

The New Philology of Michele Barbi and the Edition of Popular Texts

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Abstract: Michele Barbi (1867 - 1941) can be considered the founder of the new Italian philology, based on a revision of Lachmann's method whose results are entrusted to the critical edition of *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, to the studies on Dante's *Canzoniere* and to the contributions later collected in the volume *The new philology and the edition of our writers from Dante to Manzoni* (1938). Using correspondence with other scholars and theoretical statements, the article investigates the contribution given to the birth of the new philological method from Barbi's interest in popular poetry, which constitutes the second 'horn' of Barbi's studies, alongside Dante's. At first they are taken into consideration the scholar's training at the school of Alessandro D'Ancona (1835-1914), who was also an important scholar of popular literature, as well as of Dante, and was able to initiate a whole generation of his pupils to investigate folklore. After considering the main aspects of Barbi's studies on Dante, we examine, also in connection with the studies of other folklore researchers, the project, to which Barbi's fame as a scholar of popular poetry is linked: that is to say the *Raccolta di canti popolari e melodie* ('Collection of popular songs and melodies'), which remains the largest and most important corpus of Italian popular literature. The *Collection*, the result of gathering and arrangement of the materials carried out over a period of 50 years, was never published by Barbi or by his students, except for a few samples. Third, attention will be paid in the speech to the methods that Barbi used in the collection of songs and to the theoretical problems he faced (how to publish a popular text, the relationship of the text with the music), that are still today the guiding criteria of research on folklore poetry.

Keywords: Barbi, D'Ancona, Popular Song, Philology, Music

1. Introduction

My talk will consider the New philology and the Folkloric literature and will take into consideration the times and forms of Michele Barbi's interest in popular poetry; an interest that constitutes the second 'horn' of his research, alongside the other, better known if not greater, that of Dante. In this bifrontism he clearly counted the training at the school of Alessandro D'Ancona, who nurtured the same double passion, for cultured poetry, on the one hand, and popular poetry, on the other.

2. D'Ancona's School

2.1. The Double Interest

The ambivalence of interests (which can explain many of

the developments of the New philology) D'Ancona also transmitted it to other students besides Barbi, who graduated with D'Ancona, with a thesis on Dante, then published in 1890, *Della fortuna di Dante nel secolo XVI* ['Dante's luck in the 16th century']. Among which, it is worth mentioning, at least, Pio Rajna, the «first intellectual son» [1] of the Pisan master, the great scholar of medieval epic and chivalric poetry and the editor of cantari (*Carduino, Ponzela Gaia*), as well as the editor of *De vulgari eloquentia* (1896). An edition that indeed represented the first rigorous application of Lachmann's method to Italian and Dante philology; even considering that the Berlin code, the capital one, which is added to that of Grenoble and the Trivulziano, will only be discovered later. Called to teach in Milan, at the scientific-literary Academy (and later at the Institute of higher studies in Florence), Rajna, in turn, will have as a student Vincenzo Crescini, the publisher of *Fiorio and Bianciflore*, the oldest cantare dated.

Returning to the D'Ancona school, we must consider, in addition: Francesco Novati, professor of neo-Latin literature in Milan and Palermo, one of the greatest exponents of the historical method (he will, not surprisingly, be one of the directors of the "Historical journal of Italian literature"), appreciated by the master no less than Rajna, and a researcher of popular poetry and, at the same time, author of the essays collected in *Indagini e postille dantesche* ['Dante's Investigations and annotations', 1899], of the volume on *Origins* (1900) published by Vallardi (1900) and editor of *Coluccio Salutati's Correspondence* (1891-1911); and Napoleone Caix, the great dialectologist, who devoted himself to studies of Italian and Romance etymology, and was, also for this reason, a collector of monuments of poetry of the origins, not only Italian. If we want, next to the students, to mention also the close collaborators, and always in the sign of attention to popular traditions - from Francesco D'Ovidio, the scholar of historical grammar and Romance metrics, to Domenico Comparetti, owner of the chair of Greek literature at the University of Pisa, since 1859 -:[2] it will be possible to agree with Carlo Dionisotti that in the Danconian milieu it was concentrated the «great part, and not the most fleeting nor the most sterile, of the Italian Romanists between the two centuries» [3].

2.2. Barbi at the D'Ancona School (*Interpretatio and Emendatio*)

It must also be said that Barbi, compared to the other disciples and collaborators, will then be opposed by D'Ancona, precisely because of his philological rigor, [4] or more exactly - in D'Ancona's opinion - for the pre-eminence given to mechanical solutions to the detriment of the *interpretatio*. In reality, Barbi was always careful to emphasize how philological work was functional to understanding, and should aim, therefore, at the inclusion of the *interpretatio* in the other crucial moment of the philological procedure, that of the *emendatio*. Doing this Barbi was in fact contravening one of the principal, perhaps the greatest of Lachmannian assumptions, because he was always reluctant to mechanical solutions, and instead aimed (as he will make clear in the Introduction to his *La Nuova filologia* ['The New philology']) at the «precise and whole knowledge of the real and spiritual world in which the works of art were born». [5] With a formula that deliberately echoed the Benedetto Croce's one, since Barbi also had to deal with aesthetics of the Neapolitan philosopher; who - it must remember - was the other most authoritative investigator of popular poetry of that time.

In this regard, I will only remember that Croce, especially between 1883 and 1895, was also a collector and editor of popular songs, short stories, proverbs; and extended his investigation to what was then called popular production, in studies such as *The legend of Cola Pesce* (1896) or *Pulcinella and the Neapolitan character in comedy* (1899), which earned him the attention of Giuseppe Pitre, to whom «Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari» ['Archive for the study of popular traditions'] he was called upon to collaborate with essays (*I lazzari*; *Notes on popular literature*, etc.). Croce also

produced studies on Giambattista Basile's *Cunto de li cunti* (1891), including a partial edition and the translation into Italian, and on *The theaters of Naples, from the Renaissance to the end of the Eighteenth century* (1891), as well as on sacred performances and «drammi semipopolari o drammi diventati popolari» ['semi-popular dramas or dramas that have become popular']. However, the interest in popular traditions soon gave way to philosopher's one, that is, to aesthetic criticism. In fact, already in *Two popular songs* (1911) Croce made a profession of disenchantment:

Lessi volumi di fiabe e di canti di ogni parte d'Italia: con fervore giovanile, al quale non tardò a succedere nell'animo mio (come in quelli di non pochi altri) una sorta di fastidio per la insipidezza e perfino artificiosità di quelle cosucce popolari, cui dapprima ci eravamo accostati con la speranza di trovarvi una rivelazione ingegnosa e verginale di poesia. Speranza che si fondava sopra un preconconcetto estetico (la sincerità come popolarità) e sopra un mito (la letteratura, opera di popolo)».

['I read volumes of fairy tales and songs from every part of Italy: with youthful fervor, which was not long in happening in my soul (as in those of not a few others) a sort of annoyance due to the insipidity and even the artificiality of those popular little things, which we first approached with the hope of finding an ingenious and virginal revelation of poetry. sincerity as popularity) and over a myth (literature, the work of the people)'].

Popular poetry had, in fact, for Croce its own psychological and expressive tone, that of elementarity, immediacy, genuineness; which did not mean simplicity, since it was not identified with the poetry of the people, being often the work of literates or semiliterates. For his part, Barbi will stay true to the post-romantic conception, according to which a poem is popular when it is widespread among the people and becomes the patrimony of all, ending up being subjected to a process of continuous transformation and (re)creation. [6]

The mentioned convergence of Barbi with Croce was, let's say, a tactical 'compromise', reminiscent of that of Contini's *Critica degli scartafacci* ['Criticism of the paper sheets'], 1948. More precisely, Barbi wanted to insist on a 'global' evaluation of the literary work in reaction to the contempt manifested in the early Twentieth century towards philology, or rather to the application of the Lachmannian method by modest and restricted brains, who traded the means for the end. In this regard, see the distinction between *filologismo*, *storicismo esagerato* and *buona critica* ['philologism, exaggerated historicism, good criticism'] in the *Introduction* quoted above:

Ma da che era mossa quella piega storico-filologica che avevano preso gli studi se non dal desiderio di una conoscenza precisa e intera del mondo reale e spirituale in cui le opere d'arte erano nate, per intenderle e sentirle nella loro intima natura, nella loro varia ricchezza, nei più minuti particolari, e giudicarle così, non con criteri astratti o per l'impressione che producono creazioni d'altri tempi sulla psicologia di noi uomini moderni, ma nella concretezza della loro vita interiore rivissuta da noi per forza di studio ordinato ed esauriente?

[...] La reazione contro il filologismo e lo storicismo esagerato e di cattiva lega fu giustificata; ma, come sempre nelle reazioni, passò i limiti, e non apprezzò né conservò quanto c'era di buono nel movimento che s'era preso a combattere. Già la nostra generazione reagiva ai suoi maestri che volevano l'edizione critica senza la critica, l'*emendatio* senza l'*interpretatio*, e mirava a uno storicismo totalitario e distingueva benissimo che la vera vita del poeta non era quella esteriore. (p. XXV).

['But from what it was moved that historical-philological turn that the studies had taken, if not from the desire for a precise and complete knowledge of the real and spiritual world in which the works of art were born, to understand and feel them in their intimate nature, in their various richness, in the most minute details; and to judge them thus, not with abstract criteria or for the impression that creations of other times produce on the psychology of us modern men, but in the concreteness of their inner life relived by us by force of an orderly and exhaustive study?]

[...] The reaction against philologism and exaggerated and bad league historicism was justified; but, as always in reactions, it went beyond the limits, and did not appreciate or retain what was good in the movement it had taken to fight. Our generation was already reacting to its masters who wanted the critical edition without criticism, the *emendatio* without the *interpretatio*, and aimed at a totalitarian historicism and distinguished very well that the true life of the poet was not the external one'].

Otherwise, Barbi's intent was aimed at a totalitarian critique, at an edition in which interpretation and philology proceeded together:

Per me l'ideale resta sempre un'edizione ove il testo sia giustificato da una precisa interpretazione e illustrazione. Senza una giusta interpretazione non si può dar neppure un'interpunzione corretta, e la prima edizione del Vaticano 3793 e la stampa di non pochi altri testi potrebbero fornire di ciò esempi da far rimanere a bocca aperta. Dirò di più: anche per opere di cui s'ha la fortuna d'avere l'autografo, o l'edizione approvata dall'autore, la precisa intelligenza del testo è necessaria a voler fare un'edizione che serva ai bisogni dei lettori moderni, e insieme agli studiosi. (pp. XXVII-XXVIII).

['For me, the ideal is always an edition where the text is justified by a precise interpretation and illustration. Without a correct interpretation, not even a correct punctuation can be given, and the first edition of Vatican 3793 and the printing of many other texts could provide examples of this that will leave you speechless. I will say more: even for works of which one is lucky enough to have the autograph, or the edition approved by the author, the precise intelligence of the text is necessary to want to make an edition that serves the needs of modern readers, and together with scholars'].

2.3. D'Ancona's Philology of the Popular Texts

Returning to D'Ancona and its ecdotic procedure, this immediately appears to be of a very different stature

compared to Barbi's. The Danconian philology was still in its infancy, 'artisanal', which did not take much care of the *constitutio textus*. Generally, for the text he relied on an ancient print, to which he attributed more value than manuscripts, while he reserved the main, if not exclusive, interest in the historical framework and in the search for sources. Just see the edition of *La leggenda di S. Albano, prosa inedita del secolo XIV, e La Storia di San Giovanni Boccadoro, secondo due antiche lezioni in ottava rima* ['The legend of S. Albano, unpublished prose of the fourteenth century, and The History of San Giovanni Boccadoro, according to two ancient lessons in octave rhyme', 1865, "Choice of unpublished or rare literary curiosities", nr. LVII]. The rich *Introduction* analyzed the variants of the two legends, or rather of the two versions, prose and octave, of the same legend: from the 'primitive' ones, which are rooted in the Indian and Persian novellistic tradition, to the Byzantine one of San Giovanni Grisostomo, to the numerous versions and reworkings of Spain, France, Germany, up to the modern reinterpretation of *The Monk* by M. G. Lewis. As for the text, D'Ancona limited himself to reproducing, for the prose («certamente scrittura del buon secolo» 'certainly writing of the good century'), the *unicum* of ms. Riccardiano 2734 and, for the verses, to 're-establish' the lesson on the «due più antiche edizioni» ['two oldest editions'].

Also in this regard, must be considered one of the letters he addressed to Aleksandr N. Veselovskij, another great folklore investigator, who due to his training at the school of Fyodor Buslaev (the most authoritative representative of the mythological school in Russia, and the great scholar of the patrimony of the *byline*, the popular epic songs) was in possession of a decidedly more aggressive methodological baggage than that of D'Ancona. In the letter, more precisely, the Pisan master proposed to the young Muscovite (who had come to Italy for a historical research on the Renaissance period) the edition of the *Novella della Figlia del Re di Dacia* ['The story of the daughter of the king of Dacia'], [7] after considering that the story told «altro non era che una magra redazione prosastica della Rappresentazione di Santa Uliva» ['was nothing more than a lean prose redaction of the Representation of Santa Uliva'], published by D'Ancona himself: [8]

Mi sono portato qui in campagna la copia della *Leggenda della figlia del Re di Dacia* per prepararla alla stampa. Come indicai nella *Prefazione* alla S. Uliva, la novella e il dramma concordano fra loro nel contenuto, salvo i nomi e alcuni insignificanti particolari. Intanto, mentre stavo accomodando il testo di questa novella, mi sono ricordato delle aggiunte ed osservazioni che voi mi avete più volte annunziato per la S. Uliva, e delle quali mi avevate promesso di fare un articolo. Ora io avrei da farvi una proposta. Invece d'un articolo di giornale, fate una *Prefazione* alla novella. In questa metterete ciò che avete raccolto, e per di più, alcune cosette ch'io vi comunicherei. E così andando via d'Italia - il che spero sia tardi - avrete non una sola, ma due pubblicazioni fatte in lingua italiana. Se il mio pro-getto non vi dispiace, fatemene un cenno, ed io vi manderò il testo della *Novella*, e scriverò al Nistri a Pisa per sapere se potrebbe por mano alla stampa

del libretto cominciando dalla *Novella*; la *Prefazione* con numerazione araba, si potrebbe comporre poi (*D'Ancona-Veselovskij Correspondance*, lett. undated [but: 1866]) [9].

[‘I brought a copy of the *Legend of the daughter of the King of Dacia* here to the countryside to prepare it for printing. As I indicated in the *Preface* to S. Uliva, the story and the drama agree with each other in content, except for the names and some insignificant details. Meanwhile, while I was arranging the text of this short story, I remembered the additions and observations that you have repeatedly announced to me for S. Uliva, and of which you had promised me to make an article. Now I would have to make you a proposal. Instead of a newspaper article, make a *Preface* to the story. In this you will put what you have collected, and moreover, some things that I would communicate to you. And so on leaving Italy - which I hope is late - you will have not just one, but two publications made in Italian. If you don't mind my project, let me know, and I will send you the text of the *Novella*, and I will write to Nistri in Pisa to find out if he could start printing the little book, starting with the *Novella*; the *Preface* with Arabic numbering could be composed later’].

The student (Barbi) will resent, it was said, the attitude of the teacher (D'Ancona) towards him. Also because he will charge him with more than one responsibility in the 'Messina jail', namely having had to accept the teaching of Italian literature at the University of Messina and, above all, having had to hold it for a good number of years (1901-1912). In this regard, he said to Parodi, lett. November 14, 1906: «1000 km of travel were suspended over my head like a death sentence». The definition of 'jail' belongs to Giovanni Pascoli, the great poet of Decadence, who was also reluctantly forced to teach in Messina, where he met Barbi. Pascoli had arrived there a little earlier, in 1897, on the cathedra of Latin literature, and even he will leave earlier, in 1903, when he managed to return to Pisa. After all, Barbi asked Pascoli for help to be called to Bologna (as evidenced by their letters of the years 1905-1907); and his friend, initially, also tried to favor him on the chair of Stylistics, the one that had been of Severino Ferrari. But then suspicions and rivalries arose, to which both were naturally very inclined: when Pascoli felt attacked, indeed denigrated by academic critics for his Dante volumes, which came out in those years, and began to fear that the appointment of Barbi without competition - allowed an article of the Casati law (1859) - could imply a distrust of him. The Bolognese call therefore passed over, and Barbi was 'saved' with a command at the Crusca Academy (from 1912 to 1922); before being appointed full professor of Italian Literature at the Higher Institute of Magisterium of Florence, from December 16, 1923.

3. Barbi as a Dante Researcher

It has already been said of the importance of Barbi as Dante scholar. That passion was very precocious in him. At the age of twenty-two, in 1889, he was commissioned by the Dante Society to draw up a plan for a critical edition of all Dante's works that could compete with the attempts of

foreign scholars, from Karl Witte to Edward Moore, and to draw up a bibliography reasoned for the Bulletin of the "Dante Society" (which he will direct from 1893). In 1891 it was published the pamphlet *For the text of the Divine Comedy*, in which, taking into account the previous editions, the researcher from Pistoia took an autonomous position in the intricate problem of the critical edition of the poem, proposing the famous choice of the 396 *loci critici* or *selecti* (the so-called "canon") which would have allowed a first classification and the thinning of the vast tradition. Also in 1891 he was assigned the task of the critical edition of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Rhymes*: that of the *Vita Nuova* will be given in 1907, and will immediately be considered a model of the 'New philology'; while he will never give the edition of the *Rhymes*, even if the *Studies on Dante's Canzoniere* (collected in 1915) will form the basis of future advances not only on Dante's texts, but in general on the tradition of ancient Italian lyric poetry. These will be followed by other numerous essays gathered in the two volumes of *Dante's Criticism Problems* (I, 1943: dedicated to the studies of the years 1893-1918; II, 1941: with the studies of the years 1920-1937), aiming at a work of total reconstruction (he said «Ciò che è fuori della coscienza del poeta a noi non può importare» 'What is outside the poet's conscience we cannot import'): from the obscure points of the poet's biography, to the in-depth study of issues in Florentine history, to the chronology of the works, to the interpretation, which involved going into the philosophical cores of the author's thoughts. A third volume, entirely devoted to the fundamental problems for a new commentary on the *Divine Comedy*, published posthumously in 1955, includes articles from the period 1937-1941. In addition, it should be remembered *With Dante and his interpreters* (1941), in which a large series of precise comments on the text of the *Comedy* is collected. Obviously, alongside the precociousness, we should also say about the quality of Barbi's Dante studies, if we think about what Dante's criticism of the time had been and what it was. The nineteenth-century exegesis, that which arose from the commentary on the *Comedy* by Gabriele Rossetti and from the readings of Foscolo, a mystical-esoteric, initiatory-oracular exegesis and, more importantly, with violent actualizations and forcing of the text, still bore fruit with the complex reading of Pascoli: although this was distinct from attenuated forcings and, above all, from an effort of coherence, in the desire to bring Dante's poem back to structural and moral unity, to an organic system of signs and structures based on a precise moral conception. By now the historicist reading had established itself, which tended to reject any interference of the mystical component; and again, and above all, the aesthetic, idealistic criticism was vigorous, which instead rejected the search for sources, intolerant towards the theological and doctrinal superstructure and aiming at tasting only the authentically 'poetic' passages.

4. Barbi as a Folklorist

If, therefore, Dante's interest was precocious, the interest

in popular poetry and literature is equally timely. Here too, it has been said, at the origin there is D'Ancona. Who edited, from 1872, together with Comparetti, a series of «Canti e racconti del popolo italiano» ['Songs and tales of the Italian people']; but, above all, he had laid the foundations for research in this area with *La poesia popolare italiana* ['The Italian popular poetry'], 1878 (reprint 1974), and *Le origini del teatro italiano* ['The origins of Italian theater', 1891]. Moreover, he had come out from the Danconian school also Giovanni Giannini, who was responsible for the collection of *Canti popolari della montagna lucchese* ['Popular songs of the Lucca mountain'], one of the most important «per abbondanza di testi, la prima a concedere la dovuta attenzione alla canzone epico-lirica [...] e con sezioni, alcune assai consistenti, dedicate a generi fino ad allora per lo più negletti: *Canzoni di questua*, *Canti religiosi*, *Canti infantili*, *Bisticci e Indovinelli*» ['for the abundance of lyrics, the first to give due attention to the epic-lyric song [...] and with sections, some very substantial, dedicated to genres hitherto mostly neglected: Begging songs, Religious songs, Childhood songs, Bisticci (i.e. Tongue-twister) and Riddles'] [10]; and certainly another of Barbi's models taken into consideration. Should also be emphasized the "Collection of unpublished or rare ancient Italian writing", started by D'Ancona in 1863, having in view the series of the Commission for the language texts of Bologna; within which the attention to popular poetry gathered in the same years the interest of the most qualified members, from Francesco Selmi to Francesco Zambrini, to Giosue Carducci. They too, like D'Ancona (of which they were correspondents on questions of method and more), were interested in the relationship between 'low' production and 'high' production; what facilitated their collaboration with the Pisan master. Carducci was, moreover, called by the Commission to collaborate in the "Collection" of Ancona, for the edition of *Cantilene and ballads, strambotti and madrigals in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries* (1871); while D'Ancona published several times with the Commission: [11] in addition to the mentioned *Legend of Sant'Albano, unpublished prose of the century XIV, and the history of San Giovanni Boccadoro*, must be remembered: *The legend of Adam and Eve, unpublished text of the fourteenth century*, 1870 («Scelta di curiosità letterarie inedite o rare dei primi tre secoli», vol. CVI); *The story of Ottinello and Giulia*, 1867 («Scelta di curiosità inedite o rare dei primi tre secoli», vol. LXXXIII); *The legend of Shame, texts of the good century in prose and verse, and The legend of Judas old Italian text in prose and old French in verse*, 1869 («Scelta di curiosità inedite o rare dei primi tre secoli», vol. XCIX); *The Legend of Adam and Eve*, 1870 («Scelta di curiosità inedite o rare dei primi tre secoli», vol. CVI); Giovanni Sercambi, *Novelle*, 1871 («Scelta di curiosità inedite o rare dei primi tre secoli», vol. CXIX); (together with Domenico Comparetti) *Ancient vulgar rhymes according to the lesson of the Latin Vatican code 3793*, 1875 («Collezione di opere inedite o rare», 'Collection of unpublished or rare works', vol. 42); *Two farces from the 16th century*, 1872 («Scelta di curiosità

inedite o rare dei primi tre secoli», vol. CLXXXVII).

For his part, Barbi began with studies on Pistoia popular poetry and drama published in the years 1888 and 1889 in the «Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari» by Giuseppe Pitre. Date back to 1888 the essay on the *Maggi della montagna pistoiese* ['Maggi of the Pistoia mountains'], and to 1889 the *Saggio di canti popolari pistoiesi* ['Essay of Pistoia popular songs'], in which he presented a collection of Pistoian popular songs, which he said he was already waiting for. Furthermore, to 1895 (Florence, Carnesecchi) dates back the investigation on *La poesia popolare pistoiese* ('The Popular Pistoiese poetry'), in which some programmatic lines are already fixed. Unlike Pitre, interested in collecting new songs, Barbi proposed, following the model offered by Giannini and, above all, by Costantino Nigra publisher of *Canti Popolari del Piemonte* ['Popular songs of Piemonte'], published in the "Rivista Contemporanea", in the years 1858-1862; therefore in volume, in 1888), an ethnological and comparatistic approach; and set «l'esempio – will say Vittorio Santoli, pupil and continuator of the work of the Barbi folklorist – di un'edizione condotta con le più severe regole filologiche pubblicando di uno stesso canto più versioni e lezioni diverse (come già aveva fatto anche il Nigra), indagandone la storia, disegnando per primo le linee dello svolgimento della poesia popolare nei paesi romanzi» [12] ['the example of an edition conducted with the strictest philological rules by publishing multiple versions and different lessons of the same song (as Nigra had already done), investigating its history, first drawing the lines of the development of popular poetry in the Romance countries']. In particular, Barbi emphasized the completeness of the review, wishing he could.

sostituire a queste raccolte [by Niccolò Tommaseo, Cesare Giusfredi, Atto Tigri, Gherardo Nerucci], per un rispetto o per un altro imperfette, una raccolta fatta con maggior larghezza di criteri e con più continuata pazienza di ricerche per procurarsi tanto le varie lezioni di una stessa canzone, necessarie a ristabilirne, fra le alterazioni dovute alla trasmissione orale, il testo primitivo nelle sue linee essenziali, quanto i dati di fatto che servano a illustrare i canti nella loro origine, nel loro contenuto e nella loro forma, in relazione con quelli delle altre regioni d'Italia e, occorrendo, delle nazioni vicine [13].

['to replace these collections, for one respect or another imperfect, a collection made with greater breadth of criteria and with more continued patience of research to obtain both the various lessons of the same song, necessary to re-establish, among the alterations due to oral transmission, the primitive text in its essential lines, as well as the facts that serve to illustrate the songs in their origin, in their content and in their form, in relation to those of the other regions of Italy and, if necessary, of neighboring nations']

In these words, alongside the historicist need (a priority for D'Ancona), can be seen also the Lachmannian imprint, operating in aiming at the primitive text, at a critical edition, through the rigorous examination of all versions; as he expressed in a letter to Toschi, who had published some

religious songs of the Arezzo area without intervening on the lesson or on the punctuation: «Occorre, negli studi folklorici specialmente, trattare i testi con maggior cura, per dignità degli studi italiani: raccogliere di più, cioè più lezioni del medesimo canto, e mettersi in condizione di fare un'edizione critica come si deve» ['It is necessary, especially in folkloric studies, to treat the texts with greater care, for the dignity of Italian studies: collect more, that is several lessons of the same song, and to put oneself in a position to make a critical edition as it should be'] [14]. The same aim will otherwise be declined as a «ricostruzione della serie cronologica delle forme note» ('reconstruction of the chronological series of known forms') (in the words, again, of V. Santoli) [15]; but it continued to refer to a prejudice (moreover, cohabiting with the awareness of the continuous re-elaboration of folklore) which in the philology of popular texts would be clearly overcome only after Barbi. Above all, for the acquisitions of method, the essay *Per la storia della poesia popolare in Italia* ['For the history of popular poetry in Italy'] appears important, published in the *RAJNA MISCELLANY* of 1911, [16] then proposed again in the collection of popular Italian essays *Poesia popolare italiana. Studi e proposte* ('Italian popular poetry. Studies and proposals', 1939).

Always early, Barbi began his *Raccolta di canti popolari e melodie* ['Collection of popular songs and melodies'], a monumental undertaking, undoubtedly the largest and most important corpus of Italian popular literature, the result of a research and arrangement of materials carried out over a span of 50 years: starting from 1887, when the scholar had begun to personally collect the testimonies from the hands of the peasants of the Pistoia area. The investigation was then extended to the popular poetry of Tuscany, as well as to other regions of Italy, through a dense network of collaborators (students, local scholars, teachers), using a series of forms with questions, written by him and distributed through the didactic departments.

All this can be reconstructed through the correspondence (kept in the library of the Scuola Normale in Pisa, to which a large part of the *Collection* was also assigned by testamentary legacy; a small part is kept in the Forteguerriana Library in Pistoia), [17] with scholars and collaborators, above all Vittorio Santoli (who will give an account of them in the volume *I canti popolari italiani*, within the essay *Nuove questioni di poesia popolare* ['New questions of popular poetry'], Paolo Toschi and Giuseppe Vidossi. To whom the master, taken up by academic and editorial commitments, had finally entrusted the project for the edition of the songs, setting the publication plan himself, in 10 volumes and under his direction. It should also be remembered that starting from the academic year 1938-1939 a seminar for exercises in popular literature was established at the Scuola Normale: it was directed until 1941 by Santoli, was interrupted during the war, and later replaced by a post entrusted to Vidossi, co-director of the "Archivio glottologico" and the "Historical Journal of Italian Literature"; which in the academic year 1949-1950 used material belonging to the Collection for his lessons.

5. Popular Poetry and the New Philology

5.1. Barbi's Methodological Acquisitions

Compared to D'Ancona, therefore, Barbi was also able to give these studies «l'impronta di severità metodologica» ['the imprint of methodological severity'], [18] applying a rigorous formal philology to popular texts. In other words, the popular side also bears the marks of the new philology. In the first place (we heard it), due to the need for an organic work of review, that is to say, a collection of all the variants aimed at determining the life of a song, as well as the area of its diffusion. It is the same principle formulated for art poetry, within which the review was at that time still practiced with distrust; as Barbi himself had been able to ascertain about the task of planning the new Dante edition:

Ricordo quanta resistenza incontrai invece per il criterio più generale che l'edizione dovesse essere ricostruzione critica sul fondamento di tutte le tradizioni, e non riproduzione d'un testo scelto come il migliore e corretto solo degli errori evidenti; e ciò non soltanto per le lezioni di senso, ma anche per il colorito linguistico e gli usi sintattici. [19]

['I remember how much resistance I encountered instead for the more general criterion that the edition should be a critical reconstruction on the basis of all traditions, and not a reproduction of a text chosen as the best and corrected only for obvious errors; and this not only for the lessons of meaning, but also for the linguistic color and the syntactic uses'].

As for the other methodological acquisitions, the following can be considered, in order:

1) The awareness of the oral genesis of popular literature; hence the need to take a census of a mixed tradition, consisting of testimonies arranged on two sides, historical and geographic: that is to say, written, handwritten or printed testimonies, on the one hand; and oral testimonies, the result of a recording of texts directly from the speakers, on the other.

2) The awareness of the individuality of each tradition; as expressed in the *Introduction* to the *New Philology* («ogni testo ha il suo problema critico, ogni problema la sua soluzione, e [...] quindi le edizioni non si fanno su modello e, per così dire, a macchina», 'each text has its critical problem, each problem its solution, and [...] therefore the editions are not made on a model and, so to speak, by machine', p. XI), but already clearly anticipated in the intervention *Come si pubblicano i nostri classici* ['How our classics are published'], which appeared in "Pégaso" (III, 1931, 603-608):

Si riproducono cento volte gli stessi testi, e nessuno si cura di vedere se il problema critico è stato precedentemente ben posto: credo non si pensi neppure che ogni testo ha un suo proprio problema che occorre determinare e risolvere prima di mettersi a prepararlo per la stampa.

['The same texts are reproduced a hundred times, and no one cares to see if the critical problem has been previously well posed: I don't think you even think that each text has its own problem that needs to be determined and solved before getting it ready for the print'].

3) The awareness of the physiological variability, due to continuous contamination and adaptations, of popular songs, and the consequent need to respect the multiple editions of each song:

È veramente curioso osservare come certi canti sotto forme diverse passano e vincono i secoli. Il contrasto della madre e della figlia per la scelta del marito, con rassegna delle varie arti e professioni (o anche la rassegna delle varie cose che sono nell'orto, buone a guarire il male della giovane), rallegrava le brigate studentesche del Medio Evo [...].

Questo fatto della medesima materia che si tramanda, trasforma e rinnova da più secoli dimostra quanto sia lontana dal vero l'opinione di chi considera come forma genuina del canto popolare solo quella che appare nei primi secoli, tanto da rappresentare la poesia popolare come un fiume in cui le acque si siano venute a poco a poco intorbidando per infiltramenti o inquinamenti e scaturigini nuove. Non è la poesia popolare italiana un fiume limpido prima e torbido poi: è un fiume che ci nasconde il suo capo (una letteratura popolare, come una nazione, non si può dire che cominci in un dato momento e da sé), giunge chiaro in terreno italiano, e tale si conserva nel suo corso pur acquistando, e perdendo acque continuamente; né si vede la sua foce. [20]

['It is truly curious to observe how certain songs in different forms pass and overcome the centuries. The contrast of the mother and the daughter for the choice of the husband, with a review of the various arts and professions (or even the review of the various things that are in the garden, good for healing the young woman's illness), cheered up the student brigades of the Middle Ages.

This fact of the same material that has been handed down, transformed and renewed for several centuries demonstrates how far from the truth is the opinion of those who consider as a genuine form of popular song only that which appears in the first centuries, so as to represent popular poetry as a river in which the waters have gradually become turbid due to infiltrations or pollution and new springs. Italian popular poetry is not a clear river first and then turbid: it is a river that hides its head from us (a popular literature, like a nation, cannot be said to begin at a given moment and by itself), comes clear in Italian soil, and this is preserved in its course while constantly acquiring and losing water; nor is its mouth visible.

4) The awareness, right from the start, of the constitutive data of the music, of the accompanying melodies of the text (the final essay of *Poesia popolare italiana* ['Italian popular poetry'], after all, will be titled, *Poesia e musica popolare* ['Poetry and popular music']). Therefore the study of popular poetry was not limited only to content or formal reasons:

Grave danno per lo studio e la valutazione della poesia popolare è stato l'averla sempre considerata disunita dalla melodia. Non esiste poesia propriamente popolare senza canto; e le stesse questioni più filologiche, come la struttura delle strofe, spesso non si risolvono senza tener conto della parte musicale. [21]

['The serious damage to the study and evaluation of popular poetry has been having always considered it

detached from melody. There is no properly popular poetry without song; and the same more philological questions, such as the structure of the stanzas, are often not resolved without taking into account the musical part'].

5.2. Music and Popular Poetry

This essay is from 1934, but the request relating to the recording of the melodies was present since Barbi had begun the work of collection, and in the writings (as well as in the letters) he invited his collaborators to transcribe them whenever possible. But not only that: if the text was in indissoluble union with the melody, the latter also had, as a whole, the dominant role. This is a fact that was later underlined by all the great folklore investigators, from Milman Parry to Albert Lord, to Vittorio Santoli, perhaps Barbi's favorite pupil:

Il predominio della melodia è stato più volte messo in rilievo: chiunque ha sentito cantare canti popolari o li ha raccolti, ha notato come dal ricordo della melodia venga risvegliata la memoria delle parole; come venendo meno quel ricordo il testo verbale sia alterato e la capacità poetica del cantore supplisca alle lacune; come uno stesso testo possa venire adattato a una nuova melodia assumendo una nuova andatura. Naturalmente quel che vale per le parole vale anche per le melodie: anch'esse si mutano; anch'esse sono, spesso, particolarmente all'inizio e alla fine, contaminate; anch'esse accolgono facilmente formule melodiche; anch'esse, adattandosi a nuove circostanze, cambiano la loro andatura. Il predominio della melodia sulla parola è dunque una prima causa della trasformazione del testo di un canto popolare che – non avendo diritti di autore e non essendo normalmente affidato alla tradizione scritta, fatto com'è per essere non letto ma, appunto, cantato – si trasforma e varia in maniera incomparabilmente più profonda e più rapida che non poesia d'arte, anche prima che fossero generalmente diffuse la scrittura e la stampa. [22]

['The predominance of the melody has been stressed several times: anyone who has heard folk songs being sung or has collected them has noticed how the memory of the words is awakened by the memory of the melody; how in the absence of that memory the verbal text is altered and the poetic capacity of the cantor makes up for the gaps; how the same text can be adapted to a new melody taking on a new pace. Of course, what is true for words is also true for melodies: they too change; they too are often contaminated, particularly at the beginning and at the end; they too easily welcome melodic formulas; they too, adapting to new circumstances, change their pace. The predominance of the melody over the word is therefore a primary cause of the transformation of the text of a popular song, which - having no copyright and not normally entrusted to the written tradition, made as it is to be unread but, in fact, sung - is transformed and varies in an incomparably deeper and faster way than art poetry, even before writing and printing were generally widespread'].

There are over 800 melodies accompanying the songs

collected by Barbi and collaborators, for a musical corpus that at the time had very few comparisons for richness; perhaps, for the greater systematicity, as well as for the timeliness, in Italy we can barely mention the case of Alberto Favara, who armed with pencil and pentagram put together his collections of *Canti della terra e del mare di Sicilia* ['Songs of the land and sea of Sicily'] (1907) and *Canti popolari siciliani* ['Sicilian folk songs'] (1921); and, if we want to leave Italy, the case of Bela Bartok, one of the pioneers of ethnomusicology, with his collection, supported by phonograph, of *Canti popolari ungheresi* ['Hungarian folk songs'] (1906). In his essay of 1934, it was Barbi himself who pointed out (p. 150) the two masters who «in recent times» had turned to popular music and were the first to emphasize the importance of melody as a constitutive element of popular song: Francesco Balilla Pratella, with the *Saggio di gridi, canzoni, cori e danze del popolo italiano* ['Essay of cries, songs, choirs and dances of the Italian people'] (1919) and Giulio Fara with *L'anima musicale d'Italia* ['The musical soul of Italy'] (1921).

5.3. Polygenesis, Variety and Reworking of Popular Songs

In the essay for the *Rajna Miscellany* of 1911 Barbi will also take a position on more general issues then debated in the context of popular poetry, which show, moreover, all the difficulty in a puristic context to frame the phenomena and manifestations of 'another' literature; unlike what was already happening in Europe, from the northern areas, to the eastern ones, more precisely Russian, which identified the springs of national tradition in the testimonies of folklore. More in detail, the Pistoiese intervened on the presumed subdivision (supported by D'Ancona and Nigra, among others) of the peninsula into two diffusion areas: one, northern, prerogative (for a presumed Celtic halt) of the epic-lyric song, that is to say narrative poetry, which dealt with historical, fictional and legendary facts, mostly tragic; the other, central-southern, characterized by lyric and monostrophic singing (stornello, villotta, but above all strambotto). Closely related to this was also the problem of the monogenesis or polygenesis (determined by theme equality) of popular songs.

Now, on the basis of the testimonies collected, Barbi was able to demonstrate that the epic-lyric song (to which Nigra had first shifted attention) was not only widespread in the North, but also in the Center-South; and that the various forms of the strambotto (whose origin was assumed to be in Sicily) were anything but similar: since the quadernary scheme prevalent in upper Italy was almost never alternating rhymes, but, generally, in the form ABCC or AABB; and the Romagna strambotto, with the AABBCDD scheme, had a procedure different from the Sicilian octave and, overall, also from the Tuscan respect. For this reason the scholar asked (and concluded):

Or come può conciliarsi tanta diversità di forme colla voluta identità del canto lirico italiano e colla sua provenienza da una sola regione? Non si nega che si riscontrino fra le varie regioni motivi simili, o anche canti

uguali, dovuti a scambi reciproci, e che non vi siano regioni più e regioni meno ricche di canti originali; ma le diversità sono in assai più gran numero, e assai più notevoli, io credo, che non le somiglianze. [23]

['Now, how can so much diversity of forms be reconciled with the desired identity of Italian opera singing and its origin from a single region? It is not denied that there are similar motifs between the various regions, or even the same songs, due to reciprocal exchanges, and that there are no more and less regions rich in original songs; but the differences are far greater in number, and far more remarkable, I believe, than the similarities'].

In this respect, had a particular relevance the investigation carried out on *Scibilia Nobili*, a romantic song that Salvatore Salomone-Marino, the scholar of Sicilian folk traditions, and the founder with Pitre of the «Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari», published in *Leggende popolari siciliane in poesia* ['Sicilian folk legends in poetry'] (1880); and that Barbi resumed having now aimed at identifying the regional variants:

Senza questa indagine preliminare estesa a tutte le parti della penisola, non si potrà determinare quante e quali siano le correnti di poesia che vanno da un capo all'altro di essa, che cosa produca l'una regione e riceva e rielabori l'altra, e quali siano i caratteri speciali della poesia popolare in ciascuna regione. [24]

['Without this preliminary investigation extended to all parts of the peninsula, it will not be possible to determine how many and what are the currents of poetry that go from one end of it to the other, what one region produces and receives and re-elaborates the other, and what are the special characters of popular poetry in each region'].

Of the various editions, the Pistoiese therefore studied the contaminations, the variants, the characteristic modifications of multiple contexts. From which he could reach another general conclusion, which concerns the overcoming of the classicistic prejudice: because the life of a song no longer included only its oldest redactions; certain songs in different forms «passano e vincono i secoli» ['pass and win the centuries'], as in the example of the «contrasto della madre e della figlia per la scelta del marito» ['contrast between mother and daughter in the choice of husband'], which, starting with the students of the Middle Ages, is repeated centuries later. The people therefore - Barbi observed - receive, preserve, pass on the poetry of previous ages, but renewing it:

La poesia popolare è sempre in via: accetta, trasforma, lascia cadere; ci sono forme che si trovano in certi momenti, e non più in certi altri, che si trovano in un luogo e non in un altro; alcune rimangono locali, altre trasmigrano da una regione all'altra, e spesso, dovendo adattarsi ad usi diversi, ricevono naturali modificazioni. Sta al nostro studio riconoscere, fra tanta varietà, le forme vere, notarne i caratteri, le relazioni, la estensione sia nel tempo sia nello spazio. Si può ricercare la forma primitiva di un dato canto, ma non la forma primitiva e genuina della poesia popolare che nel suo complesso va considerata come un essere in

perpetuo stato di trasmutazione. [25]

[‘Popular poetry is always on the way: it accepts, transforms, lets it fall; there are forms that are found in certain moments, and no longer in certain others, which are found in one place and not in another; some remain local, others migrate from one region to another, and often, having to adapt to different uses, receive natural modifications. It is up to our study to recognize, among so much variety, the true forms, to note their characters, relationships, and their extension both in time and in space. The primitive form of a given song can be sought, but not the primitive and genuine form of popular poetry, which as a whole must be considered as a being in a perpetual state of transmutation’].

In the study of folklore singing it will therefore not be possible - we have already heard it - to seek the *primitive form*, but rather to identify the most ancient texts, the contaminations they have undergone, thus verifying their perennial reworking condition. Faced with this phenomenology, Lachmann's method itself could not fail to suffer repercussions. It had to be reformed, made more 'elastic', adapted, ultimately, to the problems unknown to Lachmann: those that Joseph Bédier had highlighted in the tradition of the vulgar texts, medieval and modern; and which were nevertheless typical of the tradition of popular songs, also characterized, and even more so, by the reworking, and by a high, often very high, number of testimonies and editions, as well as by their contamination:

È da notare che per la poesia popolare, anche quando si tratta di varianti di un medesimo canto, le varianti non hanno quella stessa natura e importanza che nei testi letterari. In questi generalmente una sola è la lezione che conta, e le altre devono essere considerate come errori: nel canto popolare invece tutte le varianti (non dico gli errori materiali) hanno il loro valore, in quanto sono effetto della continua elaborazione che il popolo fa del canto che s'è appropriato; son varianti più o meno felici, più o meno importanti, ma tutte servono a dimostrare quanto e come un dato canto sia divenuto popolare. I raccoglitori che hanno escluso dalle loro sillogi i canti già editi in forma press'a poco simile, hanno privato gli studiosi delle migliori prove atte ad attestare la popolarità vera di quei canti e il loro sviluppo in forme diverse. Io invece, per i miei studi sulla poesia popolare, ho sempre preferito avere lezioni diverse d'un medesimo canto che non canti nuovi. [26]

[‘It should be noted that for popular poetry, even when it comes to variants of the same song, the variants do not have the same nature and importance as in literary texts. In these, generally only one lesson counts, and the others must be considered as errors: in the popular song, on the other hand, all the variants (I am not saying material errors) have their value, as they are the effect of the continuous elaboration that the people make of the song that he has appropriated; they are more or less happy variants, more or less important, but all serve to demonstrate how much and how a given song has become popular. Collectors who have excluded from their collections the songs already published in roughly similar form have deprived scholars of the best proofs to attest to the

true popularity of those songs and their development in different forms. On the other hand, for my studies on popular poetry, I have always preferred to have different lessons of the same song that does not have new songs’].

These were unprecedented problems, even for the philologists of Romance literature, for whom it is due to Barbi to have traced, as a true pioneer, the lines of a new methodology. Which, of course, was also thought in defense of the Lachmannian method. After the attacks by Henri Quentin and Joseph Bédier, everyone had become aware of his shortcomings, but not everyone had the tools and experience to understand that «quel metodo s’era sviluppato, arricchito, adattato variamente ai diversi casi, e restava fondamentale nella critica del testo» [‘that method had been developed, enriched, adapted variously to different cases, and remained fundamental in the critique of the text’]. It could not be condemned because it did not respond to «certe particolari necessità» [‘certain particular needs’]; while depriving oneself of it would have meant doing without «d’un mezzo che in qualche caso risponde benissimo anche da solo o è il solo sicuramente applicabile, e in ogni indagine dà aiuti dei quali sarebbe dannosissimo fare a meno» [‘a means that in some cases responds very well even on its own or is the only one that is certainly applicable, and in every investigation it gives aids which it would be very harmful to do without’] [27]. Above all the variability, the peculiar trait of popular poetry, had to lead to caution, to a «cauto e ragionato arbitrio» [‘cautious and reasoned will’], even those who had always kept away from that field of study:

Non si tratta di dar per sicuro quello ch’è probabile, non d’imporre a tutti l’accettazione delle nostre conclusioni; quando allo studioso s’è esposto lo stato delle cose e le ragioni pro e contro una data conclusione, non s’è fatto quello che la scienza consente e impone? Non è più arbitrario scegliere un testo solo e a quello rimettersi con tutta fiducia per tutti i casi, salvo dove esso provi con errori manifesti che anch’esso, se pure in grado minore, rappresenta una tradizione corrotta e può, come ha gli errori manifesti, contenere altre corrotture non così appariscenti, e perfino correzioni arbitrarie? Perché dobbiamo rinunciare a considerare caso per caso, e non ci deve essere permesso di sostituire il nostro cauto e ragionato arbitrio a quello d’un trascrittore del cui arbitrio, o di quello della tradizione che a lui mette capo, non vediamo le ragioni e non sappiamo misurare l’estensione? [28]

[‘It is not a question of assuming what is probable, not of imposing the acceptance of our conclusions on everyone; when the state of things and the reasons for and against a given conclusion have been exposed to the scholar, haven’t we done what science allows and requires? It is no longer arbitrary to choose a single text and to relinquish it with all confidence in all cases, except where it proves with manifest errors that it too, although to a lesser degree, represents a corrupt tradition and can, as it has errors manifest, contain other not so flashy corruptions, and even arbitrary corrections? Because we must renounce to consider case by case, and we must not be allowed to substitute our cautious

and reasoned will for that of a transcriber whose will, or that of the tradition that leads to him, we do not see the reasons and do not know how to measure the extension?"]].

6. Conclusions

Training at the school of Alessandro D'Ancona led to Barbi's double interest in research, for cultured, Dante poetry, on the one hand, and for popular and folkloric poetry, on the other. But not only: because the peculiarity of the tradition of popular poetry, discussed by Barbi with other folklore scholars, such as A. N. Veselovskij, G. Giannini, B. Croce, C. Nigra, P. Toschi, played a decisive role in the reform proposed by him of the Lachmann method. As demonstrated by the important theoretical statements contained in the *Introduction to The New Philology*, Barbi realized the need to make Lachmann's method less mechanical, to adapt it to the specificity of individual cases. This is a lesson that he has matured in contact with the problems of a tradition, that of popular poetry, characterized by polygenesis, variability of the editions and continuous re-elaboration.

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