SERGIO MARIA GILARDINO. *La scuola romantica. La tradizione ossianica nella poesia dell'Alfieri, del Foscolo e del Leopardi*. Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1982. Pp. 149.

As Gilardino points out, Italian criticism has concentrated on the Ossian-Cesarotti rather than on Macpherson's text, because it was this translation that influenced Italian poets and critics. Macpherson is sometimes curiously faithful to the letter of his Celtic originals, but, more often, periphrastic, and he frequently invents outright. Gilardino sets out to discover how much of the atmosphere, the characters, the conflict and the stylistic features which had so great an effect in Romantic literature sprang from Macpherson's own fertile imagination and how much came from the original poetry: to establish whether certain ferments stemmed from the general spiritual restlessness in the later eighteenth century or whether they were much older, coeval with the traditional Latin and Greek sources for which an attractive and authoritative alternative was being sought. Gilardino's ambitious object is to investigate the original Celtic poetry, Macpherson's adaptation of it, the nature of the modifications introduced by Cesarotti and, finally, the origin and nature of the influence exerted by this phenomenon on Alfieri, Foscolo and Leopardi. Though his space is limited, he succeeds in presenting a coherent and informative picture.

After examining Celtic civilization and literature, Gilardino points out that the Gaelic language was in decline and its civilization in danger of extinction. Macpherson's "discovery" of ancient texts brought him the enthusiastic support of his learned Edinburgh friends who were anxious to assert and have a basis for their national consciousness. Thus the effect of the Ossianic poems, though always very great, differed in various countries, notably in Scotland and Ireland.

Gilardino traces the development of Macpherson from his two youthful poems in the English classical tradition, but with stylistic anticipations of Ossian, his contacts at Edinburgh, the publication in 1760 of his *Ossianic Fragments* and the motives by which he was animated. If Ossian was indispensable for Scottish prestige and national culture, then Macpherson was performing a vital function. In Europe, *Ossian* introduced such new elements as raw nature, Nordic scenarios, fog, storms and nocturnal landscapes, as well as "the joy of grief," such as the beloved weeping over the tomb of the hero. Gilardino mentions various studies and evaluations of Macpherson's *Ossian* and, by an informative comparison, indicates its relationship to some original texts.

After pointing out that Cesarotti, Le Tourneur in France and Denis in Austria welcomed Ossian because they were conscious of the need for renewal and a return to nature and that their work was revolutionary not only in regard to their own literatures but to Macpherson's *Ossian* itself, Gilardino turns to Italy. Cesarotti realized the inadequacy of the Italian language for the new demands posed by translations from European literatures within the context of a general literary and social crisis. His task was thus more difficult. His translation exemplified how much a simplified Arcadia and a marked desire for renewal could do to put Italian poetry in step with the new times. It is significant that his translation pleased both modernists and conservatives and that he was admitted to Arcadia in 1785.

It would not be possible to follow in detail Gilardino's pages on Cesarotti's mediation and his views on Macpherson's *Ossian* which he regarded as authentic. As throughout his book, Gilardino points out the significance of the Ossianic dispute and Cesarotti's part therein in the general framework of a human crisis which could be resolved only with the acceptance of a new feeling and outlook on life and with the art that would be called Romantic.

Cesarotti "transported" English prose into Italian verse. Among the points that emerge from Gilardino's comparison of passages in the two authors are the syntactical changes with genitives, for example, moved to the beginning of sentences, Cesarotti's treatment of Macpherson's double adjectives, his blunting of the tenseness in favour of a sentimental touch, especially in regard to women characters for whom he uses adjectives more in accord with Metastasian sensibility but who foreshadow the gloomy heroines of full and late Romanticism. Cesarotti introduces a theatrical element by his inclusion of dialogues and his use of shorter metres than the hendecasyllable — which is itself used in an original way — for the singing of a ballad or the telling of a story by a character.

The final chapter of the book deals with the form and content of Cesarotti's *Ossian* in the poetry of Alfieri, Foscolo and Leopardi, but first Gilardino shows how the Romantic situation in *Ossian* of the poet alone before the sun or moon and the theme of the perishing of the universe itself — even if the drama of the poet is episodic rather than central — is softened by Cesarotti, though the figure of nature lost in the distance is a prelude to the greatest Romantic poetry, including Leopardi. For the three Italian poets, Gilardino examines their relation with Cesarotti himself, their comments on his *Ossian* and its influence on their own work. Alfieri found a language and tragic element, Foscolo also praised the novelty of language. There were three stages in Foscolo's work in its relationship to *Ossian*: the youthful poems which include more numerous but superficial traces, the works of transition, for example, *Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*, and of his maturity, that is, *I Sepolcri*, in which are occasional correspondences in images, objects and adjectives. Foscolo eventually rejects the Ossianic isolation and titanism of the poet, since, for him, the nature of man can be observed only in society.

Leopardi saw *Ossian* as being outside the tradition and history of Greece and Rome. In this poetry, the individual is not set against life in general, that is, the "nullità e noia" which the moderns found endemic. On the other hand, Ossianic melancholy is not tempered with the power of joy, as in Homer, Virgil and Petrarch. Leopardi praised Cesarotti's translation and realized its effect upon poetry. The element of nature, says Gilardino, is the Ossianic feature that most affected Leopardi's lyric emotion. A similar situation exists in *La quiete dopo la tempesta* and the *Songs of Selma*. Leopardi also uses the Ossianic dialogue with the moon. Another common element is the poet's thought that solitude is reflected in the things surrounding him, e.g. *Il passero solitario*. There are, of course, also contrasts between the two writers. Leopardi concentrates on the person, *Ossian* on things, without Leopardi's spiritual drama. The latter's poetry is based on a meditated and dolorous conception of the universe, which is fundamental, not episodic. As Gilardino justly observes, *Ossian* was one of a number of points of departure for Leopardi, which he transformed in his immortal poetic expression.

Gilardino has produced a book useful both for the facts expressed and for the deep understanding of the human and critical atmosphere of the time. The examination of Macpherson's own contribution fills a gap in Italian criticism.

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Prezzolini: Un secolo di attività. Lettere inedite e bibliografia di tutte le opere, compilata da Francesca Pino Pingolini, a cura di Margherita Marchione. Milano: Rusconi, 1982. Pp. 156.

Margherita Marchione's first intention was to prepare a complete bibliography of the works of Giuseppe Prezzolini to honour him on his 100th birthday. But she decided later to enlarge the scope of her volume with the inclusion of 25 hitherto unpublished letters, mostly autobiographical in content. The editor realized that the letters do not present a finished portrait of Prezzolini's many-sided character but do, indeed, throw light on the least known period of Prezzolini's life, the years between 1926 and 1981, spent briefly in Paris, at length in the United States, followed by retirement on the Amalfi coast and finally in Lugano.

Prezzolini's letter of 28 June 1926 to Margherita Sarfatti, author of *Dux*, a biography, to some extent clarifies the relationship between the critic and Mussolini. Though he had once invited Mussolini to write a review for *La Voce* and had been impressed with his energetic style, Prezzolini maintained that he did not agree with the policies of Fascism or of its leader. In a letter written some months later, in November, Prezzolini pleaded with Mussolini to release Renzo Rendi, a political prisoner, who had served 6 years of a 12 year prison term for plotting against the Fascist regime.

Prezzolini's letters to colleagues picture a man hard at work on a number of projects, rarely satisfied with the results of his labours. He was disappointed, for example, that his 4-volume *Repertorio bibliografico della storia e della critica della letteratura italiana dal 1902 al 1932*, still considered a standard reference work, failed to attract Croce's notice. Prezzolini, refusing to write for Curzio Malaparte, founder in 1937 of *Prospettive*, argued that he was too used to writing for the layman in plain language which would not be acceptable for a learned journal.

In a letter to Giovanni Papini, written 5 July 1945 from Columbia University, but never mailed, Prezzolini states that he will never return to Italy, not because the country has been devastated by war and was now torn by political strife, but because Italians, who are charming as individuals, lack a social consciousness, concerned as they are solely with their own affairs. Two letters to Emilio Cecchi of 1946 and 1949 reveal the business-like attitude occasionally assumed by Prezzolini who expected to be paid in full for his work for publishers or newspapers. This was not the case with his friends. Prezzolini complains in a letter to Enrico Falqui, who had dedicated a special number of the *Fiera letteraria* to him, that the newspaper *Tempo* wanted Prezzolini to write some articles on Canada. The editors did not realize that Canada was much larger than the United