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A study of Augustan monuments and the extent to which they reflect his ideology

Research Question:

“I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble.”

How effective were Augustan building projects in representing his ideology?

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Introduction:

The purpose of my extended essay is to investigate the extent to which Augustus' building projects reflect his ideology. Having explored Augustan ideology through the use of secondary sources, written by historians such as Paul Zanker, I will then analyse some of Augustus' most significant monuments and their ideological features, to demonstrate the purpose of the monument itself or the purpose of a certain feature in the monument. I believe that the most relevant monuments to the understanding of Augustan ideology are the following because they represent most truthfully Augustan ideology itself: the Ara Pacis, the Via Labicana Augustus, the Prima Porta statue of Augustus, Augustus' Mausoleum and the temple of Mars Ultor. These five monuments not only are related to Augustus' ideology, and so will give the of possibility of exploring it, but also will give me clear evidence of what the principles were in which the Emperor who won the Battle of Actium believed in. The main characteristics of Augustan ideology were related to evolving from a supposedly degenerate society, to a society with strong moral beliefs. This also consisted in passing from the self-exaltation of contender generals to the the adoration of a leader preferred by gods, unpleasant private exhibitionism being replaced by a program of "*publica magnificentia*" (Zanker, 2002) and dishonesty and disregard of the gods by a spiritual and religious revival.

My research question is worthy of investigation because it is a meticulous way to analyse Rome's first Emperor's ideology. It is important to study Roman architecture and buildings because they give us invaluable insight into the consciousness of society at the time and heighten our understanding of the period. Buildings are not merely aesthetic objects with only a decorative purpose but can implicitly tell us about the political regime and ideology of the time. Furthermore I believe that certain characteristics of Augustus' monuments go beyond the simple representation of prosperous scenes, so, having identified these scenes, I will then analyse them and make a link between them and Augustus' ideology. The use of monuments combined with both primary and

secondary sources should help me in understanding to which extent do Augustus' building projects represent his ideology.

As said previously, I will use secondary sources to understand Augustan ideology, however, crucial to the development of this essay, are also primary sources which I will use as evidence for the points I will make. When having to select my secondary sources I believe that identifying one source as more authoritative than another may be considered to be a fairly challenging task, but on the other hand, having more contrasting points of view, gives me the possibility of analysing which I believe to be more truthful.

Historical Context:

Born as Gaius Octavius Thurinus, Augustus, was Rome's first Emperor. His reign lasted approximately from January 27 BC to August 14 AD. Augustus became Emperor in a period of Roman history when the common belief was the one that one man rule was against the common good. Furthermore when Augustus had solidified his power over what was to become the Roman Empire, a climate of negativity dominated the Roman state. The unfavourable situation was mainly due to the transformation that Roman society had undertaken before Augustus' consolidation of power. On one hand we found rich and powerful men of Roman society which were getting wealthier and more powerful, whilst on the other poor people who lived in the "mean and narrow streets" (Cicero De Lege Prov. 2.35.96, cited in Zanker, 2002).

Augustus's objective was to return to the old *mos maiorum* so to restore society's ethics. Translated literally, "custom of the ancestors" (Novaroma.org, 2019), the *mos maiorum* were the religious and ethical behaviours, which one had to put in place. The customs not only were used as guidance for personal behaviour but were also considered a "way to honour one's ancestors" (Hellenic Faith,

2019). However when Augustus took power, the diversity amongst the forgotten *mos maiorum* and what in a near future would have been negatively regarded as *luxuria*, in Rome, could hardly have been more impressive. A common example of what *luxuria* consisted of would have found itself in marketplaces in the period of Julius Caesar. The agorae of many Italian cities were characterised by naked or armoured statues of powerful men, with muscles highlighted and with heads forcefully turned. This led to the loss of the original meaning of this borrowed symbolism due to overuse. The consequences were mainly two: firstly, there was an exaggerated rise of the statues' features, and secondly, an increase in the prices of the materials used to make the statues. However, this is only one of the many aspects of what the ideology of *luxuria* had introduced to Roman society.

Ancient Romans, after having had an adverse experience with Julius Caesar and his predecessors, were very proud of their Republic and having power in the hands of the people was seen as the best thing. Moreover when civil war broke out between Augustus and Mark Antony, who had allied himself with Cleopatra, the conditions to turn into a dominant figure of the Roman world were again established. The battle of Actium, the name which was given to this civil war, took place in the Ionian Sea, on the western coast of Greece, on the second of September 31 BC. Augustus emerged victorious and instead of proclaiming himself dictator, like his adoptive uncle had done, he decided to found a principate, "a system of monarchy headed by an Emperor holding power for life" (Zanker, 2002). More generally, after many years of violent, civil war, the Romans were going to enjoy a period, of about fifty years, of prosperity and joy. The monarchy had finally brought an organised government to the immense empire, discipline to the military forces, bread and entertainment to the Roman citizens, and a colossal expansion of the economy.

Augustus' Building Projects

In Italy the basic patterns of everyday life had remained the same for generations, and cultural life was arid, after having been deprived of both literature and art. After Augustus had obtained exclusive power in Rome, his objective became the one of rectifying the conditions of the Empire. The aim of Augustus' cultural program was a total moral revival in which he would have invested an unquantifiable amount of effort throughout the course of the next twenty years. The cultural program needed a completely different typology of visual language, and the formation of a different way of visual communication was compulsory for the accomplishment of Augustus's objective.

"It is commonly known that the physical appearance of a city mirrored the peculiar state of its society." (Cicero De Lege Prov. 2.35.96, cited in Zanker, 2002)

As Cicero alludes to in the above citation, visual imagery reflects a society's everyday life and provides awareness about people's values and morals that frequently cannot be comprehended in literary sources. Mainly through visual imagery a different mythology of Rome started being promoted whilst new customs of power had been developed for the Emperor. However, throughout Augustus' reign, the meaning of imagery did not stand mainly for propaganda of the new regime, as much as a visualisation of the prosperous future that was to come.

The Ara Pacis

The first monument to analyse when trying to understand Augustan ideology is the Ara Pacis. Also known as the Altar of the Augustan Peace, the Ara Pacis, was commissioned around July the 4th 13 BC, but consecrated on the 30th of January, 9 BC. It was built to celebrate the return of Augustus in 13BC from his campaign in Spain and Gaul. "The structure has a central altar set on a podium surrounded by high walls (11.6 x 10.6 m) composed of large rectangular slabs" (Cartwright and Cartwright, 2019). The two entrances of the monument were located on the east and west sides

of the it. Furthermore the west side entrance had a very brief staircase because of the ground's lower elevation on that side in its authentic position.. Its symbolic significance lies in the concept of wanting to return to the golden era, and peace to live amongst the Romans.

Analysing the Ara Pacis one of the reliefs which has been more open to debate is the so-called Tellus relief. The Tellus relief portrays a divine-like figure of a woman holding whose lap is full with fruit and hair is embellished by a garland composed of grain and poppies, whilst with her arms she is holding two newborns who are reaching for her breasts. Additional corn, poppies, and other types of plants are markedly presented as growing behind her. There have been many interpretations regarding the women portrayed in the Tellus relief. The female figure has been identified as "Mother Earth (Tellus), Venus, Ceres, and possibly even Pax herself"(Web.mit.edu, 2019). Through the portrayal of this prosperous scene, Augustus wanted to introduce to Roman society the idea that fertility and abundance were everywhere. This not only would have then lead the Romans to become more religious and more respectful towards the Gods of their culture, but also would have contributed to a general, positive attitude towards life.

The second relief of the Ara Pacis which must be analysed when investigating Augustan ideology is the relief which immortalises Augustus in his toga followed by other key religious figures in Roman society. The portrayal of the scene demonstrates clearly how the religious revival was something in which Augustus believed in and would have done anything to carry out. The relief enhances the image which Augustus wanted to transmit of himself as Pontifex Maximus to Roman society. The figure of the Pontifex Maximus held the "the most significant position in Roman religion"(Mint Imperials, 2019), being the highest priest of the Ancient Roman College of Pontiffs. Other than inspiring a religious revival in Roman society, being identified as the Pontifex Maximus also gave Augustus the adoration of a leader preferred by gods that he wanted.

Augustus' vision of himself

According to Zanker, leading figures of communities are influenced by the image they portray of themselves. Their own image and the role they play amongst society are affected by many factors, however amongst the most relevant ones, their slogans and their competitors' slogans deserve recognition. Furthermore only in this limited period of time, compared to the rest of the ancient world, did depiction of human figures seize so much of the figure's personality. "One need only to consider the irony and detachment in even a mediocre copy of the portrait of Caesar and then compare it with the standard honorific portraits of the late Augustan period"(Zanker, 2002). Even though the portraits in Caesar's period were characterised by an individuality which mirrored an exemption from a dictated order of values, the mixture of elementary facial features with outstanding physiques pointed out a disparity amongst rhetoric and legitimate fulfilment.

When reviewing how Augustus wanted to portray himself, two statues must be taken into account. The first one is the Via Labicana Augustus, which portrayed Augustus as one of the leading religious figures, and the other is Augustus of Prima Porta, which immortalises him as commander of the army.

Via Labicana Augustus

Relevant to the comprehension of Augustan ideology is the Via Labicana Augustus. Named after the location of its founding, the Via Labicana Augustus, also known as Augustus as Pontifex Maximus, immortalises Augustus wearing his toga. The "youth who owed everything to his name", as Marc Anthony called him (Cicero Phil. 13.11.12, cited in Zanker, 2002), reputed the accomplishment of his religious duties his most important moral obligation and highest honour. This is also demonstrated by the numerous findings of Augustus' representations which immortalise him veiled in a toga.

Augustus's religious revival had to be compulsory because after civil war had broken out twice, firstly between Pompey and Caesar, and then between Marc Antony and Octavian, people reacted through a refusal of the gods and values of their ancestors.

Returning to the statue, having such an important figure completely covered by his toga showed how striking the contrast was between the unequivocal naked statues which belonged to the period before the reestablishment of the Republic and one of the statues which expressed most symbolically the princeps's perspective of himself. A view of himself which was completely different from the view of himself that he had before the Battle of Actium, a view which was mirrored in the *Mos Maiorum*.

Mos Maiorum is what Augustus believed should have been at the base of the Roman society. This is because, just like Ennius who wrote the following:

“Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque. (The Roman state stands on ancient customs and heroes.)” (Novaroma.org, 2019)

also Augustus believed that the Roman state could have survived only by basing itself on ancient customs. Overall, the concept, consisted in “simplicity and self-sufficiency, a strict upbringing and moral code, order and subservience within the family, diligence, bravery and self-sacrifice”(Zanker, 2002).

The regular statue for public celebration during the Republic had constantly been the one which showed the figure veiled in a toga, as we saw from the Via Labicana Augustus.

The celebrated figure and the toga he was wearing were distinguished by other figures' toga statues by distinct characteristics based on the political or religious office of the portrayed figure. Even

though, as stated previously, the public statue for public celebration had been the toga statue, Augustus also had decided to portray himself also as a military figure through the Primaporta statue.

The Augustus of Primaporta

The Augustus of Primaporta, built around the 20BC demonstrates how one of the main points of Augustan Ideology was the divination of Augustus himself and giving the impression of a strong empire. According to some scholars, the purpose of the creation of imperial statues, was to honor the leader's superhuman strength and courage. This is true of the Prima Porta statue of Augustus which also includes Cupid pulling down Augustus' robe, standing for an exaltation of the ruler's own divine descent. Also relevant to the analysis of the statue, is its pose. The pose is an imitation of the one of the statues of divine figures and heroes, to whom the subject should resemble. An example would be the "Polykleitos' *Doryphoros*" which is a sculpture of the Greek Classical world which was created around the fifth century B.C.

In a detailed study of the Augustus of Primaporta written by Julia Fischer (Julia Fischer, cited in Khan Academy, 2019), one of the ideological features which she believes deserves recognition when evaluating the statue is the breastplate Augustus is wearing. Also known as a cuirass, the breastplate, is covered with figures that convey supplementary propagandistic messages. Historians have been trying to interpret the identity of the figures portrayed on the breastplate, however the argument is still widely open to discussion. Even though the figure's identity might not still be completely clear, Fischer interprets the message of the breastplate as the following: Augustus not only has the gods on his side and is a worldwide military hero, but also he brings with himself what in Roman culture would have been identified as "Pax Romana, a peace that encompasses all the lands of the Roman Empire" (Julia Fischer, cited in Khan Academy, 2019).

Always according to Fischer, dominating the central zone of the breastplate are two identities, a Roman and a Parthian. In the immortalised scene, the Parthian enemy is giving back the military standards. The scene alludes to a victory carried out by Augustus around 20 B.C., when the military standards, portrayed on the breastplate, were lastly brought back to Rome after a past battle. Around the central zone both gods and personifications have been portrayed. Fischer identifies “at the top” “Sol and Caelus, the sun and sky gods respectively. On the sides of the breastplate are female personifications of countries conquered by Augustus” (Julia Fischer, cited in Khan Academy, 2019). The divine figures and personifications refer to the Pax Romana. The meaning of the portrayal of the scene is that peace and harmony are going to reign amongst all the regions of the Roman Empire bringing joyfulness and prosperity to all social classes of Roman society. Clearly Augustus is the ruler who is responsible for all the copiousness which is present all over the Empire.

Below the female personifications we find two leading, divine figures of the Roman religious world: Diana and Apollo. Augustus is evidently preferred by these two prominent figures of the religious world, and their presence on the breastplate demonstrates how the Emperor supported traditional Roman religion. Lastly, at the low extremity of the breastplate there is “Tellus, the earth goddess” (Julia Fischer, cited in Khan Academy, 2019) Tellus is looking after two babies whilst holding a cornucopia. Her presence is another allusion to Pax Romana since the earth goddess symbolised fertility and abundance (Julia Fischer, cited in Khan Academy, 2019).

Direct references to the breastplate of the Augustus of Prima Porta are also present in Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare* which was written in 17 BC to celebrate the secular games. Both the breastplate and the *Carmen Saeculare* promote the importance of marriage, fertility, and reverence to the gods. Amongst the verses of the *Carmen Saeculare* which mostly symbolise Augustan ideology the following is one related to fertility: “Duly open wombs at their proper season” (Horace’s “*Carmen Saeculare*”, cited in Zanker, 2002). Other than Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare*, also Virgil’s *Aeneid*

depicts some of the breastplate's features. More specifically, both in the breastplate and in the Aeneid, Augustus is portrayed as having the gods in his favour, as the Aeneid claims.

The Mausoleum

Another monument built in praise of Augustus and representative of his ideology is the Mausoleum of Augustus. Planned even before the Battle of Actium, firstly initiated by Augustus in 31 BC, but open to public around 28BC the Mausoleum of Augustus was only built for propagandistic reasons, and so without any concern for the traditions related to the Republic.

Caesar had left many building projects to be initiated, and some which had already had been started, but should have simply been completed, such as the Divus Iulius in the forum, however Augustus preferred putting a-side what his predecessor had left incomplete. He concentrated all his effort in carrying out the construction of the Temple of Apollo and of the Mausoleum, two monuments which were to be "clearest statements of self-glorification"(Zanker, 2002). The mausoleum was for the most part a manifestation of it's patron's considerable authority.

When speaking about the Mausoleum of Augustus what must be stated are its dimensions. The Mausoleum had massive dimensions which stood out also due to the surrounding park. Amongst the elements which were symbol of the massiveness of the Mausoleum, the one, I believe must be mentioned, are the walls of the external cylinder which were approximately nine-meters-high, which also gave a powerful effect. Furthermore, to appreciate to a greater extent the Mausoleum itself, I believe that Strabo's description of it, is one of the most appropriate because it is short but detailed:

"Most worth seeing is the so-called Mausoleion, a large mound set upon a tall socle by the river. It is planted with evergreen trees up to the top. Above stands the bronze statue of the Emperor Augustus. Within the mound are the graves intended for him, his relatives, and friends. Behind

there is a large grove with splendid walks, in the mist of which is an elevated place, where Augustus's corpse was burnt" (Strabo 5.3.9, cited in Zanker, 2002)

Particularly after the death of Antony, the Mausoleum, gave the impression of a victorious monument, even though its architect had not completely succeeded in giving the monument a united appearance. However, according to Zanker, it must be specified that Augustus did not want to be identified as being a dynast, particularly after he had restored the Republic, and this means that the building of the Mausoleum was intended to demonstrate the level of ambitiousness that the young Augustus had.

Mars Ultor

Lastly, just like the Via Labicana Augustus, the Temple of Mars Ultor also revokes the spiritual revival. The temple was built in 42BC, mainly for three reasons. Firstly to commemorate Augustus's victory in the Battle of Philippi, over the assassins of Julius Caesar, and to avenge his death. Secondly to commemorate the victory over the Parthians and to celebrate the return, in 14 BC, of the Roman legionary standards taken by the Parthians. The last reason attributed to the building of the Temple is related to the importance of Mars' figure in Augustan ideology, this is because the God of war was identified as the father of Romulus and Remus, the two founders of Rome, according to Roman mythology. The Temple of Mars Ultor, is also a fundamental part of Augustan ideology: religious revival. Especially when public monuments had ceased to express any of the old political values, such as rank and service, the creation of monuments such as this were compulsory to the restoring of the Roman Morals.

Pietas plays a key role when analysing Augustan ideology. Pietas being translated as duty or religiosity can be mirrored in a strong faith in the polytheistic world which composed the Roman religious world. Furthermore through messages such as the following:

“You will remain sullied with the guilt of your fathers, Roman, until you have rebuilt the temples and restored all the ruined sanctuaries with their dark images of the gods, befouled with smoke”
(Horace Carmen 3.6, cited in Zanker, 2002)

Augustus held the firm belief that a religious revival was crucial to the complete carrying out of his mission: returning to the golden age. However, returning to the golden age, would have been impossible if the conditions of society remained unchanged, and the death of tradition and dissolution of the esteem for the state, combined with the threats that might have destroyed Rome, had all been interpreted as carelessness of the gods.

As said previously, the only solution was a religious revival, and for it to be effective, it should have touched on things which could have been considered important throughout the Hellenistic period, such as war. This is why Augustus decided to build the temple of Mars Ultor.

The temple of Mars Ultor so became the centre of each reunion related to war. Furthermore it also became the centre from where each boy became a man, so each boy was given his adult toga. This made the Temple a more sacred place than it had been ever before, fulfilling one of Augustus's objectives: the religious revival.

Conclusion

From the Ara Pacis' reliefs to the temple of Mars Ultor, each of the monuments analysed throughout this essay fully gives insight in Augustan Ideology. Each monument is effective when representing Augustus' ideology, even though I support the view that some may be more explicit than others. For example I believe that the relief on the Ara Pacis, which portrays Augustus wearing his toga, is more effective than the building of the Temple of Mars Ultor in representing Augustus' ideology in form of the religious revival. Whilst the Ara Pacis undoubtedly alludes to a restoration of the belief in the Roman gods, the Temple of Mars Ultor may simply be interpreted as Augustus' veneration of the God of war.

In conclusion, and in answer to my original research question, I believe that to some extent each of the building projects reflects Augustus' ideology. As a native of Rome, this investigation has led me to observe the capital's architecture in a more critical way. I have been able to appreciate first hand how the city's monuments are not only objects of beauty but also conveyed messages to the people of that era.

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**To What Extent can Napoleon from Animal Farm Be Considered a
Machiavellian Villain?**

*A study of Animal Farm by George Orwell and The Prince by Niccolò Machiavelli to
determine whether it is possible to consider Napoleon from the former text as a
Machiavellian Villain.*

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“Animal Farm” is a short novel written by George Orwell in 1945. The whole novel, through an initial reading, might appear as a story directed towards children. However, Orwell’s intention was to create an allegory that described the escalation of the Russian Revolution, occurred in 1917, as Cliffsnotes.com states: “One of Orwell's goals in writing *Animal Farm* was to portray the Russian (or Bolshevik) Revolution of 1917” (Cliffsnotes.com, n.d.). Orwell discussed that the dictatorship in the USSR had become a brutal dictatorship and therefore, we can identify various political figures that Orwell purposefully inserted in his novel to demonstrate his visions of causes and effects of the Russian Revolution and, as an outcome of this, the communist regime Orwell criticized.

Throughout my essay, I will focus on the character of Napoleon, who is clearly an allegory of Stalin, and is represented through the novel as one of the pigs. Whilst reading this novel, it appeared to me that the writer was purposefully depicting Napoleon as the antagonist, as the character slowly abolished the rights that every other animal on the farm were given previously by another character, represented as an elder pig called “Old Major”, which represents an allegorical reference to Vladimir Lenin. All of this was thought out by Napoleon, for the unique purpose of seizing power on the farm. Orwell’s ‘villainous’ depiction of Napoleon made me reflect on the fact that there are many resemblances between the principles expressed by the Italian writer Niccolò Machiavelli in “The Prince” and those used by Orwell to describe Napoleon’s actions.

“The Prince” was written by Niccolò Machiavelli in 1532. The Prince is a political treatise featuring the author’s points of view relating to how a political figure is able to gain power over his population. Throughout “The Prince”, Machiavelli also shares several insights on how a leader is able to maintain power once gained. The methods he proposes are often times controversial and this is the reason why to this day, scheming and manipulative villains often fall under the nominees of ‘Machiavellian Villains’. Even though the treatise was written approximately five hundred years ago, it still remains very contemporary in my point of view, as we are still able as readers to make

connections between characters in contemporary novels and the principles expounded by Machiavelli in his work.

My essay is an investigation of the extent to which Napoleon from *Animal Farm* might be considered a Machiavellian villain (one who follows the principles expounded in “*The Prince*”). I will be basing most of my data on “*Animal Farm*” by George Orwell; “*The Prince*” by Niccolò Machiavelli; Two study guides offered by Cliffsnotes.com, which also include invaluable commentaries which helped me understand fundamental concepts found in both texts, and an article from “*The Guardian*”, which gave me awareness of a theory which I had not noticed throughout my reading of “*The Prince*”. In order to reach a conclusion, I will select the most relevant quotations from “*The Prince*” and compare them to the causes and effects of Napoleon’s power in Orwell’s novel.

Orwell’s novel appears to demonstrate a gradual change in Napoleon’s role in the farm. In fact, towards the beginning of the novel, he seems to not have a relevant role in the farm as he was just an ordinary comrade. However, his rise to power started when Old Major made his ‘comrades’ reflect on the fact that they were only being exploited by Mr. Jones, which also caused all of them to have a poor quality of life. Old Major’s speech resulted in being so motivational for the animals, that soon later the revolution to overthrow Mr. Jones occurred. However, because Old Major died of natural causes, the other pigs take advantage and already think of a plan that would make the other animals believe that their lives were going to improve through the creation of a list of ‘commandments’, which gave life to a proper “System of thought” (Orwell, 1945), which was successively called ‘Animalism’.

I feel as if this belief of a radical improvement in the quality of life acted as the very beginning of Napoleon’s ‘rise to power’, as it is clearly stated in Machiavelli’s work that “Men change their rulers willingly, hoping to better themselves” (Machiavelli, 1532). I believe that seizing power with the entire population’s consent results in giving the new ruler a greater opportunity to manipulate its

citizens, this is because they might be less likely to rebel against a decision that could appear disadvantageous to them, as they were the ones who helped him into power. This is exactly what has happened with Napoleon, as he used Old Major's principles of Animalism in order to gain respect and power throughout the animals in the farm, and this gave Napoleon the necessary authority to constantly manipulate his 'population'.

Power seems to be a relevant theme to consider when analyzing the character of Napoleon. The CliffsNotes analysis on Napoleon character, in fact, helps us to understand why we might describe Napoleon as an animal who is hungry for power: "While Jones' tyranny can be somewhat excused due to the fact that he is a dull-witted drunkard, Napoleon's can only be ascribed to his blatant lust for power." (CliffsNotes, Page 1). In fact, as Napoleon appears to be the most 'power-hungry' animal in the farm, he tries to oppress the other pigs who try and gain more authority than him. This is demonstrated when Snowball, one of the pigs, finally presents his plan to construct a windmill, which would provide electricity in the farm, decreasing each character's workload by a significant amount. Soon after this plan was presented to the animals, Napoleon gathered the dogs and they "Dashed straight for Snowball" (Orwell, Page 16, 1945), and later on, he expelled Snowball from the farm. Although the other animals don't seem able to find an answer to why Napoleon decided to expel Snowball, we might argue that as Snowball was gaining approval by the other animals, he was starting to threaten Napoleon's rise to power. This could have been a more than valid occasion for Napoleon to remove the competition that Snowball was creating by completely eradicating his presence from the farm. This type of event is described in Machiavelli's work as a principle: "He has only to take care that they do not get hold of too much power and too much authority, and then with his own forces and with their goodwill, he can easily keep down the more powerful of them, so as to remain entirely master in the country" (Machiavelli, 1532). Through this citation, Machiavelli demonstrated that being aware of the components of one's population also makes him aware of possible rival competitors and the status they hold. This awareness makes him able to ingeniously

exploit their goodwill in order to keep their status at a level below the Prince's in order to maintain the supremacy gained. This shows that Napoleon was so determined to become the most important figure in the farm that he was prepared to break one of Old Major's principles which stated that all animals had to be equal, taking advantage of most of the animals' lack of culture. And even if, by this time, the animals started to feel that Napoleon was taking advantage of them, it would have been too late. According to Machiavelli, by using 'hectic fever' as an example: "In the beginning of the malady it is easy to cure but difficult to detect, but in the course of time, not having been either detected or treated in the beginning, it becomes easy to detect but difficult to cure" (Machiavelli, 1532). This is particularly appropriate when considering Napoleon's ascendance to power, as if the animals had feared that Napoleon would have threatened the principle of Animalism before he rose to power, they would have been able to defeat him. This proved to be true especially when the animals started remembering of how much better life was for everyone under Jones' supervision of the farm, but by the time the animals realized, it was already out of their reach to rebel against Napoleon.

Furthermore, Machiavelli describes another characteristic of a successful leader: "This follows also on another natural and common necessity, which always causes a new prince to burden those who have submitted to him with his soldiery and infinite other hardships which he must put upon his new acquisition" (Machiavelli, 1532). This characteristic might be identified, in our modern society, as being a brutal dictator. According to Machiavelli, a brutal dictatorship is almost essential for a prince to inflict upon his population after gaining control of new territories. In Orwell's novel, we might identify a variety of events from Napoleon's behavior which might be linked to his intention of inflicting a brutal dictatorship upon the other animals. One of the examples is when the 'leader' creates propaganda through the use of Squealer (another pig who was known for his remarkable intellectual ability). Each and every decision Napoleon makes which could create a rebellion in the farm, is communicated to the other animals through Squealer, which through his incredible power

of speech, manages to keep a certain degree of peace in the farm. As Fonseca's critical analysis of *Animal Farm* suggests: "Napoleon employs Squealer for all kinds of propaganda and media control on the farm. Each time he violates the Seven Commandments, Squealer distorts the relevant statements by rephrasing the original text in favour of Napoleon and his swinish clan" (Fonseca, Page 6). The ability to distort any compromising occurrences was part of Squealer's superior communication skills, as compared to the other animals.

However, Squealer's power of speech and persuasion might not be the only factor that keeps Napoleon safe from rebellion. In fact, the dogs that always appear to accompany Squealer's speeches 'by chance', also appear to play a key role in the formation of a brutal dictatorship. A suiting example could be when "Squealer, attended by two dogs, approached them with the air of having something important to say. He announced that, by a special decree of Comrade Napoleon, Beasts of England had been abolished." (Orwell, 1945). In this case Squealer was announcing the abolishment of 'Beasts of England', *Animal Farm's* anthem since the rebellion led by Old Major. The dogs' aggressive appearance and their constant proximity to Squealer whilst he delivers his speeches, in my point of view, help to repress the contradictory opinions and feelings of the other animals towards what is said in the speeches, which also agrees with this statement from a critical analysis of *Animal Farm*, when talking about the meaning of the dogs' presence: "So the animals are all forced to listen to him, repress their feelings, and abstain from questioning"¹ (Fonseca, Page 7, 2017). This obviously means that the dictator, through Squealer and the dogs, can announce any decision he pleases, as there is a very low chance that the other animals would go against his 'army', especially after Snowball was attacked by the dogs and successively expelled from the farm, setting a warning for whichever animal decided to follow his path.

Moreover, in case faith towards Napoleon's policies started to fade, Napoleon might have needed to reinforce the faith by force with the use of the dogs. In fact, Machiavelli clearly states: "And thus it

is necessary to take such measures that, when they believe no longer, it may be possible to make them believe by force” (Machiavelli, 1532). In my point of view, Napoleon’s use of an army composed of dogs is a clear threat to Old Major’s principles, which all aimed towards a sense of freedom. However, by using terror and brutality as a means of governing, the animals’ rights of freedom are immediately dismantled.

Furthermore, according to Stacy Magedanz’s commentary, included in the CliffsNotes Study Guide on *The Prince*, “He observes that after your followers lose faith in your innovative schemes, you must force them to have faith, or at least, to act as if they do by obeying you.” (Magedanz, 2001) I find this citation extremely important, as it might identify another aspect that might lead Napoleon to oppress the other animals. In fact, Napoleon might be trying to increase his self-esteem by being recognized by the others as the ‘leader’. I believe that is a vital quality for a dictator to acquire.

With self-esteem, a dictator might realize that once people have faith in him, he will most likely be able to obtain anything he wants. In fact, a dictatorship like the one that has developed in ‘Animal Farm’ is not able to survive without the element of oppression. Without oppression, we could hypothesize the event of another rebellion, this time against Napoleon.

It is arguable, however, that the animals allow themselves to be oppressed by the leader. I can state this by considering the animals’ hunger for change, mainly manifested when Jones was sent out of his own home, and was continuously fueled by Squealer’s speeches. Machiavelli describes this wish for change as an easy ground for a possible new leader, by describing what had happened in France: “One can easily enter there by gaining over some baron of the kingdom, for one always finds malcontents and such as desire a change.” (Machiavelli, 1532) Napoleon uses this desire for change to his advantage, persuading the animals that since he has been into ‘power’, many things have changed to their advantage. He does this, once again, through the use of Squealer, by communicating to the other animals a variety of untruthful statistics, which always made it crystal-clear to most members of the farm that there had been significant improvements. An example for

this can be: "On Sunday mornings Squealer, holding down a long strip of paper with his trotter, would read out to them lists of figures proving that the production of every class of foodstuff had increased by two hundred per cent, three hundred per cent, or five hundred per cent" (Orwell, Page 27, 1945). This constant misleading persuasion helps to eliminate any possible additional desire for change between the animals and to continue to trust Napoleon, whichever action he might decide to take. Misleading persuasion also occurs when Napoleon wants Moses (the Raven) back to the farm. Moses was well known to the animals, as he constantly tried to persuade them about the existence of a place called 'Sugar Candy Mountain', which was only reachable after death, and was therefore considered as paradise. The notion of living in this paradise after death might have helped to generate 'euphoria' in the farm, as the animals were more determined to work for a greater amount of time and more efficiently in order to have better chances of entering in this 'paradise' after death. This surely helped Napoleon, as by being involved in the trading of crops produced by the animals, he became wealthier. He achieved this by keeping the animals cheerful, even though it was clear that they were sacrificing the scarce amount of energy they had left. Therefore, this 'desire for change' has been kept throughout all of the animals, which were all unaware of the fact that Napoleon was only bringing changes that would have benefitted him. The desire for change could perhaps embrace the Marxian concept of 'opiate for the masses', where Napoleon proves to be able to provide the animals with dreams which distract them from his constant manipulation. Furthermore, this could contribute to Machiavelli's remark on Church states and how their populations help "Keep their rulers in power no matter what they do or how they live." (Spencer, n.d.)

The last piece of evidence I selected when considering Napoleon as a Machiavellian villain, derives, once again, from Machiavelli's work. This states "If he is wise he ought not to fear the reputation of being mean, for in time he will come to be more considered than if liberal, seeing that with his economy his revenues are enough, that he can defend himself against all attacks, and is able to

engage in enterprises without burdening his people” (Machiavelli, 1532). In this quote, Machiavelli might suggest that if a prince is fearless of other people’s considerations, he is abler to avoid brutality towards his population, as long as if he has the correct resources to defend himself from any form of attack. This might explain why Napoleon decided to engage in trade with human beings, which was prohibited by the farm laws. In fact, exchanging his farm’s products for money might have helped him to believe that he was able to protect himself to a greater extent, even if the animals were to realize Napoleon’s rather ‘sinister’ intentions. Once again, Napoleon is building upon his own confidence, which, I believe, is the unique purpose of his involvement in the farm. In my point of view, he managed to accomplish this state of confidence, but he didn’t impact the other animals’ states of mind. In fact, most animals often misunderstood the situations in which they were inserted, and by not understanding, most animals decided to ignore and to continue supporting Napoleon. In addition to this, it is also true that Napoleon might have not been considered as a villain from the animals’ perspectives due to the fact that all of the animals considered Jones as the real villain. By considering *him* as the villain, they might tend to forget and ignore Napoleon’s actions, as through Squealer, everything seemed to improve since the revolution which kicked Jones out of the farm. We must also note, however, that as time passed it gradually became harder for them to recall their life conditions before the revolution against Jones, and gradually became more vulnerable towards the ‘brainwashing propaganda’ led by Squealer.

Napoleon’s character is clearly similar to the representation of a villain in Machiavelli’s “The Prince”. This similarity between the character of Napoleon and the depiction of a villainous archetype, perhaps, indicates an intentional attempt from Orwell to portray Napoleon as an example of a Machiavellian villain. This could especially be considered when we analyze Orwell’s political context and the unfavourable ideas he had towards Stalin’s communist regime at the time of the writing of the novel. The fact that both the allegorical figure of Stalin in *Animal Farm* and the direct representation of Machiavelli’s villain frequently overlap in characteristics, suggests that there was

probably some degree, although not certain, of influence from Machiavelli's work into Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

The presence of these considerable amounts of examples from "The Prince" which can easily be compared to "Animal Farm", made me reflect upon the reason behind Orwell lacking to make any direct reference to Machiavelli's work. Machiavelli wrote "The Prince" almost five hundred years before Orwell wrote "Animal Farm", and yet, with all of the similarities collated, the question persists. One possible reason for this 'lack' of consideration could be the comparison between how Orwell depicted Stalin as a villain through the creation of the character 'Napoleon', and this therefore resulted in a direct comparison between how villainous Stalin appeared to him and the actions Napoleon could have portrayed to fulfill Orwell's depiction of Stalin, rather than the Prince, as in Machiavelli's work. In this case, any reference to "The Prince" would have been unnecessary, as it would have most likely created a sense of confusion in the reader, in the case where he or she were finding themselves having to constantly compare three characters whilst reading the novel.

With the conclusion of my analyses of both texts, it appears to me that a large number of elements which constitute a 'Machiavellian Prince' have been fulfilled throughout Orwell's construction of Napoleon's character in *Animal Farm*. Although I am unable to find solid evidence that Napoleon is an actual example of a Machiavellian Prince, I find it fascinating to compare two works written in five centuries' distance from one another and yet be able to draw links between Machiavelli's expectation of a role-model prince and a character which was designed originally as an allegorical figure to represent a political exponent. It is also worth noticing that in the case where Napoleon's character proved to be an accurate depiction of Stalin, we might then raise the debate on whether Stalin himself followed Machiavelli's treatise as a model for his leadership in the USSR. For this instance, however, given the considered evidence, I am now able to state that Napoleon can be considered a Machiavellian villain.

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L'amore sopravvive alla morte? Come viene trattato questo tema all'interno del V Canto dell'"*Inferno*" di Dante Alighieri e nella poesia "*Ho sceso dandoti il braccio*" di Eugenio Montale?

Uno studio su come l'amore sopravviva alla morte in particolare all'interno del V Canto dell'"*Inferno*" di Dante Alighieri e nella poesia "*Ho sceso dandoti il braccio*" di Eugenio Montale.

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INTRODUZIONE

Amore e morte sono due concetti opposti e contrastanti. Il primo nella nostra mente viene immediatamente associato alla felicità e alla passione, mentre il secondo ci riporta alla tristezza, alla rabbia e al dolore. Queste due tematiche sono state largamente trattate nel corso della storia. Già nelle civiltà antiche, quali quella romana e quella greca, si possono trovare miti e racconti su come l'amore e la morte siano legati inscindibilmente. Troviamo, ad esempio, il mito di Eros e Thanatos in cui l'amore tra Admeto e Alceste spinge quest'ultima a dare la sua vita in modo tale da prolungare quella del proprio sposo. Lo stesso Omero, nell'*Iliade*, associa queste due tematiche più volte nel corso della sua opera, ad esempio quando nel sesto canto Ettore saluta la sua amata moglie Andromaca prima di recarsi a combattere quella che sarà la sua ultima battaglia. Andando avanti nei secoli, e dunque nella letteratura italiana, troviamo Dante Alighieri, che attraverso la sua *Commedia* e molti altri testi, quale *La Vita Nuova*, racconta di come l'amore sopravviva alla morte, sia che l'amore sia ricambiato sia che l'amore sia tormentato e non corrisposto, come il suo per Beatrice. Il grande Montale riprenderà la tematica sei secoli dopo nella sua raccolta di componimenti intitolata *Xenia* dedicata alla moglie defunta. I due autori sono, dunque, l'esemplificazione di come l'amore sia un tema sempre attuale, qualsiasi epoca storica si prenda in considerazione.

In questo saggio si è deciso di incentrare il proprio studio sull'analisi dei due temi suddetti all'interno del V Canto dell'*Inferno* dantesco e nel componimento montaliano *Ho sceso dandoti il braccio*, in modo tale da poter dimostrare non solo quanto siano sempre in auge ma anche come uno, l'amore, riesca a sopravvivere noncurante dell'altro, la morte. Si intende inoltre analizzare la tematica su due livelli diversi: quello dell'amore illegittimo tra Paolo e Francesca, che sopravvive nonostante la condanna infernale, e quello coniugale tra Montale e la sua amata Drusilla Tanzi, che continua ad ardere nel cuore dell'autore incurante della morte di lei. L'intento è dunque quello di dimostrare, attraverso l'analisi dei testi succitati, che pur cambiando il luogo, il momento storico o

la natura dell'amore stesso, quest'ultimo esiste e resiste nel cuore degli innamorati noncurante del fato.

Gli obbiettivi di questo componimento rispondono alla domanda "L'amore sopravvive alla morte? Come viene trattato questo tema all'interno del V Canto dell'*Inferno* di Dante Alighieri e nella poesia *Ho sceso dandoti il braccio* di Eugenio Montale?"

PARAGRAFO 1: DIVINA COMMEDIA, INFERNO CANTO V

Il V canto dell'*Inferno* di Dante Alighieri è ben noto come il canto di Paolo e Francesca. Francesca da Polenta, figlia di Guido, signore e vassallo dell'arcivescovo di Ravenna, intorno al 1275 era stata data in sposa a Gianciotto, podestà di Rimini, per ragioni politiche. Il matrimonio, infatti, doveva suggellare la pace tra le due città dopo un lungo periodo di contrasto, ma alla fanciulla era stato promesso come sposo il fratello di Gianciotto, il bel Paolo, di cui successivamente lei si innamorò. Paolo e Francesca, sorpresi da Gianciotto, furono trucidati nel castello di Gradara tra il 1283 e il 1285, vicenda che fece scalpore e di cui Dante era certamente a conoscenza: egli infatti doveva aver conosciuto, o quanto meno visto, Paolo Malatesta quando costui era stato Capitano del Popolo a Firenze nel 1282; inoltre, negli ultimi anni di esilio, Dante fu ospite a Ravenna di Guido Novello, nipote di Francesca. I due amanti sono tra i protagonisti del V canto, nel secondo Cerchio, quello dedicato ai Lussuriosi, a coloro cioè che in vita sono stati trascinati dalla passione amorosa e ora scontano la loro pena, secondo la legge del contrappasso, trovandosi travolti da una violenta bufera. Quest'ultima viene descritta nella sua ferocia "che mai non resta, mena li spirti con la sua rapina; voltando e percotendo li molesta." (v 31-33), cioè incessante, trascina rapinosamente le anime (dei dannati) facendole roteare su loro stesse e colpendole violentemente. Le anime da essa travolte sono quelle che "la ragion sottomettono al talento" (v 39), cioè alla passione, e così facendo si comportano come gli animali. Ciò che infatti distingue l'uomo dalle bestie è appunto la ragione, che lo guida e media i desideri della carne per consentirgli di raggiungere la Salvezza. Secondo il pensiero dantesco, infatti, anche l'amore quando sfugge alla ragione può portare alla morte, come testimonia il gran numero di anime dell'antichità lì presenti, da Semiramide a Didone, da Cleopatra a Elena di Troia, ad Achille, Paride e Tristano, che porta Dante a dire "pietà mi giunse, e fui quasi smarrito" (v 72), cioè quasi persi i sensi. In gran contrasto con queste anime, "i due che 'nsieme vanno, e paion sì al vento esser leggeri" (vv 74,75), quei due che vanno insieme e sembrano così leggeri al soffio del vento, si liberano in volo e raggiungono il poeta per raccontare la loro storia. "Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona, mi prese del costui piacer sì forte, che, come vedi, ancor

non m'abbandona" (vv 103), Amore, che non permette a nessun amato di non amare, mi fece innamorare di lui con una passione che, come vedi, ancora non mi abbandona, è il modo in cui Francesca racconta come l'intensità dell'amore che li ha condotti alla morte, e alla pena infernale, continui a dominare anche lì all'Inferno, a dispetto della morte. Questo concetto è rafforzato dall'anafora presente nei versi dal 100 al 107 in cui la parola "Amore" è ripetuta all'inizio di ogni terzina.

Paolo e Francesca sono le uniche due anime che viaggiano in coppia. Paolo sembra essere così attaccato alla donna da far parte della pena di lei. Francesca, invece, porta con sé l'ulteriore peso di una biblioteca di argomento amoroso: pur avendo sottomesso la ragione al sentimento, come tutti i peccatori presenti nel secondo cerchio, può tuttavia ancora utilizzare l'intelletto ed è lei a dialogare con il poeta. Nelle parole della donna è Amore il soggetto attivo, la forza inarrestabile che travolge gli uomini, in questo modo dipinti come vittime, o al massimo complici, di esso e alleggeriti delle loro colpe. E' da notare il modo estremamente umano in cui Dante ritrae Francesca, protagonista dell'unico vero bacio di tutta l'opera.

All'angoscia dei due amanti corrisponde la duplice pietà del poeta, dapprima sincera partecipazione affettiva ed interesse per la vicenda, poi profonda immedesimazione intellettuale e turbamento fisico. Dante patisce insieme a Francesca perché in lei vede un destino che egli stesso avrebbe patito e il perdere i sensi è l'effetto del turbamento profondo ma anche il segno del rifiuto di un coinvolgimento nella vicenda dei due amanti. La pietà del poeta e la tragedia amorosa di Francesca contengono tutti gli elementi – amore, morte, ribellione, compassione – per attirare, partendo da Foscolo, la critica romantica dell'Ottocento. Francesca viene trasformata nell'emblema dell'eroina d'amore, considerando completamente influente la sua condanna all'inferno, o vedendo questa scelta del poeta come un suo voler condividere la tragedia umana della donna, nell'interna dicotomia tra l'uomo e il poeta. De Sanctis evidenzia come Francesca sia "l'unica donna viva della Commedia", una donna con personalità, storia, voluttà, "l'umano e il terrestre, essere fragile,

appassionato, capace di colpa e colpevole” e Dante “è l’uomo vivo nel regno de’ morti, che porta colà un cuore d’uomo e rende profondamente umana la poesia del sopraumano.”

Al di là del grande interesse che il canto di Paolo e Francesca ha sempre suscitato nei lettori di tutti i tempi, specialmente nel periodo del Romanticismo, come si è già detto, secondo la critica contemporanea Dante rigetta completamente la teoria per cui chi è amato deve per forza amare a sua volta. Nel suo profondo credere nel libero arbitrio, non può non condannare un amore che non lascia scelta e infatti costringe i due amanti alla dannazione eterna. Chi ama non sbaglia, è questo quello che ci dice la *Commedia*, e qui Dante vuole far capire che il vero amore è un altro e che i due si sono solo illusi: Francesca non è innamorata di Paolo ma dell’Amore stesso, quello raccontato nel libro tra Lancillotto e Ginevra, e Paolo è solo uno strumento dell’amore.

PARAGRAFO 1.1: AMORE E MORTE NELLA PRODUZIONE DI DANTE ALIGHIERI

Il tema dell'amore nella poetica dantesca contiene molti dei motivi dell'amore cortese e stilnovista: lo sguardo, la gentilezza e nobiltà d'animo, il saluto, la lode della bellezza fisica e morale dell'amata. Ciò nonostante, Dante tenta già dalle prime opere di unificare il tema dell'amore con la dottrina cristiana, poiché quest'ultima considera il primo una spinta verso il peccato. In modo tale da ovviare alla colpa e di conciliare i due aspetti, Dante predilige la lode della bellezza intellettuale e morale, che diventa uno strumento per raggiungere il divino ed eleva il saluto a una vicenda spirituale e mistica che porta alla salvezza. La sua scelta di amare una donna non più in vita, che dal paradiso possa guidarlo nella scrittura del suo lavoro, è l'apoteosi dell'evoluzione del poeta nei confronti del tema dell'amore. Si può dunque definire la *Commedia* il passo finale verso la conciliazione tra l'amore umano e l'amore divino, dove la morte funge da "paciere" tra i due. La donna defunta non è più oggetto di tentazione carnale, dunque può diventare uno strumento di elevazione spirituale. Beatrice, la donna amata da Dante, viene infatti posta dal poeta nel Paradiso, il luogo più vicino a Dio. E' proprio nel quinto canto dell'*Inferno* che il poeta decreta la svolta tra la sua idea giovanile dell'amore, quella affine ai poeti stilnovisti, primo fra tutti Guido Cavalcanti, suo grande amico, e il pensiero maturo, e la condanna di Francesca e del "libro Galeotto" sancisce proprio il rifiuto per l'amor cortese.

PARAGRAFO 2: HO SCESO DANDOTI IL BRACCIO

Ho sceso, dandoti il braccio, almeno un milione di scale

e ora che non ci sei è il vuoto ad ogni gradino.

Anche così è stato breve il nostro lungo viaggio.

Il mio dura tuttora, né più mi occorrono

le coincidenze, le prenotazioni,

le trappole, gli scorni di chi crede

che la realtà sia quella che si vede.

Ho sceso milioni di scale dandoti il braccio

non già perché con quattr'occhi forse si vede di più.

Con te le ho scese perché sapevo che di noi due

le sole vere pupille, sebbene tanto offuscate,

erano le tue.

La lirica *Ho sceso, dandoti il braccio* è contenuta nella raccolta *Satura* e dedicata dal poeta alla defunta moglie Drusilla, da lui soprannominata “Mosca” per gli occhiali molto grandi che era solita portare. Il ricordo di quest’ultima è introdotto da un’immagine molto intima e significativa, che vede il poeta scendere le scale insieme alla moglie, ormai quasi cieca, dandole il braccio per guidarla. Questo gesto, abituale per l’io lirico, diventa l’immagine-simbolo della vita passata

insieme, come sottolineato dalla metafora del “viaggio” (v 3); tuttavia, dopo la scomparsa di Drusilla, questo ricordo assume una valenza diversa nell’animo del poeta, che ripensando, nella seconda strofa, a quel milione di scale discese, riesce non solo a rendersi conto dello smarrimento generato dalla sua solitudine, ma anche a realizzare quanto tra i due la guida sia sempre stata la donna, che, nonostante la sua cecità fisica, era in grado di cogliere ciò che si cela dietro l’apparenza del reale.

Il clima di questa lirica è dominato da un forte sentimento di solitudine, generato non solo dalla morte di Drusilla, ma anche dall’assenza per il poeta di una figura che lo conduca attraverso le illusioni della realtà, rivelando alle sue “pupille offuscate” la vera natura di ciò che lo circonda. E’ proprio il clima di profonda tristezza di cui è pervasa la poesia, nonostante la sua brevità, che mette in evidenza l’intensità dell’amore di lui, rimasto inalterato a dispetto della scomparsa della donna amata.

Entrambe le strofe di questo componimento si aprono con l’immagine dei due sposi che scendono insieme “un milione di scale”: la grande quantità dei gradini costituisce, certamente, un’importante iperbole, inserita dal poeta per mettere in risalto la consuetudine di questo gesto di affetto, nonché la valenza quasi rituale che tale gesto ha assunto nella loro vita insieme. L’immagine del braccio che sostiene il coniuge solo fisicamente più fragile trasmette con grande forza la tenerezza ancora impressa nel cuore del poeta. Si può evincere un parallelismo tra il braccio dell’uomo e gli occhi dell’amata, che sostengono, non più fisicamente, essendo “tanto offuscate” (v 11), ma con altrettanto vigore.

Lo stile utilizzato da Montale per tessere l’elogio della moglie in *Ho sceso, dandoti il braccio* è sintomatico di un cambio di prospettiva nella sua poetica, che non è più interessata a termini inediti e preziosi, frutto di un’attenta ricerca formale, ma anzi è consapevole della necessità della poesia di farsi non-poesia. Lo stile è quindi prosastico e usa un linguaggio colloquiale per ricordare la vita coniugale del poeta, di cui si fa simbolo l’allegoria della discesa delle scale e del viaggio della vita. Quest’ultimo, pur essendo stato lungo, al poeta appare breve, come evidenzia l’ossimoro al verso 3

e l'anafora ai versi 1 e 8 ("ho sceso") sottolinea la ripetitività e l'importanza che assume l'azione quotidiana dello scendere insieme le scale.

Nonostante permangano degli elementi poetici piuttosto evidenti, come l'iperbole iniziale ("almeno un milione di scale"), la metafora del "viaggio", il ritmo degli endecasillabi sparsi o la presenza di alcune rime, che, chiudendo le due strofe, contribuiscono a dare musicalità al testo, nel componimento prevale un forte sapore di prosa. Essa si manifesta soprattutto nella sintassi regolare dei versi piani e regolari e nelle scelte lessicali tipiche del linguaggio quotidiano (come "coincidenze" e "prenotazioni" al v 5), che sottolineano efficacemente anche il tono intimo e colloquiale della lirica. Questo spiraglio all'interno della vita quotidiana della coppia è presentato al lettore sotto forma di una conversazione tra i due, piuttosto che un componimento poetico "classico". In questo modo la lirica fa traspirare la continuità del rapporto tra i due e del sentimento provato nonostante uno dei due interlocutori sia venuto a mancare.

E' stato più volte osservato dalla critica come non ci sia niente di particolare in questa storia "normale" di vita coniugale. Infatti, non è tanto la vita insieme dei due, quanto il modo in cui Eugenio, ormai rimasto solo, sopravvissuto a Drusilla, medita e soffre e finalmente capisce ciò che lei significava per lui, il punto di riferimento, la guida, e ciò che gli ha lasciato. Venute a mancare le lenti spessissime della moglie miope, il poeta è perso, ma finalmente capisce l'intensità di quell'amore che non finisce in morte, ma invece continua per sempre. Il componimento *Ho Sceso Dandoti Il Braccio* è stato definito "un inno all'amore eterno e alla bellezza perfetta di due cuori che battono all'unisono. Nonostante la nebbia. Nonostante i dolori. Attraverso la vita e oltre la morte."

PARAGRAFO 2.1: AMORE E MORTE NELLA PRODUZIONE DI EUGENIO MONTALE

Il tema della morte è presente nella poetica dell'autore Eugenio Montale scisso dal tema dell'amore. Per questo in codesta sezione si è deciso di approfondire separatamente la visione dei due temi da parte dell'autore, in modo tale da poi poterne analizzare la valenza nei rari componimenti in cui le due tematiche sono affrontate contemporaneamente.

Nei primi anni della poetica montaliana la morte è prevalentemente legata alla guerra, quindi alla situazione storica che circonda il poeta, e l'amore è del tutto assente come tematica.

Nel secondo capolavoro di Montale, *Le Occasioni*, appare la donna-angelo Clizia, quasi una Beatrice dantesca, e lo stile diventa più aulico e puro, con una metrica tradizionale, fondata sull'endecasillabo, con la quale il poeta lirico si rivolge al "tu" della donna amata. In questa raccolta, al "tu" di un generico interlocutore si sostituisce la presenza delle figure femminili, che vengono cantate solo dopo la loro morte, ma appunto nella loro natura quasi divina, mancando ancora la tematica dell'amore umano che apparirà solo successivamente.

Nel 1971 Montale pubblica il libro di versi *Satura* che comprende le liriche scritte dal 1962 al 1970, diviso in quattro sezioni: qui le tematiche sono varie e compare il motivo della morte della moglie, accanto a quello dell'andare avanti dopo la tragedia dello sconvolgimento di tutti i valori del passato. E' a questo punto che l'amore entra a far parte della poetica dell'autore insieme alla morte, nelle prime due sezioni dell'opera dedicate appunto alla moglie morta. Queste poesie, profonde e commoventi, sono l'espressione più alta della tristezza e della sofferenza dell'amore che rimane dopo la morte. E' un amore "profano" e reale quello di Montale, fatto di episodi banali ed espresso con linguaggio colloquiale, in cui infila prepotentemente figure letterarie auliche in quella che è stata definita la "poesia del contrasto". Attraversando solo pochissime delle sue poesie, troviamo parole come "scale, infilascarpe, cornetto di latta arrugginito, fischio, sgabuzzino e conto del telefono" accanto ad espressioni quasi incomprensibili nella loro elegante ricercatezza come "limo dei neòteroi", a dimostrazione di uno stile che fonde il banale e il solenne.

Uno scorcio nella vita di Montale e Drusilla ci fa notare come sia proprio la morte di lei a sublimare l'amore dell'uomo, che l'ha più volte tradita e fatta soffrire quando era ancora viva, e le descrizioni prosastiche dei suoi difetti fisici danno al lettore la misura di quanto l'amore montaliano sia separato dalla bellezza fisica.

PARAGRAFO 3: SOMIGLIANZE E DISCORDANZE TRA I DUE AMORI SOPRAVVISSUTI.

A più di sei secoli di distanza l'uno dall'altro, Dante Alighieri ed Eugenio Montale dipingono entrambi un'immagine di coppia unita nello spirito e nel corpo attraverso il camminare insieme e l'aiuto reciproco: da una parte Paolo e Francesca, adulteri e peccatori, vanno insieme e sembrano essere così leggeri al soffio del vento [...] Come colombe chiamate dal desiderio amoroso; dall'altra il poeta ligure del novecento e la moglie scendono "almeno un milione di scale" dandosi il braccio ed essendo guida l'uno per l'altra reciprocamente.

Nell'andare ad analizzare i due testi del quinto canto dell' *Inferno* e della poesia *Ho Sceso Dandoti Il Braccio*, si notano alcune evidenti analogie tra le due coppie, nonostante la natura opposta della relazione amorosa. Il rapporto tra Paolo e Francesca non è considerato da Dante un volgare adulterio: nella vicenda narrata il marito di lei, Gianciotto, non viene neanche nominato, bensì indicato giusto una volta in una perifrasi ("*Caina attende chi a vita ci spense*", è destinato a Caina, cioè alla zona del nono cerchio dove vengono puniti i traditori dei parenti, chi ci uccise). La similitudine con la coppia assoluta della lirica Montaliana salta facilmente all'occhio del lettore moderno. Eppure, anche nella visione dantesca di codesto canto, esiste un terzo all'interno della relazione: la storia tra Lancillotto e Ginevra. Nell'intimità della scena di lettura si cela il vizio dell'amore narcisistico. I due amanti, persi nell'immagine incantata dell'amore lussurioso, si chiudono nella loro coppia al contrario di quanto avviene nell'amore coniugale tra Drusilla Tanzi ed Eugenio Montale: un amore quotidiano e composto non solo da grandi passioni ma da piccole cose quali le "coincidenze" e le "prenotazioni" (v5). Questo secondo modo di amare si presenta al lettore come un amore vero e puro, l'immagine della donna amata provoca dolore nel poeta in quanto lui non riesce a trovare pace in assenza di lei. Similmente, nel V Canto dell'*Inferno* l'immagine dell'amato/a crea in Paolo e Francesca del dolore. Questa volta però il dolore non è provocato dall'assenza quanto dall'impossibilità di dimenticare la persona con cui si è commesso il peccato e il peccato stesso. Nella bellissima poesia di Montale la morte dell'amata moglie provoca l'immensa

tristezza del vuoto dopo una vita passata insieme dandosi il braccio sia fisicamente che moralmente, mentre nel canto dantesco la morte di entrambi gli amanti è la tragica conseguenza dell'amore stesso.

Nel parlare di Francesca tutti i verbi sono coniugati al plurale (vv. 127-138), segno allo stesso tempo di complicità, ma anche del dramma di chiudersi in un amore esclusivo; il plurale ossessivamente ripetuto suggerisce la superbia tipica del peccato della lussuria e il tormento nasce dalla consapevolezza che sono negati tanto la salvezza, quanto l'oblio.

Evidentissimo il contrasto con Montale, dove invece si alternano l' "io" e il "tu", due entità diverse umanamente e psicologicamente che restano tuttavia unite dopo la morte di uno dei due. L'amore continua oltre la morte, oltre la separazione fisica, addirittura sembra cementarsi ancor di più di quanto non fosse quando lei era in vita.

La vita insieme di Paolo e Francesca è stata inesistente, ed è la morte ad unirli in un destino comune; Drusilla ed Eugenio, al contrario, hanno vissuto tanti anni insieme, ma per loro la morte apre strade diverse ("è stato breve il nostro lungo viaggio. Il mio dura tuttora"). Nonostante ciò, è proprio la morte ad aver sublimato l'amore stesso, tanto sottovalutato prima della scomparsa di lei, mentre per gli innamorati danteschi ha dato inizio ad un viaggio comune, pur nella consapevolezza di averli portati ad un destino infernale.

CONCLUSIONE

Alla luce delle analisi dei testi e dell'approfondimento critico che è stato necessario per sviluppare questo studio, i temi dell'amore e della morte risultano ancor più fortemente interconnessi e quasi imprescindibili l'uno dall'altro nella letteratura. Pur avendo incentrato la riflessione su come l'amore sopravviva alla morte e quindi in qualche modo vinca su di essa, si sono potuti vedere nel corso del lavoro anche altri aspetti che legano i due temi: per esempio, come l'amore porti alla morte, poiché si viene trucidati a causa di esso, o perché essendo peccaminoso porta al peccato e quindi alla morte spirituale.

A dispetto di tutte le diverse interpretazioni date al significato dell'amore tra Paolo e Francesca nel quinto canto dell'*Inferno* dantesco, sia esso amore reale, o illusorio, adultero e peccaminoso o assoluto, appare innegabile il suo sopravvivere anche lì negli inferi, cioè dopo la morte. Meno controverso il contenuto della lirica *Ho Sceso Dandoti Il Braccio* di Eugenio Montale, laddove il sentimento amoroso che persiste nonostante l'assenza dell'amata pervade ogni verso in maniera chiara ed evidente.

Se questi due amori analizzati nel presente saggio sono agli antipodi come relazione tra gli amanti e come narrazione poetica che gli autori ne fanno, le tematiche di amore e morte qui presenti attraversano tutte le letterature in tutti i tempi in forme tanto diverse. Per esempio, Petrarca narra il suo amore non corrisposto e mai confessato per Laura, con la quale non c'è nessun rapporto, neanche di parole e di sguardi, e che vive semplicemente del poterla vedere, sia pur di nascosto, ("Chiare, fresche e dolci acque dove pose le membra colei che solo a me par donna"). Anche in questo caso, la morte cambia tutto, l'amore viene vissuto in modo completamente diverso dopo la morte: non c'è più la bellezza da guardare, ed il ricordo e il dolore dell'amore perduto ricongiunge a Montale o a Dante, dove la sofferenza deriva dalla perdizione a cui quell'amore ha portato.

Amore e morte sono tra i temi centrali protagonisti di millenni di letteratura mondiale e lo saranno sempre anche nei tempi futuri. Continueranno a cambiare modi e qualità del vivere l'amore, che

sempre resterà però tema fondamentale della vita quotidiana dell'essere umano, insito nella sua natura, come la morte.

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