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**Touristic and Chauvinistic Perspectives on
the Arctic in the Italian Popular Press
Some cases of literary and artistic reception,
from the fin-de-siècle to the Fascist era**

In this paper, I will focus on non-scientific Italian perspectives on the Arctic at the beginning of the 20th century. Based on selected journalistic travel writings and on children’s books and their pictorial and photographic illustrations, I will examine some illustrative instances of the Italian perception of the Great North during this era. More specifically, I will focus on the Duke of Abruzzi’s Polar Expedition of 1900 and Umberto Nobile’s expedition of 1928. These cases are of particular interest in terms of artistic and literary reception, popular imagery, and political implications¹.

In 1899, Ugo Ojetti—journalist, art critic and an influential shaper of public opinion in Italy during the first half of the 20th century—was sent to Norway by the Italian newspaper “Il Corriere della sera” to report on the preparations for the Duke of Abruzzi’s upcoming polar expedition. However, instead of reporting on facts related to the expedition or about the materials required, Ojetti instead chose to take the opportunity to visit and report on some touristic sites in southern Norway and Sweden. This was the beginning of Ojetti’s career as a journalist, and he was curious to explore other attractions which appealed more to his literary and artistic interests. He did not want to “bore” his Italian readers back home with endless news about the food, the equipment, and the scientific aims of the polar expedition. To him—and to most Italians—the Duke of Abruzzi, a young member of the reigning Savoia family, was already a national hero and this

¹ I warmly thank Mariana Levin, who, by reading and making comments on my text, has been my most constructive critic.

expedition was expected only to confirm this fact. It is now well known that the expedition would turn out to only have partial success. On this expedition, Umberto Cagni—a member of the Duke's team—succeeded in reaching the latitude $86^{\circ} 34'$. However, even though the expedition was not entirely successful, it was richly documented with writings and pictures. In order to document their travels, the team brought one Dallmayer camera, two different types of Kodak photo cameras, and the materials necessary to develop the photos—as Fridtjof Nansen had already done before¹. The Polar explorers from such expeditions would become very popular upon returning to Italy. For instance, Umberto Cagni, a hero from this expedition, was nominated minister in 1923. Francesco Overini, who died during the Duke of Abruzzi's Polar expedition, is celebrated in a monument in Venice. The monument represents him as a romantic hero, staring into the distance². (fig. 1, 2)

In order to better make use of his precious time in Norway, Ojetti takes the opportunity to make the acquaintance of the noted Norwegian playwright, Hendrik Ibsen and the 1903 Nobel laureate for literature, Bjørnsterne Bjørnson³. Much later, in his memoirs *Cose viste*, he will remember meeting Ibsen and his impressions of Norwegian people: «Calm, honest and silent people, fond of the

¹ See L. A. DI SAVOIA-U. CAGNI, *La Stella Polare nel Mare Artico*, Milano, Effemme, 2004, p. 30 (first edition: Milano, Hoepli, 1902). The lack of success of the expedition did not diminish the fame of the hero, which even grew on the occasion of his second important (but, once more, unsuccessful) expedition of K2. Luigi Amedeo di Savoia, the Duke of Abruzzi, died in Somalia in 1933, after founding an agricultural village-colony named after him.

² See the inscription in Overini's monument: «A Francesco Overini dalla più ardita spedizione al polo artico atteso invano al ritorno Luigi di Savoia Duca degli Abruzzi che l'audace impresa ideò e con altri compì. Venezia. Qui è vanto e dolore il sacrificio di tanto figlio. MCMV».

³ Bjørnson returns to his homeland after years of absence: he lives in Rome with his family, and Ojetti translates from English his drama, *Over Aevne*, Milan 1895.

hostile and stormy environment where they live»¹. Ojetti then visited Oslo, Oscarshalle, Holmenkollen, and Trondheim. In the long train journey from Trondheim to Uppsala, Ojetti described woodland landscapes «which would be a paradise for a Divisionist painter»². In 1910, after a trip to Russia, Ojetti made arrangements so that he would end his trip in Finland. From there, he travelled to Sweden. In the the photo referring to this second travel, we see Ojetti in front of the National Museum in Stockholm with the architect Ferdinand Boberg. This is a typical Italian *grand-tour* style picture, taken with a significant work of art or a monument as opposed to a natural background. (fig. 3)

In 1911, Italian journalist and writer, Arturo Jahn Rusconi, reported on his steamboat travel to the North Cape. In his article for the journal “Emporium”, he wrote of “a nature obeying new laws of harmony, which has strange affinities with some Japanese prints”³. One should note that the photographs in the article were taken by Rusconi himself and the photographs serve to confirm the view he already had of his subjects. For example, in a very evocative and picturesque way, he chooses to photograph the coast as a borderline demarcating the limits of the known world. Another exemplar of this phenomenon of self-confirmation is a portrait of a group of travellers in the light of the midnight sun. This photo owes much to Erik Werenskiold’s well-known picture,

¹ U. OJETTI, *Ibsen* (25 March 1928), in *Cose viste. II. 1928-1943*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1951, p. 19.

² U. OJETTI, *Lettere Boreali: Da Trondheim a Upsala*, in «Corriere della sera», 17-18 July 1899, p. 1. Ojetti refers here to the Divisionist painters Vittore Grubicy de Dragon (1851-1920) and Angelo Morbelli (1853-1919). The Nordic ‘inspiration’ in Grubicy’s work can be connected to his attending Anton Mauve’s school in Den Haag and led Kasper Monrad to approach him to the Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi: see K. MONRAD, *Vilhelm Hammershøi and the Contemporary Italian Painting*, in «The Statens Museum for Kunst Journal», 1 (1997), p. 88-100.

³ A.J. RUSCONI, *Ritorno dal Capo Nord*, in «Emporium», vol. XXXIII, n. 197, May 1911, p. 397. See the other articles of the series by Rusconi: *Al Capo Nord*, in «Emporium», vol. XXXIII, April 1911, n. 196, p. 294-305; *La cattedrale di Trondhjem*, in «Emporium», vol. XXXIV, July 1911, n. 199, p. 59-74.

En bondebegravelse (fig. 4), which could be characterized as a sort of Nordic version of *L'Enterrement à Ornan* by Gustave Courbet. One reason this picture is very well-known is due to the image of Nordic religiousness compared to the French.

However, in addition to the relevant role played by some common places of the travel to the North, the natural terrain of the regions visited is not solely responsible for the forming of such aestheticizing (i.e. by means of images) and picturesque interpretations of a faraway land (e.g. landscapes seen as Divisionist paintings or Japanese prints). One must not forget that linguistic barriers between the Italian journalists and the people they met in their travels must have also played a role in the formation of such idealized and self-confirming interpretations of their experience. As a further example of this phenomenon of self-confirmation, Ojetti remarks in his notes on his travels to Russia and Finland that the inhabitants of the places he visit seem taken from Ilja Repin's paintings or from Tolstoj's novels.

In summary, the act of travelling itself appears to activate the travellers' expectations even before they have reached their destinations. For the Italian journalists discussed, we have seen how such expectations were rooted in their familiarity with particular works of art and literature and their intuitive impressions of the terrain. Likely largely due to linguistic barriers, such pre-conceptions went un-challenged during their travels, and their intuitive and "non-realistic" perspectives on the North were reflected in their writing, which in turn was received by the Italian public.

I will now analyse the role of the journal "Emporium" and other media in communicating back to the Italian public. As mentioned earlier, the Duke of Abruzzi's polar expedition generated an intense amount of media coverage. For example, the journal

“Emporium” referred to his speech at the «Collegio Romano» and illustrated his entire expedition with many pictures¹ (fig. 5, 6).

In general, the journal «Emporium» provides an exemplary case of a medium in which scientific and artistic discoveries are communicated to the public, especially from the perspective of the aestheticization of knowledge discussed above. In this journal, pictures have pre-eminence and artists are the ideal readers and protagonists of the pages. «Emporium» never intended to be more than an illustrated magazine of popular science—not an art journal, not a scientific paper. It is therefore incorrect to see this magazine related to well-known Art Nouveau journals such as «The Studio», or «Pan», or «Ver Sacrum»: the first model is the North-American Magazine, particularly the «Century Magazine» and «Harper’s Magazine», collected by Ghisleri during his visit to the Chicago Exhibition of 1893. Another model could be that of the French and German magazines for families, consisting in news and curiosities about technique, science, art, fashion for the parents, and adventurous stories for children. Among these papers—called «Familien- und Unterhaltungszeitschriften», or «Familienblätter» in Germany and *Magazines pittoresques* in France—we can find the magazine «Vom Fels zum Meer», clearly quoted by Ghisleri², even if his polemics against this kind of

¹ TOBERAL, *Spedizione del Duca degli Abruzzi*, in «Emporium», March 1900, p. 163-172; *La conferenza al collegio romano*, in «Emporium», April 1900, p. 83-94.

² *Una gita allo Spitzberg (Dal Vom Fels zum Meer)*, in «Emporium», vol. X, October 1899, n. 58, p. 293-99. A list of these German «Familienblätter» of the Kaiserzeit (1870-1918) can be found in the web page: <http://www.zeitschriften.ablit.de/periodika/per.htm>. The polemics against this kind of periodicals can be read in the article by Ghisleri celebrating the 25th year of «Emporium»: «Questa varietà enciclopedica di temi non aveva la frivola intenzione di distrarre i lettori, ma di informarli e di sollecitare le menti colte e attive del nostro paese a camminare coi passi del secolo. [...] Noi, spiritualmente idealisti e incorreggibilmente latini e particolarmente italiani, figli del Rinascimento e del nostro Risorgimento [...] pensiamo a codesta gran forza comunicativa di una idealità operosa, che sa mettere in moto tante altre volontà e farle cooperare a un’impresa comune e impersonale» (A.

periodicals («lettura di famiglia e varietà») is quite explicit. In fact, though, despite the programmatic «civic ideals» of his creators, what distinguishes «Emporium» from other family magazines is above all the quantity and quality of the pictures, obtained with innovative (for Italy) means of photo-printing: thus, «Emporium» places itself in a certain way between a popular magazine and a scientific journal. The interests of the promoters of «Emporium», Arcangelo Ghisleri and Paolo Gaffuri, meet on both a technical and a generically programmatic level (the point is to «popularize scientific culture» by means of the most innovative systems of graphic art) and do not imply—on the contrary, they always avoid—a militant criticism within contemporary culture¹.

GHISLERI, *Nel XXV Natale dell' 'Emporium' (Ricordi e confidenze)*, in «Emporium», n. 301, January 1920, p. 13-27). A similar polemic can be read in the rough draft by Ghisleri and Gaffuri dated 1903 (conserved in the Ghisleri Archives in the Library of Cremona, quoted by G. MANGINI, *Editoria e impegno civile: l'incontro tra Arcangelo Ghisleri e Paolo Gaffuri*, in *Editoria e impegno civile: l'incontro tra Arcangelo Ghisleri e Paolo Gaffuri*, «Archivio Storico Bergamasco», 9, 1985, p. 74-76: appendix III): «Per una rivista senza rubriche di curiosità e di attualità locale, senza i consueti passatempi di famiglia, senza rebus né indovinelli a premio, senza novelline, senza musica, senza versi, senza neppure una pagina di moda? [...] Noi miriamo a costituire nei lettori un archivio di cognizioni utili, di documenti grafici, di cose belle e interessanti oggi, ma che ognuno di loro potrà rivedere e consultare domani, dopodomani, fra qualche anno ancora con diletto e con frutto, soprattutto con frutto» (p. 75).

¹ Programme-Manifesto, in «Emporium», vol. I, n. 1, January 1895: «Popolarizzare l'alta cultura, i risultati delle scienze, il fior fiore delle arti, non solamente dell'Italia, ma di tutto il mondo civile. [...] Lontana da polemiche e da personalità—tutte di proposito escluse—serena, rispettosa delle coscienze [...] la nostra Rivista, battendo una strada tutta sua—sull'esempio di quei "Magazzini illustrati" che all'estero e segnatamente in Inghilterra e nel Nord-America, hanno ottenuto una sì grande e meritata diffusione—porterà a *tutti* indubbiamente delle utili cognizioni e offrirà alle famiglie, a tutti i ceti, a tutte le età un *albo* di letture ricreative, dovuto alle penne migliori e più illustri, e che sarà ingemmato dalle riproduzioni più squisite delle opere dei grandi artisti del

One can refer to the relevant role played by the art critic Vittorio Pica, who wrote in the “Emporium” and informed the Italian public about the Scandinavian artists who were exhibiting at the Venice Biennale in the first decade of the century¹. Some illustrative pages from the “Emporium” in the 1890s concerning travels to Norway and to the Spitzberg, show some typical attractions: Sami people and photographic reproductions or graphic representations of landscapes—both of which were much influenced by contemporaneous Norwegian painting². Italians of

passato, come dei più insigni del nostro tempo, italiani e stranieri [...]». On the relationship between Ghisleri and Gaffuri, see G. MANGINI, *Editoria e impegno civile: l'incontro tra Arcangelo Ghisleri e Paolo Gaffuri*, in *Editoria e impegno civile: l'incontro tra Arcangelo Ghisleri e Paolo Gaffuri*, «Archivio Storico Bergamasco», 9, 1985, p. 11-38.

¹ Pica wrote on Scandinavian schools for over twenty years, dedicating to them from 1897 to 1919 fifteen monographic articles in the survey «Artisti contemporanei», thirteen in the graphics survey «Attraverso gli albi e le cartelle» and in the exhibition reports. I'm still studying the role of «Emporium» in educating the eye of Italian artists and in shaping the opinion of the middle-class, through the typically *fin-de-siècle* multi-disciplinary approach. Related to the role played by Scandinavian artists, is my paper *Europe's periphery as a land of Primitives. The Scandinavians in the review «Emporium» and at the first Venice Biennali (1895-1911)*, to be published in *Die Kunstgeschichte und die Herausforderung der Anthropologie*, proceedings of the conference, München-Eichstätt, May 2007. This essay also reconstructs Ugo Ojetti's travels to Scandinavia by consulting his articles in the newspaper «Il Corriere della sera» and some photo-albums and notes in his archive conserved at the National Library in Florence. Finally, on the occasion of a conference on the review «Emporium», I examined particularly the case of the Swedish artist Carl Larsson, opposed to the Serbian sculptor Ivan Meštrović, then presented by Alexander Auf der Heyde as a complementary image of peoples (they represent two peoples often opposed: the peaceful Scandinavia, the bellicose Balkans). The proceedings of the conference *Emporium. Parole e figure tra il 1895 e il 1964* (Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, May 2007) are to be published in 2008.

² A. GHISLERI, *Gita invernale sulle coste della Norvegia*, in «Emporium», vol. III, January 1896, n. 1, p. 23-31; *Una gita allo*

this time period had an idea of Scandinavia as a whole from the internationally-well-known Scandinavian paintings they had seen in Italy. Hence, they continued to see these lands and reproduce them, with this distorted lens.

Another example of this phenomenon can be taken from an important journal of the symbolist perspective, «Vita d'Arte». A 1908 article from this journal shows the places where the Swedish painter Anna Boberg lived and worked¹ (fig. 7). One can also refer to her paintings exhibited in Venice and well-known to the Italian public, which were also presented in the article about her² (fig. 8). The interest of the Italian public rested in this artistic and literary side of Nordic representations. Hence, we can now understand why Ojetti chose not to dwell on the details of the scientific exploration (e. g. mapping terrain and elevations, weather conditions and climate in a remote unexplored area) and instead described his meeting with Ibsen and his visit to Swedish and Norwegian museums as a grand-tour following the principal traces suggested to the tourist. Reciprocally, Ojetti's opinions were definitely influential in shaping the opinions of the general public in Italy.

The events of the two flights of the airships «Norge» and the «Italia» - flights which took place in the mid 1920's, well-known from the wide range of literature concerning the memoirs, polemics and Nobile's trials - are essential in understanding this context of Italian reception of Nordic sites and Polar expeditions.

Spitzberg (Dal Vom Fels zum Meer), in «Emporium», vol. X, October 1899, n. 58, p. 293-99.

¹ A. BELTRAMELLI, *Le isole spettrali. (Nel paese di Anna Boberg e di Gunnar Berg)*, in «Vita d'Arte», I, 1, January 1908, p. 46-52. See then V. PICA, *Gustav Fjaestad, Anselm Schultzberg, Otto Hesselbom, Anna Boberg*, in «Emporium», March 1911, p. 171-191.

² In the Venice Galleria Internazionale di Arte Moderna, Ca' Pesaro, is one painting by Anna Boberg (which exhibits at the Venice Biennale in 1907, '12, '14, '20, '22, '24, '26, '28). In the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (since 1916 exhibited in the Chamber of Deputies) is another painting by Anna Boberg, *The Modern Vikings*, acquired in 1908.

A lamp in alabaster representing the *Discovery of the North Pole with the Norge* (fig 9) documents the popularity of an expedition in which Italy was proudly represented by Umberto Nobile. The creator of the lamp was Donatello Gabbrielli (1884-1955), a sculptor from Naples (Nobile's birthcity) who was active during the first half of the century.

In Venice, near the monument of Francesco Overini, there is a herma celebrating the aeronaut Pier Luigi Penzo, who died after being one of the rescuers of the men of the red tent. Near the inscription is an eagle, sculpted with straight lines as the symbol of the aeronautic martyr. The expression of Penzo is highly concentrated, similar to that of his neighbour Francesco Overini (fig. 10, 11).

Some of the representations of Nobile's second expedition and of the events of the red tent are reviewed here in order to understand the way Italians represent this media event, a sort of epos new to them: the triumph over the Arctic or rather, the survival of it.

The film «The red tent», directed in 1969 by the Russian director Mikhail Kalatozov but produced in Italy, was set as a sort of «spaghetti western». The film featured strong characters and a hostile land testing the men in a sort of epic fight. Even the music for “The red tent” was composed by Ennio Morricone, who is known for his “sparse” soundtracks to many well-known films, including the Spaghetti western “The good, the bad, and the ugly.” (fig. 12).

Nowadays, the ‘mythical’ story of the red tent continues to raise the interest of the Italian public. *Quark* (an Italian popular science tv programme) some years ago reminded the Italian public about Nobile's expedition (Rai tre, January 2002) (fig. 13). Additionally, the expedition has recently even been commemorated by commercial products. For example, one can refer to the “Red Tent” package set of the pen “Aurora” for the year 2007, commemorating 80 years since the event (fig. 14). Another recent form of popularization of Nobile's expedition from the Italian point of view is a documentary-film by Giovanni Minoli which appeared in the tv-programme «Rai Educational» in January 2008.

These are only some indications of the importance these expeditions had and still have in the Italian popular imagery. But let us now return to the object of this paper: the literary and artistic reception of the North, seen from the South (which is being the subject of another paper of this conference, from the linguistic point of view).

A children's book published in 1934 plays the role of an exemplary connection between the first image of the North (more related to a *fin-de-siècle* world) and the Fascist era, so dramatically represented by Nobile's expedition. In fact, children's literature is the genre in which interest in the Arctic remains most constant. Since Jules Verne, children's literature has been, and still is, a good filter of scientific knowledge. In Italy, this genre is most notably represented by the novels of Emilio Salgari. For example, his *Nel paese dei ghiacci* (1896, *In the land of the Ice*) was very popular and was translated into many languages (See the beautiful cover of a German edition of 1912, designed by the artist Alberto Della Valle¹, fig. 15). In 1901, Salgari writes about the Duke of Abruzzi's Polar expedition², adding a new readers' context to the rich list concerning the media event (fig. 16).

Two further examples of Italian children's books about the Arctic published in the 1920s and 30s are illustrative in demonstrating the relationship between this genre and Italian public perspective of the Arctic. The first, *Nel regno della bianca morte*, by the journalist and writer (follower of Emilio Salgari) Luigi Motta³, is the narration of the most important explorations to the North Pole. The second, *Pinocchietto al Polo Nord*, is a novel

¹ E. SALGARI, *Im Lande des ewigen Eises*, freie deutsche Bearbeitung von Arthur Wihlfahrt, Stuttgart, Gustav Weise Verlag, 1912. On the translations of Salgari's novels, see: *I miei volumi corrono trionfanti...*, proceedings of the conference (Torino, 2003) edited by E. Pollone, S. Re Fiorentin, P. Vagliani, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2005.

² E. SALGARI, *Notizie sul viaggio della «Stella Polare»*, Genova, Donath, 1901.

³ L. MOTTA, *Nel regno della bianca morte*, Firenze, Bemporad, 1929. Luigi Motta (1881-1955). Emilio Salgari wrote the preface to Motta's first novel, *I flagellatori dell'Oceano indiano*, 1901.

about the travel to the North Pole by Pinocchetto, the protagonist of a series of fantastic adventures by the writer Maria Chierichetti¹.

As a further indication of the important role of children's literature in shaping public perspectives of the Arctic, note that in the national catalogue of public libraries, one will find that most of the books about Polar explorations are owned by school libraries. An immediate result of this kind of popularization of scientific knowledge can be seen in the 'imaginary geography' built up by Italian children who have read these books, in their way of interpreting the literature dedicated to them. (Note that likely they have now access also to other media—movies, television, art, mythology—Santa Claus etc.—which have also shaped their perspective). I myself have tried to challenge a class of primary school students on this question, asking them to draw a picture of their 'imagined Arctic', and to associate to their drawing some words and adjectives. What resulted, apart from an expectable series of Santa Clauses, was extremely interesting. One of the most fascinating drawings was that by a girl aged thirteen, Sofia, whose way of interpreting the Arctic was a light-blue and white aerial representation, identified by the adjectives *Stillness*, *Silence*, *Emptiness* (fig. 17).

A final example of children's literature concerning the Arctic is the novel *Mastro Spago al Polo Nord* (*Master String travelling to the North Pole*), first published in 1909 by Ugo Mioni, a catholic emulator of Salgari (fig. 18, 19, 20). It is the story of a Florentine shoemaker who bets with his drunkard friends not only he can surpass Umberto Cagni's goal of 86° 34' but also he can reach the North Pole and bring it back to Florence as a souvenir. The 'epic' story of this travel—which in the end turns out to only be a dream—can have an ambivalent meaning. In a satirical way, the story announces fascist rhetoric about the permanent *ire ultra* (surpassing the limits) concept which is then paradoxically anchored to a *municipal*-chauvinistic horizon. However, children

¹ M. CHIERICHETTI, *Pinocchetto al Polo Nord*, Milano, Bietti, 1933.

are the intended audience of the book, which is meant to be read as both an adventure story and as a comic novel.

It must be said that its author, Ugo Mioni, was a priest who used to write a catholic-pedagogical literature very popular in the first decades of the century. In his more than 450 books written from 1895 till 1935, his young readers are educated to the Christian and civic virtues of God, the homeland and the family. In a few years, such ideals will make Mioni's writing perfectly compatible with the fascist ideology. For example, in a pamphlet published in 1913, he preaches—in the form of a fictitious letter to a young student—about the education of the children's character: «You should be armed of a great energy and say 'I want. I want!' This is the verb I like most. When a child says: I want! I'm sure he has character, he will go far [...]»¹.

This kind of exhortation can be heard from Mastro Spago's words: «Go ahead» I shouted «Go ahead! I have removed the word *backwards* from my dictionary, and every good Italian should imitate me»². All this can easily be connected to a poem composed in 1912 by the decadent national poet Gabriele D'Annunzio and dedicated to the explorer Umberto Cagni:

I try to imagine ... the ruthless will that made your stare look like the edge of an ice-axe [...] the sledges saved from the sudden cracks, the painful hand required for hard works [...] the mouldy

¹ U. MIONI, *Lettere ad un giovane studente*, Torino, Libreria Editrice Internazionale, 1913, p. 62: «Bisogna armarsi di grande energia e dire: Voglio. Voglio! Ecco il verbo che a me piace sopra ogni altro. Quando un giovane dice: Voglio! son certo che egli ha carattere; che si farà [...]». On Ugo Mioni (1870-1935)'s pedagogical ideals and on his support to the fascist regime, see P. ZOVATTO, *Ugo Mioni scrittore popolare*, Trieste, Centro Studi religiosi, 1988, pp. 49-98. See also T. BRESSAN, (*Ugo Mioni scrittore per ragazzi*, in *Mons. Ugo Mioni scrittore*, proceedings of the conference, Trieste, Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia patria, 1986, pp. 79-85), which underlines with right the lack of discipline and correction in his (and Emilio Salgari's) so abundant production, alimeted by the growing publishing industry.

² U. MIONI, *Mastro Spago al Polo Nord*, Torino-Roma, Marietti, 1934², p. 78: «Avanti» gridai «Avanti! La parola *indietro* la ho cancellata dal mio dizionario, ed ogni buon italiano mi dovrebbe imitare».

biscuit for lunch, the putrid water for your burning thirst; every poverty, every misery [...] The white dams rose up and broke down [...]. And you said to yourself: “go ahead, further”. The Ocean was an abyss of broken islands. And you said to yourself: “go ahead, further”. The two shores disappeared immense and tumultuous. And you “go ahead, further!”¹

However, Mioni’s book cannot be read without a smile. There is a contrast between the exaggeration in the way the characters and the events are described and the terms of comparison, which don’t exceed the provincial dimension of Florence. The first aspect—the most typical of children’s literature—is somehow ‘*rabelaisien*’, in more means. Mastro Spago is a plump man, a sort of an always-hungry and thirsty Pantagruel, whose dreams, ambitions and actions are often excessive. The dog he has chosen as his travel companion is called ‘Polo’—he is huge, with enormous legs and dreadful jaws. Polo never gets tired and fights like a hero against the bears. The gun Spago owns is a murderous weapon from the African campaign. The comic effect comes from the very tiny and provincial imagery of the hero Mastro Spago. He compares the huge dimensions of the Arctic to the great dome of the Florentine Cathedral—a very singular way of «dearcticizing» the Arctic, or «denorthernization» of North!² Further, he wishes to bring the North Pole to Florence

¹ G. D’ANNUNZIO, *Canzone a Umberto Cagni*, in *Merope*, volume IV of the *Laudi del cielo, del mare, della terra e degli eroi*, Milano, Treves, 1912: «Penso [...] la volontà spietata e senza voce che ti faceva lo sguardo come il taglio della piccozza. [...] il maglio invisibile che schiacciava i blocchi enormi. [...] le slitte tratte fuori dalle crepe improvvisate; la costretta man dolorosa ai ruvidi lavori. [...] la galletta muffita per panatica, all’ansante sete il sorso dell’acqua fetida, ogni penuria, ogni miseria. [...] Le dighe bianche s’alzavano, crollavano. [...] E tu dicevi a te: “Più oltre”. L’Oceano era un batarro di rotte isole. E tu dicevi a te: “Più oltre”. Sparivano i due solchi in un tumulto raggiante informe immenso. E tu: “Più oltre!”...».

² The concept of «denorthernization of North», in its physical transformation from wild to tourist site, is analyzed by D. CHARTIER, *Towards a Grammar of the Idea of North: nordicity, winterity*, in «Nordlit», n. 22, 2007, p. 35-47. That of the «Dearcticizing the Arctic»,

and conserve it in the Boboli Gardens, so that the travels to the Pole will be from now on much easier, and nobody will have to confront the horrific and uncomfortable weather of the Arctic...

emerged from many papers of this conference, is an interesting key to read the Arctic from the outside.







Hugo von Ferd. Boberg.







Hugo von Ferd. Boberg.



CAPO NORD — MEZZANOTTE.

(Fot. dell'A.).

l'oceano innanzi a noi, libero e solo. Là incontro è il Polo, e noi ne cominciamo già a sentire la vicinanza.

Siamo sulla punta estrema d'Europa, dove la nostra vita finisce, dove nulla di noi e di nostro possiamo più trovare, e ci sembra di essere ad un estremo che non è l'ultimo, oltre il quale pure si può ancora andare, sentiamo dietro le nostre spalle la nostra casa e la patria lontana, in una lontananza fantastica infinita. Ci sembra di essere sul punto di lasciare una parte di noi e della nostra vita, di prendere congedo, di gridare un addio per partire ancora, verso un altro orizzonte più lontano, fatalmente lontano perchè separato del tutto da ciò che ci circonda, ci trattiene, ci fa bella la vita. È il senso di un addio, d'un addio per sempre che esprime quella punta estrema d'Europa, e nell'intensità del sentimento, nell'acutezza della sensazione, si sente in tutta la sua potenza, come non si è mai altrove provata, la realtà della lontananza, il fascino e il terrore dell'ignoto che ci è dinanzi. Questo vento che ci taglia la faccia viene dalla sommità estrema del mondo, ci reca le voci del deserto di ghiacci e delle solitudini artiche, ci scuote e ci frusta come una minaccia che acuisce il desiderio, diviene un incitamento, quasi un invito. Dietro di noi, lontana, è l'Europa, la nostra patria, la nostra casa, e la vita febbrile, intensa, agitata di lavoro e di dolori, e qui innanzi è la sfige del sogno. Come a poco a poco, tra il fischiar del vento in tempesta, l'eco del mare che si frange contro l'enorme scoglio del Capo, sembra un canto di guerra e di gioia,

di lotta e di speranza, di promessa e di lusinga!

Siamo venuti a vedere il sole di mezzanotte, con la vana curiosità dei turisti: il sole è rimasto nascosto dietro le nuvole, ma lo spettacolo della natura infuriata, là sull'estrema terra d'Europa, non poteva essere più grande e più significativo.

Il sole rimane nascosto, e, ci sembra, senza speranza: ci rifugiamo nel comodo padiglione che alcuni audaci e benemeriti speculatori hanno eretto sulla sommità estrema del Capo. È un vasto padiglione in legno, ben costruito, e assicurato da numerose corde di ferro: nell'interno pendono dal soffitto le bandiere di tutti i paesi, dolce saluto a tutti i pellegrini che vi giungono. Qualche bottiglia di *champagne*, del quale vi è larga provvista, rianima e rallegra i viaggiatori: si intrecciano i brindisi e si festeggia la nuova alba,



HORNVICH — CAPO NORD — ORE 2 DI NOTTE.

(Fot. dell'A.).

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SPEDIZIONE DEL DUCA DEGLI ABRUZZI.

L'8 maggio dell'anno scorso, S.A.R. Luigi di Savoia, Duca degli Abruzzi, lasciava Torino, recandosi in Norvegia, dove completare gli allestimenti della progettata sua spedizione verso il Polo Nord. La spedizione formata di lui, del capitano di corvetta Umberto Cagni, già suo compagno nel

di Arkhangel, per entrare nel Mare Bianco, il 12 del successivo mese di agosto e, dal momento che essa lasciò la Terra di Francesco Giuseppe, che, dopo la Groenlandia, è la più prossima al Polo, non diede più notizie di sé, come, del resto, non sarebbe più stato possibile averne.



I. — S. A. R. IL DUCA DEGLI ABRUZZI CO' SUOI UFFICIALI.

viaggio all'Alaska, del tenente di vascello Franco Querini, del capitano medico della regia marina dott. Achille Cavalli-Molinelli, dei due marinai della marina stessa, Giacomo Cardenti e Simone Canepa, delle quattro guide alpine valdostane Giuseppe Pétinax, Alessio Fenoillet, Felice Ollière e Michele Savoye, che pure già accompagnarono il Duca nell'ascesa del Sant'Elias; di dieci marinai norvegesi e di centoventi cani esquimesi, imbarcati ad Arkhangel; è partita, con la *Stella Polare*, dalla baja

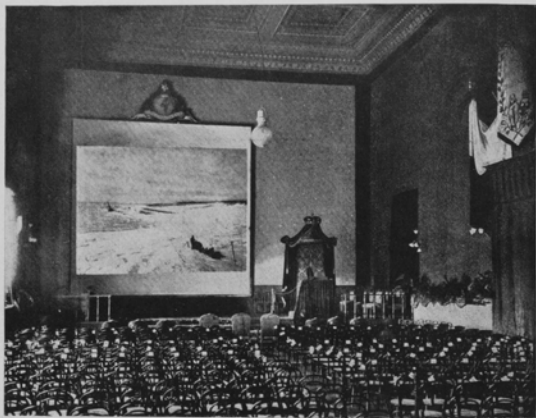
L'intelligentissimo progetto del Duca consisterebbe nell'avanzare in mezzo agli sterminati campi di ghiaccio a piccole giornate, costituendo lungo il viaggio stazioni e depositi di viveri, di cui servirsi al ritorno, sistema che egli ebbe già modo di sperimentare e con ottimo successo nella sua ascensione del Sant'Elias.

Tutti gl'italiani seguono, con palpiti di ammirazione e di ansietà, il nobile e ardimentoso tentativo, al quale s'è accinto lo strenuo giovine principe di

mincia una lotta nuova per non essere trascinati troppo a ponente dell'arcipelago: non si tratta più di atterrare a Teplitz o altrove, si tratta di atterrare dovunque sia dato e presto, o di perdersi inevitabilmente. Cogli scarsi mezzi di vita che rimangono, quasi esausta di forze, la carovana trascinata dalla deriva lungi dalla terra anderà irremissibilmente perduta.

veduta non è Teplitz; sono le isole Neale e Harley e Capo Mill.

Converrebbe ripetere le semplici e belle parole di Cagni per descrivere le ansie di quegli ultimi giorni; per far comprendere, come ben comprese chi lo udì, quale titanica lotta si combattesse nell'animo di quegli uomini d'acciaio, fra la speranza di guadagnare la



SALA DEL COLLEGIO ROMANO — IL PALCO PRESIDENZIALE E LA TRIBUNA DEGLI ORATORI.
(DA FOTOGRAFIA GENTILMENTE COMUNICATACI DALLA PRESIDENZA DELLA SOCIETÀ GEOGRAFICA ITALIANA).

Ma sagacia e coraggio congiunti provano ancora una volta fin dove giunga l'impero dell'uomo forte e sapiente di fronte alla Natura. Traverso una serie indescrivibile di stenti, sopportati con energia quasi sovrumana e di pericoli superati con eroica serenità, il 9 Giugno la comitiva rivede per la prima volta la terra, dopo novanta giorni. Rivederla non è però guadagnarla: cinque lunghi giorni devono passare ancora prima di toccarla; due altre intere settimane, prima di ritrovare i compagni. La terra

sospirata roccia e il terrore di esserne per sempre allontanati; fra il desiderio della fine d'una sì lunga e fiera prova, e la coscienza della immane difficoltà che ancora contrastava quella fine.

“ Passarono due ore di grande ansietà: la terra era a poche miglia da noi e rischiavamo di esserne allontanati per sempre „ — così parla in uno di quegli angosciosi momenti il forte marinaio. E tu, o lettore, che meco hai seguito sin qua le orme di lui, e per lui hai trepidato, pensa qual mai tre-

LE BELLEZZE NATURALI



Le isole spettrali

LE ISOLE SPETTRALI

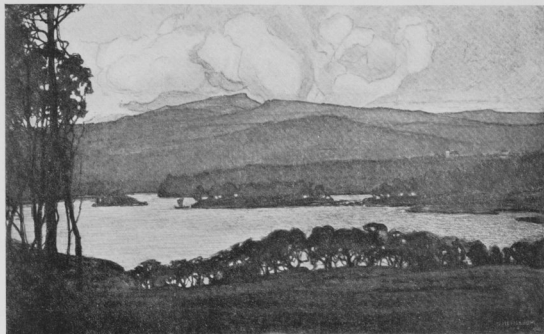
(Nel paese di Anna Boberg e di Gunnar Berg)

Io le vidi, in un triste giorno di agosto, sorgere fra nubi e nebbie dall'Oceano che le cingeva di bianchi nimbi, nel furore di una tempesta violentissima.

La luce era grigia, scendeva dai cieli oscuri come un velario tristemente uguale: una luce di crepuscolo che accennava appena i contorni nelle indeterminate lontananze e dava alle cose una vaga inconsistenza rilevandole nell'aria a simiglianza di incerti fantasmi.

Si giungeva dal *fjord* di Ofoten, da Narvik. Avevamo navigato fino allora per immobili laghi ed angusti canali chiusi fra altissime pareti di montagne squallide dalle quali, quando a quando, discendevano le linee argentee dei ghiacciai: avevamo perdute le ultime tracce della vita umana su le aspre coste nelle quali la fisica vegetazione della Lapponia era compiutamente scomparsa: muti, sul ponte quasi deserto, avvolti nei pastrani e negli scialli da viaggio avevamo guardato, con un senso di infinita nostalgia, il tragico paesaggio, tragico nella sua solennità inviolata.

Il piroscalo non aveva più scali fino a Svolveer, nelle isole Lofoten, filava diritto su le acque immobili e nere, percosso, innanzi a qualche gola, dal vento glaciale del nord che giungeva sibilando.



OTTO HESSELBOM — VEDUTA DEL LAGO.



saputo fare in modo che non fosse interrotta la diretta e sincera derivazione della rappresentazione sulla tela dalla visione apparsa ai suoi occhi al cospetto del vero, aveva saputo mantenere l'equilibrio delle varie parti e dei gradualî rapporti del quadro ed aveva saputo rendere il lavoro del pennello abbastanza rispondente ai bisogni specifici di una così complicata e difficoltosa opera rappresentativa, ella era riuscita eccellente.

Del resto, diciamolo a suo onore, la simpatica e valente pittrice svedese non si è lasciata esaltare e traviare dal plauso venutole da ogni parte, fino dal suo primo presentarsi al pubblico, e le tele esposte più di recente a Parigi ed a Londra e in cui più di una volta ha saputo esprimere, con rara intensità, la grandiosità quasi mistica della vasta solitudine dell'estremo settentrione d'Europa, dimostrano che Anna Boberg è in continuo progresso e ci danno bene il diritto di sperare che ella acuirà sempre più la sua visione di alcuni spettacoli del mondo reale fuori del comune, dei quali si è creata la specialità, svilupperà quel senso critico dell'opera propria di cui ben di sovente si sentiva la mancanza nelle sue prime prove, renderà



ANNA BOBERG.





IL CANTO AL MARMO DI
FRANCESCO QUERINI QUI
VUOLSI ONORATA E COME
PIANTA L'ALA DEL VENEZIA
PIER LUIGI PENZO
CORVOLATA SU L'ARTIDE
CADUTA NEL RODANO

NATO A VENEZIA IL 5 MAGGIO 1896
MORTO A VALENCE IL 29 SETTEMBRE
1918

PIRELLA GÖTTSCHE LOWE





Александр Зацепин

Ennio Morricone

КРАСНАЯ ПАЛАТКА

LA TENDA ROSSA

ASR 056 • AZ CD 005

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Александр Зацепин

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11. Смерть на полюсе
12. Сообщение из Рима
13. Они живы!
14. Прощание
15. Другие, после нас
16. Влюблённые на снегу

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IM LANDE DES EWIGEN EISES

VON
E. SALGARI

NOTIZIE
DELLA "STELLA"

DEL VIAGGIO
POLARE



Raccolta da
E. SALGARI



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UGO MIONI



MASTRO SPAGO AL POLO NORD

ALLA CONQUISTA DELL'ARIA

CASA EDITRICE MARIETTI - FONDATA NEL 1820
TORINO

1934

ROMA



Ne uccisi una ventina.

pag 44.



Lo avvicinai con l'aria del trionfatore...

pag. 82.