

Alì Babà and Beyond: Celati and Calvino in the Search for “Something More”

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Alì Babà: cave of fables or cave of intellectualism

The journal that Calvino, Celati, Guido Neri, Carlo Ginzburg and Ezio Melandri planned to publish between 1968 and 1972 originated from the idea that it was necessary to break through the boundaries of literature and other disciplines in order to achieve “something more”. This “something more” was not clearly defined but was felt to be urgent. When Calvino met Celati in 1968 at a conference in Urbino and spoke to him for the first time about his project to create a new journal, he was still very excited about what he had seen during May '68 in Paris. He felt as if he had been liberated from a heavy burden and was looking for a radical change, “voltare pagina”. In 1967 Calvino had just ended his engagement with *Il Menabò*, which had been brought to an end by the death of Elio Vittorini, a man who would have been in his element in the midst of a society in turmoil, while Calvino needed to distance himself from it, to change rhythm.

Calvino felt that he was at a turning point, or rather in a phase of transition, in which the militant intellectual who spoke in terms of “we” was disappearing in favour of a period of “non-identification” (Barenghi, *Ali Babà* 14). Furthermore, in 1972 he would become a member of OULIPO, embracing a concept of the intellectual as “giocoliere”, juggler, and demilitarizing his militancy of the fifties and sixties.¹ It is through the younger Celati that he is able to find in the revolution of the imagination an alternative for the dream of '68, in Italy suffocated almost immediately by the “strategia della tensione” followed on the bomb placed in Piazza Fontana in 1969. The collective aim of Celati's and Calvino's project was a journal able to restore literature to its essential role in a period when political and ideological polemics seemed to drain the social function of literary imagination.

According to Belpoliti, who agrees with Carlo Ginzburg's remark that “Celati was Calvino's 1968”, Calvino would never have accepted Celati's ideas about literature without his own experience of 1968. Nevertheless, the great difference between the two – the former shaped in the 30s and 40s by his contribution to the Italian Resistance, the latter formed in the 60s by the experiments of the neo-avant-garde – was that Calvino had difficulty in leaving behind a rationalistic and positivistic matrix of thought to define the relationship between literature and society, while Celati moved from the idea that human society was nothing but an effect of language and

¹ One may indeed argue that creative acts are necessarily political and that any creative endeavour to voice or bring about understanding is also consciously or unconsciously progressive. On the cultural front, the very late Calvino, the writer of *Palomar*, was still involved in current affairs and the book itself was at least partly born out of contemporary reflections published as newspaper articles. Furthermore his posthumous volume *I saggi*, under the heading *Cronache planetarie. Cronache italiane*, brings together 25 articles written between 1974 and 1980, dealing with issues ranging from the legalization of the termination of pregnancy to the Moro affair.

that only through language could one reach for an alternative (if not a truer) view of reality. While Calvino did not want to abandon reason, Celati was interested in forms of the irrational, mental illness, slapstick and extra-linguistic corporeal and oral communication. Significant for the differences between the two authors is an expression used by Calvino in 1957 and quoted by Belpoliti, the idea of "looking at the world while falling into the stairwell" ("guardare il mondo cadendo nella tromba delle scale"), concept in which the gaze guarantees a critical distance alien to Celati for whom "falling" is the starting point of his boundless imagination. (Barenghi, *Ali babà* 39). Another example recalled in the article by Mario Barenghi that makes explicit their divergent ideas is a comment by Calvino on *Comiche*, in which he compares Celati's writing to the naive infantile pictures by Klee. Celati tells Calvino in a letter that he does not recognize himself in this comparison first because Klee stands for "the static and cartesian geometry" that he detests, and secondly because the term infantile "gets on his nerves because it conceives of childhood as a separate zoo". He himself likes nothing more than a "row, when everyone beats everyone, everything explodes, crumbles, parts get mixed up, the world shows itself for what it really is, hysterical and paranoid, and in brief, you have the effect of general madness".²

Just as their views on the function of literature are difficult to reconcile, the same can be said of their project for the envisioned journal *Ali Babà* in the final phase of 1972. Calvino told Celati that he wanted to produce a review for a non-specialized middle-brow public, following the example of the comics' review *Linus*, in other words, to present new ideas using popular forms of writing like the feuilleton. Celati found his attitude too didactic and was contrary to the idea to teach. He

² "niente mi interessa come la bagarre, quando tutti si picchiano, tutto scoppia, crolla, i ruoli si confondono, il mondo si mostra per quello che è, e insomma si ha l'effetto dell'impazzimento generale" (Barenghi, *Ali Babà* 20).

did not want to bother about the ideal readers of the journal, and was more interested in his role as a writer than in his role as an organiser of culture. Calvino and Celati went their separate ways and the journal was destined to remain the amalgam of ideas that it was from the beginning, the virtual status of the project being probably its most appropriate form.³

The story of the would-be journal *Ali Babà* is, as has been shown, reconstructed in all its details by Belpoliti and Barengi in *Riga*, a journal that considers itself to be its ideal offspring. The editorial for issue 14, 1998, describes how *Riga*, when it was founded in 1990 by Marco Belpoliti and Elio Grazioli, wanted to recover in the 90s what it considered to be the main inheritance of the 70s. What this legacy consists of – besides some programmatic principles like the interdisciplinary character of the journal and the publication of monographs – is clearest from the epilogue, in which Celati reconsiders the

³ As a first introduction to the project from the point of view of Calvino and Celati, the two main literary figures, it is hard to beat the clarity of “Congetture su un Dissenso” (“Conjectures on a Disagreement”) the introductory article, published in *Riga* 14, by Mario Barengi. With admirable concision, Barengi sketches out the history of the project from 1968 to 1972 within the wider context of Italo Calvino’s literary and journalistic output, and proceeds to examine the main areas of disagreement between the two authors. As their readers will no doubt recognize, aesthetic differences appear to centre mainly on the role and relevance of the subconscious, the instinctual, and the corporeal. They extend, however, to a wider relationship with cultural values, so that even the possible title for the journal was never agreed upon. *Apocripha* was probably dismissed by Calvino for his Latin and classical associations; *Insiemi mobili* was suggested by Celati and summarily dismissed by Calvino as “orribile”. Finally *Ali Babà* remained in critical memory as the most successful possibility, simply because none of the contributors ever rejected it openly. Barengi sees the main area of polarity between the authors as the role that they envisaged the journal taking on that of a literary version of the successful *Limus*, from Calvino’s didactic perspective, and that of a theoretical reflection on the role of literature from Celati’s authorial stance.

project thirty years later, returning in different ways to the concept of the cave of Ali Babà.

First of all, the cave stands for the enthusiasm felt by Calvino, after his experience of May '68 in Paris, and his younger interlocutor Celati, for the “frantic intellectualism of those years” (“l'intellettualismo forsennato di quegli anni”; Celati, *Ali Babà* 316), the enormous number of new theories, all those books that seemed to them “a cave of Ali Babà” (Celati 317).⁴ Secondly, Celati reflects on the divide between ideas and daily practice, between the essence of meanings and the way in which we perceive and register them, and consequently looks at the cave full of the treasures of European intellectualism with a certain ironic distance, considering it as a warehouse with “intellectual leftovers condemned to become banal objects deprived of affection, like a Coca Cola can thrown into the ditch”.⁵ In the winter of 1971 he returned from the United States to meet Calvino, who was writing his *Città invisibili*, meanwhile cherishing the idea to produce not a cultural journal anymore but something like Oreste del Buono's *Linus*, an ideal formula to playfully collect floating ideas. The title *Ali Babà* now should stand for a cave of fables and not for a cave full of intellectual treasures. This would have meant a change of approach, but it was never put into practice.

Calvino, in the passage quoted by Barengi, stated that Celati objected to his more reader-oriented approach with the intention “to restore, with the help of the journal, the true functions of a relationship with the public: crying, laughing,

⁴ See on this subject Anna Botta, “The *Ali Babà* project (1968-1972): Monumental History and the Silent Resistance of the Ordinary”.

⁵ “residuati intellettuali destinati a diventare presto banali oggetti di disaffezione, come una lattina della Coca Cola gettata in un fosso” (Celati 319).

fear, adventure, mystery...”⁶ In his recount of the final phase of the journal *Celati* shows again to have been more interested in the speculative implications of the *Ali Babà* project. He asks himself what we should learn from it. According to Celati “what we learned was to accept the tenability and the profound instability of any form of knowledge”.⁷ For those interested in seeing what is left of the project he refers to the essays intended for it by Calvino, Ginzburg and himself on the subject of archaeology and traces.

Calvino and Celati: the geographer and the traveller

It is not our purpose here to discuss the form of archaeology undertaken by the different *Ali Babà* writers. We want only to recall an observation by Belpoliti that the titles of the essays by Calvino, “Lo sguardo dell’archeologo”, and by Celati, “Il bazar archeologico”, point again to the fundamental difference between the two authors, with Calvino identifying himself with the archaeologist who investigates and interprets his findings of the past in the hope of reconstructing their context, and Celati reading the ruins without privileging any particular point of view. Paraphrasing the words of Benjamin quoted by Celati in the note added to his essay when he included it in his *Finzioni occidentali* (1986), one could say that, like the Surrealists, Celati is in search of the “*Stimmung*” concealed in those objects that could make them explode instead of recompose (Celati, *Ali Babà* 222).⁸

⁶ “attraverso questa rivista ritrovare le funzioni vere d’un rapporto col pubblico: il piangere, il ridere, la paura, l’avventura, l’enigma...” (Calvino quoted by Barenghi, *Ali Babà* 22).

⁷ “noi abbiamo imparato ad accettare la deperibilità e l’instabilità profonda di qualsiasi forma di sapere” (Celati, *Ali Babà* 321).

⁸ The link between Celati and the Surrealists is Guido Neri, born in Bologna in 1927 but living in Rome from 1956 to 1971 and working as a journalist and as an editor, like Calvino, for Einaudi. Neri was Einaudi’s most competent translator from French and responsible for the introduction of the

According to Belpoliti, what makes Celati author of *Narratori delle pianure* an example for many young writers to follow, while Calvino’s last works (*Palomar* and the essays in *Collezione di sabbia*) remained almost without a sequel,⁹ is exemplified by the images of the geographer and the traveller, the latter fully immersed in the landscape without being tormented by the search of an explanation of origins like Calvino’s Mr. Palomar. Celati himself argued that Mr. Palomar cannot abandon himself completely to the contemplation of the world because of the culture the young Calvino has grown up with, especially the “category of consciousness” (“categoria della consapevolezza”; Belpoliti, *Alì Babà* 47).

This interpretation seems to find confirmation in Calvino’s essay of 1976 about right and wrong political uses of literature. In this essay, Calvino declares that literature is one of the instruments of self-consciousness that society possesses, and that it is a fundamental instrument because its narrative power connects to the origins of different types of knowledge and different forms of critical thought (*Una pietra sopra* 291). He concludes his famous essay as follows: “When we become aware of our disease or of our hidden motives, we have already begun to get the better of them. What matters is the way in which we accept our motives and live through the ensuing crisis. This is the only chance we have of becoming different from the way we are – that is, the only way of starting to invent a new way of being.” (*Una pietra sopra* 293).

école du regard in the late 50s and the critical fortune of Surrealism in the 70s in Italy. When he returned to Bologna in 1971, he became, like Celati in 1973, a lecturer at DAMS, part of the University of Bologna.

⁹ The notable exception are the works by Del Giudice and De Carlo, which are considered part of the legacy of the late Calvino.

This brings us to a discussion between Calvino and Celati on pathology.¹⁰ In a letter to Calvino, Celati defends his position against the suspicion of being irrationalist, arguing that when one considers illness to be a symptom of certain forms of conditioning (“condizionamenti”), then there is only one way to reach an alternative point of view: to pass through the disease from inside, to speak its language without giving space to one’s own voice (Belpoliti, *Alì Babà* 38). This means that consciousness can play no role in the process; on the contrary, reflecting on the way in which one lives through the crisis, as Calvino recommends to his readers, would render the results of this experiment irrational.

Beyond *Alì Babà*: from *Il Semplice* to *Zibaldoni*

Considering Celati as an example for future generations, we want now to have a closer look at the role he plays as a source of inspiration for young writers and new journal projects. Without any doubt, Celati has been an important figure for those who wanted to convey their experience of the 70s in Bologna. We can find Celati in *Boccalone* by Enrico Palandri as the writer-friend “gianni” who advises him to rewrite his pages without, however, performing the part of the professional writer: “riscrivere è pazzesco, me lo ha consigliato gianni, il mio amico scrittore. cioè lui ha detto: ‘che non ti scappi di scriverlo’, che

¹⁰ Aesthetic disagreements between Calvino’s and Celati’s work focus on the role and relevance of the subconscious, the instinctual, the body. The dichotomy between consciousness and the unconscious was one of the themes sparked off by the discussion of Bachtin’s essay on the Carnavalesque. In the letter by Calvino and Celati written at Cinquale in 1969 to Neri, Calvino was actually thinking of a succession of issues centred on the opposite poles of Carnival and Lent, with related themes branching off one another (*Alì Babà* 118). The ensuing pattern did not have any consequence for the journal, but became the structure of *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore*, with the opposition Carnival-Lent transformed into that between the vital minimum and the search for fullness.

vuol dire di metterti a fare lo scrittore, perché il bello di queste pagine è che tutti possono scriverle e che tutti sono scrittori. poi ha detto anche che i miei fogli scarabocchiati non li prende nessuno” (Palandri 18).¹¹

The editors of *Riga*, the journal that hosted the *Alì Babà* project, declared that when they started their review in 1990 they took great encouragement from Celati’s support. This could be indicative of Celati’s role as promotor of literary journals.

Between September 1995 and May 1997, *Il Semplice. Almanacco delle Prose*, founded by Celati and published by Feltrinelli, was a short-lived e experiment that brought out only 6 issues but that has been, at least for one of its collaborators, the writer Ugo Cornia, of fundamental importance (“un oggetto importantissimo”), overshadowed, however, by the simultaneous and more clamorous event of the so-called ‘young cannibal’ writers launched with the Einaudi-anthology *Gioventù cannibale*. The journal consisted of short stories without any critical comment. Celati declares in the first issue that:

È impressionante il modo in cui i critici e gli universitari parlano di letteratura, come se fosse una cosa che loro sanno bene cos’è, spesso mostrando anche di sapere come bisognerebbe scrivere. L’assurdità sta proprio nel partire dall’idea che si sappia qualcosa di preciso: mentre a parte un certo numero di cose che s’imparano per esperienza, tutto il resto rimane un grande mistero. Ma è un mistero nel senso proprio della parola, cioè qualcosa di cui non si può parlare: e qui ricordo che la parola mestiere viene proprio dalla lingua mistero, che significa mestiere in molto lingue europee.”¹²

¹¹ On the influence of Celati on Palandri see also Stefania Ricciardi, “Enrico Palandri, *Boccalone*: une montgolfière vers les années 80”.

¹² This theme is strongly indebted to Neri’s contribution to *Alì Babà* published in *Riga*, starting with the highly theoretical, all-encompassing

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Celati's anti-intellectualism seems here to prevail. Central to the journal is a strong territorial characterization of the Emilian countryside through the item of orality, as has been analysed by Marina Spunta. The issues are conceived as follow-ups of the oral performance of its texts.

A strong presence of Celati and the learnings from the *Ali Babà* experiment is to be found again in the on-line journal *Zibaldoni e altre meraviglie* that in January 2004 celebrated its first year of existence. The journal is introduced in *L'Indice dei libri del mese* by the critic Andrea Cortellessa who highlights the link with Celati. One of the editors, Enrico De Vivo, is the author of *Racconti impensati di ragazzini* that was published in 1999 by Feltrinelli with a foreword by Gianni Celati. Furthermore, the first issue contains a contribution by Celati in which he proposes a "leopardian line for prose" (*linea leopardiana della prosa*). Leopardi's *Zibaldone* exemplifies for him the phrasing of someone who is thinking while he writes, a mobility that pursues the surprise of saying something that was not thought yet, a "mobilità eccitatoria che è l'anima di questa scrittura, e di ogni modo di scrivere non ancora catturato dalle rappresentazioni del reale". Besides the Benjaminian *Stimmung* now it is Leopardi who helps Celati to conceive of a non-rationalist 'affective' approach of reality: "Le condizioni affettive sono la sua [of Leopardi] chiave per uscire dalla triste

question "What is literature. Is this question meaningful?" ("Che cosa è la letteratura. Ha senso questa domanda?" (*Ali Babà* 113). While Neri continued until his death in 1992 to operate as a cultural referent both as an editor and as a scholar, involved in projects such as the publication of Baudelaire's letters together with his students 1980-83, it is hard to establish how, if at all, his participation in the *Ali Babà* project influenced his future work. On the other hand "What is literature? Is this question meaningful?" is the starting point and recurrent theme for Celati's "I lettori di libri sono sempre più falsi", the third of his *Quattro novelle sulle apparenze* 1985.

ragionevolezza delle filosofie analitiche, recuperando energie che contrastano la noia e l’uniformità delle società moderne.”

By way of parenthesis one could compare this lecture by Celati with the one by Calvino on exactitude in *Lezioni americane*. Here Calvino defends the hypothesis that Leopardi, in order to reach the beauty and pleasure of vagueness, dedicates an extremely precise attention to the composition of every image (60). By doing so he is not a philosopher of sensations but rather a cultivator of metaphysics like Descartes and Kant, trying to understand the relationship between the idea of infinite as absolute space and absolute time, and our empirical cognition of space and time (63).

It seems that Celati finally found in Enrico De Vivo from Angri (Salerno) and Gianluca Virgilio from Lecce the ideal persons to bring into being the journal that *Ali Babà* could have been. While Calvino looked for creative and yet generally accepted forms of writing to bring back the confusion of floating ideas to a dialogue with the reader, abandoning in this way the initial project of a cultural journal, De Vivo and Virgilio propose with their title *Zibaldoni e altre meraviglie* exactly the way in which *Ali Babà* could have been realized without betraying its original intentions. According to the editors in their presentation (“Presentazione”) of the review, the etymology of “zibaldone” can be derived from “zabaione”, that is the chaotic status of a work, the tension towards the work but not the work itself, in short a work in progress, a big “calderone (hotchpotch) di scrittura”. Besides the reference to Leopardi, Benjamin too is back into the picture with his concepts of the *collectionist* and the *flâneur*, central to the essays on archaeology recommended by Celati. “Zibaldone” also appears as an anti-genre in which everything is mixed up, thus preventing genres to be recognizable as such. The result of this hotchpotch is *Zibaldoni e altre meraviglie*, in which the *marvellous* is equivalent to the alternative reason of narrative knowledge.

In De Vivo's and Virgilio's own creative contributions to the journal, respectively the "Divagazioni stanziali" and the "Scritti zibaldoniani", many echoes of Celati's thoughts about narration as a "discursive/conversational manifestation of memory" can be found. De Vivo's attempt to give an idea of his personal geography, the village of Angri, is greatly inspired by the author of *Narratori delle pianure*: "Noi dovremmo fare qualcosa di sommamente semplice: dare un'idea dei luoghi in cui viviamo, non snaturarci e non forzarci a fare cose che non ci riguardano molto a fondo e molto direttamente. Non voler fare i registi, i teorici, ecc. Scrivere per dare un'idea, innanzitutto." In thought number 8 of Virgilio's "Scritti zibaldoniani" art is described as a contingent experience, a conclusion that is not the result of some theory but of the earthquake that damaged the basilica of S. Francesco in Assisi.¹³ Also in this case speculation is linked to a form of geography of the ordinary and opposed to the stereotypical reproduction of reality by mass media. In thought number 129 Virgilio comes to speak of *Fango* by the 'young cannibal' Niccolò Ammaniti. Although he cannot deny that the lightness of the book gave him some pleasure in reading, he disapproves of a prose that is "*ancilla* of television programmes".

In fact, *Zibaldoni* is also a political programme, but in an ironically "militant" way, as Cortellessa observes in his review of the journal. This comes to the fore during the first anniversary

¹³ "Un evento catastrofico naturale, come il terremoto che distrusse qualche anno fa la basilica di Assisi [...] può darci la possibilità di pensare a fondo questo rapporto tra catastrofe e arte, al di là e al di fuori di ogni considerazione politica, moralistica, patetica e sentimentale dei fatti occorsi. Arte e natura non sono termini antitetici. In realtà l'estetica deve tenere conto dell'estrema possibilità che tutto venga meno, che un evento catastrofico determini improvvisamente la scomparsa dell'opera d'arte. L'arte allora ci appare come una esperienza contingente, che soltanto una forzatura di pensiero può costringerci a dotare di un valore assoluto e intriso di sacralità." (*Zibaldoni e altre meraviglie* 1).

of *Zibaldoni* celebrated with a text by the editors, first published in *L'Unità* (31-1-2004), on politics and literature. The “something more” that literature could offer Calvino and Celati searched for, is now interpreted in terms of ideas that live and circulate within a community. Leopardi’s “zibaldone” is viewed as an alternative to the opposition between the engagement of realism and the disengagement of the fantastic. Literature according to Virgilio and De Vivo is not a discourse that is technical or theoretical, fantastic or referential, but a “vision” of the world. It is the visionary power of literature that should permit it to break with a self-referential discourse. “Zibaldone”, because of its never-fixed and collective nature, becomes an ideal metaphor to embody the idea of literature as “expression of a community”. Politics has to be understood as “participating with the ‘private’ in ‘communal’ activities” (“partecipare con il ‘proprio’ alle attività ‘comuni’”).

The philosopher of weak thought, Gianni Vattimo, is also called into the debate with his idea expressed at a conference in Istanbul (“Heidegger filosofo della democrazia”, 2003) of considering the intellectual as a priest without hierarchy (“prete senza gerarchia”), or as a street artist (“artista di strada”). He is someone who, in a postmodern era characterized by the end of metaphysics and in the context of antiauthoritarian democracy, looks for the ontology of being not privileging, like Heidegger did, great works of art, but the collective experience of the ordinary instead. Thus the intellectual in its role of priest or artist has the task of constructing within the community a natural continuity between past and actual experiences, helping to find new ways of understanding, and here Vattimo refers to Habermas’ concept of the philosopher as *Dolmetscher*, interpreter.

Back to Celati and Calvino: a “funambulist” and a “priest without hierarchy”

Maybe with the help of Vattimo it is possible to reconnect Celati's and Calvino's views on the function of the writer intellectual. Celati in his epilogue on the *Ali Babà* project describes himself as a “saltimbanco confusionario” (319), a confused acrobat that could be related to Vattimo's image of the street artist. Because of his lack of discipline and his recklessness he is the one who performs best the role of disclosing new ways of understanding: “credo che fossi io ad attizzare di più il fuoco, semplicemente perché ero il più sbandato” (317). Within Vattimo's framework Celati's acrobatisms can be endowed with ‘political’ implications. To Belpoliti, who in the special issue of *Riga* expresses his intention to study *Ali Babà* in order to narrate “an idea of literature and a project of society” (*Ali Babà* 313), Celati objects to leave out the part on the “project of society”, but in the light of the intellectual as *Dolmetscher* this recommendation could be overruled.

Calvino on the other hand is best characterized as a “prete senza gerarchia”. Like a priest he considers giving pleasure and emotions, using literature as a persuasive machine, to be true functions of an authentic relationship with the public. His continuing oscillation between the search for an intelligible order and the impossibility of grasping the world makes him however a priest without hierarchy.

Both forms of intellectualism are conceivable within the era of the end of authoritarianism in Western thought and in Western democracy. Does this mean that the anti-authoritarianism of the 70s that formed the model of intellectual militancy is left behind once and for all? Certainly not.

If one looks at the Italian literary journals that in 2004 dominate the internet, one must conclude that anti-authoritarianism is alive and kicking again. We refer to the front formed against the so-called oligarchy of literary critics and against a society

that after September 11 nationally and internationally is dominated by neo-conservative reactionary forces. The avant-garde of cultural resistance is formed by the on-line journals – or, rather, blogs resisting any editorial hierarchy –, *Carmilla on line*, directed by SF author Valerio Evangelisti, *I Miserabili*, directed by author and critic Giuseppe Genna, and *Nazione Indiana*, co-founded by Carla Benedetti, known for her polemic essays *Pasolini contro Calvino* and *Il tradimento dei critici*. Hot topic in 2004 is of course the Italian authorities’ request for the extradition of ex-terrorist Cesare Battisti, domiciled in Paris since 1990, who, after the protests of French intellectuals and of these ‘warriors’ on the internet was temporarily released from prison until the rehearing of his case on April 7 2004. Even after his escape his case is still defended, as is shown by the section “Il caso Battisti” on *Carmilla on line*.¹⁴

In *Nazione indiana*, that in March 2004 celebrated its first year of existence, one finds a discussion provoked by an article by literary critic Romano Luperini in *L’Unità* (“Intellettuali, non una voce”, 18-2-2004), in which he argues that after Calvino and Pasolini there are no voices of writers or intellectuals to be publicly heard. It is known that Luperini considers the post-68 journal *Alfabeta*, which ended in 1989, to have been the last cultural journal with a collective voice and an intellectual impact: “Dopo *Alfabeta* non ci saranno più, in Italia, riviste letterarie e politico-culturali capaci di esprimere il punto di vista degli intellettuali e la loro volontà d’intervento complessivo. È la fine del dibattito culturale [...] È anche la morte dell’intellettuale (inteso come uomo di cultura generale, capace di problematizzare le questioni in termini etico-politici e di intervenire attivamente nel dibattito ideologico)” (1102). One of the objections to this so-called “party of the lament” (Carla Benedetti) is that Luperini is not aware of the birth of another

¹⁴ <http://www.carmillaonline.com/archives/cat_il_caso_battisti.html> (1 Nov. 2006).

medium of intervention, namely the internet. Writer Tiziano Scarpa in his reaction to Luperini's lament ("La generazione dei padristi", *L'Unità* 26-2-2004) calls him a "padrista", who in order to rule eliminates, or rather ignores the existence of all future generations of intellectuals. Still thinking in terms of generations he does not take note of what is happening beyond the reach of his fatherhood: "Eppure siamo qui. Vivi e fortissimi. In attitudine di combattimento e di sogno." The quest for the "something more" that literature could offer is still in evolution, a cave of Ali Babà.

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