

IT 1830A: REALISM AND FANTASY IN MODERN ITALIAN NARRATIVE

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Spring Term: 16 Jan '06 - 31 Mar '06.

Week 6: reading week, no teaching (week beginning 20 Feb)

Weekly breakdown

Weeks 1 & 2: Introduction to course. Narrative strategies: realism and fantasy in modern Italian narrative. The short story. Reading strategies in Italian.

Weeks 3 & 4: Dino Buzzati, *I sette messaggeri* (Milan: Mondadori, 1942) [stories first published between 1936-1940]. Fantasy and modernity explored.

Weeks 5 & 7: Italo Calvino, *Marcovaldo ovvero Le Stagioni in città* (Milan: Mondadori, 1993) [1952-1963]. The modern fairy tale.

Weeks 8 & 9: Primo Levi, *Storie naturali* (Turin, Einaudi, 1966) [written between 1952-1964]. Literary transgressions.

Weeks 10 & 11: Stefano Benni, *Bar Sport* (Milan: Mondadori, 1976). Fantasy as social critique.

Teaching

Two hours per week. One lecture hour and one seminar hour. Term 2 only.

Text to be studied (handouts will be distributed in class)

For consideration in class and for your commentaries/essays, but attempt to read as much as you can of the collection

- Dino Buzzati, *I sette messaggeri*: - 'I sette messaggeri'.
- 'Sette piani'.
- 'Il mantello'
- Italo Calvino, *Marcovaldo*: - Prefazione.
- 'Inverno. Il Bosco sull'autostrada'.
- 'Primavera. Fumo, vento e bolle di sapone'.
- 'Estate. Luna e Gnac'.
- 'Autunno. La pioggia e le foglie'.
- 'Inverno. Marcovaldo al supermarket'.
- Primo Levi, *Storie Naturali*: - 'I mnemagoghi'
- 'L'ordine a buon mercato'
- 'Versamina'
- Stefano Benni, *Bar Sport*: - 'Il folletto delle brutte figure'
- 'Cenerutolo'

Assessment (by coursework only)

- 1 commentary 2,500 words (formative i.e. practice, not counting in course mark);
- 1 commentary 2,500 words (summative i.e. counting in course mark);
- 2 essays 2,500 words each.

First commentary (formative) due on **Monday 6 March 2006** (either on Buzzati or Calvino). **Second commentary** (summative) due on **Monday 27 March 2006** (either on Buzzati or Calvino). **Essays** due on **Monday 1 May 2006** – one on either Levi or Benni; one comparing/contrasting the work of two or more of the authors studied (without repeating material used in previous assignments). All works must be placed in the box outside room 123 BEFORE 4 pm on the day of the deadline.

The 3 assessed pieces count for 33.3% each. There is no examination.

Commentaries (choose from the following titles)

- **Dino Buzzati:**
 1. Critics frequently comment on the air of mystery in Buzzati's writing. How do you think he achieves it? How does he set about creating suspense? Do you find the work humorous (even bleakly so)?
 2. How does Buzzati use the form of the short story?
- **Italo Calvino:**
 1. 'Si rischia di perdere il senso della differenza tra le cose e gli esseri umani, e tutto viene valutato in termini di produzione e consumo'. Examine the prescribed short stories from *Marcovaldo* and discuss ways in which Calvino explores this theme.
 2. What conclusions do you draw from considering the ways in which Calvino brings to an end each of the five stories from *Marcovaldo*?

Essays (choose from the following titles)

- **Primo Levi:**
 1. 'These are stories that take place at the edges of natural history' (P. Levi). Examine the three prescribed short stories from *Storie naturali* in the light of this statement.
 2. With particular reference to the dynamics of realism and fantasy in literature, discuss Levi's narrative technique in the prescribed short stories.
- **Stefano Benni:**
 1. To what extent does irony work in parallel with fantasy in the prescribed short stories by Benni?
 2. Which narrative devices are deployed by Benni in order to establish the interrelatedness of realism and fantasy in the two selected short stories?

Selected Bibliography

- Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (London & New York: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995)
Founder's Library, 801.95 BEN
- Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis* (New York: Methuen, 1984)
Founder's Library, 809.3915 HUM
- Helmut Bonheim: *The narrative modes: techniques of the short story* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992)
Founder's Library, 820.31 BON
- Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 1988 [1981])
Founder's Library, 809.3915 JAC
- Susan Onega and José Angel Garcia Landa, *Narratology: An Introduction*, ed. by (London and NY: Longman, 1996)
Founder's Library, 809.923 NAR
- Martin Montgomery et al, *Ways of Reading* (London: Routledge, 1992)
Founder's Library, 801.95 WAY

Study Packs of articles on the Italian authors will be made available to students.