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NUNTIUS POETA MILES
THE FIGURE OF GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO IN NEO-LATIN POETRY*

SUMMARY: This article explores the largely unknown corpus of Latin poetry dedicated to the figure of Gabriele d'Annunzio. It appears that quite a few of d'Annunzio's Italian contemporaries turned to Latin in order to immortalise *il Vate* and his oeuvre in verse. This article therefore tries to offer an overview of all Latin *Nuntiana* known to date, and to shed light on the ways in which these Latin poets reactivated the classical heritage in presenting, praising, or at least referring to d'Annunzio or his oeuvre. Based on a number of recurring themes, the article's structure is devised as a triptych, focusing on the representation of d'Annunzio in Latin poetry as a national war hero, the conqueror of Fiume, and an author respectively.

KEYWORDS: d'Annunzio, Neo-Latin Poetry, *Certamen Hoeufftianum*, Cesare De Titta, Annibale Tenneroni, Alfredo Bartoli, First World War, Fiume

1. Introduction

The figure of Gabriele d'Annunzio has never failed to capture the imagination, be it as a decadent poet and dandy author, a leading pro-war interventionist, a swashbuckling war hero, or the Poet-King of Fiume. As such, the character has taken on many forms throughout his various appearances in Western literature, so much so that, in the words of Luciano Curreri, everyone seems to create their own version of d'Annunzio ("a ciascuno il suo d'Annunzio")[1]. A little known fact in this regard is that the character of *il Vate* also captured the imagination of many a Latin poet, mostly in his own day, but also later in the twentieth century[2]. As we will see, these so-called Neo-Humanist poets from Italy, many of whom were personal acquaintances of d'Annunzio's from the Abruzzo region, turned to this dead language in order to paint an unabashedly positive picture of d'Annunzio ('*Nuntius*'), mostly as a classical hero and *poeta miles* (warrior-poet).

D'Annunzio's affection for the classics and the presence of the classical tradition in his oeuvre at large have already been noted and studied[3]. As the product of an education with a strong emphasis on classics, d'Annunzio of course felt very much at ease in the worlds of ancient Rome and Greece. In fact, the first collection of poetry he ever published, *Primo vere* (1879), even contained a number of translations of Horace's odes. In the second edition of 1913, he also added translations of Catullus, Tibullus, and a number of Homeric hymns[4]. Even the 'original' poetry of the young d'Annunzio – *Primo vere* and *Canto novo* in particular – is marked by the presence of many 'barbarian' (i.e. classical) elements with which he clearly aimed to follow in the footsteps of Carducci's *Odi barbare* (e.g. the variety of classical metres in those works). D'Annunzio's name is also often mentioned in the same breath as Giovanni Pascoli's (1855-1912), as they were the main players on the literary scene around the turn of the century[5]. While an excellent Italian poet, Pascoli also reigned supreme as the prince of Neo-Humanism, having revolutionised modern Latin poetry with a dose of Romanticism, and obtaining one victory after another in the *Certamen Hoeufftianum*, the foremost international competition for original compositions in Latin. D'Annunzio, by contrast, is not particularly known for composing Latin poetry like Pascoli, although he apparently did dabble in Latin composition. The Palazzo Venezia in Rome, for instance, still holds the pen and inkwell used to sign the papers of the Armistice of Villa Giusti; the objects are enclosed in a wooden box and are

* This research was made possible by KU Leuven (3H160225) and FWO (64346) research grants.

[1] CURRERI 2008b, 15.

[2] The first one to mention some Latin poetry featuring d'Annunzio was Tommaso Sorbelli in his seminal article on the Latin poetry of the First World War: SORBELLI 1935, 154-55. On Abruzzi Latin poets, see ESPOSITO 1980, 658. I have not come across any literary document in Latin prose dedicated to d'Annunzio.

[3] E.g. PASQUALI 1939; PARATORE 1991; CAPOVILLA 2006; CHAPELLE 2017.

[4] On this, CHAPELLE 2017.

[5] On the relationship between d'Annunzio and Pascoli, see FATINI 1963 and TRAINA 1991, 231-50.

accompanied by two silver plaques, bearing a Latin inscription (left) and its Italian translation (right), which are ascribed to d'Annunzio[6].

E CALAMO EXIGUO	DALL'ESIGUA PENNA
ITALICI MIRANDA POTENTIA FATI	LA MERAVIGLIOSA POTENZA DEL FATO ITALICO
EFFULSIT IN HOSTES	SFOLGORÒ CONTRO I NEMICI
IGNEO SANGUINE	D'AFFOCATO SANGUE
ARSERE COMMISSA CHARTIS PACTA	I PATTI COMMESSI ALLE CARTE ARSERO
INSTANTE VICTORIA	SOPRASTANTE LA VITTORIA

Under the Latinophile Fascist regime, d'Annunzio is even supposed to have proclaimed to Mussolini that he was translating one of his speeches into Latin, though this text is now nowhere to be found[7]. What we do have in large numbers, are his countless Latin mottoes, which he either borrowed or coined himself[8].

It seems that when it came to his own name, d'Annunzio preferred the latinised form '*Nuncius*', an etymological play on the variant spelling of '*nuntius*' ('messenger') which tied in with his given name 'Gabriele', in that this also referred to the Archangel Gabriel, who announced the coming of Christ to Mary. In fact, d'Annunzio seemed to be quite fond of his latinised name, which we come across time and again in various contexts. Many of his printed *ex libris* notes, for instance, bear the signature '*Gabrielis Nuncii*'. With regard to his dandy *persona*, d'Annunzio also created an own clothing line, items of which received the quality label '*Gabriel Nuncius vestiarius fecit*', while he also released his own perfume brand under the Latin name '*Aqua Nuntia*'[9]. Or, as a final example: in a manuscript of the *Laudi* which he offered to his mistress Eleonora Duse, d'Annunzio even went as far as to transform the *incipit* from a contemporary edition of Saint Francis of Assisi's famous *Laudes creaturarum*, replacing '*Beatus Franciscus*' with '*Gabriel Nuncius*' ("*Incipiunt laudes creaturarum quas fecit Gabriel Nuncius ad laudem et honorem divinae Eleonorae cum esset beatus ad Septinianum*")[10].

Although d'Annunzio did not write much in Latin himself, his Italian poetry did attract the attention of contemporary Latin poets, some of whom were keen on translating parts of his oeuvre into the classical language themselves. The *Elegie romane* (1892), for instance, have been translated into Latin twice, first by Annibale Tenneroni (1855-1928) and not much later by Cesare De Titta (1872-1948)[11]. The Latin poet Alfredo Bartoli (1872-1954) also translated d'Annunzio's ode in honour of Victor Hugo, written on the occasion of the latter's hundredth birthday, into the language of Virgil[12]. It appears that d'Annunzio himself was rather pleased with these translations. He even believed that a Latin version of his poetry could be a helpful instrument for foreign readers to better understand the original, as he wrote to Emilio Treves: "le *Elegie Romane* (…) con a fronte la traduzione latina (bellissima) che ho già nelle mani e che potrebbe servire anche di aiuto alla comprensione del testo per gli studiosi stranieri."[13] Looking back on his literary legacy in his short poem *Opellae meae*, Cesare De Titta also proudly proclaimed that d'Annunzio had expressed his appreciation for his Latin translations: "*Romanos Elegos Gabriel me Nuntius apte | ad Latios gaudet restituisse modos*"[14]. What is more, De Titta even claimed that the poet had explicitly asked him to translate the *Elegie romane* into Latin in the first place: "Or io da ben tre anni, per espresso desiderio di Gabriele, ho voltate in distici latini tutte le *Elegie Romane*"[15].

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[6] HUETTER 1959, 249.

[7] PIGHI 1936, 449-52, where he quotes d'Annunzio's letter to Mussolini ("*epistolam Gabrielis Nuntii ad Ducem Italiae IV K. Oct. datam*"): "Io mi son messo a tradurre la tua orazione stupenda alle genti d'Irpinia nel latino dei Comentarii ma non senza qualche acerbità sallustiana. Questo latino ignudo, più che qualsivoglia acutezza d'indagini, svela gli spiriti della tua eloquenza". Cfr. LAMERS - REITZ-JOOSSE 2015, 217; LAMERS 2017, 211.

[8] On his Latin mottoes, see PARADISI 2014b; TRAINA - STRATI 2015.

[9] On the clothing label, see ANTONGINI 1953, 163.

[10] MONACI 1955, 54: "*Incipiunt laudes creaturarum quas fecit Beatus Franciscus ad laudem et honorem Dei cum esset infirmus ad Sanctum Damianum*" (cfr. DI CIACCIA 2017, 96-97). Thus, God is also replaced by 'divine Eleona'.

[11] TENNERONI 1897 and DE TITTA 1900 (republished as DE TITTA 1905). On these translations, see MENNA 2004 and MENNA 2007, 34-57.

[12] BARTOLI 1902. On Bartoli, see RAGAZZINI 1930 and MORABITO 1979.

[13] D'ANNUNZIO 1999, 146 (also quoted in MENNA 2004, 767).

[14] DE TITTA 1952, 82-86 (85); also quoted in ZOLLINO 2008, 57. The poem is dated 23 September 1927.

[15] OLIVA 2002, 444, also quoted in MENNA 2004, 759.

Yet these Latin translations are not the focus of this article. Instead, I will concentrate on original Latin verse in which Gabriele d'Annunzio himself or his oeuvre play a part. This phenomenon goes well beyond the few lines of Latin inscribed on the golden medal presented to d'Annunzio on behalf of the province of Chieti, to name but one example (front side: "*Gabrieli Nuncio hoc suae gentis have*"; back side: "*Felix cui rerum spirare affulget imago* | *quemque loqui rerum vox numerosa docet*")[16]. For apart from translating d'Annunzio's poetry, many contemporary poets from Italy – some of them fellow Abruzzians (e.g. Luigi Taberini, Cesare De Titta, Domenico Tinozzi, Domenico Valla, Giuseppino Mincione) – were also drawn to singing the praises of d'Annunzio in Latin, either as a national war hero, a patriotic conqueror, an inspiring writer, or just as a close friend.

This is not to say, lastly, that Tenneroni's and De Titta's translations are not interesting documents in this respect either. For in addition to the translations themselves, both booklets were also furnished with dedicatory poems in honour of *il Vate*. In Tenneroni's case, the paratextual poem addressed to his 'candido fratello' bears the title *Gabrieli convivae* ('To Gabriel, My Table Companion')[17]. This peculiar title can be explained by the fact that Tenneroni had originally recited the same poem – *ex tempore*, so he claimed – at the end of an exclusive dinner party several months before[18]. The poem therefore has no actual bearing on the *Elegie romane* themselves, but is an ode to the completion of yet another one of d'Annunzio's works: his play *La città morta*. Inspired by his recent trip to Greece, d'Annunzio had decided to write a modern tragedy set in the same country. Tenneroni welcomes d'Annunzio on his return to Italy and compares him to the humanist scholar Giovanni Aurispa, who famously brought a host of valuable Greek manuscripts with him to Italy[19]. Just as the humanist once safely entrusted a manuscript containing Sophocles' plays to the waters of the Aegean, so too has *il Vate* brought back a newly finished tragedy. According to Tenneroni, everyone – from Giovanni Pascoli and Adolfo de Bosis (the '*symposiarcha*', i.e. the host of the banquet where the poem was originally recited) to Francesco Paolo Michetti (d'Annunzio's artist friend) – is burning with desire to see the play.

Eximium Italiae decus insignisque cothurno
Tu redis a nostro, dulcis amice, mari.
Aestubus hadriacis felici sorte volumen
Aurispas Sophoclis credidit archetypum.
Drama novum exactum *Surgens post fata Mycenes*,
Convivas omnes illius ardor habet.
Plaudit io Bargae, iam se mirantibus addensn
Pulsat pindarica Pascolus arte lyram.
Iliadis tantum versus bene vertere doctus
(Felix terque quater!) symposiarcha legit.
Vati nunc tragico iam gallica serta canentes,
Pallida, cui charites dulce micant oculis,
Atque Leonardo genitus Franciscus, et unus,
"Musagetes, clamant, semper ave, *Gabriel*,
Omina laeta sonent, tibi syrma tendit amicta
Divinas longe *Sara* tragoeda manus."

O exalted jewel set in Italy's crown, sweet friend, you have returned from Our Sea conspicuously wearing Grecian shoes. Aurispa once entrusted an original manuscript of Sophocles' plays to the waters of the Adriatic, with fortuitous outcome. All guests are burning with desire for the new play you have completed, *Rise after the fall of Mycenae.* In Barga, Pascoli – the only one qualified to correctly translate verses from the *Iliad*[20] – joins the spectators, applauds (hurrah!) and plays the lyre with Pindaric skill. Our host – o three and four times blessed man! – reads the play. While they sing of the poet's garlands, Bianca[21] (from France), at whom the Graces twinkle their eyes softly, and Francesco, son of Leonardo, shout at the tragedian:

[16] Apparently also written by De Titta (1922, 119).

[17] On Tenneroni and d'Annunzio, see MENNA 2007, where the poem is also quoted (30-31).

[18] MENNA 2004, 766; PARADISI 2014a, 61-62.

[19] This ties in neatly with d'Annunzio's tendency to represent himself as a Renaissance artist (cfr. DELLA SCHIAVA 2018).

[20] Pascoli never translated the *Iliad* in its entirety, but did publish fragments of his translations in the anthology PASCOLI 1889.

[21] With '*Pallida*' ('the pale woman'), Tenneroni is referring to the Italian name 'Bianca' (i.e. 'white'), which in combination with '*gallica*' ('French') probably stands for Bianca Maria, the character played by the French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who

"You are always welcome, Gabriele, leader of the muses, let happy omens resound; clad in a Grecian robe, Sarah the actress is extending her divine hands toward you in the distance."

In fact, Tenneroni would regularly treat his friend to Latin distichs. In their preserved correspondence, one comes across various "scherzi poetici" presented to d'Annunzio[22]. In a letter of 22 September 1900, for instance, he added a brief composition titled *Gabriel Nuncius Sagitarius* ('Gabriele d'Annunzio the Archer'), in which he celebrates d'Annunzio as he sets off to hunt, comparing him to the golden-haired god Apollo[23]. Just as Apollo was the god of both archery and poetry, the poem juxtaposes d'Annunzio's arrows and his poetry: like deer struck by an arrow, young women are wounded by d'Annunzio's new songs; the string of his bow is like the string of a lyre.

Si Phoebum crispis retulit flavisque capillis
    Venaturus abit Groseus[24] Gabriel.
Arcu tenso mirandus velut alter Apollo,
    Et ferus in damas spicula[25], pila iacit.
Virginibus novus exacuit iam vulnera cantus[26].
    Mens ardet strophis nunc sua pindaricis.
Sunt arcus nervi pariter citharaeque protervi.
    Ictus quo fugies arcitenentis[27]? Ave.

Resembling Phoebus with his blond and curly hair, Gabriele is about to go out hunting. Like a second Apollo, he is a sight to behold when he stretches his bow and fiercely launches his arrows and darts at the deer. Now his new song exacerbates the pain young women feel; now his mind is ablaze with Pindaric stanzas. The strings of his bow are as violent as the strings of his lyre. Whereto will you run away from the archer's shots? Farewell.

Like Tenneroni, De Titta also added a dedicatory poem (*Ad Gabrielem d'Annunzio*) to the first edition of his *Elegie romane* translation[28]. Unlike Tenneroni, however, De Titta composed a dedication which was actually related to the work itself. In a number of Sapphic stanza's, the poet simply asks d'Annunzio to give heed to his modest translations. Though De Titta knows that d'Annunzio has moved on and is working on his *Laudi del cielo, del mare, della terra a degli eroi*, he asks *il Vate* to never forget about his elegies, which are such a fundamental part of him.

O sacris Arni, Gabriel, in oris
Quae tibi plaudunt resonantque laetae,
Audias, olim placiti, minoris
    Verba poetae;
Quos tibi in Villis Elegos Quirinis
Rite dictarunt Charites decentes,
Audias nostro numeris latinis
    Ore canentes.
Quas novas Terrae, Maris atque Caeli

performed the role of Anna on the play's first staging in Paris in 1898, and who is also referred to as '*Sara tragoedia*' in the final verse (MENNA 2007, 31).

[22] MENNA 2007, 29. Days after the election of Pope Pius X in 1903, for instance, Tenneroni sent the following distichs to d'Annunzio: "*Non macula maculatus adest bene ad arma paratus* | *Petri sarturus lintea quassa scaphae.* | '*Ostia mi Veneto datur – inquit – pandere Olympi* | *Curque meas tantum non aperire fores*?'" (MENNA 2007, 29). With the future participle '*sarturus*' (he will sow together the damaged sails of St. Peter's ship), Tenneroni was making a pun on Pius' birth name Sarto. Three days later, he sent another distich, following up on the previous letter: "*Respue nunc maculam, dicunt, velare necesse* | *sensuque obstricto, supple, poeta, alias*" (quoted *ibid*.; '*respue*' corrected from *'respuc*'). On the background of these distichs: ANON. 1907, 216.

[23] MENNA 2007, 29.

[24] MENNA's Latin transcriptions are often marred by mistakes, most of which can be restored. As for what appears to be the nonsensical '*Groseus*', however, I have no immediate solution (I did not have access to the letters in question, which are held at the Biblioteca e Archivio del Vittoriale degli Italiani in Gardone Riviera).

[25] Not the metrically incorrect '*spiculas*' (MENNA 2007, 29).

[26] According to MENNA 2007, 29, the verse went "*Virginibus Novus Exacuit jam* | *vulnera Cantus*", as if "*vulnera Cantus*" were the adonean in a sapphic stanza.

[27] Not the non-existent '*arcitentis*' (MENNA 2007, 29). '*Arcitenens'* was a common epithet of Apollo.

[28] He did not include it in the second edition of his *Elegie romane* translations (DE TITTA 1905), although it was later included in DE TITTA 1922, 247, from which the current text is quoted.

Fervidus Laudes meditaris ausu
Pindari magno, repetat fideli
Gloria plausu;
Corde sed nolis Elegos abisse,
Cordis heu partem, Gabriel, anhelam:
Sis memor te, nunc aquilam, fuisse
Iam philomelam!

O Gabriele, please listen to the words of a lesser poet whom you once loved, on the sacred banks of the river Arno, which happily resonate and clap for you; please listen to the Elegies which the lovely muses carefully whispered into your ears on the Roman countryside, and which they now sing in Latin verse through me. May Glory once more respond to the new Praise of Earth, Sea, and Sky, which you are composing with a Pindarus-like boldness, with her sincere approval. Yet please do not let the Elegies, which are such an ardent part of your heart, out of that heart; please do not forget that you who are now an eagle once were a nightingale.

2. D'Annunzio the War Hero

It should come as no surprise that d'Annunzio was predominantly celebrated in Latin as a national war hero. By the time the First World War came to a close, *il Vate* was one of Italy's most famous soldiers. Always aware of his position in the public eye, d'Annunzio was careful to orchestrate his every move. The record of his war exploits is, therefore, quite impressive, encompassing a variety of military adventures on land (e.g. Battle of the Timavo), at sea (e.g. Beffa di Buccari), and in the air (e.g. Volo su Vienna).

These feats of course also caught the attention of Latin poets. One of the first to sing the praises of a specific dannunzian exploit in Latin was Luigi Taberini (†1933), a schoolteacher from Ancona. He participated several times in the *Certamen Hoeufftianum*, though never with any success. Like so many of his fellow Italian Latinists, he would also end up paying lip service to the Fascist regime with his Latin verse[29]. Before celebrating Mussolini in Alcaic stanzas, however, Taberini already dedicated an ode in the same metre to d'Annunzio entitled *Gabriel Nuntius Timavum tranans* ('Gabriele d'Annunzio Swims Across the Timavo'), about what is perhaps the latter's most famous operation as an infantryman: the Battle of the Timavo, on 28 May 1917[30]. One of the final offensives of the Tenth Battle of the Isonzo, the Battle of the Timavo was a disaster waiting to happen, even though d'Annunzio, who was one of the operation's main architects, still managed to turn the defeat into a celebration of legendary heroism with regard to the figure of major Giovanni Randaccio. The Italian troops were supposed to capture a strategically located hill by crossing the short but deep Timavo river near Trieste and subsequently plant an Italian flag on top of the hill, in order to signal to the Triestines that their liberation was imminent. Yet few managed to cross the river, and even fewer reached the top of the hill, as the Italians were mowed down in great numbers by the Austrian machine guns. After sounding the retreat, the young Randaccio was shot and later famously died with his head resting on the Italian flag. D'Annunzio himself, moreover, actually never crossed the river at all, even though official accounts would state that he had[31]. The poet made sure that Randaccio was reburied in the *terra redenta* of Aquileia later on, where he held a funerary oration enshrining Randaccio's mythical heroism.

Taberini's ode turns the story into a mythological event, but redirects the attention away from Randaccio to give centre stage to d'Annunzio himself. It is also marked by the same blind optimism – note the cheerful tone of such words as '*ovans*', '*hilare*', '*gaudet*' – so often expressed by d'Annunzio himself in the context of the war: instead of mourning the tragic loss of lives, the poem celebrates the advancement of Italy's irredentist cause without even mentioning the dead or the enemy. The ode opens *in medias res*, with d'Annunzio swimming across the river like a Byronesque hero trying to save his brave wounded comrade Randaccio ("*fortis sodalis vulnerati*"). Suddenly the god of the river appears, offering his support to the Italians. He gazes at d'Annunzio wading through the water. Apparently, d'Annunzio is the only one who is able to see the god. In fact, Taberini tells us, as a true *vates*, d'Annunzio has always been able to talk to the gods: back in Greece, he saw and spoke to the Olympian gods as well. For the final

[29] Cfr. LAMERS - REITZ-JOOSSE 2015, 252.
[30] TABERINI 1918 (dated 14 August 1917; briefly referred to in SORBELLI 1935, 154-155 and CRISTINI 2019, 59-60).
[31] THOMPSON 2010, 255-56.

part of the poem, the god Timavo addresses the Italian troops directly. He is thrilled that they have finally made it to his river. He encourages them to stay strong, as the end of their suffering is near. Trieste is within their reach, and soon the Italians will hold a triumph:

Vates Timavi caeruleas ovans
Tranabat undas, Nuntius impiger
Fortis sodalis vulnerati
    Sollicitam premit ipse curam.
Arcana pando, quis tribuat fidem?
Ex rupe prodit, qua caput occulit,
Divus Timavus, gaudet imo
    Corde Italosque deus tuetur.
Iuncis coronat tempora mollibus,
Prolixa pectus barba tegit, manu
Mulcens eam, miratur exstans
    Gurgite pube tenus poetam.
Soli poetae cernere eum licet,
Non cernit illum turba sodalium;
Mortalibus spectare magna
    Numina luminibus negatur.
(…)
Est allocutus iam Gabriel deos,
Lustrans amoenae litora Graeciae,
Et Pana conspexit, Minervam,
    Mercurium, Venerem, Iovemque.
Dixit Timavi sic hilare deus:
"Tandem venitis nunc, Itali mei[32]?
Vestigium quaerisne Dantis
    Hoc iter ingrediens, poeta?
(…)
Durate, fortes, non procul ultima
Meta est laborum; Patria conspicit,
Tergeste clamat; mox agetis,
    Numine propitio triumphum."

The poet d'Annunzio was swimming across the dark waters of the Timavo triumphantly, seriously worried about his brave wounded comrade. Who would believe my account of these unknown facts? The god Timavo revealed his head from the rocky banks where he hides, watching the Italians, happy in the depths of his heart. Soft wreaths cover his temples, as does a long beard his chest, which he strokes as he watches the poet up to his waist in the water. Only the poet can discern the god, his band of comrades cannot. Mortal eyes are not allowed to look upon such great divinity (…) Gabriele had also spoken with the gods when he was wandering along the coasts of lovely Greece, where he saw Pan, Minerva, Mercury, Venus, and Jupiter. The god of the Timavo cheerfully said the following: "Have you finally arrived, my Italians? Are you following in the footsteps of Dante by coming here, o poet? (…). Stay strong, brave Italians, the end of your hardship is in sight. Your country is watching you; Trieste is calling; soon, by the grace of the gods, you will be holding a triumph!"

Yet d'Annunzio's military track record is perhaps most impressive with regard to his actions as an aviator. A daredevil constantly on the lookout for new adventures, d'Annunzio was quick to enlist as a pilot and went on numerous daunting missions, flying over Trieste several times, bombing multiple cities (i.a. Trento, Parenzo, Pula, Cattaro), and famously crashing quite early into the war, costing him his sight in his left eye. His crowning feat, however, was undoubtedly the 'Volo su Vienna' on 9 August 1918, an air raid over Vienna during which d'Annunzio's squadron dropped tons of propaganda leaflets over Austria's capital heralding their imminent defeat.

Aviation as such was actually a recurrent theme in Latin poetry at the time, especially in the context of the war: as the Great War was the first major conflict in which aeroplanes were used on such a considerable scale, the indignation at the unprecedented bloodbath was often focalised through such

[32] Corrected from '*miei*'.

modern technology as zeppelins and aeroplanes. With a classical twist, the Latin poetry would often bring these novel inventions into the realm of ancient mythology by drawing comparisons with Daedalus and Icarus, Pegasus, Prometheus… The Sicilian poet Giovanni Maria Comandè (1882-1933), for instance, was fascinated by 'l'aviazione contemporanea'. In 1927, he tried his luck at the *Hoefftianum* with a Sapphic ode on the subject entitled *Aquilarum ordo* ('Squadron of Eagles')[33]. The poem starts out by praising the miracle of aviation, eventually turning into a catalogue of famous aviators, military and civilian alike: Roald Amundsen, Charles Lindbergh, Mario de Bernardi, Sidney Webster, Charles Nungesser, François Coli all deserve mention. In addition to De Bernardi, Comandè also lauds two Italian fighter pilots in particular: Francesco de Pinedo and Gabriele d'Annunzio, whom "multiple wings raise high up to the stars".

Saeculum mira patet arte caeli,
Quo leves ventisque velociores
Fervidis carpunt animis apertum
    Aera naves.
(…)
Multa Pinedum levat aura fortem,[34]
Arduas cum orbis petat ipse metas;
Gabriel velis numerosus alta ad
    Sidera fertur.

The age of the sky has commenced, by the grace of wonderful technology light ships soar through the open skies with burning desire, propelled by the wind. (…) A great gust of air lifts up the strong Pinedo as he explores the lofty limits of the earth; multiple wings raise Gabriele high up to the stars.

Even though the poem turned out to be unsuccessful in the competition, Comandè would eventually publish it with minor adaptations in a poetry collection entirely devoted to aviation, *Aquilarum impervia*[35]. Another ode in this series, *Per astra, pueri!* ('Past the Stars, Boys!'), is exclusively dedicated to Italian pilots. Here too, the poet praises a long list of aerial heroes of Italian stock: Francesco Baracca, Umberto Nobile, Francesco de Pinedo, Mario de Bernardi, Angelo Donati, Umberto Maddalena, Italo Balbo, Arturo Ferrarin, Eugenio Casagrande, Carlo del Prete, Giuseppe Mario Bellanca…[36] The very first Italian aviator to be praised, however, is Gabriele d'Annunzio, specifically with regard to the 'Volo su Vienna':

Centena caelo millia passuum
Vates, minans qui Danubium bibunt,
Depromit hosti alis amica
    Ignivomis monita expaventi[37].

From a hundred miles up in the air, soaring over the people who drink from the Danube, the poet lets drop from his fire-spitting wings friendly warnings to the terrified enemy.

Another contemporary Italian who was keen on celebrating aviation in Latin was the Jesuit Alessandro Monti (1862-1937). Known for his elaborate didactic poems on modern subjects such as the digging of the Panama Canal or the draining of the Pontine Marshes, Monti also wrote a long poem on the miracle of flight in all its aspects, *De arte volandi* ('On the Art of Flying'), ranging from the history of aviation and the technical functioning of various types of aeroplanes to accounts of some famous exploits in the sky.

[33] Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief, Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, 64-831, XXI (henceforth: NHA, KNAW). I quote from COMANDÈ 1928, 5-9, which is almost identical to the *Hoefftianum* submission.

[34] Cfr. Hor. *Carm.* IV 2,25.

[35] COMANDÈ 1928 (not '*Aquilarum imperium*', as Sorbelli wrote (1935, 161)).

[36] In a previous bundle of poetry (COMANDÈ 1927), the poet had also praised the pilots De Pinedo, De Bernardi, and Nobile in a short poem *Coelum nostrum*, obviously drawing the comparison with the classical *Mare nostrum* doctrine which was revived during Fascism. In fact, the bundle was dedicated to none other than Mussolini himself ("*Restituit rem, iura, artes, vir ferreus, arma*: | *inde honor italicis: hostibus inde pavor*").

[37] COMANDÈ 1928, 10-13 (verses quoted: 29-32, on p.11).

Like Comandè, he first tried his luck with his poem in the *Hoeufftianum* in 1922. When this proved unsuccessful, he decided to publish it anyway[38].

The final part of Monti's *De arte volandi* is dedicated to the aeroplane as a military instrument. After a lamentation of the havoc wrought by aeroplanes during the Great War, Monti closes his poem with a celebration of one particular aerial exploit: the dogfight between the Italian ace Ernesto Cabruna (1889-1960) and a squadron of no fewer than eleven Austrian aircrafts on 29 March 1918. Cabruna, who would later become one of d'Annunzio's most ardent supporters in Fiume, had singlehandedly confronted the squadron and lived to tell the tale. For his exploits, he was awarded the 'medaglia d'oro al valor militare', the highest military distinction[39]. Monti was particularly proud to be able to give a poetic account of these events, he noted, as Cabruna was actually a nephew of his[40]. It might strike one as odd that d'Annunzio was not mentioned anywhere in this poem on aviation, especially given the close friendship between *il Vate* and Monti's nephew and the references to the Great War. In the 1933 version of the poem, however, the poet eventually added a passage in praise of d'Annunzio as a war pilot as well, right before the section on Cabruna. Monti refers to d'Annunzio's flights over Trieste, Pula, Cattaro, and Buccari, before lauding his most famous feat in the sky: the Volo su Vienna[41]. This truly was, according to the Jesuit, his crowning flight; for instead of bringing bombs or missiles of fire, d'Annunzio brought a gentle message of deliverance.

An memorem, Gabriel, primum Tergeste superne
De bello monitum a te velivolante relatum?
Nec minus impavide volitas per tecta Tridenti.
Ast oculum, temere ad terram remeare coactus,
Offendis, vitias, cura amittisque neglecta.
Pola tamen sensit, Catarum Bucarumque volantem
Austriaco et pretio pendentem digna cachinnis.
Omnia sed superat mirus tuus ille volatus,
Pacificis tonuit pro bombis aethra Viennae.
Ignea namque rates tela haud torsere volantes,
Hostibus at pavidis hilarem misere salutem.
Non pueris inferre Italos, non matribus arma,
Non senibus tandem memorant, monitosque relinquunt[42].

Or should I mention the first warning you issued about the war when you flew over Trieste? Equally undaunted you flew over the houses of Trente. Yet you hurt your eye and lost sight in it due to lack of medical attention, which forced you to stay on solid ground. Still, Pula suffered when you flew over, as did Cattaro and Buccari, when you made a fool of the Austrians. But pride of place goes to your wonderful flight over Vienna: not bombs, but peace-offerings thundered in the sky. For instead of whirling fiery ammunition, your flying ships sent a cheerful message of deliverance to the frightened enemy. These messages claimed that Italy was not waging war on children, mothers, or on the elderly, and left the Viennese warned.

Shortly after the Volo su Vienna itself, one Domenico Valla, who is otherwise unknown as a Latin poet, also wrote a short and simple poem in praise of the mission, dedicated *Gabrieli d'Annunzio*[43]. Dated 14 Augustus 1918, but published in the *Rivista Abruzzese* in January 1919, the poem extolls d'Annunzio's rapid action – he is compared to the god Hermes – of spreading 'sweet words of love' instead of discharging 'fire-vomiting bullets'. Sadly, as Sorbelli already remarked, the rather unfortunate poem is marred by its many typographical errors[44]. Apart from the various typos which I have corrected, for

[38] First submitted for the competition of 1923 (Haarlem, NHA, KNAW 64-826, V; as in n. 33), then published separately as MONTI 1925, and finally included in his poetry collection MONTI 1933. On Monti, IJSEWIJN – JACOBS 1961, 66.

[39] In 1927, d'Annunzio bestowed onto Cabruna a 'medaglia d'oro' of his own (cfr. MONTI 1933, 26). On the dogfight, see FISCHETTI 1926.

[40] MONTI 1925, 5 (the poem is dedicated to another nephew of Monti's, Benedetto Ferretti: "L'ultimo episodio del mio qualsiasi lavoro riguarda il carissimo cugino tuo e altro nipote mio Ernesto Cabruna, che porta il petto fregiato della più alta e ambito distinzione di guerra, che è *medaglia d'oro*.").

[41] D'Annunzio's part in the assault on Buccari was actually carried out by boat, not by aeroplane.

[42] MONTI 1933, 23.

[43] VALLA 1919.

[44] SORBELLI 1935, 154.

instance, the poem ends with two pentameter lines; the final hexameter line has simply been forgotten, it seems:

Non globulos iecisti ignem tam turpe vomentes
In medios cives Vindobonae, Gabriel,
In multis sed verba schedis dulcissima amoris.
Praeclari iuvenes, viribus et validi
Quorum aquilae in oculis acies, te ipso duce gaudent.
Difficili arte minas insidiasque volans,
Altis ignavi fugisti nubibus hostis;
Et longum exiguo, Nuntie, tempore iter
Fecisti celer, ut Maiae tum filius olim
Cum referebat sic provida iussa patris.
Gentem iterum, Gabriel, per te Italia edocet illam,
Quae tigris hyrcana est et velut Attila trux
Diruit et digitos desecuit pueris[45].

You did not shoot bullets which shamefully vomited fire at the population of Vienna, Gabriele. Instead, you shot the sweetest words of love contained in a great many leaflets. Noble young men, brave and with eagle eyes, happily followed your command. Soaring through the clouds up high with exceptional skill you managed to escape the lazy enemy's threats and traps; in a short space of time, d'Annunzio, you quickly travelled quite a distance, just like the son of Maia in olden times, when he related the prudent orders of his father. Through you, Gabriele, Italy once more instructs this people, which is as cruel as a Hyrcanian tigress and, just as Attila, brought destruction and cut of little boys' fingers.

Carlo Landi, a professor of classics at the university of Palermo, also wrote a short elegy concerning the Volo su Vienna under the title *Vindobona V. Id. Aug. MCMXVIII* ('Vienna, 9 August 1918'), but without specifically mentioning d'Annunzio[46]. The bottom line of the poem is obvious, as Landi opposes the savage bombings carried out by the Austrians in the Veneto region to the peaceful admonishments of the Italians. By not staining its hands with blood, Italy has shown its moral superiority. However, *in cauda venenum*: now that the enemy has been warned, Italy will not be as clement upon the next provocation…

Saeviat immiti descendens hostis ab Histro
In Venetos quamvis ac patret omne nefas,
Mortiferis nostras temerans licet ignibus urbes
Arduus e caelo vulgus inerme premat,
Parce tamen scelerare manus, Hesperia virtus:
Hortari placida sit tibi voce satis.
Quod si non monitus, non audiat ille salutis
Verba, tui demum roboris esto memor!

However much the enemy descends upon Venice from the merciless Danube and commits every imaginable crime, however much they profane our cities with lethal fire and slay our unarmed population from the skies, o Hesperian virtue, do not pollute your own hands! Content yourself with sweet-voiced admonishments. If they do not heed your warning and your words of salvation, then you must recall your own strength!

D'Annunzio's part in other missions was far less peaceful. In the course of the war, for instance, the Italians bombed 'Pola' (Pula in present-day Croatia), the main harbour of the Austrian navy in the Adriatic, multiple times. The most memorable of these incursions were the three air raids led by d'Annunzio during 3-9 August 1917. It was during these attacks, moreover, that d'Annunzio coined the classically-inspired war-cry '*eia eia alalà*!'[47]. The same Carlo Landi also composed an elaborate celebration of these attacks under the title *Pola (Colonia Iulia Pietas). XVI Kal. Aug.*, dedicating it to d'Annunzio himself[48]. Written in light-footed hendecasyllables, it addresses the Italian fighter pilots and sings the praises of their victory,

[45] I have made the following corrections: *Vindobonae* (pro *Vindobonam*); *viribus* (pro *viridus*); *quorum* (pro *quoreun*); *Nuntie* (pro *Niunte*); *fecisti* (pro *fecicti*); *filius* (pro *filus*).

[46] LANDI 1918, 12.

[47] The rally cry is a combination of the Latin '*eia*' (a powerful exhortation) and the Greek war cry 'alalà' (ἀλαλή, or in Doric, ἀλαλά).

[48] LANDI 1918, 4-6.

all the while repeating the dannunzian '*eia*'. Their attack on the 'well-fortified harbour of those northern barbarians', the poet claims, was marked by a level of aeronautical daring equalling that of Bellerophon's slaying of the chimera. They came like a bolt from the blue, laying Pula in ashes:

Vicistis, viri! Io Triumphe et eia!
Eventus resonat per ora fama
Atque Echo reboans ad astra laetas
Voces tollit: Io Triumphe et eia!
(…)
Credendum est properos stetisse ventos,
Ceu cum Daedalea potitus arte
Fortis Bellerophon domare quivit
Victor taetram ope Pegasi Chimaeram[49].

You have won, men! Huzzah and hurrah! The story of this exploit is being repeated all over and Echo is resonating happy voices up to the stars: huzzah and hurrah! (…). We should believe that there were violent winds, as when brave Bellerophon mastered the art of Daedalus and was able to tame the foul chimera with the help of Pegasus.

Landi goes on to extol d'Annunzio as the 'star among stars', guiding the brave Italian pilots safely through flashing fires. Punning on d'Annunzio's name, the poet then lauds *il Vate* as the messenger (*nuntius*) of deliverance and happiness, while also referring to another one of the latter's many mottoes: *Memento audere semper* ('Always Remember to Dare')[50]. Just as at the end of Taberini's ode, Landi calls on the war-weary Italians to soldier on, reminding them that the end of their suffering is in sight. Soon, the enemy will surrender and pay for their crimes:

Quantae est munere liberalitatis,
Quanto est carmine digna vestra virtus?
Nec sunt carmina nunc opus poetae.
Felix auspiciis at ille vates
(Inter sidera sidus, inter ignes
Dux certissime, Gabriel, coruscas!)
Verus Nuncius exstitit salutis
Vestrae laetitiaeque, qui 'MEMENTO
Eia, AUDERE, monebat, eia, SEMPER.'
Exsultetis! Adesse credite horam,
Qua finem statuat Deus laborum
Fiantque irrita vota inominata
Cimbrorum et domini nocentis arma[51].

What great generous gift, what great poem does your bravery merit? This time, a poet's accomplishments do not concern his poetry. For there was a fortunate seer in command (Gabriele, you star among stars, as a fearless leader you shine among the flames!), a true messenger of your salvation and happiness, who warned you to "always remember to dare, hurrah, hurrah!" Rejoice! Trust me when I say that it is the hour when God will end the hardship and when the ill-omened wishes of the Cimbrians will not come true, as will the weapons of their harmful master become useless.

Unlike the previous poems, which either refer to d'Annunzio as a soldier in passing or focus on one of his military exploits in particular, the two final odes under discussion in this section, Cesare De Titta's *In poetam militem* and Alfredo Bartoli's *Poeta miles*, are entirely dedicated to d'Annunzio as *poeta miles*.

We have already come across De Titta with regard to his translations of the *Elegie romane*. Yet he also wrote original poetry about *il Vate* himself. In fact, as a childhood friend of the poet's, De Titta was the most prolific poet when it came to honouring d'Annunzio with Latin verse. In 1921, for instance, he

[49] LANDI 1918, 4-6.

[50] With the motto *Memento Audere Semper*, d'Annunzio was also making a play on words, in that 'MAS' was an acronym for 'Motoscafo Armato Silurante', the famous MAS-torpedo boats used by the Italians during the war.

[51] LANDI 1918, 6.

published an entire cycle of four odes, *Gabrielis Nuncii laudes*, praising *il Vate* for his efforts during the war and in Fiume[52].

The first of these odes, *In poetam militem*, is situated shortly after the war (dated 1919), and describes d'Annunzio's imminent return to Rome as a true war hero. His return is represented as a classical triumph, the highest possible honour a Roman general could receive: Rome will echo with applause, there will be flowers and Italian *tricolori* everywhere, children will fight to catch a glimpse of him… He is truly deserving of this triumph, De Titta claims, since he, 'the avenger of our Latin name', has vanquished Italy's foes not only on land, which has now become *terra redenta*, but also at sea and in the sky. The Sapphic ode then continues this tripartite structure by singing the praises of his exploits on land, at sea, and in the sky, respectively. First, however, De Titta returns to the warrior-poet's actions before the war as an ardent interventionist. For it was with his impassionate speeches that d'Annunzio had played a crucial part in the *radioso maggio* ("*cum dies magni tonuere Mai*"), goading the Italians into joining the war. Once this campaign had proved successful, d'Annunzio immediately rushed to the front, fighting to hold the line, as the banks of the Timavo can confirm, De Titta continues. As for d'Annunzio's maritime adventures: although he is actually better known for his *anti*-submarine missions, the poem refers to d'Annunzio actually riding *in* a submarine itself, which seems to allude to the celebratory hundredth '*immersione*' of the Italian submarine *La Salpa* in which d'Annunzio took part on 12 August 1915, just days after his flight over Trieste[53]. This is then followed by d'Annunzio's exploits in the air, more specifically his flights over Pula and Vienna:

Gestient septem resonare colles[54]
Plausibus, flores calathis ferentur
Tresque vexillum patrium colores
    Tollet ad auras.
Miles ex terris veniet redemptis
Ex mari victo domitoque caelo
Nuncius nostri Gabriel Latini
    Nominis ultor.
Desinant maestae lacrimare matres,
Concinant laeti pueri, puellae,
Militem Vatem celebrare fausto
    Omine certent.
(…)
Miles in primas acies premente
Hoste processit tenuitque iussum
Dimicans locum, velut usta clamat
    Ripa Timavi;
Nave quae fertur liquida sub unda
Vectus, est ausus penetrare saepta
Machinis diris freta per catenas
    Insidiarum;
Nave quae fertur liquidas per auras
Vectus, est ausus super hostis arma
Ire, munitas iaculatus arces
    Sulphure et igni.
Edidit longo veniens volatu
In Polae portu subitas ruinas;
Carmen ex caelo trepidae Viennae
    Funebre dixit[55].

[52] They were first published in the journal *L'Abruzzo* 2. 1-2 (1921) and were later included in De Titta 1922, 177-90. I quote from the latter source. They are notably absent from De Titta 1952.

[53] D'Annunzio 1965, 747-52.

[54] Hor. *Carm*. III 11, 3.

[55] De Titta 1922, 177-79.

The seven hills will exult in applause, people will bring baskets of flowers, and the national flag will lift the *tricolore* to the skies. Gabriele d'Annunzio, avenger of our Latin name, will come from redeemed land, from the tamed sky, and from the conquered sea. Let mourning mothers stop crying, let young boys and girls sing happy tunes and compete to welcome the soldier-poet with celebrations. (…) As a soldier he rushed to the battered front and fought to hold the line, as the scorched bank of the Timavo proclaims. In a submarine, he dared to pass into enemy waters guarded by horrendous machines and a series of traps. In an aeroplane, he dared to fly over enemy lines, bombarding their strongholds with sulphur and fire. After a long flight, he arrived at the port of Pula and unleashed a sudden storm of destruction; from the sky he issued a dreary warning to trembling Vienna.

The ode then continues to celebrate d'Annunzio's unremitting courage and the challenges he faced. Thus, De Titta refers to the time when d'Annunzio was temporarily blinded and bedridden. And although Italy's war effort was going through an even darker night, De Titta continues, d'Annunzio never gave up, biding his time and encouraging his fellow countrymen. In the end, the Italians were victorious, which allows the poet to close the cycle and return to the opening image: d'Annunzio's triumph. Nobody deserves a triumph more than this warrior-poet. De Titta asks the sun to shine brightly on her son that day. Basking in the sunlight, d'Annunzio will follow in the footsteps of Horace, and recite his own *Carmen Saeculare*…

Quae fides ardens animusque constans!
Res quot adversas tulit atque vicit!
Nocte quam nigra iacuit diuque
    Lumine clauso!
Nocte per dolum graviore mersis
Italis armis Patriaque flente,
Spem suam numquam posuit nec umquam
    Anxius haesit.
(…)
Dignior nemo rediit triumpho
Hanc in excelsam chlamydatus urbem,
Nec magis clarus iaculo lyraque,
    Solis alumnus.
Rideas, o Sol, Reduci nec ulla
Nube te veles: merita Poeta
Laurea Miles decoretur, omnis
    Lumine cinctus,
Et canens dicat tibi saeculare
Carmen antiquis veluti diebus:
"Alme Sol, possis nihil urbe Roma
    Visere maius!"[56]

Such burning faith and constancy! He suffered and overcame such adversity! Such a long and dark night he spent in bed, blinded! While betrayal plunged the Italian arms into a more dreadful night and the country was crying, he never lost hope and never let fear hold him back. (…) No one has returned in uniform to this sublime city more worthy of a triumph, or more famous for his darts and lyre, like a son of the Sun. Well, Sun, smile on your returning son, do not hide behind a single cloud. Let the Poet-Soldier be decorated with deserved laurel, basking in all your light, and let him sing to you, as in olden days, the *Carmen Saeculare*: "Nourishing Sun, may the city of Rome be the greatest thing you can look upon!"

Yet the most elaborate Latin ode in honour of d'Annunzio is without question Alfredo Bartoli's *Poeta miles*. As was the case with De Titta, we have also already come across Bartoli with regard to a Latin translation of his of one of d'Annunzio's poems, i.e. the latter's ode on Victor Hugo[57]. Bartoli was one of the most productive Latin poets of his time, consciously following in the footsteps of Pascoli. A case in point is his track record in the *Hoeufftianum*: in the course of the first half of the twentieth century, Bartoli participated in the competition almost every year, with up to five poems in a single year. Yet he never managed to obtain the coveted gold medal. In the absence of an edition of Bartoli's poetry, the recently

[56] De Titta 1922, 180-81; cfr. Hor. *Carm. saec.* 9-12.
[57] On Bartoli's translations: Morabito 1956, 34-44.

rediscovered *Hoeufftianum* archives present a treasure trove for the study of the poet's oeuvre as well[58]. In fact, this is how the allegedly lost *Poeta miles* has resurfaced: I have come across two submissions of the d'Annunzio ode in the archives, from 1917 and from 1926[59]. I have subsequently tracked down two copies of the extremely rare 1925 Gerace print of the poem[60]. It seems that Bartoli had initially composed *Poeta miles* in 1917 and submitted it near the end of the year for the competition of 1918. However, the postal delivery from Italy was particularly slow that year, resulting in a total of 16 poems arriving too late to be taken into consideration[61]. The deliberation of these poems was therefore postponed to the competition of 1919 instead. At any rate, when push came to shove, the jury was not particularly blown away by *Poeta miles* anyway. They found it "stilted and not very compelling": though he may have been a figure larger than life in Italy, d'Annunzio seemed to speak little to the imagination of this Dutch audience[62]. Besides, the Alcaic ode was not without its metrical flaws either. Nine years later and despite already having published the poem, Bartoli tried his luck again and sent in a slightly revised version – contrary to the rules, which stated that submissions had to be unpublished – to the *Hoeufftianum*, yet again without success. The text offered below is the final version from 1926.

Unlike De Titta's ode, Bartoli's *Poeta miles* was written while the war was still going on, and even prior to some of d'Annunzio's most memorable exploits like the Beffa di Buccari and the Volo su Vienna. True to its title, it is a lavish celebration of d'Annunzio as the rare union of *poeta* and *miles* and consists of three parts: the introduction of d'Annunzio as *poeta miles* (1-48), his oeuvre ('*poeta*', 49-68), and his soldierly valour ('*miles*', 69-112).

The poem opens with a powerful barrage of rhetorical questions related to the role and viability of art during the unprecedented bloodbath that was the Great War. Surely, Bartoli implies, war and art are mutually exclusive? Yet there seems to be one who is able to combine his roles as both *miles* and *vates*, both engaging in combat and supporting his fellow soldiers through the power of his speech.

Num qua Camenis, dum fera saeviunt
Totum per orbem bella, decentibus
Fas ire quo res cumque densas
    Urguet atrox hominum catervas?
Num Pallas inter caedibus oblita
Fert arma cerni laurea? Num sinit
Hinc inde anhelanti praeire
    Carmina Mars operosa turmae?
Est, est cruentos qui vigil impetus
Hortetur; est qui interritus hostium
Vim miles extundat, suisque
    Vim adiciat simul ore vates!

Surely the noble Muses, while savage wars rage all around the world, are not allowed to go wherever the horrible situation will drive the dense throngs of men? Surely Pallas does not want the laurel to stand out amid weapons drenched in blood? Surely Mars does not allow elaborate poetry to precede panting squadrons everywhere? There is someone, someone watchful who encourages bloody assaults; there is someone who fearlessly breaks the enemies' force, as a soldier, and who at the same time lifts his comrades' morale with his words, as a poet.

Bartoli is in doubt which of these two activities he is to value most: his valour or his literary contributions to Italy's irredentist and colonial cause? For the as yet unnamed *poeta vates* always cared deeply for the glory of his country: even while he was in exile (i.e. d'Annunzio's escape from his creditors to France from 1909 to 1915) and Italy decided to conquer Libya, he longed to further his country's righteous cause with his poetic talents. With this, Bartoli is obviously referring to d'Annunzio's collection

[58] On the rediscovery, see FERA *et al.* 2017.

[59] CRISTINI 2019, 106, claims that the poem is nowhere to be found. See Haarlem, NHA, KNAW 64-823, I and 64-830, XLVI.

[60] BARTOLI 1925. The poem is dated 1917. Copies can be found in the Tommaso Sorbelli fund at the Biblioteca Estense in Modena (*Racc. T. Sorbelli* 20.4; signed by Bartoli) and in the Bartoli fund at the library of the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani in Rome (*Le carte di Alfredo Bartoli*, XIII, 13).

[61] See the report from 11 February 1918 (VMKAW 1918, 387-88).

[62] VMKAW 1920, 243: "een lofdicht op d'Annunzio in Alcaeische strophen, houterig en weinig treffend".

of poetry in support of the Libyan invasion, *Canzoni della gesta d'oltremare*[63]. D'Annunzio was still in France when the Great War broke out: from there, Bartoli continues, he saw 'Latin eagles' (i.e. Italian aeroplanes) fly to the Alps and the Adriatic to engage in combat. Bartoli then refers to criticism which d'Annunzio had to endure at times, i.e. that he spoke, but did not act: these were just words ("*vox illa tantum*"), useless admonishing poetry ("*carmina nil viri* | *erant monentis*")… Eventually, the *vates* – whose name is alluded to for the first time with the Latin '*nuntius*' (messenger) – did translate his words into action and joined the war effort himself ("*fidibus sociavit arma*").

Quem pluris ausum sum dubius putem
Se inferre pugnae saepius, an lyra
Fines recantantem, sibi quos
    Ausonis ora reposcit armis!
Extorris idem, pectore at aestuans
In derelictae iam Patriae decus,
Fatoque promissam Latinis
    Voce studens properare laudem,
Tum signa, Nostri per freta quae Maris
Iuris petebant litora pristini,
Cantarat et Romae, quod olim,
    Imperio Lybiam revinctam.
(…)
Vox illa tantum: carmina nil viri
Erant monentis. "Quid faciant lyrae?
Quid verba?" Quaerebant "poetis
    Barbitos, haud gladius canoris!"
(…)
Et quam volatu Nuntius edidit
Sensisse sacro cingere verticem
Victoriam de more Romae,
    Hanc celerare gradum laborat
Praesens, relictis quae studiosius
Tam cara vitae quaesierat sibi:
Firmaret hortatus et ipse,
    Re, fidibus sociavit arma.

I am in doubt whether I should attach more value to his repeated actions in battle or to his songs about the territory which his country is claiming back with Italian weapons! When he was in exile, his heart burned for the dignity of the land he had left behind, and he wanted to hasten with his voice the glory that destiny had promised to the Latin race: thus, he sang of the troops who crossed the waters of Our Sea to reach the coasts which by ancient law belonged to them, and of Libya, which as of old regained its place in the empire of Rome. (…) Yet these were just words, ineffective poetry from an admonishing person. "What is the meaning of this poetry and of these words", people asked; "sweet-voiced poets should stick to the lyre, not the sword!" (…) d'Annunzio toiled to hasten Victory – whom he claimed he had felt crown his head in the Roman fashion during a sacred flight – with his very presence, having left behind what he had held dear and had been looking for his entire life, and having urged himself to make an actual contribution, he united his arms and his poetry.

After a number of stanzas in which Bartoli tries to insert multiple – and often strained – references to various titles from d'Annunzio's oeuvre, the ode closes by singing the praises of d'Annunzio's participation in combat, as he 'did not hesitate to shed blood for his country'. In a sequence of three stanzas, Bartoli refers to the warrior-poet's exploits on land (73-76), in the air (77-80), and at – or rather, under the – sea (81-84). Yet throughout all of this, the poet emphasises, Art remains d'Annunzio's constant companion. He keeps on writing and composing, continually urging his companions to keep on fighting, and celebrating their sacrifices. For the Italians are fighting in the icy Alps and rough Adriatic for 'hearth and

[63] Bartoli added a number of notes to his *Hoeufftianum* submissions (a few '*adnotatiunculae*' in 1917 and more extensive '*adnotationes*' in 1926). With regard to this passage, he noted in 1917: "*Dum Itali in suam potestatem Lybiam redigunt, Poeta in Gallis versabatur; et tum* Le Canzoni d'oltremare *scripsit*", and in 1926: "*Gabriel Nuncius in Galliam exsulatum ierat* (...) *In carminibus* "Le Canzoni d'Oltremare" *quibus naves Italorum in Lybiam navigantes comitabatur (1912)*".

home', but also for Art[64]! For what do all of these sacrifices matter, Bartoli has d'Annunzio (the 'priest of the Arts') ask his fellow countrymen, what does it matter to protect Italy, if not for the sake of Art as well?

Quae afflatus alto numine condidit
Vates, potenter iam Patriam canens,
Testatur hic miles profuso
    Non timidus Patriae cruore!
Namque in tenaces nunc facit impetum
Hostes; ruentes strenuus excipit;
Nunc dux revertentem cohortem
    In graviora vocat pericla.
Nunc verior ceu Daedalus aethera
Rumpit, et infra nuntius oppidis
Pacata fraternis renarrat,
    Hostibus at minitatur audens;
Nunc lintre sese clausus aheneo
Mergit profundi sub latebras maris,
Auferre iussus seu dolosas
    Classibus insidias locare.
Haec inter, Artem ne comitem abneget,
Quandoque flores eloquii legit,
Hortatus in pugnam labantes,
    Laudibus exequias honestans:
(…)
Nam quae nivosis bella sub Alpibus,
Nam quae sonantem bella per Hadriam
Geruntur, haec arae focique
    Hesperiae simul imperabant.
Num, praeter aras sanguine in Italis
Est quid tuendum? Num qua manent focos
Servanda post nostros?... Quas omnes
    Instituisse fatemur, Artes!
(…)

What he wrote as a poet, inspired by higher powers and powerfully singing of his country, he now demonstrates as a soldier who does not shrink from spilling blood for his country! For now he carries out an assault against the tenacious enemies, and in turn strenuously endures their attack as they advance. Now he leads a returning company to greater danger. Now he breaks through the skies like a veritable Daedalus and spreads news of conquered lands to allied towns below, and boldly threatens the enemies. Now, confined in a bronze boat, he dives into the hidden depths of the sea, following orders either to remove treacherous mines or to place them for enemy fleets. Amid all this, so as not to deny Art his companionship, he every so often collects the flowers of his eloquence, urging his wavering comrades to fight and praising their deaths to the skies. (…). For the wars which are being fought beneath the snowy Alps and across the murmuring Adriatic are ordered by Italy's altars and hearths! Surely there is nothing else which the blood coursing through Italian veins is to protect other than its altars? Surely there is nothing left to save when our hearths are saved? Yes there is: the Arts, all of which we claim to have established! (…)

3. D'Annunzio the Conqueror: Fiume and Beyond

The euphoria that the Great War was finally over turned out to be short-lived in Italy. For in the war's aftermath, the country was plunged into a state of social, economic, and political crisis. One of the main political conflicts during these unstable times of the *biennio rosso* was undoubtedly the *Impresa di Fiume*, spearheaded by none other than d'Annunzio.

Despite having won the war, many Italians could not help but feel disappointed for not being granted what was owed to them. For many, Italy had specifically joined the war with irredentist motives, in order to restore the country's 'natural borders' in the southern Alps and the Adriatic, yet the post-war gains in

[64] 1926 *Adnotationes*: "*Itali enim non tantum visi sunt pro aris focisque pugnare, sed etiam pro expolitioris artis suae monumentis, quae ad omne hominum genus spectant et quibus hostis, barbaro, ut constat, more saepissime minabatur*."

territory were minimal when compared to what had been promised in the Treaty of London. D'Annunzio even coined a phrase for this: '*la vittoria mutilata*' (the mutilated victory). The case of Fiume – Rijeka in present-day Croatia – became particularly symbolic: though a city with a vast majority of ethnic Italian inhabitants, Fiume was handed over to Yugoslavia, much to the chagrin of d'Annunzio. Tired of the government's indecisiveness, the warrior-poet eventually decided to take matters into his own hands and invaded the city with a legion of his supporters, establishing his own regime which lasted from September 1919 to December 1920.

Like d'Annunzio's military exploits, the Fiume experiment also came up in contemporary Latin poetry. In his seminal article on the Latin poetry of the Great War, Sorbelli even claimed that Bartoli's *Poeta miles* actually also dealt with the liberation of Fiume:

> In mezzo a tanto putridume, a sollevare gli spiriti e a far sperare nella resurrezione della Patria venne il d'Annunzio con la marcia di Ronchi. Tra il generale silenzio, quasi di morte, fece allora udire la voce il Bartoli con l'alcaica *Poeta miles*, nella quale canta l'eroismo fattivo del poeta soldate, il glorioso ardimento, la liberazione di Fiume[65].

Yet this seems to be case of *Hineininterpretierung*. Though he did not quote any text, Sorbelli must have had the following stanza in mind (73-76), in which Bartoli refers to d'Annunzio as a '*dux*', 'leading his returning cohort towards even graver danger':

> Namque in tenaces nunc facit impetum
> Hostes; ruentes strenuus excipit;
> Nunc dux revertentem cohortem
> In graviora vocat pericla.

Sorbelli was clearly tempted to read a reference to the *Marcia di Ronchi* into this, since d'Annunzio did eventually assume the title of 'Comandante' in Fiume, which he had captured (*graviora pericula*) with the support of war veterans or 'legionaries' (*revertentem cohortem*). Yet it seems that Bartoli's intentions had been far more general in nature, in that he simply wanted to refer to d'Annunzio's exploits as an inspiring commander during the war. Nor could he have possibly meant to hint at the *Impresa*, as the text from the 1925 edition which Sorbelli had at his disposal actually dated from 1917[66].

Someone who did dedicate Latin verse to the chaos of post-war Italy and d'Annunzio's part in it was Domenico Tinozzi (1858-1953) with his 1919 poem *Minois iudicium* ('Minos' Judgment'). Born and raised in the Abruzzi, Tinozzi was not only a surgeon, a teacher, and a politician, but also a Latinist with personal connections to d'Annunzio. He had already written quite an amount of Latin poetry on the Great War, and according to Esposito he also wrote a Latin poem about d'Annunzio and the Abruzzi under the title *En adsum Gabriel* ('Behold, it is I, Gabriel'), though I have not been able to track down a single copy[67].

With *Minois iudicium*, Tinozzi composed a biting satire on the Italian parliament of his time, specifically aimed at the 'XXIV Legislatura', which was in power from 27 November 1913 to 29 September 1919. Tinozzi had actually been a member of parliament himself from 1895 until the end of the XXIV Legislatura, and would be again during the rise of Fascism ('XXVI Legislatura', 1921-1924). Though he was part of the legislature himself, Tinozzi was not afraid to celebrate the downfall of what he considered to be a weak assembly, unable to stand up to the challenges of its time. The political satire in elegiac distichs is to be situated during the final weeks of this legislature: the Fiume-issue is clearly on the agenda, though it seems that the poem was written before d'Annunzio actually invaded the city on 12 September[68].

It opens with a dedication to prime-minister Francesco Severio Nitti, who is portrayed as *Orpheus Lucanus* ('Orpheus from Lucania')[69]. Just as Orpheus once visited the underworld and lulled the three-

[65] SORBELLI 1935, 154.

[66] Cfr. n. 60.

[67] ESPOSITO 1980, 658. As the title suggests, Tinozzi made the recurrent connection between d'Annunzio's first name Gabriele, the etymology of his surname ('*nuntius*', messenger), and the Archangel Gabriel.

[68] Otherwise the *Marcia di Ronchi* would have surely been a prominent subject. Besides, the introduction to the poem is dated 29 September 1919, so Tinozzi's poem must have been completed before this date.

[69] Niti hailed from the Basilicata region, '*Lucania*' in ancient times.

headed Cerberus to sleep, so Nitti is now faced with the task of taming the five-hundred-headed beast that is parliament. He decides to send the assembly to the underworld and let Minos decide whether they are worthy of another term. One by one, prominent MPs of all political hues are led before the infernal judge, providing Tinozzi with ample opportunity to satirise his peers.

The first one to explicitly mention Fiume is Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, who was prime-minister during the last years of the war and represented Italy during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, where he famously tried yet failed to secure Italy's claim on Fiume, eventually forcing him to resign. In full battle array, Orlando tries to defend his actions before Minos. With a play on words, he claims that despite the 'streams of words' (*flumina verborum*) they exchanged, the treacherous Allies still denied him Fiume (*Flumen*). He swears that he did his duty, but fell victim to fickle Fortune. Closing his plea with a piece of advice to his successor Nitti – that the same could just as easily happen to him – Orlando takes his leave with his armour drenched in tears:

"Arbiter umbrarum, quas partim trudis in Orcum,
Ast alias campos mittis in Elysios,
Flumina verborum diffudimus et mihi Flumen
Heu sociorum aufert perfida calliditas!
Nunc tua iura, pater, testor superosque potentes
Me numquam officium deseruisse meum!
Caeca sed eventus omnes fortuna gubernat:
Deprimit excelsos, huc redit unde abiit.
Omnia sum expertus, plausum tristemque repulsam.
Cerne: solo iaceo qui steterim in solio.
At, Lucane vafer, qui vento credis amico
Vela ratis, tu nunc utere sorte tua.
Sed cave ne quando adversam vertatur in auram:
Expectata minus te graviora prement."[70]

"O Lord of the shades, part of whom you drive toward Orcus, while sending the rest to the Elysian Fields, we exchanged rivers of words, yet the treacherous and shrewd allies robbed me of Fiume! Father, I now swear on your laws and on the mighty gods above that I have never neglected my duty! Yet all events are governed by blind fortune: she bears down on the lofty ones and returns whence she came. I have experienced it all: applause and sad rejection. Look: I who once sat on the throne now lie on the ground. You, shrewd Lucanian, who entrust the sails of the ship to the friendly wind, enjoy your fortune while it lasts. Yet beware of the day when the wind changes: what you least expect will hurt you most."

As the politicians discuss the fate of Fiume among themselves, tensions rise so high that they start fighting, until a chariot pulls up with an old man dressed as an ancient poet: Tinozzi did not even spare himself in his own satire. Minos advises Tinozzi to quit politics altogether and dedicate himself to his poetry, after which he rises to address all MPs one last time. Minos has decided that it is not up to him, but to the Italian people to judge them. However, he does want to warn them about the dark clouds he sees gathering on Italy's horizon. Eerily prophetic, Minos claims that war is brewing once again. They should therefore forget about d'Annunzio and his Garibaldi complex – "the winged prophet obsessed by the great glory of the Ligurian general" – and the quibbles about Fiume, and focus on what lies ahead. Minos then lets darkness descend upon the MPs: they are to find their own way out of the underworld.

"Hoc unum tamen admoneo, quod pectore fixum
Impediet ne vos irrita imago trahat.
Hinc omnes liquidas mundi venietis ad auras,
Vos ubi magna manent bella ineunda cito.
Heu quantam cerno cladem stragemque futuram!
Hei mihi, quam paucis post superesse licet!
(…)
Cur invicta manent tibi iurgia pectore, Ferri?
Armorum sonitus ad nova bella vocant.
Verte animum; aligerum nunc obliviscere vatem

[70] TINOZZI 1919, 18-19.

Quem torquet Liguris gloria magna ducis.
Iamque valete omnes." Dixit, noctemque repente
Induxit: reditus caeca via est miseris;
Qui manibus tenebras temptant qua semita ducat,
Alter et alterius flagitat auxilium[71].

"Yet I am warning you, lest you be under any illusion: you will all make it back to the clear air of the world, where great wars are looming on the horizon. O what a massacre and bloodbath I foresee! O and how very few survivors! (…) Why do you keep holding resentment in your heart, Ferri[72]? The clang of arms is calling for new battles. Focus, forget about the winged poet obsessed by the great glory of the Ligurian general. Farewell, all of you!" Thus he spoke, and he immediately let darkness descend. The miserable politicians cannot see their way back; groping in the dark to find the path, they ask each other's help.

Another poet who did explicitly dedicate Latin verse to the Fiume adventure was d'Annunzio's lifelong supporter Cesare De Titta. Whereas the first installment of his *Gabrielis Nuncii laudes* cycle deals with d'Annunzio's wartime experiences, the three other poems are all related to Fiume.

The first and longest of the three, *In legionariorum ducem* ('To the *Comandante* of the Legionaries'), was written during the Fiume endeavour itself and picks up where *In poetam militem* left off: the war is over and Rome should be preparing to celebrate d'Annunzio. Yet the latter is tired of Rome's indecisiveness as to the fate of Fiume, so he calls on his troops and occupies the city at his own initiative. De Titta goes on to sketch the state of post-war Italy: social unrest is brewing, factions are undermining the country, people are scouring the streets for breadcrumbs as poverty is skyrocketing, those who managed to survive the war are being killed by their fellow countrymen instead… Meanwhile, d'Annunzio is the only one who remembers what his country truly wanted out of the war, so he founds the 'Regency of the Liburnian Gulf' (i.e. *La Reggenza Italiana del Carnaro*):

Iam Quirinalis Capitoliumque,
Gesta quae prisci meditantur aevi,
Militem parant duplici Poetam
Cingere lauro,
Cum moras longas mediosque segnes
Pacis aspernans Gabriel, citato
Agmine, iniussu, legione Flumen
Occupat urbem.
Dum bacchatur sociale bellum
Italos inter rabidaeque partes
Irruunt contra Patriam trucesque
Omnia miscent;
(…)
Dum, quibus dirus gladius pepercit
Hostium, fratrum manibus per urbes
Concidunt fratres populumque crescens
Torquet egestas;
Dux memor coepti Patriaeque voti
Et Sinus fundit Regimen Liburni
(…)[73]

The Quirinal and Capitoline, mindful of the feats of ancient times, are preparing to crown the Poet-Soldier with a double laurel, when Gabriele, sick of the long delay and sluggish peacemakers, summons his legionaries and occupies the city of Fiume without official orders. While social strife is brewing among Italians and rabid parties are rising up against the Fatherland and fiercely overturning everything (…) and while brothers who were spared the enemies' dire sword die at each other's hands in the cities and the people are suffering from increasing poverty, *Comandante* d'Annunzio is mindful of his Fatherland's initial wish and founds the Regency of the Liburnian Gulf.

[71] TINOZZI 1919, 28-29.
[72] I.e. the 'neutralista' Enrico Ferri.
[73] DE TITTA 1922, 182-84.

The government was of course not amused by d'Annunzio's high-risk game. De Titta addresses Rome directly: 'why are you sad, why are you still tarrying? Will you no longer give d'Annunzio the triumph he deserves?' To conclude, the poet marks the contrast between Rome and the peaceful surroundings of Fiume, where d'Annunzio will hopefully be able to focus on writing patriotic poetry for years to come:

Roma, quid maeres, quid adhuc moraris?
Non iubes colles resonare septem?
Non sibi parto properas Poetam
    Ferre triumpho?
(…)
In iugis nostrae viridantis orae
Non deest felix aliquis recessus,
Murmur ad glauci maris, ad sereni
    Aetheris auras,
Quo procul scena strepituque vulgi
Ille concedat redeatque Musae,
Cuius in divo gremio severos
    Transeat annos,
Et canat, cuius fuit ille magna
Pars domi et bello, patrium poema
Luce, quam solus gerit intus, ardens
    Solis et Urbis[74].

Rome, why are you sad? Why do you still tarry? Won't you order the seven hills to echo? Won't you rush to usher in the Poet in the triumph he deserves? (…) On the green hills of our shore there is no shortage of tranquil recesses near the murmuring blue sea and under a clear sky where the Poet can retreat, far from the public eye and vulgar din, and return to his Muse, in whose divine womb he can pass the rough years and compose, burning with the light of the Sun and the City which he alone carries in his heart, the poem of his Fatherland, of which he was a large part both in times of peace and war.

Dannunzian Fiume turned out to be a short-lived experiment. A little more than a year after the annexation, the curtains fell when d'Annunzio flouted the Treaty of Rapallo, in which Italy and Yugoslavia had agreed to turn Fiume into an independent state, and declared war on Italy itself. The barrage of cannon fire which Italy subsequently unleashed on Fiume around Christmas Day 1920 heralded the end. The third ode of De Titta's d'Annunzio cycle, *In civem exsulaturum* ('To the Man about to go in Exile as a Citizen'), centres around this *Natale di Sangue*. The poet-priest laments the shedding of blood on Christmas, yet continues to support d'Annunzio. Ever apologetic, he calls for a respectful moment of silence instead of accusations: if d'Annunzio can be accused of anything, it is that he simply loved his country *too* much ("*nimii* (…) *crimen amoris*"). In his mind, d'Annunzio was serving a higher notion of *patria* when he decided to stay true to his ideals and reject the "*pactae foedera pacis*" (i.e. the Treaty of Rapallo). De Titta is saddened by the rumours that d'Annunzio might flee the country in exile. Yet even if he physically leaves Italy, he will always carry it with him in his heart:

O novi luctus Patriaeque tellus
Nocte Natali rubra! Vulneratum
Pectus est Divi Pueri… Silete
    Corda cruenta!
(…)
Nullus accuset, sileamus omnes.
Num reus laesae patriae quis adstat?
Si quod est crimen, nimii vocetur
    Crimen amoris.
Cum ferus, tenax, ita constitutam,
Plebis ut scitum statuisset, urbem
Stare decrevit renuitque pactae
    Foedera pacis,

[74] De Titta 1922, 184-85.

Ille maiori Patriae magisque
Paruit pulchrae, Patriae superbae,
Corde quam semper tulit ut fidemque
Spemque coruscam.
Exsul iratus Patriae futurus
Fertur: at terram patriam relinquet,
Patriae nusquam iaciet relictae
Exsul amorem.
(…)[75]

O new calamities, the land of the country is crimson with blood on Christmas Eve! The heart of baby Jesus has been wounded… Be silent, bloody hearts! (…) Let no one make accusations, let us all remain silent. Or is there anyone present who is guilty of wounding the country? If there is any fault, it is the fault of too much love. When he, with fierce resolve, decided that the city should remain as the people had decreed, and rejected the peace treaties made, he was serving a greater county, a more beautiful country, a proud country, which he always cherished in his heart, like his burning faith and hope. They say he will go into exile, angry at his country: though he will leave the native soil, nowhere will the exile discard his love for his abandoned country.

When it transpired that d'Annunzio would not leave the country after all, De Titta was overjoyed, dedicating the last, brief poem of his cycle, *Ad Lares Patrios* ('To his Native Home'), to these glad tidings. At the time, the poet seemed to be under the impression that d'Annunzio would return to his native Abruzzi region, even though he went on to live in the now famous villa at lake Garda. Thus, instead of going into exile, d'Annunzio would stay and protect Italy as a 'silent guardian'…

Dux, ut in votis erat, exsulatum
Non abit. Felix Aprutina tellus
Filium magnum cupit in paterna
Tecta redire.
Ille nobiscum manet, ut novercae
Nomen avertat Patriae dolenti
Et novae culpae maculam novumque
Murmur et iras.
Hic manet firmus tacitusque custos
Illius quisquis sacer exstat ignis
Corde multorum velut in reposta
Abditus ara[76].

As we had prayed, the *Comandante* has not gone into exile. The happy Abruzzo wants her great son to return to his father's home. He is staying among us, to shield both his aching Motherland and his Stepmotherland from disgrace, from the blemish of new mistakes, and from new muttering and anger. He stands firm, a silent guardian of however much remains of the sacred fire in the hearts of the many, as though hidden in a secret altar.

D'Annunzio would go on to live there for the rest of his life. He kept relatively quiet, focusing on his writing, without getting too much involved in politics. Mussolini, on the other hand, was quite a fan of his, so when d'Annunzio decided that he wanted to transform his parental home in Pescara into a monument dedicated to his mother, who had died in 1917, the *Duce* was all too happy to support his plan. In 1927, the house was declared a national monument, a decision which was in turn celebrated in another brief Latin poem of De Titta's, *Per la casa natale di G. d'Annunzio*[77]. Structured around the repetition of a number of adverbs and pronouns (*hic*, *hic*, *huc*, *hanc*, *quam*), the poem zooms in on the house in question. It opens with a typical pun on d'Annunzio's name, drawing a comparison between Gabriele and the Archangel Gabriel, both of whom are 'messengers of happiness': it was here that d'Annunzio came into

[75] De Titta 1922, 186-87.

[76] *Ibid.*, 189-90.

[77] De Titta 1952, 359-60. The poem is followed by a distich on De Titta's own humble childhood home (361, *Per la casetta natale del Poeta*: "*Non in divitiis mihi prima puertia risit,* | *sed mea pauperies non mihi dura fuit*."). De Titta had also written a brief poem to d'Annunzio in response to his mother's death in 1917, *Ad Gabrielem d'Annunzio in mortem matris* (1922, 141): "*Quae sonuit tam cara tibi sub luce, Poeta,* | *carior ex umbris vox tibi matris erit.* | *Felix qui vitam nigro sub limine sentit,* | *quaeque perire putant, non periisse videt!* | *Ex umbris lumen: felix cui lumen ab umbris,* | *cui verbum vitae mortis ab ore venit!*".

the world; it was here that the new poet witnessed his first spring (a reference to *Primo vere* and *Canto novo*); it was here that he was raised by a doting mother, who could die in peace when she realised the greatness her son had achieved; it was here that he returned from the turmoil of the war to attend his mother's funeral; and it was this very same house, finally, which the 'Principe di Montenevoso' – a title of nobility which Mussolini made sure d'Annunzio received in 1924 – wanted to transform into a sacred monument:

Nuntius hic gaudi Gabriel apparuit infans,
Cantus hic primo vere poeta novi.
Hic illum, longe quem gloria duxerat, altus
Exspectavit amor matris et alta fides,
Quae, cum vidit eum iam culmina cuncta tenentem
Dixit laeta: "Deus, nunc mihi dulce mori!"
Huc tum, qui vatum princeps Helicone reversus
Viventi tulerat gaudia summa piae,
Exstinctae medio veniens de turbine belli
Princeps heroum dona suprema tulit.
Hanc sanctam voluit Princeps de Monte Nivoso
Largius ornatam splendidiusque domum.
Quam velut ex voto gaudebunt visere gentes,
Sacra quibus virtus ingeniumque sacrum.

This is where baby Gabriele came into the world, as a messenger of happiness; this is where a poet of a new kind witnessed his first spring. This is where d'Annunzio's doting and faithful mother waited for him, taken far away on a quest for glory; and when she saw that he excelled in everything he did, she said happily: "God, now I can die in peace!" This is where he, upon his return from mount Helicon as the chief of poets, brought his pious mother extreme happiness when she was still alive, and this is where he returned from the turmoil of the ongoing war to pay her his last respects as the chief of heroes. This is the house which the Prince of Montenevoso wanted to turn into a sacred monument, decorated more lavishly and sumptuously. People who revere virtue and talent will be thrilled to visit this house, and feel as if their wish has come true.

D'Annunzio eventually passed away in 1938 on the eve of the Second World War. Yet his *persona* never died, as he continued making his appearance as a literary character, even in Latin. This was the case, for instance, in another composition of Domenico Tinozzi's: *Somnium Pantalonis* ('The Dream of Pantaloon')[78]. This closet drama in five acts dating from 1948 deals with the fall of the Fascist regime and the chaos in its wake (1943-46). The at times apologetic and somewhat incoherent play is written from the perspective of 'Pantalone', a stock character from the *commedia dell'arte*, who has visions of a number of key events from the period (e.g. the imprisonment, liberation, and execution of Mussolini, the German invasion of Italy, the Allied bombing of Montecassino, the mass killings at the Ardeatine caves, and the transition from monarchy to republic).

The fifth act of the play received the subtitle *Urbium eversarum lamentationes* (in the facing Italian translation *Lamenti delle città distrutte da mine o da bombardamenti aerei*)[79]. After the first four scenes dealing with the Ardeatine massacre, the fifth scene offers the lamentation of Pescara, Tinozzi and d'Annunzio's native city. The city cries out that she, Pescara, "the noble city of the winged poet", is being razed to the ground by Germans and Englishmen alike. She is in ruins: her walls are crumbling down, there is fire and blood everywhere, her citizens are abandoning her, her monuments are in tatters… She ultimately supplements her cry for help with a sneer towards her most famous citizen: "this is not what you promised me, Gabriele!".

Magna Urbs heu pereo magna convulsa ruina,
Aligeri Vatis nobilis Urbs pereo!
Moenia cuncta labant; fumosis ignibus uror;
Angli et Germani me simul excruciant.
Effugiunt passim trepidi per litora cives
Tutaque lustra petunt; sanguine terra rubet.

[78] TINOZZI 1948.
[79] Fragments are also quoted in ESPOSITO 1980, 674-79.

Quae micuere cadunt Vestino parta labore;
Celsa ruit turris, pons ruit aere nitens.
Arctis quis feret in rebus mihi dulce levamen?
Non eris haec, Gabriel, tu mihi pollicitus[80]!

Alas, I, a great City, the noble City of the Winged Poet, am being destroyed, torn apart and ruined! All my walls are collapsing, I am ablaze with sooty fires, and ravished by English and Germans alike! My citizens are alarmed, fleeing everywhere along the coast, looking for safe caves. The earth is crimson with blood. The treasures erected with Pescarese effort are falling: the sublime tower comes crashing down, as does the bridge adorned with bronze. I am in dire straits, who will come to my aid? This is not what you promised me, Gabriele!

In the following scene, the ghost of d'Annunzio himself rises from the grave, very briefly addressing the Pescaresi, urging them to take heart and to be the masters of their own fate:

Eia age, sume animum, Vestino sanguine nate,
Fortunaeque novae sis faber ipse tuae[81].

Come on, take heart, son of Pescarese blood, be the master of you own fate!

This is not the only appearance that d'Annunzio makes. Though Pantalone wakes up from his nightmare at the end of the fifth act, the play does not stop there, as there still is an *Appendix*, a patchwork of dialogues and rather loose fragments of verse. Following an elegy describing the final moments of Mussolini and his mistress (including the cruel desecration of their bodies by a mob of angry milanesi), the ghosts of both d'Annunzio and Dante take centre stage. D'Annunzio cries out that he is disgusted by these atrocities, and tells Dante that he would like to leave as quickly as possible. He then asks Dante whether he has ever witnessed such cruelty, even when he visited hell in person. The latter replies that he has in fact not, and laments the fact that Italy seems to have been catapulted back into its days of torturing martyrs. D'Annunzio then repeats his urgent wish to leave Milan at once: he should be heading back to the Abruzzi, and Dante to Firenze. All of a sudden, a voice is heard from above. It turns out to be the voice of Italy itself, calling upon its citizens to end the strife once and for all. The voice is then joined by the apparition of Ambrose, the patron saint of Milan, urging the Milanese to leave the dead at peace:

Umbra Gabrielis umbrae Dantis

Summe propinque mihi, iuvat hanc nos linquere, Vates,
Urbem, ne videant amplius hoc, oculi.
Cum vivus loca lustrares nigrantia Ditis
Crimina vidistin' tu, feriora, Pater?

Umbra Dantis

Heu redeunt pravi mores aevumque nefandum
Quo martyr picea veste adopertus erat,
Ignis ut ardens crudelius ureret illum,
Hoc gaudente fero crimine plebe fera;
Quo victor victi raptabat triste cadaver,
Hoc gaudente truci funere plebe truci!

Umbra Gabrielis

Nos urbem iuvat hanc extemplo linquere, Dive:
Te vocat urbs florum, me vocat Aprutium.

Vox Patriae

Ne quid nunc nimis: at fraterno foedere iunctos,
Cives, vos livor deserat et rabies!

[80] TINOZZI 1948, 76-77.
[81] *Ibid*.

Umbra divi Ambrosii suis civibus

Postuma pax clemens foveat tellure repostos;
Humana hoc Pietas, lex docet hoc Superum[82]!

[*ghost of d'Annunzio to Dante*] O great Poet close to me, we'd better leave this City, to remove this horror from our sight. Tell me, Father, did you witness anything more horrible when you, still alive, visited the dark realm of Dis? [*ghost of Dante*] Alas, the wicked customs and terrible times have returned when martyrs were covered in pitch to make the fire burn all the more cruelly while the ferocious crowd rejoiced in the ferocious punishment; or when the victor dragged along the pitiful corpse of the defeated foe while the savage crowd rejoiced in the savage funeral! [*ghost of d'Annunzio*] We'd better leave the city at once, Divine one: the city of flowers is calling you, as is the Abruzzo calling me. [*voice of the Country*] Calm down, citizens: stop this spite and rage and come together as brothers! [*ghost of St. Ambrose to his citizens*] Let clement peace finally protect the dead underground. Human piety and divine law commands it!

4. D'Annunzio the Author

Apart from a soldier and a leader, d'Annunzio was of course also a famous writer. In this final section, we will shed light on Latin verse related to d'Annunzio's oeuvre and his persona as an author. In fact, we have already come across several dannunzian titles, e.g. in the paratexts accompanying De Titta's and Tenneroni's translations of the *Elegie romane*.

As the two Latinists most close to d'Annunzio, De Titta and Tenneroni wrote a fair amount of occasional poetry with regard to the oeuvre of d'Annunzio, especially concerning the latter's dramatic works. Tenneroni, for instance, dedicated at least three Latin compositions to dannunzian drama, one of which we have already touched upon, *Gabrieli convivae*, written in honour of the completion and first production of *La città morta*. In fact, the same booklet containing *Gabrieli convivae* also includes a number of elegiac distichs which Tenneroni had composed in honour of the premiere of d'Annunzio's very first play, *Il sogno di un mattino di primavera*, from 1897. The leading role of Isabella, whose lover is killed by her husband and who subsequently goes insane, spending an entire night clinging to her lover's body drenched in his blood, was played by d'Annunzio's mistress and one of Italy's most famous actresses, Eleonora Duse. After her portrayal of the mad Isabella in the first production of *Il sogno* in Paris, Tenneroni wrote *In Isabellam* ('To Isabella'), picturing the couple's bloody embrace.

Sanguine perfusam crines et candida membra,
Cum pia vulneribus corporis exanimi
Oscula figebas, heu te dementia cepit!
Fidus anhelanti nocte tibi gremio
Interfectus amans. Quatiens maestissimus alas
Pavo Dianorae te prope fata refert[83].

Ah, you went mad while you were gently kissing the wounds of a lifeless body, with your hair and snow-white body drenched in blood! Your loyal lover was killed, and lay on your sobbing lap all night long. Near you, a heartbroken peacock claps its wings and announces the death of Dianora.

As his muse, Duse would go on to play the lead in many of d'Annunzio's plays. A year later, for instance, in 1898, he completed yet another tragedy – *La Gioconda* – in which she played the female protagonist, Silvia, the wife of Lucio Settala, a sculptor who had fallen in love with his model Gioconda. After a botched suicide attempt because his love had remained unrequited, Silvia forgave her husband and helped him get back on his feet. The play starts with Lucio in recovery, though he still appears to be infatuated with Gioconda, despite the loving care of his wife. Silvia eventually confronts the model, ordering her to leave their house, at which point the two women get into a fight and Gioconda tries to destroy Lucio's most recent masterpiece, a statue of a sphinx which had been modelled on Gioconda. Trying to save the statue from falling to pieces, Silvia has both her hands crushed. When Lucio decides to leave her for Gioconda, she goes into exile by the seaside during the fourth and final act. Here, Silvia is accompanied by 'La Sirenetta', a witch-like figure who tries to comfort Silvia with songs and gifts from nature while she awaits her daughter Beata to come and join her. The play comes to a close when Beata finally shows up, wanting

[82] *Ibid.*, 98-101.
[83] TENNERONI 1897, 13.

to be hugged by her mother and to give her flowers, which breaks the latter's heart as she is unable to do so on account of her handicap.

It was the final act in particular which inspired Tenneroni to compose some Latin verse. In *In IV^um^ actum dramatis La Gioconda Gabrielis d'Annunzio* ('On the fourth act of Gabriele d'Annunzio's *La Gioconda*'), Tenneroni addresses the exile directly ("*Silviae Septalae*")[84]. Alluding to her stumps, the narrator asks her what terrible sacrifice she is hiding behind the fabric of her dress[85]. She is paying the prize for having wanted to save both the statue and her husband, which has enraged both the god of art and the god of love. He asks her to stop watching the marble mountains in the distance, which must remind her of her husband's marble and, consequently, the beautiful Gioconda[86]. The narrator then describes how La Sirenetta ("*Sirenuncula*") tries to console Silvia with sea stars and a song, of which Tenneroni translated the first three lines into Latin[87]. With a fine reference to Virgil's eclogues (IV, 60: *Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem*), Beata suddenly appears, wanting to hug her mother ("*at noto cupiens amplexu noscere matrem*") and give her flowers[88]. Just like the play, the poem ends with Beata noticing that her mother is crying[89]. Interestingly, this is one of the only Latin poems which d'Annunzio himself also commented upon. Not without reason, he qualified the distichs as "versi mediocri" in a letter to Tenneroni, though he was grateful to his friend for these "segni continui di affettuosa ricordanza"[90].

Quaenam dira tegis velo supplicia, mater,
    Sic ut supplex non significandus amor?
Sphingem tentasti et cordi servare maritum
    Frustra: quemque trahunt condita fata sua.
Ecce caduca iaces, et Amoris et[91] Artis acerbo
    Numine, Pisanis hostia[92] litoribus.
Desine marmoreas intendere lumina ad Alpes:
    Verest Iucundae forma superba[93] deae!
Stellatos pelagi dat Sirenuncula flores,
    Vulnera quae mulcent carmina iamque canit:
"Septem nos fuimus, pulchrae[94] pariterque, sorores,
    Ac nobis una fontis aquae speculum".

At noto cupiens amplexu noscere matrem,
    Unica spes tandem blanda Beata redit.
Accipe – ait – flores. Lugen? – Cor dicta dolenti
    Frangunt ac tantis dulce mori lacrimis[95]!

[84] TENNERONI 1899 (quoted in MENNA 2007, 32, albeit with many errors). See also BORRELLI 2005.

[85] D'ANNUNZIO 1910, 178: "*Ella porta una veste cinerizia alla cui estremità corre un piccolo orlo nero, come un filo di lutto. Le maniche lunghe nascondono i moncherini, ch'ella tiene distesi giù pe' fianchi e talvolta serrati contro, un po' in dietro, come per nasconderli nelle pieghe, con un moto doloroso di pudore*."

[86] *Ibid.*, 212: "*le Alpi marmifere in lontananza segnano nel cielo una linea di bellezza, in cui si rivela il sogno che sorge dal loro chiuso popolo di statue addormentate*."

[87] *Ibid.*, 178: "(…) *appare una figura feminina – La Sirenetta* – (…). *Ella s'insinua verso le vetrate con un passo furtivo, reggendo in una mano il lembo del grembiule ripieno di alghe, di nicchi e di stelle marine*"; *ibid*., 184: "Eravamo sette sorelle. | Ci specchiammo alle fontane: | eravamo tutte belle."

[88] *Ibid.*, 215-17: "Ah, quanto ho corso, quanto o corso! Sono fuggita, sola. Ho corso, ho corso. Non volevano lasciarmi venire. Ah, ma io sono fuggita, col mio fascio di fiori. (*copre di nuovi baci il volto materno*) (…) Perché non mi prendi? Perché non mi stringi? Prendimi! Prendimi, mamma! (*ella si solleva su la punta dei piedi, per essere rapita dall'abbraccio materno. La madre indietreggia, perdutamente*) (…) Io t'ho portati i fiori, tanti fiori. Vedi? Vedi?"

[89] *Ibid.*, 218: "Piangi? Piangi? (*Sbigottita ella si getta contro il seno della madre, con tutti i suoi fiori. La Sirenetta, caduta anch'ella in ginocchio, prona, tocca con la fronte o con le palme distese la terra*.)"

[90] MENNA 2007, 31.

[91] Not "*Amori set*" (MENNA 2007, 32).

[92] Not "*ostia*" (*ibid.*).

[93] Not the metrically impossible "*superbae*" (*ibid.*).

[94] Not "*pulchae*"(*ibid.*).

[95] Originally published in TENNERONI 1899, also quoted in MENNA 2007, 32.

What terrible sacrifice are you hiding behind your veil, mother, so as not to betray your submissive love? You have tried to save the sphinx and your husband for the sake of your own heart, yet all in vain: destiny is set and drags everyone along. Look at you, here you lie, a fallen victim at the seaside of Pisa, having enraged both the god of Love and the god of Art. Stop looking at the marble Alps: it is truly the overwhelming beauty of the goddess Gioconda! La Sirenetta offers you starry flowers from the sea and sings songs which are already healing your wounds: "we were seven sisters, and we were all pretty, and the water was our mirror." At long last, fair Beata, your only hope, has returned, craving to recognise her mother through a familiar hug. "Take these flowers" she says. "Are you crying?" These words break your suffering heart, but it is sweet to die by so many tears.

Eleonora Duse was also supposed to play the lead in d'Annunzio's *La figlia di Iorio*, written in 1903, since the character of Mila, the titular 'daughter of Iorio', had actually been inspired by Duse herself[96]. Yet by 1904, there was so much strain on the relationship that d'Annunzio decided to give the part to Irma Gramatica instead. In honour of the first production of the master piece at the Teatro Marrucino in Chieti on 23 June 1904, Cesare De Titta composed two short poems in Latin, one rather general congratulatory poem (*Mons patrius ad poetam*) and one engaging with the play's plot (*Angelus mutus*).

Set in archaic Abruzzo, the play centres around Mila and Aligi. Mila has been cast out by her father, the wizard Iorio, and is on the run for a mob of drunken harvesters when she comes across Aligi and his family in the midst of a wedding ceremony: the shepherd Aligi has descended from the mountains to marry a girl of his parents' choosing. Much to the chagrin of his family, Aligi decides to rescue the young girl from the mob, thereby ruining the ritual. They then run away together to the mountains, where they fall in love. At a given moment, Mila is approached by Aligi's father, Lazaro, who tries to rape her and is subsequently killed by his own son. When Aligi is about to be executed for this crime, Mila sacrifices herself for him, claiming that she is in fact a witch and has put a spell on him. She is therefore condemned to death and burned at the stake. While she is being consumed by the flames, she lapses into a state of ecstasy, crying out "*la fiamma è bella!*".

In De Titta's first celebratory poem, *Mons patrius ad poetam* ('The Native Mountain to the Poet'), the Abruzzi mountain, the almost mythical surroundings where most of the tragedy takes place, addresses d'Annunzio directly. When d'Annunzio was a boy, the mountain – i.e. the Abruzzi in general – would sing to him of everything that was grand and beautiful. Now, the tables have turned, and the poet sings to his native country not only of its beautiful nature, but also of the mythical tales of love that took place in bygone days (i.e. *La figlia di Iorio*). For this masterpiece about the 'victim of love' shouting 'the fire is beautiful' ("*rogus est pulcher!*"), the mountain now wants to crown its poet:

Risu cui puero pulcherrima quaeque sereno,
Cui tonitru vitae maxima quaeque meae,
Mons patrius, cecini: lyricam tragicamque per artem
Qui mihi nunc recinis vim resonantis aquae,
Vim tacitam silicis, frondes umbrasque loquentes,
Sibila per cautes verba, nigrasque minas,
Antiquae Gentis, veluti sub pectore vivens
Montis custodis, cor iuvenile tuae,
(Quod furit indomita saevitque libidine amoris
Sed "*Rogus est pulcher!*" victima amoris ait);
Fili magne, veni: magnam tibi sacro coronam,
Quam texunt fronti fulgura et astra manu[97].

Come, great son, to whom I, the native mountain, sang of the most beautiful things in my life with serene laughter, and of the greatest things in my life with thunder when you were still a boy: now you sing to me through your lyric and tragic art of the power of babbling water, of the power of silent stone, of talking leaves and shadows, of whispering words and dark threats in the crags, of the young heart – as though beating in the chest of the guardian mountain – of your ancient people (which rages and raves with untamed passion of love, but which, a victim of love, cries out "*the fire is beautiful!*"). Come, great son: I dedicate to you the great crown which lightning and the stars weave on my forehead.

[96] On Duse as a source of inspiration for Mila, see BARSOTTI 2015. Tenneroni sent the following Latin distich to d'Annunzio while the latter was writing *La figlia di Iorio*: "*Laeta qua fidi solitus, mi Nuntie, fronti* | '*Jorigenam*' *scribens accipe versiculos*." (quoted in MENNA 2007, 29).

[97] DE TITTA 1922, 157-58.

The second poem in honour of *La figlia di Iorio*'s first staging in the Abruzzi, *Angelus mutus* ('the Mute Angel'), centres around the *angelo muto*, a character without any lines in the play, though crucial to the plot. When Mila is begging to be saved from her chasers and Aligi is about to shut the door on her, he sees an apparition of a crying yet silent angel behind her back, at which point he decides to help her anyway. Aligi remains enchanted by Mila's silent guardian angel, which he decides to carve into a wooden sculpture. Via the angel, De Titta essentially summarises the entire play, once again rendering the infamous "*la fiamma è bella!*" into Latin at the climax of the poem:

Angelus est mutus, qui errantis maesta puellae
Vindice praenovit corda probanda rogo;
Custodem flentis quem pastor vidit Aliges
Mutatoque pie pectore sculpsit amans;
Angelus est mutus, quem nescivere ruentes
Messores tumidi, turba proterva, mero;
Quem de Tartareis infestum credidit umbris
Religio diro murmure adesse magae;
Lazarus effreno quem risit caecus amore;
Candia quem graviter, pressa dolore, tulit.
Angelus est mutus; sed vox non ulla ab imo
Pectore, corda movens, altius intonuit,
Quam cum luce micans (tu sola, Ornella, micantem
Vidisti lucem pro pietate tua!)
Angelus ante aras moriturae ex ore misellae:
"*Pulchra* – inquit – *flamma est!*" insiluitque pyrae[98].

The angel is silent: he knew beforehand that the saddened heart of the wandering girl would be put to the test on a pyre of vengeance; the goatherd Aligi saw him as the guardian of the crying girl, and when he turned into her lover after his change of heart, he was devoted to sculpting the angel's image. The angel is silent: the wanton mob of drunken harvesters chasing after her did not know him; the communion believed him to be a nefarious spirit from hell, assisting a witch with his accursed whispers; blinded by unrestrained love, Lazaro mocked him; in the throes of sadness, Candia[99] could not stand him. The angel is silent, but no utterance thundered forth from the bottom of his heart more loudly than when he lighted up (only you, Ornella[100], in your compassion, saw the flickering light) and spoke through the poor girl who was about to die before the altar and said, jumping into the pyre, "the flame is beautiful!".

With the following poem, Giacomo Porcelli's *Supremum sodalium colloquium* ('The Last Conversation Between Friends'), we have reached the last phase of Latin *Nuntiana*, comprising compositions from the second half of the twentieth century, long after d'Annunzio's death. Though Porcelli (1901-1978), a second-generation Pascolian poet, is also known for a string of successes in the *Hoeufftianum* during the 1950s, he actually wrote this poem for another contest held in Bologna in 1960, the short-lived *Certamen Mingarellianum*, where he also won a prize[101]. He subsequently published it in his *carmina* collection *Horae subsicivae*, after which it was furnished with an elaborate introduction, translation, and commentary by Aldo Marsili in a study of 1986, so I need only give a small taste of the poem[102]. In no fewer than 224 hexameter lines, *Supremum sodalium colloquium* describes the very last time d'Annunzio met Giovanni Pascoli in Bologna in 1910 before going into exile in France. It seems to be modelled on Pascoli's prizewinning *Catullocalvos* from 1897, which masterfully reconstructs the day of poetic play between Catullus and Calvus as briefly recounted in Catullus' fiftieth *carmen*[103]. The poem starts out with a description of d'Annunzio walking up to Pascoli's house, ruminating on his time in Rome and on some of his earlier works. As Pascoli greets his "*frater minor aevo, nomine maior*" at the door, d'Annunzio is surprised to find him looking so old and tired. The two poets then fall into conversation, reminiscing and

[98] DE TITTA 1922, 159.

[99] Candia della Leonessa is Aligi's mother, and one of the persons trying to restrain Aligi from saving Mila.

[100] Ornella is one of Aligi's sisters, and the only other person to show compassion towards Mila: she also wants to save Mila from her assailants, and when Mila is on the pyre, Ornella shows her forgiveness by kissing her feet.

[101] Cfr. PASOLI 1967.

[102] PORCELLI 1961, 34-41; PORCELLI 1986; PARADISI - TRAINA 2007, 129-30.

[103] Cfr. PARADISI - TRAINA 2007, 129. On *Catullocalvos*, see MAHONEY 2006.

declaring their mutual appreciation. When Pascoli mentions his old age and modestly refers to d'Annunzio's poetic superiority, the latter is at a loss for words and needs to sit down:

> Adsidit Gabriel, vultusque per omnia circum
> Fert, secum meditans, et dicere vellet, "amice,
> Nil hodie gravat ista caro corpusque misellum;
> Ne pudeat te, frater; me quoque perculit aetas,
> Evellit nitidos densa de fronte capillos,
> Dentes paulatim nigra robigine trivit,
> Inque annos minuit vires et signa iuventae;
> Sed dium quoddam haec redolet domus alma poesis,
> Aeternoque animi tu vultum e robore formas.
> Mecum side hilaris, ceu cum florentibus annis
> Tironis libuit Romae tibi visere tectum,
> Multaque disseruit Musis instinctus uterque,
> Quae postid tulimus! (…) Livor niger ipse malorum
> Inter nos – pudor heu! – scriptis armavit acerbis;
> Omnipotens sed vicit amor, qui robora sumit
> Ignis uti crepitans averso flamine venti."
> Dicere sic vellet; sed mens incerta vagatur,
> Aptaque nec reperit quae texat verba dolenti[104].

> Gabriele sits down and looks around, thinking to himself. He would like to say: "Oh my friend, this flesh and this unhappy body are not weighing you down today at all. There is no need to be ashamed, brother: old age has struck me as well; it has plucked the splendid hair from my bushy forehead; it has slowly ground away my teeth with black mould; and every year my strength and the signs of my youth diminish. Yet this bountiful house of poetry smells of something divine, and you reinvigorate your face with the eternal strength of your soul. Come and sit with me, happily, just as when you liked to visit me, a novice, in Rome in the flower of our youth, and we both spoke of many things, inspired by the Muses. How we have suffered since then! (…) Black envy of those who bore us ill will – o shame! – armed us both with bitter writings; yet omnipotent love overcame, gaining strength like a crackling fire fanned by the adverse wind." He wanted to say this, but his mind drifted, unsure and unable to find the right words to say to his sad friend.

As night falls, Pascoli mentions that he has prepared a room for his friend to stay the night, but d'Annunzio graciously declines the offer, claiming that he must be on his way. The poem then comes to a close as the "*Pollux Castorque gemelli*" both foreshadow their own destinies while they say their goodbyes: great battles still await d'Annunzio, while the old poet will lose the unwinnable fight against old age.

The final poem under discussion, Giuseppino Mincione's *Puer curiosus* from 1975, is not only the youngest composition in the corpus, it also goes back furthest in time, as it is a rather romanticised account of d'Annunzio's childhood in Pescara, focusing on a number of fictionalised events from his boyhood which supposedly gave shape to some of his earlier prose.

Mincione (1922-2015) was a classicist from the Abruzzi with a keen interest in both d'Annunzio and contemporary *latinitas*. He published on De Titta's Latin poetry, for instance, and on classical elements in d'Annunzio's oeuvre[105]. Apart from his more scholarly work, he also wrote Latin poetry.

With *Puer curiosus* ('The Curious Boy'), Mincione managed to combine his passions for d'Annunzio, the Abruzzi, and Latin. In the poem's preface, he wrote that he had always been convinced that "molte delle cose, che il d'Annunzio ha scritto e detto nella sua opera giovanile *Le novelle della Pescara*, sono frutto di una esperienza, diretta o indiretta, fatta da lui in quegli anni"[106]. Thus, the reader is transported to d'Annunzio's childhood and presented with a kaleidoscope of events or experiences which would eventually make their way into d'Annunzio's earlier works, specifically his short stories, which he collected in *Le novelle della Pescara* (1902). Not surprisingly, the Pescarese background acts as the glue connecting d'Annunzio's variegated stories.

The poem starts out with an intimate scene of d'Annunzio as a child, playing in the garden while his mother is keeping an eye on him from the kitchen. As little Gabriele is busy playing – throwing rocks,

[104] PORCELLI 1986, 31-32.
[105] MINCIONE 1976. On him, see ESPOSITO 1980, 663-64.
[106] MINCIONE 1975, 1.

drawing animals on the wall, playing with the bucket from the water well – his mother reminds the boy not to forget about his homework, but succumbs to his begging and lets him play a little longer. Dropping the bucket of water and getting his clothes all wet, d'Annunzio eventually hurries inside and is comforted with a kiss.

> Saepe brevi Gabriel ludi iam munere functus,
> Angusto solus mox versabatur in horto,
> Ex alta mater vigilabat at usque fenestra
> – prospicit ex ampla haec hortum quoque namque culina –
> Atque videns puerum miro gaudebat amore:
> Illum ludentem mater cum intenta videret,
> Immemor interdum sua pensa domestica linquens,
> Laeta intus natum modo mirabatur et extra[107].
>
> Having quickly wrapped up his homework, Gabriele would often be alone in the small garden of his house, though his mother would watch him from a high window, which also looks out into the garden from the large kitchen. Watching the boy would fill his mother with wonderful love, and when she anxiously watched him play, she would sometimes absentmindedly abandon her household chores, joyously admiring her son, inside and out.

This is followed by a series of ten, short, independent scenes, which either paint the picture of a particular experience that supposedly inspired a dannunzian *novella*, or, more generally, introduce a certain element or atmosphere which would become recurrent in the writer's oeuvre. I will offer one example of each[108].

The first scene introduces the figure of Cincinnato, who appears in the eponymous short story from *Terra vergine*, which Mincione follows faithfully. In d'Annunzio's *Cincinnato*, the narrator tells the story of his quaint childhood friendship with one Cincinnato, whom he first met when he was thirteen years old. He was a bearded older man, a quirky, vagabond-like outcast, yet the two somehow bonded and became a couple of unlikely friends. The victim of a mysteriously failed relationship, the eccentric Cincinnato is eventually found dead at the end of the story, supposedly having committed suicide by jumping under a train. Mincione transitions into the story with a description of little d'Annunzio playing in the garden again one day. When a man with long hair and a beard passes by, the boy invites him over and offers him some bread[109]. Cincinnato gratefully accepts the token of d'Annunzio's friendship, and the two get to talking, even though the odd Cincinnato speaks rather erratically[110]. From then on, the two would meet regularly and take trips to the coast, where Cincinnato would stare at the sea, talk of his love, and amuse the boy by describing the shapes he discerns on the moon[111]. When they see a train in the distance one day, Cincinnato is suddenly scared out of his wits[112]. This prefigures the ending of the story, to which Mincione then flashes forward: one morning, Cincinnato is found dead alongside the railway track, leaving a lasting impression on the writer-to-be[113].

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[107] MINCIONE 1975, 2.

[108] The scenes and corresponding *novelle* are in the following order: *Cincinnato*, *Lazzaro*, *Terra vergine*, *Fiore fiurelle*, d'Annunzio by the Abruzzese seaside, *Dalfino*, d'Annunzio in the Abruzzese forest, *Toto*, *L'eroe*, and *Il cerusico di mare*.

[109] Cfr. D'ANNUNZIO 1968, 15: "Portava la barba alla nazarena, incolta anch'essa, piena di pagliuzze; gli occhi li teneva sempre a terra: si guardava la punte dei piedi scalzi"; 17: "Dopo lo rividi spessissimo; quando passava nella via lo chiamavo sempre per dargli del pane."

[110] *Ibid.*, 16: "Parlava così, sommessamente, a pause. Faceva uno sforzo a seguire il filo dell'idea; gli comparivano nella mente cento immagini confuse (…)".

[111] *Ibid.*, 18: " (…) la luna color di rame saliva nel cielo fra le nubi fantastiche, lentamente. Egli guardava la luna mormorando con un accento infantile: – ecco, ora si vede ora non si vede; ora si vede ora non si vede. Poi pensò un momento. – La luna!... Ha gli occhi e il naso e la bocca come un cristiano; e ci guarda; e chi sa che pensa, chi sa…"

[112] *Ibid.*, 15: "In lontananza si vedevano avvicinarsi rapidamente i due fanali del vapore, nell'ombra, come due grandi pupille sbarrate di un mostro. Il treno passò rumoreggiando e fumando; si udì il fischio acutissimo sul ponte di ferro; poi la calma tornò nella immensa campagna scura. Cincinnato s'era alzata da sedere. – va va va – esclamò – lontano lontano, nero, lungo come il drago, e ha il fuoco dentro che ce l'ha messo il demonio, ce l'ha messo!..."

[113] *Ibid.*, 21: "Poi, una bella mattina di ottobre, piena di cobalto e di sole, lo trovarono sul binario vicino al ponte, sfracellato che pareva un mucchio di carname sanguinoso. Una gamba tagliata di netto era stata trascinata dalle ruote della locomotiva venti passi più in là; la testa senza mento, con il sangue aggrumato ne' capelli, aveva i due occhi verdastri sbarrati che facevano paura."

Angusto Gabriel quondam dum ludit in horto,
Cincinnatus adest ad murum nomine quidam:
Longa qui barba et spisso longoque capillo
Hortum oculis lustrat tacitus puerum inde salutat.
Ille virum invitat, mox laetusque accipit horto,
Praebet ei panem et casus cum nomine quaerit.
Cincinnatus edens, puero nunc gratus amico,
Assidet atque suos casus nullo ordine narrat.
Conveniunt hic et ille die simul atque sequenti
Dicere res multas pergunt variasque vicissim,
Sic una inde terunt ambo iam tempus amici.
Ad litus quoque deveniunt hi saepe marinum.
Deque suo loquitur modo Cincinnatus amore,
Humanas nunc in luna videt ecce figuras,
Nunc maris et pisces, nunc contemplatur et undas,
Sed prae se semper ferratum habet agmen et horret
Inque via fractus ferrata est mane repertus!
Re non provisa hac parvus turbatur amicus[114].

When Gabriele was playing in the small garden one day, a man named Cincinnato stood near the wall: he had a long beard and long thick hair and was silently peering into the garden when he greeted the child, who invited him in, happily welcoming him to his garden, offering him some bread and asking him his name and background. Grateful to the friendly boy, Cincinnato ate the bread and sat down to tell him his story in a disorderly way. As soon as they met again the next day, they continued to talk about many different topics. Thus the two friends spent their time together. They also went to the seaside together. Now Cincinnato speaks of his love, now he sees human shapes on the moon, now he looks at the fish and the waves of the sea, yet he always has the railroad in his mind's eye, full of horror, and one morning he is found dead on the tracks, crushed! His little friend was upset by this unforeseen event.

The following scene of the young d'Annunzio playing in the pine forest is an episode which does not have any direct link to one of the author's writings – apart from pointing to his love of pine forests, which permeates e.g. his poem *La pioggia nel pineto* from *Alcyone* (1903) – but instead paints the picture of a more general experience from d'Annunzio's childhood. More than anything else, it serves to prefigure d'Annunzio's military career, since it deals with little Gabriele 'playing war' in the woods with his friends. Even back then, Mincione implies, the boy was already destined for greatness: he was not just 'one of the troops', but he took on the role of *dux* and led his band of brothers into battle. At the end of the day, they would all return home with bruises and torn clothes:

Pinorum puer in silvam curritque propinquam,
Hunc quo saepe ducem parvi comitantur amici.
Res ibi tot miras acies facit haec puerilis:
Hic pinum ascendit ramos hic frangit ubique;
Dissipat hic nidos, saxis petit ille volucres.
Nunc inter pinos una omnes praelia fingunt
Pinetumque sonat totum clamoribus altis:
Huc illuc currunt, veniunt simul undique cursu
Et fustes agitant pro veris fortiter hastis.
Si non multa domum referunt et vulnera demum,
Interdum at redeunt laceratis vestibus omnes[115]!

The boy also runs into the pine forest nearby, where his small friends often follow him as their captain. The young battalion performs many wonderful exploits in the forest: this boy climbs into a pine tree and breaks branches everywhere, that boy destroys nests, while another one throws stones at birds. Now they all engage in fictional battles together among the trees, and the whole forest echoes with loud cries; they run this way and that way and simultaneously come running from all sides, bravely brandishing their sticks like real spears. Though they go home with few bruises, they all return with torn clothes from time to time!

[114] MINCIONE 1975, 2-4.
[115] *Ibid.*, 6.

5. Conclusion

"A ciascuno il suo d'Annunzio"[116]. It is now clear that this claim also holds true for the literary circle of Latin poets who were active in Italy in d'Annunzio's own time. For d'Annunzio – "le plus latin des génies latins" – was acquainted with many Italo-Latin poets of his day, some of whom tried to repay this friendship by dedicating Latin verse to *il Vate* and his accomplishments (literary or otherwise) or by having him feature in their compositions[117]. Among the *latini*, Cesare De Titta and Annibale Tenneroni clearly considered themselves to be d'Annunzio's closest friends and composed many a verse in his honour[118]. Of course, not every Latin poet was a close friend. The Abruzzese Latin poet Luigi Illuminati (1881-1962), for instance, allegedly "abhorred" the man[119]. And the prize-winning Latin poet Francesco Sofia Alessio (1873-1943) even gladly joined the crusade mounted against d'Annunzio – "pagano contraffattore di Cristo" – when he tried to hold a mass for his fallen fellow soldiers on the fourth anniversary of the end of the war in 1922[120].

Those who wrote Latin verse about d'Annunzio did so from various perspectives, but almost always in an outspokenly positive way. As we have seen, most praised *il Vate* as a war hero or an author. The celebrations of his military feats clearly centred on his adventures in the sky: apart from Taberini's ode on d'Annunzio's part in the Battle of the Timavo, most poems of this category focus on d'Annunzio as '*aliger vates*', ranging from brief references to him as a pilot in more general poetry on aviation (e.g. Comandè and Monti) to compositions entirely dedicated to specific exploits such as the Volo su Vienna (e.g. Valla and Landi) and the attack on Pula (e.g. Landi). De Titta and Bartoli, finally, composed extensive, baroque odes on d'Annunzio as the ideal 'poeta soldato'. De Titta in particular dedicated a great deal of Latin verse to his childhood friend, ranging from an entire cycle of odes in the context of the war and Fiume to more personal compositions such as a consolation on the death of his mother. Like his rival Tenneroni, he also repeatedly turned to Latin to praise a new literary accomplishment of d'Annunzio's, often the production of a new play. In the context of the Fiume experiment, De Titta's poetry was clearly protective of d'Annunzio, at times even apologetic. In the same spirit, Tinozzi even brought d'Annunzio back to life as a ghost to condemn the murder of Mussolini. Porcelli and Mincione, finally, reimagined certain key events in d'Annunzio's life as an author, from his final meeting with Giovanni Pascoli to a number of childhood experiences which acted as fundamental sources of inspiration for his later oeuvre.

Perhaps contrary to expectations, d'Annunzio's dandy lifestyle does not seem to have elicited any reaction in Latin. Yet there actually was one poem which came close: Tenneroni's *Aquae Nuntiae*, an ode to d'Annunzio's perfume brand '*Aqua Nuntia*'. Probably inspired by the perfume's Latin name – d'Annunzio allegedly discovered the Latin formula in a quattrocento manuscript – Tenneroni set to writing the short poem in a post-classical, rhyming metre, which he sent to d'Annunzio in a letter of 19 August 1906[121]. Not surprisingly, the ode brings the perfume into the realm of classical antiquity, in that it compares the fragrant liquid to the clear and flowing water of the Hipprocrene – the hallowed Helicon spring which granted poetic inspiration – and claims that it harnesses the power of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty. In fact, Tenneroni's poem in praise of these almost magic-like qualities of the perfume is now going through a most peculiar *Nachleben*, in that snippets are being reused in the context of a commercial attempt by the Venetian perfume company Mavive to reboot '*i profumi di d'Annunzio*'[122].

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[116] Curreri 2008b, 15.

[117] De Vogüé 1895, 190.

[118] Cfr. Menna 2007, 32-33, where he refers to the "agone letterario" between De Titta and Tenneroni, a "*certamen* mai apertamente dichiarato i cui contendenti gareggiarono per un' ipotetica palma del vincitore consegnata dal *divo* comune."

[119] Grillo 2006, 183. Illuminati makes one brief reference to d'Annunzio in Illuminati 1931, 98. In a distich dedicated to Tito Rosina (*Ad Titum Rosina*), the poet praises Rosina's recent publication, Rosina 1931, a study of d'Annunzio's *Le città del silenzio*: "*Quas cecinit Gabriel urbes ceu nocte silentes | nil operire doces, ore, Rosina, tuo*." (note *ibid*.: "Tito Rosina è un genovese studioso del mondo dannunziano. Ha pubblicato un pregevole volume: "*Attraverso le Città del Silenzio*", ossia un esame di quei sonetti del d'Annunzio ispirati a storie e cronache non sempre facilmente note.").

[120] Fera 2006, 314-15.

[121] Quoted in Menna 2007, 29-30. The rhyming scheme is ABABC ABABD EFEFG. Each stanza consists of three *octosyllabi descendentes* (i.e. eight syllables, with the stress of the final word falling on the penultimate syllable) followed by a *heptasyllabus ascendens* (i.e. seven syllables, with the stress of the final word falling on the antepenultimate syllable).

[122] On this reboot, see Goretti 2014.

Thus, in the advertisement of 'Aqua Nuntia' on Mavive's website, one reads the following: "It evokes in the feelings of the surging pace of marine foam, and the sound of a singing, sovereign Venus: Aqua Nuntia portentosa,/Ora facis aulitosa,/ Nardo spirans, nari mitis,/In te virtus Aphroditis" (*sic*). This clearly is a hotchpotch of verses gleaned from Tenneroni's original composition[123].

Aqua Nuntia portentosa
Fluxa lymphis Hippocrenis[124]
Ora facis aulitosa[125],
O quam, barba rasa[126], genis
Dulce refrigerium!

Lactea fis in aqua effusa
Nardo spirans, nari mitis,
Cumque recte sit abstrusa
In te virtus Aphroditis,
Sensus omnes recreas.

Super aliis bene excellis
In reddendo robur uti
Rugas vultu pia depell[is][127].
Quisnam te non velle[t][128] uti,
Clara sic virtutibus?

O magical Aqua Nuntia flowing from Hippocrene's clear waters, you make the face smell so fragrant! O how sweetly you refresh the cheeks after shaving! When poured into water you turn into a milky-white, aromatic balm which is gentle to the nose, and when the power of Aphrodite is correctly enclosed in you, you revive all the senses. You excel above all others in restoring strength so as to – pure as you are – dispel the wrinkles from one's face. Who would not want to use you, you who are so radiant with powers?

What makes this poem and the rest of the corpus so peculiar is, of course, the choice of language. Even though Neo-Latin poetry itself had been going through a small revival around the turn of the century – and especially so in Italy – the active use of Latin had irrevocably been caught in a downward spiral. Nevertheless, the prestigious language was still not completely 'dead' in d'Annunzio's day. Almost automatically, the choice of Latin also evoked a cultural universe from which poets could draw inspiration to articulate their ideas. In this collection as well, poets were clearly eager to tap into the classical tradition. Thus, many were drawn to bring their narrative into the realm of classical mythology: while Valla and Tenneroni drew the comparison between d'Annunzio and the gods Mercury and Apollo, and Landi compared the attack on Pula by the Italian fighter pilots, flying 'with Daedalian art', with Bellerophon's conquering of the Chimaera, Taberini brought d'Annunzio into direct contact with the god of the Timavo river, and Tinozzi had Minos tell the Italian MPs in the underworld not to worry about d'Annunzio's Fiume adventure. Others, like De Titta, reimagined d'Annunzio as a successful military commander from ancient Rome, whose accomplishments and sacrifices during the Great War called for the greatest possible honour: a Roman triumph. During this ceremony, De Titta envisioned, d'Annunzio would also become a

[123] Quoted from Menna 2007, 29-30. As noted, Menna's Latin transcriptions are not always fully accurate.

[124] Menna 2007, 29 offers '*Hyppocrenis*', whereas the Latin word is '*Hippocrene*', derived from the Greek Ἱπποκρήνη' ('ἱππου κρήνη', the spring of the horse), without bearing any relation to the preposition 'ὑπό(-)'.

[125] The adjective '*aulitosus*' is not attested in Latin (cfr. *olens*, *odoratus*, *odorus*). Tenneroni seems to have been inspired by mediaeval Italian poetry, such as Guido delle Colonne's *Gioiosamante canto*, v. 16-20: "e la bocca aulitosa | più rende aulente aulore | che non fa d'una fera | ch'à nome la pantera, | che n'India nasce ed usa".

[126] As opposed to the nonsensical '*barbarosa*' (Menna 2007, 29).

[127] Restored from '*depellit*' (Menna 2007, 30), in order to maintain the rhyme scheme (even though one would expect the subjunctive *'depellas*' after the conjunction '*ut*').

[128] '*velle*', as offered by Menna 2007, 30, cannot be the correct form, neither syntactically nor metrically, as the sentence requires a finite verb, the ending of which does not elide with the following '*uti*' in order to reach eight syllables. It must either be '*velit*' or '*vellet*' (i.e. a *potentialis* or *irrealis*).

second Horace, singing a new *Carmen Saeculare*. Thus, just like Bartoli, De Titta enshrined his view of d'Annunzio as the ultimate union of both *poeta* and *miles*.

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