

ROMANIA ORIENTALE

34
2021

DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI EUROPEI, AMERICANI E INTERCULTURALI

34

2021

RO
România Orientale



Roberta 2010 "descoperire fauna asina" 2021

ISSN 1121-4015



www.editricesapienza.it

€ 17,50



University Press



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ EDITRICE

ROMANIA ORIENTALE

Dipartimento di Studi europei,
americani e interculturali

34, 2021



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UNIVERSITÀ EDITRICE

2021

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Dipartimento di Studi europei, americani e interculturali
Sapienza Università di Roma
Circonvallazione Tiburtina 4, 00185 Roma
mail: romaniaorientale@uniroma1.it
sito: <https://web.uniroma1.it/seai/?q=pubblicazioni/rom%C3%A0nia-orientale>

I contributi pubblicati in questo numero sono il risultato della ricerca di Ateneo "The Humanities and the Historical and Cultural Context of Central and Eastern Europe in the XXth Century" (Progetto di ricerca grande 2019, responsabile Annalisa Cosentino)

Editing, traduzione in inglese dal ceco e dall'italiano e revisione dei testi in inglese a cura di Peter Gaffney

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Sapienza Università Editrice

Piazzale Aldo Moro 5 – 00185 Roma

www.editricesapienza.it
editrice.sapienza@uniroma1.it

ISSN 1121- 4015

Iscrizione Registro Operatori Comunicazione n. 11420

La rivista, di proprietà della Sapienza Università di Roma, viene stampata con il contributo dell'Ateneo

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In copertina: *Testa d'asino* (acquaforte di Constantin Udriou)

THE HUMANITIES AND THE HISTORICAL
AND CULTURAL CONTEXT
OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
IN THE XXTH CENTURY:
ACADEMICS, TRANSLATORS
AND OTHER LITERATI FACING
WARS, REVOLUTIONS, REGIMES

a cura di

Annalisa Cosentino e Angela Tarantino

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TAULERO ZULBERTI AND THE RECEPTION OF CZECH CULTURE IN 1920s ITALY

Alessandro Catalano

*Synopsis – This essay traces the work of Taulero Zulberti as a translator and promoter of Czech literature. The story of Czech-Italian cultural exchange during the 1920s and 1930s, which was carried out in a variety of magazines and periodicals, is undoubtedly a relevant, even if secondary, topic. Yet it has received little attention in the context of Italian Slavistics. Zulberti, subsequently known for his work as a journalist, remains a practically unknown figure as mediator of Czech culture in Italy. This represents the first thorough survey of his extensive output, based on analysis of such magazines as *Il Brennero*, *Il Secolo XX*, and *Le opere e i giorni*. Zulberti's career is particularly significant as regards Josef and Karel Čapek, and it is through his translations that their stories first appeared to the Italian public. He would attentively follow their careers at least throughout the 1920s. The obscurity surrounding Zulberti's work is due in part to the kind of texts he published, preferring short pieces that rarely reached the size of a full-length article, with the unique exception of Karel Čapek's *The Makropulos Affair*, the author's first published volume in Italian.*

Keywords: Taulero Zulberti, translation, cultural transfer, Czech-Italian relations, Karel Čapek.

For a long time, the reception of Czech culture in Italy was limited and superficial. It was only after the First World War that it acquired a more comprehensive, albeit fragmentary, character¹. It is already well known that systematic study in this field only began with the foundation of a Slavic Studies department at the University of Padua (1920-1921) and creation of the Institute for Eastern Europe (Ipeo) in Rome in 1921². Much emphasis has also been placed on the first journals specialising in Slavic studies: *L'Europa Orientale*, which published its first

issue in 1921, and the *Rivista di Letterature Slave*, where various scholarly articles dedicated to Czechoslovakia have been published since 1926³, as well as analogous publishing activities that developed in Prague in connection to the Institute of Italian Culture, founded in 1922⁴.

In this article I approach the historical nexus of Italian-Czech cultural exchange from a different perspective, focusing on a completely different strategy of cultural mediation – one that is undoubtedly less academic, but which reached the broader popular readership of its time. In purely quantitative terms, Taulero Zulberti (1896-1980) would prove to be one of the most prolific mediators of Czech literature in Italy, at least in the context of the 1920s. It is indeed surprising how many of his articles, translations, and notes, scattered throughout the most varied magazines and periodicals of the period, deal with central cultural figures of the nascent Czechoslovak state, and in particular with the brothers Josef and Karel Čapek, which he was the first to present to the Italian public in a systematic manner. It is, in fact, this striking case – that of Zulberti's translations of Karel Čapek – that best demonstrates why we should avoid limiting our analysis of the relationship between Italian and Czech culture to the academic field alone, especially with regard to an era as *irregular* as the interwar years. However superfluous it may seem to retrace the path of this figure, whose work naturally lies outside established institutional circles, we may continue to overlook Zulberti only at risk of neglecting a substantial number of publishing projects – projects which, if less notable, are characterised by a number of remarkable aspects⁵. But who exactly was Zulberti, and what relationship did he have with Czechoslovakia?

In a discussion with Giorgio Bocca on the figure of Indro Montanelli in 2000, speaking on the history of Italian journalism, Enzo Biagi recalled, 'There was a journalist named Taulero Zulberti, who was a correspondent from Berlin, and who managed to insert a piece of truth into his articles every day. He quoted the English bulletins, saying: "this is what the enemy propaganda does, it boasts of having won in El Alamein, it claims that Tripoli is about to fall." And he would proceed to inform' (Maltese 2000, p. 48).

Zulberti was also mentioned by Eugenio Montale when he accepted the Nobel Prize in 1975: 'A few years ago at the *Corriere della Sera*, I discovered my name in a *cocodrillo* [literally 'crocodile', a kind of

obituary on a person still living] written by Taulero Zulberti, a critic, translator, and polyglot' (Zulberti 2000, p. 45). While nearly forgotten today, it is clear from these quotations that Zulberti was a fairly important figure in the field of Italian journalism, playing a principal role in 1958-1965 as head of the foreign services of *Corriere della Sera*. Yet he is remembered above all for his work as a correspondent to Berlin for *Il Resto del Carlino*, 1930-1943, when 'he also carried out some delicate tasks for our secret services in the most intense period of relations between Italy and Germany'⁶.

Also known as the author of the libretto for *Serenata veneziana* ('Venetian Serenade', composed by Alois Melichar for the tenor Beniamino Gigli), Zulberti was born in Tione, a village in the Val di Ledro, province of Trento, which at that time was part of the Austrian monarchy. His mother, the daughter of a farming family, died in 1906, and his father, a judge, in 1912, leaving Zulberti to find work as a reporter at an early age⁷. He took part in irredentist demonstrations in Trento, and was later arrested during the war for attempting to escape from Italy and transported to Innsbruck, before being moved to the Marchtrenk prison camp for a lengthy sentence⁸. In a subsequent work of autobiographical fiction, Zulberti wrote: 'he was put on trial for high treason, surviving only by the skin of his teeth, and was branded thereafter as a political suspect, like the *good soldier Švejk* in Jaroslav Hašek's humorously satirical fantasy' (1971, p. 128). It was there that Zulberti first met various Eastern European cultural figures, starting with the Russian writer Arkady Averchenko, whose stories he would later translate into Italian (Zulberti 1937, pp. 220-225)⁹. Of this period, Zulberti writes that he 'studied a great deal and had the opportunity of irregularly attending the universities of Innsbruck, Vienna, and Prague'¹⁰. For Zulberti, as indeed for many of the first scholars of Slavic studies, familiarity with Central and Eastern Europe was thus linked to the war years, which provided the context for more systematic encounters with Czech culture than could be found in Italy at the time¹¹. His relocation to Prague must also be in some way linked to the evacuation of the Val di Ledro to make way for the warfront in 1915, when Italy entered the war, compelling many families to wait out the war in and around Prague¹².

In November 1918, with the end of the war, and having published several volumes of war poems, Zulberti took part in an attempt to found

the first free daily newspaper in Trento (Zulberti 1974), before resuming his studies. In 1919, he obtained the diploma of professor of foreign languages in Milan and the following year, in Pavia, a law degree. He also began working as a journalist at the Trento newspaper *La libertà*, which would send him as a correspondent for Italian newspapers to various foreign posts (Vienna, Prague, Munich, etc.). Returning to Merano, Italy, he started the magazine *Il Brennero* (we will later return to this episode in more detail), and then worked on *Il Resto del Carlino*, first as head of the editorial office in Verona and then as interior editor (in Bologna), travelling extensively throughout Europe, including Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. It was during this period that he began to write literary and artistic articles from Italy for German-language newspapers and magazines, including *Bohemia* and *Prager Presse*, which demonstrates the two-way nature of his role in cultural exchange. This represented an intensely productive period in Zulberti's career, so much so that he claimed in 1929 to have written 'over two thousand articles on internal politics (fascist!), foreign policy, reviews, foreign literature, history, variety, sport, etc.', in addition to 'a thousand short stories' (Truppia-Antolini 1990, p. 19). He also lists an extensive number of magazines and periodicals to which he was a regular contributor, including *Alto Adige*, *Il Popolo*, *Risveglio tridentino*, *La Tribuna illustrata* (in the period 1913-1914), *La Domenica del Corriere* (with several short stories in 1915), *Libertà*, *Il Piccolo*, *Nuovo giornale*, *Il Gazzettino* (1918-1919), *Il Resto del Carlino*, *Il Progresso*, *Gazzetta del Popolo*, *Illustrazione del Popolo*, and *Il Secolo XX* (as a regular contributor for two years), *La Lettura*, *Le opere e i giorni* (as a regular contributor, 1924-1930), *La Nazione*, *Il Tevere*, *Nuova Antologia*, *Prager Presse* (literary and artistic works from Italy), *Neues Wiener Journal*, *Europäische Revue*, and *Bohemia* (Ibid., pp. 17-19).

Years later, in one of his novels, Zulberti would give an ironic description of a hyperactive character bearing his own name: "That unpleasant face of Zulberti showed itself even here, the face of a "fazo tuto mi" [do-it-all], good God, who snatched up all possible jobs in Berlin journalism, writing dramas for Pilotto with Aldo Gabrielli, and comedies for Baseggio with Primo Piovesan, or with Eugenio Ferdinando Palmieri, editing the Italian text for UFA films, and even writing lyrics for Beniamino Gigli. A fool who only lived to work, and still lives to

work, who worked, and still works today, harder than a donkey, typically for just a handful of hay' (1971, p. 97).

In addition to writing scripts for theatre, autobiographical fiction, and novels proper (which he published primarily in his later years), Zulberti wrote a variety of descriptive texts throughout the 1920s on Czech culture in Italy and Italian culture in Czechoslovakia. When he moved to Berlin in 1930, he shifted his focus to German politics. Working as a journalist in 1939, Zulberti broke news of the non-aggression pact between Berlin and Moscow (Candito 1997, pp. 168-170), introducing himself as 'the Italian journalist denounced by Goebbels in a report at Wilhelmstrasse as "the most biased of Berlin correspondents" and a dangerous informer for Mussolini's anti-Nazi collaborators, above all Grandi' (Truppia-Antolini 1990, p. 22). He stayed in Berlin until 1944, when, 'denounced by Goebbels for his defeatism' (Ibid., p. 19), he returned to Italy, spending the end of the war in hiding in Romagnano, near Trento. As we retrace the path of Zulberti's life, starting with the fervent interventionist and committed fascist, then, at the end of the war, the intellectual critic of Nazism and leading journalist of the *Partito d'Azione* ('Action Party'), and finally the writer for the most important Italian newspaper, *il Corriere della Sera*, we rediscover the entire history of the twentieth century in Italy¹³.

Regarding Zulberti's translations of Czech literary works, he is best known as translator of the first publication in Italy of Karel Čapek's works in book form (in spite of his unsuccessful attempt in 1924 to get *R.U.R.* published in the magazine *Comoedia*¹⁴). His translation of *The Makropulos Affair* was published in 1926 as part of the theatrical collection of the Alpes publishing house (Čapek 1926), with 'a page [by Čapek] that we believe was previously unpublished'¹⁵ (Ibid., p. [10]) and an introduction by the translator, who, in addition to his emphatic tone, shows an extensive knowledge of the author's previous work. Zulberti's translation is connected, moreover, to the only significant production of Karel Čapek's plays in Italy during the interwar period, at Anton Giulio Bragaglia's Teatro degli Indipendenti in Rome (12 March 1927)¹⁶. In a merciless analysis of the first translations of Czech authors into Italian, Arturo Cronia writes that 'based on foreign sources, he even discovered some experiments in Czech literature (Masaryk, Machar, Čapek, Langer, Hašek) in several Italian magazines' (Cronia 1932, p. 500).

Though he barely even mentions Zulberti in his previous studies, Cronia then proceeds to describe his translations in the most critical terms – the translator may have had the original text in hand, he writes, but the result is ‘a translation so careless and at times unfaithful to the original that long passages appear completely incomprehensible’; all told, it is only ‘a distant copy of the original’ (Ibid., p. 504)¹⁷.

While staying in Prague, Zulberti had the occasion to meet not only with Karel and Josef Čapek but (somewhat less regularly) with a number of other important figures of the Czech cultural scene, including T. G. Masaryk, whose *Světová revoluce* (‘World revolution’, 1925) Zulberti had translated in excerpted form for Italian magazines, and who, as reported by a periodical in Fiume (now Rijeka, Croatia), sent him a ‘letter of unqualified praise’¹⁸. Zulberti makes frequent mention of Franz Kafka as well, on whom he had long planned to write a book (left unpublished), a book ‘which, he hoped, would have been met with considerable interest, if only for the discussions that, in 1923, together with their mutual friend Otto Pick, he had had with the brilliant German-Bohemian writer, first in Prague, then in Merano’ (Zulberti 1971, p. 85)¹⁹. It seems he also translated some previously unpublished verses by the German author for the newspaper *Alto Adige* (‘South Tyrol’), which he had discovered in an unspecified student magazine in Prague, though this could very well be ‘one of Zulberti’s jokes, man of letters that he was’ (Cibotto 1993, p. 170). In this regard, Zulberti himself writes of a certain ‘theatrical hoax, in fashion at the time’ which he had created together with Aldo Gabrielli: a play with the title *La risata di Serghiej* (‘Serghiej’s joke’), attributed to the deceased Russian writer Lev Lunc (1971, pp. 134-136). If our knowledge regarding his network of Prague contacts is rather limited, we know in any case about his significant and lasting friendship with the German journalist and writer Otto Pick (1887-1940), a leading translator of literary works in his own right (from Czech to German and vice versa), and a key translator of the works of Karel and Josef Čapek.

In the following, I present a provisional outline of Zulberti’s work as a translator and promoter of Czech culture, rather than aiming at a complete account (which lies beyond the scope of such a study). Indeed, a quick survey of Italian periodicals from the period shows that Zulberti translated a vast number of novellas and short stories from

various languages, including German, Czech, Russian, Hungarian (a great deal of which have not yet been digitised)²⁰. We will focus our attention in particular on the two magazines where Zulberti played a central role – *Il Brennero* and *Le opere e i giorni* –, with an eye as well to some of his more notable contributions to newspapers with larger circulation (primarily *Il Secolo XX*).

Il Brennero

At the beginning of the 1920s, Zulberti took part in the publication of *Südtland*, a German-language monthly directed by Arno von Brandau which aimed expressly at political and cultural reconciliation between German- and Italian-speaking populations (five issues in all were published in 1921, and one in 1922)²¹. A few months later, together with Franco Ciarlantini, he founded the popular monthly *Il Brennero*, which he himself defined as ‘the first Italian political-literary magazine in South Tyrol’ and modelled essentially on the same agenda as *Südtland*. Interest in the Slavic regions along the Italian border was already on the rise in the nineteenth century (also during the period in question here), leading to a number of projects: in the cultural context of Rijeka, for example²². The magazine *Il Brennero*, with a total of ten issues over its two plus years of operation (January 1922 to the spring of 1923), ‘had the support, and not only moral, of the Fascist government’ (Truppia-Antolini 1990, p. 17). It is likely that the magazine ceased operations when Zulberti left to join *Il Resto del Carlino*. *Il Brennero* is mentioned briefly in bibliographies as one of the Italian-language magazines to appear in Merano at the beginning of the 1920s, and a clear message to the province to commit to the process of Italianisation (Valente 2004, p. 135). Yet the monthly represents a much more complex reality, featuring a wealth of information on Central Europe – an expression of its director’s international cultural interests – which merits closer analysis. That the monthly enjoyed a fairly large circulation is demonstrated both by the reprinting of one of Pick’s letters by *La Stampa*²³, and by the numerous reports received in Czech periodicals²⁴.

The editorial that opens the first issue of the magazine (‘Poche parole’ [‘A few words’]. *Il Brennero*, 1922, 1, pp. 1-2, alongside various political objectives of an evidently more *internal* character²⁵, lays out the

international inspirations of the monthly: 'The title of our magazine should not be seen only as a forthright symbol of victory, but also as an eloquent expression of peace, since Brenner Pass (*il Brennero*), in addition to constituting our indispensable strategic frontier, is the vital pass that connects us with our neighbours to the north' (Ibid.). Brenner Pass also represented the road to new countries 'that were previously no more than geographical expressions': first of all Austria, but also Czechoslovakia. 'Beyond the border, the Brenner road leads to Prague, capital of a country that is now strongest economically in Central Europe. Yet the marvellous flourishing of literary and musical culture on the part of the small but talented Czechoslovakian population is hardly known to its immediate neighbours. It is only quite recently that the Germans have begun the systematic translation of works by the most notable Czech poets' (Ibid., p. 2). As often happens with border regions, Brenner Pass was seen as a gate leading eastwards, towards Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine, 'all nations that, in the near future, will play an important role in European history, nations that we must strive to know in all their manifestations' (Ibid.). Leaving aside here a series of articles on the political situation in Germany and Austria, as well as a number of other interesting texts (including poems by Zulberti himself), it will be worthwhile, in the interest of better understanding the spirit of the magazine, to provide a complete account of its contents concerning both Czech culture in the strict sense and Bohemian culture in the broader sense – especially given that so much attention was paid to Prague's German-speaking, testifying to a real interest in the culture of the region as a whole.

While the first issue does not feature any articles referring directly to Czechoslovakia, there are two noteworthy chronicles from Vienna and Budapest and the first collection of reviews by Zulberti, including one of Wedekind's *Risveglio di Primavera* ('Spring awakening'). In the following issue, however, alongside articles dealing with Austria and South Tyrol, we find an interesting article by Enrico Herbatschek (1877-1956), a significant figure in the context of Czech-German cultural exchanges (Budňák 2020). The article focuses on the works of Svatopluk Machar, in particular the role they played as 'catapults against the *clerical Hapsburg Castle*' (Herbatschek 1922). The issue also features the first contribution by Otto Pick: a letter on Czech theatre as part of a regular column with

the title *Da oltre il Brennero* ('Beyond Brenner Pass'), featuring reports on cultural events in the main cities of Central Europe (Pick's article appears in the section 'From Prague'). The author comments on the most important recent performances, focusing on the extraordinary success of the Čapek brothers and on *R.U.R.* in particular, which had already been translated into Italian. According to Pick, 'due to his healthy Americanisms (reminiscent of the science-fiction of H. G. Wells), due to the refreshingly original content, and due to the natural, lively and fascinating dialogue, he has conquered all Czech audiences in a very short time' (*Il Brennero* 1922, 2, p. 68). The same author, in the next issue, also dedicated a shorter note to German theatre in Prague, whose performances 'oscillate between real works of art and sensational dramatic pieces with strong cinematographic hues' (*Ibid.*, 3, p. 107). Yet these reviews do not represent a unique case in the Italian press of that period. More or less contemporaneous with *Il Brennero*, the impetuous journalist Ugo Daddone, to give one example, was publishing his reviews on Czech theatre for the magazine *Comoedia*²⁶.

Otto Pick and Quinto Catoni were responsible, in the fourth issue of *Il Brennero*, for what can be considered the first translation of a text by Josef Čapek into Italian: the short story 'Veš' ('The louse'), originally published as part of the collection *Lelio* (1917). The story was introduced by the following note: 'With the following quite original story, the oldest of the Čapek brothers (just over thirty years old!) begins his collaboration with our magazine. He also happens to be one of the most talked about expressionist painters in Czechoslovakia' (Čapek, *Ibid.*, 4, pp. 141-145). In his report from Prague, Pick writes on Petr Bezruč's *Slezské písničky* ('Silesian songs'), a collection that has 'an infinitely greater significance than any novel' (Pick, *Ibid.*, p. 151), while Zulberti reviews various novels, including those by Czech writers Robert Saudek and Oskar Baum (Zulberti, *Ibid.* p. 156-157).

In the fifth issue of 1922, Zulberti reviews Paul Leppin's collection of short stories *Das Paradies der Anderen* (Zulberti, *Ibid.*, 5, p. 205) and translates a fragment of Machar's *The Barbarians* (*Ibid.*, p. 182). Catoni's name returns here as a translator of Pick's own novel *Repatriation* (Pick, *Ibid.*, pp. 189-193), who in turn authored a note on 'Czech magazines on literature and art', as well as *Štěpěje* by Jakub Deml (*Ibid.*, p. 201).

For the sixth issue, Zulberti reviews Franz Werfel's tragic poem 'Bockgesang' ('Buck song'; *Ibid.*, 6, pp. 251-252) and, together with Pick, translates one of Karel Čapek's first short stories from the *Boží muka* collection of 1917, 'Historie beze slov' ('Story without words'), to which they gave the title 'Puerta del sol' (*Ibid.*, pp. 229-231).

The seventh and final issue of 1921 features excerpts of Oscar Butter's *Cenni di letteratura ceca* ('Outline of Czech literature'; *Ibid.*, 7, pp. 263-267), alongside a remark by Arrigo Solmi on relations with Central and Eastern Europe (*Ibid.*, 7, pp. 263-267) and a report from Vienna by Robert Musil (*Ibid.*, pp. 298). In his detailed article on the best known of Karel Čapek's plays, *R.U.R.* (with the German title *W.U.R.*), Zulberti mentions the Čapek brothers' neologism 'robot' (in its plural Italian form, *roboti*), making him the first to use the word in the Italian context. According to the author, 'in this drama (which reminds us in some ways of works by H. G. Wells), the great Czech writer sets out with the best intentions (perhaps he calls it utopian) of educating humanity using the paradoxical methods of satire'²⁷ (Zulberti, *Ibid.*, pp. 278-282).

The eighth issue appeared at the beginning of 1923, opening with an article by Ugo Marchetti on Mussolini's fascist revolution (*Il Brennero* 1923, 8, pp. 1-3). In addition to Zulberti's translation of *Demos* by Petr Bezruč (*Ibid.*, p. 26), it also features the seminal *Cenni d'arte ceca* ('Outline of Czech art'), once more signed O. Butter (*Ibid.*, pp. 48-49).

The ninth issue presents the translation (again by Pick-Catoni) of a new short story by Karel Čapek, 'La via smarrita' (originally titled 'Ztracená cesta', or 'The lost way'), also taken from the 1917 collection *Boží muka* (*Il Brennero* 1923, 9, pp. 83-86). In spite of the fact that Giovanni Maver was among its contributors, the tenth and final issue of *Il Brennero* did not feature and contents dealing with Czech literature, apart from a brief note that 'Taulero Zulberti is preparing the October issue of *Novella* (Casa Ed. Mondadori), which will be dedicated exclusively to Czech literature' (*Ibid.*, p. 164). In fact, this monographic issue was never published; instead, a similar note appears in the October issue that 'The next (November) issue will be released on October 20th. It will be dedicated to contemporary Czechoslovakian literature, including the most important short stories edited and translated by Taulero Zulberti' (*Novella* 1923, 10, p. iv). *Prager Presse* even published a list of texts

that would be featured in the special edition, together with news of the forthcoming release of *R.U.R.* in *Comoedia* and a translation of the Čapek brothers' *Ze života hmyzu* with the title *Vita degli insetti* ('Life of the insects') in *Il Brennero*: this included, in addition to an introductory text by the curator, works by Josef and Karel Čapek, F. X. Šalda, F. Langer, O. Theer, R. Těsnohlídek, A. M. Tilschová, A. Sova, and others (*Prager Presse* 08.05.1924, pp. 5-6).

While we have focused here on those contents of *Il Brennero* in 1922-1923 that concern Czech culture specifically, it must be emphasised that very few of its peer periodical featured anything comparable in the broader context of Central European culture. The magazine *L'Europa Orientale*, for example, published by the Institute for Eastern Europe and covering a broader range of topics than the cultural sphere, featured only a small number of articles on Czechoslovakia during the period 1921-1923, mostly by Czech scholars. Even in periodicals dealing with culture, news on Czechoslovakia was taken primarily from Czech and foreign-language periodicals (*Gazette de Prague* and *Prager Presse*), with the only real exception of a rather negligible number of articles by Ettore Lo Gatto. During the year and a half *Il Brennero* was in publication, Zulberti was able to put out a remarkable number of original articles, with particular attention to works of Josef and Karel Čapek – in addition to three stories translated in full, he also presented summaries of the main dramatic works – effectively introducing the Czech writers for the first time to the Italian public. Any effort to reconstruct the history of Czech literature in Italy would be compelled to give some attention to this episode – an episode that, thanks in large part to the contributions by Otto Pick, transcended the superficial character of later projects.

Il secolo XX and other magazines

We do not know exactly why *Il Brennero* closed its doors, but it is probably connected to Zulberti's leaving the monthly to work for the newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino*. This does not mean, however, that Zulberti was any less active in the years that followed to promote Czech culture in Italy. It is impossible to offer a complete overview here, so we will focus instead, at least briefly, on those publications where Zulberti's contributions were most significant.

For more than two years, 1924-1926, Zulberti worked tirelessly for *Il secolo XX*, publishing a series of long articles (3-4 pages with illustrations) on the topic of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, just as Lo Gatto did in the context of Russian culture. The first of these articles, which all went by the title 'Il movimento intellettuale in Cecoslovacchia' ('The intellectual movement in Czechoslovakia'), was published in April 1924. It presents various cultural innovations in succession, focusing on the work of Anna Maria Tilschová and poet J. S. Machar, before going on to convey the various successes of the brothers Čapek. In addition to pointing out the publication of *Italské listy*, he makes the following observation on 'The life of insects': 'despite having the choice of two Italian translations, I believe our typically fearless producers will never overcome the terrible dread inspired by Josef Čapek's expressionistic dramaturgy' (Zulberti, *Il secolo XX* 1924, 4, pp. 304-306). The article that follows, dated November 1924 and inspired by an interview with Josef Čapek, offers a lengthy reportage on current events in Prague cultural life, specifically in the fields of fine arts, theatre, and music (Ibid., 11, pp. 800-803). The article is characterised by a large number of inaccuracies, all more or less evident, providing a characteristic example of the strengths and weaknesses of Zulberti's journalistic method, and compelling us to view his determination, both in seeking out information and presenting it to the Italian public, as a commendable effort that is lacking nonetheless in anything like scholarly rigour. In another article, dated February 1925, Zulberti follows a similar formula, opening with a conversation with Josef Čapek before moving on to a variety of other topics, including Fráňa Šrámek's novellas, Karel Čapek's novel *Krakatit*, and Leoš Janáček's music for a new staging at the National Theatre (Zulberti, *Il secolo XX* 1925, 2, pp. 141-144). The second review of 1925 instead discusses the essential Czech character (based on a recent book by Jiří Mahen), the new generation of poets (Jiří Wolker), and recent happenings in literature and theatre (Ibid., 7, pp. 551-553). The last of Zulberti's reviews for *Il secolo XX* deals with the 'literary oases that lie beyond the banks of the Morava: Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Russia', dwelling at length on Donizetti's letters found in the archives of Count Taaffe (*Il secolo XX* 1926, 8, pp. 571-573). It should be noted, in this regard, that the errors contained in these articles at times became the object of caustic commentary in the Czech press. František Kovárna for

example, while praising the author's good intentions, spoke of errors 'bordering on the ridiculous' (Kovářna 1926), and Václav Jiřina writes, more severely: 'Finally, I would like to draw attention to the way in which cultural promotion must never be done [...] The outrageous misrepresentations of truth that I read there astound me' (Jiřina 1926, p. 72).

Zulberti also contributed to the magazine *2 lire di novelle* – an episode worth dwelling on briefly, even if the attention he devoted there to Czech culture is less significant than in other contexts. Zulberti's translations for this magazine, starting as early as 1926, are quite numerous and range from Russian (in particular various texts by Averchenko) to Hungarian and Romanian (including his work for two monographic issues published in 1928). There are several occasions, however, on which the magazine does not credit the translator, so it may be that the number of articles in which Zulberti had a hand is even greater. Regarding Czech literature, there is only one translation by Zulberti, but it is significant: Karel Čapek's short story 'Mezi dvěma polibky', translated as 'Tra due baci' ('Between two kisses'), taken from a collection published by the Čapek brothers in 1916, *Zářivé hlubiny a jiné prózy* ('Radiant depths and other prose'; Čapek-Čapek 1927).

Yet another magazine in which Zulberti published translations from Russian, Hungarian, and other languages is the well known *Le grandi firme* ('The great names'). In this context, however, his only translation of Czech literature was the Čapek brothers' notable short story 'Systém', with the title 'Il sistema' ('The system'; Čapek-Čapek 1928), from the collection *Krakonošova zahrada*²⁸ ('Kakonoš Garden'). Certain elements in the story are considered to anticipate the artificial worker in *R.U.R.*

Concerning Zulberti's works in Italian, we must point out a translation (ostensibly by Zulberti), of an opinion piece by Karel Čapek published with the title 'Dacci il nostro giornale quotidiano' ('Give us our daily newspaper'²⁹), published years later in the magazine *Quadrivio* (Čapek 1936).

We could present a similar outline, albeit more limited, with regard to Zulberti's contributions to Czech magazines, in particular the daily *Prager Presse*, in which he published reviews on Italian literature and theatre (Zulberti, *Prager Presse* 1925), reviews and reports of various kinds (Zulberti, *Prager Presse* 1923), and even one of his own short stories (Zulberti, *Prager Presse* 1928). We also know that a monographic

issue of *Prager Presse* dedicated to Italian culture was in preparation, organised by Zulberti, in collaboration with Pick³⁰.

What this list demonstrates, as provisional and incomplete as it may be, is that Zulberti's interest in Czech culture remained constant over time, spanning several sectors, often assuming the form of a simple digest of events, and just as often characterised by inaccuracies and misunderstandings. The topic that attracted his attention more than any other was the literary output of the Čapek brothers, by whom Zulberti presented a number of stories in various magazines that together represent a significant body of work. By contrast, it is interesting to note the detached attitude towards these authors shown by several of the best known Slavists.

Le opere e i giorni

Having looked at Zulberti's experience with *Il Brennero* in detail, I would like to focus now on his contributions to the Genoese magazine *Le opere e i giorni*, which was in some respects even more extensive. Directed from 1922 to 1938 by Mario Maria Martini, the publication never received very serious attention, except on occasion by its critics. Stefano Verdino, for example, describes it as a crucible of 'merely oratory anthologies' on the part of the 'last season of nationalism' which nobody looks to for anything more than 'a temporary parking space or secondary texts'. What does not escape notice, he continues, is the attention the magazine has shown towards Soviet literature, 'the gaps, and accommodation of many small anomalies, compared to the hegemonic cultural framework, in its various aspects, from Fascism to Crocianism to the Frenchifying Europeanism of Florentine magazines' (Verdino 1993, pp. 81-87). As we will see, however, *Le opere e i giorni* reported with great timeliness on the cultures of Eastern Europe, and can be considered one of the most significant Italian magazines of its time in the context of the dissemination of news and topics related to Czechoslovakia.

If the first years of the magazine were characterised by a clear preference for Italian politics and culture, alongside occasional travel letters from Hungary and Czechoslovakia (Piazza 1923), the format changed between 1925 and 1926 with the introduction of regular columns dedicated to news, bibliography, and reviews, giving the magazine the mul-

tifaceted structure that would characterise it for the rest of the decade. News on Czech literature was initially episodic and often taken from other Italian periodicals³¹, but thanks to Zulberti's assiduous work the column began to present constant and detailed reports. Starting in the fall of 1924, Zulberti would go on to write numerous essays and translations concerning German, Russian, Hungarian, and Czech culture, becoming one of the most prolific authors of the magazine³².

In the December 1924 issue, alongside several brief notes on performances in Prague, it is reported that 'the new comedy by Karel Čapek *The Makropulos Affair*, translated into Italian by T. Zulberti, will be performed during the first days of January by the Compagnia Uberto Palmarini'³³. The issue also features the first Italian translation of Josef and Karel Čapek's short story 'Ostrov' with the title 'L'isola' ('The island') from the collection *Zářivé hlubiny a jiné prózy* (Čapek-Čapek, *Le opere e i giorni* 1924).

Leaving aside a few shorter notes, the year 1925 opens with news of the imminent publication in Prague of the Masaryk's memoirs (*Světová revoluce*) which 'will be translated into the main European languages; some essays have been published in *Il Resto del Carlino* by T. Zulberti'³⁴. In the next issue, on the other hand, there is news of 'an interesting literary trial' in Moscow, where 'Alexei Tolstoi has been accused by Karel Čapek of plagiarising the utopian work *R.U.R.*, translating it into Russian under a title with a more communist flavour: *The Revolt of the Machines*. The Moscow judges have proved Čapek wrong'³⁵.

There is no need to mention the numerous translations of Italian works into Czech during this period, but it is worth pointing out that the Czech magazine *Komedia* published a letter by Zulberti on the topic of modern Italian theatre³⁶. As evidence of his total interest in Slavic literatures, Zulberti was probably also the first in Italy to underline the likeness between Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* ('a ferocious satire against Bolshevism was written by Eugenio Samiatin') and Čapek's *R.U.R.* ('The novel, from the literary point of view, has many similarities with the comedy *R.U.R.* by Karel Čapek')³⁷. A few issues later Zulberti translates a short letter where, in a gesture of protest, Čapek renounces his appointment as a member of the Czech Academy of Sciences³⁸, along with the first part of the chapter dedicated to Venice of his *Letters from Italy*³⁹, which can be considered the first Italian translation of an excerpt that was received

critically by various scholars of Slavistics⁴⁰. The author also announces the imminent performance of *R.U.R.* in Moscow, and publication by Karel Čapek of a 'very important study on proletarian art'⁴¹.

In 1926 our prolific author continued to report regularly on news in the cultural field⁴². One of the texts deserves to be reported in full: *'Il paese dai molti nomi [Země mnoha jmen, or 'Land of Many Names']*, the wonderful comedy by Josef Čapek, has been translated into English by P. Selver, who has also written an interesting study with the title *The Čapeks in Czech Literature*. Karel Čapek's comedy *The Makropulos Affair*, translated into Italian by Taulero Zulberti, will be released as soon as possible at the Alpes publishing house; the comedy is preceded by a profile of the fortunate Czech writer, written by Zulberti himself⁴³.

An interesting new translation appears in the second issue of the same year: 'a lively article' by Karel Čapek on the paradoxes of the workings of the theatre, which 'is part of a forthcoming volume'⁴⁴. The next issue begins with a chapter excerpted from *Světová revoluce* by Masaryk (1926), from which the editorial staff are careful to distance themselves, and which is followed by a polemical postscript⁴⁵. Starting in this issue, all news briefs relating to Czech culture would be systematically grouped into a single column dealing with a variety of topics – art, music, literature, graphology, etc – under the title 'Czechoslovakia'. The column appears as a regular feature in all subsequent issues⁴⁶, reporting on 'new works by Karel Čapek'⁴⁷, an announcement for the Polish edition of *Krakatit*, and a remark about Zulberti: '*The Makropulos Actor* [sic], released by Casa Alpes (translated by T. Zulberti) will be produced by Camillo Pilotto'⁴⁸. In one issue, the column is dedicated entirely to the 'fiftieth anniversary of Palacky's death'⁴⁹.

In the eighth issue of 1926, the column features reports on various 'Czechoslovakian theatrical novelties' and ample space is dedicated to František Khol's work at the National Theatre, as well as Otto Pick, who, 'together with other central figures, has set out to do with Prague what has been done for Hamburg, a centre for the import of English theatre productions. The Czechoslovakian capital will thus become a centre for the import of Slavic production which can then be exported throughout the West'⁵⁰. It concludes with the translation of yet another text by Karel Čapek, 'an interesting chapter in which the *workings* of a permanent Czech theatre are described, humorously', excerpted from 'a book on

theatre, from which I was asked at the time to convey a short essay⁵¹. In the following issue, the entire column is dedicated to graphology⁵², while the eleventh issue features a report on the staging of a Russian theatrical work in Prague by Karel Čapek, 'a well-known Czech writer, who has recently become a strident champion of Benesian democracy'⁵³. In the last issue of the year, the column covers recent literary prizes awarded by the Czechoslovakian government⁵⁴.

In the sixth issue of 1927, after a few brief reports⁵⁵, we find a summary of Olga Scheinpflugová's comedy *L'assassinato* (*Zabitý*, or 'The murdered'), as well as an account, notably, of the 'somewhat lukewarm' reception of the new comedy by the Čapek brothers, *Adamo crea il mondo* (*Adam stvořitel*, or 'Adam the creator') in which the authors allow 'the fantastic-grotesque element to completely overwhelm the human dimension'⁵⁶. In the following issue, Zulberti recalls a trip to Italy by the conductor Oskar Nedbal, followed by a remark on *Krakatit*. He then provides a plot summary for Karel Čapek's 'new' novel, *La fabbrica o l'assoluto* (*Továrna na Absolutno*, or 'The Factory for the Absolute')⁵⁷. In the ninth issue of 1927, Zulberti comments at length on the 'artistic-literary movement in Czechoslovakia', inspired by a conversation in which Josef Čapek tried to 'persuade him about the absolute originality of Czech humanitarianism'. He then focuses on the publication of an interview with Foreign Minister Beneš regarding his relations 'with Madame Literature', in which the Czech politician considers it the duty of Czech writers to produce 'works of global interest'. In a second paragraph he underlines how 'the easiest genre to export' is theatre, so much so that 'Čapek was able to establish himself on the sole basis of the success of his comedies', and goes on to describe how authors were paying court to František Khol, who had proposed 'to export half a dozen national works and to see that the works of a dozen foreigners, including five Italians, were produced in the various theatres of the Republic'. The column also reports on Karel Čapek's intention to publish two comedies and a drama, as well as the thousandth performance of Smetana's *Sposa venduta* (*Prodaná nevěsta*, or 'The Bartered Bride')⁵⁸. In the following issue, Zulberti dwells on a volume of short stories with the title *Il paradiso degli altri* (*Das Paradies der Andern*, or 'The paradise of others'), by Paul Leppin, one of the members 'of the cenacle that welcomes the most wonderful German talents of Czechoslovakia [...] a select group of Bohemian-German writers'⁵⁹.

In the third issue of 1928, under the rubric 'Intellectual Movement in Czechoslovakia' (a column occasionally featured in *Il Resto del Carlino* as well), Zulberti underlines the growing success of the Aventinum publishing house, and promotion of the meritorious Khol from playwright at the National Theatre to 'director of the Centrum theatre agency'⁶⁰. Particularly detailed annotations appear in the following issue where, in addition to pointing out the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Karel Hlaváček and praiseworthy actions of Bindo Chiurlo in Prague, Zulberti writes on a portrait of Franz Werfel. Two entire columns are devoted to large excerpts from an interview by Karel Čapek on the 'rampant crisis' in theatre, where 'the best known and most successful playwright of the Quadrilatero' speaks about his current preference for 'short stories and novels' and of his method: 'the idea and leitmotif of the drama about *robots* (*R.U.R.*) was born and developed in five minutes, whereas the play itself took three months to write'⁶¹.

In the fifth issue of 1928 Zulberti reports on Paul Eisner's assessment of the literary situation in Czechoslovakia and urgent need for novelists ('our prose writers have not yet known how or been able to follow the fast pace of contemporary national life'⁶²). Later, in the seventh issue, he will consider how the publication of *Bloudění* ('Wandering') by Jaroslav Durych answers to this assessment: an example which should 'mitigate the pessimism of Eisner, and a bit of Karel Čapek's pessimism as well'⁶³. In the following issue, Zulberti writes an interesting note on Jaroslav Hašek – based on a letter from Maxim Gorky and the biography by Hašek's friend E. A. Longen⁶⁴ – on the occasion of a successful theatrical adaptation of *The Good Soldier Švejk* (staged in Italy and elsewhere) by the German dramaturge Erwin Piscator. In the ninth issue Zulberti writes on the discovery of some unpublished letters by Donizetti made by 'Prof. Paolo Netti of the German University of Prague'⁶⁵. In the following issue he translates a long passage by Masaryk regarding his meeting with Tolstoy, followed by a report regarding Eisner's study on Slavic folk songs, as well as a brief review of the latest generation of poets who 'made their debut under the red insignia of proletarian poetry'. Here Zulberti describes the formation of 'two individual currents: one decidedly communist, the other neo-socialist' – a poetry, he specifies, 'which, created by the original poet Vitezlav Nezval, had the good fortune to find in Karel Teige a dynamic and fanatical theorist'.

The latter had in fact recently published 'a dogmatic manifesto, whose bombastic and slightly dizzying style allows one to grasp the essential points of the program enunciated only with considerable effort of interpretation'. Having presented the main points of the manifesto, as well as Eisner's favourable assessment and the poetic activity of Konstantin Biebl and Josef Hora, Zulberti concludes by noting the movement's lack of success in the field of prose⁶⁶.

In the eleventh issue Zulberti reflects on 'experimental possibilities in the field of theatre' and – after recalling the Karel Čapek prophecy that in this field 'it is still possible, *with repeated efforts*, to produce something concrete, decent, and, perhaps, even original' – he analyses the 'pseudo-revolutionary' phenomenon of the *Osvobozené divadlo* (Liberated Theatre) and importance of the recent productions of two texts by Vladislav Vančura⁶⁷. The last issue of the year once more covers state prizes and new productions at the National Theatre⁶⁸.

Zulberti writes a brief note on sub-Carpathian Russia in the first issue of 1929⁶⁹. In the second, taking his cue from an article by Kamil Krofta on the 'worryingly peculiar' character of modern Czech literature as 'an art in all respects proletarian – or, to be more explicit, communist', Zulberti objects that many individuals had actually begun to adhere to this 'mauve communism', but in a manner that was 'limited to individual Sturm und Drang' – a criticism that, in 1929, was not yet so obvious⁷⁰. The third issue that year announces the upcoming congress of Czech philosophers, philologists, and historians, the staging of an unpublished text by Chekhov, and the death of Hugo Salus, as well as speculation about the foundation of a permanent Czech theatre in Vienna which 'will likely be directed by the well-known Prague playwright, Karel Čapek'⁷¹. A long review in the sixth issue presents – apparently in error – the collection *Gli sloveni nel decennio 1918-1928* ('The Slovenes in the decade 1918-1928'). It is followed by various brief notes on theatre productions in Prague, concluding with an announcement about the 'decisive return to writing' of the best known playwrights, in particular the Čapek brothers, who 'are writing a science-fiction fantasy drama set on the planet Mars'. Following a note on Averčenko's posthumous writings and the death of Otokar Březina, Zulberti presents three new published works by Karel Čapek 'after a long period of relative silence', which he describes as 'a kind of novel, a kind of

biography, and a kind of treatise'. He introduces these works – *L'affare scandaloso di Giuseppe Holousek* (*Skandální aféra Josefa Holouška*, or 'The scandalous affair of Josef Holoušek'), praised by as a 'very fine satire of *tabloid* journalism', a conversation with Masaryk, and *L'anno del giardiniera* (*Zahradníkův rok*, or 'The year of the gardener'), the 'viaticum, lyrical and practical at the same time' – with a rhetorical question: 'has the urban Čapek gone rustic?' His answer is 'Yes, it seems so, especially given that Čapek is writing a new play, according to one Prague newspaper, in which *robots* (mechanical men), have been replaced by vigorous and intelligent peasants of the fertile Bohemian countryside. "After all", says the author of *R.U.R.*, "I used to belong, and in a certain sense still do, to the school of *Weltliteratur* ('world literature'), but this is only because it has allowed me to fight, with analogous and therefore adequate arms, the invasion of mechanised civilisation, or more precisely Americanism and Americanisation"⁷².

The seventh issue in 1929 reports on the First Conference of Czechoslovak Masters of Philosophy, Philology and History, with particular attention to the introductory lecture by Arne Novák⁷³. The tenth issue features a brief note on theatre⁷⁴ and an article on František Langer's new play *L'atto di contrizione di Ferdy Pistora* (*Obrácení Ferdyše Pištory*, or 'The conversion of Ferdyš Pištora')⁷⁵, as well as a report concerning the publication of 'a complete list of all Italian works translated into Czech or Slovak'⁷⁶. In the eleventh issue, Zulberti writes on Giovanni Maver's participation in the Conference of Slavic Studies held in Prague⁷⁷, as well as a comprehensive survey of Czechoslovakian news on theatre and publishing, singling out 'an interesting study on Czech literature and Jews' by Hans Waidhaus. Zulberti also mentions an 'announced historical-philosophical work' by Karel Čapek, and publication of the writer's *Povídky z jedné kapsy* ('Stories from a Pocket'), which he praises for 'the exceptional qualities of an imaginative narrator and, in particular, a fine humorist'. There is also mention of Otto Pick in the context of his efforts to organise a 'Prague literary cénacle', even before the outbreak of the war, and his priceless work as the 'exclusive owner of an active import-export company, for which the best Czech intellectual production is promoted and sold not only on the German market, but also in Europe and America'⁷⁸ (concerning the dissemination of works by Italian authors, his closest counterpart was Franz Werfel).

In the first issue of 1930, Zulberti's columns open with news about state prizes and recent events in the theatre world, but they also mention the death of Hermann Ungar and announcement of new works by Čapek: 'The famous Czech writers Josef and Karel Čapek have written three new works for theatre, one of which is set in a utopian world with the unknown title *L'aeroplano-razzo* ('Jet plane')⁷⁹. The third issue of the year features news of Jaroslav Durych's long-awaited *Wallenstein* trilogy and the production of *L'amore non è tutto* (*Láska není všechno*, or 'Love is not everything'), a new work by actress-author Olga Scheinpflugová⁸⁰. The following issue features a brief note on Dante in Bohemia⁸¹, and announces the publication of the second part of Masaryk's *Světová revoluce* on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Zulberti also dwells on the death of František Khol: 'he was a sincere admirer of Italy; indeed he was one of the very first foreign contributors to the two Italian propaganda magazines, *Il Brennero* and *Südländ*, founded in Bolzano in the autumn of 1920 by Taulero Zulberti and Franco Ciarlantini'⁸². It is rather hard to tell exactly what he is referring to with these words, though it is interesting to compare them to those of Khol, who did not seem to be in particularly close relations with him. In a letter to Čapek in 1926, Khol writes: '*Makropulos* was published in Milan at the expense of Casa Alpes, and was translated by someone by the name of Taulero Zulberti. I already wrote to him about it.'⁸³. There is also an article on the publication of Karel Čapek's *Novelle dalla seconda tasca* (*Povídky z druhé kapsy*, or 'Stories from the second pocket'), which was imitated by various writers (Eduard Bass, for example)⁸⁴. In the fifth issue Zulberti underlines the crisis in theatre as a result of the 'lack of raw material', given that 'the most famous writers have given themselves over to an obstinate idleness, raising demand even on the most mediocre writers'. The only notable play, he concludes, was the adaptation (translated from German into Czech) of Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk*⁸⁵. Brief reports by Zulberti's for the sixth issue⁸⁶ contain little editorial news. In the eleventh issue, he writes an announcement on the imminent publication by a Czech publishing house of 'a memoir of the Queen Mother of Romania' (accompanied by a short translation)⁸⁷.

The issues of *Le opere e i giorni* that appeared in 1931 do not feature any reviews on Czechoslovakia, and the few notes on Czech publications related to Italy are reproduced from other magazines. Even Karel

Čapek's short story 'I campi volevano riunirsi' ('Zločin v chalupě', from *Povídky z jedné kapsy*) was based on a German translation by Francesco Marsicano, and had already appeared in another periodical⁸⁸.

It can be said then that Zulberti's move to Berlin effectively meant the end of his collaboration with the magazine; aside from a report on his first impressions of Berlin for the first issue of 1931, the path we have been following breaks off here. In spite of frequent factual errors and the use of second or third hand sources – especially in his reports on Karel Čapek, which deal typically with rumours collected in the Czech press and are of little consequence –, this episode in Italian-Czech cultural exchange, characterised by the journalistic slant of Zulberti's pen, should not be forgotten. Through it, a window opened for the Italian reading public in the 1920s and early 1930s on Czechoslovakian cultural production.

Conclusion

Close analysis of Taulero Zulberti's contributions to several literary magazines demonstrates how his work as a translator and promoter of Slavic culture in the 1920s effectively pioneered the scholarly study of Slavic culture in Italy. In these terms, his work cannot be overlooked, especially in the case of Czechoslovakia, for which it represents anything but ephemera. That Zulberti remains virtually unknown in this context derives in part from his tendency to write brief remarks, rarely reaching the length of a full article. The problem is not with the quality of his writings, but their dispersion across a number of different periodicals, often with only local circulation. It is clear, in any case, that it has nothing to do with the quality of the works and authors he mediated. We see this most clearly in the case of Karel Čapek, who was more or less disregarded by Italian Slavistics scholars at the time, yet who would turn out to be one of the most important Czech literary figures of the period. (It was only at the end of the 1920s that Wolfango Giusti and Renato Poggioli published their studies on Karel Čapek⁸⁹). That Zulberti's publication on and of Czech literary culture never appeared in book form – with the exception of his translation of Karel Čapek's *The Makropulos Affair* – may have also played a role in this regard. As for the Czech reception of Zulberti, there is no doubt that the numerous inaccuracies

that appeared in his writing did not go unnoticed, and gradually cooled initial enthusiasm for the Italian.

If we have been compelled here to reconstruct Zulberti's extensive efforts, at least in part, it is because the reception of Czech culture in Italy has always been based on more established university scholarship – this is especially true of the 1920s. What is missing, therefore, is an understanding of cultural exchange based on the context of journalism, where this exchange was significant and widespread. In this regard, it should also be remembered that Zulberti's vast work in periodicals has never been taken into consideration, and his longstanding collaborations with such literary publications as *Il Resto del Carlino*, *Alto Adige* and *Corriere della Sera* remain virtually unknown. Whatever assessment might be made of the ephemeral nature of these contributions, it is undoubtedly true that an attentive reader in 1920s Italy who wished to learn what was happening in the Czechoslovakian cultural field could do so only thanks to the multitude of information published by Taulero Zulberti.

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Endnotes

- ¹ On the early reception of Czech literature in Italy see Catalano (2019), pp. 61-78.
- ² On the early development of Slavic studies in Italy, see Mazzitelli (2016).
- ³ The monographic issue 'Studies on Czechoslovakia' (*L'Europa Orientale* 1924) deserves special mention; it was later published as part of the imposing volume *La 'Cecoslovacchia'. Organizzazione politica – Organizzazione economica – Organizzazione culturale – Grandi personalità* (1925).
- ⁴ In this regard see Cosentino (1997), pp. 219-235.
- ⁵ Only one contribution by Zulberti is recorded in the bibliography of studies dedicated to Czechoslovakia, the only one published in book form (Wildová Tosi 1980, p. 152; see also Cronia 1936, p. 150).
- ⁶ In this regard, it is no coincidence that Zulberti's historical importance is emphasised: 'few remember his name today, a name which nevertheless remains in the history of journalism and, in a broader sense, in history'; *Corriere della Sera*, 6.8.1980, p. 6).
- ⁷ This is based on the interesting reconstruction of Zulberti's life in Truppia-Antolini (1990), pp. 15-24.
- ⁸ This story can be found in the author's own autobiographical fiction (Zulberti 1937), reworked thirty years later and published in a different form (Zulberti 1965).
- ⁹ On the subsequent chance encounter in Prague see Zulberti (1937), pp. 387-388.
- ¹⁰ Much of this information comes from an interesting autobiographical note published in *Il Resto del Carlino* in 1929 (Truppia-Antolini 1990, pp. 15-19).
- ¹¹ I have already dealt with this theme elsewhere – see Catalano (2015), pp. 20-32.
- ¹² Zulberti describes this exodus from the point of view of a female character in one of his novels, written in the early postwar years (Zulberti 1921, p. 35).
- ¹³ In the early 1920s, Zulberti also pursued a brief political career as provincial secretary of the fascist trade union. Enrolled in 'the first unit of fascist journalists in Venezia Tridentina, established in February 1923', he claimed to have been 'the only journalist who participated in the fascist occupation of the municipality of Bolzano' (Truppia-Antolini 1990, p. 19). He even opened

- his most important novel with a quotation from Mussolini, and ended it with the trademark exclamation (uttered by protagonist, Rodolfo Sudanói): 'To Rome!' (Zulberti 1937, p. 390).
- ¹⁴ See the letter sent by Otto Pick to Čapek from Naples in May 1924 (Čapek 2000, p. 275). Later that year, Ugo Dadone's translation of *La vita degli insetti* (Čapek-Čapek 1924) was published in the magazine *Comoedia*; R.U.R. was released a few years later by Lorenzo Gigli (Čapek 1929).
- ¹⁵ This regards Čapek 1983, pp. 359-360.
- ¹⁶ See the collection of reviews of that period in Alberti-Di Giulio-Bevere (1984), pp. 292-296.
- ¹⁷ No less severe is Cronia's criticism of the introduction: '[the translation is] preceded by some philosophical twaddle and a prologue by the author himself' (*ibid.*, p. 509).
- ¹⁸ The article from *La Vedetta d'Italia* was republished by another Merano periodical (*Il piccolo posto*, 1922, 3, p. 2).
- ¹⁹ See also his reference to the series of literary figures that he encountered in the course of his work (Zulberti 1971, pp. 88-89).
- ²⁰ See, for example, the articles and translations concerning Russian literature catalogued as part of the *The Russians in Italy* project (<http://www.russitalia.it>).
- ²¹ Dietzel-Hügel 1988, p. 1166. See also the editorial in the first issue, released in March 1921 ('*Das Südländprogramm*', *Südländ*, 1921, March, pp. 1-3).
- ²² The episode of the magazine *Delta* is interesting in this context. It dedicated a monographic issue to Czech culture in 1924, edited by Bartoš Vlček, and also featured Karel Čapek's short story 'The Tribunal' (Čapek 1924). See in this regard Boschiero (2008), pp. 268, 271, 276.
- ²³ *La stampa*, 12.03.1922, p. 3.
- ²⁴ See, for example, *Prager Presse*, 14.07.1922, p. 4.
- ²⁵ 'Il Brennero therefore has two aims: first of all, to make the Italians aware of their northernmost province, in all its many aspects, and to create strong sincere relations between the new German citizens, including Alto Adige, intellectually and economically, and the rest of the Italian homeland; secondly, to re-establish ties with our northern neighbours that have been violently severed by war, and to resume traditional relations of mutual understanding with Germany' (*ibid.*, p. 1).
- ²⁶ He speaks of R.U.R., for example, in Dadone (1923). Dadone himself is a figure that should certainly be studied in more detail – for the first information see Tomášek (2007).
- ²⁷ The author's introduction was recently republished in Catalano (2020).
- ²⁸ Other stories by Karel Čapek were later published; see Čapek (1934 and 1937).
- ²⁹ This concerns a reduced version of the text (Čapek, Karel: *Chvála novin*. In: *Marsyas. Jak se co dělá [Spisy XIII]*. Československý spisovatel, Praha 1984, pp. 30-40).
- ³⁰ *Le opere e i giorni 1924*, 11, p. 54.

- ³¹ See news of the success of *Vita degli insetti* in *Le opere e i giorni* (1922, I, 2, p. 64), or references to the Hungarian translation and forthcoming Italian translation of R.U.R. (*ibid.*, 7, p. 51; as well as 9, p. 49), all taken from the correspondences published by the magazine *Comoedia*.
- ³² His first review was dedicated to German literature (Zulberti, *Le opere e i giorni* 1924, 10, pp. 39-42), and the first translation was from Russian (Zulberti: *Lettere inedite di A. Cécov*. *Ibid.*, 11, pp. 28-33).
- ³³ *Le opere e i giorni*, 1924, III, 12, p. 57.
- ³⁴ *Le opere e i giorni*, 1925, IV, 1, p. 52.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 50. In a note dedicated to Marat, Čapek is again named, who in *The Makropulos Affair* ‘tells us that in Marat...his hands were sweating and his breath stank in a truly nauseating way’ (*Ibid.*, 5, p. 62).
- ³⁶ ‘The December issue of the theater magazine *Komedia* [...] will be dedicated to Italian theatre. The drafting of the dossier was entrusted to Taulero Zulberti’ (*ibid.*, 11, p. 61). See Zulberti (*Komedia*, 1925-1926).
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6, p. 57. See also the other news about Czech cultural life (*ibid.*, pp. 57-58).
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9, p. 43.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 10, pp. 57-58.
- ⁴⁰ See in particular *Cronia* (1924). The book was only translated many years later (Čapek 1992).
- ⁴¹ *Le opere e i giorni*, 1925, IV, 10, p. 61. See also the various news on Prague theatre, on reviews, literary prizes, and Czech writers (*ibid.*, pp. 59-61; *Ibid.*, 11, pp. 59-61; *Ibid.*, 12, pp. 60-61).
- ⁴² *Le opere e i giorni*, 1926, V, 1, pp. 54-55; *ibid.*, 2, p. 60.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62. This regards the sections *Obsazení*, *Režie* and *Po premiéře* in the book *Jak vzniká divadelní hra* (also in Čapek 1984, pp. 272-273, 274-277 e 323-324).
- ⁴⁵ The authorised version of Zulberti was introduced by a critical note: ‘It is useless to observe – the aims and character of our magazine are enough to exempt us – that we deeply disagree with certain judgments by Masaryk [...] This is not new and in any case corresponds to the Slavic mentality and agenda’ *Le opere e i giorni*, 1926, V, 3, p. 3). The following issue features the controversial reaction of Alberto Lombroso ‘*Per la Dalmazia italiana (A proposito delle Memorie del Presidente Masaryk)*’ (*Le opere e i giorni*, 1926, V, 4, pp. 13-17).
- ⁴⁶ ‘‘Cecoslovacchia’’. *Le opere e i giorni*, 1926, V, 3, pp. 47-48. Also see the brief note in ‘‘Cecoslovacchia’’ (*ibid.*, 5, pp. 61-62).
- ⁴⁷ ‘The fortunate author of *The Life of Insects*, after having written a series of impressions from England, has completed a new theatrical work, much of the action set in Italy. Now Čapek has left for Egypt where he intends to set a cynical-grotesque drama’; *ibid.*, 4, p. 51).
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6, pp. 56-57.

- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 7, pp. 58-59.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 8, pp. 53-54.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 54-55. This regards the first chapter of *Průvodce po zákulisí* (Čapek 1984, pp. 325-343).
- ⁵² 'Cecoslovacchia'. *Le opere e i giorni*, 1926, V, 9, pp. 62-63.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 11, pp. 60-61.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 12, pp. 54-55.
- ⁵⁵ See the news on the production of Tito Strozzi's *Maddalena* in Prague ('Cecoslovacchia'. *Le opere e i giorni*, 1927, VI, 3, p. 55) and the dispute over the flags won in the battle of White Mountain (ibid., 4, p. 49).
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 6, pp. 61-62.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 7, pp. 58-60.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 9, pp. 62-63.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 10, pp. 68-69.
- ⁶⁰ 'Cecoslovacchia'. *Le opere e i giorni*, 1928, VII, 3, pp. 71-72.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 4, pp. 89-90.
- ⁶² Ibid., 5, p. 88.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 7, pp. 68-69.
- ⁶⁴ Citing the success of Piscator's adaptation, he adds that it would come 'to Italy as well (Bragaglia), if we are not mistaken' (ibid., 8, pp. 79-80).
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 8, pp. 82-83.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 10, pp. 73-76.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 11, pp. 69-70.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., 12, pp. 71-72.
- ⁶⁹ 'Cecoslovacchia'. *Le opere e i giorni*, 1929, VIII, 1, p. 82.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 2, p. 66.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 3, pp. 65-66.
- ⁷² Ibid., 6, pp. 83-85.
- ⁷³ Ibid., VIII, 7, p. 68.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., VIII, 8, p. 75.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 10, p. 69.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 59-60.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 11, p. 55.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 71-73.
- ⁷⁹ 'Cecoslovacchia'. *Le opere e i giorni*, 1930, IX, 1, pp. 77-78.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 3, pp. 80-81.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., 4, p. 54.
- ⁸² Ibid., 4, p. 70.
- ⁸³ *Památník národního písemnictví, Literární archiv, fond Čapek Karel, Doklady vlastní, soubor korespondence, týkající se vydávání děl bratří Čapků u nás i v zahraničí agenturou Centrum, 26.6.1926.*
- ⁸⁴ 'Cecoslovacchia'. *Le opere e i giorni*, 1930, IX, 4, pp. 70-71.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., 5, p. 81.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 6 pp. 76-77.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 11, pp. 86-87.

⁸⁸ Čapek (1935), published previously in 1931 as *Illustrazione del Popolo*.

⁸⁹ See Giusti (1928 and 1929), as well as the excellent articles of Renato Poggioli (1932 and 1934). On this topic, also see Catalano (2014).

APPENDIX

Documents and Photographs

References

Figures 1-3. Alessandro Catalano, *Taulero Zulberti and the Reception of Czech Culture in 1920s Italy* (pp. 59-92).

Figures 4-8. Luigi Marinelli, *Imagines Agentes: The 'Old Professor' as Archive and Place of Memory, or Sante Graciotti and 'Celeste Zofia'* (pp. 149-175).

Figures 9-10. Barbara Ronchetti, *Writing for the Self: Ripellino's Notebooks from the "Sapienza" Archive of the XXth century* (pp. 195-216).

Figures 11-15. Ioana Bot, Angela Tarantino, *Italo-Romanian Academic Relations in the Communist Period: The Example of Rosa Del Conte* (pp. 217-247).



Fig. 1. Cover of the first issue of the journal *Il Brennero* (1922, 1).

„Werstands Universal Robots.“



Questo, veramente, non è che uno dei sottotitoli; tra il decimo e l'undicesimo piano del „grattacielo“ disegnato sulla copertina del libro recentemente pubblicato dalla casa editrice „Orbis“ di Praga, sta scritto il titolo . . . integrale: *WUR*. Il quale, come si vede, è formato dalle tre iniziali del sottotitolo esplicativo: proprio come nelle società per azioni: per cui, se la copertina del pittore, e poeta, espressionista Josef Capek ci ricorda una corrente letteraria già tramontata, il titolo disegnato ci fa subito pensare che il fratello Karel si trova cogli avanguardisti nordici, nel novissimo regno della sintesi.

Ma questo pensiero svanisce, come leggiamo il secondo sottotitolo il quale dice: „dramma collettivo utopistico in tre atti“, o, per lo meno, viene adeguatamente modificato così da premunirci contro qualsiasi sorpresa ovvero sia contro i conflitti paradossali dell'espressionismo; ma questi, già alla lettura delle prime pagine, risultano inesistenti; tutt'al più ci appaiono sotto forma di paradossi; e questi, si sa, non sono affatto moderni; anzi, nel caso nostro, ci ricordano l'olimpico Goethe che agita nella storta dell'ironia l'idea di *homunculus*. Carel Capek à fatto la stessa cosa: solamente à atteggiato il cervello geniale a una serietà didascalica: come se alla sua fatica sorrisse già il premio Nobel per la pace. Infatti nel suo dramma gli uomini vengono creati (più esattamente, prodotti) a centinaia, a migliaia, in serie, come le utopistiche idee di fratellanza che pullulano all'Aia. Abbiamo parlato di „serietà didascalica“; appunto: il grande scrittore ceco è animato, in questo suo dramma (che ci ricorda sotto certi aspetti qualche lavoro di H. G. Wells) dai migliori propositi (per ciò forse lo à chiamato „utopistico“) di educare l'umanità coi metodi paradossali della satira.

Vogliamo pertanto riprodurre alcune scene dello strano lavoro, quelle che a nostro parere sono le più significative ed adatte per classificare i propositi . . . umanitari dell'autore.

DOMIN (il direttore della fabbrica): In che posso servirla, signorina?

ELENA: sono venuta . . .

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— interessa. La vecchia Europa non parla d'altro . . .

— Permetta che io dica . . .

— Perdoni, signorina. Voleva forse dire qualche cosa d'altro?

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— Come sa lei che io volevo chiedere proprio questo?



Fig. 3. Cover of *The Makropulos Affair* edition, Alpes, Milano 1926.