Georgetown University
Villa Le Balze

Fall Semester 2007

Italian Literature

Modernity and Its Parody: From Verga to Calvino, and Beyond

Prof. Carlo Zei
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This course focuses on particular trends in the development of Italian narrative since the end of 19th century. The emphasis is on the evolution of different genres in twentieth century Italian novel. We will read such prominent writers as Verga, Pirandello, and Buzzati. By placing these authors in the broader context of European culture students will be provided with a critical language appropriate to the reading and analysis of the 'modernist' novel. Furthermore, by reading works by such authors as Svevo and Calvino, and consequently discussing their often humorous and ironic reflections on modernity, students will achieve an understanding of the implications of 'postmodernism' in the Italian literary tradition.

Literary Texts

Giovanni Verga, *The House by the Medlar Tree*

Italo Svevo, *The Confessions of Zeno*

Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

Dino Buzzati, *The Tartar Steppe.*

Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*

Primo Levi, *Survival In Auschwitz*.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Course Reader

M. P. Ginsburg *I Malavoglia and Verga's "Progress"*
Pirandello *The Man with a Flower in His Mouth*
JoAnn Cannon *The Question of the Frame in Pirandello's Metatheatrical trilogy*.
Carlo Zei *Dialogue about Theatre, Literature, and Other Things.*
Thomas F. Staley *James Joyce and Italo Svevo*
Carlo Zei *Why Zeno's Lies are Not Hazardous to Your Health*
Ellen Nerenberg *Tartar Control: Masculinity and impegno in Buzzati's Il deserto dei tartari*
Gregory Lucente, *Lampedusa's Il Gattopardo: Figure and Temporality in an Historical Novel*
Dalya M. Sachs, *The Language of Judgment: Primo Levi's "Se questo è un uomo"*
Carol P. James, *Seriality and Narrativity in Calvino's Le città invisibili*

Meetings: Tuesday 17:15 - 18:45; Thursday 17:15 - 18:45

Requirements: attendance and partecipation to class discussions (25 %), a mid-term Exam (25 %), a Final Exam (25%), and a Research Paper or Presentation (25%).

Office Hours: after class or by appointment.

Calendar:

9 September	**Introduction:** Literature and the representation of reality; The "Questione Meridionale"; The rise and fall of Positivism and its myth of progress; The language of science and the language of literature.
11 September	Italian Poetry and Culture from unification to *Decadentismo* **Reading**: Poems from: "A Selection of Modern Italian Poetry in Translation": Carducci, Pascoli, D'Annunzio. (handouts)
16 September	Italian Poetry and Culture from *Decadentismo* to Futurism **Reading**: Poems from: "A Selection of Modern Italian Poetry in Translation": Corazzini, Gozzani, Marinetti, Palazzaschi (handouts).
18 September	Giovanni Verga and the Italian *Verismo* **Reading**: Giovanni Verga, *I Malavoglia (The House by the Medlar Tree)*
23 September	**Reading**: M. P. Ginsburg *I Malavoglia and Verga's "Progress"* (Reader)
25 September	The breaking of the "fourth wall" in modern theatre: Pirandello **Reading:** Luigi Pirandello, *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (Six Characters in Search of an Author)*
30 September	**Film Screening**: *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (DVD, Broadway Theatre Archive) (1976)]
2 October	"Deconstruction of the Self" on stage; Theatre on Theatre, Films on Films, Metafiction. **Readings**: Pirandello *The Man with a Flower in His Mouth (reader)*, JoAnn Cannon *The Question of the Frame in Pirandello's Metatheatrical trilogy*. (reader), Carlo Zei *Dialogue about Theatre, literature, and other things, between a Character and a Peaceful customer in a Cafè* (reader).
7 October	Literature, Psychoanalysis and Paradoxes: Zeno's lies and his "last cigarettes" **Reading:** Italo Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno* (*The Confessions of Zeno*)
9 October	**Reading**: Thomas F. Staley *James Joyce and Italo Svevo* (reader), Carlo Zei *Why Zeno's Lies are Not Hazardous to Your Health* (reader)
14 October	Using literature to say the unsayable: Buzzati's "Magic Realism". **Reading:** Dino Buzzati, *Il deserto dei Tartari* (*The Tartar Steppe*)
16 October	**Reading:** Ellen Nerenberg *Tartar Control: Masculinity and impegno in Buzzati's Il deserto dei tartari*

21 October	Literature in post-war Italy **Reading**: Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*)
23 October	**Reading:** Gregory Lucente, *Lampedusa's Il Gattopardo: Figure and Temporality in an Historical Novel (reader)*
28 October	**Mid-term Review**
30 October	**Mid-term Examination**

FALL BREAK

11 November	**Film Screening** Luchino Visconti, *Il Gattopardo*
13 November	Primo Levi, Literature and the Shoa **Reading:** Primo Levi, *Se questo è un Uomo (Survival in Auschwitz)*
18 November	**Reading:** Dalya M. Sachs, *The Language of Judgment: Primo Levi's "Se questo è un uomo"*
20 November	**Reading:** Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili* (*Invisible Cities*)
25 November	**Reading:** Carol P. James, *Seriality and Narrativity in Calvino's Le città invisibili* (reader)
27 November	Thanksgiving Holiday: no class
2 December	**Presentations**
4 December	**Review Session**
9 December	**Final Exam, Final Paper Due**