Poché Parole

The Italian Cultural Society of Washington D.C.
Preserving and Promoting Italian Culture for All
www.italianculturalsociety.org

ICS EVENTS

Social meetings start at 3:00 PM on the third Sunday of the month, September thru May, at the Friendship Heights Village Center, 4433 South Park Ave., Chevy Chase, MD (See map on back cover)

Sunday, January 19: Pianist Sophia Pileggi and mezzo soprano Madeleine Curtis in concert

Saturday, February 22: Carnevale!!

Sunday, March 16: ICS Member, numismatist Frank Palumbo, will speak on coins of ancient Italy

Movie of the Month at 1:00 PM on January 19: Le Mani sulla Città’, Kids’ Movie at 3:00 PM Pinocchio

Italian Lesson and Conversation on January 19 at 2:00 PM

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

The festivities of this year’s Festa di Natale were overshadowed by the death, just a few days later, of Maria Wilmeth, founder and former director of the ICS Italian Language Program, who was an inspiration to teachers and others well beyond our community. See page 2.

This year’s Festa was attended by over 150 adults and at least 50 children. We put special emphasis on the children this year, with two separate children’s activities, theater and crafts, and a choir recital in Italian by the children from the ICS Italian Language Program, and of course Babbo Natale (Riccardo Cannavo’), La Befana (Sabrina Munao), and the Elves (Lucio and Edvige D’Andrea) handing out presents to the kids. See pictures on page 10.

Of course our star attraction was Lyric-Coloratura Soprano Angela Knight, back by popular demand, singing operatic arias and Christmas carols and two versions of Ave Maria.

We are grateful for all the volunteer help that made the party a success – board members, friends and colleagues, and ladies from Italians in DC, who worked with the kids. Even the potluck food was great this year.

Many of you already know this, but we have announced that vice president Ron Cappelletti after two years of uncompensated service as Acting Director of the Italian Language Program is turning over this responsibility to our new permanent Director, Francesca Casazza. Congratulations Francesca and thank you Ron for what you have done to bring the program to where it is today. See p. 3

On January 19 we will be entertained by Sophia Pileggi, winner of the Luciana Montanari Mendola award for piano performance, along with her fellow Catholic University student Mezzo Soprano Madeleine Curtis, and in February we will celebrate Carnevale, and we invite members of other local Italian organizations to participate.

Arrigo Mongini

Maria Wilmeth

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Da alcuni giorni aveva smesso di alimentarsi. Era pronta ad un’altra avventura. Più volte, durante le nostre chiacchere, dopo l’infarto che le aveva cambiato la qualità di vita, era scocciata. “A che servo?” si lamentava… “non sono più’ buona a nulla”. Quella inattività’ piu’ di ogni altra cosa le pesava. Per capire quanto le costasse l’inoperosita’, occorre passare in rassegna le tappe importanti della sua vita. Alla laurea italiana del dopoguerra, era seguita una laurea in lingua e letteratura francese dalla Sorbona e un dottorato dalla Georgetown University. Era stata coordinatrice delle lingue straniere per la Fairfax County in Virginia, direttrice della scuola Continuing Education presso la USDA, Trustee e Segretaria del Consiglio della Fondazione dell’American University di Roma (e Presidente ad interim per 3 mesi); direttore (per ben 26 anni) del programma di italiano presso la Italian Cultural Society di Washington, DC. Era stata responsabile della creazione dell’Ente Gestore dell’Italian Cultural Society e dell’Ente Gestore di Casa Italiana, insieme ad altri grandi della comunità’ italiana di Washington, DC.

Era coautrice di un libro di testo per le scuole medie “Teaching Foreign Languages” integrato dalla sua “Guida per l’Insegnante”. Tramite l’ultima sua creazione, il CoPILAS, aveva messo insieme una squadra formidabile di “tecnici” della scuola americana che era stata in grado di inserire l’italiano come lingua straniera nel Maryland State Department of Education, aprendo la via ad altre lingue straniere che copiavano la struttura da lei impiantata per l’italiano. Grazie al lavoro di volontariato di Maria Wilmeth e alla sua lungimiranza, un documento speciale intitolato “White Papers” venne accettato dal Maryland State Department of Education. Questo documento permise a coloro che dimostravano di essere in possesso di una laurea italiana, di potere usare questo titolo di studio per insegnare l’italiano presso le scuole secondarie americane. La comunità’ italo-americana le stava molto a cuore con le varie organizzazioni “non profit” che sosteneva tramite l’iscrizione e prestando volontariato ognialvolta si presentasse l’occasione.

Nell’estate del 2008, il Maryland State Department of Education riconoscendone le doti, la nomino’ membro emerito con speciali funzioni. Un titolo che non era mai stato insignito prima di allora ad un italiano o orlando italiano.

Maria Wilmeth aveva il dono di sapere come pianificare e affrontare un “task”. A coloro che la circondavano preoccupati di non avere i fondi necessari per un determinato progetto lei replicava imperterrita che i soldi “non erano un problema… si sarebbero trovati” e quando non si trovavano ce li metteva lei! Non perché’ Maria avesse un pozzo dal quale attingere senza problemi, ma perché “la causa” era giusta e in qualche modo alla fine si sarebbero superati gli ostacoli. Erano generosa fino all’eccesso. Offriva il suo aiuto a tutti senza chiedere ricompensa alcuna. Era sempre pronta ad aiutare e … a perdonare. Perché’ anche Maria non era immune a qualche gelosia immettata. Era grande, ma non era superba. Per lei il successo di un progetto era al di sopra di qualsiasi gratificazione personale. Diceva sempre che le cose erano state fatte non da lei sola, anche se in verita’ Maria, la nostra Maria, aveva donato il 90 % del tempo e del lavoro. Era felice di condividere il successo con gli altri, senza mai avanzare pretese. Non e’ possibile ricordare Maria Wilmeth
senza annoverare le scuole presso le quali oggi si insegna l'italiano. Non e` possibile onorarne la memoria senza riconoscere il contributo di successo da lei lasciato: corsi curricolari d'italiano nelle tre contee nella zona metropolitana con circa 17 licei e molte scuole medie.

Maria G. Wilmeth nacque il 16 giugno del '24 da bambina si trasferi` a Caserta con il padre professore agli istituti superiori. Si era iscritta in medicina, ma quando la seconda guerra mondiale porto` gli Alleati in Italia, Maria, incontro` il futuro marito e lascio` l'Italia e la medicina per trasferirsi negli Stati Uniti prima e poi nei paesi dove la carriera del marito la porto`. Prima New York, poi nel Texas, nel Missouri, dove e` nato il figlio maggiore Eric, e in California prima e dopo nel Giappone dove nascono Deborah e Michelle, infine in Virginia, dove rimase fino al 18 dicembre scorso.

Con la scomparsa di Maria Guerrera Wilmeth si chiude una pagina della storia della comunita` italiana a Washington, DC. La famiglia Wilmeth ha perso il suo punto cardinale. Noi, italiani di Washington, abbiamo perso una paladina insostituibile del nostro patrimonio culturale.

Olga Mancuso

REPORT OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

This is my last communication as Acting Director of the Italian Language Program. The Board of Directors of the ICS has voted to appoint Francesca Casazza as the Director of the ILP beginning in January 2014. Francesca is well-qualified for the job. She is an experienced teacher in the Program and has taught Italian at the U. of Maryland, Montgomery College, and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. She brings international business experience to the task as well. Over the last 5 months Francesca has shown herself to be a decisive and energetic contributor to expanding the program and providing leadership to the teachers. A full article about Francesca will appear in a later issue of Poche Parole.

When Maria Wilmeth became disabled, and later funding dried up and Cesarina Horing passed away, it fell to me as president of the ICS to act as steward of the Program. I believe that along with the cooperation of our wonderful instructors and students we have succeeded in keeping it alive and I have confidence that it has a bright future with Francesca in charge.

Ron Cappelletti

National Gallery of Art:
The Dying Gaul, West Building, Rotunda
Thru March 16, see above picture

Italian Language Tours, West Building, Rotunda, January 7 and 11

Corcoran Gallery of Art: Siamo quell che mangiamo?
Italian and American artists from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, Milan and the Corcoran College of Art and Design.
Thru January 26

Casa Italiana: Feast of La Befana (good children will receive a present) Sunday, January 5, 1 PM, adults invited

Briscola card game January 8, 6:30 PM

Joe Grano memorial, January 19, 6PM

Italian Cultural Institute: Italian Jewish Composers 1914-1945 a musical program, January 27, 6:30 PM, RSVP to be announced www.iicwashington.esteri.it

Piazza Italia: Italian Language meetup group. See website for details and an excellent calendar of Italy-related events. http://www.meetup.com/DClItalian
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WELCOME TO NEW ICS MEMBERS
It is with great pleasure that we welcome those Members who have joined us recently. As we welcome them we hope that they will take advantage of all that the Society has to offer and that they will contribute with their knowledge and expertise to the success of the Society’s mission:
Hilary Boardman, Donna S. Gerdin,
Julie Lorenzen,
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BENVENUTI!
Arrigo Mongini

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Constantino Brumidi (1805-1880) was an Italian-American whose major opuses were the frescoes and decorations of the United States Capitol, a task at which he worked from shortly after his arrival from Italy in 1855 to his death in 1880. His work was so highly regarded that he was called "The Michelangelo of the Capitol."

Brumidi studied art at the Roman Academy of St. Luke. His painting instructor was Antonio Canucci while Canova and Bertel Thorwalden form Denmark taught him sculpture.

Brumidi's first important painting commissions were to fresco parts of the Palazzo Torlonia in Piazza Venezia, Rome, and the Torlonia country villa (where Mussolini was to reside when Prime Minister during the 1930s and 1940s), restoring frescoes in the Vatican Palace (1840), the Quirinale Palace (1846) and painting fifteen oil portrait studies of Popes as models for mosaics for Rome's Church of St. Paul Outside the Walls. In 1849, during Mazzini's Roman Republic, he was a part-time captain of the civic guard, and when the Pope returned to power with the help of French troops, Brumidi was arrested for theft. Sentenced to eighteen years in prison, he was pardoned after less than three months, and in September 1852 immigrated to the United States.

From 1853-55, he painted in Massachusetts, New York, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Mexico City. In late 1854 he was introduced to General Montgomery C. Meigs, the supervising architect in charge of expanding the U.S. Capitol. Brumidi was hired to paint a fresco in the lunette of Meigs' office in the Capitol. The fresco, Calling Cincinnatus From the Plow, so impressed the Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, that Brumidi was put on the payroll for eight dollars a day—to be paid retroactively.

Thus began Brumini's career at the U.S. Capitol. In 1862, during the U.S. Civil War, he proposed to fresco the interior of the Capitol Dome with an Apotheosis of Washington at a cost of forty-thousand dollars in 1863. He prepared the preliminary drawings and fresco cartoons during 1864 and in early 1865, Brumidi started the fresco and finished it by the end of the year.

He had been hired to paint various rooms and corridors in the Capitol. He received other commissions in private homes, the White House (entrance hall: Liberty and Union -1869), and St. Stephen’s Church in New York City. In 1877, Brumidi on the Capitol's payroll, was commissioned to fresco the frieze around the dome’s interior for ten dollars a day. Originally, the proposal called for marble, but because of the high cost, fifty-thousand dollars, the idea was discarded. Brumidi proposed to fresco the frieze in a bas-relief mode, and make it look like sculptured marble. The subjects were to represent in chronological order, starting with the landing of Columbus and proceeding to other significant events in American history.

Brumidi’s intention, as evidenced by his sketches, was to depict the conquest of California as ending a era in American history of a Manifest Destiny. In October 1879, however, while frescoing the eighth scene, William Penn and the Indians, he fell from the scaffold and avoided a gruesome death only by holding on to a ladder’s leg for fifteen minutes until rescued. He was then seventy-four years old and ill. Although cold weather and maladies of old age dogged him,
he returned and worked all day. This, however, was his last day on the scaffold. He continued to work at home on the cartoons and died on February 14, 1880. He was buried at the Glenwood Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Filippo Costaggini (1837-1904), another Italian, continued to paint the freeze. When Costaggini finished painting from Brumidi's cartons, there was still a gap of over thirty-one feet to fresco to complete the circle. While Congress appropriated additional funds, Costaggini's subjects were not approved and when he died in 1904, the gap was still unpainted.

In 1918, American Charles Ayer Whipple, painted panels on the freeze but his work pleased no one and it was scrapped. Finally in 1952, U.S. painter Allyn Cox painted three additional scenes, the last being The Birth of Aviation, completing the job in late 1953.

Luciano Mangiafico is a retired U.S. diplomat. Among many postings, He was U.S. Consul in Milan and Consul General in Palermo.

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2013 Anno Della Cultura Italiana: Teatro alla Scala Academy Orchestra

In conjunction with the Embassy of Italy and the Bracco Foundation, the Teatro alla Scala Academy Orchestra made its first US tour in celebration of “2013-Year of Italian Culture” with a rousing concert of Italian composers featuring music by Nina Rota, Giacomo Puccini, Giuseppe Verdi, Gioacchino Rossini and Gaetano Donizetti at the Strathmore on 4 December. Many Italian organizations were in attendance including the Italian Cultural Society and the Italian Ambassador, Claudio Bisogniero.

The orchestra played with the youthful enthusiasm emitted by its conductor, Daniele Rustioni, whose appearance belied his thirty years. Rustioni's body-language put one in mind of the contortions seen in the Cirque du Soleil. At times he danced, sang, mouthed lyrics, winked, whispered, sighed, laughed, stomped, clapped and even shaped his left hand into a claw as if to pull the music out of each player while pacing them from La Strada to Manon Lescaut, to Macbeth before the intermission. The second half featured soprano, Ludmilla Bauerfeldt and tenor, Jaeyoon Jung, singing arias from Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Lucia di Lammermoor, Elisir d'Amore and many other Verdi favorites. Both singers were worthy of the Metropolitan Opera but Bauerfeldt’s “Parigi o Cara” was sung with the pathos of an actress in full costume. Jung’s pronunciation was clear and he projected with a strength not heard in more experienced tenors.

The lasting impression one will have of the concert may be of the young singers and the even younger musicians, but the star was Rustioni. Far from upstaging the other artists, his direction enhanced their performance. He got a near-perfect sound from the musicians who smiled with him, laughed at his gestures, and visibly enjoyed themselves as much as he did. The audience demanded three encores.

1879 mentre affrescava l’ottava scena, che rappresentava William Penn e gli indiani, cadde dall’impalcatura ed evitò una morte raccapriccianente soltanto perche’ rimase aggredato per quindici minuti ad un piolo di una scala fino a quando fu tratto in salvo. Aveva allora 74 anni, era vecchio e malato eppure, nonostante il freddo e le malattie della tarda età che lo affliggevano, tornò sull’impalcatura il giorno dopo l’incidente e vi lavorò tutto il giorno. Quello tuttavia fu il suo ultimo giorno sull’impalcatura. Continuò a lavorare a casa sui cartoni e morì il 14 febbraio 1880. Fu sepolto nel cimitero di Glenwood a Washington, DC.

Filippo Costaggini (1837-1904), un altro italiano, continuò a dipingere il fregio. Quando Costaggini finì di dipingere usando i cartoni di Brumidi, rimaneva ancora uno spazio di oltre trentun piedi (9,45 m) da affrescare per completare il fregio. Sebbene il Congresso avesse stanziato ulteriori fondi, i canavocci di Costaggini non furono approvati e quando egli morì nel 1904, quello spazio vuoto non era stato ancora dipinto.

Nel 1918 l’ americano Charles Ayer Whipple dipinse dei pannelli sul fregio ma il suo lavoro non piacque a nessuno e venne rimosso. Infine nel 1952 il pittore statunitense Allyn Cox dipinse tre ulteriori scene completando l’opera a fine 1953; soggetto dell’ultima scena era la Nascita dell’Aviazione.

Luciano Mangiafico e’ un diplomatico americano in pensione. Fu Console a Milano e Console Generale a Palermo.

Antenna Italia
is now on the AMICO website. Get news from Italy and information on Italian and Italian-American events as well as music & commentary in streaming audio. Log on any time at Pino Cicala’s web site www.italianamericancommunications.org
Movie of the Month: “Hands Over the City”

Planet Naples by Joe Onofrietti

Francesco Rosi knows the plight of long suffering Neapolitans. Born there on November 15, 1922, he went on to study law at the University of Naples. Following his long apprenticeship in theatre and radio, Rosi entered the film industry assisting Luchino Visconti on the set of La Terra Trema (1948). A decade later, he debuted as director with La Sfida (1958). Rosi’s next three hit movies I Magliari (1959), Salvatore Giuliano (1961) and Le Mani Sulla Città (1963) earned him international recognition and prestigious awards. The inaugural 2004 issue of CinemaCittà journal was devoted exclusively to Francesco Rosi.

The Italian Cultural Society January film of the month is Hands over the City (1963). Director Francesco Rosi reveals how underhanded his native city of Naples operates. When Bella Vista Construction uses a pile driver to demolish one building, the vibrations collapse an old apartment building next door killing two. Naples City Council orders an investigation. Bella Vista is cleared of charges. City Councilman Da Vita (Carlo Fermariello) suspects bribery by Building Commissioner Edoardo Nottola (Rod Steiger), so De Vita goes to the media. Deeper corruption involving city planners granting Nottola no bid contracts to develop sites for enormous profit is alleged. Frustration mounts as office after municipal office claims that another agency has the information. Nottola counters by going to the Mayor (Vincenzo Metafora), but those displaced by the tragedy lead a movement to vote him out of office. Nottola asks his contacts in Rome to intervene with no success. Nottola uses uniquely Neapolitan backroom methods to forge a new political alliance. Hands over the City won the 1963 Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. In Italian English subtitles

Il Presepe Napoletano

At an evening gathering on December 2 in a classroom at the Italian Cultural Program, Dr. Gherardo Noce Benigni Olivieri gave a bilingual slide presentation of excerpts from his new book, Il presepe napoletano del ’700 e la pittura. La natura morta. His book describes the often overlooked relationship between the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries painting tradition, especially from Naples, and the 18th-century Neapolitan nativity scenes.

The Presepe Napoletano dates back, at least, to the eleventh century. What started off as a depiction of the nativity of Jesus became a representation of Neapolitan life in the eighteenth century and has continued to evolve into the twenty-first century.

Il Presepe no longer represents the cave where Christ was born but gives us a glimpse into the daily life of the Neapolitans themselves. From exquisitely carved terra cotta figures of the holy family to waxed fruit to the clotheslines strung across modern apartment buildings, this marvelous creation is a time capsule into Neapolitan history.

Mr. Noce is a collector and artist who is considered a point of references for Italian and international collectors and lovers of the Neapolitan nativity scenes. He is passionate about Neapolitan nativity scene shepherds from the Eighteenth century and collects them. His library is open to all who wish to visit it. Mr. Noce has published several books on the subject and previously owned an antiques gallery in Rome. He also worked in sales and marketing for several multinationals and has a degree in Political Science from the University La Sapienza of Rome.

Film del Mese: Le Mani sulla Città'

Di Joe Onofrietti


Il film di gennaio della Società di Cultura Italiana è Le Mani sulla Città del 1963. Il regista, Francesco Rosi racconta come l’amministrazione della città di Napoli operasse in modo subdolo e disonesto. La storia comincia con la società di costruzioni Bella Vista, mentre questa società sta abbattendo un edificio le vibrazioni provocano il crollo dell’edificio accanto uccidendo due persone. Il Consiglio Comunale di Napoli ordina un’inchiesta sull’accaduto. La società Bella Vista è ritenuta non colpevole ma il Consigliere Comunale Da Vita (Carlo Fermariello) sospetta un giro di corruzione tra la società di costruzioni e l’Assessore all’Urbanistica Edoardo Nottola (Rod Steiger). Da Vita decide di andare in TV e raccontare tutto. Il giro di corruzione si estende coinvolgendo la Commissione Urbanistica comunale che dichiara di non aver mai dato all’Assessore alcuna autorizzazione per costruire in quel sito e in molti altri siti (permettendogli di guadagnare enormi profitti). All’interno dell’amministrazione comunale tutti cercano di trovare queste autorizzazioni e tutti gli uffici insinuano altri uffici di avere i documenti. Nottola si rivolge al Sindaco (Vincenzo Metafora), ma questi risponde non poterlo aiutare perché la tragedia ha causato un grande polverone e ha creato un movimento per chiedere le sue dimissioni. Nottola si rivolge anche ai suoi potenti amici politici di Roma ma senza risultato. L’Assessore allora riesce a mettere insieme una nuova alleanza politica utilizzando i tipici metodi napoletani sottobanco… Le Mani sulla Città ha vinto il Leone d’Oro al Festival del Film di Venezia nel 1963. In italiano con sottotitoli in inglese.

Dalla Cucina di Mia Cugina

Stewed tomatoes and beans

3 tbsp oil
Sliced onion and chopped garlic
2 cans stewed tomatoes
2 cans white channeling beans
1-10 oz. pkg. chopped spinach

Saute onion and garlic in oil add tomatoes and cook for 30 minutes. Add two cans of water. Add frozen spinach and cook till spinach is thawed. Add beans and cook 15-20 minutes on low.
Salt and pepper to taste. You may also add cooked white rice according to taste.

La cucina piccola fa la casa grande

A small kitchen makes the house big
Back, Back, Down the Old Ways of Time:
D. H. Lawrence in Italy (Part II)  
by Luciano Mangiafico

In the first part of this story, we left DHL in Taos in the early ’20s in a ranch deeded to DHL’s wife Frieda by their friend Mabel Hagel.

A Lawrence admirer, English aristocratic socialite and painter Dorothy Brett, had joined them in Taos in 1924 and stayed in a small cottage within the ranch’s land, painting and acting as Lawrence’s secretary and typing his manuscripts. She would stay on in Taos until her death. Lawrence thus had three women who admired him and competed for his attention, often jealous of each other: his wife Frieda, Lady Dorothy Brett, and Mabel Sterne Luhan. As we’ll see, these rivalries would out-last their object.

In late November 1925, Lawrence was back in Italy with Frieda, and this time, on the advice of his London publisher, they decided to settle in Spotorno, a coastal town about thirty miles west of Genoa. In Spotorno they rented Villa Bernarda from an officer of the bersaglieri, Captain Angelo Ravagli, who would become Frieda’s lover, her second husband, and the inheritor of the Lawrence estate.

In Spotorno, Lawrence started the plot of Lady Chatterley’s Lover, wrote Sun, and the Virgin and the Gypsy. Traveling around Italy by himself, he also met with Dorothy Brett, back from Taos for a European visit. On May 6, 1926, the Lawrences moved again, this time to Villa Mirenda, a small residence south west of Florence. There, from October 1926 to January 1928, Lawrence wrote Sketches from Etruscan Places, The Escaped Cock, Resurrection, and Apocalypse. There he also wrote the first version of Lady Chatterley’s Lover, the book that would win him his immortality.

The inspiration for the married Lady Chatterley’s affair with Mellors, her husband’s gamekeeper, has long been rumored to have come not from Nottinghamshire, the novel’s setting, but from Spotorno, where Frieda had carried on an open, torrid love affair with their landlord, Captain Ravagli. Alternately, Italian writer Gaetano Saglimbeni claims the “real Mellors” was a Sicilian muleteer of Castelmola (a small town above Taormina), Peppino D’Allora, with whom Frieda had had an affair when Lawrence lived in Taormina in 1920-22. Still another theory is that Lawrence drew his inspiration from the affair Lady Ottoline Morell (a friend and supporter of Lawrence) had with a young stonemason working on her property (she nicknamed him Tiger).

However it came about, the first edition of Lady Chatterley’s Lover was printed privately in Florence in a run of 1000 copies under the sponsorship of bookseller and publisher Pino Orioli, owner of a bookshop in the Lungarno delle Grazie and one of the few who believed in Lawrence’s new book from the beginning. Although pirated copies of Lady Chatterley’s Lover began circulating on the black market quickly, that original Florentine volume was bound in a mulberry-red cover with a black phoenix, the symbol of immortality, printed on the front. Orioli had arranged for a small printing shop to do the job and Lawrence delivered the typeset manuscript to the printer himself. Since the printer neither spoke nor understood English, the proofs had many errors.

Lawrence was honest with the printer and told him exactly what he was printing, giving him the opportunity to decline the job, if doing it would land him in trouble with the law. Lawrence assures us that the older white-moustached man looked at him indifferently and said “Oh! Mah! But we do it every day!”

By now Lawrence was very sick, but he continued to write until in October 1929 he moved to Bandol, France, on the French Riviera. There his doctor advised him that he required urgent treatment, and on February 6, he was admitted to the Ad Astra Sanatorium in Vence. As word spread that he was ailing, many of his friends and admirers visited him, including the Aga Khan, H.G. Wells, and Aldous Huxley and his wife Mary Nys Huxley.

On March 1,1929, Lawrence demanded to be discharged and moved to a residence, Villa Robermond. He died there on March 2, 1930. He was buried in Vence, under an elaborate tombstone.

D.H. Lawrence in Italia (Parte Seconda)

Nella prima parte di questa storia, abbiamo lasciato DHL in Taos, in un ranch donato a Frieda, la moglie di DHL, dalla loro amica Mabel Hagel.

Un’ammiratrice di Lawrence, la pittrice inglese Dorothy Brett, donna mondana e aristocratica, aveva raggiunto Lawrence e Frieda a Taos nel 1924 e alloggiava in un piccolo villino nel ranch, dipingendo e fungendo da segretaria per Lawrence trascrivendone i manoscritti. Sarebbe rimasta a Taos fino alla morte.

Lawrence aveva quindi tre donne che lo ammiravano e facevano a gara per le sue attenzioni, spesso gelose l’una dell’altra: la moglie Frieda, Lady Dorothy Brett e Mabel Sterne Luhan. Come si vedrà, questa rivalità continuera’ anche dopo la morte di Lawrence.

Alla fine di novembre 1925 Lawrence tornò in Italia con Frieda e questa volta, su consiglio del suo editore londinese, decisero di stabilirsi a Spotorno, una città sulla Rivera ligure a circa 30 miglia a ovest di Genova. A Spotorno affittarono Villa Bernarda da un ufficiale dei bersaglieri, il capitano Angelo Ravagli, che sarebbe diventato l’amante di Frieda, il suo secondo marito ed il destinatario dell’eredita’ di Lawrence.


Si è sempre pensato che l’ispirazione per la vicenda di Lady Chatterley, donna maritata, con Mellors, il guardiacaccia del marito, non provenisse dal Nottinghamshire, dove si svolge la storia, ma da Spotorno, dove Frieda aveva apertamente avuto una torrida storia d’amore con il loro padrone di casa, il capitano Ravagli. In un’altra versione, lo scrittore italiano Gaetano Saglimbeni affermava che il ”vero Mellors” fosse un mulattiere siciliano di Castelmola (un piccolo paese sopra Taormina), Peppino D’Allora, con cui Frieda aveva avuto una relazione quando Lawrence viveva a Taormina nel 1920-1922. Ancora un’altra teoria è che Lawrence trasse la sua ispirazione dalla storia che Lady Ottoline Morell (amica e sostenitrice di Lawrence) ebbe con un giovane muratore (da lei soprannominato Tiger) che lavorava nella sua proprietà.

Comunque fosse, la prima edizione di “L’amante di Lady Chatterley” venne stampata privatarmente a Firenze in 1000 copie sotto il patrocinio del libraio ed editore Pino Orioli, proprietario di una libreria sul Lungarno delle Grazie e uno dei pochi che credettero fin dall’inizio nel nuovo libro di Lawrence.

Sebbene copie pirata di “L’amante di Lady Chatterley” cominciarono molto presto a circolare sul mercato nero, il volume originale fiorentino era rilegato con una copertina rosso vermiglio che portava molte presto a circolare sul mercato nero, il volume originale fiorentino era rilegato con una copertina rosso vermiglio che portava molte presto a circolare sul mercato nero, il volume originale fiorentino era rilegato con una copertina rosso vermiglio che portava errori. Orioli aveva disposto che il lavoro venisse fatto in una piccola tipografia e Lawrence consegnò personalmente al tipografo il manoscritto. Poiché il tipografo non parlava né capiva l’inglese, le bozze erano piene di errori.

Lawrence disse onestamente al tipografo ciò che stava stampando, dandogli la possibilità di rifiutare il lavoro se a continuarlo avrebbe potuto metterlo nei guai con la legge. Secondo Lawrence, l’uomo, più anziano di lui, con i baffi bianchi, lo guardò con indifferenza e disse: “Oh! Mah! Ma noi lo facciamo ogni giorno!”

Ormai Lawrence era molto malato ma continuò a scrivere fino a quando, nell’ottobre del 1929 si trasferì a Bandol, in Francia sulla Costa Azzurra. Ivi il medico gli disse che aveva bisogno di cure urgenti e il 6 febbraio Lawrence venne ammesso al sanatorio Ad Astra a Vence. Non appena si sparse la voce che stesse male, molti
boring the mosaic of a phoenix, the symbol Lawrence had adopted as his own.

In May 1931, in one of the eerie parallels that Lawrence the novelist would have appreciated, Frieda invited her lover Ravagli to abandon his family and run away with her — specifically, to Taos, to the Kiowa ranch. In November 1931, they returned to Europe, where Frieda fought Lawrence’s sister and other relatives for the estate of her husband. Apparently, a will Lawrence had written had been lost in all the moves the two had undertaken, and after much litigation, the issue was resolved in Frieda’s favor on the basis of the testimony of John Middletown Murry, who testified that Lawrence had told him he had made a will in favor of Frieda (perhaps not unconnectedly, Murry, after Mansfield’s death in 1923, had also carried on a short but torrid affair with Frieda, and the affair had briefly resumed after Lawrence’s death). In May 1933, Frieda and Ravagli returned to Taos, tore down the old cabin and started building a new home. When in the summer of 1934, they were told that Lawrence’s tomb in Vence was falling in a state of disrepair, Frieda made plans to have the remains exhumed, cremated, and transferred to the New Mexico ranch, where Ravagli was in the meantime building a small memorial chapel.

On March 4, 1935, Lawrence’s remains were exhumed in Vence and brought to Marseilles where they were cremated on March 13. Ravagli then boarded the ship Conte di Savoia bound for New York carrying the urn containing the ashes. On arrival, he ran into problems with U. S. authorities, but finally, helped by famous photographer Alfred Stieglitz, he made it ashore and went on his way to Taos. Many were waiting Ravagli’s arrival by train in Lamy, N.M., and in the confusion the urn was left on the station platform, but the loss was discovered on the way to the ranch and the urn was hastily retrieved.

Once at the ranch, the question of how to treat the ashes led to a dispute between Frieda and Mabel Sterne Luhan and Dorothy Brett. Frieda wanted to bury them in the small Spanish-type chapel built on the property, while Luhan, supported by Brett, felt that the ashes of the famous man were not Frieda’s property but belonged to the world and should perhaps be spread by the wind over the ranch. But Frieda had possession, and fearing that they may be stolen, had them mixed with the concrete being made for the altar slab of the chapel.

Are Lawrence ashes really in the slab of the memorial chapel? According to a French professor at the University of Nice, when French Baron de Hauteville and his sister-in-law Rose Nys de Hauteville (related to Aldous Huxley’s wife) visited Ravagli at the Taos ranch after Frieda’s death, after a bout of drinking, he confided to them that the had dumped Lawrence’s ashes near Villefranche before boarding the ship for New York. After arrival, he had collected the beautiful vase selected by Frieda, and filled it ashes of local provenance, which he then took to Taos.

There is yet another story of the fate of the ashes. The Inn of the Turquoise Bear in Santa Fe was formerly the residence of poet Witter Bynner, a friend of both Frieda and Lawrence. The story goes that somehow Bynner got hold of Lawrence ashes and in order to absorb Lawrence poetic genius, he started to mix one spoonful of ashes with his tea every morning. Whether or not his poetry got better open to doubt, but one of the two current owners of the Inn of the Turquoise Bear is reputed to have said, “D.H. Lawrence’s final resting place may very possibly be at the bottom of the outhouse in my backyard.”

Frieda continued to live in the ranch with Ravagli, hosting many literary icons such as W.H. Auden and Tennessee Williams. In 1950, Ravagli obtained a U.S. divorce from his Italian wife (although it wasn’t valid in Italy) and married Frieda. In 1955, Frieda Ravagli deeded the Taos property to the University of New Mexico to be a cultural center named the D. H. Lawrence Ranch. She died in August 1956 and is buried outside the Lawrence Memorial Chapel. Angelo Ravagli returned to Italy in 1959, a wealthy man from the Lawrence royalties, which skyrocketed when U.S courts lifted the ban on Lady Chatterly’s Lover. Made rich by adultery, he rejoined his wife and children and died at Spotorno in 1976.

Il primo marzo 1929 , Lawrence esigette di venire dimesso e si trasferì in una villa privata, Villa Robermond. Lawrence vi morì il 2 marzo 1930 e fu sepolto a Vence, sotto una lapide elaborata recante il mosaico di una fenice, simbolo che Lawrence aveva adottato per se’.

A maggio del 1931, in uno dei parallelismi inconsueti che Lawrence romanziere avrebbe apprezzato, Frieda invitò il suo amante Ravagli ad abbandonare la sua famiglia ed a fuggire con lei - proprio a Taos al ranch Kiowa. A novembre del 1931, tornarono in Europa, dove Frieda litigò con la sorella di Lawrence ed altri parenti per l'eredita del marito. A quanto pare il testamento che Lawrence aveva scritto era andato perso durante uno dei loro molteplici traslochi. Dopo molte controversie, la questione fu risolta in favore di Frieda sulla base della testimonianza di John Middletown Murry che affermò che Lawrence gli aveva detto di aver fatto testamento a favore di Frieda (forse non e’ del tutto scollegato al fatto che Murry, dopo la morte di Mansfield nel 1923, aveva avuto una breve ma torrida relazione con Frieda, e la vicenda era brevemente ripresa dopo la morte di Lawrence).

Nel mese di maggio 1933 Frieda e Ravagli tornarono a Taos, demolirono la vecchia capanna e iniziarono la costruzione di una nuova casa. Quando nell’estate del 1934 furono informati che la tomba di Lawrence a Vence era in stato di abbandono, Frieda decise di far esumare le spoglie, cremarle e trasferirle al ranch in New Mexico dove nel frattempo Ravagli stava costruendo una piccola cappella commemorativa. Il 4 marzo 1935 i resti di Lawrence furono esumati a Vence e portati a Marsiglia dove vennero cremati il 13 marzo. Quindi Ravagli con l’urna contenente le ceneri, si imbarcò sul Conte di Savoia diretto a New York. Al suo arrivo incorse in problemi con le autorità americane ma alla fine, aiutato dal famoso fotografo Alfred Stieglitz, riuscì a sbarcare e se ne andò a Taos. Erano in molti ad aspettare Ravagli alla stazione di Lamy, NM e nella confusione l’urna fu lasciata sul marciapiede, ma la perdita fu scoperta quando erano sulla strada per il ranch e l’urna fu prontamente recuperata. Arrivati al ranch, la discussione di come trattare le ceneri portò ad una controversia tra Frieda, Mabel Sterne Luhan e Dorothy Brett. Frieda voleva seppellirle nella piccola cappella in stile spagnolo costruita sulla proprietà mentre Luhan, sostenuta da Brett, riteneva che le ceneri del famoso uomo non fossero proprietà di Frieda , ma appartenessero al mondo ed avrebbero dovuto essere sparse dal vento sul ranch. Ma le ceneri le aveva Frieda e, temendo che potessero venir rubate, le aveva mescolate con il calcestruzzo preparato per la lastra dell’altare della cappella. Le ceneri di Lawrence si trovano veramente nella soletta della cappella commemorativa? Secondo un professore francese presso l’Università di Nizza, quando il barone francese de Hauteville e sua cognata Rose Nys de Hauteville (parente della moglie di Aldous Huxley) visitarono Ravagli al ranch di Taos dopo la morte di Frieda, dopo un’abbandonata bevuta lui confidò loro di aver buttato le ceneri di Lawrence vicino a Villefranche prima di imbarcarsi sulla nave per New York. Dopo il suo arrivo aveva preso il bel vaso scelto da Frieda e lo riempi di ceneri di provenienza locale che poi portò a Taos.

Esiste un altro racconto sulla sorte delle ceneri. La Locanda Turquoise Bear (L’Orso Turchese) a Santa Fe era stata la residenza del poeta Witter Bynner, un amico di entrambi Frieda e Lawrence. La storia racconta che in qualche modo Bynner era entrato in possesso delle ceneri di Lawrence e al fine di assorbire il suo genio poetico, inizò a mescolare ogni mattina un cucchiaio di ceneri con il suo té. Rimane in dubbio se la sua poesia sia migliorata o meno ma si dice che uno dei due attuali proprietari della Locanda del Turquoise Bear avesse detto: “L’ultima dimora di D.H. Lawrence potrebbe molto probabilmente essere sul fondo della mia latrina in cortile “.

Frieda continuò a vivere sul ranch con Ravagli, ospitando molte personalità famose della letteratura quali W.H. Auden e Tennessee Williams. Made rich by adultery, he rejoined his wife and children and died at Spotorno in 1976.
Luciano Mangiafico was born in Italy and is a retired U.S. diplomat. Among his many foreign postings in several continents, he was U.S. Consul in Milan (Italy), and Consul General in Palermo (Italy), Bucharest (Romania), and Bridgetown (Barbados). This essay is an abridged portion of a book in progress.
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