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*Allegory and Psychology in Multi-authorship
Writing. The cases of Fuoco grande by C.
Pavese and B. Garufi and Pelle d'asino by A.
Giuliani and E. Pagliarani*

Abstract

This essay focuses on the critical analysis and comparison of Fuoco grande by C. Pavese and B. Garufi and Pelle d'asino by A. Giuliani and E. Pagliarani as examples of co-authored literature. I define co-authored literature as a literary practice that entails the active and conscious co-operation of two or more authors. This approach leads to an innovative, argumentative and unpredictable interpenetration (compensation), which is the result of the various authorial contributions. In particular, I aim to investigate the links between allegory and psychoanalytical techniques used in co-authored literature. On the one hand, studying these approaches in relation to literary practice helps to reveal the relationship between co-authored writing and the contemporary world; on the other hand, it allows to verify the validity of this very analytical methodology when applied to co-authored texts. This can help to underline both the relationship between the concept of multi-authorship and Modernity, as well as the way dreams and fantasies influence both novels under scrutiny. I found that the psychoanalytic approach could not provide any fruitful

results, as it appeared to nullify the creolising process that takes place during co-authored writing, because it is mostly apt to reveal the individual self. In contrast, the allegoric approach (be it intentionis operis, or premeditated construction) demonstrated to be useful for the analysis of both works as it is more flexible.

Keywords: *co-authored literature; allegory; psychology; multi-authorship; avant-garde, Fuoco grande.*

1. Introduction

Co-authorship is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that in fiction entails different types of collaboration, which deserve extensive study and discussion.¹ In this paper, I provide a systematic yet brief overview of the theoretical framework needed for the scope of this essay. René Wellek and Austin Warren remark the importance of authorship when two writers decide to collaborate:

The book is a real instance of a collaboration in which the author is the shared agreement between two writers. In terminology, tone, and emphasis there remain doubtless, some slight inconsistencies between the writers; but they venture to think that there may be compensation for these in the sense of two different minds reaching so substantial an agreement.²

Wellek and Warren used the definition above to describe the structure of their jointly authored *Theory of Literature* (1942); I use their definition while dealing specifically with a literary

¹Cfr. F. Medaglia, *La scrittura a quattro mani* (Lecce-Brescia: Pensa MultiMedia, 2014).

²R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. VI.

work as it clearly points out that the authors want to collaborate and therefore plan carefully how they should proceed. Moreover, this definition suggests the idea that “two different minds” merge to create a product that is more complex and complete than what would be done by each author alone.

I previously applied this approach while analysing an extract taken from Édouard Glissant’s *Poetica del diverso*, which describes the process of creolisation. I contended that this is a typical feature of Creole writing:

Creolisation entails that when various elements interconnect, they mutually increase their ‘value’. This avoids degrading or diminishing individual identities, both inside and outside.³

The word ‘creole’ is usually about a cultural identity that become hybrid: this kind of cultural and literary production was born from the contact between indigenous, African and European populations after the Colonisation. ‘Creole’ was used initially to define a cultural mix that originates from Caribbean area. Later it began to designate also new cultural identities from different geographical areas. Glissant, native to Martinique, focuses on Caribbean experience to define this kind of postcolonial literatures. In this paper, I transpose this word in an authorship context and obviously I do not use ‘creole’ in its full meaning. I apply this term to co-authored literature in order to underline the fact that collaboration between authors with different backgrounds brings to innovative and mostly unpredictable results.

³É. Glissant, *Poetica del diverso* (Rome: Meltemi, 1998), p. 16; for the sake of textual coherence, I have translated into English all quotations that were originally in another language. Henceforth, all quotations are mine unless otherwise specified.

Similarly to the cultural creolisation, in the co-authorship creative process the different elements coming from each part are melted together in a unique and unpredictable mix. In other words, in co-authorship, as well as in creolisation, the hybridisation of the identities does not bring to a *diminutio* of the single parts or to a degradation of the individual backgrounds. The result of the processes is something totally new and autonomous from the parents' contributions.

On the basis of this brief introduction, I can now proceed to put forward a concise yet sound definition of co-authoring in literature. It can be seen as a planned and aware collaboration between two (or more) authors that leads to an innovative mutual penetration (i.e. compensation), which can result in an unforeseen improvement of each author's contribution in terms of content, language and style.

2. *The Research Project*

This research project is titled "Allegory and Psychology in Multi-Authorship Writing. The cases of *Fuoco grande* by C. Pavese and B. Garufi and *Pelle d'asino* by A. Giuliani and E. Pagliarani". It was made possible thanks to a post-doctoral research grant offered by the British Academy and funded by the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (from 24th August 2015 – 15th February 2016). This grant allowed me to carry out my research project at the CenTraS and the SELCS of UCL (University College London) as Affiliate Academic. This study aims to investigate the way style and meaning are developed in multi-authorship writing. In particular, it focuses on allegory and those psychoanalytical techniques that proved to be two main features of modern and contemporary literature in temporal, cultural and social terms. On the one hand, studying

these approaches in relation to literary practice helps to reveal the relationship between co-authored writing and the contemporary world; on the other hand, it allows to verify the validity of this very analytical methodology when applied to co-authored texts.

This research project developed over three distinct phases. The first involved setting up a suitable theoretical framework; the second involved collecting appropriate textual data; and the third involved testing the initial hypothetical assumptions. Each phase is individually discussed below.

Preliminary Phase: Cognitive-Theoretical Framework (2 months)

This initial phase of the project included the theoretical investigation of allegory and psychoanalysis in relation to literary criticism. During this period, I studied, researched and read critically an exhaustive number of works that could form the bibliography of these themes. After examining the different styles and topics developed in co-authored writing, I perused the literature that dealt with the philological and critical analysis of the works under scrutiny. The preliminary scrutiny also included some research on Garufi's *Il fossile* as it is considered to be the continuation of her previous co-authored work *Fuoco grande*. Furthermore, I devoted a good deal of attention to these writers' correspondences and related work, both reading their complete bibliography and the published correspondence between Pavese and Garufi.⁴ This was done in order to understand what sort of relationship they had (including shared or opposing views) and how their co-authored writing developed. After collecting all

⁴M. Masoero, ed., *Una bellissima coppia discorde. Il carteggio tra Cesare Pavese e Bianca Garufi (1945-1950)* (Florence: Olschki, 2011).

this material, I examined it in order to detect and highlight some relevant issues, which partly led to the revision of my project as a whole.

Working Phase Methodology (2 months)

During this second stage of my project, I focused my attention on the two books selected. Their philological analysis helped me to question some theoretical issues that led to a partial revision of this research project (more details are provided in the following section). As for the *Fuoco grande*, it was first published in 1959, after Pavese's death and it is a clear example of the gender issues as it is written by two authors of different sex. Pavese and Garufi wrote this novel at the beginning of 1946 but it remained unfinished; only eleven chapters were found by Pavese's wife after he passed away. The narration alternates Pavese's and Garufi's chapters. The former tells the story from Giovanni's point of view, the male main character; the latter tells the story from Silvia's perspective as she is the female main character. Giuliani and Pagliarani's *Pelle d'asino* was published in 1964 by the publisher "All'insegna del pesce d'oro", which was founded in Milan in 1936 by Giovanni Scheiwiller. It was inspired by Charles Perrault's literary fairytale in verse that was published for the first time in 1964 but subsequently rewritten in prose by an anonymous writer.

Final Phase: Verification and Conclusions (2 months)

During the last phase, I examined both works from a philological and critical point of view. In particular, I concentrated on allegory and psychoanalysis as techniques used to develop the different styles and meanings in co-authored

writing. As for *Fuoco grande*, its critical and theoretical examination benefitted from answering the following questions:

- 1) Is it possible to detect the authors' existential malaise and if so, to what extent?
- 2) Is it possible to understand Pavesi and Garuffi's dialogue by taking particularly into account their relationship?
- 3) Is it possible to interpret the female main character's psychological idiosyncrasies as a sort of allegory?
- 4) Is it possible to detect those typical features of communication problems (which Garuffi extensively debated in her studies on Jung)⁵ and solitude (which Pavesi particularly liked)?
- 5) Can references to dreams and fantasies, the unsaid and unfinished, be found?

As for *Pelle d'asino*, its critical and theoretical examination benefitted from answering the following questions:

- 1) Has the process of self-reduction, typical of the new Italian avant-garde, been the reason that led the authors to collaborate?
- 2) What type of narrator can be found?
- 3) Considering that the new Italian avant-garde authors strived for experimentalism in their writing, can fairytale be seen as a coherent narrative strategy within the movement?
- 4) Can interrupting the fairytale be seen as a way to deal with the hypotext as a device for an open-ended work?
- 5) Is the fairytale structure modified in order to comply with the allegoric process used in theatrical performance?

⁵See her MA thesis entitled *Struttura e dinamica della personalità nella psicologia di C. G. Jung* [Structure and dynamics of personality in C. G. Jung] (supervisor: G. Della Volpe, University of Messina, 1951).

6) Can the allegories in the text be interpreted in relation to its underlying anti-capitalist criticism?

All these questions were addressed in the light of and in relation to relevant issues that can be detected in multi-authored writing. First of all, I focused on the individual author's contribution. This study sought to verify whether it is possible (and if so) to detect each author's contribution. On the one hand, this approach allowed me to 'solve' and go beyond the issue of the death of the author. On the other hand, it helped me to link the issue of individual contribution in multi-authored writing to the theory of linguistic, cultural and human creolisation. Then I paid attention to the authorial attitude. In order to understand the real nature and innovative force of co-authored writing, I necessarily had to investigate what type of relationship the authors under scrutiny had established with each other. In addition, I had to examine the way these authors' ideas are reflected in their texts, their attitude towards their characters and the text as a whole. At this point, I consequently need to reflect on the gender issue in co-authored writing, particularly in *Fuoco grande*. Finally, I took into account the relationship between co-authored writing and the new Italian avant-garde. In fact, the authors that considered themselves part of this movement carried out co-authored experimental projects as a way to criticise individualism and private property. This allowed them to work together and, at the same time, 'disappear' behind their own ideas.

3. Approach Verification

Initially, my idea was to draft the questions reported above and address them separately. Subsequently, I realised that the

methodology I initially proposed to follow could not apply to the two afore-mentioned books. According to my initial intentions, I should have firstly examined *Fuoco grande* by means of a psychoanalytical approach; later, I would have dealt with *Pelle d'asino* by considering the allegories in it. This decision was due to the fact the Pavese and Garufi are generally considered to be linked to psychoanalysis, whereas Pagliarini and Giuliani are connected to allegory by 'traditional' criticism. Nonetheless, I soon realised I could not go further in this direction since my initial questions did not appear to be functional to my analysis. Hence, a change in perspective was in order and I therefore decided to verify the validity of these two approaches on both works. I somehow merged all my research questions into a single set and attempted to answer them for both texts by keeping co-authored writing as the *main focus* of my research. Rather than analysing each text separately and individually, I carried out one single analysis by means of a sound methodology that relates to the multi-authored writing practice.

The first finding is that the psychoanalytical approach cannot be applied across the board, as this could trivialise it. This framework can be used to examine the archetypes, dreams and fantasies within the text; however, it cannot be employed to analyse a text as a whole. Its extensive application is likely to lead to the so called *self-reduction*, thus resulting in a diminished level of plurality in terms of perspectives. Questioning authorship in this way will necessarily lead to negate co-authored writing. It mostly highlights each individual author's contribution, thus nullifying the collaborative scope of the text. Conversely, the allegoric approach appears to be valid in its application to both works if used in its dual

conceptualisation: allegory as a (not predetermined) *interpretation* of the whole text (*intentio operis*)⁶ and allegory as a *predetermined structure*, which is therefore enigmatic and animated by its internal tension; it tends to decompose into an asymmetric, disproportioned and uneasy contrast that is motivated by the characters' repressed feelings.⁷ In light of such considerations, I therefore decided to reorganise the whole project according to this new framework. This yield more interesting results, which are presented below. Due to space limitations, the following overview cannot be considered exhaustive. However, it can provide a sound understanding of my investigative process and its detailed application.

4. Fuoco grande

Cesare Pavese and Bianca Garufi co-authored this book at the beginning of 1946. It comprised eleven chapters but was left unfinished; Italo Calvino ensured that the volume saw its publication in 1959 after Pavese's death. According to Pavese, the title was meant to be *Viaggio nel sangue* but it was subsequently changed by the publisher into *Fuoco grande*. The publisher drew inspiration from one of Catina's sentences, which contains an idiomatic expression taken from both the Sicilian and Calabrese dialects to deal with difficult situations:

C'era un fuoco che bruciava sempre e nascita, morte, guerre, alluvioni svanivano in mezzo a quella fiamma. Dissi: – Catina, qui si sta sempre in mezzo al fuoco. – Fuoco grande, fuoco grande, – disse Catina. E attraverso

⁶U. Eco, *I limiti dell'interpretazione* (Milan: Bompiani, 1990), p. 125.

⁷F. Muzzioli, *L'alternativa letteraria* (Milan: Booklet, 2002), p. 32.

la notte sentii che mia madre bruciava, che Dino bruciava, che anch'io mi ero messa di nuovo a bruciare.⁸

There was a fire that kept burning and birth, death, wars, floods disappeared in the middle of that flame. I said: – Catina, here we are always amid fire. – A big fire, a big fire, Catina said. And through the night I heard my mother burning, Dino burning, and even I started burning again.

The narration alternates Pavese's and Garufi's chapters. The former tells the story from Giovanni's point of view, the male main character; the latter tells the story from Silvia's perspective as she is the female main character. The novel tells the story of two former lovers, Silvia and Giovanni who, months after their break-up, meet again. Silvia is a young woman who now lives in a city and receives a telegram asking for her immediate return to her native town, Maratea. The reason for calling Silvia back home is that her youngest brother Giustino is about to die. She asks her former lover Giovanni to accompany her and he immediately accepts. This experience will force Silvia to cast her mind back to her troubled past and Giovanni will have the chance to discover a long-hidden family secret.

4.1 The Gender Issue

I decided to investigate the gender issue as one of the main features of this novel. Drawing on my previous work on this topic,⁹ I examined *Fuoco grande* and this analysis confirmed my previous findings that each author's gender influences the co-authored writing process in various ways. The first one is that in the gender-based co-authored writing there are usually no more

⁸C. Pavese and B. Garufi, *Fuoco grande* (Turin: Einaudi, 1959), pp. 51-52.

⁹For a detailed discussion, see: Medaglia, pp. 145-208.

than two authors.¹⁰ The second is that the writers often decided beforehand which chapters each author will write (authorial tracking). Moreover, normally, those who decided to write together are closely related (positioning) and each author searches their own identity through their writing companion (positioning).

4.2 *Identity, Relationship and Self*

As for the dimension of identity and personal representation within this text, the following points were considered: the current debates in Gender Studies on postmodern feminism, the multiplicity of voices and styles, the doubled sets of linkages with other literary works, the symmetry and asymmetry in the joint authorship of Pavese and Garufi.

Firstly, according to Masoero, Gender Studies on postmodern feminism:

Have criticised the idea of a universal woman and, since the 1990s onwards, have highlighted the distinction between *plural masculine and feminine identities*. They have also

¹⁰For example: *Un ventre di donna: romanzo chirurgico* (1919) by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Enif Robert; 108 romance novels (published from 1903 and 1943) by M. Delly (pseudonym of Frédéric Henri Petitjean de la Rosière and Jeanne Marie Henriette Petitjean de la Rosière), *Ghiacciofuoco* (2007) by Laura Pariani and Nicola Lecca; several novels written by Sveva Casati Modignani (pseudonym of Bice Cairati and her husband Nullo Cantaroni); the long series of novels featuring inspector Martin Beck and the Stockholm Murder Investigation Team supervised by Maj Sjöwall and her husband Per Fredrik Wahlöö; the novels by Nicci French (pseudonym of Sean French and Nicci Gerard); the novels by Lars Kepler (pseudonym of Alexander Ahndoril and Alexandra Coelho Ahndoril); the novels by Michael Gregorio (pseudonym of Daniela Gregorio and her husband Michael J. Jacobs).

remarked the interconnections between gender-based relationships with categories such as social class, power relations and generations.¹¹

In a letter to Garufi dated 23rd February 1946, Pavese himself defines *Fuoco grande* as a “bisexual novel”.¹² In co-authored writing, authors accept multiplicity and give up their individualist self because “being is relationship, which means that being is not to be considered in absolute terms; it means relating to others”.¹³ Secondly, it becomes no longer possible to distinguish our identity in absolute terms, because “the notion of being and the absolute of being is linked to the idea of identity as a ‘single root’ and the exclusivity of the identity is conceived as a root that is interwoven with other roots; so, what becomes important is not the absolute nature of each single root but the way they enter in contact with other roots, their Relationship. Today, I find the poetics of relationship more evident and more compelling than the poetics of being.”¹⁴ Thirdly, as J. Mukarovsky explains: “firstly, a given work of art is not normally the only product produced by his author. More often than not, it is only one of the links of a longer chain of products [...]”. The artist is not confined within the limits of his own individuality as there is always some tension between what changes and what lasts. This phenomenon is amplified when the author happens to find himself related to someone else, as it happens in co-authored writing; when in isolation “the artist remains locked within the limits of his own artistic individuality,

¹¹M. Giuffrè, *Donne di Capo Verde. Esperienze di antropologia dialogica a Ponta do Sol* (Rome: Cisu, 2007), p. 4.

¹²Masoero, *Un bellissima coppia discorde*, p. 38.

¹³Glissant, p. 26.

¹⁴*Ibidem*.

which he cannot overcome because he continues producing individual works.”¹⁵ Finally, despite Pavese’s and Garufi’s writing and points of view alternate, the narration proceeds smoothly and it is well structured. The very fact that there is a continuous change in perspective leads the reader to develop a sort of estranging feeling.¹⁶ Hence, the language used in the novel is no longer Pavese’s or Garufi’s, it becomes a merged, polyphonic yet single language: the two authors’ voices have creolised into a single new ‘author’ that has swallowed them up.

4.3 A Finished or Unfinished Novel? The Unsaid and its Incompleteness

As far as incompleteness is concerned, Garufi herself solved the issue in her introduction by writing that:

The novel stops at its eleventh chapter. Our initial intention was to develop a much longer narration. Indeed, both Pavese’s and my own typewritten texts were accompanied by our notes regarding how the story should have unfolded (along with a pencil drafts of the map of Matera and Silvia’s mother’s two-storey house), which included Silvia and the lawyer’s life after they run away to the big city, the love story between Giovanni and Flavia and Silvia’s suicide. However, interrupting our narration during Silvia and her family’s trip, and the later discovery of their secret, led the

¹⁵J. Mukarovsky, *La funzione, la norma e il valore estetico come fatti sociali* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), p. 170.

¹⁶See: G. Romanelli, ‘La compiutezza di un incompiuto: *Fuoco grande* di Cesare Pavese’, in *Pavese «irregolare»: la compiutezza dell’incompiuto e l’umanità degli dei. Quinta rassegna di saggi internazionali di critica pavesiana*, ed. by A. Catalfamo (Santo Stefano Belbo (CN): CEPAM, 2005), p. 43.

novel to be charged with such a degree of emotional and narrative tension that it can be considered as a finished work rather than as part of something incomplete [...].¹⁷

The reality was rather more complex. The story narrated in this novel was further developed by Garufi alone in her later novel *Il fossile*, which was published in 1963 by Einaudi. In her subsequent novel, we find the same main characters and the same alternated narrative structure. *Fuoco grande* ends with its eleventh chapter, but the moment when Silvia's secret is revealed (as Garufi herself explained)¹⁸ is to be the source of several further developments of the storyline, among which Silvia and the lawyer's city life after they run away, the love story between Giovanni and Flavia and Silvia's suicide. Yet, such ideas were pursued in *Il fossile*, since the novel opens with Giustino's deaths. Silvia is still in Maratea and spends her days in bed pretending to be sick until something inside her awakes and she starts going out with her cousin Salvatore. Giovanni, who runs away from Maratea, spends his time with Flavia and Mario who decided to get married. In the meantime, Silvia's mother dies after her coach clashed against a car. She leaves all her money to Giustino and Dino, Silvia's step-father and a lawyer; he runs away with the money. Giovanni, after receiving a letter from Silvia, decides to return to Maratea but when he arrives, Silvia has already left.

The story of the two main characters in *Fuoco grande* is therefore concluded. Yet, after reading both novels, the differences in Garufi's style become immediately evident, although fifteen years separate her co-authored work with

¹⁷Pavese and Garufi, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸M. Masoero, 'Nota al testo', in *Fuoco grande*, by C. Pavese and B. Garufi (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), p. XL.

Pavese and her solo endeavour. The significantly different voice and tones confirm that the creolisation process effectively took place when writing *Fuoco grande*. It resulted in a sort of ‘unified-author’ who is something more than each single author considered individually. In my opinion, this new kind of author could be called ‘creolised author’.¹⁹

4.4. *Literary Construction and Psychological Elements*

In light of its incompleteness, for this novel I needed to understand whether or not *Fuoco grande* was the result of a merely literary construction or a sort of “journal-novel”, which is based on real psychological elements. Some critics emphasise the overlapping of authors and characters and in particular the strict relationship between the female author and the creation of a character.²⁰ They claimed that this novel is deeply introspective²¹ and remarked that the end of the novel matches the end of the love story between the two authors.²² However, Pavese’s own words regarding the writing of *Fuoco grande* are much more interesting and revealing. In a letter addressed to Bianca Garufi and dated 18th February 1946, he writes:

While rereading [the novel], I realise that [...] the rhythm becomes unbearable. How about *you start narrating first*, for instance, about the night Giov. [sic.] besieges Silvia’s room, or the death of Giustino who is watched over *till morning*, or

¹⁹For a detailed discussion, see: Medaglia, pp. 17-18.

²⁰S. De Paola, *Gli amori sofferti di Cesare Pavese* (Rome: Bibliosofica, 2013), p. 18.

²¹*Ibidem*.

²²S. Marufi and W. Mauro, ‘Lettura a due voci di *Fuoco grande*’, in *La stanza degli specchi. Cesare Pavese nella letteratura, nel cinema e nel teatro*, ed. by A. Catalfamo (Santo Stefano Belbo (CN): CEPAM, 2004), pp. 131-141.

Silvia's night walk to the cliff *till dawn*? You decide. As for me, I think the earlier Giustino kicks the bucket, the better. Also, remember that there is a major difference between our writing styles".²³

With these premises, the novel appears to be a carefully considered literary construct, rather than the 'romantic' whim of both authors. However, it is equally true that in a letter dated 22nd February 1946 that Garufi writes to Pavese, she explains: "[...] then, in a bloody scene involving Silvia and Giovanni, who during the night loses his mind and does all kinds of bad things in a very strange way, you will see. It is then your duty to explain why you were in that state".²⁴ Garufi's use of the verb "you were" seems to fully merge Pavese with his character Giovanni.

Apart from the letter I mentioned above, the two authors' other letters (and particularly those dating between February and July 1946, which is also the period when the novel was written) clearly deal only with technical literary issues (rhythm, language, style, etc.). In a letter dated 1946, Pavese himself defines *Fuoco grande* as "a work of art and not an outburst".²⁵ In my opinion, this clears any possible doubt, as he further adds:

I mean that each one of the main characters should write as if unaware about the others' writing – this is the artifice that frees the novel from that possibly unpleasant character of double biography: our work is art, it is not an outburst".²⁶

As Catalfamo rightly points out regarding Pavese and Garufi's letters:

²³Masoero, *Un bellissima coppia discorde*, p. 29.

²⁴Ivi, p. 35.

²⁵Ivi, p. 54.

²⁶*Ibidem*.

Hence, we have the privilege to witness, almost as if in ‘live recording’, the creation of a novel, we can learn about the observations the two authors share, their mutual criticism. We can see them working in two different ways, which also reveal two opposing personalities. Pavese is a meticulous writer who has a work plan and scrupulously respects it. Bianca Garufi fully trusts her “instinctive creativity” that, although apparently chaotic, is also rational and secretly moved by its underlying principles”.²⁷

In my opinion Catalfamo completely understand the nature of the relationship between Pavese and Garufi as a work experience and not just a personal relationship. In fact, thanks to the published correspondence between Pavese and Garufi we are able to examine the building of this novel. Consequently the comprehension of the working role of the two authors becomes simpler. This is a rare case that allows us to easily recognise the different writers’ hands inside the book. In fact, like in *Pelle d’asino*, usually we do not have the chance to read the comment written by the authors on their novel while they are writing it. In this other cases we need to find a different way to approach to the book and analyse it.

5. Pelle d’asino

5.1 Co-authorship Writing and new Italian Avant-Garde

In my opinion, multi-authored writing was an essential feature of the avant-garde movements, because it is perfect way to represents the idea of group wished by Futurists. Avant-garde writers opposed to the idea of a unique individual and the

²⁷A. Catalfamo, *Cesare Pavese. Mito, ragione e realtà* (Rende (CS): Solfanelli, 2012), p. 208

legitimacy of private property.²⁸ It was therefore coherent with these tenets of their contemporary literary trends that they turned to such a writing style as it could ‘depersonalise’ the author and demystify the sacredness of their role, which were felt necessary at that stage. The avant-garde writers hoped that literature could survive despite the hectic life and innovations that were brought about during those years, which made the world and, most importantly, writing faster and faster. Unexpectedly, the new Italian avant-garde of the twentieth century did not make a large use of multi-authored writing, compared to the Surrealists such as A. Breton and P. Éluard.²⁹ Unlike Surrealism and Futurism, the new Italian avant-garde called Group ’63 probably did not fully believe that literary multi-author writings could replace the single individual; in fact they merely suggested that “a conference can be a place for a real and decisive collective experience”.³⁰ As remarked in the *Novissimi* anthology, the new Italian avant-garde rejected the idea of a ‘monolithic self’; yet it never displayed a real sense of a group. Unlike historical avant-garde movements such as Futurism and Surrealism, the new Italian avant-garde no longer thought possible to represent a group through a “manifesto [...] which is a too unilateral and limiting form. We need more open and less exhibited ways. Hence, consider the plurality of the debate and, above all, the new way of doing ‘research’”.³¹ The narrator does not die but it

²⁸L. Ballerini, *La piramide capovolta* (Venice: Marsilio, 1975), p. 10-16; Muzzioli, *L’alternativa letteraria*; A. Saccoccio and R. Guerra, eds., *Marinetti 70. Sintesi della critica futurista* (Rome: Armando, 2014), pp. 60-63;

²⁹Medaglia, pp. 124-143.

³⁰F. Muzzioli, *Il gruppo ’63. Istruzioni per la lettura* (Rome: Odradek, 2013), p. 15.

³¹Ivi, p. 118.

is deconstructed and estranged by spiritualism, which becomes a pivotal element “of irony, hybridization, multiple voices and meta-discourse”³².

5.2 *The Original*

This literary work in verse was first published in 1964 and later rewritten in prose by an anonymous writer.³³ Charles Perrault’s literary fairy-tale tells the story of a king who, after losing his wife, could not find any princess beautiful enough to replace her. He eventually fell in love with his daughter and wanted to marry her. Frightened by her father’s desire, the princess attempted to avoid such an inappropriate marriage by making impossible demands as a condition to her consent. She asked for three gowns, one had to be the colour of time, one the colour of the moon, and one that of the sun. Moreover, she asked her father for the gold droppings of the donkey Cacazecchini. To the princess’s great surprise, the king granted all requests and killed the donkey to offer her its skin. The princess ran away covered only in the donkey skin and found shelter in a farm as one of the many servants. During a party, the princess decided to wear one of the dresses the king had had made for her and a young prince fell in love with her and married her. It is interesting to note that the story closely resembles *Donkeyskin* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who always co-authored their fairytales.

³²Ivi, p. 203.

³³AA.VV., *Dizionario letterario delle opere e dei personaggi di tutti i tempi e di tutte le letterature* (Milan: Bompiani, 1964), vol. V, p. 456.

5.3 Giuliani and Pagliarani's Version

Alfredo Giuliani and Elio Pagliarani published their own version in 1964 with the publisher All'insenga del pesce d'oro, founded in Milan in 1936 by Giovanni Scheiwiller. This grotesque theatrical and musical version was accompanied by Gastone Novelli's illustrations (who also created the set design and scenography for the theatre) and it is slightly different from Perrault's original fairytale. The main focus of this theatre version is gold and the anti-capitalist debate, which is amplified by its colloquial language and satirical tone. The link between money and defecation has been largely debated both in literature and psychology. Sigmund Freud himself explained that human beings try to fight their anal-related lust by transforming it into the desire to possess increasingly large amounts of money.³⁴ Giuliani's and Pagliarani's *Pelle d'asino* very well represents the prototype of the Italian avant-garde's idea that contemporary writers should not forget the past and existing literary traditions. The authors preferred reading and writing the past in the light of the progressive stimuli of the contemporary experimentalism. Hence, using a fairytale did not only mean redeveloping a literary genre that was normally co-authored, but it also confirmed that working on narrative functions fruitfully fitted the ideas put forward by the new Italian avant-garde movement, which strived for experimental writing. Using grotesque as a genre, and accompanying it with images and set designs, can be linked to Alfred Jarry's theatrical expression. However, we should not overlook the connection of the text with the captions

³⁴See: S. Freud, 'Carattere ed erotismo anale', in *Opere: Il motto di spirito e altri scritti*, by S. Freud (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001), vol. 5, pp. 401-106; M. Bustreo and A. Zatti, *Denaro e psiche. Valore e significati psicosociali nelle relazioni di scambio* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2007), p. 37.

to the images and the notes enclosed therein. Besides, we also need to consider the relationship between the message conveyed through its words and images. As Giuliani explained in his introduction to the *Nuovissimi* anthology in 1965 (one year after *Pelle d'asino* was published):

[Modern writing] is an aspect of modern art and those who manage to survive the consumption chain (which is also the grinder that crushes individual sensitivity into a homogeneous power that feeds the System) should also ask themselves why they feel the need for such an irritating and absurd type of poetry; it matters not that poetry knows and speaks to them; *what matters is that they can have their chance to talk.*³⁵

5.4 Anonymous Author and Open-ended Work

In his introduction to the *Novissimi* anthology, Giuliani refers to experimentalism, recalling the issues of impersonality and multiplication. He writes that:

Coherence means moving from the dry writing practice of a 'style' to the adventurous search and proposals for a 'more impersonal and extensive sort of 'writing'. The famous 'experimentalism' [...] It seemed that the possibilities of 'speaking in verse' became limited; instead, we expanded them.³⁶

He also relates to the phenomenon of self-reduction, which was another essential aspect dealt with by the *Nuovissimi*. Nonetheless, as Muzzioli remarks:

³⁵A. Giuliani, ed., *I Novissimi. Poesie per gli anni '60* (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), p. ix.

³⁶Ivi, pp. XXIII-XXIV.

The author is not cancelled; quite the opposite. The subject is still essential but the subject of the enunciation takes the main features of the subject of the enunciated; or put more simply, it regains its features, which are normally hidden. It is not by chance that we can find a plural author including more people.³⁷

Thus, the author becomes an anonymous and multiplied narrator, a collective instrument that escapes the limited perspective of the individual self. This is the starting point of that journey Giuliani and the Nuovissimi hoped for; it implies a deep manipulation of language and its structures, which are connected to the ‘schizomorphism’³⁸ of modern society. Sometimes the self-reduction process leads to collective writing, as it happened in *Pelle d’asino* and Pagliarani’s *La ragazza Carla*, which is a typical example of ‘novissimo’ in verse. Hence, this shows “the need to go beyond the blinkers that the self places on us. A more general perspective is added to that of the actor’s; it is a collective point of view that is supported by the strategy of having an anonymous narrator” (my translation).³⁹ As Giuliani himself warns us in his introduction to the 1961 *Novissimi* anthology, “the self-reduction depends more

³⁷Muzzioli, *Il gruppo '63*, p. 22.

³⁸About the meaning of schizomorphism, “Giuliani coined the term ‘schizomorfism’ to differentiate the work of his colleagues from the previously dominant Hermetic poetry, which drew on the voice of the writer’s individual subconscious. Schizomorfism, in the tradition of Surrealism, drew on the individual subconscious, but its emphasis was on the portrayal of the schizophrenic nature of modern society” (see: J. Picchione and L. R. Smith, *Twentieth-century Italian Poetry: An Anthology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 398-399).

³⁹Muzzioli, *Il gruppo '63*, p. 112.

on one's linguistic creativity than on its ideological choice".⁴⁰
Consequently:

Self-reduction is my last historical chance to subjectively express myself [...] In other words, I can see the opportunity to regain, as least as far as feelings and attitudes are concerned, a portion of self, world and society, the not-agreed disorder we find semantically necessary, as well as the historical background with its highly-biased forms. For example, I hope that contemporary readers can go back to Dante through Sanguineti, or they may understand the *Scapigliatura* movement, and *Verism* [*Realism*] through Pagliarani. Any ancient and old form of writing can be used and they can be rediscovered through an innovative process, moving from this rather than from a hypothetical continuity or a polemically archaeological rediscover.⁴¹

Pelle d'asino seems to recall what Pagliarani states in his conclusions to the essay *La sintassi ed i generi*, which is also included in the *Novissimi* anthology:

Time will become fruitful by following Eliot's suggestion on social power that conquers poetry when it is proposed in a theatrical form (which can disrupt audience stratification). The only way to accelerate this process is by writing tragedies... As for the 'Drama in Verse' genre, I would say we now have the right tools.⁴²

Pelle d'asino could rightly be considered as the first experiment in this sense as it alternates parts in prose (featuring colloquial language) and more poetical and clearly musical

⁴⁰Giuliani, p. XXVI.

⁴¹Ivi, pp. XXVII-XXVIII.

⁴²E. Pagliarani, *La sintassi ed i generi*, in *I Novissimi. Poesie per gli anni '60*, ed. by A. Giuliani (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), p. 168.

sections. In the final part of this work, the President pleads the king not to kill the donkey, but the latter gives the order to do so and proceed with the wedding preparation. The fairy suddenly turns into a *maîtresse* and tries to convince the young princess to get married:

Fatina: Però, tutte queste belle cosine,/ Non ti capiterà mai più un'occasione simile!⁴³

Fairy: All these beautiful little things/ You will never get another chance like this!

Meanwhile the courtiers form a ring and start singing an obsessive refrain that leads to the climax of the story when the donkey dies and the princess runs away wearing its hide. When the Princess flees, the fairytale is interrupted and thus becomes an example of the way the writers can employ a hypotext as a device for an open-ended work. The death of the donkey, and the consequent loss of its gold, leads to the end of the novel when a multitude of messengers enters the scene to give a statement:

'Messaggero I – Sciopero nazionale dei trasporti' 'Messaggero II – Interrotte le comunicazioni con la capitale' 'Messaggero III – Serrata dei grandi magazzini' 'Messaggero IV – Lunedì nero in Borsa' 'Messaggero V – Agitazioni nei cotonifici' 'Messaggero VI – Martedì nero in Borsa' 'Messaggero VII – I minatori in rivolta' 'Messaggero VIII – Piovano le cavallette' [...].⁴⁴

⁴³A. Giuliani and E. Pagliarani, *Pelle d'asino* (Milan: All'insegna del pesce d'oro, 1964), p. 27.

⁴⁴Ivi, pp. 29-30.

‘Messenger I – National strike of transport’ ‘Messenger II – Interrupted All communications with the capital’ Messenger III – Department Store closed’ ‘Messenger IV – Black Monday at the Stock Exchange’ ‘Messenger V – Cotton mills turmoil’ ‘Messenger VI – Black Tuesday at the Stock Exchange’ ‘Messenger VII – Miners’ uprising’ ‘Messenger VIII – Locust plague’[...].

5.5 Authorial Tracking

The analysis of this work allowed me to focus on the possibility of tracking the author’s individual contribution, which is an issue that is generally connected with collective writing. In fact, tracking the individual authorships seems to be the only way to understand the state of the merging process between the two contributions. In other words, understanding the level of interpenetration of the two authors’ writing styles is a reliable tool for the philological analysis of the book.

As for *Pelle d’asino*, I needed to verify whether it was possible to detect each author’s individual contribution. Such an approach cannot be applied to the investigation of collective writing *tout court* due to the multifaceted complexity of this writing procedure. As a matter of fact, in some cases it may be possible to detect each author’s contribution to a literary work because they both manage to retain some idiosyncratic stylistic features in specific parts of the text. This happens in particular when the writers are a man and a woman. However, in many other cases the authors’ styles penetrate so deeply into one another that dissecting the novel to find each author’s contribution becomes impossible.

Indeed, in many works, the authors’ voices totally merge into each another’s as, for instance, in Tonino Guerra and Luigi Malerba’s series of literary works that feature Millemosche as

their main character.⁴⁵ He is a deserter and mercenary who travels with two men whose names are quite revealing: Pannocchia (Cob) and Carestia (Famine). The story is set during the Middle Ages and people are most likely to die of starvation or during a war. This series of novels targets teenagers and their three main characters are moved by a strong epic spirit, which turns out to be extremely comical. The protagonists face several challenges such as walking endlessly, starvation, field battle, desperate and fruitless food hunting, adventures inside monasteries, false miracles and meetings with expert crooks. They are always hungry and try to save their lives and win their bread, thus becoming examples of anti-heroes that fight authority and those obsolete and rhetorical themes that can normally be found in juvenile literature. As in *Millemosche*, detecting each author's contribution in *Pelle d'asino* appears to be impossible. Giuliani and Pagliarani show their true colours as members of the Italian new avant-garde; their voices are perfectly creolised, and they do not have any interest in showing the style of their individual contribution to the process of writing their piece. The same applies to the authors who collectively called themselves I Dieci and worked together before Giuliani and Pagliarani.

5.6 Allegory as a Premeditated Creative Structure

In light of what I have contended so far and to confirm that allegory is a premeditated creative structure, it is important to underline that in *Pelle d'asino* the structure within this fairytale

⁴⁵See: *Millemosche mercenario* (1969), *Millemosche senza cavallo* (1969), *Millemosche fuoco e fiamme* (1970), *Millemosche innamorato* (1971), *Millemosche e il leone* (1973), *Millemosche e la fine del mondo* (1973) and *Millemosche alla ventura* (1974).

is mainly theatrical and allegoric. Moreover the fairytale style is used as a narrative basic function as it is ideal for experimenting and an allegoric vision of the anti-capitalist debate can be detected throughout the text.

For instance, the princess feels afraid of and disgusted by her father's proposal and therefore hides in a corner. The Fairy attempts to comfort her while the king tries to convince her to marry him by offering her priceless dresses, in a surreal and ironic increasing tension:

Re – (alla figlia) Lo vuoi l'abito di zibellino? [...] Lo vuoi l'abito di plasticopolistirene/ che non s'incendia? [...] Lo vuoi l'abito di ossidometilmecollina/ che non si macchia? [...] Lo vuoi l'abito della Rinascente/ che è già confezionato e non si stira?.⁴⁶

King (to his daughter): Would you like this sable dress? [...] Would you like this plastic-polystyrene dress/ it does not catch fire? [...] Would you like this methylmalonic-oxide dress/? it does not get stained? [...] Would you like this Rinascente dress? It is tailor-made and doesn't need ironing?

It also seems worth noting that the opening scene of this fairytale is set in the hall of the palace where the king, the queen and the princess happily hold hands, sing and dance altogether. Suddenly, the President of the Senate arrives to the party and exchanges the following conversation with the king:

'Re – (al Presidente) Ah, giusto voi: che ora è? Il popolo gode della nostra felicità?' 'Presidente – Sire, il popolo ne è informato e abbiamo ragione di credere che ne goda assai'.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Giuliani and Pagliarani, pp. 25-27.

⁴⁷Ivi, p. 11.

‘King – (to the President): Ah, there you are! What time is it? Do our people enjoy our happiness?’ President – Sire, your people know and we have reason to believe that they are really enjoying it’.

These examples illustrate both the use of a fairy tale as a way of experimentalism and the anti-capitalist debate that has been built as an allegoric overshadowed plot. In this book, the allegory is not an unplanned interpretation but a premeditated structure, well-connected with the whole plot.

Subsequently, the king enquires about the health and doings of his precious donkey and The Minister of Treasury offers him the donkey’s chamber pot full of gold. This sight encourages everybody to start a celebrating ballet around the chamber pot:

‘Principessa – (entra in tenuta da cavallo, col frustino. Dice a parte annoiata:) Il solito merdoso rito’ ‘Presidente – Merda dorata, Altezza.’ ‘Ministro del Tesoro – Merda dorata purissima. Venti carati’ [...] Re, Regina e Principessa – (ballano intorno al cesto, mentre il Re canta). ‘Re – Chi è più felice di me?/ Moglie, figlia e merda/ d’oro. [...] L’Asino risolve tutti i miei/ problemi, per lui ho/ ogni riguardo. Dicono che/ è macilento, sebbene io lo nutrisca/ di biade e di fichi. È vero/ che il cacar quotidiano gli è fatica,/ ma è cosa della vita, ma è cosa della vita’.⁴⁸

The Princess – (dressed for horse riding, holding a crop. Aside, and slightly bored): The usual shitty ritual. The President: Golden shit, Her Highness. The Minister of Treasury: Pure golden shit. Twenty karats [...] The King, Queen and Princess (dancing around the basket while the king sings). The King: who is happier than me?/ Wife, daughter and shit/ golden shit [...] The donkey solves all my/ problems, for him I have/ special consideration.

⁴⁸Ivi, p. 13.

They say that/ he is scrawny/ even if I feed it with fodder and figs. It is true that shitting daily is tiring for it/ but it is part of life, it is part of life.

6. Conclusions

In order to investigate the different styles and meanings of multi-authored writing, I decide to apply a strict approach based on a set of research questions, such as to verify whether it is possible (and if so to what extent) to detect each author's contribution; what type of relationship the authors under scrutiny establish with each other; the way these authors' ideas are reflected in their texts, their attitude towards their characters and the text as a whole and, at last, I take into account the relationship between co-authored writing and the new Italian avant-garde.

My methodology of textual analysis predominantly focused on two areas, which were respectively the application of the psychoanalytic approach to study *Fuoco grande* and of the allegoric framework to investigate *Pelle d'asino*. This choice/stand/approach was motivated by the fact that in literature these approaches had strictly been used to analyse each text. However, soon after my preliminary examination, I detected a remarkable problem: this strict application of both approaches lacked the flexibility needed to investigate co-authored writing practice. Hence, I resorted to using both approaches on *Fuoco grande* and *Pelle d'asino*; then, I reconsidered my initial research questions so as to utilise a comparative approach in order to conduct my analysis of the two texts. As a result of this revised methodology, I found that the psychoanalytic approach could not return any fruitful results, as it appeared to nullify the creolising process that takes place during co-authored writing, because it is mostly apt to reveal the

individual self. The psychoanalytic approach puts a strong emphasis on the author as a single person, consequently it completely forgets about the 'creolised author' who is something more than each single author considered individually.

Hence, only psychological elements can be detected within these works and they most likely depend on the allegory of the enigmatic creative process, which gains internal tension and life. Moreover, this process tends to deconstruct into an asymmetric and disproportioned contrast, which is also moved by the revival of what is repressed. In contrast, the allegoric approach (be it *intentio operis*, or premeditated construction) demonstrated to be useful for the analysis of both works as it is more flexible.

