti con chiuse dette conche, rogge come la Stadera o la Balossa, inalveazione dell'Olona e del Seveso, protezione da monte: e intorno i due Lambri (il meridionale nasce da Milano): e, a valle, captazione delle risorgive: e cloache, sgrondi, fogne, fognòli. Senza contare l'acqua potabile.
>
> La Vettabbia fu adibita a collettore principale di fogna (1893-1901) mediante convenzione stipulata dal Comune coi rivieraschi ed utenti. Videro essi per tal modo le concupite acque luride – fertilizzanti non che irriganti – pervenire in copia sempre più ragguardevole alle loro verdi marcite: donde 10 e insino a 12 fienagioni per anno. Nella Vettabbia immettono il collettore di Vigentino e il collettore di Nosedo: oggimai vi si raccoglie soltanto una parte, ma certo cospicua, di tutta la civica evacuazione. Ché son cresciute le genti, e dietro loro i quartieri, e i budelli difficili delle cloache.
>
> Quanto al Seveso, la sua portata di piena è oggi accolta in un canale intercettore che immette nel circonvallante Redefesso e, per tramite di esso, nel Lambro detto settentrionale a Melegnano ossia Marignano. [L'A 337-338]

[5] Zanzucchi, 'Note e testo in *L'Adalgisa*', p. 383. Martignoni, 'Sul sistema delle note', p. 124..

[6] From here onwards, the supernumerals that refer to the notes of *L'Adalgisa* in the passages quoted above are also underscored (e.g., [n]), in order to distinguish them from the supernumerals that refer to my notes.

Forced into a canal as it approaches Milan, the Olona moves to the south-east of the city centre passing through the dock of Porta Ticinese, where it is redirected into the Naviglio Pavese and, thence, into the river Ticino, never joining the Vettabbia. Since it is the main canal in south-eastern Milan, the note claims, the Vettabbia is taken to refer synecdochally to the entire area. It is for this reason – 'l'intrico dei navigli […] può consentire l'immagine' – that the Olona is urged to flow into the Vettabbia, even though the appeal does not reflect the actual state of things. 'All'incitamento', the note spells out, 'non corrisponde uno stato di fatto'. The exhortation is not to be understood in a strictly referential manner. The 'intrefolarsi' of the Olona into the Vettabbia should be interpreted in a topographical, rather than hydrological, sense. As the familiar ramification of the Milanese citizens is also referred to in the terms of an 'intrefolarsi',[7] the penetration and distribution of water into the urban space comes to mirror the demographic distribution of the population inhabiting that space. The canals of Milan are the arteries which supply water to the immense body of the city.

The note corrects the emphatic literary exhortation made in the disegno, justifying it and reinstating a corrected correspondence between the disegno and its extratextual reality. The tricks of fiction are revealed as such. Along this line, the note also explains that the 'fiotto' of the Vettabbia is called 'decumano' because the Vettabbia ideally flows below the decumanus line which used to cross ancient cities from west to east in Roman times. Acting as a mediator between the disegno and reality, the note motivates and almost rectifies the rhetorical devices at work in the narrative.

[7] Cf. 'I Cavenaghi avevano, si può dire, per legge, tramandata di generazione in generazione lungo le varie intrefolature del clan, avevano per norma assoluta e inderogabile che le persone di servizio – così umanamente accolte – a spolverare la santità un po' malinconica dei Lari, a mutar l'acqua al canarino – dovessero essere delle ragazze "fedeli ed affezionate" e "delle nostre parti"' [L'A 318].

The note informs us of something that exists outside of the diegetic domain: the external history, the history of Milan and the structural-morphological changes it has undergone, starting from its Roman past and leading up to the present day. The information given appears to be accurate, factual, and verifiable. As a handbook of Milanese history can confirm, the Vettabbia is a sewer canal in the south-east area of Milan, Felice Poggi is the supervisor of the plan that provided the city with a sewer system, and so on. By means of the note, the narrative is placed into relation with a non-fictional, extradiegetic dimension. The note links the diegetic level, so it seems, to the level of history.

After the first section, the note continues with three textual blocks, each one focusing on a single aspect or element of the main topic (the hidrology of Milan), reflecting the order found in the disegno: the section on the Vettabbia, for example, precedes the final reference to the Seveso (another river of northern Italy) as in the disegno the Seveso is mentioned a few lines after the Olona and the Vettabbia.[8] What about the style and language? The vocabulary is often technical and specialised ('captazione delle risorgive', 'cloache', 'collettore principale di fogna', 'conche', 'fognòli', 'inalveazione', 'marcite', 'rogge', 'sgrondi', 'utenti'). In a few cases, the syntax is constructed with nominal sentences ('Antichi fògnoli d'epoca romana rinvenuti negli scavi della regione Vettabbia', 'Difficoltà gravi per la qualità dei terreni, la scarsa pendenza disponibile, la presenza di cospicue falde acquifere nel sottosuolo'). Dates are provided in synthetic form and also enclosed between round brackets: 'negli anni 1889-1901', '(1893, poi 1901)', '1893-1901'. The information given is detailed and can be put in numerical form: the usage of black waters as fertilisers results, for instance, in '10 e insino a dodici fienagioni per anno'. The text exhibits, in short,

[8] The note, however, comments not only on the textual segment to which it refers, but also on other segments which follow its supernumeral and which would require – according to the conventional annotative system – a relocation of the supernumeral in a subsequent position or the creation of a further note. In the present case, for example, the supernumeral is appended to the word 'Vettabbia' and before the world 'Seveso', while it should in fact follow the world 'Seveso'. Such incoherences are very common across the disegni.

a form of *discursivity* different from that found in most of the disegni. Although there are a few bizzarre and eccentric remarks which could be perceived as out of place in an essaystic or scholarly context and to which I will return (the 'pozzi neri' are humorously defined, for example, as 'più o meno profumati'), the note might be mistaken – if removed from its original context – as an excerpt from a book on the hidrological history of the capital of Lombardy. At least on the surface, the note is animated by an informative intention.

Moving from the disegno to the note, however, readers cannot but wonder whether it really is necessary or advantageous to have as much information as they are given in order to comprehend how and why the Olona is exhorted to enter the Vettabbia, or to contextualise the picture of Lombardy and of Lombard people that follows the exhortation (discussed in chapter 2), not to mention the storyline of the Cavenaghis which has just started to take shape in the disegno. The answer to such a question would most probably be no. The note provides readers with supplementary information about the Olona, but that information is of little use and is anyway at odds with the narrative context in which it is introduced, giving rise to a sense of *disparateness* or *incongruity*. It is in virtue of this that the note acquires a comical-humorous effect.

In adopting the tone of a learned author of an encyclopedia entry, many of the notes to *L'Adalgisa* incongruously mimic and exacerbate in a fictional and narrative context the characteristic practice of providing notes in non-fictional writings. Overly concerned with details, sometimes punctilious and pedantic, many notes combine an erudite attitude with a comical intention. They make unsavoury comments, as well as quirky and fanciful remarks, as can be seen in the following examples:

[*Quando il Girolamo*] 14 'Pascoli rintronati di Marignano'. Oggi Melegnano (sul Lambro; alt. m. 88), 16 chilometri a sud-est di Milano. Ivi il 13 e il 14 settembre 1515 si svolse la cosiddetta 'battaglia dei giganti'. [L'A 338]

[*Quattro figlie*] 4 'Brusuglio': (alt. 145): oggi frazione del comune di Cormano: 10 chilometri circa a settentrione della metropoli. A Brusuglio una villa già appartenuta a ad A. Manzoni: vi fu composto di getto il

Cinque maggio, con la diletta Enrichetta al pianoforte. Son terre di bravi muratori e capimastri (magütt e capmàster), che ogni mattina s'inurbano in bicicletta o 'con la Nord': Ferrovie Nord Milan. [L'A 375].

[*Quattro figlie*] 28 'Un paio di brente di latte, ecc.'. Brenta o brentina è, in Lombardia, misura di capacità: litri 50. Ell'è recipiente di legno, da 50 litri, fatto con doghe e bandali, a forma di gerla, assai piatta contro al dorso del portatore. E la si adibisce, in campagna, ne' travasi e trasporti brevi del mosto, del vino, del latte; e talotta a evacuare i pozzi neri, spargendone il tifo sulla cavolaglia. [L'A 377]

[*Strane dicerie*] 12 Gregorio Pontefice XVI, (1831-1846), 'amante delle arti e delle scienze', fu costruttore, e ornamentore di Roma, con lapidi in buon latino: 'fondò' il Museo Etrusco che da lui si denomina. Lasciamo stare del rimanente. [L'A 405]

Beyond their already mentioned numerosity, the notes of *L'Adalgisa* can also be very lengthy, distorting any criterion of proportion between main text and note, and dispelling norms concerning the brevity and concision expected of a note. Such is the case for note 10 of *Quando il Girolamo*, which develops into an account of the history of Napoleon, 'il "grassouilet"' [L'A 331], and of the French revolution. It is also true of the eighth note in the last disegno, which offers a wide-spanning fresco of the 'epoca "positivistica"' [553].

The notes of *L'Adalgisa* fulfil the explanatory functions conventionally attributed to them in non-narrative texts, but they do so in a mostly arbitrary, whimsical manner. In many cases, they explain the meaning and etymology of a term or idiom of rare use or difficult comprehension (especially if dialectal) and provide information on details concerning fashion and conventions, facts and events, in the spirit of making the disegni more accessible. In many other cases, however, they provide information on elements or topics that would not require a note to be understood, while neglecting to throw light on other elements or topics that would greatly benefit from comment or at least clarification. Zanzucchi notes that the 'motivi che esulano dall'immediata necessità informativa spingono Gadda a scrivere note su termini del tutto comprensibili', so that many of his notes are marked by a 'sovrabbondanza di informazioni fornite senza alcuna "necessità"'.[9] Gadda, Zanzucchi sums up:

[9] Zanzucchi, 'Note e testo in *L'Adalgisa*', p. 387.

esalta così le caratteristiche di quello che si potrebbe definire un micro-genere, la nota appunto, di cui rovescia le condizioni normali, rivolta le regole di chiarezza, essenzialità, marginalità e discrezione, riscattandola dalla subordinazione totale alla narrazione. La nota lascia dunque il ruolo accessorio di commento, per diventare ulteriore scena del dramma linguistico.[10]

Not lacking in humour or irony, nor in stylistic and rhetorical quality, the 'note semi-burlesche' [L'A[12] 340] of *L'Adalgisa* – as Gadda himself defined them in a letter[11] – enrich and develop in bewildering ways the texts of the disegni, providing some sort of a unitary framework that encompasses them all, regardless of their origin or what they narrate. They challenge any readerly expectation on what a note could or should do.

There is, however, something else that makes the note on the Olona and the canal system of Milan interesting for us. 'Per le acque luride valevano altresì pozzi neri', the note claims about the disposal of sewer water. 'Li ammirai stupefatto da ragazzo', it adds, to attest to the factuality of the statement. The voice speaking in the note takes a first-person singular form, confirming by means of his own autoptical experience – 'li ammirai' – the existence of wells where water was treated. If in the disegni the 'I' relies on what seen and told to him by others to support his narrative, here in the note it is the 'I' itself who acts as a direct witness and garantor. His experience stands as evidence of the existence of something, drawing on a personal memory of the speaking subject. The main questions which will guide this chapter are: who is this 'I'? And how does the 'I' found in a note enter in relation with the 'I' found in many of the disegni (discussed in chapter 3), and how does this relate to the satire practiced therein?

[10] Ibid., p. 385.
[11] I have already mentioned a passage from this letter in ch. 2.2.

4.2. The 'I' of the notes

The voice speaking in the notes takes a first-person plural form for the first time in the collection in note 5 of *Notte di luna*. The disegno mentions in round brackets that rumbles and gleams of light were heard and seen for years in the suburban landscape described. The note explains the underlying reference, clarifying that those rumbles and gleams of light were produced by the explosions taking place at the Alpine front where the Italians fought during the First World War:

> (Per anni si erano uditi fragori dalle montagne, come tuoni lunghi, implacati. Sul nero bastione de' pianalti la cimasa delle abetaie si accendeva di faville.[5] Della città erano a dolorare le torri, illividite nella tènebra). [L'A 292]
>
> 5 'La cimasa delle abetaie si accendeva di faville'. Da Vicenza, nelle buie notti (maggio-giugno 1916), tutto il rovescio del nostro ultimo aggrappamento appariva diademato di faville (esplosioni), del fuoco d'interdizione onde il nemico si studiava resecare al taliana i rifornimenti e i rincalzi. La costa e lo strapiombo sull'Astico dell'altipiano dei Sette Comuni, assai brulli poi nel meriggio, eran listati in sommo d'un nero vivagno, delle abetaie che lo ricoprivano tutto, il sanguinante altipiano. Questo 'paese' di maniera deve considerarsi una contaminazione varesino-brianzuolo-vicentina. [L'A 297]

Explaining that the explosions were also visible from Vicenza, the note refers to the back of the military encampment as 'nostro'. Although the pronominal form might be understood as a generic reference to the Italian identity of the speaking subject ('nostro' would then work as a synonym for 'Italiano' as opposed to 'Austro-Hungarian'), the intonation adopted and the details provided in describing the landscape of the Altopiano dei Sette Comuni suggest that war is called upon as a personal experience found in the memory of this subject: one who claims he has served as a soldier at the Alpine front, and who is now able to recollect with great detail that the sheer cliffs of the river were 'brulli poi nel meriggio' and 'listati in sommo d'un nero vivagno' while the plateu was covered by 'abetaie'. This is the first explicit reference made to war in the collection.

A first-person plural form also occurs in note 6 of *Quando il Girolamo*, commenting on the proparoxytone accentuation made in the disegno of the surname of the Italian adventure fiction writer Emilio Salgari:

> Ma tutt'a un tratto, che è, che non è, la 'Confidenza' aveva amaramente deluso le vecchie famiglie, le vecchie case: e le non dirò vecchie ma giudiziosamente mature signore che, adorne di sardanapaleschi orecchini da 50.000 lire l'uno (detti nel Sàlgari) 'nocciuole di brillanti'),[6] avevano a lei confidato lor anima […]. [L'A 303]
>
> [6] 'Sàlgari' chiamavamo ragazzi Emilio Salgàri da Verona, autore diletto. [L'A 331]

Who is the subject of this 'chiamavamo'? The mistaken pronunciation is presented as a reminiscence of a childish habit, shared by the speaker with his playmates.

Gadda served as a soldier at the Alpine front and was also imprisoned for approximately one year. Any reader who is even minimally informed of the vicissitudes of Gadda's life will therefore very likely read this reference to war as an *autobiographical* remark. As is the case with the Vettabbia, which enters the Naviglio Ticinese through the dock of Porta Ticinese, the experiences mentioned in the notes come across as a 'stato di fatto'. They lend themselves to us as if they took place outside the fictional-diegetic borders of the disegno. In the context of notes, the 'I' presents itself to us *extradiegetically*, as the direct expression of Carlo Emilio Gadda, the historical author of the collection. Born and bred in Milan, it is more than plausible that, in his young age, Gadda would have caught sight of the black holes used for the depuration of the water running out of the city. The wonder that the speaking subject attributes to himself ('li ammirai stupefatto') seems to be the wonder that Gadda remembers he felt as a child, looking with his own eyes at the black holes. The mistaken pronunciation of the surname of Salgari comes to us as a recollection of his childhood taken from the world existing outside the disegni.

The notes also abound with third-person references to an 'autore', outlining the profile of an individual perfectly coincident with the historical Gadda. Note 6 of *Strane dicerie* informs us, for example, that the 'autore' is an engineer:

6 Occorse all'autore ingegnere di aver a discutere con un 'collega suo' circa le dimensioni di alcuni luoghi di comodo. [L'A 404]

Commenting on the comfortable posture allowed by the armchairs and footstools of the Circolo Filologico of Milan, note 18 of *I ritagli di tempo* claims that in the years of his youth ('a' "begli" anni') the 'autore' himself rested on them:

Una sorta di perìptero, a piano di pavimento, e una specie di matroneo a primo piano, avviluppano il salone quadrato: da cui altre sale e salotti si dipartono, ai due piani. Aule, altrove, per le lezioni serali. Le matrone del matroneo sono rappresentate, invece, da copia di poltrone d'assai agio, rosse: le più altolocate di queste matrone hanno messo al mondo un panchetto posapiedi: e il piccinino ti facilita, dopo avertela suggerita lui stesso, una felice orizzontalità delle gambe.[18] [L'A 417]

18 'Una felice orizzontalità delle gambe', lecita e anzi approvata ai sensi del regolamento sociale. E l'autore, manco a dirlo, ne usufruì largamente, e lungamente, a' 'begli' anni, per appassionate letture.

In prosieguo d'anni e di tempo, ma non d'esperienza, meditò ancora di orizzontalarsi sulle sedie a bracciuoli dette di Vallombrosa (L. 19,75) del Gabinetto (Vieusseux), adibite all'uopo du' gemine consorelle. Invano! Ché certo signor de' Benci o de' Menci ch'e' fusse, e certo Vesciolini e direi Ceccherelli generale a riposo, oggi entrambi defunti, 'reclamarono' appo la direzione del prefato Gabinetto: come di attitudine disacconcia al luogo, sacro alla lettura: (della cronaca dei mercatini nel conteso *Nuovo Giornale* del pomeriggio). Iddio grande e potente ha già certamente avuto modo di rimeritare i due valentuomini del loro civico zelo [L'A 422].

A few years after the time narrated in the disegno ('In prosieguo d'anni e di tempo, ma non d'esperienza', it is humorously remarked), the 'autore' attempted to make good use also of the armchairs of the Gabinetto Scientifico-Letterario 'G.P. Vieusseux' of Florence. He had, however, little success as his naps were unfortunately reported as indecorous by other attendants of the Vieusseux ('certo signor de' Benci o de' Menci ch'e' fusse, e certo Vesciolini e direi Ceccherelli generale a riposo, oggi entrambi defunti').

Gadda lived in Florence between 1940 and 1950, where he habitually attended the Vieusseux and the literary environment around it, particularly in contact with Alessandro

Bonsanti, director of the Vieusseux from 1941. The note informs us that the 'autore' – Gadda – was not only familiar with the Florentine environment of the Vieusseux, but was also a member of the Circolo Filologico of Milan, just like the characters he portrays in *I ritagli*. If the characters of the disegno are fictional, the space in which they move – the Filologico – is instead very real, coinciding with the one Gadda himself had experienced.

Drawing attention to the references provided in the notes to texts published by Gadda, Cristina Savettieri observes that the voice speaking in the notes is 'proprio la sua, quella dello "scrivente" che si fa autore del libro, cioè collettore, editore e commentatore dei propri scritti':[12]

[*Quando il Girolamo*] 5 'D'un bue vero', cioè non toro o vacca. Di squisita carne ossia polpa, dalla campagna padana tradotto in carretta apposita fino al macello milanese. Mentreché di Croazia e d'Ungària, per ferrovia, vecchie e fibrose femmine: o maschi tigliosamente resistenti alla masticazione. Vedi 'Una mattinata ai macelli', di penna dello scrivente. [330-331]

[*Quattro figlie*] 27 Castagnòle e' son di piccoli involti di cartone impeciato, riscontro in Fanfani, carichi a polvere, da spararli per allegrezza nelle feste di campagna. Leggi la Festa dell'Uva, di penna dello scrivente. E, del resto, vada per gli involtini: e per le feste di campagna. [376]

[*Un 'concerto'*] 30 'Galassia di costolette crude': lanciate dal guardiano l'una dopo l'altra nelle fauci di un lupo. Gabbione (1930-1940) sotto l'arco della ruina centrale della Ghirlanda, fuori il castello di Milano, sul fronte Nord-Ovest; la ruina medesima è celebrata nel racconto 'Una tigre al parco', di penna dello scrivente. [475]

[*Un 'concerto'*] 59 Il transito ferroviario di stupendi crisantemi (specie sulle F.N.M. che disservono la zona delle ville, assai vasta: Varese, Como, Erba) era ed è una nota caratteristica di fine ottobre metà-novembre. Ne' due sensi: cioè, per i più, dalla villa alla 'tomba' milanese, o, per altri, dall'acquisto milanese alla 'tomba' in villa.

Vedi anche: 'Dalle specchiere dei laghi', di penna dello scrivente (in *Gli Anni*, Firenze, Parenti, 1943): 'Ed erano dolci e infinite le ville: giardini memori, più che i nepoti e gli eredi, fiorivano crisantemi alle tombe'. [480]

[*L'Adalgisa*] 18 […] Il mio Ateuco, imbalsamato nel 1934, vide la luce dell'eternità ne *Il Tesoretto*, almanacco dello *Specchio*, 1941, Mondadori, stampato in sulla fine del 1940. Leggivi a pp. 463-466. In quel *Tesoretto*, pp. 449-478, buona parte del racconto dell'Adalgisa e del povero Carlo. [561]

In compliance with the bibliographical function that notes have in scholarly writing, note 59 of *Un 'concerto'* provides, in round brackets, the exact details concerning the publication of the volume where the prose *Dalle specchiere dei laghi* is collected: '(*Gli Anni*, Firenze, Parenti, 1943)'. Note 18 of *L'Adalgisa* also provides readers with exact

[12] Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, p. 209.

bibliographical information on the pages of the almanac *Il Tesoretto* in which a central part of the last disegno was printed at the end of 1940. The speaking voice takes the form of an 'I' only here ('il *mio* Auteuco'),[13] while all the other notes make third-person references to a 'scrivente': a modest definition, so to speak, which belittles the essential role of Gadda as a creator while also pointing to the physical-material nature of the operation of *writing*. 'Gadda parla nelle note', Savettieri considers, 'senza maschere finzionali': the subject speaking is the 'autore extralocale, che si palesa nella sua posterià e ulteriorità' in the act of bringing his texts together and commenting them. It is this act of authorial performance that – as we have already mentioned in the introduction – keeps *L'Adalgisa* together, making a book out of an ensemble of disparate pieces.[14]

A note of *Un 'concerto'* does not make reference but directly quotes (without unveiling the source) a text published by Gadda. While dwelling on a catalogue of the bourgeois society convened at the Conservatorio di Musica 'Giuseppe Verdi', the disegno pays attention to the brides found in the auditorium: it is in order to marry them – the narrator claims, not without a polemical intent – that many young died on the battlefield, to the delight of the flies feasting on their remains:[15]

> Il loro stupendo volto diceva la sicurezza e la validità d'un amore quotidiano, legittimo, esente da tempeste e da imposte, presenti se non future: perché potessero esercitarlo senza minaccia, nella terra serena, dopo dono di rubini, per questo erano subitamente impalliditi gli eroi. D'ogni eletto, dentro il caglio del suo sangue, si smarriva sul pietrame la castità lacerata, mosche verdi tenevano, ebbre, la purtredine della dolina.[46] [L'A 463]
>
> 46 'La castità lacerata,.… la putredine della dolina'. Decedettero anche in età di anni venti, o diciannove. Riaffiorarono in chi li vide morire, nell'attimo della lor morte, parole del *carmen saeculare* di Orazio: 'puerosque castos'. Non fu morte da cartolina, né da 'disegno di A. Beltrame'.

[13] Gadda claims that *his* 'Ateuco' was 'imbalsamato nel 1934' because the passage where such a beetle is mentioned was drafted amongst the material of *Un fulmine* in the 1930s. As the note clarifies, the passage in question was published in the almanac *Il Tesoretto* in 1940, only then to be included in the collection of disegni. For more details on the textual history of this disegno and of the collection, see in this thesis, ch. 2.1.

[14] Cf. Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, pp. 199-200.

[15] For an analysis of the catalogue of the bourgeois gathering at the conservatory and of this passage as well, see ch. 5.

'Allora, nel rovinìo tragico della pietraia, distesi un telo sui sacrificati: il sasso non dava tomba, o corona'. [L'A 478]

The note leaves no space for any rhetorical or bombastic patriotism, nor does it indulge in idealised representations such as those found in the drawings by famous illustrator Achille Beltrame. The final sentence is a quotation from Gadda's *Impossibilità di un diario di guerra*, a piece originated in *Giornale di guerra e di prigionia* written between 1915 and 1918, and later collected in *Il castello di Udine*. Solemn and severe, the inserted quotation reinvigorates the polemic carried out against any form of sugarcoating death in war. For those who already know the piece and/or could connect the quotation to him, war comes across, once again, as something *lived* in actual fact by Gadda; something experienced with his own body and seen with his own eyes. Through the filter of the note, the author's memory of war glimmers behind the reference to war made almost in passing in the disegno. The note suggests that behind the 'caglio del […] sangue' of the soldiers who died in war, mentioned in the disegno, there is in fact the first-hand experience of the very author of *Impossibilità di un diario di guerra* and of *Un 'concerto'*: Gadda, who saw in actual fact, beyond the veil of fiction, his fellow soldiers dying next to him.

We have a first preliminary answer to the questions posed above: the 'I' speaking here is that of the author himself. But is it really, or simply, so? The voice speaking in the notes considered so far has an undoubtedly authorial *timbre* or *modulation*, but things are – as I will try to demonstrate in what follows – more complicated than they seem at first sight. Delving into the question of how subjectivity takes form in *L'Adalgisa* on which I began to reflect in the previous chapter, I would now like to look further into how the literary-fictional dimension interacts and conflates with an authorial-autobiographical perspective, paying particular attention to how this interaction and conflation affects the representation of the 'I'. How and to what effect, for the narrative and for the self, is the pole of fiction

contaminated with and attracted to the pole of the 'stato di fatto'? And what does this entail for satire?

4.3. Questioning the borders between 'reale realtà' and the reality of the disegni

As seen in chapter 3, the advisory notice introducing readers to the notes of *Quattro figlie* informs us that 'alla tentata rappresentazione di un interno si sono voluti adibire, a tratti, i modi mentali e i modi idiomatici propri de' personaggi' [L'A 374]. If chapter 3 focused on the plunge taken by the 'autore' [374] who finds himself soaked in the water in which his characters have also bathed, it is now necessary to bring attention to the identification of those found in the disegno as 'personaggi'. The author claims he has taken a plunge in his characters' water precisely because in the notice he is speaking from the outside of the narrative perimeter. The 'personaggi' can be referred to as such because the notice looks at them, in a way, from the outside. The notice and the notes take us to a dimension where the characters and their stories can be acknowledged for what they are: fictional creatures, fictional events.

Note 4 of *Strane dicerie contristano i Bertoloni* observes that the shape of a villa of the San Juan coast in the fictional country of Maradagàl resembles that of an upside-down radish, something in between the Granada Alhambra palace in Spain and the Milanese Russian-style building called Kremlino:[16]

> Altre villule, dov'è lo spigoluccio più in fuora, si dirizzavano su, belle, belle, in una torricella pseudo-senese o pastrufazianamente normanna, con una lunga e nera stanga in coppa, per il parafulmine e la bandiera. Altre ancora si insignivano di cupolette o pinnacoli vari, di tipo russo o quasi, un po' come

[16] On the Kremlino, cf. Ornella Selvafolta, 'A "casa del diavolo": Gadda, Città Studi e il Kremlino', QI, 4 (2013), pp. 181-205.

dei rapanelli o cipolle capovolti,[4] a copertura embricata e bene spesso policroma, e cioè squamme d'un carnevalesco rettile, metà gialle e metà celesti. Cosicché tenevano della pagoda e della filanda, ed erano anche una via di mezzo fra l'Alhambra e il Kremlino. [L'A 382]

4 'Come dei rapanelli…. capovolti'. Il modello fisico di questo Kremlino-Alhambra-filanda-pagoda esiste nella reale realtà, in riva, quasi, d'un bel lago della provincia di Novara: e quasi appiè il monte, 'la cui neve è rosa'. [L'A 404]

The inspiration, the model for such an incredible building as the one described in *Strane dicerie* exists in extratextual reality – the note maintains – and is located on the side of a lake, in the Northern-Italian province of Novara. Distinguishing the fictional-diegetic dimension from the 'reale realtà' where things *really* exist, the note confronts readers with information they can potentially check: the existence of the building in question and its geographical location.[17]

At the very end of the same disegno in which the above note is found, *Strane dicerie*, the condition of Gonzalo's psychological-moral suffering and his seclusion from the world are associated with a hidden illness: a tropical nervous-depressive syndrome about which the *conquistadores* have been warned by the indigenous population and on which information is provided by a missionary named 'Saverio Lopez' in his work titled *Mirabilia Maragdagali*. Note 22, the last one of the disegno, gives more details on the *Mirabilia* by quoting a fragment – in a macaronic, archaic Italian – attributed to some scholar/historian of whom no information is given other than his surname, 'Bandinelli':

[17] A few others notes create an opposition between the diegetic fiction and reality: cf. *Quando il Girolamo*, note 17: '"Novantamila volume, ecc.". Il titolo è stato modificato *dal vero* nella sua parte onomastica' [339]; note 42: 'I soprannomi sono *autentici*, e d'uso comune per giovani nel linguaggio della "lingéra". Glido-gratta = Gildo-ruba. Grattare è rubare con destrezza. Biscella = ricciutello, da bisc = ricciolo' [342], and so on; *Quattro figlie*, note 14: 'Anacreontica, a Nice. Questa che si esibisce nel testo è d'invenzione dello scrivente, ma di stretta osservanza gueriniana. Il "però" all'ultimo verso, (nell'accezione odierna e volgare di ma), e la chiusura in fellòn erano obbligativi' [376]. In revealing that the story narrated in *Claudio disimpara a vivere* is inspired by a real event, the advisory notice placed at the end of this disegno claims the verisimilitude of the narrative while at the same time keeping it at a distance from the 'caso storico': 'Il docente, nel caso storico, professava un corso finitimo e applicato a particolari strutture: il che non infirma la verisimiglianza dell'elzeviro' [351]. As the notice informs us that 'Sette, poveri ragazzi!, trovarono morte in platea: se ricordo al giusto' [351], the disclosure of the referent of reality behind the disegno has the effect of giving greater seriousness to the mockery directed against the mystical aura surrounding the polytechnical class of Lombardy.

E c'era, per lui, il problema del male: la favola della malattia, la strana favola propalata dai conquistadores, cui fu dato raccogliere le moribonde parole dello Incas. Secondo cui la morte arriva per nulla, circonfusa di silenzio, come una tacita, ultima combinazione del pensiero.

È il 'male invisibile', di cui narra Saverio Lopez, nel capitolo estremo de' suoi 'Mirabilia Maragdagali'.[22] [L'A 404]

22 'I Mirabilia di questo buon Padre Lopez, viaggiando e conoscendo quelli strani costumi, paiono voler accreditare una sorta di moralità, o etica, per quanto discosto dalla consueta e perenne contoversia de' filosafi circa la predestinazione e l'arbitrio libero: e discrivono il macchinismo interiore e proprio della vita d'ognuno. L'ultimo suo capitolo, in sul sopravvenir della morte, aergumenta la è una disgiuntura o spegnimento d'ogni accozzo di possibilià compatite: tantoché la ti vien tacita, e come la ti camminassi dietro le stiene' (Bandinelli). [L'A 406]

Modelled on the South American countries of Argentina or Uruguay, the Maradagàl is a fictional setting which can be allegorically understood in reference to the Brianza region of Lombardy. The villas of the San Juan coast may recall, for example, the villas on the lakes of the Milanese bourgeoisie, while the mountain range of the Serruchon will bring to mind the Monte Resegone of the Bergamasque Prealps eulogised in Manzoni's *Promessi sposi*, and so on. On this same line, the *Mirabilia Maragdali* by Lopez might be understood as a metaphorical Maradagalian equivalent of medieval guides addressed to pilgrism and tourists of Europe such as the *Mirabilia urbis Romae* and the *De magnalibus Mediolani* by Bonvesin de la Riva.[18] Understanding the *Mirabilia* as an allusion to Gadda's own *Meraviglie*, Emilio Manzotti considers that the figure of Saverio Bandinelli might have been inspired by that of Francisco López de Gómara, chaplain of Hernán Cortés and author of accounts of his expedition, while the name of the scholar/historian talking about Lopez and his work might have been modeled on those of Italian sixteenth century authors such as Baccio Bandinelli or Biagio Buonaccorsi.[19] Regardless of the exactness and/or significance

[18] Works echoed in the title choosen by Gadda for his 1939 collection of journalistic proses *Meraviglie d'Italia*. Cf. Liliana Orlando, 'Dalle *Meraviglie d'Italia* a *Verso la Certosa*', in *Editing Gadda*, ed. by Paola Italia, EJGS, Supplement 6, 2007: 'Una raccolta così composita si fregia anche di un titolo, *Le meraviglie d'Italia*, dalle molteplici valenze, in cui si assommano dichiarata ammirazione, enfasi, ironia, e che evoca illustri precedenti, dai *Mirabilia urbis Romae*, medioevali guide ad uso dei pellegrini, al *De magnalibus Mediolani* del milanese Bonvesin da la Riva'.

[19] Cf. Manzotti, in the critical and commented edition of *La Cognizione*: '*Saverio López*: Forse il cappellano (cf. nota dell'Autore "Padre López") di Cortés, López de Gómara (ma Fransisco, non Saverio),

of these references, the note's point of interest lies, for the purposes of this chapter, in the way that it comments on the diegetic fictionality of the disegno by means of further fictional remarks.

However plausible the existence of such a work as the *Mirabilia Maragdagali* in the fictional country of Maragdagàl may be, no work is titled *Mirabilia* in the 'reale realtà'; nor there is a preist named Saverio Lopez who has authored it or a scholar/historian named Bandinelli. While many notes reestablish the relation between the diegetic fictionality and the world outside, note 22 of *Strane dicerie* ultimately explains an imaginary work, the *Mirabilia*, with an equally imaginary work, the text by Bandinelli from which – a fiction in the fiction – the note pretends to quote a fragment. The distance separating the South-American fictional setting from its referent of reality is considerably greater than the one which separates the fictional image of the Olona entering the Vettabbia from the actual geography of Milan. Given the metaphorical-allegorical veil, it could be said that this note has an entirely different nature. Note 22 does not provide extradegetic insight on a topic or element mentioned in the narrative, as in the case with the channelling of the Olona, but it surreptitiously backs up a reference to an object found in the narrative world by making reference to a fragment of a non-existent work. The note *expands* the fictional reality by adding, so to speak, to its narration.

Notes 14 and 21 of the same disegno analogously extend the borders of the world conjured up by the disegno:

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autore di una relazione sulla conquista del Messico (ristampata a Madridnel 1922: *Hispana victriz*). Un altro López, ma, ancora, Thomé e non Saverio, era stato lo storico della seconda spedizione di Vasco de Gama in India (la trad. italiana della sua *Relaçao de viagem à India* è inclusa nel vol. I delle *Navigationi et Viaggi* del Ramusio)' (p. 109). '*Mirabilia Maragdagali*: […] Le gaddiane *Meraviglia d'Italia*, naturalmente, uscite nel '39 a Firenze, e la cui storia è variamente intrecciata a quella della *Cognizione*' (p. 110); '*Bandinelli*: Attribuzione immaginaria, come il Buonaccorsi di una redazione anteriore. I nomi sono forse quelli di Bacio Bandinelli e di Biagio Buonaccorsi (compagno di Machiavelli nella Segreteria Fiorentina): entrambi non incongrui al *pastiche* (Niccolò e Benvenuto) della nota. (Del Bandinelli, di più, poteva aver sollecitato la fantasia gaddiana la *Succinta descrizione sopra la Galleria degl'Illustrissimi Jacopo e Sinibaldo Gaddi*)' (ibid.).

14 'Ferreterìa' (spagnolo): commercio di oggetti e stromenti di ferro. Tipico del Maradagàl, che ricorre esclusivamente all'importazione per detta voce' [L'A 405]

21 'Puchero': lesso di carne di boce con verdure: (cavoliu, carote, patate, pannocchia di granturco verde). È il piatto nazionale del Maradagàl' [L'A 406].

Beyond the borders of the narrative, the 'puchero' is not the national dish of Maradagàl, nor is the 'ferreterìa' typical of the economy of such a country, precisely because such a country is not found in 'reale realtà'.

The notes above present us, in short, with something apparently different from what was seen in the notes considered in the sections above. What are we to make of this? By examining notes found in novels by Henry Fielding, Lawrence Sterne, and James Joyce, Shari Benstock argues that 'the notational system implies an extra-referentiality that does not exist in fiction (where all is fiction, even the notes), so that the notes can only extend the authority of the text by seeming to enlarge the context in which the fiction takes place'.[20] Although confined to the novels she takes into account, Benstock's remarks on the fictionality of annotational systems found in fictional contexts are insightful when examining the notes of *L'Adalgisa*, where Gadda imitates and apes – as do the authors considered by Benstock – the conventional forms of annotation to essays and non-fictional writings.

The note on the *Mirabilia* coexists alongside other notes of *Strane dicerie* which make references to the *Carmina* by Catullus, the architects Giuseppe Sommaruga and Gino Coppedè, pope Gregorius XVI. Works, authors, and historical figures who existed in actual fact: all coexist in the notes with the non-existent *Mirabilia*, father Lopez, and the historian/scholar Bandinelli.[21] In this regard, it is now fundamental to turn back to note 5 of

[20] Shari Benstock, 'At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text', PMLA, 98, 2 (1983), pp. 204-225: 219-220.

[21] Cf. note 1: "Villette otto locali doppi servissi; ecc.". È uno standard della grafia pubblicitaria, ne' cosiddetti "annunci economici" de' giornali. Servissi è pronuncia lomb. Per servizi: (1943 et ultra). "Esposte

Notte di luna (quoted above, in section 4.2), which explains that the rumbles and gleams of light mentioned while describing the landscape are reminiscent of the explosions which took place at the Alpine front. The note also acknowledges that the described landscape is the result of a process of cross-contamination of traits belonging to the three different real landscapes: the Varesotto, the Brianza, and, finally, the Vicentino:

> Questo 'paese' di maniera deve considerarsi una contaminazione varesino-brianzuolo-vicentina. [L'A 297]

Drawing attention to the note, Savettieri observes that 'la combinazione dichiarata di referenti di realtà e loro manipolazione' is a distinguishing feature of the book, which is at the same 'tutto vero e tutto immaginato'.[22] The amalgam of fictitious and factual references has the effect of introducing dangerous ambiguity and, ultimately, of questioning any ideal border separating what is real (the 'reale realtà') from what is made up (the 'realtà' of the disegno), in favour of this latter.

Benstock observes that the notes 'belong to a fictional universe, stem from a creative act, and direct themselves towards the fiction and never towards an external construct, even when they "cite" real works in the world outside the particular fiction'. 'While the historical reference co-exists in its time-bound context outside the novel, inside the novel it becomes part of the fiction, subject to the rules of the fiction that subsumes it'.[23] In other words, once

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mezzogiorno, ecc.": Catullo, *Carmina*, 26: "....villula nostra non ad Austri flatus oppositast neque ad Favoni, ecc..... verum ad milia quindecim et ducentos": (di ipoteche). "O ventum horribilem atque pestilentem!" [L'A 404]; note 5: 'Sommaruga e Coppedè sono architetti "straricchi" del primo ventennio del secolo. Di Galeazzo Alessi la città di Milano e di Genova dicono la fastosa grandezza, il perduto e patetico sognare. Per il Sommaruga si usarono anche gli aggettivi: pesante, funerario' [404]; notre 12: 'Gregorio Pontefice XVI, (1831-1846), 'amante delle arti e delle scienze', fu costruttore, e ornamentatore di Roma con lapidi in buon latino: 'fondò' il Museo Etrusco che da lui si denomina. Lasciamo del rimanente [405].

[22] Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, p. 205.

[23] Benstock, 'At the Margin of Discourse', pp. 205 and 221. Cf. also Frigerio, *Linguistica della nota*, p. 288: 'diventa opportuno, persino nel caso di note apparentemente informative, rendersi conto di quanto esse siano funzionali alla finzione, prima che all'attribuzione di un taglio saggistico al testo. Possono essere inventate, inesatte o magari invece del tutto attendibili, ma anche in quest'ultimo caso introducono nel romanzo

inside the fiction, both fictional characters and real personages exist at the same fictive level, as they are are engulfed in the fictional dimension into which they are drawn by the notes.

Reconsidered from this point of view, the note on the Olona is not as different as it might at first have seemed from the note on the non-existent *Mirabilia*. Much as the note on the *Mirabilia* extends the fictional-diegetic borders by creating a work commenting on the *Mirabilia* which also becomes, in its own turn, part of the fictional universe, so the note on the Olona does not simply retract or take back the literary image found in the disegno but rather elaborates on it, drawing into its fictional universe the hidrological history of Milan, its canals, its sewer systems, and, ultimately, the memory of one who has seen with his eyes the black holes used for depuration.

Rather than resolving our doubts, the notes of *L'Adalgisa* muddy the waters favouring – as we can see – a conflation between fiction and reality. As any distinction between one and the other comes into question, so any clear-cut distinction of status between the disegni as the space of the diegetic fictionality and the notes as the space of 'reale realtà' becomes tricky. If the authorial timbre or modulation that we have recognised as distinctive in the notes is also to be seen as a fictional matter, how can we reconsider the dissociation existing between notes and disegni in the collection? As I will try to show, extreme caution is necessary when looking at the notes as a space where Gadda talks directly to the reader in an unmediated form, making references to apparently factual information as well as to what seems to be his own memory.[24]

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un certo quoziente di ambiguità, perché certificano con dati autentici il racconto di una realtà magari verosimile, ma in genere non *vera*'.

[24] An excellent example of the power the notes have in presenting something which is invented as real is offered by *I ritagli di tempo*. In the 1955 definitive edition of *L'Adalgisa*, Gadda carries out an act of self-censorship. Afraid that the disegno might be considered offensive, he changes the Circolo Filologico of via Clerici into a fictitious Biblioteca Linguistica located in via Pasquirolo, making the identification between the disegno and its referent in reality still possible but less obvious. The changes take place not only in the disegno, but also in the notes, which extend the fiction developed in the disegno referring to the 'Circolo' as 'Biblioteca' and erasing any reference made to via Clerici. Although they pretend to place the narrative of the disegno in the context of 'reale realtà', the notes of *I ritagli* in fact corroborate the verisimilitude of the narrative. The changes made by Gadda can be appreciated by comparing the Garzanti edition of *L'Adalgisa* (where we find

4.4. Self-displacement, self-disparagement, and self-defense

The final part of *Quando il Girolamo* describes the effects of urban renewal plans on Milan. While many businesses move or close throughout the years, this is not the case of the butchery of the 'pantagruelico Fumagalli'. Note 33 explains the blade used by Fumagalli is not a 'bipenne' as it is maintained in the disegno, but a simple meat axe.[25] The choice of improperly naming it 'bipenne' is taken, the note claims, so as to create a rhyme with the adjective 'indenne'. More interested in the sound of words than in their meaning, the voice in the disegno – what in the previous chapter I referred to as the narrative voice or the narrator – is humorously defined a 'calligrafo':

> Il pantagruelico Fumagalli risfolgorava e trionfava con invitta bipenne[33] dall'alto banco marmoreo: usciva indenne e paffuto dal polverone: dai crolli della 'più grande Milano'. Oromedonte in càmice, la lordura vitale del sangue, dei carnicci, ne inzaccherò sempre la salute imperterrita. Con cento mani schermaglianti di su quel pulpito fra scamòni e stracùli, affilava, nell'orgoglio d'un Briaréo prosciolto, machbetiani coltelli […]. [L'A 326]
>
> [33] 'Invitta bipenne'. Non è bipenne, la macellaresca, ma semplicemente scure o accetta. Se non che la lubido della rima (con indenne) ha travolto il calligrafo. 'Oromedonte': da una arrotondata parafonia e paragrafia rabelaisiana: Oromédon in luogo di Eurymédon. *Pantagruel*, cap. I, gigantogenesi e prosapia pantagruelica: '….Qui engendra Artachées – Qui engedra Oromédon – Qui engendrà Gemmagog', ecc. ecc.
>
> Si può identificare in Eurimedonte il titano Giapeto, fratello di Crono e però zio di Zeus: e primo amore di Hera, quando la gallinona non s'era pur anco messa alle costole del nuovo re, nuovo gallo in pollaio. Padre a Epimeteo salame e a Prometeo portatore di fuoco (πυρφόρος, ESCHILO), Eurimedonte-Giapeto si fe' condottiere de' titani frondisti contro gli dèi di nuova nomina: superato nella guerra (titanomachia), fu dal pimpante e vendicativo Zeus precipitato e carcerato negli Inferi.
>
> Per una possibile equazione titani = dèi antichi (pre-omerici), vedi WALTER F. OTTO, Gli dèi della Grecia, trad. ital., Firenze, 1941, La Nuova Italia.
>
> 'Briareo': la successione cinetica delle immagini ('cento mani schermaglianti', nell'affilatura delle coltella), si coàgula nel nome di Briareo ecatònchiro, già relegato nel Tartaro, coi Ciclopi e con gli altri due ecatònchiri Cotto e Gige, dal sospettoso padre Urano: indi con essi loro prosciolto a opera di Zeus, il quale se ne avvalse alla guerra de' titani e i premiò rendendoli bidelli e carcerieri nel Tartaro medesimo, a guardia degli incatenati rubelli: se rubelli erano. [L'A 341-342]

If the voice in the note were to be immediately identified with the narrator, there would be no point, one might argue, in choosing the wrong word in the disegno, only then

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the definitive 1955 text supervised by Gadda) and the 2012 Adelphi edition (where we find instead the text of the 1944 *editio princeps*).

[25] Cf. GDLI, *s.v.* 'bipenne': 'ascia o scure a due tagli'.

to find fault with that very choice in the note. The comment made on the mistaken lexical choice presumes that the note does not entirely depend on the same creative impulse that created the disegno, as if disegno and note were at least at some levels extraneous: we have the narrator on the one hand; the commentator or gloss-maker on the other. Many of the notes to *L'Adalgisa* are concerned with what Manuela Bertone defines the 'doppia dislocazione del soggetto'.[26] Along the lines of what we have observed in the note on the Olona, the voice found in the note on the 'invitta bipenne' presents itself as distinct and even axiologically distant from the one responsible for the disegno, mocked for displaying lexical improperty. Displaced in the note, the subject can look at himself, and makes fun of himself, from the outside, engendering an *othering* process.

Clelia Martignoni and Lorenzo Panizzi describe these acts of distancing so frequently found in the collection in terms of a 'distanziamento della nota (autoriale) dalla narrazione (o dalla voce del personaggio) in funzione ironico-satirica', calling attention to the parentage that the notes of Gadda have with the notes found in several satirical writings by Jonathan Swift, as well as in the 'romanzo umoristico' of the already mentioned Fielding and Sterne. The voice of the notes – functioning, as Martignoni and Panizzi understand it, as an expression of the author – disproves elements of the narrative related by characters and by the narrator himself. The effect obtained is that of a 'maliziosa presa di distanza', on the part of the note (i.e., the commentator), towards the disegno (i.e., the narrator).[27] As the contents of the narrative are retracted by a further voice, the viewpoints expressed in the text are multiplied, and the reliability of the narrative is challenged and doubted.

Suggestive of the massive, solid appearance of the butcher, the epithet 'Oromedonte' is taken, the note informs us, from that of the giant Oromédon in Rabelais's classical satirical

[26] Bertone, 'Ai margini del testo', in *Il romanzo come sistema*, p. 133.
[27] Martignoni, Panizzi, 'La "malattia delle note", p. 89. For Swift and Gadda, cf. ch. 1.4.

novel *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. In his turn, Rabelais formed the name 'Oromédon' – the note continues – on that of Eurymedon, a giant of Greek mythology. Also applied to the butcher, now to suggest the agility of his movement, 'Briareo' is instead the name of one of the Hecatoncheires, three other giants provided with one-hundred arms.[28] Moving on from this, at the crossroad between the goliardic and the erudite, the note develops into a short, humorous digression on the titans and giants of Greek mythology, followed by a reference to the classical study of the historian of mythology and religion, Walter Otto. Provided in full scholarly style, the reference is offered – with the usual effect of incongruity, given the narrative context into which the note breaks – for the benefit of readers who might be interested in knowing more about the topic.[29]

The notes often refer to the subject responsible for the narrative in a belittling, disparaging manner, mocking it for his frivolity or shallowness, or disclosing the sources and references underlying the creative imagination. While note 33 of *Quando il Girolamo* ridicules the choice of defining the butcher's blade as 'bipenne' and refers to the one responsible for it as 'calligrafo', note 10 of *Navi approdano al Parapagàl* is more categorical in declaring a quotation from Manzoni's poem *Pentecoste*, inserted into the narrative, as in all respects wrong:

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[28] The other two giants of the trio are Cottus and Gyges. They are also called, for their one hundred arms, the Centimanes or the Hundred-Handers.

[29] Taking a similar line, many other notes uncover the sources of inspiration and the works by other authors behind the terms and images found in the disegni or to which images found in the disegni can somehow be retraced or reconnected: *Quando il Girolamo*, note 10: 'Incomptis capillis': da Orazio, *Carmina*, *I*, 12, v. 41: 'e Curio dagli scaruffati capelli' [331]; *Strane dicerie*, note 1: 'Villette otto locali doppi servissi; ecc.'. È uno standard della grafia pubblicitaria, ne' cosiddetti 'anunci economici' de' giornali. Servissi è pronuncia lombarda per servizi: (1943 et ultra). 'Esposte mezzogiorno, ecc.': Catullo, *Carmina*, 26: '….villula nostra non ad Austri flatus oppositast neque ad Favoni, ecc…. verum ad milia quindecim et ducentos: (di ipoteche). 'O ventuym horribilem atque pestilentem'!' [404]; *I ritagli*, note 20: 'Arcano consiglio': Orazio, *Carmina*, iii, xxi, 15-16: 'et arcanum jocoso – consilium retegis Lyaeo': detto di quel che hanno in zucca i filosafi, non tuttavia se gli si imbibisca il cervello del contenuto dalla nota bottiglia di barolo vecchio: ('languidiora vina')' [422]. Other examples could be made, but the dynamic at play is the same. The note take us into the laboratory of writing, disclosing models, authors, and references underlying the disegni and pointing to the nature of the disegno as a text itself: a text virtually lodged into a constellation formed of the many other texts to which the disegni are indebted. By means of alluding to the connections existing between the disegni and other texts, the notes hint at the textuality of the disegni.

Era, dalla nuca ai calcagni, come una staffilata di dolcezza, 'la pura gioia ascosa' dell'inno.[10] [L'A 434]

10 Citazione sbagliata e assolutamente impropria del noto, sublime invocativo de 'La Pentecoste'. Il Poeta, rivolgendosi allo Spirito Santo, chiede gioie al plurale per le clarisse: *Manda alle ascose vergini – Le pure gioie ascose; – Consacra alle spose – Il verecondo amor*. [L'A 439]

Towards the last part of *I ritagli*, the perspective of two cats living in the Circolo Filologico is assumed within the narrative. As we apprehend through a sort of inner monologue expressing their feline worldview, these cats fear that the remains of a wolf dog called Flòck might be housed in the Circolo and might even come back to life as the sun leaves the sign of Virgo on the zodiac:

Essi presumono, i due zampa-di-felpa, che nel misterioso ed oltremodo sospetto mausoleo sia salvaguardata, e venerata da una confraternita di citrulli e di fatebenefratelli, quell'atroce dentiera di Flòck, il cane lupo del marchese Clerici, con tutto il rimanente dello scheletro, d'altronde: del loro persecutore, del loro Artaserse. Ed ecco non appena uscito il sole dalla Vergine[21] ed entratogli il Pesce, o entrato lui nei Pesci, 'ecco', pensano con angoscia immedicabile, 'sì, sì…. è lo spirito del dannato Nabuccodonosor…. che gli ha preso a fermentare…. e ribolle…: e' son le mascelle di certo, codeste, che le digrignano…. e ci mandan di fuora sto sufolìo e sto barbuglio premonitore…. foriero de' più sinistri latrati…. e spari anche, già dalla maledetta pancera dello Zodìaco…. Meglio tagliar la corda….' [L'A 419]

21 'Uscito il Sole dalla Vergine ed entràtogli il Pesce'. Non è guari la Vergine, se tuttavia sono i Pesci, costellazione equinoziale di primavera: amando appunto il detto equinozio trastullarsi tra gli ittidi e il barbabucco: tutti i gusti son gusti. Il passo addimostra (ve ne fosse bisogno!) la ben nota leggerezza dell'autore in materia zodiacale, il suo 'barocchismo' e il vitando 'macaronismo' del suo spirito cialtronico. E tenta invano l'autore di giustificarsi, adducendo aver egli attribuito l'immaginativa all'ossessione de' duo gatti – meno informati ancora di lui circa di diportamenti del sole in relazione a' disegni dello Zodiaco – di veder resuscitato il maledetto dentone del cane lupo del marchese. [L'A 422]

Pointing out the 'ben nota leggerezza dell'autore', the note highlights the far-fetched nature of the operation by which the reference to the passages of the sun through the zodiac is unconvincingly attributed to the perspective of the cats, by all means the least informed of all – readers might argue – about such a topic. The note sabotages any form of suspension of disbelief put in place in the disegno as the viewpoint of the cats is assumed in the narrative, eroding any claim of seriousness the 'autore' might make. The mode at work here is the

usual 'modo-chiave del distanziamento narratore/chiosatore' described by Martignoni and Panizzi.[30] Separated from the 'narratore' (i.e., the disegno), the voice speaking in the notes, the 'chiosatore', looks at the disegni from a distant, privileged perspective, commenting on them as an external interpreter.

Hinging on the apparently external character of the note, the voice speaking therein makes fun of the voice of the disegno by taking recourse to categories that are generally attributed to Gadda by critics with a derogative purpose. If in note 33 of *Quando il Girolamo* it was the turn of the label of 'calligrafo', connected to a reductive understanding of Gadda as a writer of appearances and not of content, here, in the note on the cats and the zodiac, it is the turn of 'barocchismo' and 'macaronismo', two equally recurrent categories in the critical debate on Gadda, also often applied to his work with disparaging intent.

When such categories are used by others in a denigrating way, their victim is of course Gadda. In the case of the present notes, however, Gadda is only apparently the butt of the joke. The true victim is the unfortunate trusting reader who may fail to decrypt the irony that permeates the notes and mistakenly interpret notes and disegno as effectively written by two different subjects. While deriding his 'spirito cialtronico', in other words, the note deprives any criticism turned against Gadda of its original disparaging effects, and the author regains possession of the narratives told about him by others. Besting his critics, Gadda reclaims as his own what is used against him, and also shields himself from further malicious critique. With this kind of strategy, the notes attempt – as Bertone highlights – to 'allontanare il narrato dalla presa della critica anticipandone i giudizi o svolgendo opera di chiarificazione dei propri intenti'.[31] The self-derision proves to be functional in a potential inversion of perspective that is operationalised in service of self-defense and even self-

[30] Martignoni, Panizzi, 'La "malattia delle note"', p. 133.
[31] Bertone, 'Ai margini del testo', in *Il romanzo come sistema*, p. 131.

promotion. By *fictionally* disassociating himself from the narrative, the subject successfully gets away with it. By making fun of himself, the subject displaced in the notes makes fun of us: the real others.[32]

4.5. The interplay between the fictional and the autobiographical

In chapter 3, we saw how the 'I' is entangled with the world he narrates as he represents himself on the scene as a *fictional* character. The dive mentioned in the advisory notice to the notes of *Quattro figlie* is primarily, as I have tried to show, a dive into fictional-diegetic matter, and not merely a mimetic acquisition of the mental and linguistic habits of the characters. In making himself part of the narrated reality, the narrator nonetheless attributes to himself traits that are evidently recognisable as distinctive of the historical author Carlo Emilio Gadda: he not only refers to himself as Milanese throughout the disegni, but in the last disegno – when he is more than marginally involved in the story narrated – he makes explicit references to his past as a student of engineering at the Politecnico and he touches on his experience as a soldier.[33] When the diegetic 'I' recalls the 'I' of Gadda, as we have seen, the first-person narrative almost takes on the tone of autobiographical recollection, if not of memoir.

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[32] Something similar happens when the notes include derisive pictures of the 'autore' (or 'Autore', as he is sometimes referred to). Note 55 of '*Un concerto*' dwells, for example, on the typical Milanese institution of the porter, self-deprecatingly portraying the 'Autore' in his cowardly attempts – 'pusillo' – to earn his way into the graces of the 'portinara': 'I portinai': tipica istituzione milanese. Di 'portinara' (per lo più femmina: e trucibalda) non è sprovveduta nemmeno la casa de' più poveri […]. L'Autore, pusillipo, cerca tuttodì propiziarsele, con vili sorrisi: e con donativi di qualche valsente [479-480].

[33] For references to his participation in war in the last disegno, see in partic.: 'Nessuno di noi patì né sudò mai tanto in guerra, salvo che il sangue s'intende, come sudammmo al Fossati nel mese e nella stagione d'amore per batter le mani alla Tettón [Adalgisa] dopo l'ultima biscroma del Parigi o cara' [529]; 'Così mi raccontò lui stesso [Carlo], non senza umore, qualche anno più tardi. Lo incontrai durante una licenza di guerra' [543]. A reference to his studies had already been made in *Quando il Girolamo*: 'a' miei anni la sana fatica avente nel suo punto focale un "giambòn" o un "motore con valvole in testa"' [307]. Cf. ch. 3.3, note 22.

Of course, I am not claiming that the last disegno – or any of the others – is to be read as a memoir of Gadda: it is from the memory of the narrator incarnated into a character that the horrific experience of war included in the last disegno springs forth.[34] What I would like to remark on is that the character of this narrator is, in some respects, constructed in accordance with the profile of Gadda. It is the disegno itself that prompts us, through the ways it portrays him, to recognise in the diegetic 'I' a textual projection of the historical author. The notice introducing to the notes of *Claudio disimpara a vivere* informs us that the fall of the bridge mentioned in the disegno 'adombra un più drammatico e anzi addirittura ferale mancamento di ponte': similarly, the narrator foreshadows – 'adombra' – in more than one way the very author of the collection.

The point is that the autobiographical identification of the 'I' is not only a prerogative of the notes but also partly occurs in the narrative. The autobiographical references found in the notes are part of a tension existing *also* in the narrative between the fictional and the autobiographical, as well as the invented and the real; a tension which is one of the salient features of the collection. When the 'I' resurfaces in the narrative, it is the narrative itself which often asks us to understand it in relation to Gadda. I then agree with Cenati when he argues that 'uno dei fondamenti di complementarità paradossale su cui si regge la possente composizione dell'*Adalgisa*' is found in the interlacing of 'autobiografismo umoristico d'autore e finzione autobiografico-memoriale'.[35] In the last disegno – in a disegno, then, and not in a note – the 'I' identifies itself as a 'scrittore', self-disparagingly including himself among the '50.000 scrittori italiani di oggi' compared to the 'gentildonna' Eleonora Vigoni:

> Questa gentildonna, che aveva amici garibaldini, e una sarta nipote di Cavallotti, era molto intelligente e colta: e, come tutte le gentildonne della nostra città ch'erano maturate prima del telefono,

[34] The experience of war springs forth from what Lugnani, *Del tempo*, p. 93, refers to as the 'memoria del personaggio-narratore'. For a few fundamental remarks on the topic of the memory of the narrator, see ibid., pp. 92-97.

[35] Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 61.

disponeva d'inchiostri e di cartoncini finissimi per la sua corrispondenza particolare; aveva una calligrafia magnifica, quantunque un po' minuta, nonché beninteso una grammatica e uno stile perfetti, che molti dei 50.000 scrittori italiani di oggi, me compreso, potrebbero sinceramente invidiarle. [L'A 545]

Disclosing himself in his capacity of writer, the 'I' ('me compreso') stands at the same level as Eleonora; at a lower level, to be exact, as he claims he might even envy her perfect grammar and style. 'Il narratore-autore', nell'esplicita comparazione tra sé e una propria creatura letteraria' – Eleonora – 'fa mostra di abolire ogni distanza finzionale, a beneficio di una connotazione realistica del racconto', Cenati observes.[36] Rather than entering into the diegetic space himself, as he does when he places himself as a clumsy young man in Adalgisa's flat, the 'I' compares itself to the characters, while alluding to its own extradiegetic role as writer in the present day ('di oggi').

If the 'I' of the disegni calls to mind the extradiegetic and extratextual author, the reality it narrates also tends to escape the fictional boundaries to which it is confined, achieving a new kind of *realistic* or *autobiographical consistency*. 'I riverberi di una pseudo-autobiografia gaddiana, svolta per mano dell'io narrante', Cenati claims, 'conferiscono coesistenza di realtà vera e soda alle figure di fantasia che si muovono nel racconto, mentre la stessa immagine pubblica dell'autore Gadda è assimilata alla dimensione immaginaria dove quelle figure, i suoi personaggi, prendono forma'. Thus, as Cenati puts it, 'Gadda diventa personaggio di sé stesso, mentre Adalgisa e la sua corte di amicizie prendono spessore di carne e ossa'.[37] If the fictional pole draws the authorial 'I' into the world of his

[36] Ibid., p. 62. The identification of the diegetic 'I' in an autobiographical sense is suggested on other occasions through allusions of different kinds. In the final part of the last disegno, for example, a family called 'Gadda' is mentioned alongside many other families receving a funeral portrait of Adalgisa's husband, Carlo: 'E siccome – dato che in quei mesi era proprio l'epoca che due o tre figliole della quinta generazione venivano a tiro anche loro – siccome stavano per entrare in scena i Consonni, i Carugati, i Gadda, i Roncoroni e i Brambilla, così per ogni nuovo nucleo familiare ch'era già in riserva il suo bravo 'ritratt' [549]. It is also easy to see an oblique reference to the name of Gadda when the narrator humorously remarks: 'Come dice anche solo il nome, Carlo!, egli era un bravo e bell'uomo' [L'A 514]. But cf. also specifications such as the following: 'Lei [Adalgisa] aveva il diritto di voler bene a chi voleva…. senza domandar permesso a nessuno…. e chi voleva era il Carlo, il suo Carlo' [540].

[37] Cenati, *Disegni, bizze e fulmini*, p. 62.

characters, making a fictional character of himself, the fictional-diegetic 'I' nonetheless alludes to the profile of Gadda, drawing it into the fiction. In chapter 3 we looked at how the author becomes a fictional creature, reducing the distance between himself and his characters, we are now looking at the other side of the same process: it is the fictional-diegetic reality that now draws nebulously and ambiguously close to the 'reale realtà'.

My argument is that the notes offer a crucial contribution to this process, knotting together the collection's rope of fiction with that of reality. As they lend themselves to readers as a space to comment on the narrative from an apparently external viewpoint, and so reconnect that fiction with a reality beyond the diegetic boundaries, the notes also provide the optimum conditions for a representation of the 'I' in an authorial mode, uncovered by any of the fictional cloaks this 'I' may wear in its fictional-diegetic form. As the note on the *Mirabilia* demonstrates, however, notes can expand the fictional-diegetic boundaries, rather than limiting them and counterpointing the narrative. By taking shape in the notes as 'ragazzo', 'autore ingegnere', 'autore' or 'Autore', 'scrivente', 'calligrafo', Gadda introduces further portraits of the self in addition to those found in the narrative. The authorial timbre found in the notes provides additional emotive texture to the collection, contributing to the realistic consistency of the narrative mentioned above, in line with those passages that almost take on the tone of a memoir. The experiences found in the memory of the narrator thus nod to the memory of the author, while the disegni themselves allude to the essential function of the 'I' as the creative origin of the text. Likewise, the artificial separation between commentator and narrator also allows Gadda to surpass his critics and make fun of the 'autore', while in fact making fun of those who speak ill of him. Contributing to the construction of the self in the collection, the notes perform the function of the fiction they comment on and are appended to, combining multiple instances and a plurality of viewpoints.

As a proof of the proximity of disegni and notes in this respect, the same self-mocking remarks found in the notes are also found in the disegni. Aside from the peculiar case of the central scene of the last disegno, discussed in chapter 3, in *I ritagli*, for example, we are informed that the 'autore' himself has studied German and has furthermore failed to learn it, just like the other members of the Filologico:

> Accudivano a studiare il tedesco fin dalla prima giovinezza, o addirittura dalla puerizia con la Fraülein, da loro denominata Fraülein: e seguitavano poi a studiarlo per tutta la vita, come l'autore di queste note: tralasciando però di commetter l'imprudenza d'arrivare a impararlo, come l'autore di queste note, con che non avrebbero più potuto perseverare a studiarlo. [L'A 412]

While diminishing the 'autore', the disegno humorously stresses the laxness of the Milanese ruling class in the field of humanistic-philological knowledge. Without alienating the self from the milieu satirised, the subject manages to cast on the milieu a critical eye. As I have already demonstrated, forms of satirical opposition and rejection are inescapably entangled with forms of continuity and identification. As Cenati observes, 'la patina umoristica di autobiografia corrobora i motivi di estrosa verosimiglianza dell'esposto; attesta che gli sberleffi e le caricature satiriche trovano davvero fondamento nelle conoscenze ed esperienze dell'intellettuale Carlo Emilio Gadda, anche se il narratore non assume mai a chiare lettere questo nome'.[38] The same applies, however, for the notes, where the autobiographical identification also bears out the critical analyses and satirical judgements expressed in the narrative on the world narrated; a world that appears in the notes distant and yet *more real* than ever. As in a process of osmosis, the reference to the autobiographical dimension and to the dimension of 'reale realtà' transmits its character of reality to the world narrated, giving it new substance.[39]

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[38] Ibid.

[39] As they sometimes show in a positive light that which is ridiculed or derided in the narrative, notes are also perfectly congenial for the kind of satire put into effect throughout the collection, becoming a visible sign of the doubleness which in the previous chapter I have acknowledged as inherent to satire.

Allowing the self to displace itself in different ways and forms, and to carry out self-defense and self-promotion, the notes serve a crucial end within the collection. They enable an original interaction between fiction and reality, drawing the 'autore' into the fictional dimension. They put into practice the conflation of the fictional and the real, which we have acknowledged as a peculiar characteristic of *L'Adalgisa*, a book suitably defined by Savettieri – as already mentioned – 'tutto vero e tutto immagino'.[40] It matters little whether Gadda truly set his eyes on the black holes where the sewer water of Milan are depurated. The point is to recognise a textual device in the notes where the self has an authorial timbre, and the speaking 'I' performs a further textual function, drawing the self *in*. The self of Gadda is not to be found in the shrewd commentator speaking in some of the notes, nor in the 'autore' mocked for his improprieties, nor in the clumsy 'I' plunged into Adalgisa's flat; he is, so to speak, in all of them together, which is why the perfect place to start looking for him is the virtual intersection between disegni and notes. Returning to the conclusions reached at the end of the previous chapter, the subject cannot but ambiguously inhabit the world he creates; a world in which he remains entangled.[41]

Reassessing things from this perspective, any marked difference of status between notes and disegni will necessarily be scaled down. Rather than a *meta-text* growing out of a primary text, to which it has a relation of compliance and subjection, the notes of *L'Adalgisa*

[40] Cf. 4.3 above, where I referred to the fundamental passage of note 5 of *Notte di luna* where it is explicitly affirmed that the landscape described is a 'contaminazione varesino-brianzolo-vicentina' [L'A 297].

[41] In *I ritagli* readers also find some 'Gaddus' mentioned alongside the members of the Filologico: 'Il bibliotecante di turno ha un bel rintuzzare gli assalti e l'impeto degli aggressivi Caviggioni, che, in drappo ricco, avidi d'ogni sapere, gli sottopongono le schèdule delle loro richieste terzopiano, concomitanti con quelle dei Perego, dei Biraghi, dei Maldifassi, dei Corbetta, dei Rusconi, dei Bernasconi, dei Trabattoni, dei Repossi, dei Lattuada, del Gaddus. Soci della Biblioteca Linguistica, oltre un Gaddus, sono due Corbetta, tre Perego e sei Caviggioni'' [413]. The linguistic deformation 'Gaddus' in place of the correct form 'Gadda' responds, in a way, to the dynamics I am trying to describe here: if the diegetic 'I' triggers an autobiographical identification (*Gadda*), the deformation warns us that the 'I' is nonetheless a fictional-diegetic projection: a character (*Gaddus*). On the 'capitano Gaddus', cf. ch. 1.4, in partic. note 53.

might be better looked at as a *para-text* in the fullest sense of the term: a text parallel to the primary text on which it comments.[42]

[42] Although she comes at this conclusion from a different perspective, arguing for an interpretation of the relationship between main text and notes as *conflicting* spaces, one of centripetal construction, the other of centrifugal dispersion, Bertone makes a point which is also very relevant to my understanding of the notes of *L'Adalgisa* as a paratext: 'La digressione è solo grammaticalmente subordinata di una principale, così come la nota è solo spazialmente inferiore al testo, ma non lo è ontologicamente' ('Ai margini del testo', in *Il romanzo come sistema*, p. 141).

Chapter 5

The unrepeatable time of *L'Adalgisa*

5.1. Time and the satirical representation of society

In the last disegno of the collection, Adalgisa brings her speech to Elsa at Parco Sempione to an end with a recollection of the funeral of her own deceased husband, Carlo. Adalgisa indulges in the memory of their love story and in the hopes of happiness she had when she was young; hopes shattered by Carlo's death and by the malevolence of his relatives, who always looked down on her as a *parvenue*. If the considerations made in the following passage refer at first to Adalgisa and the way in which she clings to her past, the change of the verb tense from the past ('finì', 'si intenerì', 'andava andava', 'vi trovava') to the present ('tende', 'è', 'vive') marks – as Cristina Savettieri observes – a change of perspective:[1]

> Finì con il povero Carlo, e a suo modo si intenerì: vagabonda, – con quella borsetta chiusa, stretta a due mani, vagabonda nei pascoli sconfinati della vedovanza. La sua povera memoria andava andava: verso il tempo, e le immagini che non ritornano. Vi trovava, disperatamente, la ragione e il senso del suo sopravvivere. Ogni anima tende a motivare il suo essere: quando il motivo è nell'irrepetibile tempo, ogni anima vive nella memoria. [L'A 547-548]

Adopting a gnomic stance, the narrator makes a universal statement: all individuals search for their reason to exist; as an individual finds a reason in something which has already happened, that individual will live their life in the thought of the past. Indeed, Adalgisa finds her reason to exist in a now-lost past. Immersed in the memory of what once

[1] Cf. Savettieri, 'Self-Reflection and Ambivalence', p. 420.

was, she is almost unable to live in the present. As she lives in the past, for her, to live is to remember.[2]

As I will return to the importance of memory for Adalgisa and more in general in the collection, I would like to single out here the definition given of time as 'irrepetibile'. The images of the past in which Adalgisa nostalgically indulges 'non ritornano' as it is the past itself that cannot return. Temporal irreversibility is a law that regulates the human experience of time without exception. In the space of a couple of aphoristic sentences, we are faced with one of the major themes of the collection: the inexorable passage of time which sweeps everything away, leaving us in a condition of frustration, powerlessness and bewilderment.[3] Moving on from Adalgisa to Elsa, let us now take into account another disegno, where the human experience of time is expressed through an extremely effective comical-realistic metaphor.

In *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori*, Elsa listens to the musicians tuning their instruments before the beginning of the concert which gives the title to the disegno. She is unsure whether to interpret the jumble of sounds produced by the orchestra as an allegory of her own sense of psychological-moral extraneousness to the bourgeois community of which she is part in virtue of her social background and her marriage to the wealthy Gian

[2] On an earlier occasion Savettieri also referred to the definition of time as unrepeatable as the 'teorema compositivo dell'ultimo dei disegni milanesi': cf. Cristina Savettieri, 'Il racconto del tempo nella *Cognizione del dolore*', *Italianistica*, 31, 2-3 (2002), pp. 237-252: 250.

[3] On time in Gadda, see Carla Benedetti, 'La storia naturale nell'opera di Gadda', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda*, ed. by Marie-Hélène Caspar, *Italies Narrativa*, 7 (1995), pp. 71-89; Giuseppe Bonifacino, 'La torre e il banzavóis. Figure e antinomie del tempo di Gadda', in *'Buone maniere'. Iconologie, linguaggi, manierismi, antagonismi. Studi in onore di Giorgio Patrizi*, ed. by Daniela Carmosino and Francesco Rizzo (Avellino: Sinestesie, 2021), pp. 333-347; Giuseppe Bonifacino, 'Dalla polarità alla deformazione: il realismo 'noumenico' di Gadda', in *Gadda: interpreti a confronto*, ed. by Pedriali, pp. 101-122; Lugnani, *Del tempo* (see in partic. the chapter 'Racconto ed esperienza umana del tempo', pp. 89-106); Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri (see in partic. the section 'Tempo perduto', pp. 197-213); Giuseppe Stellardi, '"Il tempo degli atti possibili": qualche riflessione sulle dimensioni della temporalità in letteratura, a partire dalla *Cognizione del dolore*', in *Letteratura e filologia fra Svizzera e Italia. Studi in onore di Guglielmo Gorni*, ed. by Maria Antonietta Terzoli, Alberto Asor Rosa and Giorgio Inglese (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2010), vol. III, *Dall'Ottocento al Novecento. Letteratura e linguistica*, pp. 231-248.

Maria; or as a sign of the disharmony which concerns the life of every member of the community and which is ultimately to be identified with life itself:

> Parevano, quei frantumi di musica, a Elsa, le dissociate, stridule forze della sua vita: o forse della vita col V maiuscolo, della vita di tutti. Nella disperata officina batteva ogni intestardito fabbro il suo ferro, ognuno a suo conto, come un manìaco, come un frenetico, con la sorda, ottusa pertinacia d'un partitante di Binda, o di Guerra. E l'officina, a un tratto, diveniva popina, taverna. I battitori si trasformavano in bevitori. Era la taverna dell'attimo: bevevano l'attimo. La vecchia eternità, ghignando, li lasciava gozzovigliare con un litruccio annacquato. Ma no, no! quella gente affocava i suoi atti verso un fine, un unico spirito la sospingeva agli atti necessari e probandi, una comune entelechia, un'anima. Lei, lei sola, era stata strappata via dalla comune speranza, divelta dal credere: come stanca foglia il vento dalla chioma tempestosa del faggio. [L'A 460]

At first, the disharmony of the orchestra is taken to signal the inner disharmony of the community. As every instrument is tested on its own, so every individual selfishly pursues their own ends. There is no shared, overarching meaning orientating everyone's lives towards one destination. Life is imagined as a workshop – a 'disperata officina' – where blacksmiths are striking their iron at their own pace, oblivious to anyone else. The dedication of the blacksmiths is compared to the frenzied obsession of a maniac or a fan of famous cyclists Alfredo Binda and Learco Guerra. Life is a frenetic delirium where individuals live alone in a state of turmoil.

The workshop metaphor suddenly transfigures into another: no longer blacksmiths, individuals are now drinkers in a tavern, the tavern of time.[4] The action of drinking time – 'bevevano l'attimo' – stands for living. This is the effective comical-realistic metaphor referred to above. Humans spend their lives as revellers gulping down time. As they cannot experience infinity and only enjoy a limited amount of time, they are shown guzzling it down with wanton voracity. Their beverage is no more than an instant: the 'attimo'. Sneering eerily in the background, eternity is almost personified as it lets drinkers revel while they consume

[4] *Popina* is a Latin and learned term for – cf. GDLI, *s.v.* – 'osteria', 'bettola'.

the portion of time they are given: a portion incommensurably small, compared with the vast expanse of eternity.

The exclamatory syntactic structure ('ma no, no! quella gente affocava i suoi atti verso un fine *etc*.') responds to a change in Elsa's perspective. The instruments will soon be directed by the conductor as the concert begins, the chaos of the orchestra is only temporary. As the metaphor of the tavern is left behind, Elsa leans towards interpreting the musical disharmony as a symbol of her own life, and *not* of life in general. Reflecting this shift in perspective, society no longer seems to be made up of self-absorbed individuals living their lives independently of one another. As it tends towards one goal, the social body is imagined to be provided with one soul: 'una comuna entelechia, un'anima'. It is only Elsa who feels excluded from this collective movement compacting society together. Elsa feels, in other words, like an outcast: 'lei, lei sola, era stata strappata via dalla comune speranza, divelta dal credere: come stanca foglia il vento dalla chioma tempestosa del faggio', alongside other outcasts we have already encountered in the collection.[5] If a unity of purpose holds the community together tightly on the way towards one destination, what is this destination? What is the nature of the 'comune entelechia', the 'anima' from which Elsa feels excluded? And, also, what is the relation between this 'anima' and the way in which time and eternity are summoned up in the metaphor of the tavern?

In the metaphor of the blacksmiths, disharmony mainly referred to the disconnection between the lives of each individual and to the lack of a purpose common to the community. In the metaphor of the tavern, the attention is instead drawn to a contrast between *limited* time and *infinite* time: the key idea is that humans consume a ridiculously limited amount of time – the 'litruccio annacquato' – while only eternity enjoys, so to speak, the real drink. For humans, as stated in the aphorism mentioned above, time cannot repeat, nor can it be

[5] Cf. ch. 2.4: 'Bruno and Gonzalo: "here" and "there" in the collection'.

repeated. In other terms, the rectification made in Elsa's perspective clarifies that there is a common path to be walked by society, but it does not undermine the meaning of the metaphor of the tavern with respect to the conception of time expressed therein. Although we acknowledge with Elsa that society has a common purpose, we are left with the impression that there is something nonetheless *disharmonius* with how humans make use of time.

Looking into the metaphor of the tavern introduced as Elsa questions the cohesion of the community and catches a glimpse of its disharmony, the problem I would like to address in this chapter concerns the relationship between the theme of time and the way in which society – and the Milanese, bourgeois society in particular – is represented in the collection. The eighth disegno proves fundamental if we want to discuss this problem as the sequences which follow the passage where Elsa listens to the orchestra paint an extraordinarily grotesque picture of the audience in attendance: the so-called *musogonic* society.[6] A picture which connects, as we have seen in chapter 2, with the taunting and yet affectionate celebration of Lombardy and its people found in *Quando il Girolamo ha smesso*…., as well as with the overwhelming, hallucinated vision of the others from Gonzalo's perspective in *Navi approdano al Parapagàl*, forming with them an ideal triad in demonstration of the convergence of the disegni on the subject of social representation.[7] As the metaphor of the workshop which insists on the absence of a universal meaning is

[6] Gadda derives the adjective *musogonico* occurring also in others of his works from the noun *musogonia*, a learned term referring to the mythological birth of the muses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (*Musogonia* was chosen by the Neoclassical poet Vincenzo Monti as title for his 1797 poem in *ottava rima*). *Musogonico* refers to the interest and devotion the Milanese beourgeoisie has for the arts of which the Muses are the patronesses. As at least in *Un 'concerto'* this devotion only seems a matter of appearances, the definition of the bourgeoisie as musogonic sounds ironic and sarcastic. Giorgia Ghersi remarks that in *Un 'concerto'* there is no space for the illusion 'che l'arte possa ancora avere a inizio Novecento un valore educativo incidendo positivamente sulla morale: il concerto è degradato a rito mondano a cui i milanesi partecipano solo per "potersi congratulare l'un l'altro della propria apertura d'ali" [L'A 456], ma dove la "lieve febbre enarmonica" [471] si placa ancora prima dell'innesto. I giovani e le giovanette non ne risultano educati, Elsa non ne esce pacificata' (Ghersi, 'La voce di Elsa', pp. 173-174).

[7] For these three interrelated pictures of society, cf. ch. 2.5.

immediately followed by the metaphor of the tavern which points out the way in which time is consumed by humans, how can the satirical representation of society be reconsidered in light of the way in which time is envisioned? Is there a relationship between the concept of time and the representation of society given in *Un 'concerto'*, where the satirical register reaches one of the highest points in the entire collection? What is, in short, the role played by time in the satire of the community?

Let us now return to *Un 'concerto'* and to Elsa's perception of her extraneousness to a movement which drives the others – 'quella gente' – towards a common destination. Let us start again from there, looking for an answer to the questions on satire and on time I posed above.

5.2. Society as a factory of children and time as a cook of life

In the lines of *Un 'concerto'* which follow the rectification that it is only Elsa who feels excluded from the harmony of society, the metaphor of the workshop returns, but now expanded in new directions. The workshop grows into a factory: a 'fabbrica di bàmboli e bàmbole'. The aim keeping society together, the 'comune bene' to which all the blacksmiths contribute with zeal is now made clear: *making children*.[8] The 'comune entelechia', the 'anima' takes the form of a procreative mission:

[8] The only character not attacked in *Un 'concerto'* does not contribute to the procreative mission presented as the ultimate aim of the community. Elsa appears indeed perturbed by the thought that Adalgisa has two children on at least two occasions: '"Non pensarci, cara, a certe tristezze", disse Elsa assai triste, con una sincera pietà. "Rasserenati…. hai almeno i tuoi figli….": e un pianto le velò improvvisamente gli occhi' [L'A 511]; '"Via…. non pensare a certe tristezze", le suggerì dolcemente, "tutti, si sa, dovremo diventar vecchi…. un po' per volta… Basta accomodarci all'idea…. Tu hai i figlioli…. i tuoi figlioli….": e li guardò sorridendo, poveri nasoni: e chinò il capo nell'ombra"' [528]. In addition to her ill-concealed interest for Bruno which could potentially make of her an adulteress, Elsa's sense of extraneousness to the community is very probably to be seen, then, also in connection with the theme of maternity.

Coronata di lontane stelle, la Protettrice proteggeva la sua gente: la Salvatrice avrebbe salvato la gente. I clan dell'antica gente rivivevano confederati in un Foro, elettrificati nella società nuova e perenne. La vita di sua tribù, comune di tutte le tribù della stirpe, era un motivo reale nella partitura del destino. Ogni fabbro lavorava solerte e docile: batteva sicuro, attento. Lavorava fino a notte, per il comune bene: necessità lo esigeva. E la fabbrica di bàmboli e bàmbole funzionava 'in pieno', 'senza un attimo di sosta', mandata a tre turni. Il reparto spedizioni impacchettava settimanalmente una valanga di Carli, di Giancarli, di Sergi, di Teresine, di Marise, di Giuseppi, di Checchi, di Chicchi, di Liliane, di Anne. Adesso era la volta che usciva di fabbrica, ancora appiccicosi di vernice fresca, l'incredibile ondata dei Luciani. [L'A 460-461]

Traditionally pictured with a circle of stars as a crown and addressed as 'Protettrice' and 'Salvatrice', Mary is invoked as a guarantor to vouch for the future prosperity of the community which will be able to pursue its aim – the generation of offspring – if provided with divine assistance. Referred to as living descendants of the Gauls ('i clan dell'antica gente rivivevano'), subsequently conquered and culturally assimilated by the Romans ('confederati in un Foro'), up until the present age marked by the advent of electricity when they finally form a new, modern community ('elettrificati nella società nuova e perenne'), the twentieth-century Milanese are understood as the result of a history of multicultural stratification. In a diachronic perspective where the present is grasped as sprouting from the past and as being at one with it, the Milanese are identified in continuation with their Gallic and Roman ancestries as an ethnic unity whose durable cohesion is based on a set of practices and rites.[9]

[9] Note 42 comments: '"I clan dell'antica gente", proprî, cioè, dell'antica società gallica. E aggiungi le "fare" (*élites* etniche, aggruppamenti de' nuovi venuti, in ogni borgo o città) degli invasori longobardi. "Confederati in un Foro", cioè nel municipio di diritto latino, poi nel Comune' [L'A 477]. References to the Gallic origin of Milan and the process of multicultural amalgamation which concerned the development of the city are spread across the collection. See in *Quando il Girolamo*: 'Oh! sangue e gente delle stragi e delle ibridazioni lontane, tra ligure e gallico e longobardo e minchione, con quello spruzzo di bugie curuli in coppa a dargli il sapore e la parvenza d'una civiltà, quasi polvere di cannella sulla panna frullata!' [307]. The 'spruzzo di bugie curuli' refers to the Roman colonisation – amusingly compared to a layer of cinnamon powder sprayed on whipped cream – which added to the original Gallic substrate.

Delving deeper into the imagery of manufacturing processes, society is portrayed as a forge – 'formidanda fucina di uomini e di energie'[10] –, and represented in the act of bringing infants to the world, as if distributing a product on the market: the 'mercato della vita':

> Formidanda fucina di uomini e di energie, ecco offriva al mercato della vita i suoi nati, con l'orgoglio che il coltivatore una messe o una sementa vivida, sacra al domani. Nel clamoroso teatro il giovane e la giovinetta arrivavano al proprio posto, toglievano il segno d'occupazione, movevano, alzandolo, poi riabbassandolo, il sedile mobile, vi prendevan dentro il lembo della gonna o del soprabito di chi c'era dietro, sedevano: il giovane e la giovinetta dall'animo sereno e puro, dal limpido occhio: e dal cervello sano, come, in cilestri mattini il granito eminente dell'Alpe. Parevano dei cerbiatti venuti col vintiquàter. Il Luciano e la Luciana dalle floride gote:
>
> > Tu, forte appoggio de le patrie mura:
> > E tu, soave cura
> > E lusinghevol'esca ai casti cori.
>
> Erano giovani robusti, agili: elegantissimi, altri. Un barattolo di brillantina gli si era consunto dentro i capegli dolcemente ondulati: e stillanti puro nardo, come, dagli schidioni del tempo, un gocciolante arrosto. [L'A 461]

The crowd of young people taking their seats in the auditorium can be regarded as the tangible results of the work of the workshop/forge committed to the procreative process. The young people who are now in the room are a prefiguration of what the children dispatched each week by the workshop/forge will be in the future.

The emotions aroused in the members of the community when presenting their children to the world recall the pride a farmer may have for what he has harvested or is about to plant, full of hope. Enclosed in quotation marks as to highlight their foreignness to the narrator's linguistic habits, '"in pieno"' and '"senza un attimo di sosta"' are trite idioms describing the efficiency and productivity of a factory, especially in a context such as that of Milan where commitment to work is celebrated as a founding value of society. Coming under the same semantic field as the previous two expressions but not enclosed in quotation

[10] Not only a a synonym for 'formidabile', 'straordinario', the adjective *formidanda* – from the gerundive of the Latin verb *formido*, 'to fear', 'to be scared of' – probably preserves here its etymological meaning as 'da temere', 'spaventoso': cf. GDLI, *s.v.* 'formidando'.

marks, 'tre turni' indicates that the factory is operating full-time in an attempt to maximise the profits – produce as many children as possible – as any other industrial facility might do.[11]

With a comical-humorous and also disturbing effect, the kind of language normally associated with industrial production and economic activities is reused to describe the reproductive process essential for the continuation of the species. This suggests a notion of the community as a machine where individuals are depersonalised and considered in function of a predetermined mission; a machine devoted to the continuation of the species as if creating life was a mere practical matter. As with any other factory, the factory of society has a specific department for the dispatching of the children produced each week, treated in all respects as items or goods. The use of birth names to refer to children in series – the Carli, the Giancarli, the Sergi, the Teresine, and so on – points out a principle of social homologation and standardisation. Within each series one individual stands for the others: to name *one* Luciano is to name the prototype or model for the entire category, *the* Luciani. The process of standardisation put in place in representing the Luciani and other members of society is functional – as this and the next sections of the chapter will show – to connect the concept of reproduction to that of industrial/economical production, as well as to create an opposition between the ways in which society and time function.

Following the image of the forge, the attention returns to the conservatory and the audience gathering therein. The focus is at first on the young people standing in the foyer or taking their seats in the auditorium. Their pyshical and mental features – 'il giovane e la giovinetta dall'animo sereno e puro', 'dal limpido occhio', 'dal cervello sano, come in cilestri mattini, il granito eminente dell'Alpe', 'il Luciano e la Luciana dalle floride gote' – convey a sense of limpidity, if not of overly brilliant clarity. Recalling and at the same time

[11] 'Tre turni' means that the twenty-four hours of day are divided in three eight-hour shifts.

mocking epithets found in epic poetry, the parallel syntactic structures of high-literary tone used here seem, however, incongruous with the prosaic context of the social event and its crass audience, engendering an effect of contrast. Likewise, the depiction of the young as 'cerbiatti venuti col vintiquàter' bizarrely combines a reference to a wild animal such as the fawn with a trivial reference to the chaotic streetcar system of Milan,[12] adding a note of naivety and unwariness to the way in which the Luciani are depicted: their candidness and glowing features thus emerge as a form of dullness and ingenuity, rather than of purity.

Nestled in the description of the Luciani is a quotation of a few verses from the ode *L'innesto del vaiuolo* (1765) by Giuseppe Parini.[13] Particularly known for the poem *Il giorno* which painted a fiercely satirical portrait of the eighteenth-century aristocracy in Milan where he was born and lived for almost all his life, Parini was a writer dear to Gadda.[14] In the ode, Parini observes how fundamental it is for society to keep children in good health as they grow up, protecting them from the dangers of smallpox. As variolation[15] struggles to become common practice due to the prevailing religious bigotry and irrational fears, Parini marks out the behaviour of society as harmful and self-destructive, defending the many benefits variolation may provide for society. It is within this framework that the young are called upon and urged – as we read in the verses quoted by Gadda – to grow up in good

[12] A dialectal form for 'ventiquattro', the term *vintiquatèr* refers to the urban tram line 24.

[13] The reference is disclosed by Gadda himself in note 43: '"Tu, forte appoggio de le patrie mura, ecc.": Giuseppe Parini, *Odi*, *v*. 'L'innesto del vaiolo': vv. 46-48' [L'A 477]. For notes which disclose the references underlying images and expressions found in the disegno, cf. ch. 4.3.

[14] For a quick and essential overview on Parini in Gadda, see Italia, *Glossario di Carlo Emilio Gadda 'milanese'*, pp. XXXIV-XXXV: 'Poeta francamente ammirato da Gadda, Parini è modello di un'ironia che ha nella figura dell'iperbole il suo elemento portante. La lezione pariniana, quindi, non è attiva solo sul versante lessicale, ma può ben dirsi alla radice di tutto il procedimento di "divaricazione" stilistica" che abbiamo visto caratterizzare la prosa di Gadda. I casi di citazioni implicite, infatti, non sono molti, ma tutti di notevole interesse e con assoluto predominio dei vv. 1 13-34 del *Mattino*'.

[15] A predecessor of vaccination, variolation consists in the inoculation – the 'innesto' mentioned ode title – of the virus causing smallpox. The practice of vaccination is also mentioned at the end of *Un 'concerto'* as the young girls leave the conservatory: 'In quelle lor braccia sane, testé divinamente burrose nella sala, il vaccino si era trionfalmente insediato. Aveva riscosso dalle tenebre l'addormita legione dei fagociti. Asetizzata dentro il vivido cuore della fiamma, la lancetta aveva conferito a quei due bracci le due placche regolamentari, assolutamente rotonde: come due bolli di vidimazione e di licenza d'esercizio che le abilitassero a debitamente appagare, al tempo debito, una aspettazione smaniosa del damo senza pace' [L'A 472-473].

health, so as to be able to contribute to the collective progress.[16] As it is part of a communicative strategy to demonstrate how foolish it is to put children at risk of illness, the invocation to the young plays an important role in the ode. The tone of the invocation is as high and solemn as required by the serious theme and the general stylistic context. The polemical target is the idiocy of a superstitious society such as the one represented by Parini: a society incapable of taking care of its children and therefore of its own future.

Needless to say, there is a substantial difference between the young saved from smallpox in Parini and the offspring of the twentieth-century Milanese bourgeoisie who safely gather at a high-society event and are represented as being as unwary and dull as a fawn caught in traffic. The solemnity found in Parini's ode is somewhat wasted in *Un 'concerto'*. By quoting Parini and incongruously comparing the Luciani with the young of the ode, Gadda downgrades the Luciani and points to their mediocrity. The introduction of Parini's verses within the context of the disegno does not only create a contrast of comical nature in reference to the Luciani, but also has the effect of casting doubt, in much more general terms, on the seriousness of the ode in relation to the theme in question. As the emphasis placed on the role of the young for the future of society is misplaced in the disegno, it is the emphasis itself that is degraded, and not only the young to whom it is referred. It is the very idea that society will continue thanks to the young which ultimately sounds ludicrous and odd. This will come in handy as we continue the analysis of the disegno, where the theme of reproduction becomes, in fact, a laughing matter.[17]

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[16] In strict compliance with their gender, males/men will serve as soldiers and protect their country ('tu, forte appoggio de le patrie mura'), while females/women will be the passive object of love and desire ('e tu, soave cura | e lusinghevol'esca ai casti cori').

[17] This does not mean that there are no other possible connections between the ode and *Un 'concerto'*. The rather traditional comparison between the offspring and the harvest of a farmer present in the disegno is also found, for example, in the ode, vv. 37-38: 'Come biada orgogliosa in campo estivo, | Cresce di santi abbracciamenti il frutto'. Cf. in *Un 'concerto'*: 'formidanda fucina di uomini e di energie, ecco offriva sul mercato della vita i suoi nati, con l'orgoglio che il coltivatore una messe o una semente vivida'. In quoting the ode, the disegno essentially draws attention to the idea of the continuation of society, defined in fact in Parini's ode as 'util commun' (v. 171), but also makes a parody of it, leading us to wonder how the young men and

Moving on from the quotation, the narrator returns to the attractiveness of the Luciani, now defined 'robusti, agili: elegantissimi, altri'.[18] In short, they are athletic and fashionable. He then concentrates on an unpleasant detail bringing in a note of disgust: the abundant application of wax on their hair – 'un barattolo di brillantina gli si era consunto dentro i capegli dolcemente ondulati' – to make it look wavy. The hair is so slimy, from the wax they use, that the Luciani are compared to spit-roasted chickens dripping grease, in a simile where the subject of time surprisingly comes back to the scene: 'stillanti puro nardo, come, dagli schidioni del tempo, un gocciolante arrosto'.[19] What is the role of time in this grotesque image which leaves us disorientated? If the young are pictured as chickens hanging off spits, time is pictured as the one who is letting them roast. Compared to meat being cooked, the young are presented, degradingly, as passive objects in a context out of their control; they are victims of a cooking process leading them to being consumed, eaten away.

In *Un 'concerto',* just a few pages before the metaphor of the tavern discussed in the previous section, an association between time and cooking had already been made, shedding light on the image we are now analysing. Involved in a car accident while carrying out deliveries for Elsa's husband, the former bucther's boy Bruno is summoned to the Caviggionis' house in via Pontaccio.[20] Finally dismissed after a heated discussion with Gian

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women described in *Un 'concerto'* can actually continue anything at all. As we will see soon, there is something problematic in the way in which the society represented dedicates itself to its own continuation.

[18] The adjective *altri* is here ironically used in reference to the young with the meaning of 'different from the average', 'different as better'. Cf. the CGLI, *s.v.* 'altro': 'diverso, ma superiore (con intonazione allusiva […])'.

[19] The rare term *nardo* identifies a plant resin or an oily balm (cf. GDLI, *s.v.*; see also in my thesis ch. 2.5, note 45). *Schidione* is an ancient/regional form from for 'spiedo' (cf. GDLI, *s.v.*). A similar image to the one found here is in *Quattro figlie* as the faces of the employers of the silk shop where Giulia de' Marpioni looks for a special fabric glisten with sweat: 'Grosse gocciole di sudore gli imperlavano la fronte, belli miei; brillantina liquefatta, dai capelli unti, gli si sdilinquiva giù per il collo, dietro gli orecchi, in una scolatura oleosa' [367].

[20] For the reference to via Pontaccio, cf. ch. 2.3.

Maria who blames him for the accident, Bruno is redirected to the kitchen, where he can finally enjoy a steaming bowl of soup:

> Bruno, come un ragazzaccio sgusciato di mano al parroco dopo la mutria delle divozioni – quei rubesti preti nostri un po' ladini di spazzola – prese a ingollare le prime cucchiarate bollenti: e intanto parlava, frasi a pezzi, soffiando nel cucchiaio, alla povera sorda in faccende; che arrivava a sedersi a intervalli, tra un rimestolamento e un pescaggio. Forse voleva una interlocutrice, voleva interessarla alla storia: nella cucina piena di gorgoglianti penombre, o di ombre, agli angoli, ragnateli della carità: buona e lieta nonostante quell'odorino del gas che si soprapponeva all'arrosto. E il veleno azzurro delle fiammelle bruciava il sedere alla casseruola, a una pentola. Buona e tepida come dalla presenza di un antico genio, che fosse vaporato fuori dagli antichi risotti: dai capponi, dagli spinaci, dai sabaglioni del tempo cuoco. Cuoco di vita. [L'A 449]

The kitchen is described in few but effective strokes synaesthetically involving all the senses: there are the sounds of simmering and gurgling and the smell of gas blending with that of roast,[21] as well as a light blue flame sparkling on the stove. The warm atmosphere almost suggests the presence of a household deity evocative of an ancient Roman lar, a guardian of the kitchen. Different kinds of food are listed and associated – as was the case with the spit-roasted chickens mentioned above – with time: 'dai capponi, dagli spinaci, dai sabaglioni del tempo cuoco. Cuoco di vita'. As the short non-verbal sentence specifies, time is a cook as it *cooks life*, leading humans towards their death. With a *myse-en-abyme* technique, the action of cooking is also performed by the deaf servant, who is preparing something to eat – 'tra un rimestolamento e un ripescaggio' – as Bruno is intent on his soup.

Time passes, slips away, and in so doing it cooks and consumes life. Life – and human life in particular – is once again pictured as food, while time passing evokes cooking. If human existence comes to its end as a result of a process of combustion, it will not be a surprise that in the last disegno years are compared to ashes: 'Oh! adesso scherzo, per farmi passare la tristezza delle cose lontane: ricordi e sogni: ed anni mutatisi in cenere' [L'A 356].

[21] The roast – 'arrosto' – which Maria prepares in the kitchen prefigures, then, the dripping roast – 'gocciolante arrosto' – to which the Luciani are compared later on in the disegno. On the kitchen of via Pontaccio, cf. Georges Güntert, 'Satira sociale e male di vivere: I "disegni milanesi" di Carlo Emilio Gadda', *Esperienze Letterarie*, 2 (2014), pp. 25-44.

The link established in the simile of the Luciani between human life, time, and food is not cursory, then, but falls instead within a wider conceptual network extending to the whole disegno, along the lines of the literary-pictorial tradition of *tempus edax rerum* dating back to Ovid:

> *tempus edax rerum, tuque, invidiosa vetustas,*
> *omnia destruitis vitiataque dentibus aevi*
> *paulatim lenta consumitis omnia morte!*[22]

The Luciani are compared to chickens as time is roasting them in its capacity as chef. Hanging off the spits of time, the young only wait to be burnt to a crisp or to be picked up and eaten. Incomparably tiny compared to eternity, human time is likened to food or a watered-down drink: a 'litruccio annacquato', as in the metaphor of the tavern. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, human time is revealed in all its ridiculous fragility and ephemerality; essentially, in all its nothingness.[23]

[22] *Metamorphoses*, XV, 234-236. [Time, eater of things, and you, jealous old age, | all you destroy after you have bitten it with the teeth of years | little by litte, all you consume by means of a slow death']. Ovid uses the verb *consume* in relation to the action performed by time on reality. On time as an agent that *consumes* in *L'Adalgisa*, cf. *Quattro figlie*, note 29: 'Il quartiere di Via Spiga, Bagutta, Borgospesso, è de' tranquilli del "centro" milanese: e sopravvive al tempo consunto ' [L'A 377]; *I ritagli*: '(e' son gli scherzi del tempo spappolatore)' [409], where the definition of time as 'spappolatore' grotesquely recalls the Ovidian definition of time as *edax* ('devourer', 'eater').

[23] In the metaphor of the tavern, humans actively perform the action of drinking: it is time that is represented as a beverage and is thus consumed. In the simile of the roasted chicken, on the contrary, humans are the *passive* object of an action performed by time as the cook of life. As for the association between time and a culinary/gastronomical imaginary, it will not be irrelevant that in *Un 'concerto*' the audience is also degradingly compared to a boiling soup: 'Il minestrone era pervenuto a bollore, con grossi sedani e qualche fenomenale carota' [L'A 457]. On the image of the soup in Gadda, cf. Ida De Michelis, *Una minestra ristretta: la sintesi del minestrone gaddiano*, in *La sapida eloquenza. Retorica del cibo e cibo retorico*, ed. by Cristiano Spila (Rome: Bulzoni, 2004), pp. 271-277. On the image of the soup in relation to that of the cauldron and Dante, see also Vandi, *Satura*, pp. 45-47.

5.3. The catalogue of the products made by society

The passage on the Luciani is the first snapshot of a living picture of the Milanese community where, as previously mentioned, the satirical-grotesque register hits one of the highest peaks in the collection. The description of the young people continues, stressing how they exhibit an air of superiority.

As gods are conventionally pictured as enfolded in clouds, the wrinkles visible on the forehead of some of the young attending the concert are compared to thread-like clouds and interpreted as a sign of divine annoyance: 'Sulla fronte d'alcuno, sotto a neri e cresputi capelli, ecco ecco una lieve ruga orizzontale pareva nube sottile, corruccio d'una divinità distratta' [L'A 462]. Assembled together, other young people are compared to the 'dei consentes' [462], the group of twelve major deities traditionally depicted in council in the Ancient Roman pantheon: 'troppo numerosi di già per raccogliere, ognuno, una bastevole dose di venerazione dalle menti mortali' [462]. As seen in the previous sections and throughout the collection, the application of a noble/high imagery to incompatible subjects creates an effect of comical-humorous contrast. In spite of the divine comparison put in place, the young people appear, in fact, to be all but divine.[24] Their bodies are so swollen and unctuous that they are associated, with a very degrading simile, to an overfilled bin: 'Sembravano gonfi di patatine arrosto fino al collo e alle amìgdale come la rüéra quand'è intasata' [461].[25] Their way of speaking is so hyperbolically impetuous that their neighbours

[24] Another example of how deification is used for the purpose of ridicule is in *Quattro figlie*, starting from the very title of the disegno which creates a contrast between the heavenly context surrounding the daughters of Raimondo Berengario in *Paradiso* VI ('Quattro figlie ebbe, e ciascuna reina, | Ramondo Beringhiere, e ciò li fece | Romeo, persona umìle e peregrina', vv. 133-135) and the not at all heavenly context surrounding the de' Marpioni daughters, who are explicitly compared to 'diavolesse' [L'A 364]. Deification is a strategy typically used to diminish the subject to which it is referred also in Parini's *Il giorno* quoted by Gadda himself in *Un 'concerto'*.

[25] Note 45 explains: '"Rüéra", (dial lomb.), è la fossa delle spazzature di casa, oltreché il letamaio. Per estensione, quel condotto verticale ricavato nel muro, a guisa di canna funeraria, per il quale il domestico

are completely overwhelmed by it, while particles of saliva pervade the air of the auditorium and turn it into a place of disgusting promiscuity: 'seguitavano, seguitavano […] sputacchiando atomuzzi di cara e cuginesca saliva sulla faccia dell'interlocutore cordializzato, e ridente e sputacchiante a sua volta in una Pasqua felice della cordialità' [461].

The narrator does not bring out differences between one individual and the other but rather draws attention to traits common to some of them and unrealistically exaggerates those traits in a caricature.[26] Some of the young people are distinguished by their speech impediment: 'avevano la lingua imbvogliata in un gavbuglio di evve, cvesimati da San Cavlo Bovvomeo' [L'A 461].[27] Others are counted and grouped together purely on the basis of the sport they practice or of the educational background they have, so that we have 'due campioni di tennis e uno di hockey' [461], 'due vincitori di coppe automobilistiche e due giocatori di golf' [461-462], 'otto primi premî skiatori' [462], 'nove skiatrici' [462], 'otto architetti, tutti e otto razionali' [462], 'quattordici laureati in scienze economiche' [461], 'un notaio, due dentisti, trentatre ingegneri elettrotecnici e cinquantacinque studenti' [462], and so on. Ranks upon ranks of bodies similar, if not identical, to each other are listed as they fill in the space of the conservatory, talking and making connections.

Right after the young men it is the turn of their female counterparts and of women in general. Once again, enumerations follow one another. We first meet the 'ragazze, dette da noi "signorine"' [L'A 462], escorted to the concert by their 'centoventi madri giuocatrici di

"rüff" (= spazzatura), vien precipitato negli appositi serbatoî di cantina. Dispositivo tipico della edilizia milanese, ha il plauso dell'Autore' [L'A 477].

[26] For caricature in Gadda, cf. Valentino Baldi, 'Corpi, metafore, rappresentazioni caricaturali', in *Come frantumi di mondi. Teoria della prosa e logica delle emozioni in Gadda* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019), pp. 145-201. Baldi defines as 'immagini corporali collettive' (p. 165) those images featuring traits that could be more realistically attributed to an individual rather than to an entire category, as it is here the case with the Luciani.

[27] The inability to correctly pronounce *r* sounds is colloquially referred to in Italian as *erre moscia*. A speech impediment is also mentioned in the social picture of *Navi approdano*: a small further indication of the proximity of the three pictures of society discussed in ch. 2.5 and recalled above.

bridge' [462], the 'spose, note in città per la loro avvenente grazia' [462], the 'quarantadue suocere ancora potabili (secondo loro)' [463], 'qualche vereconda vedova' [463], and then, finally, the 'bisnonne ottantaquattrenni', against whom the narrator particularly exercises his inventiveness in a passage which offers a perfect sample of how all the components of society are made the object of a merciless representation aiming to ridicule and degrade:

> Non c'erano lì, ma a casa loro c'erano, esistevano, perduravano – lì si facevan manifeste ne' rami, negli infiniti pinnacoli nepotili – diciannove bisnonne ottantaquattrenni, ma ancora in gamba per un'altra quindicina. Questa specie di collegiata di dolomiti di Ampezzo, o di Castrozza, erano ancora adorne di tutte le terrene visuali: e anche a sensi di legge, del resto, dovevasi adibire ogni più amorosa cura e cautela da preservarle in vita e in dolomitica efficienza il più a lungo possibile, eventualmente oltre il centesimo anno di loro età. Sonavano ancora imperiose il campanello, si facevano chiamare 'contessa' o 'donna Carla' dalla donna del clistere, avevano ancora in testa tutto un assortimento di ordini, di comandi, di contrordini, da impartire uno dopo l'altro alla serva, alla cuoca, alla nuora: dalla sveglia al tramonto. Biasciando tra gencive senza più denti una polta di biscotto disfatto, spappolata a mero amido, ad acqua e glùtine, perseguivano le anche fuggitive della serva con carovane di maledizioni motorizzate: per il latte, per la pellicola del latte, perché s'era freddato il latte, perché s'erano sbrodolate il troppo latte sui pantaloni. Sullo scialle. Perché il caffè, che la Palmira aveva messo nel latte, era troppo lungo, o troppo corto, o troppo caldo, o troppo color clistere. Perché avevano capito che le volevano avvelenare. Dal fondo della loro millenaria poltrona, col parletico ne' ginocchi, nelle lunghe mani scheletrite, venate d'azzurro, impotenti a colpire, a giustiziare, latravano traverso occhî di zafferano il loro tenace malaugurio contro i superstiti: intenti, questi, a vuotar la calzetta d'un qualche marenghino dimenticatovi dai tempi del Prina, per arrivare a pagare, pagare, pagare: tutto quello che c'era da pagare. [L'A 463-464]

Present nonetheless in the auditorium through their 'infiniti pennacoli nepotili', the 'bisnonne' are at home, chewing the sticky paste of a biscuit, 'spappolata a mero amido'.[28] Their coffee resembles the fluid of an enema. Crossed by the light blue lines of their fragile veins, their old hands are skeletal, while their eyes express embittered malevolence. Caught in the act of turning their socks inside out looking for a few pence, their heirs are also not portrayed in a positive light.

Climbing back through the ancestral lines which start from those attending the concert, the narrator extends the borders of the representation of society given here including also those not in attendance. The picture of the musogonic society thus develops into a picture of the bourgeois society of Milan in its entirety. A picture which takes the form of a

[28] Cf. the use of the same verb *spappolare* in the definition of time as 'spappolatore' [L'A 409].

catalogue: an inventory of all of those *produced* by the factory of society, described in groups, sub-groups, and categories; recorded one after the other, as if they were goods or items.

Amongst the few singular individuals discerned in the audience there is the gynaecologist: 'E c'era per davvero lo zio ginecologo, il taumaturgo della moltiplicazione: speleologo de' più illuminati, fornitore emerito di Liliane e di Marie Luise ai ginnasi cittadini' [L'A 465]. Is this 'zio ginecologo' a 'zio' of Elsa, of the narrator, or of all of those convened at the conservatory? It does not really matter, as everyone is in some ways – genetically or not – related to the others. The bourgeois society of Milan is a single vast family; a clan ('di generazione in generazione lungo le varie intrefolature del clan' [318]), a tribe ('La tribù era al completo' [458]).

As the gynaecologist is brought on stage, the procreative process of which he is the minister is humorously referred to as a process of 'moltiplicazione'. A similar image is also evoked in *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina*, when detailing that the downstairs neighbours of the de' Marpionis do not have children:

> Gli 'inquilini di sotto' (guai a dire, in presenza di donna Giulia, i signori del piano nobile) erano un discreto paio di marito e moglie, e di ottima estrazione sociale, che avevano smarrito in una gran pena lo scontrino felice del multiplicàmini. [L'A 363]

As the term *multiplicàmini* – a passive imperative of the second-person plural form of the Latin verb *multiplico* – indicates, behind the ironic reference there is a biblical allusion. The allusion is to the passage of *Genesis* which famously reads, in its Latin version: *Crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram*.[29] As I will try to show in the next section of this

[29] *Genesis*, I, 28. The biblical exhortation is the object of an interesting discussion in *Meditazione milanese*: cf. MM 641-643. References to the biblical *multiplicamini* are also included in the 1932 writing titled *Tre storie d'amore* (cf. SGF 1 739-744: 742) and, more significantly, in a manuscript note found amongst the genetic material of *La cognizione del dolore*, where the act of reproduction is reconsidered under a bitterly ironic light, questioning if there is an actual growth or an increase of any kind when the human species

chapter, it is by making recourse to the lexical field of multiplication that an analogy is built, in *Un 'concerto'*, between reproduction and other forms of deceptive replication, pointing out the ultimate pointlessness of replicating oneself in a world burned down by time.

5.4. The multiplication of the living and the multiplication of the dead

As in *Un 'concerto*' the inventory of society moves to its final section, two individuals are brought into focus: 'il commendator Bernardini e il grand'ufficiale Usuardi, secondi sempre e distratti al saluto, data la qualità e la quantità degli affari che stanno di casa nei loro cervelli' [L'A 465]. Bernardini and Usuardi are representative of a category of administrators and professionals so absorbed in their occupations that they are incapable of enjoying themselves on any relaxing occasion. This also includes the present concert, which they attend for the sake of appearances; as a duty to perform amongst others, in accordance with a model of life geared to the zealot motto '"famiglia e lavoro":[30]

> La loro vita era esclusivamente dedita alla famiglia e al lavoro: (indefesso). Con 'applicazione' d'ogni giorno, d'ogni ora, d'ogni minuto – così dicono i virtuosi del crescendo – preparavano ognuno a se medesimo il suo funerale, il testamento al notaio, e il palpiruolo agli eredi […]. [L'A 466]

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continues by reproduction in new individuals. Cf. in the critical and commented edition by Manzotti: 'Anche alle carote si può dire: "crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram". La sua intima e più secreta perplessità, il più secreto orgoglio affioravano nella negazione d'una vita non valida: come l'agricoltore e il bravo giardiniere strappano le foglie incompiute dalla bella pianta: riserbano al seme eletto la poca, la circoscritta, la limitata terra' ('Tema 128', p. 556). On the significance of the biblical quotation in *La cognizione* and for Gonzalo in particular, see Roscioni, *La disarmonia prestabilita*, p. 111.

[30] As is also the case with Gian Maria, Elsa's husband: 'Un giocondo "tiremm innanz" gli si era insediato nell'animo al pensiero di essersi potuto svincolare dal concerto, che non lo interessava affatto, come nessun concerto del resto, ma lo agganciava ogni volta con l'arpione senso-del-dovere, rappresentato in sede lombarda e borghese dalle quattordici lire a persona che veniva a costare in abbonamento. Lire di allora. E tanta era la felicità, che prese e monologare a voce alta, d'ogni tristezza dimentico, burattinando con quelle gambe, con quel bastone, da una sala all'altra. Poi posò il bastone sul divano: e si dava lesto lesto, come poteva, delle fregatine di mani a ripetizione d'un suo speciale modello: e giurò a sé stesso per la millesima volta, nell'euforia delle otto, giurò che l'"an vintür, quas quas, s'el füdèss minga per la mia Elsa", eccetera eccetera: cioè si sarebbe liberato dal giogo dell'abbonamento' [L'A 448].

In dedicating all their energies to business, planning out their time and putting it to good use, the 'lavoratori indefessi' [L'A 466][31] are virtually preparing and arranging, as the narrator does not shrink from remarking, their own death. The fervent commitment and indefatigable dedication they show for their jobs thus emerge as absurdly sterile.

In tune with this kind of consideration, the narrator imagines what will happen upon the death of a wealthy industrial businessman pompously referred to as 'il Grand'Ufficial Dottor Ingegner Maurizio Rinaldoni Senatore del Regno' [L'A 466], as pages and pages of the *Corriere della Sera* will be occupied with memorial advertisements featuring his name, *multiplied* in print an infinite number of times. As many points of interest are found in the sections which follow, let us examine them in their entirety:

> Ventidue banche, quel giorno, otto assicurative incendi e trasporti, trentatre cotonifici e settanta società elettriche o para-elettriche fra grosse e piccine, fra madri e figlie, riempiranno del loro unìsono nerolistato colonne e colonne del Corriere della Sera. Il Grand'Ufficial Dottor Ingegner Maurizio Rinaldoni Senatore del Regno, come fosse un'ameba, si sdoppierà e moltiplicherà in una seria infinita di Maurizio Rinaldoni, Maurizio Rinaldoni, Maurizio Rinaldoni, Maurizio Rinaldoni, Maurizio Rinaldoni, da rimanerci inebetito il lattaio.
>
> Non mancheranno al pio officio né la vedova inconsolabile ovvero affranta dal dolore (a scelta), né, costernati, i figli e le figlie: Giovanna, col marito dottor Carlo Baffi, Teresa, col marito Umberto Barbisoni, e Paolina vedova Scotti; né il fratello Grand'Ufficiale Anselmo generale di brigata a riposo, né gli zii Lattuada e gli affezionati cugini Perego, Recalcati, Consonni, e Dumenìl, i nepoti, gli abbiàtici e i parenti tutti. Né, a due a due per sollievo di spesa, il ragionier tale e il dottor tal altro ch'Egli ebbe devoti collaboratori durante cinquant'anni di indefesso; e nemmeno, poverini, gli operai, gli impiegati e il personale tutto del cotonificio Spinazzola e Manusardi di Palazzolo sull'Oglio, che, associandosi al cordoglio dei famigliari, partecipano la scomparsa del loro amato Presidente; i funerali avranno luogo impresa pompe funebri Beccamordio e Tafani: o il direttore, i tecnici, le maestranze della Anonima Lombarda Lacche Isolanti ed Affini (A.L.L.I.A.), o i dipendenti della società elettrica di Cerro al Lambro, che, addolorati, ne dànno il triste annuncio. [L'A 466-467]

Close family members, friends and acquaintances, employees and business partners, banks, cotton factories, insurance and power companies, listed in unrealistically large numbers: so many are those who will be writing an obituary that the impression is that of a

[31] Suggesting that it is almost impossible to mention a word related to 'lavoro' without attaching to it the attribute 'indefesso' ('lavoratori indefessi', 'lavoro: (indefesso)'), the disegno makes fun of the rhetorical conventionality of the language spoken by the community. The same happens, as we will now see, to the language used on the occasion of funerals.

massively chaotic and also meaningless performance of pain. In examining the final scene of the last disegno where Adalgisa takes care of a statue of Saturn at the Cimitero Monumentale, Savettieri notes that the statue is presented in a state of decay and reduced to a ruin while his private parts are comically rubbed and polished off by Adalgisa: 'the sense of time passing and the pain it engenders' are thus made the object, argues Savettieri, of a 'comic deconstruction'.[32] A comic deconstruction is also at work here, affecting not the reality of death itself but rather the way in which society publicly relates to notices of death and to the emotions they evoke. In making use of expressions such as 'la vedova inconsolabile ovvero affranta dal dolore (a scelta)', the narrator ridicules the use of a language thriving on clichés and set phrases habitual in this kind of occasion. As one word seems as good as another (and can in fact be chosen in place of the other), readers are left with the belief that the verbal exhibition of pain does not adhere to reality, and that in actual fact the widow is neither 'inconsolabile' nor 'affranta dal dolore'. Likewise, the deacesed's devoted collaborators are writing together their condolences – 'a due a due per sollievo di spesa' – to save on the cost of the advertisement. The focus is not on the intensity of the pain which follows the death of a man they have worked with for fifty years, but on a trivial detail pointing out their stinginess. The display of pain becomes a masquerade where everyone just plays their part.

The main point of interest on which I would like to concentrate is, however, the endless repetition – 'moltiplicherà in una seria infinita' – of the name of the deceased across the pages of the *Corriere*, conveying the false impression that there is more than just one Maurizio Rinaldoni and presenting us with a further case of a multiplication. As an amoeba would do, the deacesed has somehow cloned himself, giving rise to an interminable series of 'Maurizio Rinaldoni, Maurizio Rinaldoni, Maurizio Rinaldoni', and so on. The

[32] Savettieri, 'Self-Reflection and Ambivalence', p. 421. See also Bonifacino, *La torre e il banzavóis*.

comparison between the unicellular reproduction of the amoeba and the proliferation of the name 'Maurizo Rinaldoni' obviously has a comical-degrading effect on his image, contributing to the process of deflation of the sense of loss mentioned above. All the more so when we consider that the only mentioned effect of this reproduction in writing is that of leaving the milkman puzzled, leaving us as well, once again, with a notion of confusion and chaos. The multiplication of the name of the deceased sounds fatuous and devoid of meaning.

The obsession with the motto '"famiglia e lavoro"' which encapsulates the scale of values at the basis of the bigoted bourgeois model of life returns in the obituaries, also made the object of a process of multiplication:

> Tutto dedito alla famiglia e al lavoro, il Grand'Ufficiale Dottor Ingegner Maurizio Rinaldoni, Presidente di qui e Amministratore Delegato di là: e più sotto 'alla famiglia e al lavoro' e ancora più sotto 'famiglia e lavoro': e dopo tre dita di nuovo 'famiglia e lavoro', 'famiglia e lavoro', 'famiglia e lavoro', 'famiglia e lavoro'. Impossibile sperare nella variante 'lavoro e famiglia', data la gerarchia degli affetti. E la conclusione di tutto sto lavorare è che i funerali avranno luogo giovedì 27, alle ore 15 precise, 'ai tre ôr', come direbbe il dottor Piva, 'partendo' da…. per arrivare a…. Eh! ce lo sappiamo pure noi, zio hàne, senza bisogno ce lo venghi a ricantare il Corrieraccio, ce lo sappiamo bene! madonna bona! dove diavolo ci toccherà di arrivare. 'Omnes eodem cogimur'. Così – perché Lui possa arrivare al Cimitero Monumentale alle ore 16 precise di giovedì 27, dopo una cantatona di quelle, dopo la silente galoppata di Libitina – disorganizzerà col codazzo de' suoi erbaggi l'arruffìo troja dei dersètt e dei trentòtt e del dirett di Parabiak – per arrivare a questo bel risultato, i fusi del rings e dei self-actings avranno piroettato in trilioni di giri, a filar miliardi di chilometri di filo: cardato le carde milioni di balle di Oklaòma e di Makò, i telai tessuto e tessuto infinita tela agli umani: tela di guendali e camicie, di innocenti fasce e di insanguinate bende, di tovaglie avvinate e di demografiche lenzuola. [L'A 467-468]

Remarking sarcastically that there is no hope to find in an announcement the variant '"lavoro e famiglia"' in place of the canonical '"famiglia e lavoro"', the narrator further underlines the narrow-mindedness and rigidity of the bourgeois code of practice regulating the life of the community. An ironically causal relationship – '*perché* Lui possa arrivare al Cimitero Monumentale alle ore 16 precise […] *per arrivare a questo bel risultato*, i fusi dei rings e dei self-actings avranno piroettato in trilioni di giri' (italics mine) – is established between the funeral and all that the deceased will have produced and accomplished by then,

as if to suggest that it is precisely because of the huge amount of his work that Rinaldoni has finally *managed* to die. An antithetical image opposes the desolate ending of the funeral, on the one hand, to the infinite metres of fabric that Rinaldoni's factories will have produced by the time of his death, on the other. The paradox of an existence devoted to the cult of work and only animated by a will to increase in prosperity and power is glaringly coming into focus. One might say, in a nihilistic perspective, *much ado about nothing*.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920),[33] Freud famously observed how the behaviour of humans is moved by two main and opposite pulsions: the pulsion of life and the pulsion of death, also expressed in the dialectics between Eros and Thanatos. Given that all the living beings at some point meet their end because of internal reasons connected to their organic-biological nature, there must be in them – together with a pulsion which keeps them alive – also a parallel pulsion which tends to a state of non-existence or inorganic existence. This state corresponds with death: the inevitable end of all life. The grotesque notion of death as a 'bel risultato' found in *Un 'concerto'* shares some similarities with the Freudian notion of death as the final achievement of life. Death will paradoxically be the final achievement for one who has spent all his life working – as Rinaldoni has done – to achieve something material and practical; a final achievement amongst many other achievements obtained by Rinaldoni with all the work endured throughout his life. This leads to a notion which is – as we will see – crucial for this disegno and also for the way in which time is conceived in the collection: all the aims or purposes one might have in his or her life will inevitably coincide with death. As note 13 in the last disegno states, 'l'essere è, da dentro, un morente: per cui la tromba la può suonare a perdifiato, ma suona invano' [L'A 560].

[33] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, vol. 18 (London: Hogarth, 1955), pp. 1-64.

The Latin *sententia* 'Omnes eodem cogimur' is a fragment of a verse taken from the end of an ode by Horace developing the typically Horatian motif of the transience of human existence:

> *omnes eodem cogimur, omnium*
> *versatur urna serius ocius*
> *sors exitura et nos in aeternum*
> *exilium impositura cumbae*.[34]

The *eodem*, the one end to which we are all drawn, is death. The Latin quotation is in contrast with its context as it follows *in clausula* a sudden emotional upsurge in the intonation of the voice of the narrator, who derides and at the same time hurls his curses against the platitudes contained in the death announcements, needlessly informing their readers that the funeral procession will end at the cemetery. And where else?, the narrator seems to ask: 'Eh! ce lo sappiamo pure noi, zio hàne' – he exclaims in a sudden falsetto – 'senza bisogno ce lo venghi a ricantare il Corrieraccio, ce lo sappiamo bene! madonna bona! dove diavolo ci toccherà di arrivare'.[35] Horace's ode is distinguished by a paraenetic dimension: since we are all bound to die, we should learn how to accept all the good and the bad that happen to us, and embrace life as it is, so as to enjoy every chance of happiness we are given. This attitude is entirely absent in the disegno. What remains is instead the

[34] *Odes*, II, 3, 25. [We all are being driven to an end, | all our lots are tossed in a urn and sooner or later | they will emerge and lead us | to the boat for eternal exile].

[35] The pronunciation of the voiceless stop consonant in the expression *zio hàne*, 'zio cane', is a phonetic phenomenon characteristic of most Tuscan dialects and generally referred to as *Tuscan gorgia*. In *Quando il Girolamo*, Girolamo informs Elsa of his retirement claiming that '"quel che ho fàa, ho fàa… Speti domà el caretón ch'el me mena a Müsòcch…"' [L'A 318]. He thus prefigures, in a way, the exclamatory remark made here by the narrator. *Caretón* is a Milanese form for 'hearse', as explained in note 22 of *Quando il Girolamo*: 'carro funebre: (gergale mil.): "corbillard"' [340]. Girolamo prefigures for himself the funeral prefigured here for Rinaldoni. With a significant difference: Girolamo will be taken to the Musocco cemetery located outside the centre of Milan, whereas Rinaldoni will be buried in the more central and patrician Cimitero Monumentale, as it befits his higher social status. Adalgisa will have to struggle to bury Carlo in the Monumentale: 'Era riuscita […] a seppellire il suo Carlo al Monumentale: mentre oscure trame e il compassionevole suggerimento di donna Eleonora tendevano a dilontanarne il feretro verso Musocco, adducendo le ragioni della "spesa", e che dopo morti "tant'e tant"…. (quelle donn e signore cattolicissime non s'avvisavano della contraddizione)' [548].

ratification of the inevitability of human destiny, as well as a vision of death as a communal, ultimate destination.

As it provides, in a gnomic style, a countermelody to the vulgarity of the humoral outburst which precedes it, the Latin quotation seems to be a bitter derision, but also introduces a note of depth and gravity, broadening and complicating the scope of the tonal strings played in the text. Albeit not lacking the biting mockery, the *sententia* comes as a solemn truth, connecting the disegno to a long-standing literary tradition devoted to a reflection on the transitory nature of human existence which finds in Horace one of its forebears and main exponents.

With the last disegno coming to an end, Adalgisa's mind goes, as we already know, to the funeral of her husband, which has a few significant traits in common with that of Rinaldoni:

> Del funerale ricordava con orgoglio i vigili municipali mobilitati in soprannumero a sbarrare e a ristabilire il circolo delle vetture e dei tram, e delle carra: (oggi denominato traffico). Rivedeva quegli elmetti di panno, vittoriosi e neri sopra il coàgulo della circolazione metropolitana, i cittadini reverenti, a capo scoperto, le biciclette paralizzate, tutta Milano costernata, nel leggere grandi scritte d'oro nei nastri delle corone: 'Al rag. Carlo Biandronni – i cugini Gnecchi', 'Al rag. Carlo Biandronni – la Società Pro Patria': e così via, in centoventitre varianti. [L'A 548-549]

Both the funerals of Rinaldoni and Carlo are characterised by traffic congestion and urban, noisy chaos, as well as plenty of floral tributes: if in *Un 'concerto'* the hearse is followed by a line of flowers ('codazzo de' suoi erbaggi'), in *L'Adalgisa* Carlo is honored with wreaths with his name printed out in gold letters 'in centoventitre varianti'.[36] Although there is no explicit lexical mention of a multiplication here, the memory of Carlo's funeral makes reference to a further case of amoebic replication, concerning this time not only the

[36] The number is repeated more than once: 'Era riuscita, dopo un funerale con centoventitre corone e dopo una disperata battaglia, a seppellire il suo Carlo al monumentale' [L'A 548].

name of the deceased but also his image, distributed – as it was habitual on such occasions – as a photograph to relatives, friends, and acquaintances:

> Fu in quell'epoca, o poco dopo, che i ritratti del povero Carlo invasero i salotti dei Cavigioli, dei Caviggioni, dei Biandronni, dei Lattuada, dei Maldifassi, dei Vigoni, dei Gnocchi, dei Gnecchi; e, d'altra parte, dei Borella, dei Ghiringhelli, dei Pessina, dei Trabattoni, dei Recalcati, ecc. ecc. ecc. ecc. Nemmeno donna Eleonora Vigoni poté rifiutare una temporanea ospitalità, fra una pantera e un Sèvres, a quel ritratto tutt'occhi, tutto naso, tutto baffi, a quel 'Guigoni & Bossi' così vivo, così balzante, così 'lui'. 'Ah l'è lü, l'è propri lü!, l'è lü, ch'el par vif!', badavano ad esclamare i marsinoni della famiglia, con vociacce di baritoni in preda a commozione, a persuasione. E siccome – dato che in quei mesi era proprio l'epoca che due o tre figliole della quinta generazione venivano a tiro anche loro – siccome stavano per entrare in scena anche i Consonni, i Carugati, i Gadda, i Roncoroni e i Brambilla, così per ogni nuovo nucleo familiare c'era già in riserva il suo bravo 'ritràtt': le quattro fidanzate potevano star tranquille: c'era un 'povero Carlo' anche per ognuna di loro, pronto. [L'A 549]

Despite the comments made on how realistic it is ('"L'è propi lü, ch'el par vif!"'), the portrait of Carlo which invades the houses of the community remains lifeless and silent. Likewise, not even one Rinaldoni remains living out of the infinite number of Rinaldoni cloned in the obituaries. Although his name is mentioned in so many pages of the 'Corrieraccio', Rinaldoni remains dead. The grotesque multiplication of the businessman is purely nominal; an illusory reproduction which has effect only in writing. In *Un 'concerto'* as well as in the last disegno, the mere repetition of the name and image of the deceased conveys a sense of fatuous redundancy and points out, in the end, their absence. The multiplication of which the deceased are made the object is futile and ineffective. It provides only an illusion of life but is in fact incapable of bringing them back.

The analepsis of the last disegno bringing the narrative back in time through Adalgisa's perspective combines with the prolepsis bringing it forward to the funeral of Rinaldoni imagined, in *Un 'concerto*', by the narrator. At a short distance from one another, the two funeral scenes strengthen the cohesion of the block formed by the three final disegni (*Un 'concerto*' *– Al Parco, in una sera di maggio – L'Adalgisa*) already interconnected by narrative consequentiality, marking in a further darker sense the final part of the collection which ends with Adalgisa at the cemetery.

Coming back to the main focus of this section: how to look at the identification of *both* the reproductive process and the recurrence of the deceased's names and images as forms of multiplication? The convergence of vocabulary expresses, in my view, an analogy which concerns the processes in question also on a substantial level: it is the incontrovertible action of time on which the narrator has drawn the attention in this very disegno on more than one occasion that proves the procreative multiplication of the living as pointless as the nominal multiplication of the dead.

Following the reference to Rinaldoni's funeral, in *Un 'concerto'* time is abruptly brought back into focus with an exclamation developing into a sequence of nominal sentences where several aspects and ways of experiencing and/or thinking about time are put in a sequence:

> E il tempo! Il tempo dorato e rosso delle certose guarderà di fra i pinnacoli e infiniti birilli oltre i pioppi, a sognati, perduti tramonti. Il tempo imperterrito degli alternatori e dei regolatori di giri, il tempo ingranato degli orologi di fabbrica e dei contatori di chilowattora, il tempo infranto e assordato dei telai e delle mitragliatrici, il tempo indaffarato e cuci-camicie ci avrà guidati a indossare la camicia della morte. Ed è il commendator Berlicche, stavolta, che gli appunta, ecco, sul risvolto della vaiana, la commenda indefettibile dell'eternità. [L'A 468]

The first dimension of time mentioned is dreamy and melancholic, involving a contemplative attitude towards life. Then, there is time as it could be perceived in a factory, a time which does not feel human: full of noises, fragmented to be as productive as possible, profited from and capitalised for industrial purposes such as producing shirts.[37] With an unsettling reversion of perspective, however, this time used to sew shirts ('tempo cuci-camicie') becomes the one which leads us to wear our own final shirt: the shirt of death ('camicia della morte'). We are once again told that we are never really using time. Taking us from a factory of society to a factory of death, the disegno uncovers and shows us the

[37] Let us not forget that the factory of society has been earlier on said to be full-time operating with three eight-hour shifts.

frightening underside of the frenetic activity of the blacksmiths at work in the metaphor of the 'disperata officina': the transition, from Elsa's perspective, from the metaphor of the workshop to that of the tavern is finally clear. In accord with the cooking image already discussed, it is time that uses and consumes us – and *not* vice versa.

The reversal of perspective is completed with a final mockery directed at the bourgeois model of a successful life. It is not uncommon for institutions to award entrepreneurs who have reached the end of their career with a public acknowledgment: here in the disegno, however, the only award the Rinaldoni can hope for, after a lifetime of work and success, is the 'commenda indefettibile dell'eternità', given to him as in a farcical sketch by no other than the devil himself, the 'commendator Berlicche'.[38] Eternal death is the award we will all receive, awarded to us by no less than the best businessman of all, the one investing in the only thing which will always be sure: that sooner or later we will reach him.

The amoebic replication of the name of the deceased is ineffective and unproductive; it is a superficial, counterfeit multiplication. The same applies nevertheless for the multiplication of the living, as life is inevitably burnt away and consumed by time just like a chicken is roasted by fire. As the grotesque multiplication of the deceased is merely nominal, so the procreative multiplication provides only the illusion of a life that *temporarily* continues from parents to offspring. Wiped out by the passing of time, one generation after the other is inescapably driven towards the Horatian *eodem*. If considered from the perspective of what Giuseppe Bonifacino calls the 'tempo "noumenico" (pensiero di un *processus* senza immagini)', the 'tempo logico combinatorio, intreccio coinvolutivo di ragioni e irragioni, di conoscenza ed inconscio', the procreative multiplication supervised by the gynaecologist is perfectly analogous to the purely nominal multiplication of Rinaldoni and Carlo. It is only from the human perspective of time – the 'tempo-parvenza (maschera

[38] Cf. GDLI, *s.v.* 'Berlicche': 'nome popolare e scherzoso del diavolo'.

dell'esperienza, delle sue rappresentazioni)' – that one multiplication and the other appear to be different.[39]

The interlacing of a perspective dominated by a notion of time as *semblance* with a perspective conveying a notion of time as *noumenon* also occurs in the two prologues of *La meccanica*, the unfinished novel which Gadda had attempted to write between 1928 and 1929 (around the time when he had also worked on the philosophical treatise *Meditazione milanese*) and which was published, in an edition unsupervised by the author, only in 1970.

Located in a liminal position and separated from chapter 1, the first prologue revolves around the idea that the physical-mathematical science of Mechanics – 'la meccanica' which inspires the title of the novel – is not able to provide an account of the inner movements concerning the life of humans ('de' tenebrosi fatti delle lor anime non ha sortilegio da predir se non pochi' [M 467]), but can significantly predict a fact which is fully understable in its physical-mechanical nature: death. At the very beginning of chapter 1, the second prologue provides a liminal space of contextualisation for the novel, introducing the theme of the destiny of death which afflicts all the livings and symbolically carries them away in a river created by the succession of their generations:

> Ma per piani aridi e illuni o nell'aggrovigliata paura delle giungle immense udrà forse taluno di là da ogni voce de' viventi come segui il torbido fiume delle generazioni a devolversi e penserà che sciabordi contro sue prode le rame e li steli dalle selve divelti; e verdastre, con i quattro piffari all'aria, le carogne pallonate de' più fetidi e malvagi animali, quali furono in vita e saran pecore, jene, sanguinolenti sciacalli, saltabeccanti scimie, asini con crine de' lioni e gran baffi: e il branco lurido e tronfio arriverà nelli approdi lutulenti a travolgersi, dove è soltanto la vanità buia della morte. [M 469]

[39] For this double notion of temporality in Gadda (time as it appears to us; time understood in its logic-abstract sense as expression of the deformation with which Gadda identifies reality) and for the polarities that this notion engenders in Gadda's narrative, see Bonifacino, *La torre e il banzavóis*, in *'Buone maniere'*, ed. by Carmosino and Rizzo, pp. 333-347. For the quotations above, see pp. 339 and 340. In the perspective of Bonifacino, the two multiplications to which my section draws attention might be reconsidered as an expression of the polar nature that time always has for Gadda. On the effect of temporal polarity in Gadda, see also Bonifacino, 'Dalla polarità alla deformazione', in *Gadda: interpreti a confronto*, ed. by Pedriali.

The multiplication of the living, which is essential for the continuation of the 'fiume delle generazioni', paradoxically coincides with a multiplication of death. The life of each individual is then part of a broader context marked by an alternation of life and death. The 'fiume delle generazioni' is, in a way, an image of life, but is nonetheless associated with a dimension of death, because it also carries with itself the corpses of those who are dead:

> Ma la sacra corrente seguiterà defluendo, con una mormorazione delle tenebre, verso lontane stelle. E resupino sulla cóltrice nera del flutto e come adagiato nel silenzio e nella solitudine della sua morte, trapasserà segno o corpo che parerà fatto di cerea luce: greve per tutte le membra della fatica mortale, di che solo avrà voluto vestir il fulgore di sua giovinezza: e avrà il capo stancamente nel flutto, il viso rivolto verso i cieli gelidi. Così composto nella sua morte parerà un fiore pallido della eternità. [M 469]

Against the broader context of eternity, the life of each individual is just an illusory snapshot.

5.5. 'Godimento, ripetizione e profitto': compulsions to repeat

In the last disegno, the beetles hunted by Carlo in the pond flee from him thanks to the hydrodynamic shape of their bodies, the result of a long history of biological evolution: 'salvi dal loro profilo ellittico o paraellittico, che offre, credo, un minimum di resistenza, che segna un optimum della forma natante' [L'A 519]. Likewise, the well-built body of Bruno cycling around the park in the two final disegni is regarded as the result of a complex process of adjustement and adaptation which goes beyond the individual and involves his entire species, requiring millennia of gradual change and entailing infinitesimal variants of possibilities: 'Anche il suo sangue, traverso i millenni, doveva aver comportato e risolto

tutta una serie di problemi infinitesimali' [520].[40] It is a creative process, understood as the expression of an impelling urge and/or tension intrinsic to all the beings that Gadda names – in his philosophical treatise *Meditazione milanese*, written in 1928 – 'euresi'.[41] Compared to the processes which have led the beetles and Bruno to be what they are now, the limited and trivial experience of reality of the Caviggionis in the actions and thoughts of their ordinary life has little, if anything, of the heuristic activity. The bourgeois habits marking their rigid way of life are explicitly associated, then, to a dimension of 'ripetizione':

> La onorevole discorsività degli atti finiti, dei bei pensieri distesi, come mutande ad asciugare al sole, non è se non ordinaria pratica, non è creazione, non è euresi, ma godimento, ripetizione e profitto. Perciò l'abitudine, la cara abitudine, 'le mie care abitudini', erano il bozzolo prediletto dove s'imbozzolavano tutti della famiglia, il N.H. Giovan Maria, e la stessa donna Eleonora, per quanto sardonica e tira-sberle. Il nobile Gian Maria, poi, neanche parlarne: stretto e rappreso nelle sue abitudini come la nave del Duca fra le gelate cataste della banchina. Perciò quei due nasi del Gianfranco e del Luciano, poveri nasoni in lotta (presente o prossima) coi verbi deponenti, avevan l'aria di significare: 'ci siamo e ci resteremo: soprattutto ci resteremo'. [L'A 520]

Indicating a notion of life governed by the assumption that things are done the way they always have been done, the word 'abitudine' is here understood in a broad sense as a mental-moral attitude rooted in received opinion and conformism – be it about the way in which food and drinks should be served or a servant should be chosen, or about what is decent to wear and what is not.[42] It is the narrow-mindedness of the bourgeois that is once

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[40] The one at work here is the perspective of *natural history* to which Carla Benedetti in particular has brought the attention: cf. Benedetti, 'La storia naturale nell'opera di Gadda'. For the tendency typical of Gadda of placing every element he takes into account into a broader context in any direction of space and time, the essential reference is still provided by Roscioni, *La disarmonia prestabilita*, in partic. ch. 2, 'Singula enumerare', pp. 57-75; ch. 3, 'Omnia circumspicere', pp. 57-77.

[41] In short, starting from a system called n defined as such by the convergence of a number of relations in it, the heuresis can be described as the broadening of those relations: as further relations clump together, n moves to $n + 1$. In the vision of reality expressed by Gadda in *Meditazione meditazione*, heuresis refers to both how we understand reality and how reality itself works moving from n to $n + 1$. Euresis indicates indeed how reality 'understands' itself, as well as how we understand it as we ourselves are part of it. As the infinite systems n that part of reality are continuously moving to their $n + 1$, reality continuously changes and progresses. Creation and auto-deformation are thus different aspects of the same heuristic principle.

[42] Just to give a couple of significant examples amongst the many possible (many others have already been mentioned throughout the thesis), cf. in *Quando il Girolamo*: 'I Cavenaghi avevano, si può dire, per legge, tramandata di generazione in generazione lungo le varie intrefolature del clan, avevano per norma assoluta e inderogabile che le persone di servizio – così umanamente accolte – a spolverare la santità un po' malinconica dei Lari, a mutar l'acqua al canarino – dovessero essere delle ragazze "fedeli ed affezionate" e

again put in the spotlight. The habits regulating the life of the Caviggionis envelop them – 'erano il bozzolo prediletto dove s'imbozzolavano tutti' – like a silk moth in its cocoon. Gian Maria's attachment to his own habits in particular is compared to the forced immobility of the vessel Stella Polare trapped in the ice of the North Pole during a polar expedition led by Italian prince and explorer Luigi Amedeo, the so-called 'Duca degli Abruzzi'. The way of life of the Caviggionis does not entail the possibility of a change or progression towards something new. As they live on something that has already been accomplished and is now set in common knowledge as a rite of the tribe, the Caviggionis are in a condition of hedonistic indulgence, if not of existential laziness. They live, as the tricolon 'godimento, ripetizione e profitto' definitely confirms, in a dimension of repetition. Repetition that is associated – as the similes of the Stella Polare and the cocoon suggest – to a condition of stasis and imprisonment, rather than to the benefits of comfort or safety.

We have seen earlier on in *Un 'concerto'* that the way in which the Milanese are committed to the propagation of their species is reminiscent of the way in which a factory works: procreation is comically and disturbingly represented as an industrial process; the young people are depicted as automata; death is the final (and grotesque) achievement of the life of Rinaldoni. We have also seen that the notion of death as the final achievement of a life of hard work can be considered in relation to the pulsion of death which is found, in a Freudian perspective, in all of the living. This is perfectly consistent with the coexistence of life and death which distinguishes the 'fiume delle generazioni' found in the second

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"delle nostre parti". Guai a chi proponesse loro di andar a pescar le domestiche in partibus infidelium' [L'A 318]; or, in the last disegno, when the narrator interprets the special care taken by Adalgisa in welcoming him and his friend to her flat as an attempt to make a good impression: 'Forse voleva solo dimostrarci, a furia di sandwichs e d'acqua dolce, che era una signora come tutte l'altre anche lei, una vera signora, come le nostre mamme e sorelle…. che anche lei "sapeva ricevere", così, come niente fosse' [539]; or else, when Eleonora and her minions talk of Adalgisa's style: 'La cantante?.. ah! la cantante!', esclamavano di lei, distratte, in un tono un po' nasale, di estrema indulgenza. Trovavano che vestiva come una 'parvenue'. | 'Se andasse dalla Teruzzi….' | 'Eh! sì…. e come cantante….' | 'Del Fossati….', sibilava annoiata la papessa. Gli occhi delle belle si incrociavano in un sottinteso di pudore e di carità' [546].

prologue of *La meccanica*: a river created by the reproductive multiplications of the living and yet entailing, for each individual, a destiny of death. The Freudian theory can now come in useful by offering us a further tool for our analysis: the concept of the *compulsion to repeat*.[43] The compulsion to repeat is defined by Freud as an unconscious and irrational tendency which leads the individual to a (generally painful) situation, which is a re-occurence or a reenactment of a previous (generally traumatic) experience. The compulsion to repeat is linked to the principles of psychic balance/economy and homeostasis: it is preferable for the psyche to simply repeat an already apprehended or established pattern, albeit painful and potentially dangerous in the long term, rather than embracing a change.

The link established between society and a factory can now be definitely confirmed in the form of a structural, core similarity: family and work form an inseparable pair not only because they are part of the motto which recurs in the obituaries, but more significantly because both are the expression, then, of a *compulsion to repeat*. As the great-grandmothers mentioned in the catalogue of *Un 'concerto'* vicariously attend the concert through their 'infiniti pinnacoli nepotili', so the list of items produced by Rinaldoni's factories includes 'infinita tela': procreation and industrial-economic production/accumulation of wealth are understood in similar terms, because the Milanese – and particularly the bourgeois gathering for the concert – are represented as a collective body, an organism attempting to *repeat itself* in different ways and forms.

The attachment of the Caviggionis to their habits expresses their insistent need to affirm and preserve their own selves in the world: 'Perciò', as is stated in the disegno, 'quei due nasoni del Gianfranco e del Luciano […] avevan l'aria di significare: "ci siamo e *ci resteremo*: soprattutto *ci resteremo*"'. On another day, Gianfranco and Luciano will also

[43] Cf. especially *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through* [1914], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, vol. 12 (London: Hogarth, 1950), pp. 146-156.

take part in the reproductive cycle. Their noses will pass on to their future descendants, as theirs were passed on to them by Carlo:

> Carlo, con ali ai piedi lungo i sentieri della notte, aveva seguitato l'indizio di quell'odorino: giunto sull'epicentro si chinò, mettendo avanti la lanterna. Il naso, che aveva trasmesso ai famigli moltiplicato per due, gli era stato fedele in misura maggiore d'ogni previsione. [L'A 524-525]

The shape of Carlo's nose, passed on to Gianfranco and Luciano, is *multiplied* by two.[44] There is no real creation in the notion of generation and in the model of society and economy attributed to the bourgeois community of which the Caviggionis and Carlo are members. Production and reproduction are both acknowledged as expressions of an impulse intrinsic to the kind of society represented in the disegni: that of securing one's own presence in the world by means of offspring (i.e, procreative reproduction) or of things, money, and power (i.e., production of items/accumulation of wealth). If having children only means repeating oneself in the world through them, the Caviggionis and the other families do not put in practice the heuristic principle at the basis of the idea of reality conjured up in the *Meditazione*; they merely struggle to establish and secure their present and future existence in the world.

Consumed and frustrated by time, the multiplications of the living are deemed equivalent to the amoebic multiplication of the dead because both are understood as attempts at repetition and are as such in conflict with the axiom of temporal unrepeatability postulated in the last disegno. The main consequence of the acknowledgement that time is unrepeatable is that the bourgeois caught in the act of repeating themselves are found culpable of living in a paradoxical condition. As their way of life is in opposition to its first law, the bourgeois

[44] As is also the case with Carlo, Gianfranco e Luciano are often identified for their nose: 'li guardò sorridendo, quei poveri nasoni' [L'A 528].

misunderstand time. They incongruously strive to prolong and extend themselves in a dimension that is marked instead by loss.

The criterion of truth against which the satirical condemnation is expressed in the collection lies precisely in the recognition of the unrepeatable nature of time and of its character of semblance beyond which all the multiplications attempted to by society are equally unavailing. Rather than being simply given as a fact, this criterion, which presides over the satirical discourse and orientates it towards a form of judgement, is worked out in and by the text itself, as the social catalogue of *Un 'concerto'* discussed above starts with a parallelism between society and a factory and ends with a scornful reference to the factory of death. It is only at the end of the disegno that the narrator affirms clearly that the Gnocchi sisters are ridiculous: he also significantly adds, however, that they were ridiculous even before entering the auditorium:

> Una delle sorelle Gnocchi, poi, nelle diatribe e nello stiaccia-stiaccia dell'uscita, le si rivoltò la penna di gallo cedrone da Sud-Sud-Est verso Nord-Nord-Ovest: ma con ciò non era più ridicola di prima. [L'A 470].

It is mainly upon the axiom of temporal unrepeatability that their ridiculousness is founded and that their mere existence has – as Elsa herself senses when listening to the chaos of the orchestra – something of the *disharmonious*, both before and after the concert.

But it is now necessary to point out an importance difference. One of the two disegni of the collection derived from *La cognizione del dolore*, *Strane dicerie contristano i Bertoloni*, contains one of the best known – and also most beautiful – passages of *La cognizione*. In the context of the collection, and in light of the considerations made so far on the issue of generation and on how the vital multiplication that is reproduction is associated with a dimension of death, this passage acquires special meaning:

Oh! lungo il cammino delle generazioni, la luce!.... che recede, recede…. opaca…. dell'immutato divenire. Ma nei giorni, nelle anime, quale elaborante speranza!.... e l'astratta fede, la pertinace carità. Ogni prassi è un'immagine,… zendado, impresa, nel vento bandiera…. La luce, la luce recedeva…. e l'impresa chiamava avanti, avanti, i suoi quartati: a voler raggiungere il fuggitivo occidente…. E dolorava il respiro delle generazioni, de semine in semen, di arme in arme. Fino allo incredibile approdo. [L'A 401 = CDD 604]

As Emilio Manzotti observes in the commented edition of *La cognizione*,[45] the light 'recede' and is 'opaca' because the individuals who are part of the 'cammino delle generazione' – an image that is closely related to that of the 'fiume delle generazioni' seen in the second prologue *La meccanica* – are excluded from the possibility of remaining on the 'cammino'. *As individuals* upon whom the 'cammino' relies and is founded, they must necessarily die, so as to make it possible for the 'cammino' to continue. The light 'withdraws' and 'becomes dim' in their life, then, because the individuals are inexorably swallowed up by the *eodem*, whilst it is only the 'cammino' that is allowed to continue. The adversative 'Ma' introduces a contrast: although they are condemned to a dimension of death, day by day ('nei giorni') the living nonetheless strive to carry through the chores and tasks that they deem important and which often require hard work and sacrifice ('quale elaborate speranza!... e l'astratta fede, la pertinace carità!'). In spite of the pain they must endure, the living strive to live their lives until the final 'incredibile approdo', which we can ultimately identify with death. I agree with what is claimed by Carla Benedetti about this passage in *La cognizione*:

sebbene destinati a morire, nelle anime degli individui e nei loro giorni non viene mai meno l'impulso ad agire, a perseguire qualche opera che costi impegno e fatica, spinti da speranza, fede e carità. È questo che genera stupore e commozione nel malinconico occhio che qui sta osservando il mondo.[46]

There is indeed a vibrant note of compassion in observing the 'operosità degli uomini che per qualche misterioso congegno della meravigliosa macchina naturale riescono a non

[45] Manzotti in the critical and commented edition of *La cognizione*, pp. 97-98.
[46] Benedetti, 'La storia naturale in Gadda'.

pensare alla morte, e a vincere così l'accidia che quel pensiero inevitabilmente produrrebbe'.[47]

It is very significant, I think, that this passage is also included, as part of *Strane dicerie*, in *L'Adalgisa*, where it provides a new take on the issue of generation and on the connection between the themes of biological reproduction and death. The incongruity of the condition of the Milanese community does not lie in reproduction *per se*, nor in the physiological impetus which leads from one generation to the other; the problem is instead represented by the very peculiar notion of reproduction which is acknowledged as distinctive of the community: the problem is that reproduction is mainly understood by the community as an impossible form of self-preservation. Such a concept of reproduction is in many respects similar to Gadda's concept of what is 'male', as understood by Benedetti herself in her analysis of the passage of the 'cammino' in *La cognizione*: 'Il male nasce non dalla limitatezza di ogni punto di vista, ma dal suo fissarsi in una postazione rigida, come tale nociva alla vivente euresi'.[48] *Evil* can be described, in other words, as the static sclerotization of one single viewpoint amongst the many others that are also possible. The comparison established between the replication of the name of the dead Rinaldoni and the replication of the amoeba can be enlightening in this regard: since the single-celled amoebae reproduces itself via asexual reproduction, its offspring inherits the full set of genes of its single parent, of which it is an almost perfect replica. The unreasonableness of the community represented mainly lies in *this* kind of reproduction, where giving life is understood as an act of mere duplication: 'i mali, tutti i mali sociali contro cui Gadda si scaglia', as Benedetti remarks, 'sono la conseguenza di un fissarsi del punto di vista'.[49]

[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid. Cf. also Gabriele Frasca, 'La lingua del sì e quelle del no', in *Gadda: interpreti*, ed. by Pedriali, pp. 49-84, where Frasca dwells on the theme of the 'fantasma generativo' (p. 54).

Voicing Elsa's perspective before the beginning of the concert, the narrator had represented the community unanimously tending towards one purpose: 'Quella gente affocava i suoi atti verso un fine'. The 'fine' mentioned then was to be interpreted in reference to the procreative mission that each individual fulfils within the 'fabbrica'/'fucina' of society. If we have earlier understood 'fine' in reference to the common aim which brings the social body together, 'fine' can now be reinterpreted in its meaning of 'ending' or 'conclusion'. Throughout the disegno, the 'fine' takes the form of the *eodem*: death.

In one of the notes attributed to a fictitious commentator[50] of *Tendo al mio fine*, the opening piece of *Il castello di Udine* (1934), Gadda himself plays on the meaning of the word 'fine':

> Riscontro del Ns. a un referendum indetto da 'Solaria' nel 1931, circa le 'tendenze' degli scrittori interrogati. Fine: ma. nell'it. class. Anche al significato di termine; e cioè di morte. Amb. Dunque, per 'morte' e per 'finalità'. Il Ns. si dà l'aria di rispondere al referendum, ma devolve la pagina ad espressione lir. della propria amarezza. [CDU 122]

The occasion for the writing of *Tendo al mio fine* is given by a 'referendum' asking writers about the 'tendenze' which animate their poetics. Taking this as a starting point, Gadda writes a piece in which he essentially remarks that any aim or purpose he may tend to as a writer[51] will ultimately coincide with the end of his life. Following this key idea, Gadda represents himself as he walks through his life and towards death: 'andando verso l'orrida solitudine mia' [CDU 119]; 'seguiterò il mio cammino solitario' [CDU 122]; 'il termine de' miei pochi passi' [CDU 122]. The key image of the 'cammino solitario' stands

[50] The fictitious commentator of *Il castello di Udine* is Feo Averrois. For the practice of writing notes in Gadda and for the notes, see ch. 4.1.

[51] Cf. 'Tendo a una brutale deformazione dei temi che il destino s'è creduto di proponermi […]' [CDU 119], 'Tendo a dare di questa devoluzione [i.e, life] un segno, tenue e forse indecifrato algoritmo in sul marmoreo muro della legge' [CDU 199], 'Sarò il poeta del bene e della virtù, e il famiglio dell'ideale' [CDU 199], 'Tendo a una sozza dipintura della mandra e del suo grandissimo e grossissimo intelletto' [CDU 120], and so on.

as a parallel and yet different version of the 'cammino delle generazioni' seen in the passage of *Strane dicerie*. Gadda tends towards an artistic-literary 'fine' which coincides with death, as perfectly epitomized in the title of his text. The society of Milan tends towards a procreative 'fine' without realising that such 'fine' is also a 'fine' of death.[52]

If the procreative multiplication supervised by the gynaecologist of *Un 'concerto'* is as futile as the amoebic multiplication of the dead, it will now be clearer why eternity sneers in the tavern of time where humans are shown to consume their own 'litruccio annacquato'. 'La *conclusione* di tutto sto lavorare è che i funerali avranno luogo giovedì 27, alle ore 15 precise': 'fine' and 'conclusione' come to coincide, as every aim or purpose is ultimately disclosed as a form of end. It will not be by chance, then, that the collection of disegni itself ends at the Monumentale, nor that the narrator wonders if those attending the concert of 'domenica, 28 aprile, 1931, alle ore 16 precise' are the residents of a cemetery, free to walk outside of it as in an anticipation of the day of judgement:[53]

> O forse, data l'occasione del Bartholdi-Stangermann, il nostro monumentale cimitero aveva spalancato gli avelli, i granitici avelli: dischiuso le sue blindate cassaforti: come accadrà nel dì del concerto novissimo, al primo fa-bemolle degli oricalchi. Aveva risputato verso el vintiquàter, da scoperchiati forzieri, l'Andromèda caparbia di quelle indispensabili novantenni. 'Ego sum resurrectio et vita'. Per quanto arduo possa apparire, anche ai tecnici di più perizia, uno scoperchiamento del genere. [L'A 458]

As we realise that the time we perceive is a semblance of the deformation of reality, those attending the concert are in fact already entombed in the Monumentale. The sneer of

[52] *Un 'concerto'* turns out to be, then, an important centre of convergence for a few key strands of thought in Gadda's writing which connect together the two prologues of *La meccanica*, *Tendo al mio fine*, and the passage mentioned above from *La cognizione*.

[53] And let us not forget that further on in *Un 'concerto'* the concert takes place instead 'Alle ore 15 precise!' [L'A 453]. This change may be the result of a lapsus, inaccuracy, or distraction, but is in line with the overlapping of the image of the concert with those of the procession, the funeral, and the cemetery. On lapsus and their significance, see Valentino Baldi, 'Errori, dimenticanze, menzogne. Funzione-lapsus, modelli onirici e statuto del referente nel *Pasticciaccio*', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario* ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, pp. 159-190.

eternity is the sneer of the narrator-satirist, who looks at human folly, acknowledges it as such, and finds it ridiculous.[54]

5.6. The three different times included in the collection

Un 'concerto' allows us to face two ways of considering time: the human notion of time, on the one hand, which corresponds to a notion of time as *semblance*; and the notion of time from the perspective of eternity, on the other, which corresponds to a notion of time as *noumenon*, something which remains essentially unfathomable and ungraspable. As we have also seen in chapter 4, dedicated to the authorial notes which are found in the collection, the disegni altogether present us with three *different times*: 'tre strati temporali differenti', as Savettieri puts it, which coexist in the text.[55]

In chronological order, the first time is presented in the form of what Savettieri calls 'un tempo anteriore':[56] *past perfect*; a *plus-que-parfait* past, which comes before another past. This past perfect precedes, in the years between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the traumatic experience of World War One alluded to on several occasions in both the narrative and the notes. It is the time of the birth and childhood of the 'Autore', as we are

[54] I do not agree, then, with Guido Lucchini as he claims (see my introduction, section 2) that the presentation of the world narrated as distant and lost – a process especially but not exclusively carried out in the notes – undermines from within the satire practiced in the collection. On the contrary, I think that the awareness of the distance which separates the 'nobili cose del passato' [L'A 518] from the present day in some ways increases the intensity of the satirical attack, adding up to it a tragic note. Cf. Lucchini, *L'istinto della combinazione*, p. 93. Cristina Savettieri also reflects on the crucial role played in the collection by the temporal hiatus which separates the objects narrated from the one who narrates, but she does not see this hiatus as an insuperable obstacle for an understanding of the text as satirical. Cf. Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, pp. 210-211. The next section of this chapter is fully dedicated to a discussion of the different temporal layers found in the collection. I will come back to the intersections between time and satire in the conclusions of my thesis.

[55] Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, p. 206.

[56] Ibid.

informed in note 54 of *Un 'concerto*: 'Ai dì dell'Autore (1895-1905) le balie degli agiati milanesi portavano ancora la raggiera a spilloni d'argento' [L'A 479]. It is the time in which the Milanese dialect is the only one heard in the streets; when Girolamo, the parquet cleaner who retires in the second disegno, is young and rampant, and not yet old and tired of coughing:

> Quando viceversa in un battito violento, pieno, [Girolamo] aveva sussultato di certi occhi, lontani anni! Nelle vie gaie, interloquite dal vecchio dialetto. Aveva sognato, sussultato, a ogni incrocio, magari con un sacco sulla spalla, nelle interminabili crociere stradali, tra le voci del vivente dialetto, dell'unico:[21] e maggio recava sorbetti a' lattai, e il cader d'agosto, agli 'ortolani', i cocòmeri. [L'A 317]
>
> [21] 'Del vivente dialetto, dell'unico'. Allora unico (1895-1890), quando per le vie di Milano non risuonavano ancora tutti i dialetti d'Italia, come nel 1928. [L'A 340]

It is the time in which Eleonora Vigoni of *Al Parco, in una sera di maggio* is a young woman in step with the time, and not an old lady who moves around on a carriage attended by a servant in livery.[57] This past perfect also precedes the town plan which causes the Cavenaghis' move from via Santa Maria Fulcorina to via Pontaccio, and is marked in its turn by the succession of other town plans:

> Il 'nuovo' piano (altri ce n'erano stati), anticipando la demolizione del nümer desdòtt in Santa Maria Fulcorina, aveva sloggiato aequo pede non soltanto la nobiltà del primo nobile e i più insigni scarafaggi dell'ammodernato secondo (o terzo), e gli avvocati e i ragionati e relative dattilografe del mezzanino, ma infine la bisunta borghesia bottegaia, lanii, fartores, che con la sparizione dei lumi a gas, dopo il 1905, era arrivata a penetrare il fortilizio gentilesco; un cantone, al pianterreno, di quella vetusta bicocca. [L'A 325]

As clarified in the nostalgic description of the 'cantone' which follows the passage above, Milan is very different, at the time of the past perfect, from what it is when the Cavenaghis move to via Pontaccio.

[57] Cf. L'A 483-491.

The second time found in the collection is indeed that of the main narrated events: the diegetic time ('quello del tempo della storia, ambientata all'inizio degli anni Trenta').[58] It is what I would call – returning to the metaphor of the grammatical tenses used above – a *simple past*, following a more distant and now finite past, and spanning the 1920s and 1930s: between, that is, the end of World War One and the outbreak of World War Two. Girolamo's retirement takes place – as stated in note 21 (see above) – in 1928, providing a reference for the dating of other events presented as more or less concomitant with it (the failure of the Banca di Milano, the pregnancy of the servant Maria, the arrival on the scene of the former butcher's boy Bruno, the move of the Cavenaghis caused by the implementation of a new town plan,[59] and so on). Likewise, in *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina,* the de' Marpionis move to via Spiga in 1920 and their children are all born over the course of that decade. The concert attended to by the musogonic society dates to April 1931, and it is only after the concert that Elsa sees Adalgisa at Parco Sempione.

The third time is the *present* in which the act of narration occurs: a time introduced in the form of 'oggi' and frequently provided in the notes with the specification '(1943)'.[60] The present is the time when the narrator looks at the *pasts* lying behind him: the simple past of the narrated events (the diegetic time), *and* the past perfect that opens up behind the simple past, at the turn of twentieth century, prior to World War One. While the disaccord of the present from the past is insistently remarked upon in the notes where the 'Autore' clarifies that things are different *today* from what they used to be, the distinction between a

[58] Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', p. 206.

[59] Not explicitly dated, the town plan mentioned in *Quando il Girolamo* is most probably to be taken as an allusion to the town plan of 1926, which contributed, together with that of 1934, to the re-shaping of Milan in line with a fascist vision of urban spaces. Cf. Erik Morsink, 'Il nuovo piano regolatore, la casa, la vita intima. Lettura di alcuni "disegni" dell'*Adalgisa*', *Nuova rivista di letteratura italiana*, 5, 1 (2002), pp. 115-159.

[60] It is in fact the time in which 'il glossatore è situato': Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', p. 206.

simple past and one before it may be less noticeable, but is nonetheless in action and perceivable in the narrative, in special relation to the postures adopted by the narrator.[61]

Adalgisa is made the object of narration as she is located in the diegetic past which corresponds to the 1930s, when she meets with Elsa and talks with her in Parco Sempione. Through the recollection of her past life with Carlo, she also allows us to look into the past perfect which precedes the main narrative events and where her youth and her love story with Carlo are located. It is in this past perfect that the narrator takes the stage and becomes a character more than marginally involved in the narrated matter, as we have seen in chapter 3. *L'Adalgisa* as a collection thus offers itself to us as a work inhabited by different *notions of times*, different *times*, and different – and yet intertwined – *memories* as well.

5.7. Memory and meaning

As an act of mental, inner recreation of a past experience, memory can be understood as another form of repetition. In the case of Adalgisa, this is also made evident by the fact that the one narrated in the last disegno is not the first time that Adalgisa tells the story of her life to Elsa: 'Dopo alcune battute d'apertura, il discorso lingueggiò rapido, simile a fiamma in pagliaio, dato, poi, che Elsa era la quarantesima volta che lo ascoltava: e i riferimenti base li aveva oramai a memoria' [L'A 528]. The question with which I would like to close this chapter is, then, the following: lingering over her past life with Carlo and her hopes of

[61] The stratification of different temporal layers in the city is perfectly encapsulated, just to give a further example, in the following passage of *Quando il Girolamo*: 'Il cantone è poi quello che dava sul già vicolo dei Fighini, *in oggi* scomparso, *allora* e *in passato* il più dimestico a tutta la maturità delle Cinque Vie' [L'A 325; italics mine]. If 'oggi' is the time of narration (the year '1943', as specified in many notes), 'allora' is the main narrated past, when the town plan alters the Cinque Vie district, while 'in passato' refers the past perfect which precedes the narrated past. I will come back in these conclusions on how time is inseparably connected to space in *L'Adalgisa*.

happiness, is Adalgisa entrapped in a paradoxical compulsion to repeat like the society around her? Is memory a form of vain repetition, like the amoebic multiplications discussed above?

Although she is in some ways ensnared in her thoughts of the past, comfortably enveloped in them as the Caviggionis are cocooned in their habits, Adalgisa looks into the 'irrepetibile tempo' for a possible answer to the question of the meaning of her own existence: it is in the dimension of time that Adalgisa finds 'la ragione e il senso del suo sopravvivere' [L'A 548]. Adalgisa may appear to us entrapped in the past like the Stella Polare is entrapped by the polar ice, but she is also significantly associated with a theme of *search for meaning* ('ritrovava […] il senso'): it is this very pursuit of meaning that differentiates her from many other characters represented.

As Savettieri observes, 'è nel passato, nel ricordo che si fa narrazione, che l'esistenza trova significato, riandare indietro con la memoria è un tentativo di ricomposizione del senso della propria vicenda individuale: ciò che nel tempo diventa "irrepetibile" torna a ripetersi nel ricordo'.[62] The cult of Carlo's memory that the widow Adalgisa practices shares some features with the amoebic multiplication of Rinaldoni: let us consider the hyperbolical emphasis placed by Adalgisa on the number of floral wreaths following the coffin, or the way in which the houses of the community are invaded by copies of his funeral portrait. However, Adalgisa's immersion in the past does not relieve her from experiencing loss and pain, but makes her even more exposed to such emotions. Albeit mixed with conventional and comical-grotesque exhibitions of pain, a high concept of memory is condensed, I think, in Adalgisa. To recount one's own past is a way to fictitiously reenact it, but it is also a way to better understand and process it. To tell a story out of the past – as Adalgisa does when

[62] Cristina Savettieri, 'Il racconto del tempo nella *Cognizione del dolore*', *Italianistica*, 31, 2-3 (2002), pp. 237-252: 250.

she tells Elsa and us readers about her past life – is in Freudian terms a way to make *sense* out of it. In contrast with the forms of repetition in which the bourgeois are engaged where no trace of the heuristic activity is found, memory also is, for Adalgisa, a *creative* form of repetition.

As Lucio Lugnani suggests, Adalgisa and the narrator are not so distant from one another in terms of how they relate to memory. If the disegno dedicated to her is in great part founded on her memory as a character, it is through the memory of the narrator himself that the narrated world is sometimes presented to us in its entirety.[63] To remember is to *recreate* with memory: that is essentially the only thing that a narrator aware of the unrepeatable nature of time such as that of *L'Adalgisa* can do. The narrative act coincides with an act of meaning. For both the narrator and Adalgisa, fabulation takes on a Freudian creative or recreative function. The satirical condemnation does not take the contours of a nihilistic and total derision of reality also because *there is* something that the narrator can cling to: memory. It is in this sense that memory works as a creative form of repetition not only for Adalgisa but more in general in the whole collection: a positive centre of meaning in the face of the destructive power of time.[64] What the narrator finds in the eyes and moustache of Girolamo Zavattari in the second disegno can thus be referred to himself as well: 'Lo sguardo de' grigi e dolci occhi, velati d'una sorta di lacrima, e i gran baffi ambrati pioventi sulla rassegnata pace dei settantadue, dicevano la pietà del rammemorare, e dell'accettare il destino' [L'A 316].

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[63] Lugnani, *Del tempo*, p. 99.

[64] I therefore agree with Stellardi as he argues for the constitutional role that memory has in the collection and in relation to the theme of *caritas*. According to Stellardi, it is this positive and creative way of intending memory – of which literature is in some ways a product – that distinguishes the disegni derived from *Un fulmine* from the disegni derived from *La cognizione*, where memory has instead a destructive outcome and there is no space for any form of *caritas*. The eyes of Gonzalo are only fixated on the grotesque representation of society by which he feels besieged and overwhelmed. In the world of *La cognizione* there is no possibility of finding in the past a comfort or an answer to one's own questions. Cf. Stellardi, 'La città che dispare'. For the role of memory in *La cognizione* as opposed to that of *L'Adalgisa*, cf. also Savettieri, 'Il racconto del tempo nella *Cognizione*', pp. 250-252. In my conclusions, I will come back to how the encounter between different notions of memory creates in the collection a satirical meaning of differential nature.

Conclusions

It is now necessary to return to the questions from which this thesis began, and, from this retrospective viewpoint, reframe the results of the above analyses of *L'Adalgisa* within a broader panorama. Special attention will be given to the category of satire which has represented a central thread in my thesis. I will try to show, in particular, how my research around this category helps us better comprehend *L'Adalgisa* as a work on its own and its significance in Gadda's production, as well as the importance of satire as a form of expression for Gadda in more general terms.

1. Time and the shadows of connection

The last chapter of my thesis has shown that an equivalence is established between the reproductive and economic multiplications of the living and the amoebic multiplications of the dead (in particular, *commendator* Rinaldoni, in *Un 'concerto' di centoventi professori*, and Adalgisa's husband, Carlo, in the last disegno). These multiplications appear different only if seen from the human perspective of time: what Giuseppe Bonifacino calls the 'tempo-parvenza'. If we shift our perspective – if we understand things through the *other* side of time, the 'tempo "noumenico"', a time understood in its logical sense as one of the deformations of the ever-changing system of systems that is reality[1] –, we will see that the multiplications of the living are in fact not so different from those of the dead. This is the

[1] Cf. Bonifacino, 'La torre e il banzavóis', in *'Buone maniere'*, ed. by Carmosino and Rizzo (already mentioned in ch. 5.4).

truth that unfolds throughout *Un 'concerto'*, putting an end to the grotesque catalogue of the musogonic society with the equally grotesque sequence on Rinaldoni's death and funeral.

If *Un 'concerto'* allows us to face two different *notions* or *aspects of time*, the disegni altogether present us – as we have also discussed in the previous chapter – with at least three different *times*: three different temporal layers, as Cristina Savettieri defines them.[2] Times which appear in some ways distinct from one another and which are nonetheless made to coexist in the collection, almost as a demonstration of the ultimate logical unity of the different temporal semblances we experience from our human perspective. We have the preterite past or past perfect which precedes the main narrated events. We have the simple past which corresponds to the events narrated and spans the 1920s and 1930s. We have, finally, the present – 'oggi', 'oggi (1943)' – which is the time when the one who narrates looks back at the pasts lying behind him.

The narrator seems more critical of Milan and its inhabitants on the level of the main narrated events, while his personal and emotional involvement – which can represent an obstacle, as we have seen, to an interpretation of the disegni in a satirical direction – occurs more conspicuously on the level of the time which comes before it: the past perfect. This is what happens, for example, in the last disegno when the narrator is presented as a character more than marginally involved in the story: in pre-war Milan, the narrator depicts himself as a young student of the Politecnico, even the member of a 'combriccola' of friends who are – just like him – part of the bourgeois milieu represented in derisive and critical terms elsewhere in that same disegno and in the collection. The urban landscape he looks at as he leans out of the window – *his* 'svergolata Milano' [L'A 537] – is not the one which is in the background of the events concerning the Cavenaghis/Caviggionis and the de' Marpionis,

[2] Savettieri, 'Gadda intempestivo', in *Carlo Emilio Gadda. Un seminario*, ed. by Baldi and Savettieri, p. 206: 'tre strati temporali differenti'.

but is the one of Milan at the turn of the twentieth century, when the narrator is a student and has not yet served as a soldier.[3]

Likewise, the description of the 'cantone' of Cinque Vie mentioned above is a description of a place which no longer exists as such at the time of the diegesis, and belongs instead to the past perfect. The 'anni' referred to in the following passage taken from that description are not the ones when the Cavenaghis move, rather they are part of a more distant, remote time:

> In quegli anni della sua prece postrema il vecchio campaniluzzo de' pauperi, il protomartire delle persecuzioni edilizie, lasciava ancora cadere sull'asfalto notturno i dodici goccioloni di bronzo, fesso: le palpebre della vecchia notte assonnata si richiudevano, a quel rintocco, nella pietà e nel silenzio: come nelle due carezze del pensiero di Dio. Un tram vuoto lo si sentiva rotolare al galoppo, verso le suburbane rimesse. D'un passo ritardatario la cadenza si scandiva netta, si smarriva quale d'esametro in fuga, sul lastrico. E la notte, nel disco del suo tacere, incideva ancora la mitezza stentorea di quel così parsimonioso 'picchiettato', d'un così laborioso pipì. È il relitto degli anni. Anni, figli degli anni! Di quando la Gilda singhiozzò la prima volta, alla Scala, e Don Enrico Tazzoli pencolò muto, col collo nel laccio: a Belfiore. È la Milano che dispare: e quale la lasceremo non era, e qual'era neppur più la ricordo: la forme d'une ville – change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel. [L'A 325-326]

Distinguished by a lyrical-suffused quality, the description is moved by an affectionate warmth and conveys a form of nostalgia. Referenced without any parodical intention, the quotation from Baudelaire's *Le cygne* recognises how quickly a city – Paris, in *Les Fleurs du mal*, and Milan, in the 'disegni milanesi' – changes throughout time: an allegory of how things are inexorably swept away by the erosive passing of the years ('relitto degli anni').[4] As we can see, while the dimension of the simple past and that of the past

[3] Alluded to as a traumatic experience, World War One has a fundamental significance in distinguishing the past perfect, from the simple past. On this and role of war as watershed experience for the narrative subject, cf. Savettieri, 'Self-Reflection and Ambivalence in Gadda's *L'Adalgisa*', pp. 418-419; Lugnani, *Del tempo*, pp. 92-99.

[4] Stellardi, 'La Milano che dispare dell'*Adalgisa*', observes that here we have 'quella che potremmo definire la dichiarazione d'intenti, o addirittura la professione di fede, non dell'intero volume, ma di una sua metà abbondante'. Milan and its inhabitants, Stellardi also maintains, are explicitly made the object of 'un sentimento indubitabilmente nostalgico, di uno sguardo compassionevole e partecipe. Ed è la stessa gente e la stessa città che il medesimo narratore, a distanza di poche pagine, irride o fustiga impietosamente, e talvolta pesantemente'. It will not be irrelevant to note here, in passing, that Stellardi also suggests that Baudeaire's *Tableux Parisiens* might have provided an inspiration for the subtitle 'disegni milanesi' chosen by Gadda. Cf. Giuseppe Stellardi, 'Fragments of (Urban) Space and (Human) Time: Gadda's Poetics (with Baudelaire and

perfect are both presented as out of reach from the standpoint of the present, the narrator's involvement seems to become stronger and deeper in the past perfect. The narrator becomes more involved as he moves farther away from the present along the axis of temporality.[5]

However, as has been specified on many occasions in this thesis, the narrator does not conceal his connections with the world he narrates even at the time of the main narrated events. On the contrary, he claims he knows the de' Marpionis (he meets them 'nel 1927' [L'A 437], one year before the birth of their male heir, Gilberto Gaudenzio), and that he is *now* in contact with other figures – direct witnesses of what he narrates – who share information of a different kind with him ('così mi garantivano, e mi garantiscono ancora oggi, all'Ufficio Sviluppo della mia banca' [L'A 309]). What is more, throughout the disegni he always includes himself in the references to the community through the use of the first-person plural subject pronoun 'noi' and 'noi milanesi', regardless of the time in question: be it the distant past perfect when he was a student, or the simple past when the main narrated events take place. Although there is no doubt that his involvement becomes fuller on the level of the past perfect, the narrator is then in some ways entangled in the narrated matter *also* on the level of the simple past. How to make sense of this contradiction?

The narrative 'I' in the disegni set in or near Milan – the disegni derived from *Un fulmine sul 220*, as well as *Claudio disimpara a vivere a vivere* and *Quattro figlie ebbe e ciascuna regina* – is poised between two forces: one leads him to exhibit his relationship with the world he talks about; the other keeps him at distance, and brings out, without

Benjamin)', in *Cultural Reception, Translation and Transformation from Medieval to Modern Italy: Essays in Honour of Martin McLaughlin*, ed. by Guido Bonsaver, Brian Richardson and Giuseppe Stellardi (Oxford: Legenda, 2017), pp. 410-442.

[5] The same applies, in some ways, to Adalgisa, who becomes a widow in 1921, only after a few years of marriage (marriage which takes place sometimes between 1913 or 1914 and 1921). In the years preceding the war when she was an opera singer, Adalgisa was happy and full of hopes for the future. It is after her marriage – and the death of Carlo – that she experiences how the bourgeois environment she has married into is narrowminded and bigot. Also for Adalgisa, then, pre-war Milan appears to be different from the city she experiences at the time when Elsa meets her, in the 1930s, at Parco Sempione.

leniency, the grotesque nature of such world. Starting from Fredric Bogel's theoretical considerations, this thesis argues that the satire practiced in these disegni functions as a rhetorical mechanism of difference creation where connections and similarities are reprocessed, rather than dismissed or dispelled. As the narrator-satirist represents the social collective (i.e., his satirical object) in such a way to present it as *other*, traces of the similarity between himself and his object – what Bogel calls the 'shadow of connection' – are found nevertheless. At times evanescent or imperceptible, other times these traces become obvious, making it difficult for readers to decipher the satirical attack.

If, on the one hand, the mockery of the bourgeois studying languages in *I ritagli di tempo* is mitigated by the admission that the 'autore di queste note' [L'A 472] has also unsuccessfully tried to learn German, on the other hand, the moment in which the 'I' in the last disegno reveals himself does not at all result in a statement of full integration into the milieu of which he is part. On the contrary, as we have seen, while he shows himself to be more than an acquaintance for Adalgisa and Carlo, and friends with other characters, the narrator presents himself – a character in his own right – as an outsider. Despite claiming he would like to be as attractive as Carlo is for Adalgisa, he diagnoses for himself the impossibility – an existential, a moral-psychological impossibility – of emulating him in the future. Gazing out the window, to avoid looking in Adalgisa's eyes, he almost relegates himself in another dimension, and keeps himself apart from the characters with whom he has, unquestionably, a bond of friendship and affection, if not a familial connection. A form of satirical difference is thus preserved even as he represents himself as a clumsy young student, before the watershed event of World War One.

If different times generally correspond to a different level of involvement of the narrator and consequently to a different narrative attitude, the big picture is complicated by the narrator's constant looming presence, so that it is impossible to simply conclude that the

more distant and remote the past, the more indulgent the narrator. This temporal web is far more complex. Taking different shapes, and influencing the adoption of different narrative postures, the shadow of connection is always present, so as to indicate that the satirical rejection and derision carried out in the disegni is combined with a contrasting tension tending towards the acknowledgment of a condition of similarity; a condition of similarity against which the satirical difference is created.

My study departs from the inadequacy of the principles behind the classical-canonical view of satire as a form of opposition to account for the dynamics at work in most of the disegni. In so doing, it takes a first step towards rethinking – as a potential future development for research – what satire is for Gadda. It argues for a differential and creative understanding of such a complex expressive form, with a view to looking at the satirical difference between satirist and target as something that is created and performed – and not always in a linear fashion – in and by the satirical text itself.

2. Referentiality and self-reflection in the notes and in satire

As mentioned in chapter 2, Dante Isella explores the deconstruction of *Un fulmine sul 220* and its re-functionalisation within the context of *L'Adalgisa* through an autobiographical lens. Isella recognises the 'I' of Gadda in the character Adalgisa, who comes to acquire greater prominence throughout the writing of *Un fulmine*. The *j'accuse* Adalgisa pronounces against the bourgeois clan in which she has married, Isella claims:

> suona infatti come il 'j'accuse' dell'autore in prima persona contro la casta a cui è appartenuto e da cui è fuggito: la stessa che, alla stregua della cantante, ha marchiato anche lui letterato: bastardo, figlio di una serva ('La governante.… Sì', interviene Elsa, mitigando con una grande dolcezza), e, dopo il tracollo finanziario del padre bozzoliere, sprovvisto di beni di fortuna, nullatenente. 'E la milionaria di

via Pisacane?... che poi si è scoperto che non aveva neanche le mutande?', incalza l'Adalgisa-Gadda […].[6]

Superimposing the viewpoint of the historical author on Milan and the Milanese community onto that of one of his characters, Isella situates the interruption of *Un fulmine* in relation to Gadda's own excessively personal involvement: 'dissacrante, violento, animato da spirito di rivalsa'. As Gadda yields to his own anger and resentment, the novel implodes, and is repurposed, a few years later, for the collection, also marked by a fiercely satirical intention against his own 'odiosa-amata società lombarda'. 'L'autore dovrà scegliere', Isella concludes: 'o salvare il romanzo […]; oppure abbandonarsi alla foga dirompente dei suoi furori ("L'Adalgisa sono io"). E allora sarà (nel '43) il sacrificio del *Fulmine* sull'altare dell'*Adalgisa*'.[7]

While taking into account the troubled and tempestuous – to say the least – relationship between Gadda, the city where he was born, and the social-cultural establishment in which he spent a significant part of his life, before moving to Florence in the early 1940s, my thesis examines *L'Adalgisa* as an accomplished literary expression in and of itself, and not as the result of an unresolved tension between Gadda and his hometown. The insights on satire I take from Bogel's theory are not intended as a way to shed light on the thorny biographical matter of Gadda's own thoughts and emotions about the environment in which he grew up. They are instead intended as a tool to better understand, in a narrative perspective, the ways in which a narrative subject takes form in the fictional-diegetic world of which he claims to be part and which he nonetheless chastises: a tool to explore the narrative regimes this subject adopts throughout the collection, as well as the imagery and thematical repertoire used to paint a picture of the society inhabiting that

[6] Isella, 'Gadda e Milano' in DM XXIV.
[7] Isella, 'Nota al testo' of *Un fulmine* in Fu 294, 296 and 295.

world. Refraining from reducing satire to a dynamic of personal resentment and from turning the narrator into a substitute for an animosity-ridden author, I consider *L'Adalgisa* as a satirical work in virtue of its inner, deep functioning: a sign, undeniably, of Gadda's complicated relationship with his city, without going so far as reconstructing his biography, nor deeming it a mere product thereof.

This notwithstanding, as my thesis also argues, in the case of the collection, the author's text calls into question his life and the extratextual reality in a very peculiar way. Not unlike any novel where a fictional story is set in a real place, the narrative of the disegni is a mix of fictional and real elements blended together: the former mainly concern the individual characters and their vicissitudes (the Cavenaghis/Caviggionis, the de' Marpionis, Elsa, Adalgisa, Bruno, and so on); the latter relate to the general setting of the diegesis (the streets and places mentioned, people's customs and habits, the historical events recalled in the background, and so on). If Adalgisa does not exist in the real world and is a fictional character, the world she talks about and of which she exposes the closed mentality and censorious rules adheres to reality, at least in its basic features. In the advisory notice to the notes of *I ritagli di tempo* we are warned that 'Le locuzioni e i vocaboli di lingua straniera (1928) sono adibiti a riprendere il tono (cioè rifare il verso) a certa conversazione colta o medio-colta dell'ambiente e dell'epoca' [L'A 419]. The 'ambiente' and 'epoca' mentioned are, it is quite clear, the 'ambiente' and 'epoca' of the real world 22outside the text itself. Albeit fictional in terms of its diegetic contents, the disegno is deliberately presented to us in the space of the notice as inspired to the real world: the historical Milan and its bourgeoisie of the late 1920s (specifically 1928, as we are told). It is this extratextual referent – the world outside – that the disegno reproduces and mimics.

Just like the notice, so the notes are also fundamental in strengthening the conviction that outside the disegni there is an extratextual dimension – the 'reale realtà' [L'A 404] – to

which the disegni are related, starting from their very identification as 'milanesi' in the subtitle of the collection. Along these lines, the notes recalibrate or even correct the relationship of correspondence between the literary images found in the narrative and reality, or they comment on the linguistic-stylistic choices made by the 'Autore' or 'calligrafo' [341] showing his inaccuracy or unreliability. This is what happens, for example, in some of the notes analysed in chapter 4. Considered from this viewpoint, the notes lend themselves to readers as a space where the extratextual reality can enter the collection in a nonfictional and unaltered form, while the 'I' can adopt – now unconstrained by any narrative perimeter – an authorial timbre or modulation. But is it really so?

The notes, which may potentially be interpreted as the reaction of a first, ideal reader to the narrative, stand as evidence of the fact that the fictional-diegetic text they accompany is meant to come across as a text which is connected to the external world. A text which, in order to be fully understood, must interact with this world, as well as the real life of Carlo Emilio Gadda: former engineering student, soldier, then engineer himself, and author, as the notes reclaim, of the disegni brought together in the collection and of further writing also mentioned in the notes. The notes work, in this perspective, as an artificial, author-induced demonstration that the disegni are concerned with a high level of referentiality, understood – to make use of a further definition provided by Bogel – as a 'a textual gesture outward, whether to a historical object or not'.[8] It is unsurprising, then, that *L'Adalgisa* is so often interpreted in an autobiographical direction: it is the work itself that recalls the external world, eliciting a reading where the narrated reality is closely related to the reality which exists outside of it.

However, as chapter 4 argues, the notes only apparently provide a nonfictional and extradiegetic counterpart to the narrative. Rather than reinstating the relationship between

[8] Bogel, *The Difference Satire Makes*, p. 9.

what is *inside* and what is *outside*, they have in fact the effect of distending and breaching the fictional-diegetic boundaries, taking part in a tension between the invention and reality that is also found in the narrative.[9] Appropriately defined by Gadda as 'semi-burlesche' [L'A[12] 340], the notes are not a neutral space. Confirming that there is, somewhere, an extratextual reality echoed by the narrative, they paradoxically turn that reality into an echo chamber for the narrative, complicating the invention and giving to it new depth and consistency. The diegetic fictionality is then revealed as such – as fiction – while it appears at the same time grounded in reality.

On the other hand this tendency is in accord with the nature of satire as a mode strictly related to the real world, on which not only can it have an impact but to which it is sometimes linked by reformative purposes and a moral outlook, while also being a mode constitutionally based on techniques of exaggeration and distortion such as stylisation and caricature.[10] By suggesting that the disegni only imitate the 'ambiente' and 'epoca' to give a faithful picture of them, advisory notices such as those of *I ritagli* or *Quattro figlie* are the perfect expression of such ambivalence. Not only do they abdicate responsibility from the satirist for giving a derogatory representation of the satirical object, but they also defer the characteristics of such a representation to the intrinsic nature of the object itself. Shielding the satirist's polemical vein and his creative-imaginative power from possible objections, and also reclaiming possession of categories used by others to discredit him, the notices and the notes contribute to an increase in the overall satirical gradient.

[9] The narrator who places himself in Adalgisa's flat is a fictional character, but portrays himself in such a way that it brings to the mind of readers the author, Gadda, also alluded to by means of other references mentioned in ch. 4.5. The young student found in Adalgisa's flat is then a fictional character, no doubt, but his presence comes to have autobiographical resonations and is ambiguously located at the intersection of the fictional-diegetic and the autobiographical.

[10] What many critics of satire, and notably Northrop Frye, have referred to as the 'fantasy content' of satire: 'a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognises as grotesque' (Frye, *Anatomy of criticism*, p. 224).

3. Knowledge, ethics, and satire

The criterion of truth against which the satirist considers in the collection what is wrong and nonsensical, disassociating himself from it in the differential – and not only destructive, punitive, or censorial – manner I argue for, lies in the nature of time and in its all-consuming power. It is against the law of temporal *unrepeatability* that the community caught in the act of *repeating* itself is found *culpable* of living in a condition of contradiction and paradox. It is because of time's unrepeatability that the multiplications attempted to by the living are proven to be as futile and grotesque as the multiplication concerning the deceased (Rinaldoni and Carlo). The problematic aspect does not lie in reproduction *per se*, but rather in the ways in which reproduction is intended, as well as in the 'obscure' forces of which reproduction is the expression.[11] The presence in *L'Adalgisa*, as part of *Strane dicerie contristano i Bertoloni*, of the passage of *La cognizione del dolore* on the 'cammino delle generazioni' [L'A 401 = CDD 604] is extremely significant in this respect.

The reproduction put in practice by the factory of society is a mere duplication of an individual: an egomaniacal replication of an 'I' which strives to prolong itself and its existence in a reality marked by infinite relationships, failing to acknowledge what lies behind the veil of the 'tempo-parvenza'. As discussed in chapter 5, the problem is the individual – the *particular* – who struggles, stubbornly, desperately, stupidly, to impose himself or herself in the infinite flux of deformation of reality – the *general* – of which time itself is a manifestation. The problem is, in other words, what Carla Benedetti refers to, with

[11] As for the adjective 'obscure' I used here, cf. 'Bruno ripassò, alto e calmo, sulla sua bicicletta. Anche il suo sangue, traverso i millenni, doveva aver comportato e risolto tutta una serie di problemi infinitesimali. Gli imponderabili atti e moti, le intime e quasi inavvertite volizioni, le *oscure* e tormentose delìbere, le profonde elezioni dell'istinto, i minimi sopralivelli della scelta, "les petites perceptions", s'erano lentamente stratificate negli evi, affiorando nella risorgiva di una persona. L'*oscuro* tendere, l'*oscuro* volere, l'*oscura* fermezza, l'*oscura* fede: l'*oscura* fatica della sopportazione, l'*oscura* negazione e ripudio delle cose abominevoli, la scelta degli atti vitali, il raggiunto essere, alfine, come di chi emunto alfine risorga: nel giorno!, dalla tomba infernale della miniera' [L'A 520].

a very effective formula, as the 'natura dell'individuo, tendente "malvagiamente" a permanere'; the problem is the individual's 'reluttanza a smarrirsi nel "buio indistinto".[12] '"Malvagio" è', to put it differently, 'il particolare proprio per la sua tendenza a persistere'.[13]

In *Meditazione milanese*, the philosophical treatise written in 1928, Gadda observes that each one of the infinite systems of reality moves to a further, more elaborate system by means of the heuresis. The lack of heuristic activity that distinguishes the Milanese community, found in the collection of disegni in a condition of indulgent repetition ('godimento, ripetizione e profitto' [L'A 530]), corresponds to a lack of development, or to a non-development, of reality itself. The non-creative repetition in which the bourgeois are stuck is not only useless, then, but even potentially disruptive and damaging; an evil, so to speak, of an ontological kind. When I say that the community is *culpable* of living in a condition of contradiction and paradox, *culpable* of failing or being unable to understand time, I am in agreement with Benedetti when she asserts, one of the first scholars to firmly do so, that 'al centro del "rovello gnoseologico" gaddiano […], c'è l'etica con il suo problema sommo: la necessità del male'.[14] Benedetti's claim is mainly based on her analysis of *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* but also refers to Gadda's work more in general. In compliance with a principle of stoic and Spinozian derivation found in *Meditazione milanese*, the awareness of the infinite multiplicity of the causes of reality should bring with itself, as Benedetti argues, the necessity for the individual to conform with it and hence with the absence of a form of finality or meaning valid for said individual alone. Behind Gadda's gnoseological quest, Benedetti continues, there is 'il pungolo del compito etico spinoziano con quel tanto di liberazione delle passioni che esso promette: riconoscere la necessità naturale di ogni cosa, e dunque anche del male, e adeguarsi serenamente a

[12] Benedetti, *Una trappola di parole*, p. 12.
[13] Ibid., p. 140.
[14] Ibid., p. 137.

essa'.[15] Girolamo is spared from the satirical attack which affects almost everybody else in virtue of the awareness he seems to transmit of his imminent death: 'Lo sguardo de' grigi e dolci occhi, velati d'una sorta di lacrima, e i gran baffi ambrati pioventi sulla rassegnata pace dei settantadue, dicevano la pietà del rammemorare, e dell'*accettare il destino*' [L'A 316]. Girolamo is spared because, in other words, he appears to accept the truth more than other characters.

Beyond the case of *L'Adalgisa*, the pervasive presence of satire in Gadda's writing offers in this sense a confirmation that there is a tight connection between knowledge and ethics for Gadda. It is probably as a result of this connection that satire lends itself to Gadda as such a suitable form of expression: a satire taking into account, however, that in the ever-changing system of systems that reality is there can be no such thing as a pure and simple opposition between the subject (i.e., the satirist) and the object (i.e., the target). Subject and object always are inevitably co-implicated. It is Gadda himself who famously declared, in *Meditazione breve circa il dire e il fare* (1937), later included in the collection of critical essays *I viaggi la morte* (1958), that: 'Quando scriverò la Poetica, dovrà, ognuno che si proponga intenderla, rifarsi dal leggere l'Etica: e anzi la Poetica sarà poco più che un capitolo dell'Etica: e questa deriverà dalla Metafisica' [VM I 444]. A knot binds together, in Gadda's view, not only epistemology and ethics, but also metaphysics, aesthetics, and the writing practice.

The issue of the co-implication of subject and object, and all that this co-implication entails in terms of aesthetics and writing practice, is pivotal to another key essay by Gadda, published in 1950 and then chosen as the opening piece of *I viaggi la morte*: *Come lavoro*. Along the lines of thought already developed in *Meditazione milanese*, in *Come lavoro* Gadda considers that that what we refer to as 'I' is in fact a 'groppo, o nodo, o groviglio, di

[15] Ibid., p. 137.

rapporti fisici e metafisici: (la distinzione ha valore di espediente)' [VM 428]. Following this, Gadda not only scoffs at those who might still put their faith in a rigid and monolithic notion of the subject seen as separate from the rest of reality, but also claims that every act of knowledge, as well as every act of expression (as is the case with writing), is inextricably entangled with and in an infinite series of both internal and external factors. In Gadda's words:

> L'atto critico, l'atto espressivo, non è concepibile per sé, come una emanazione funzionale del bamberottolo io, come polla che ci si ostini a ritenere indipendente, mentre che il monte, del suo secreto, le sovviene di continuo. L'atto espressivo è il resultato, o meglio il sintomo, di quella polarizzazione che ho detto: quella che si determina fra l'io giudicante e la cosa giudicata: fra l'io rappresentatore e la rappresentata. L'io giudicante non preesiste in un'attesa logica, o in una incubazione partenogenetica, alla cosa giudicata, narrata. L'io ha veste di modo, di strumento potenziale del giudizio: e nel giudizio soltanto si manifesta, come termine polare della tensione fra lui e la cosa, che è l'altro termine. La cosa giudicata (rappresentata) è istanza, è sollecitazione apparentemente occasionale: è realtà inserita in una consecuzione, in una totalità di eventi che infinitamente si articola: ottiene dall'io critico, dall'io rappresentatore, una risposta immancabile. [VM 429-430]

The passage quoted above is crucial to our understanding of the kind of satire practiced in *L'Adalgisa*. There is no such thing as a mere opposition between the one who narrates and/or judges and the object of that narration and/or judgement: this is in essence why a traditional notion of satire based on a binary and rigid opposition between satirist and target will not suffice for the collection of disegni:[16]

> L'attore del giudizio e la cosa giudicata, lo scrittore e la scritta, il narratore e la narrata, e' stanno fra loro come combattenti in duello, di cui l'uno si creda aver sospinto al muro (acculé au mur) il su'

[16] The fact that it is especially with *L'Adalgisa* that a canonical understanding of satire does no longer suffice to explain what happens in the text is a further proof, I think, that *L'Adalgisa* marks a fundamental transition in Gadda's work. With *L'Adalgisa*, Gadda enters a new phase: a new area of the map of his work is now drawn, and it is is in this area that *L'Adalgisa* should be located together with *La cognizione del dolore* and *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, and separate from all the previous narrative works. On this transitional role of *L'Adalgisa* and on how the collection is much more related to *La cognizione* and *Quer pasticciaccio* than any other Gadda's work, cf. Stellardi, 'La città che dispare dell'*Adalgisa*' and Savettieri, 'Self-Reflection and Ambivalance' (from where I took the image of the map of Gadda's work), both already mentioned in my introduction. I am aware that the point I have made on how the satire of *L'Adalgisa* diverges from satire in previous works requires from me a in-depth analysis of such previous works, which I cannot conduct here. For this reason, I now leave this point, with the intention to return to it and further develop it in the future.

rivale. Il giudizio, la rappresentazione, la Vortstellung (il duello) non può celebrarsi, è ovvio, senza il coesistere e il convenire dei due. [VM 430]

If we look closely at this image, we will note that the dynamic at play is the same one described by Bogel when he reminds us – this has been seen in detail in chapter 3 – that a *rival* is one who shares the water of the same stream (*rivus*) with another, as well as the one alluded in the advisory notice of *Quattro figlie*, where it is claimed that the author has dived into the water of his characters ('quasicché a propria volta l'autore si tuffi nella bagnarola e nell'acqua medesime ove poco prima erano a diguazzare i suoi colombi' [L'A 374-375]). The bathtub of *Quattro figlie* corresponds in some ways to the ground where the two 'combattenti in duello' are fighting: the relationship between the fighters is never merely just oppositional, but also implies a 'coesistere', a 'convenire'.

4. 'Un abisso di bellezza e di scandolo'

This thesis took its start from one of the main questions *L'Adalgisa* poses to readers and which concerns its consistency as a book, and not just a collection of disparate pieces which are in some cases narratively interconnected but essentially independent from each other. The analyses carried out in chapter 2 highlighted the convergence of both the disegni taken from *Un fulmine* (together with the other disegni set in Milan) and those taken from *La cognizione* on painting pictures of the social collective, seeing this convergence as a principle of unity for the collection. Against the backdrop of the social collective, a few characters stand out, more or less remarkedly: Gonzalo, Bruno, Elsa, Adalgisa, the narrator himself; characters who do not have a peaceful relationship, albeit for different reasons, with the others.

On the one hand, there is Gonzalo, who has no relationship with society. A form of pain is so intensely concentrated in his figure that he is almost completely – if not just completely – estranged from it. The difference between him and the others is unalloyed and pure. Chapter 3 showed that, in line with such a strong difference, the narrative voice heard through the disegni taken from *La cognizione* – a voice which adopts the perspectives of the doctor and other characters in *Strane dicerie*, and which almost exclusively focuses on Gonzalo in *Navi approdano al Parapagàl* – does not incarnate in any character who is part of the world narrated.

On the other hand, there are the characters of the disegni set in Milan, who also convey a form of difference, and experience this difference in their own skin. Elsa suffers because of how she feels excluded by the movement which herds society towards a common destination. The difference keeping Adalgisa apart from her husband's relatives comes with disappointment and resentment on Adalgisa's own part. It is because of their difference that both Elsa and Adalgisa offer a standpoint through which the others can be represented in a critical way and become deformed and monstrous. It is because of her own sense of exclusion from the community that Elsa is able to sense the disharmony of those who sit next to her in the conservatory, as they strive to multiply and repeat themselves in the world. For the narrator, who dives into the water of his characters and becomes himself a fictional-diegetic creature, such difference comes with pain and bewilderment, as he is a member of the community but also a stranger. This difference is also related to a sense of melancholy, as the narrator himself is caught in the act of recalling a world which is now lost.

Within the collection, the radical difference conveyed by Gonzalo is combined, then, with other less marked and more subtle differences: the ones conveyed by the characters found in Milan. Albeit distant from each other, not only geographically but also stylistically and even morally, the two worlds found in the collection have a connection which becomes

meaningful precisely *because of* the differences existing between each one. The difference conveyed by Gonzalo's world is matched with the different kind of difference that arises from the world of *Un fulmine sul 220* and Milan, where the narrator-satirist is not so distant from the world satirised and is part of it.

Readdressing the question on the unity of the book, I can now answer that the fictional-diegetic dissimilarity of the disegni taken from *La cognizione* from the rest of the collection and the dissimilarity of Gonzalo from all the other characters are functional to a creation of satirical difference. Satirical difference that is released as the difference expressed through Gonzalo connects with the less marked differences conveyed by the characters of the other disegni. In other words, the internal differences within the collection serve to a mechanism of creation of difference on a macrostructural level, ensuring that the collection itself – and not only the disegni set in or near Milan – is founded upon a simultaneous coexistence of distance and proximity. The heterogeneity of the book does not undermine its unity; on the contrary, it contributes to it, giving rise – as chapters 2 and 3 propose – to a form of plural unity, or of *unity created by difference*.

Combining together for the first time a variety of perspectives within a monographic study where such perspectives intersect one another, my multi-focused study on *L'Adalgisa* shows the following: the presence of Gonzalo, the ambiguous behaviour of the character of the narrator, the authorial notes, and the centrality of the theme of time, are all interconnected and interrelated. The presence of Gonzalo is functional to a mechanism of difference creation and this mechanism describes how the narrator ambiguously manifests himself. The notes explain but also complicate things, as they offer an apparently detached outlook on the narrative and the satirical representations found therein, while they create instead a further level where the subject can enter the textual space and inhabit it, once more, with ambiguity. The notes are also the space where the present time – 'oggi (1943)' – arises more frequently

and where the distance between the past and the present is more emphatically stressed. As I previously claimed in this conclusion, the further the narrator draws away from the present, the thicker and darker the shadows of connection become. Thus, time itself has a role in the creation of satirical difference.

As chapter 5 points out, the discourse on time is also linked to satire in another way: the acknowledgment of temporal unrepeatability is indeed at the core of the principle of truth against which the judgement of society is expressed. Given the importance of the theme of time in this respect, the collection lends itself to us as a reflection on time and temporality, and on how the human experience of time passes through the ways in which we ourselves and the space we inhabit change. Here we finally understand the universal and meta-historical character of *L'Adalgisa* as a reflection on how the *city* – understood as a quintessential form of human aggregation and organisation and also intended as an expression of *society*[17] – changes in relation to time. In this regard, *L'Adalgisa* is a book that articulates a consistent, albeit internally diversified, discourse upon three main subjects and the way they interact: the city/society, the individual (in relation or not to the city/society), and time.

Bringing my thesis to its conclusion, one final image can be useful. In Un 'concerto', the bourgeois are *attracted* to the conservatory where they attend the concert of 'domenica 28 aprile 1931' [L'A 443], as if disappearing into an abyss:

La chiamata, come di lontana doccia, ecco agiva sulla corrente desïosa, facendola unanime e lesta verso la caduta, verso un abisso di bellezza e scandolo. Alle ore 15 precise! [L'A 453][18]

[17] The city understood, that is, 'nel doppio senso del tessuto fisico (architettonico e urbanistico) della città, e della tribù che lo abitava' (Stellardi, 'La città che dispare dell'*Adalgisa*').

[18] Note 23 explains the meaning of the term 'chiamata' to refer to the attraction that the concers has on the bourgeois flocking towards it as follows: '"Chiamata": quella trazione, cioè stiramento e acceleramento delle vene liquide, (cui va congiunta una sempre più cupa decessione del livello), esercitata sul corso d'acqua da una prossima cataratta: o da una doccia in forte declivio. Termine tecnico della idrologia e della idraulica teorica' [474]. The bourgeois fall into the abyss of beauty and scandal as a mass of water falls in coincidence of a difference in height of the surface where it runs. On the significance of a hydrological imagery, cf. ch. 3.1.

'Bellezza' and 'scandolo' are understood in ironic reference to the event the bourgeois attend to and the attitude they show towards it. As seen in chapter 5, the audience is not authentically involved, but attends the concert for the sake of appearances, allowing themselves to be scandalised by the innovative character of the music they hear, only then to brag about their own cultural open-mindedness.[19] The 'abisso di bellezza e di scandolo' is a hyperbolical reference to what the bourgeois see in the concert, but it is also an image which resonates with many other important associations.

Almost deprived here of its nobler and higher connotations, the term 'bellezza' can also bring to mind the beauty of Adalgisa and Elsa; the beauty of those characters and aspects of the city that are spared from the satirical attack and are instead the object of empathy and melancholy: the shadow of connection that is preserved in the act of difference creation. 'Bellezza' can also work as a reference to the role of memory as a *creative* form of repetition: a glimmer of light and hope upon which the act of memory carried through by the narrator is founded, with an allusion to the creative power of art and literature in a more general sense. Here stripped of its most serious meaning, 'scandolo'[20] refers to the shock inanely exhibited by the bourgeois, but can also refer to the intolerable and much more serious scandal of reality, connected to the double acknowledgement that time is unrepeatable and

[19] Cf. the following passage where both the words 'scandolo' and 'bellezza' return, as if to better explain the meaning such words have in the context of the concert and how the bourgeois intend them: 'Il semiarabo giapponese dal nome cileno [the conductor] fornisce agli imbottiti melomani e melomanesse del Quadronno e del Pasquirolo quel zinzino di scandolo che gli ci vuole, giusto, per potersi decentemente scandolezzare. Nonché indignare, compiacere, inorgoglire. Da potersi congratulare l'un l'altro della propria apertura d'ali. Da poter fremere od allibire secondo grossezza, trasecolare, sudare. Da protestare, zittire, grugnire, bofonchiare, sibilare fra i denti, gorgheggiare, nitrire, starnutire, soppédere di commozione, procurarsi una trombosi, dallo sdegno, un colpo apoplettico. Da assaporare insomma tutta la serie degli affetti, come dicevasi dallo Spinoza o dal Foscolo, cioè tutta la gamma dei solletichi, dei fremiti, delle estasi, delle prurigini, delle vibrazioni e dei gratacùli assortiti che la divina arte di Euterpe e di Polihymnia vien suscitando, ogniqualvolta un violino raspa, nel nostro animo assetato di bellezza' [456]. I have already noted that both the funeral and the concert are mistakenly said to take place 'alle ore 15 precise' and 'alle ore 16 precise': cf. ch. 5.5

[20] *Scandolo* is an allotropic form of 'scandalo' now fallen of use: cf. Italia, *Glossario di Carlo Emilio Gadda 'milanese'*, *s.v.*

that time is, in fact, just one amongst the infinite deformations of reality. The 'scandalo' is, in other words, the discovery of the *eodem* to which we all tend. 'Scandolo' can also recall, finally, the dramatic and painful difference conveyed by Gonzalo, which corresponds to the destructive-annihilating moment in the process of affirmation of difference. Together, beauty and scandal come to express the doubleness which I have identified, in my differential reading, as constitutional of the satire practiced in *L'Adalgisa*: a collection inhabited by opposing forces becoming one in spite *and* in virtue of their differences. There is no duel, as we have seen in *Come lavoro*, without 'coesistere' and 'convenire'.

The 'abisso' towards which the bourgeois run and are attracted is the *eodem* itself, the empty space which expects us all, as well as the frightening emptiness which lies behind their habits and ways of life: the 'care abitudini' where the Caviggionis 's'imbozzolavano tutti' [L'A 520].[21] The abyss of beauty and scandal is the very abyss of *L'Adalgisa*, which is an abyssal work in and of itself due the way in which it escapes any kind of unilateral or univocal understanding, or any form of critical cage: an abyssal work in virtue of its doubleness, which leaves readers suspended in its depths without ever reaching the bottom.

[21] The abyss of *Un 'concerto'* also significantly resonates with the 'vacuum' lying behind the linguistic and mental habits of the bourgeois mentioned in the version of the notice of *Quattro figlie* appeared in *Letteratura* ('E mette capo [the impetus of the characters] a quella felice condizione dell'anima e della capa che "i filosofi scolàstici", e forse anche l'Evangelista Torricelli, chimano vacuum'). Such 'vacuum' is instead an 'abisso d'inutilità' in Gadda's manuscripts. On this, cf. ch. 3.5, note 35.

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