

ER

EMILIA
ROMAGNA

N.1
2008

PIRATI DEL GUSTO

La pirateria agroalimentare
danneggia i prodotti tipici
dell'Emilia-Romagna

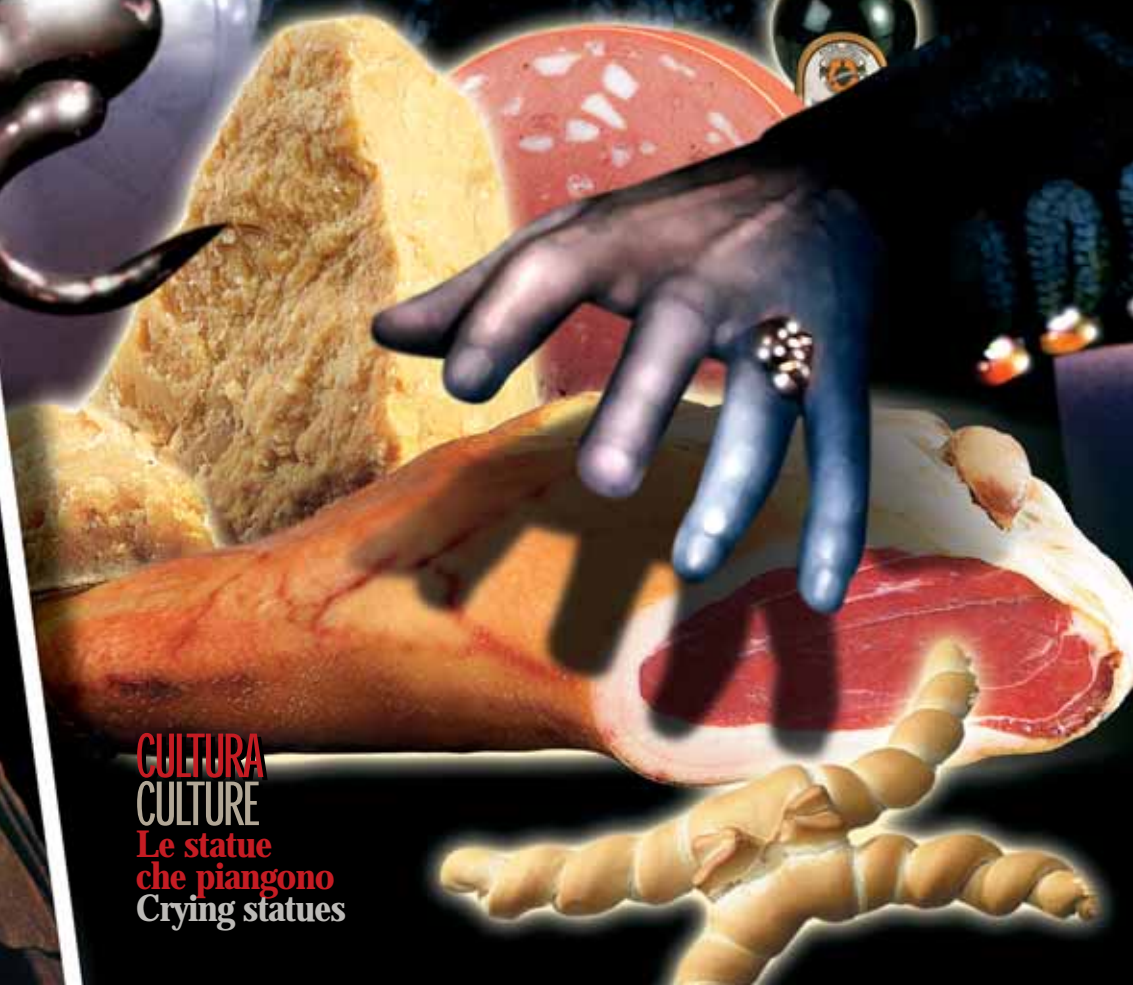
PIRATES OF TASTE

Agricultural
and food piracy
damages the
typical products
of Emilia-
Romagna

ECONOMIA
ECONOMY
Rosse
da podio
Reds
on the podium



CULTURA
CULTURE
Le statue
che piangono
Crying statues



ER

EMILIA ROMAGNA



4

...

...

Roberto Franchini

6

I PIRATI DELLA
TAVOLA

DINNER
TABLE PIRATES

Stefano Vezzani

12

ROSSE
DA PODIO

REDS
ON THE PODIUM

Gaia Levi

14

DISTRETTO DI
LARGHE VEDUTE

A DISTRICT WITH A
BROAD VISION

Thomas Foschini

17

LE STATUE CHE
PIANGONO

THE WEeping
STATUES

Giorgio Savona

20

IN PIAZZA
CON DANTE

ON THE ROAD
WITH DANTE

Renato Bertacchini





Trimestrale d'informazione
a cura dell'Agenzia Informazione
e Ufficio Stampa della Giunta regionale
e della Consulta regionale
per l'Emigrazione dell'Emilia-Romagna
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22

UNO SCATTO IN
BIANCO E NERO
A BLACK AND WHITE
PHOTOGRAPH

29

LA SCOPERTA
DELLE AMERICHE
THE DISCOVERY
OF THE AMERICAS

*Brunetto Salvarani
e Odoardo Semellini*

35

CONVERSAZIONI
CON I VICHINGHI
CONVERSATION
WITH THE VIKINGS

Claudio Bacilieri

38

APE
REGINA
QUEEN
BEEEN

Silvia Gibellini

41

POESIE, DIPINTI
E GRATIACIELI
POEMS, PAINTINGS
AND SKYSCRAPERS

Claudio Bacilieri



Rubriche

16 - 34 - 40

REGIONE &
NOTIZIE
REGION &
NEWS



DINNER TABLE PIRATES

by Stefano Vezzani

They go through supermarket and food shop shelves all over the world, checking the products for sale, the brands used and amounts available. These are the 007s of industrial counterespionage, looking for counterfeits, who hardly have anything in common with James Bond's typical iconography: informers of Italian Consortia manufacturing typical and protected products, they fight (or try to limit) international food piracy by raking through shops and exhibitions in the five continents. More specifically, they carry out monitoring operations on the market, this is one of the most traditional, and yet still efficient, tools to contrast food frauds.

Ancient methods for recent problems: indeed, the phenomenon of counterfeiting top-quality agricultural and food products made in Italy has been gaining momentum and, according to the assessment of CIA (Conferenza Italiana Agricoltori – Italian Farmers' Conference), the country is losing 3 billion Euros every year because of it: on top of the list of the most badly affected regions we find Emilia-Romagna which, with 25 certified products, ranks first nationwide and in the whole of Europe for number and economic value of protected products. These range from Modena and Reggio Emilia traditional balsamic vinegar to central Apennines white beef but, needless to say, the most commonly imitated products are Parmigiano-Reggiano and Parma Ham, among the most-renowned symbols of the quality and refinement of our region. It is impossible to calculate the number of imitations and the extent of losses for manufacturers and their Consortia, one of the main aims of which is protecting and safeguarding the typical nature of these products. What is certain is, however, that "the main damage suffered is not quantitative, but rather qualitative, since it affects the image of a product, especially abroad, where consumers only belong to restricted and highly selected market niches. Customers looking for a top quality product and coming across a substitute may decide never to purchase it again", explains Federico Desimoni, person in charge of Legal Matters and Monitoring of the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma (Parma Ham Consortium).

And yet, contrasting the attacks performed by agricultural and food pirates is not a sim-

INDEX OF THE TRANSLATIONS		
TRADUZIONI: Benedict School , a cura di <i>Filippo Valente</i>		
DINNER TABLE PIRATES	48	by Stefano Vezzani
REDS ON THE PODIUM	48	by Gaia Levi
A DISTRICT WITH A BROAD VISION	49	by Thomas Foschini
ON THE ROAD WITH DANTE	49	by Renato Bertacchini
THE WEEPING STATUES	50	by Giorgio Savona
CONVERSATION WITH THE VIKINGS	50	by Claudio Bacilieri
QUEEN BEE	50	by Silvia Gibellini
POEMS, PAINTINGS AND SKYSCRAPERS	51	by Claudio Bacilieri

ple task: in most cases, counterfeiting exploits gaps in the regulations and the impossibility of defending protected denominations outside the European Union, thus resulting in confusion between DOP and IGP products and false ones, or using disguised "brands". For this reason, shop shelves are teeming with "Ham of the Parma type" or "Parma recipe" or the well-known Parmesan: these are products which, of course, have nothing in common with the real ones manufactured in Emilia-Romagna, except for a broad similarity in their names. "Outside Europe, where the laws make it possible, the only practical way to protect products is to register brands. However, this is not always possible: in some cases states refuse to do so because they deem the name to be excessively general, whereas in other states, although they accept the registration, extremely similar denominations to those registered are allowed". This is the case, for instance, of some Southern American countries, where Regianito and Parmesao, as well as "Parma style ham" have become very popular. All of these are obviously sold in packages bearing the Italian flag, showing the map of Italy or even an enlarged picture of the region Emilia-Romagna. They are devised in order to create confusion so well that even the most careful consumers may make mistakes. Let alone (and here criticalities increase enormously) the difficulties western inspectors have in coming to grips with Arab and eastern alphabets and ideograms, which

conceal a plethora of counterfeited products that we are barely even aware of. Recently, the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma successfully concluded a wide monitoring programme in Japan – third market for exportations as far as the figures are concerned, with 100 thousand hams in 2006 – using a network of local cooperators, mostly belonging to legal offices and endowed with a profound knowledge of brand protection: only in this way is it possible to understand what actually lies inside packages bearing the three colours green-white-red. As a matter of fact, it is often only possible to discover counterfeits by means of local business partners, who report suspicious products: having proved that they are counterfeits, if the brand is registered, it is not difficult to solve the case by having the goods removed from shops. In most cases it is not even necessary to bring the case to court, since the authorities in charge take care of withdrawing the goods before the preliminary hearings. However, there are some noticeable exceptions. In 2002 the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma only concluded one major litigation in Great Britain, where a company had been manufacturing, cutting and selling a counterfeit product, pretending it was Parma, for as many as five years. Or let us mention the case of Parmesan, an almost inescapable translation of "Parmigiano", one of the most widespread names among substitutes, but also one of the most difficult to remove. "If in Germany, where the DOP brand, in any case, applies, there has been a

litigation on the broad nature of this term used as the name of various types of cheese for a long time", says Giorgio Capovani, person in charge of Institutional Services of the Consorzio del Parmigiano-Reggiano. "In the United States, the brand Parmesan has been registered by a massive food company as a generic cheese, thus de facto preventing us from protecting our product". Instead of cheese being produced with the utmost care, on the basis of a close relationship with the local territory and in compliance with the strict norms of the Parmigiano-Reggiano Rules – which only accept the following ingredients: raw milk, natural rennet and salt and a ripening period of at least 12 months, but normally 18 – in the United States the name Parmigiano is therefore connected with an industrially-made product of low quality, that is with an image very different from the one created by the Consorzio. This problem entails a cost of thousands of Euros year in, year out for legal expenses, in an attempt to reassert the supremacy of the brand, and it is also a very widespread one, if it is true that inspectors have counted about one hundred substitutes of this type of cheese all over the world.

"The problem of imitations might partially be reduced by removing the bottleneck of importation" adds Capovani. "As a matter of fact, the quotas established do not always meet the actual requirements or potentials of domestic markets: in the case of Northern America, for instance, importation quotas do not meet more than one tenth of the demand, so this clearly leaves a margin for substitutions and counterfeits".

REDS ON THE PODIUM

by Gaia Levi

Fifty kilometres separate Maranello, cradle of Ferrari, from the Bologna-based company Ducati, located at Borgo Panigale. This distance comes to nothing on the track, where this year these companies located along the Via Emilia won the world championship in both the drivers' and constructors' classifications, at the end of the Formula One and Moto Gp seasons. Same tyres, same sponsors and technical partners for the Italian reds, driven by Scandinavian Raikkonen and ridden by Australian Stoner. But 2007 proved to be an important year not only in the world championships: Ferrari, an ambassador of luxury and technological ex-

cellency made in Italy, celebrated its sixtieth anniversary and is ready to beat "all the records in its history from an economic point of view", according to the president of the Prancing Horse, Luca Cordero di Montezemolo. And if the year 2006 ended with an ordinary management result of plus 183 million Euros (+12.6%), the year which has just finished reached the 230 million Euros threshold, race expenses having been deducted. Sales were not less successful: over 6 thousand cars were sold in 2007, in comparison with an average of 5 thousand 700. No turning around, though: as always, the company of Maranello produces a limited number of vehicles, as the long waiting list proves. Foreign markets took the lion's share. They include 52 countries, especially the USA, Germany and Great Britain, along with Japan, France and Switzerland. Therefore, almost 90% of production, which include a range of four models – two 8-cylinder ones (F430 and F430 Spider) and two 12-cylinder ones (612 Scaglietti and 599 Gtb Fiorano) – sold in 212 outlets worldwide, crossed the border. In addition to victories on the tracks and in fan shops, in 2006 the Maranello group also won the gold medal as best working place in Europe, according to the statistics of the Great Place to Work Institute.

First Moto Gp world title – which has come back to Italy after 34 years – for Ducati, which conquered the drivers', constructors' and team's world championships with Desmosedici number 27. The company, which sold 40 thousand motorbikes in 2007, was given a Nettuno d'oro award from the very hands of Sergio Cofferati, mayor of Bologna: this is a tribute to sports results, but also a sign of thankfulness for successfully integrating in the local territory. Eighteen points and the highest step of the podium also for Supertest World Association, the international association which represents ten of the most important magazines in the motorbike sector worldwide: the best bike of the year 2007 is the latest Superbike produced by Ducati, the 1098 model.

The fact that winning on the tracks is good for your business in the world's markets is confirmed by the results of one of the historical brands of national motorcycling. Along with excellent results, applications for licences of products bearing the Ducati brand, such as glasses, shoes, apparels, have been skyrocketing. Result: in the financial statements, the figures under this entry rose to three and a half million Euros. The story of the growth of this Bologna brand starts from the establishment, promoted by the company itself, of an international community of Ducati lovers. An international reservoir of potential customers and, at the same time, an engine encouraging the planning of new products. Thanks to its own community, Ducati could implement three sports classic models, tailored to the needs of those

who took part in the frequent exchange of opinions on-line.

In other words, transparency is the motto of the Emilian company, which does not deal with common customers, but rather Ducatists and supporters in all parts of the world, ready to buy dreams. This phenomenon is magnified in the Internet in the so-called Desmoblog (which is visited every month by almost 300 thousand persons, who type blog.ducati.com), the only case worldwide in which the protagonist is a motorbike company aiming to create an identity for its products. A brand with a strong image, ceaselessly supported by the performances of its racing bikes in competitions, which has made it possible for a small-size enterprise, in comparison with its competitors – revenues accounted for 304.8 million in 2006 for 1100 employees – to compete, few years after the start of a renewal plan, with the giants of world motorcycling. To pay a tribute to the Motor Valley, MotoGp world champion with Ducati, F1 world champion with Ferrari, Gt world champion with Maserati, in 2008 the reds of Borgo Panigale will run with the symbol of the Emilia-Romagna region on their handlebar.

A DISTRICT WITH A BROAD VISION

by Thomas Foschini

You just need to enter a shop in the centre of Bologna and buy a simple sweat-shirt to realize that in the "Emilian model", the model of production districts, the myriad of small family-run businesses sharing the motto "union is strength", something has changed. Made in Bangladesh, Madagascar, Turkey, and so on. The brand remains Italian, that is true, a pure added value to products whose production has now become standardized.

Textile manufacturers of Carpi are aware of this: they have been living through a deep crisis for years, some of them have been expelled from the market once and for all, some others were born again, also because of an aggressive marketing policy. The same holds true for shoemakers from Romagna, who bet on luxury and design in order to avoid going bankrupt, in other words, on what the Chinese are not able to do (yet). Or think of the biomedical sector and agricultural machines: competitors beaten by means of innovation, science-fiction becoming applied science in as short a time as a decade.

Renewed and redefined districts, to the extent that today, as shown in a research study by the European Commission on industrial districts, bearing the title Innovation clusters: a statistical analysis and overview of current policy support – Emilia-Romagna ranks

fifth in the list of the best-performing regions of Europe, with reference to the "strength of its districts", an indicator which takes into consideration both figures and relevance. On this side of the Alps, only Lombardy and Veneto rank better and, considering the whole of Europe (from a geographical point of view), Istanbul and Catalonia.

The first and foremost problem of Italian districts is their low specialization. According to statistics – prepared by the Merit research centre in Maastricht – only 8% of European districts earn "three stars", that is qualifies as "hyper-specialized". Emilia-Romagna and Veneto rank better than Lombardy, from this point of view, but worse than some other European regions like Stuttgart, and even some Turkish and Romanian ones. One of the top-quality areas in the region is the technological sector: here, Emilia-Romagna ranks second in the absolute list, after Stuttgart.

The fact that our entrepreneurs have not just stood and waited since the time when the globalization vehemently entered the regional scenario in the early Nineties is proven by single excellent cases (Ducati or Ferrari), but not only that: the advanced mechanics sector of Reggio continues to make the Germans and the Japanese bite the dust, despite the tiny size of enterprises (ridiculous, if compared with the others) and the management of innovation, often based on good ideas of single people rather than a common system in the whole of the Country. The food sector, machine tools, the building sector, processing ores are industrial sectors which, along the Via Emilia, are resisting and renewing themselves: many companies have established premises and marketing structures abroad without delocalizing their core business and have opened up to the stock market – as many as 25% of small- and medium-size enterprises quoted on the stock market at the beginning of 2007 are located in Emilia-Romagna – prudently, without resorting to speculation.

Will it work? Can we say that the crisis of Emilia-Romagna districts – which according to some experts have evolved into "production lines", whereas according to others they have clustered around some "leading" companies – is over? "Emilia-Romagna has grown and continues to grow at an acceptable and sustainable pace – remarks Alessandro Aronica, editor of the research study Emilia-Romagna, come cambia un modello ("Emilia-Romagna, how a model changes"), recently published by Donzelli – it is, indeed, an economy almost constantly on alert, which can count on few self-protection measures, especially in unfavourable phases at national level". From oil to the high price of the Euro, just to mention the most noticeable cases. "For this reason – Aronica goes on – the capacity to compete, that is to reposition oneself, to constantly improve what you do and change the markets is of para-

mount importance". And in Emilia-Romagna – states the Unione Regionale delle Camere di Commercio (Regional Union of Chambers of Commerce) – there are still less than a dozen clearly identifiable industrial districts, in addition to the engineering one ("as a matter of fact, the whole of Emilia can be considered to be a large multi-sector engineering district").

To be successful playing with the current rules of the game is not an easy task, and yet it is made simpler, along the Via Emilia, by an enviable cultural and social background: also in 2007 the Centro di Ricerca e Documentazione Luigi Einaudi declared Emilia-Romagna to be the queen of Italy as regards "economic freedom", followed by Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Once again, a cooperation model, social cohesion, a low relative poverty index and a high employment rate wins. Once again, the Emilian model wins. After being modified and adjusted, that is true. Changed, and yet still the same.

THE WEEPING STATUES

by Giorgio Savona

Mary, Jesus's mother, Magdalena, Mary Salome, Mary of Cleofa, John the Evangelist, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea cluster around Christ's dead body. The statues are made of terracotta and give life to a tender representation of the pietà, which was extremely widespread in the Po valley and in Emilia-Romagna, starting from the 1480s.

The artistic and historic value of these holy statues, called Compianti (Mourning scenes) are the topic of the film Il pianto della statua (Crying statues), produced by Betty Wrong and the Information Agency and Press Office of the Region Emilia-Romagna, directed by Elisabetta Sgarbi. Presented at the sixtieth festival of Locarno, the film stems from a desire to see, through a cine camera, that "sacred theatre" model which gives life to real masterpieces of humanistic-renaissance art.

Carved in wood or modelled in terracotta, the Compianti spread in the main European countries, particularly in France, but gained special momentum in the lands of Emilia-Romagna between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. After being considered for a long time as samples of "minor art", today, thanks to the rediscovery of their authors, masters like Guido Mazzoni, Niccolò dell'Arca and Antonio Begarelli, they are being re-assessed, due to their strong emotional impact and the clear realism of their subjects which express suffering.

The film deals with five important works: three by Guido Mazzoni, located at Busseto in the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, in

Ferrara in the Del Gesù church and in Modena in the church of San Giovanni Battista; one by Niccolò dell'Arca, the most famous one, located in Bologna in the church of Santa Maria della Vita; and one by Antonio Begarelli, located in the church of San Francesco in Modena.

Lit by the cine camera, in the film these statues become "water statues", symbols of a cinema which lets liquidity emerge to express human pain, which constantly renews itself, which is eternal. A holy representation which turns into cinema and literature, thanks to the texts of international film directors, such as Academy Award winner Michael Cimino and George Romero and writers such as Tahar Ben Jelloun, Diego Marani, Lucrezia Lerro, Pino Roveredo, Antonio Scurati and Vittorio Sgarbi.

Anna Bonaiuto's and Toni Servillo's voices give rise to a song of love and pain of which these texts consist, passing on to watchers the original experience which inspired and worried the artists who made the *Compianti*. Music by Franco Battiato, Roberto Cacciapaglia, Antony & the Johnsons.

ON THE ROAD WITH DANTE

by Renato Bertacchini

At Cervia, in the winter of 1956, between its large square and the colours of the sea, between the green pine grove, the ancient saltworks and the warehouse, two passionate and sensitive "guys", Walter della Monica from Romagna and Toni Comello from Milan, devised and implemented the first poetic Trebbo. By using the word *tréb*, which is typical of Romagna and means "meeting, gathering, party" (far *tréb* referred to meetings of farmers, in the evening, after work), the two "commercial travellers of poetry" referred to an autonomous, native, popular cultural project: bringing common people into direct contact with the Italian poetic patrimony; removing yesterday's and today's texts and authors from academic shelves and spreading them in streets, church squares and in schools, in town districts as well as the most remote and isolated towns. The fifty years of the Trebbo – 1956-2006 – have been reconstructed, with a precise documentation and a marvellous re-evocation, by Natascia Ferrini, an expert of Cultural Heritage, in the booklet called *Cinquant'anni fa il primo Trebbo Poetico della poesia italiana di ogni tempo* ("Fifty years ago the first poetic Trebbo ever in Italian poetry"), published by the association by the name of Amici dell'Arte Aldo Ascione at Cervia, 2007, 65 pages).

The census of the 161 trebbi starts in Cervia, a place of great literary merits for giving its honorary citizenship to three poets, namely Grazia Deledda, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Mario

Luzi. And from the heart of Cervia (not just a land of pleasure-seekers, due to ballroom dancing, *piadina* – unleavened flat bread – and Sangiovese wine), it spread to other regions of Italy, from Gradara to Trieste, as well as abroad, from Stuttgart to Rotterdam. Having started with Dante and Cavalcanti, the following authors have been paid particular attention: Leopardi and Pascoli, Quasimodo and Saba, Valery and Lorca.

The booklet, including a sensible interview-memoir of Della Monica, is full of itineraries and stories, warm emotions and precise retrospectives. At Tricarico, hometown of poet/trade union member Rocco Scotellaro, the Trebbo was announced by the town crier, who even blew a trumpet. Long and sincere applause when Dante's cantos were read and at the beginning of Pascoli's Romagna. A deep feeling was shared by the audience when Gridasti soffoco by Ungaretti and Lamento by García Lorca were read.

A final, peculiar Trebbo, both sceptical and non-sceptical, was Roberto Benigni's in Ravenna on 22nd July 2007. Political satire, commotion and coarse jokes. He went down to the bottom of the "holy poem", to Francesca's canto as a personal tribute to Romagna and passion, since Benigni's wife, his partner in both his art and life, is from Cesena.

CONVERSATION WITH THE VIKINGS

by Claudio Bacilieri

Gianfranco Contri was thirty years old when, one night in August 1982, he landed at the Fær Øer islands, an autonomous territory of Denmark: about twenty islands scattered between Iceland and Norway, over 300 kilometres north of Scotland. "The first time I saw the islands from the ship, during one of those late summer's nights which are neither completely dark nor clear, I fell in love with them. The lights of the villages emerged from the partial darkness and I was surrounded with an unreal quiet".

Gianfranco Contri defines himself as a "lover of the north". Like many sailors, adventurers, lonely men, he looked for his Ultima Thule and found it here, on the Fær Øer. He loved them, these "sheep islands" – this is the meaning of their name – so much that he remained here for ten years, learnt the language and wrote the first Italian-Faroese dictionary ever.

In 2005 Contro moved back to the village where he was born, Riolutato, in the Frignano area, in the district of Modena. "Having grown up in a mountainside little town was useful to adjust to the deep north", he remarked. "Although social relationships are different in comparison with Italy, you can say that what the Fær Øer share with

marginal places like the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines is an inner simplicity, lack of interest for excesses, a capacity to attribute the right extent to everything".

The harsh beauty of the north penetrated into Contri's blood at a very early stage. At first in his fantasy, then during his training trips. When he departed from the Scottish port of Skrabster heading towards the Fær Øer, he had already been in England for three years and made several trips to Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Lapland. What drove him even further north was the tale of a Swedish man he had accidentally met.

Gianfranco decided to stay. He found a job in a factory, in the shipyards, and tried to learn the Faroese language. This little language, which has survived thanks to its isolation, fascinates him. It is a language of Germanic origin, halfway between Icelandic and Norwegian. The persistence of Celtic-Gaelic terms in modern Faroese can be explained with the origin of the earliest inhabitants of the British Isles, or perhaps with the fact that the Vikings, before colonizing the Fær Øer between the 9th and the 10th centuries, came into contact with Celtic populations. A document of 1298, the so-called "letter to sheep", proves the existence of a local language different from old Norwegian, but destined to be replaced by Danish as the written language, as the Protestant Reform increases the local dependence from Copenhagen.

This is the town where Gianfranco Contri returned in order to give momentum to his research, after remaining in the Fær Øer continuously for two years, during which he devised an Italian-Faroese phrasebook. From the Danish Ministry of Culture and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs he got a scholarship for the University of Copenhagen in order to carry on with his research, since most of the documents concerning those islands are written in Danish. At the Royal Library, he started working on his graduation thesis on Faroese writer He?in Brú.

Contri's interest for Faroese, which only became the official language of these islands in 1948, when they achieved autonomy from Denmark, seems to be the same that English writer John Berger pays to his characters in *Once in Europe*: farmers and highlanders who do their utmost to contrast the flattening brought about by modernity. "In this marginal language, spoken by 50-60 thousand people – Contri explains – more than one hundred books are published every year". All Faroese people know Danish and English, but they do not intend to give up their language, which has survived thanks to their oral traditions, through legends and sagas passed on generation to generation, during winter evenings spent by the fireplace. These were the Vikings' islands. And there is still a place in Tórshavn – the capital which was named after the Viking god Thor

(havn means "port") – in which the Viking leaders used to meet. It is called Tinganes (from ting, assembly, and nes, rocky strip) and, according to the Faroese, it is the earliest Parliament of Europe.

QUEEN BEE

by Silvia Gibellini

Protected by a net mask, Manlio Pugliese approaches the beehives, sprays some smoke in order to calm the bees, with a little metal lever he takes out the wooden frames where honey is "stored". We are in Novellara, in the Emilian plain, at a distance of 15 kilometres from the river Po, and Manlio is one of the ten thousand beekeepers of Emilia-Romagna, besides being councillor of Conapi, the Consortium of Beekeepers and Organic Producers.

"For me the world of bees is first of all a childhood memory, the memory of my father's work around beehives, in our house garden. The smoking machine in the attic, wax bread, some frames piled up...". This is how Manlio, a retired Latin and Italian teacher, describes his first contact with beekeeping, an activity he has been practising with passion for over 28 years. Having removed them from the beehive, the frames are brought to the laboratory, where the wax enclosing the honey is removed with a knife and then they are introduced into a centrifugation in order to extract the product.

With over 106 thousand beehives, a yearly production of approximately two thousand tons of honey, Emilia-Romagna is one of the Italian regions in which high-quality beekeeping is most developed. It is second, for the sake of precision, only to Lombardy and better than Piedmont, which has, however, almost two thousand more beehives. It is no coincidence that the National Beekeeping Institute, the National Observatory on Honey Production and Market and the Conapi are located along the Via Emilia. Beekeeping is practiced all over the national territory, including hillsides and mountainsides, where refined, high-quality varieties of honey are produced. And an increasing number of beekeepers produce all varieties of honey in an organic way.

"Making organic honey – explains Pugliese – requires a major effort, since we must use neither antibiotics nor chemical molecules in order to contrast diseases in bees; in addition to this, it is necessary to look for sites lying far from possible sources of pollution in order to place the beehives there". Therefore, in order to foster a development and an improvement of beehive products on the whole Emilia-Romagna territory, the Regional Legislative Assembly has allocated over 2.1 million Euros for the years 2008-2010 for technical support, professional training and research to defeat varroasis, a

bee hive parasite. An important support for a delicate sector, regardless of the difficulties related to an organic production. As a matter of fact, bees are very sensitive to the quality of the environment where they live: suffice it to say that the 2007 honey production in Emilia-Romagna was around 1,300 tons, that is 30% less than the potential production, equal to two thousand tons. A drastic fall which is due, besides the unfavourable weather conditions, to the serious damage caused by insecticide treatments carried out on vineyards and cultivations, which entailed phenomena of bee depopulation.

The most appreciated type of honey, due to its tender flavour, is *millefiori*, produced on the highest mountains. Rich of mineral salts, it exerts a reconstituting action and is excellent at detoxifying the liver. But in the whole of Emilia-Romagna various types of honey are produced, depending on the blossoming, mostly of the "integral virgin" type, that is the purest, extracted from a centrifugation without performing any thermal treatments over 40 degrees centigrade. Some of the best-known are the chestnut one, with a dark colour and bitterish flavour, the acacia one, which is naturally fluid, and the alfalfa one.

POEMS, PAINTINGS AND SKYSCRAPERS

by Claudio Bacilieri

Among the crowds of immigrants that used to land at Ellis Island at the beginning of last century, there were also some poets. Three of them came from Emilia: pen poets, like Emanuel Carnevali, and brush poets, like Athos Casarini and Martino Jasoni. When in 1929-30 Federico García Lorca wrote "Poet in New York", celebrating the "sleepless city", our three unfortunate heroes had already concluded their American experience.

In 1906, when Martino Jasoni landed there, New York was a metropolis with three million inhabitants, on the streets of which 14 thousand cars roamed, the underground was already in existence and higher and higher skyscrapers were being built in order to take care of its increasing population. Four years later, Guglielmo Marconi's inventions would make it possible for passengers of the Avon steamer, navigating along the coast, to listen to Caruso's voice live from a Broadway theatre.

Electrical, exciting New York welcomed a five-year-old child and his father, who had to sell the only cow he had in the stables of Corchia, a village made of stone houses in the Apennines of Parma in order to buy two third-class ship tickets. Martino bore the name of the patron saint of his village; looked after by a neighbour while his parents worked in a hotel, he fought loneliness by drawing some signs on the wall with a

piece of chalk and copying the pictures of satirical American magazines. Young Martino attended a public school and, at the age of fifteen, in 1916, started working as an engraving apprentice in a print shop, then as an errand boy in a printers and in a photographic laboratory. His passion for art prompted him to attend evening courses at the New York High School and, in 1919, he started attending, once again in the evening, the Art Students League, a non-conformist school. In this way, almost without knowing it, this young man from Emilia found himself in the very heart of the most stimulating American cultural life, some of his classmates attending Sloan's lectures being Walt Disney, who would give life to Mickey Mouse in 1928, and Otto Soglow, an extraordinary caricaturist and founder of the New Yorker.

From 1921 Jasoni exhibited his oil works and aquarelles to the yearly exhibitions of the Society of Independent Artists, and in 1923 he organized a personal exhibition in the hall of the New York Public Library. His watercolour spots on canvas create scenes referring to a metropolitan environment, like strolls in Central Park, confidential chatting, the crowded beaches of Midland and South Beach, sitting at the barber's shop. Sometimes he looks at reality like a caricaturist; sometimes, for instance in his still natures, he dilutes his colour up to the point that they almost become abstract; some other times he expresses his genius through intense and painful portraits. All of a sudden, all this came to an end. On 24th June 1924, Martino Jasoni bade his friends goodbye from the ship which brought him back home, along with his family. On the Parma Apennines they needed labour and he did not feel able to object to his father, who had always opposed his artistic tendencies. For some years he kept in touch with Otto Soglow, his best friend, and took part in Independent exhibitions in New York, but his fall had started. Exhausted due to working in the fields, having newly sunk into the isolation of the countryside, Jasoni lost the liveliness of his youth and forgot what he had learnt from Sloan, who had felt very disappointed when he left. When his father died in 1943, he quit painting. His economic situation got worse and worse, so much so that in the Fifties he considered the idea of taking part in the TV quiz *Lascia o raddoppia*, answering questions on American history. The man who might have become one of the greatest American painters of the Twentieth century died in 1957 as a farmer. On 9th June last year the Municipality of Berceto opened, in the hamlet by the name of Corchia, the Jasoni Museum. A vertical skyline, visual vertigo, colourful advertisements: in the early twentieth century New York was also an aesthetic ideal for the most sensitive immigrants.

Athos Casarini reached it from Bologna in 1909 to reach his brother Alberto, editor of the daily newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*. He was 26 years old and had just completed his art studies. Two years earlier, the world had grown smaller due to the first public radiotelegraphic line connecting Europe and Northern America, resulting from the discoveries of his fellow citizen Guglielmo Marconi. Casarini plunged into this scientifically and culturally vibrating atmosphere, fascinated by the metropolis, its dynamism, its sense of anxiety and haste which symbolize modernity to him, whereas the quiet Bologna with its red bricks still seemed to live in the Nineteenth century. New York is Casarini's muse. He is attracted by the smoke coming out of factory chimneys and the noise of tug-boats berthing at East River, the geometry of fire ladders, light signs, shining lights, the yellow dots of the windows of Manhattan skyscrapers, viewed from his studio in Poplar Street, in Brooklyn. Athos promptly drew people's attention as a satirical drawer endowed with an elegant line. He cooperated with newspapers and magazines such as *Post-Dispatch*, *New York World*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Collier's* and promptly joined the futurist movement, established in 1909 by Marinetti's Manifesto. He and his friend Joseph Stella would introduce Futurism into New York, proud of the news coming – for once – from Italy. Marinetti would return the favour by defining Casarini "the best Italian futurist painter of America". An innovator in the field of advertising posters, of which he can be considered one of the fathers, he kept in touch with Mario Pozzati, another giant of poster painting, who from his town of Bologna joined the futurist avant-garde with quick and harsh brushstrokes. In 1910, thanks to tenor Caruso's involvement, young Casarini was granted a personal exhibition at the prestigious Knoedler Gallery in the Fifth Avenue. In 1912 his picture *New York seen from Brooklyn* was the cover of *Harper's Weekly* and in 1914 *The World Magazine* dedicated a long article to him. In between these, he took part in the famous Armory Show exhibition in 1913, the only Italian among more than one thousand European and American artists. In 1914 again, Casarini was invited to exhibit at the *Salon d'Automne* in Paris. But in 1915 the war broke out and he, a futurist and a nationalist, wanted to be consistent with his ideas. On 14th August he boarded the "Duca d'Aosta" and returned to Italy, where he volunteered in the army as second lieutenant. Just like Boccioni, he was looking for actions, praised interventions, and yet found his death, on 12th September 1917, in a trench on the Karst.

Emanuel Carnevali left Bologna and landed at New York on 5th April 1914 to escape his authoritative father who "hides a black

heart". Expelled from the boarding school in Venice where he had studied and having being reproached by his father for skipping lessons in Bologna, "Manolo" reached America when he was just 16 years old. In New York the guy from Bologna did not know anybody, except for his brother, who reached him two weeks later, and with whom he immediately quarrelled. He started living of temporary jobs and rented rooms: he worked as a waiter, dishwasher, convenience store errand boy, snow shoveller, and learnt English on the street, deciphering advertising posters. In 1917 he avidly read French poets and wrote his first line in English: *Love is a mine hidden in the mountain of our old age*. He sent his first poems to magazines, which systematically rejected them, and kept on changing job continuously, living by the day. He made friends with a Frenchman, a would-be writer, Louis Grudin, who introduced American literature to him and with whom he paid visits to some important American writers, such as Max Eastman and Louis Untermeyer. In September *The Seven Arts* published a couple of his poems. The following month, Carnevali met a neighbour living in the next room, a little girl who had emigrated from Piedmont, and married her. For the first time he had a house, although in the disreputable East Side. In March 1918 the prestigious magazine *Poetry*, edited by Harriet Monroe, awarded him for a series of poems, thanks to which he got in touch with the greatest intellectuals of his time: William Carlos Williams, who dedicated the whole last issue of the magazine *Others* (July 1919) to him, Ezra Pound, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, Sherwood Anderson.

Carnevali translated Croce, Papini and the new Italian poets into English, published an essay on Rimbaud, cooperated with magazines, but he remained an outsider, a wanderer rejected by life, an accursed poet. Feverish, wild, with a certain similarity with Dino Campana as for style and substance, he betrayed his wife with occasional partners, abandoned her in New York – and would never see her again – to move to Chicago, summoned by Harriet Monroe to become vice-director of *Poetry*. He did some little jobs to carry on, without ever managing to get rid of his intrinsic instability. He fell in love with a Jewish girl and, when in February 1920 she left him to move to New York, he also left the little he had achieved, for instance his job for the magazine, and wandered at night in the streets of Chicago, living off prostitutes' money. Had a disease, a ceaseless shaking all over his body, not claimed his life when he was just 25, forcing him to give up with his words and misconduct, the Certosa Cemetery of Bologna would now host the remains of one of the most important Italian writers of the twentieth century. ☛