

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ARTS IN PASQUALE DE LUCA: THE PAINTED WORD

If you want to assign a place to Pasquale De Luca in Italian Literature, first you must leave out all his Italian Literature production, so pleasant, from 1900 onwards. This is generally the judgement of the few, who have dealt with him.

Different Opinions you may have about the participation of Pasquale De Luca to the Verismo Movement, a regionalist production that, without doubt, must be included in. When Pasquale De Luca moved to Milan, he had already given the best of himself. Later he will elaborate and improve the two most challenging novels *Alle porte della Felicità* (*At the door of Happiness*) and *Le Ambiziose* (*The ambitious women*), written long before.

It is worth remembering now just this Verismo production, unjustly forgotten, also framing De Luca in the short Neapolitan glimpse of the '80s, with his fervid personality and creative imagination.

Everyone who worked with him and for him, loved and praised him. Lots of great critics and writers, not only Italian but also foreign ones, gave admired judgements of him. We can find the proof of esteem and affection towards Pasquale De Luca in the pages of *A Pasquale De Luca nel suo primo Giubileo Letterario*, where colleagues and friends thought to manifest their affection and their regret at his departure from the direction of the journal *Nature and Art*, that he had brilliantly directed, spreading with it the culture and the good taste in Italian families to launch himself in the journalism with a new review which would have become his favourite creature.

He left a vast legacy, helpful and honest as a novelist, a short story writer, an art critic, a witty presenter of the solemn beauty of visions of Aurunca land and the Italian contemporary life.

It doesn't exist a comprehensive biography about Pasquale De Luca, and as a consequence the research work is not easy to accomplish.

In his first short stories we can read about silent plains, dark and clear nights without moon and stars, customs and traditions of Aurunca land, rituals, festivals and villager folklore, farmers and

herdsmen, romantic love stories and death, revenge and honour tragedies, works of high poetry, worthy of the greatest representatives of our Verist literature.

His first youthful work was *Racconti Silvani*, which in the first edition had a splendid illustration as a cover by the master Domenico Morelli and the preface by the Onorato Fava, a great and already well known friend of Pasquale De Luca. Onorato Fava began the presentation by saying: "When the story is not only limited to the reproduction of the real, but it captures as preference the customs, the habits, the characteristic features of some popular people, then, besides being a work of art, it rises of the height of a civil work.

He had the full affirmation as a realistic novelist, asserting his most complete and faithful physiognomy to the provincial naturalism.

Later he wrote a trilogy in which, faithful to the canons of Naturalism he tried to give a representation of society dividing it into three different levels: popular, bourgeois, aristocratic. The novel *At the gates of Happiness* (1922), full of happiness and sadness, by simple but effective art, relates the whole tragic irony of life and the heart of Naples. The second novel, *The Ambitious Women* (1905), fully represents the petty bourgeois world of our South, seen in its ruthlessness, in his passions and miseries, full of love for intrigue. It was a great success not only in Italy but it was also translated into French and German. The third novel, *The Knight of Malta*, which was announced but not published, should have presented the scenes of the

aristocratic life. He soon began to write in literary journals, especially those Neapolitan, and in the journal "The Small" of Naples, directed by Rocco de Zerbi, demonstrating a strong and versatile mind. He worked as an editorial staff of "The Small", when Arturo Colautti was the director, and after for "The Corriere of Naples". The young Pasquale De Luca turned away from Sessa to

move to Naples, a melting pot of writers, novelists, poets, where dozens of scathing newspapers were born and died in a few months, where the interest for the Arts was very widespread and where new publishing houses and literary magazines were born. In the great metropolis he had the opportunity to show his skills by writing on the papers *Don Marzio* and *The Sting*, where he found help and praise from already known artists and poets. Simultaneously with his publicist career he continued to write short stories, which he published in the collection *Without Sun*. These stories are characterized by a certain melancholy, a clear spy of his internal anguish for the misunderstanding and slander of his fellow citizens who had obliged him to go away from Sessa. As a consequence he moved from Naples to Milan in 1897 where he accepted the direction of "Nature and Art", which he had already collaborated with in the past. He will work there from 1896 to 1910. The magazine, edited by Francesco Vallardi, was a fortnightly illustrated Italian and foreign review of science, literature and arts. It was one of the first attempts of the rising publishing industry to have a national circulation and to be addressed to Italian families, where, in the meantime, thanks to compulsory schools illiteracy decreased. The best Italian signatures collaborated to the magazine: Giosuè Carducci, Edmondo De Amicis, Matilde Serao, Grazia Deledda, Giovanni Verga and Salvatore Di Giacomo. Always in Milan he directed the magazine "Varietas" (founded by Giannino Antona-Traversi), from 1920 to 1928, when the fascist regime suspended its publication; on this last

magazine (1-11-1926), he published his autobiographical novel in serial form: *The Wreck*.

Interpreting the dictates of the fashion of the time, he hid himself under different pseudonyms: The Blue Count (for the first time in n. 10 of 15 August 1886 of "Idea", the magazine printed in pink paper in Naples); then the various newspapers and magazines, (particularly in the journal "Nature and Art", the directory Your fifteen minutes.

The Blue Count); Lino Easter ("The literary journal" n. 16 of April 20, 1889: the magazine, founded in Turin in 1877, directed by Vittorio Bersenzio, had a higher reputation in the Milanese period); A whisperer (in "Don Marzio," explained political newspaper, founded by Eugenio Priests in 1891).

Other articles will still be signed "Aldo Bruno", the name of his son who will collaborate with his father as an appreciated sketch writer signing the most beautiful covers of the elegant and eclectic magazine. About Aldo Bruno, pseudonym of Aldo De Luca, we have got few and fragmentary information, biographical data are unknown, probably born in Naples around 1891 near Port'Alba. During the first ten years he became known as an illustrator and designer. In 1913 he participated to the humor of Bergamo which is documented in the number of 111 "Varietas" magazine in July of the same year wherethey praised the artist's ability who by the persevering and fervent studying, refined more and more his taste, emulating the most celebrated drawers. At the humour exhibition of Bergamo he exhibited for the first time three series of gouaches "in the world of snobs" who were later chosen Emporium, a major exhibition of modern art Italian Institute of Graphic Arts. Surely the innate passion for the art of our De Luca, who in 1913 will give to the prints the book of treasures, art history narrated to young people, will be inevitably transmitted to the son who will also sign several major advertising era like the one of 1918 of Cinzano vermouth in pure Art Deco style.

