



Dip *Um libri*

STUDI

Riceventi, lettori e pubblico

Una proposta transdisciplinare

a cura di

*Nicoletta Agresta, Alessio Bottone,
Giovanni Genna, Riccardo Orrico,
Carmela Sammarco, Debora A. Sarnelli*

DipΩ**Um libri**

STUDI

Biblioteca di Studi e Testi

Dall'antica Babele alle contaminazioni della Modernità

Riceventi, lettori e pubblico

Una proposta transdisciplinare

A CURA DI

Nicoletta Agresta, Alessio Bottone, Giovanni Genna,
Riccardo Orrico, Carmela Sammarco, Debora A. Sarnelli

Riceventi, lettori e pubblico : una proposta transdisciplinare / a cura di Nicoletta Agresta, Alessio Bottone, Giovanni Genna, Riccardo Orrico, Carmela Sammarco, Debora A. Sarnelli. – Salerno: DipSUM, 2021. – 399 p. ; 23 cm. – (Biblioteca di Studi e Testi : dall'antica Babele alle contaminazioni della Modernità)

Riceventi, lettori e pubblico

Una proposta transdisciplinare

Nicoletta Agresta, Alessio Bottone, Giovanni Genna,
Riccardo Orrico, Carmela Sammarco, Debora A. Sarnelli
(a cura di)

Accesso alla versione elettronica:

<http://www.fedoabooks.unina.it/index.php/fedoapress/index>

Gli e-book di ShareBooks sono pubblicati in modalità

Open Access con licenza Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International

DipSUM *libri* Studi

Biblioteca di Studi e Testi

Dall'antica Babele alle contaminazioni della Modernità

prima edizione elettronica: novembre 2021

Per la pubblicazione del presente volume è stato adottato
il procedimento di valutazione doppio referaggio cieco (*double blind peer review*)

ISBN 978-88-946103-0-7

DOI 10.6093/978-88-946103-0-7

pubblicazioni.dipsum@unisa.it

in copertina: *Purple Sweater* (2013), Rick Beerhorst
creativecommons.org

progetto grafico: L. Avallone

Realizzato con fondi del Dipartimento di
Studi Umanistici dell'Università degli Studi di Salerno

INDICE

<i>Carmine Pinto</i> Presentazione	9
SEZIONE I. AUTORI, TESTI E LETTORI: DESTINI, RUOLI ED EVOLUZIONI LETTERARIE	
<i>N. Agresta, A. Bottone, G. Genna, D. A. Sarnelli</i> In margine allo statuto del lettore: centralità e crisi del destinatario nei processi letterari	15
<i>Francesco de Cristofaro</i> La forza della destinazione. Romanzi epistolari, epistole romanzesche	34
<i>Giuseppe Longo</i> Il destinatario delle biografie trobadoriche di Jean de Nostredame	62
<i>Maria Cardillo</i> Sulle tracce delle <i>Memorie per le Belle arti</i> (1785-1788): strategie editoriali e ipotesi di lettura	76
<i>Nicoletta Alaia</i> Il problema delle ricezioni dei <i>plays</i> shakespeariani: le prefazioni di Elizabeth Inchbald	92
<i>Chiara Silvestri</i> Romanzi e pubblico tra l' <i>Ortis</i> e <i>I promessi sposi</i>	105

Aureo Lustosa Guerios
Disgust, taboo and poverty: 121
some aspects of the literary imagination
of cholera from the 1830s to the 1860s

Iari Iovine
Per un'affermazione di Ibsen sulle scene tedesche: 139
il contributo di Otto Brahm

Roberta Capotorti
«L'étincelle joyeuse et motrice» della lettura: 153
gestualità e interpretazione del senso nella *Recherche* di Proust

SEZIONE II. EMITTENTI, LINGUE E DESTINATARI:
USI LINGUISTICI TRA INTENZIONE E RICEZIONE

Riccardo Orrico, Carmela Sammarco
Indagine sul destinatario: 175
il suo ruolo nella co-costruzione dei messaggi linguistici

Grazia Basile
(In)comprensione e ambiguità linguistica. 197
Dalla parte del ricevente

Federica Fumante
La ricezione della comunicazione orale 224
attraverso le espressioni metaforico-figurate:
unità e variazioni interlinguistiche

Francesca Mazzilli
Chatbot come destinatari. 247
Interagire con interlocutori non umanista cambiando
il nostro modo di comunicare e di apprendere?

<i>Anna Chiara Pagliaro</i>	
Il riferimento al destinatario nelle formule di cortesia quale strategia di mitigazione/rafforzamento	263
<i>Maria Francesca Ponzi</i>	
“Boldrina”, “Presidenta”, “Signora”. L’uso degli allocutivi come arma discriminatoria: il caso della presidente Laura Boldrini	288
<i>Chiara Zanchi</i>	
Late Latin demonstratives as markers of engagement: the Addressees’ role in explaining synchronic distribution and diachronic evolution	305
SEZIONE III. STORIA E PUBBLICO: DALLE FONTI AI LETTORI	
<i>Silvia Sonetti</i>	
Il destinatario nella storia	331
<i>Francesco Cacciatore</i>	
Radio nella foresta: <i>mirror imaging</i> e trasmissioni d’ <i>intelligence</i> dall’Unione Sovietica negli anni Cinquanta	341
<i>Giuseppe Iglieri</i>	
Il dibattito storiografico italiano sulla Cassa per il Mezzogiorno Un’esperienza da rivalutare?	358
Sinossi dei contributi	379
Gli Autori	401
I Curatori	415

PRESENTAZIONE

di Carmine Pinto

Gli studi umanistici sono parte centrale della nostra storia e della nostra identità. Quando, nel 1944, fu fondato un istituto universitario a Salerno, era immaginato come una scuola delle culture più antiche d'Italia e del Mezzogiorno. Destinato a formare le giovani generazioni che si avviavano alla prima scolarizzazione con l'insegnamento. Venti anni dopo, quando l'Italia registrava il suo principale trionfo come democrazia industriale dell'Europa e del mondo Occidentale, l'ampliamento della formazione universitaria ne diventò una delle espressioni più rilevanti.

A Salerno si avviò la costituenda università. Un anno dopo, nel 1969, nasceva la Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia. Fu la premessa di un ateneo destinato a svilupparsi in tutte le direzioni, ampliandosi ai settori scientifici, economici e giuridici, fino alle tecnologie e alle sfide dell'epoca della Seconda globalizzazione. Un processo di modernizzazione che vide protagonisti gli studi umanistici, dalla fondazione dei corsi di comunicazione fino alla nostra Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere e ad altre esperienze originali nel mondo dei beni culturali.

Le novità di questi anni accompagnarono ulteriori trasformazioni di Salerno, della Campania e delle regioni vi-

cine. Le province del Mezzogiorno costiero ed interno si urbanizzarono definitivamente, all'interno di un più ampio fenomeno di terziarizzazione della società. L'affermarsi dei nuovi modelli culturali e sociali modificò anche il contesto degli studi liberali, finendo per valorizzare l'ancoraggio alla identità del nostro territorio e dell'intero paese. Era necessario interpretare lo spirito dei tempi, senza perdere i significati della cultura umanistica.

A fianco dei corsi di laurea si svilupparono percorsi di formazione diffusi e specialistici, capaci di ampliare a generazioni nuove, a gruppi sempre più ampi, l'esperienza della ricerca professionale e del mondo scientifico. I dottorati umanistici iniziarono con i primi cicli trent'anni fa. Si svilupparono anche a Salerno, sperimentando piste di ricerca, nuove domande, sfide intellettuali. Eppure non vennero meno i presupposti di una università popolare e non elitaria, trasversale e non verticale, modello aperto e liberale, nonostante problemi e battute di arresto.

Nel 2013, con la confluenza dei dottorati storici nel Programma di Dottorato di Studi Letterari, Linguistici e Storici si è voluto offrire una nuova prospettiva agli studi umanistici. Si è fondato un corso interdisciplinare, capace di collocare in una prospettiva più ampia ed internazionale gli studi della letteratura, della linguistica e della storia. Un programma che ha investito sulla formazione di giovani ricercatori dinamici intellettualmente e scientificamente, mantenendo intatti i valori fondativi di una istituzione basata sul merito e sull'inclusione.

Le conferenze organizzate dai dottorandi sono all'interno di questo progetto di crescita culturale ed operativa.

Questo secondo volume, che segue la pubblicazione dei risultati del primo evento, ne è un esempio. Rielabora gli interventi presentati alla successiva Graduate Conference organizzata nell'autunno del 2018 nel nostro ateneo, un appuntamento che registrò un notevole successo di partecipazione generale e di dibattito scientifico, accompagnata da una importante adesione del corpo docente.

L'Indagine sul destinatario raccolse giovani studiosi interni ed esterni all'ateneo, mostrando il valore del confronto interdisciplinare e il suo effetto moltiplicatore. Ora il volume si conferma come un punto di verifica delle ricerche in corso e allo stesso tempo come volano di nuove piste. Analizza la relazione tra autori, testi e lettori; tra emittenti, lingue e destinatari; tra storia, pubblico e fonti portando a conclusione quel confronto e ne raccoglie le prospettive.

Nel libro ci sono interventi di più di venti giovani ricercatori e docenti che dialogano con premesse e linee di sviluppo differenti, capaci di un risultato finale coerente ed omogeneo. E per questo il nostro ringraziamento va agli organizzatori e curatori del volume, ai docenti che hanno accompagnato questo percorso, a tutti i giovani che continuano e innovano il ruolo di modernizzazione culturale e integrazione sociale rappresentato dalla cultura umanistica del nostro Programma di Dottorato, del Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici e di tutto l'ateneo di Salerno.

DISGUST, TABOO AND POVERTY:
SOME ASPECTS OF THE LITERARY IMAGINATION
OF CHOLERA FROM THE 1830S TO THE 1860S

Aureo Lustosa Guerios

(Università degli Studi di Padova)

When it first arrived in Europe in 1830, cholera was perceived as a dreadful new disease that could attack seemingly anyone, anywhere, at any moment. The illness developed unexpectedly, it resulted in death in 50 to 60% of cases, and it could kill in a few hours. At the time, nearly nothing about it was understood: it was not clear if it was contagious, no effective treatment existed, and no form of prevention was at hand.

Moreover, cholera was nauseating, its main symptoms consisting of abundant and uncontrollable discharges of diarrhoea and, to a lesser extent, vomit. The continuous evacuations resulted in acute dehydration, which transformed the patient's appearance dramatically and gave him or her a "mummified look" – through sunken eyes, dry mouth and lips, hoarse voice, and bluish, inelastic and leathery skin. Alongside that, the patient could also experience severe weakness, cramps, sharp pains, difficulty in speaking, sleepiness, fever, seizures and, occasionally, even coma.

Cholera is caused by *Vibrio cholerae*, a bacterium that spreads through food and water contaminated by faecal matter. Once ingested, the microorganism enters the stomach, where it may perish due to its acidic pH. If it survives, it lodges in the intestines and produces a toxin that causes the excretions, while blocking the absorption of liquids.

As a consequence of this mode of transmission, cholera does not affect all social classes equally. The poor are at a much higher risk from contamination because they have less access to both urban sanitation systems and good-quality nourishment. Since the stomach's pH tends to be more basic in individuals with inadequate nutrition, the bacterium has higher chances of surviving, thus developing into cholera more often. Furthermore, once the pathology appears, undernourished individuals have less nutritional resources to sustain their immune system. Therefore, the poor are not only more exposed to infected food and water, but are also more prone to develop the infection, and, when they do so, have a higher chance of dying.

In this particular aspect, cholera is dissimilar to the plague, which was habitually seen as «the great leveller», killing rich and poor alike, and created a larger income distribution through new social conditions that resulted from the Great Mortality (HUPPERT G. 1998; SCHEIDEL W. 2017: 291-313).

Cholera played an important role throughout the 19th-century. Its impact was not limited to culture and science but extended to economics, politics and urbanism as well. Scholars have argued, for instance, that it encouraged the French government to annex Tunisia (GALLAGHER N.

1983: 92-98), that it stimulated the formation of state bureaucracy (BALDWIN P. 1999), and that it was a salient reason for the ground-breaking re-urbanisation of Paris and other cities (EVANS R.J. 2017: 315-318).

The disease also finds its way into literature, slowly at first, but accelerating as the century reached its end. It is present, for example, in Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2), in De Roberto's *I Viceré* (1884), in Ricarda Huch's *Erinnerungen von Ludolf Ursleu dem Jüngeren* (1893), or in several short stories by Maupassant, Verga and Kipling (predominantly from the 1880s).

However, even though the number of works featuring cholera is considerable, they seem few when we take into account its historical impact. There is much silence around the epidemic, especially before the 1860s. Balzac, for instance, hardly hints at it in *La Comédie Humaine* (1830-1856). Harriet Martineau makes the epidemic a major event of her novel *Deerbrook* (1838), yet she systematically avoids the word "cholera", employing a range of generic synonyms instead. She is not the only author to use this stratagem – Mary Shelley and Paul Heyse are two other –, which indicates that the word had become unutterable, a taboo. Outside of literature, this behaviour is confirmed by the obstinacy of individuals in not naming the epidemic in daily life. Schader illustrates this point well by quoting from a letter by Rahel Varnhagen in which the German writer declares «I will name it not, the infamous disease» and «I hate to write its name»¹.

¹ «... ich nenn sie nicht, die infamirende Krankheit » and «... ich hasse ihren Namen zu schreiben» in SCHADER B. (1985: 83).

This phenomenon of silencing the disease is motivated by several reasons, one of which is undoubtedly the public's resistance to read about disgusting matters. The epidemic emerges in a context of hypersensitivity to and denial of the bodily functions². Even an allusion to the existence of bodily fluids was already considered a transgression. This is very clear from the introduction of Rosenkranz's *The Aesthetics of Ugliness* (1853) – according to Eco, «the first and most accomplished» (ECO U. 2007: 16) of its kind – in which the philosopher warns his readers about the contents of the essay by wielding, precisely, a comparison to disease:

«[we] deal with concepts whose discussion or even mention might well otherwise be regarded as an offence to good manners. If someone picks up a book on the pathology and therapy of disease, then they must anticipate the disgusting. And that is also the case here» (ROSENKRANZ K. 2015 [1853]: 33).

Still another revealing example can be found in the author's condemnation of a scene from *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-3): «Disgusting illnesses with immoral causes must be rejected by art. Poetry prostitutes itself when it represents such things, as Sue in his Parisian Mysteries gives a medically precise description of [the hospital of] St. Laza-

² Several historians discuss this issue. Sennet, for example, mentions the reluctance of middle-class women to leave home after eating, for fear of accidentally farting in public (SENNETT R. 2015 [1976]: 262). Laporte refers mostly to the period when presenting the axiom «no beautiful odour exists because beauty has no odour» (LAPORTE D. 2017 [1978]: 84). While Evans emphasizes that to the bourgeois sense of honour, the idea of uncontrollably defecating in public was probably almost as horrifying as death (EVANS R.J. 1987: 229).

re» (ROSENKRANZ K. 2015 [1853]: 193). Coincidentally, Sue had prepared for this criticism on this exact passage by admitting that his novel is deficient artistically albeit not morally: «Cet ouvrage, que nous reconnaissons sans difficulté pour un livre mauvais au point de vue de l'art, mais que nous maintenons n'être pas un mauvais livre au point de vue moral» (SUE E. 1880 [1842]: 677). That is to say, Sue knew people would react like Rosenkranz. He considers the passage “a bad one” precisely because it mentions sensitive information on disease.

The condemnation of the presence of repulsive themes in literature is also blatant in the article «La littérature putride» (ULBACH L. 1869: 18-28)³, published in the *Figaro*, in January of 1868. In it, the writer and critic Ferragus attacks the naturalists for their exploration of nauseating themes by, interestingly enough, pathologizing his own language:

«Il s'est établi depuis quelques années une école monstrueuse de romanciers, qui prétend substituer l'éloquence du charnier à l'éloquence de la chair, qui fait appel aux curiosités les plus chirurgicales, qui groupe les pestiférés pour nous en faire admirer les marbrures, qui s'inspire directement du choléra, son maître, et qui fait jaillir le pus de la conscience».

The criticism is directed, above all, against Zola, which in the previous year had published *Thérèse Raquin* – extensively criticized in the review – and *Les Mystère de Marseille*. A cholera outbreak features prominently in this nov-

³ www.gallica.bnf.fr.

el, however, without any trace of realistic description. Simply put, cholera's gruesome symptoms are absent. Nevertheless, this is the book that Ferragus has likely in mind when referring right from the start to mass graves (*charnier*), plague victims (*pestiférés*) and "master Cholera" (*choléra, son maître*).

Later, the critic declares the "pleasure of repulsiveness" to be a universal human instinct, though the lowest and the most bestial⁴; and rhetorically asks: «Les foules qui courent à la guillotine, ou qui se pressent à la morgue, sont-elles le public qu'il faille séduire, encourager, maintenir dans le culte des épouvantes et des purulences ?» This is a very revealing comment because it denotes that Ferragus presupposes the existence of two different publics: on the one hand, the masses, which is pleased and entertained by repugnance; and, on the other, a selected and well-behaved few that are adequately disgusted by such topics. Not unexpectedly, the first is an anonymous majority by definition, while the second is the group to which Ferragus appertains and for whom he speaks.

This implicit distinction is strengthened at the end of the text by an allusion to two paintings by Gustave Courbet that were being sold in Paris at the time, *Le Sommeil* and *L'Origine du Monde*. They were both made in 1866 and are much provocative in their unapologetic eroticism. The first depicts two women sleeping in an embrace, probably after having sex; the second explicitly portraits only the

⁴ «Attacher par le dégoût, plaire par l'horrible, c'est un procédé qui malheureusement répond à un instinct humain, mais à l'instinct le plus bas, le moins avouable, le plus universel, le plus bestial» (ULBACH L. 1869: 22).

genitals of a woman. Ferragus considers both inappropriate – «le dernier mot de la volupté» – and refers to *L'Origine du Monde* as being displayed not in the exhibit room, but in the bathroom, where it was restrictedly shown «aux dames indiscrètes et aux amateurs» (ULBACH L. 1869: 28). It is clear, therefore, that according to him, disgust has no space in “real” art: it should not appear at all and, if it does so, it is valued by those who do not count – “amateurs” and “the masses”. Thus, the choice of sickening themes is not only of bad taste: it is inherently immoral; something which can be proven by its appreciation by the “low”, the “bestial” and the “indiscrete”.

In this regard, Ferragus and Rosenkranz partially disagree, because according to the philosopher, the abhorrent in art is acceptable if wielded to foster morality. Even so, both commentators embody the high cultural sensitivity of the bourgeoisie to themes considered taboo and, in this sense, they are representative of their class⁵.

Thus, cholera is almost unrepresentable in art, unless it is extirpated of its nauseating symptoms. Even the sole mention of the word “cholera” may be considered problematic. In this way, the hesitation in writing about the subject is linked to the reluctance to read about it. Ferragus gives voice to many of his contemporaries when he declares that “high” literature is «contenu, mesuré, moiré» implying that it is consumed by the “righteous” bourgeois. “Low” literature, on the other hand, is easier to produce, «brutal, plein de sanie, de crimes et de prostitutions» and, above

⁵ Elias shows how, in several cases, subjects and practices considered taboo in the 1800s were perfectly acceptable two or three centuries earlier (ELIAS N. 2000 [1939]).

all, is «à la portée de tout le monde» (ULBACH L. 1869: 22). Hence, according to him, if something is “accessible to all”, to rich and poor alike, it is *a priori* undeserving of aesthetic consideration.

In *Fortune du Pauvre*, Lochard remembers that the Goncourt brothers brag about being the first to lift the «literary interdiction» of representing the poor (LOCHARD Y. 1998: 5). Interestingly enough, they do so in the preface of *Germinie Lacerteux* (1864), which, incidentally, is the first title mentioned in Ferragus’ review. The Goncourts hint at the recent emergence of the impoverished as a literary theme, but, notwithstanding their comment, Lochard (LOCHARD Y. 1998: 7-33) is quick to specify that literature is seldom interested in representing the poor per se, but overwhelmingly focus on the subgroup of the “criminal” poor⁶. That is the same conclusion reached in a study by Laura Otis in which she interprets Sherlock Holmes as a hypocritical mechanism of social control: «Despite the wealth and social status of many of the criminals that Holmes has uncovered, for him, the “criminal classes” are the poor» (OTIS L. 2000: 110).

Therefore, in the opinion of both scholars, literature at the time is not interested in the poor as such, but in the poor as a social menace; something which is evident in many 19th-century novels like *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842) or *Les Misérables* (1862). Francesco Mastriani goes even further in his *I Vermi: Studi storici su le clas-*

⁶ Something Huxley complains about: «[...] a great deal has been written about criminals, derelicts and, more recently, the working-class intelligentsia. But the ordinary town proletariat, the people who make the wheels go round, have always been ignored by novelists» (KEATING P.J. 2016: 1-30).

si pericolose in Napoli (1864), where the metaphor in the title explicitly equates “the dangerous classes” (le *classi pericolose*) to “worms” (*vermi*). These and other authors frequently refer to the “honest poor” in implicit opposition to the “criminal poor”. The urge to specify that an individual is conscientious in spite of his poverty – he is poor *but* honest –, reveals that the word “poor” is tainted with preconceptions. If used without an adjective, it tacitly designates the criminal rather than the honest individual.

Moreover, historians have identified at the period a new behaviour within the “surveilling elites”, which, by writing essays and ethnographies on poverty, suppress the voice of the poor themselves (CHEVALIER L. 2007). At the same time, the rise of criminal anthropology, public health, and the overall medicalisation of society, stigmatised misery. It transformed the poor into ugly, malodorous, dirty and infected. Corbin has shown, for instance, how class distinctions became olfactive in the 1800s, belittling the “stinky” poor *vis-à-vis* the “odourless” bourgeois (CORBIN A. 1982: 85). Eco asserts that, as a consequence of Lombroso’s ideas on physiognomy, the miserable and the marginalised become «ugly and evil»⁷. The same applies to matters related to health and propensity towards disease. In *Hygeia, a City of Health* (1876), a utopian essay pleading for reform which was largely based on cholera prevention, the author asks rhetorically: «What are the most ready and convincing methods of making known to the uninformed the facts:

7 «[...] diventano brutti e cattivi, anche nella letteratura popolare, tutti i reietti che la società non riesce a integrare e domare o non intende redimere [...]. Tali saranno i poveri, [...], gli omosessuali, i dementi e, segnate inesorabilmente dal loro vizio, le prostitute» (Eco U. 2007: 261).

[...] that poverty is the shadow of disease, and wealth the shadow of health?» (RICHARDSON B.W. 1876: 12). The superposing of economic and medical classifications is evident in the statement: poverty is to sickness what affluence is to health.

That being said, we can look back at cholera as a disease that afflicts disproportionately the lower classes. Since its mode of transmission was unknown for most of the century⁸, the higher incidence of the disease among the poor was explained as a natural biological fact, plainly justified on the grounds of “dirtiness”, but also “ignorance” or “immorality”.

That is clear from the newspapers’ reports published during the Paris cholera outbreak of 1832. In her study of these sources, Kudlick gives several examples of the widespread belief that the poor were not only more afflicted by cholera, but also somehow blamed for their health problems: «Cholera-morbus is doctrinaire [...] it strikes and overcomes the poor classes in particular»; «all the men stricken with this epidemic . . . come from the class of the people. They are the shoemakers, the workers who labor in textile factories. They live on the dirty and narrow streets of the Cité»; «it finds bodies and souls marvelously predisposed to receiving its deadly influences» (KUDLICK C.J. 1996: 55-57). Kudlick shows how the epidemic helped the bourgeoisie to develop a sense of class identity; their exaggerated immunity became antithetical to the real, yet equally exaggerated, susceptibility of the poor. She also notices how in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, the lower classes are

⁸ Koch established it only in 1884 and his ideas took some years to be entirely accepted.

guilty of their ills for having chosen to be dirty and sinful out of free will.

In literature, cholera is also used to establish a neat ideological distinction between the healthy rich and sick poor. In *Paris Malade*, a theatre play written in 1832 by Eugène Roch, a middle-class citizen tries to appease a crowd of workers by denying that the disease attacks only the lower classes. He says that many of his acquaintances were stricken by cholera, to which 'the Chauffeur' replies: «[vous êtes] trop riche pour le chauléra : les bonnes aubaines sont toujours pour les pauvres gens» (ROCH E. 1832: 63). Informal or incorrect language – *chauléra* instead of *choléra* – is typically used in situations of this kind to highlight the alienation of the needy. Besides that, the poor in the scene are generally designated either by their professions (*un Chaffeur, un Cordonnier, un Tailleur de Pierre, un Maçon*) or as unspecified voices in the crowd (*Tous* [ROCH E. 1832: 60-66]). They are undeserving of individuation. In comparison, the bourgeois is identified as M. de Saint-Firmin and set aside for his substantial status and wealth – «capitaine de la garde nationale. Fortune honorable» (ROCH E. 1832: 14). According to Lochard, this ambiguous representation – specific when regarding the rich and general when considering the poor – is typical in literature, where «la pauvreté se définit par un anonymat» (LOCHARD Y. 1998: 73).

Another example can be found in George Sand's *Lélia* (1833). The heroine contracts cholera and, even though she displays «blue cheeks», «eyes that retreat to the profound arch of the eyebrows» and «a great wrinkle traversing her forehead», all other symptoms – the important ones – are

absent. To tell the truth, she hardly seems affected, since «sa voix était pleine et assurée, et le sourire du dédain errait, comme de coutume, sur ses lèvres mobiles» (SAND G. 1833: 141). She is accompanied by «the cute doctor Kreyssneifetter», something that indicates her social status and affluence, since the cholera-stricken poor would be brought to a hospital, by force if necessary. The physician nonsensically declares that cholera is «the best-known malady» – hardly anything is known about the disease at the time – and says «vous avez le choléra, une maladie qui tue en deux heures ceux qui ont la faiblesse de s'en effrayer, mais qui n'est point dangereuse pour les esprits fermes comme les nôtres» (SAND G. 1833: 142). The message is clear: the disease is promptly lethal for the “weak of spirit”, but it is almost harmless for the “strong”. Along with that, the doctor’s mention of «firm spirits like *ours*», and not like *yours*, further emphasises this class identity. This distinction is stressed again later in the novel when her suitor rhetorically ponders «La lutte entre le pauvre et le riche n'a-t-elle pas commencé du jour où elle a cessé entre le fort et le faible?» The structural combination of the concepts of “rich and strong” (*le riche, le fort*) and “poor and weak” (*le pauvre, le faible*) is evident in this passage. Lélia – who recovered without trouble from her cholera infection – replies with allusions to the apocalypse and the suitor then comments on her «ascetic» manner and «poésie dantesque et colère» (SAND G. 1833: 252-254). The choice of adjective is relevant, since *colère* and *choléra* both derive from the same etymological root, coming from the Latin ‘cholera’ and, prior to that, from the Greek χολέρα. As a result, the illness is

indirectly summoned to the discourse, once again in relation to ideas contrasting poverty and prosperity. Lélia's reply augments this impression. She talks about the arrival of the «grand monstre de l'Apocalypse» – cholera itself had been previously called «ce hideux monstre» (SAND G. 1833: 143) –, whose description is filled with vocabulary often applied to the epidemic: the monster of the Apocalypse consists in a *pale* woman, coming from *the Orient*⁹, galloping a hydra which *vomits* rivers of *poison* and streams of *venom* (SAND G. 1833: 256).

Besides appearing in the texts of Roch and Sand, the idea that cholera respected social and economic hierarchies was widespread enough to allow Baudelaire to build a satire upon it. In one of his minor poems, *À propos d' un importun qui se disait son ami* (1865), the author depicts the nuisance that a talkative and inappropriate individual causes to a fellow passenger in a train. The effusive Bastogne is a wealthy bourgeois which is fleeing cholera. He torments his cabin companion by telling his life and bragging about his many properties. All this unrequested intimacy exasperates the traveller, who listens only out of politeness. In fact, the situation is so tormenting, that the companion wishes Bastogne was dead, makes an effort to control his hate, and considers how he could escape this situation – even by suicide if necessary. The talkative bourgeois is ironically portrayed as worse than cholera itself and is silently called a *fléau* and a *monstre* by the annoyed traveller. As it hap-

⁹ The first five Cholera Pandemics started in India, so the illness was often portrayed as 'oriental'. So much so, that one of its commonest denominations during the 19th-century was, precisely, 'Asiatic Cholera'.

pens, the behaviour of the lyrical-self can be explained by the centrality that the ideas of boredom and *ennui* occupy in Baudelaire's aesthetics; and, consequently, it is linked in complex ways to other more relevant poems by the author.

That being said, what is relevant for our argumentation is that this poem accepts the cultural status quo which equates cholera and the poor. That is clear in the first two verses, where the ideas of being rich and, at the same time, fearing the disease are presented as intrinsically opposed: «Il me dit qu'il était très riche, / Mais qu'il craignait le choléra» (BAUDELAIRE C. 1908: 37-39). This dichotomy is accompanied by a detached formulation which casts doubt into the discourse that follows: he says he is rich but he fears cholera. According to this view, the bourgeois' alarm seems to contradict his self-proclaimed status as a property owner. In other words, his fear of the disease could mean he is lying about being rich; or, if it turns out he is telling the truth, the opposition works to emphasise how unconventional it is for a wealthy person to be alarmed by cholera. As a result of these trivial initial remarks, the poem reveals and reinforces a cultural ideology which considers the rich healthy and for the most part immune, and the poor inherently sick and prone to cholera.

The three literary examples provided above are representative of a broader pattern of the cholera imagination in European literature from the 1830s to the 1860s. At the time, cholera was considered terrifying and repulsive. It was a symbol of a disgusting and humiliating condition which was inherently transgressive – and even more so in an age that made great efforts to deny the existence of bod-

ily functions. For this reason, the disease does not appear as often in literature as we would expect given its historical importance. While tuberculosis is mentioned directly or indirectly in countless literary texts, cholera is not as popular. Typically, it is altogether absent; and, in the rare occasions in which it appears in art, cholera is deprived of its unpleasant symptoms and very likely of its name too. That is true of many of the examples we have provided earlier, and it continues to be true when Thomas Mann published *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912) early in the 20th-century.

Along with the reluctance to represent it realistically in literature, another essential element of the cholera imagination is its connection to the poor. As we have seen, this relationship does exist in real-life, being caused by the way the epidemic spreads via the faecal-oral route. Nevertheless, the link between poverty and cholera was manipulated by the culture of the time in two different directions: one which magnified the immunity of the wealthy up to the point of invulnerability; another which exaggerated the susceptibility of the poor. Then, as variously demonstrated by the historians mentioned earlier, these biological predispositions were used to justify social and economic hierarchies and to blame the poor of willingly being dirty and getting sick as a result. Being a part of culture, literature has also engaged with these discourses, sometimes to discredit them, but more often to validate them. These ideas are vital to understand the minutiae of what is happening in the texts by Roch, Sand and Baudelaire, which we discussed. They are good examples of how the representation of cholera and the poor can sometimes fuse together to cre-

ate what Lochard has called «une rhétorique de la fascination/répulsion» (LOCHARD Y. 1998: 217). This paradox is particularly evident in *I Vermi*, a novel which features cholera prominently, and in which at least some of the poor are called «this class of ragged lice that are disgusting and repulsive to see»¹⁰. That is precisely what Susan Sontag has in mind when, in her influential essay *Illness as Metaphor*, she talks about tuberculosis as advancement and cholera as degradation:

«At the end of the story [of *Death in Venice*] Aschenbach is just another cholera victim, his last degradation being to succumb to the disease afflicting so many in Venice at that moment. When in *The Magic Mountain* Hans Castorp is discovered to have tuberculosis, it is a promotion. His illness will make Hans become more singular, become simply more than he was before» (SONTAG S. 1990 [1978]: 37).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BALDWIN Peter, *Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999.

BAUDELAIRE Charles, *Œuvres posthumes*, Société du Mercure de France, Paris 1908.

CHEVALIER Louis, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses*, Perrin, Paris 2007.

¹⁰ «Nè si creda che l'accattonaggio si limiti in Napoli a questa classe di cenciosi pitocchi che fanno disgusto e ribrezzo a vedere» (MASTRIANI F. 1877: 42).

CORBIN Alain, *Le miasme et la Jonquille, l'odorat et l'imaginaire social, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles*, Flammarion, Paris 2016 [1982].

ECO Umberto (dir.), *Storia della Bruttezza*, Bompiani, Milano 2007.

ELIAS Norbert, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenic and Psychogenic Investigations*, en. trans. by Edmund Jephcott, Blackwell, Oxford 2000 (orig. ed. *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, Haus zum Falken, Basel 1939).

EVANS Richard J., *Death in Hamburg: society and politics in the cholera years, 1830-1910*, Oxford University Press, New York 1987.

EVANS Richard J., *The Pursuit of Power: Europe 1815-1914*, Penguin, London 2017.

GALLAGHER Nancy E., *Medicine and power in Tunisia, 1780-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002.

HUPPERT George, *After the black death: a social history of early modern Europe*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1998.

KEATING Peter J., *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, Routledge, London 2016 [1971].

KUDLICK Catherine J., *Cholera in Post-Revolutionary Paris: A Cultural History*, University of California Press, Oakland 1996.

LAPORTE Dominique, *Storia della Merda*, it. trans. Stefano Rosso and Roberto Cagliero, Tozzuolo, Milano 2017 (orig. ed. *Histoire de la merde*, Bourgois, Paris 1978).

LOCHARD Yves, *Fortune du pauvre : Parcours et discours romanesques, 1848-1914*, Presses Universitaires Vincennes, Saint-Denis 1998.

MASTRANI Francesco, *I Vermi: Studi storici su le classi pericolose in Napoli*, Gabriele Regina, Napoli 1877.

OTIS Laura, *Membranes: Metaphors of Invasion in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Science, and Politics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2000.

RICHARDSON Benjamin W., *Hygeia: a city of health*, Macmillan and Co., London 1876.

ROCH Eugène, *Paris Malade*, vol. I, Moutardier, Paris 1832.

ROSENKRANZ Karl, *Aesthetics of Ugliness: a critical edition*, en. trans. by Andrei Pop and Mechtild Widrich, Bloomsbury, London 2015 (orig. ed. *Ästhetik des Häßlichen*, Gebrüder Bornträger, Stuttgart 1853).

SAND George, *Lélia*, Henry Dupuy, Paris 1833.

SCHADER Brigitta, *Die Cholera in der deutschen Literatur*, Demeter Verlag, Berlin 1985.

SCHEIDEL Walter, *The great leveler: Violence and the history of inequality from the stone age to the twenty-first century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2018.

SENNETT Richard, *O Declínio do Homem Público: As Tirani-
as da Intimidade*, port. trans. by Lygia Araujo Watanabe, Record,
Rio de Janeiro 2015 (orig. ed. *The Fall of Public Man*, Knopf,
New York 1976).

SUE Eugène, *Les Mystères de Paris*, J. Rouff, Paris 1880 [1842].

SONTAG Susan, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Meta-
phors*, Picador, New York 1990 [1978].

ULBACH Louis, *Lettres de Ferragus*, L. Poupart-Daryl, Paris 1869.