“CRISTINA CAMPO’S VISIONS AND REVISIONS: THE ESSAY ‘UNA ROSA’ BETWEEN 1962 AND 1971”

CRISTINA MAZZONI

Summary: A comparative analysis of the 1962 and the 1971 versions of Cristina Campo’s essay “Una rosa”—an interpretation of the French classic fairy tale, “Beauty and the Beast”—reveals several small but significant changes. These can be most usefully understood in the context of Campo’s conversion to traditionalist Catholicism: in every instance, the later version of “Una rosa” underscores and increases the spiritual significance of Beaumont’s fairy tale.

In 1987, ten years after Cristina Campo’s death, the highbrow Milanese publishing house Adelphi released *Gli imperdonabili*. This volume gathers together all the essays from Campo’s two collections of prose, *Fiaba e mistero* (1962) and *Il flauto e il tappeto* (1971), as well as a few additional articles, reviews, and introductions that had been published individually.¹ The appearance of *Gli imperdonabili* expanded the public’s awareness of Cristina Campo (pseudonym of Vittoria Guerrini, 1923-1977), who, more than for her essays, is known in literary circles for her poetry (*Passo d’addio*, her first volume of poems, was published in 1956), letters (epistolary collections with several cultural figures have been published in recent years), and translations (primarily of English-speaking writers, such as William Carlos Williams, Katherine Mansfield, and John Donne, but also of the French social activist and philosopher Simone Weil). Campo is remembered as well for her traditionalist public voice in post-Vatican II liturgical controversies. Serious critical work on this writer did not begin in earnest until the 1990s, through to the efforts of a group of friends and admirers. In addition to the genres mentioned above, Campo’s written production includes original prose contributions on a variety of literary and more generally cultural topics—such as stylistic perfection, the role of destiny, attention in life and literature, and the most frequently recurring one: fairy tales, perceived by Campo as profound spiritual and philosophical parables through which young human beings begin to understand their unique destiny.

¹ The essays that appear in both *Fiaba e mistero* and *Il flauto e il tappeto* have been reproduced in *Gli imperdonabili* in their latest form, i.e. the way they appeared in 1971.

Critic Alessandro Scarsella has described fairy tales as “l’asse di rotazione del pensiero degli *Imperdonabili*” (“Poetica e ricezione di Cristina Campo,” 135).² Fairy tales for Campo posit another world, for example; they emphasize beauty and *sprezzatura* as signs of grace and invite readers, through the example of the fairy tale hero, to pay attention, be patient, wait—but also, like the Scriptures, sometimes fairy tales teach just the opposite of what one normally expects: look away, be impetuous, don’t waste any time, they seem to say.³ Thus, for Campo, “The Brave Little Tailor” provides evidence that in order to win against a force greater than our own, we must change the terms of the competition: in the otherwise unwinnable contest against a giant, one should throw a flying bird up in the air, instead of a heavy stone; the protagonist of “Cinderella” enjoins readers to lose material possessions (the slipper) in order to obtain incommensurably greater spiritual rewards; the youngest of the brothers in “The Six Swans,” with the bird wing that will never return to its previous human shape, proves bodily imperfection to be a mystical gift, a marker of the dark night of the soul.

Campo’s first book of prose, *Fiaba e mistero*, came out in 1962. Its five essays included three that Cristina Campo was to revise and republish for the longer 1971 book—Campo’s last, in her lifetime—titled *Il flauto e il tappeto* and made up of nine pieces altogether. The three essays present in both collections are “Fiaba e mistero,” “Una rosa,” and “In medio coeli.”⁴

² For a detailed outline of the role of fairy tales in Campo’s essays, see my article, “Tough Magical Nuts to Crack: Cristina Campo’s Reflections on Fairy Tales,” *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy Tales Studies* 26:2 (2012): 240-258.

³ “La fiaba, come i vangeli, è un ago d’oro, sospeso a un nord oscillante, imponderabile, sempre diversamente inclinato come l’albero maestro di una nave su un mare mosso. Come scegliere di volta in volta fra abbandono ed astuzia, ingenuità e sapienza, memoria e oblio salutare? Uno vince perché in un paese di creduloni e intriganti fu diffidente e segreto, l’altro perché si affidò infantilmente al primo venuto, o addirittura a un cerchio di malfattori. Enigma ogni giorno nuovo, proposto e mai risolto, se non nell’ora decisiva, nel gesto puro—non dettato da nulla ma alimentato, giorno per giorno, di pazienza e silenzio” (*Gli Imperdonabili*, 156).

⁴ *Fiaba e mistero* consists of five essays: “Fiaba e mistero,” “Una rosa,” “Parco dei cervi,” “In medio coeli,” and “Attenzione e poesia.” *Il flauto e il tappeto* includes nine essays: revised versions of “Una rosa,” “In medio coeli,” and “Fiaba e mistero”—the latter with the new title, “Della fiaba”; and six new essays: “Les sources de la Vivonne,” “Notti,” “Gli imperdonabili,” “Una divagazione: del linguaggio,” “Con lievi mani,” and “Il flauto e il tappeto.”

In the nine intervening years, the three essays common to the two books had undergone varying levels of alteration. From “Fiaba e mistero,” which gave the 1962 collection its title, Campo removed the final paragraph (dedicated to Simone Weil, whose influence on Campo’s work will be addressed later in this article); this essay was also revised in terms of style and organization, its title changed to a more generic and academic “Della fiaba”; it tells of beauty and fear as the tragic poles of fairy tales, whose protagonists are saintly beings who hope beyond hope and receive, for their steadfastness, heavenly rewards. Except for a few changes in punctuation and an added epigraph—two lines from seventeenth-century English religious poet Thomas Traherne—the two versions of “In medio coeli”⁵ are almost identical; this essay dwells on the telling of fairy tale journeys, landscapes, rules, and symbols as a link between old age and childhood. “Una rosa,” the shortest of all the essays in either collection, is the one whose modifications, although apparently minor, are most telling and direct in terms of Campo’s artistic, spiritual, and ideological changes between 1962 and 1971.

Campo’s essays usually include more or less extensive discussions of, or at least references to, fairy tales, although only “Una rosa” is dedicated to a specific example of this popular genre.⁶ It is on the corrections made to “Una rosa” for its 1971 publication, therefore, that I will expand in what follows, with the hope of tracing, through this microscopic analysis, the larger processes of change informing Campo’s work more generally during this critical period in her life. With my examination, I hope to begin addressing Massimo Morasso’s plea, at the beginning of his recent book on Campo’s poetry, translations, and letters (*In bianca maglia d’ortiche: Per un ritratto di Cristina Campo*), for a philological analysis of Campo’s work: “Mi chiedo per esempio quando si inizierà a lavorare sulle varianti, posta la reperibilità, mi si assicura da più parti, di almeno alcuni tra gli originali... mi chiedo se non stia arrivando il momento di mettere finalmente a disposizione dei crescenti amatori non dico un’edizione critica, ma, almeno, un’edizione accuratamente commentata dei testi” (21). Morasso alludes to the

⁵ The Latin title of this essay describes Joshua’s command, in his eponymous Hebrew Bible book, that the sun stay still in the sky: “Stetit ergo sol in medio coeli” (“The sun stopped in mid-heaven,” *New Revised Standard Version*, Josh. 10.13).

⁶ “Una rosa” is a short, three-page essay that may be divided into ten paragraphs; given the brevity of the text and the specificity of my remarks, it is to paragraphs, rather than to page numbers, that I will refer throughout the following pages.

critica delle varianti spearheaded in Italy by the work of Gianfranco Contini and summarized as follows by Dante Isella: “Punto di partenza e presupposto fondamentale della critica delle varianti è la possibilità di riconoscere il ‘valore’ (in senso crociano) non solo nel testo rifinito, ma anche in un suo abbozzo preparatorio, in una redazione o in un suo frammento anteriori” (291). Following, in some small way, Contini’s lead, it can be claimed that work on the variants in Campo’s two editions of “Una rosa”—1962 and 1971—allows for a better understanding of the progress of this author’s contribution to the Italian cultural and intellectual scene.

As the title only allusively indicates, “Una rosa” consists of Campo’s interpretation of Madame Jeanne Marie LePrince de Beaumont’s 1756 fairy tale, “La Belle et la Bête,” commonly known to English speakers as “Beauty and the Beast.” Campo renders Beaumont’s title in Italian not literally, “La Bella e la Bestia” (which is how the story is commonly known), but rather as “Belinda e il Mostro,” likely drawing from the title of an almost identical Tuscan tale collected by Italo Calvino in his 1956 influential collection *Fiabe italiane*: “Bellinda e il mostro” (the name of Calvino’s protagonist includes an extra “l”). The rose of Campo’s title refers to the flower that Belle, in Beaumont’s tale, asks her father to bring back to her from his travels—a gift which, although cheaper than her greedy sisters’ wish for fancy clothes and accessories, proves far harder to obtain. It is winter in the fairy tale, Campo rightly notes, and a rose makes for an impossible gift. As it turns out, a rose will indeed only be available in the Monster’s enchanted garden, leading to the adventures so many are well familiar with: the Monster takes Belinda’s father prisoner and releases him in exchange for one of his offspring. Belinda, the youngest of three daughters, is the only one willing to make the necessary sacrifice. Once she resides in his palace, the Monster persistently asks Belinda to marry him, night after night, despite her refusals. She eventually overcomes her repugnance and falls in love with her captor—at which point the Monster is transformed into a handsome prince and the two lovers live happily ever after. As we will see, Campo interprets Belinda’s floral request as the physical expression of a fundamental spiritual longing and, therefore, as the motor of the story.

Consisting of ten paragraphs, “Una rosa” exalts French fairy tales such as Madame d’Aulnoy’s as inquiries into the highest mysteries, inquiries that are far above the work of the prosaic Brothers Grimm (paragraph 1); it introduces a quotation from Perrault’s “Cinderella” (paragraph 4: the fairy godmother’s recommendations to the girl on her way to the ball) by inviting the reader to notice the revelatory qualities of Perrault’s story, and not

just its symbols (paragraphs 2 and 3); it claims that Cinderella's loss of the slipper leads to a far greater gain: the prince (paragraph 5); it describes "Beauty and the Beast" and "Cinderella" as representations of the education of souls away from nostalgia for the past and into the realities of the present (paragraph 6); it says that the Monster is transformed once Belinda has learned to practice attention (paragraph 7), that this by-now unnecessary transformation is a gratuitous joy, much like the joy promised in the Gospels (paragraph 8), and that Belinda's success is due to the Monster's brave and hazardous folly (paragraph 9); "Una rosa" concludes that God does for us what the Monster did for Belinda, though it was Belinda who called her Prince by asking her father for a rose (paragraph 10).

The first paragraph of "Una rosa" introduces Campo's attraction to fairy tales and, more specifically, to the literary ones written in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, mostly by women. Campo begins with a contrast between the perceptiveness of French fairy tale writers, such as Madame d'Aulnoy (Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baroness d'Aulnoy, 1650/1651-1705), and the often uninspired and far less literary production of the Brothers Grimm (Jakob Grimm, 1785-1863, and Wilhelm Grimm, 1786-1859). Campo knows she is going against common critical assumptions here, and reacts to the accusation of frivolity frequently leveled at French fairy tale writers ("Una rosa" opens as follows: "Accusare di frivolezza i favolisti francesi perché adornarono di qualche piuma di struzzo le loro fate, significa 'possedere la vista, non la percezione'"). In Campo's spiritual interpretation of d'Aulnoy, Beaumont, and Perrault, the last thing one could accuse these texts of is being trivial or superficial.

"Una rosa" focuses, as I mentioned earlier, on Beaumont's "La Belle et la Bête" ("Belinda e il Mostro") and, to a lesser extent, Charles Perrault's 1697 "Cendrillon" ("Cenerentola")—whose eponymous protagonist, like Belle, represents in Campo's text a literary figure for the human soul.⁷ Both the 1962 and the 1971 editions of "Una rosa" also mention, in the second paragraph, French fairy tale author Madame d'Aulnoy. In 1962, only d'Aulnoy's "Il ramo d'oro" is cited; in the 1971 edition of "Una rosa," Campo adds a second fairy tale by this author, "La gatta bianca." Campo describes these two tales as "fiabe sublimi... delle quali sembra impossibile toccare il fondo o la cima," though she does not explicitly state, in this essay, what they have in common with "Belinda e il Mostro." In both the

⁷ I will use throughout this article Campo's own titles for the stories—Perrault's "Cenerentola" and Beaumont's "Belinda e il Mostro"—and the names Campo herself employs for the two protagonists: Cenerentola and Belinda.

1962 “Fiaba e mistero” and its 1971 version, “Della fiaba,” however, Campo specifically connects “La gatta bianca” to “Belinda e il Mostro”; in these essays, the two French fairy tales are paired for a common spiritual thrust that elevates them both to the status of parables, “parabole”: “Persino alla corte di Re Sole corsero fiabe che non erano in realtà se non parabole: *Belinda e il Mostro, La Gatta Bianca*” (*Il flauto e il tappeto* 37). In this same essay, Campo cites d’Aulnoy with the claim, generalized to the authors of literary fairy tales as a group, that, “chi sia costretto dalla natura di una narrazione a far uso costante di metafore, difficilmente schiverà il dono pericoloso e stupendo dei contenuti segreti” (35-36).

The arguments in “Una rosa” must be read in this interpretive context of fairy tales as “parabole” and as vessels for “contenuti segreti”; this hermeneutic framework reminds readers of the two levels of meaning that are always implicit, according to Campo, in the genre that is the literary fairy tale. A significant and recurring emphasis on analogy—in this case, on fairy tales as parables and story tellers as prophets—has been identified by one of Campo’s most prolific critics, Monica Farnetti, as the philosophy subtending Campo’s predilection for the use of similes in her writing: “L’uso insistito della similitudine... non è che il riscontro stilistico di questa modalità, o mentalità, analogica, tesa a cogliere—se non a creare—similitudine fra le proprietà” (Farnetti, “Il privilegio” 24). For example, still in the first paragraph of “Una rosa,” Campo makes her analogical mentality explicit in her allusion to Ernst Jünger’s statement about fairy tales: those who write in this genre capture spiritual contents like (“come”) one finds four-leaf clovers in a meadow. Likewise, in the second paragraph of both versions of “Una rosa,” where Campo compares fairy tale writers to seers, she asserts: “... quali rivelazioni in Cenerentola. Lampi che soltanto a simili narratori, dolcemente svagati come tutti i veggenti, poteva capitare di cogliere.” Fairy tales authors are “dolcemente svagati” because they are “come tutti i veggenti.” Precision cannot belong to texts that, in speaking of one world, continually allude to another one altogether.

A universe made of two levels of meanings is best described through metaphors and similes as well as through the more elusive figure of the symbol. When, in 1962, Campo refuses to discuss the symbols of Perrault’s “Cenerentola,” she writes, in the second paragraph of “Una rosa”: “A parte i simboli.” In 1971, instead, she writes, “Lasciando per ora i simboli,” implying, with her “per ora,” an eventual return to them. Campo in this essay never does return to Perrault’s specific symbols in “Cenerentola,” nor does she explore what she calls, “i simboli, già così tristemente deflorati, delle cattive sorelle e dello scarpino di vetro”: with the sexual-botanical

metaphor of deflowering, Campo points to the violation and loss of innocence implicit in traditional interpretations of Perrault's tale, even as she suggests the novelty of her own reading. Symbols, after all, signify in a more complex manner than metaphors or even allegories (another important trope in Campo's work, to which I return below). As Farnetti notes in the essay cited above: "ciò a cui il simbolo rimanda non è 'solo' un altro significato dal suo prioritario o almeno da ciò che esso sembra dire ma è un significato infinito e inesauribile, leggendariamente vago, prestabilito e inanalizzabile, giunto fino a noi dall'infanzia dell'umanità e dalla notte dell'inconscio" (Farnetti, "Il privilegio" 26). Symbols connect for Campo the present and the past, what is visible with what is invisible, immanence and transcendence: Belinda's earthly beauty, to take the most obvious instance, is symbolic of her immortal soul.

Indeed, in her other essays Campo returns to and elaborates on the role of symbols in fairy tales: fairy tales initiate human beings to the power of symbols ("In medio coeli," *Il flauto e il tappeto* 26) and only writers with a liturgical feel for language are able to dominate the symbols present in fairy tales ("Della fiaba," *Il flauto e il tappeto* 50); fairy tale symbols are "simboli di dolore" ("Les sources de la Vivonne," *Il flauto e il tappeto* 57), that "si vestono delle forme più concrete di questa terra"—hence the seemingly odd pair of examples provided: the "Grillo Parlante" and the "Zucche di Cenerentola," concrete objects pointing to an immaterial world ("Attenzione e poesia," *Fiaba e mistero* 64). In his study of the symbolism of fairy tales in Campo's prose, Gianfranco De Turreis contends that the perception of Reality (a noun capitalized by De Turreis because of its esoteric, mysterious nature tied to the sacred essence of things), in Campo's reading of this genre, "si cela dietro le apparenze" and "si manifesta tramite i simboli"—as it does in myth, because of its connection to the sacred (De Turreis, "Il senso della fiaba" 111).

Following the long quotation from "Cenerentola" that makes up the fourth paragraph of "Una rosa," Campo provides in the fifth paragraph of this essay her spiritual interpretation of the young woman's plight: Cenerentola must avoid the precipice brought on by the infraction of a temporal limit: the dreaded toll of midnight every reader of fairy tales knows about. Her voluntary loss of the slipper (which, Campo specifies with a characteristic philological attention, was made of "vaio," *vair* in French, namely gray squirrel fur, and not glass, the homophonous *verre*) becomes her gain, because this slipper will bring the prince to her. Cenerentola is willing to lose "un lembo del gratuito, estatico presente" (the earlier edition said "meraviglioso" and not "estatico"), "del quale una

potenza l'ha rivestita." That this latter phrase should be entirely absent in the 1962 version is significant. Like the adjective "estatico," so often associated with the mystical experience of ecstasy (as a word, "meraviglioso" is more readily identified with the realm of magic), this added phrase refers to the origin of Cenerentola's present: the divinity as power, "una potenza," a phrase that underscores the presence of God in this fairy tale as the beneficial providence in its young protagonist's life.

Even in something as microscopic as the change from "meraviglioso" to "estatico"—or especially in such microscopic changes—a literary transformation may be read. "Authorial revision," we are reminded by textual criticism, "may reflect an effort to achieve more satisfactorily an intended text of a work, or it may reflect a changed conception of the work" (Williams and Abbott, *An Introduction to Bibliographical and Textual Studies* 78)—or, one might add in the case of Cristina Campo, it may reflect a changed conception of the world. Many changes indeed take place in and around Campo's life in the years between 1962 and 1971. The most important of these is the fact that, during 1964 and 1965, Campo—who grew up in a nominally Catholic family—discreetly undergoes a profound religious conversion. In the words of her biographer, the journalist Cristina De Stefano (whose *Belinda e il mostro: Vita segreta di Cristina Campo* was published by Adelphi in 2002), "Quella della conversione di Cristina Campo alla religione cattolica è una storia segreta, difficile da decifrare. Alcuni amici parlano di un ritorno, perché dalle cose dello spirito è sempre stata attratta... Quel che è certo, è che tra il 1964 e il 1965 qualcosa le parla, la raggiunge da distanze infinite" (De Stefano, *Belinda e il mostro* 124). Around the same time, in December 1965, the Second Vatican Council is concluded. Its innovations exert a profound influence on this author's religious and literary life. With the zeal of the newly converted, Campo begins in 1966 her prolific activism against Vatican Two, vociferously opposing the reforms the Council brought to the Catholic Church—reforms which Campo scathingly calls "lebbra," "leprosy," for their ugliness and devastation (*Lettere a Mita* 189, March 1965). Campo is among the founders of the first Italian association of traditionalist Catholics, "Una voce," and collaborates on the *Breve esame critico del "Novus Ordo Missae,"* a tract addressed to Pope Paul VI and criticizing the new vernacular Mass (1969; to claim authorship of this text, Campo uses the name on her birth certificate, Vittoria Guerrini). Beginning in 1968, Campo stops attending regular Roman Catholic Masses and assiduously frequents, instead, the Pontificio Collegio Russicum, where priests are trained in the Eastern Catholic rite and where the liturgy remained in Latin, even after Vatican

Two. By 1972, exhausted—she suffered from a congenital heart disease that eventually killed her when she was in her fifties—Campo moves away from the front line of criticism against the current state of the Church.

Cristina Campo's turn towards Catholic orthodoxy is the most obvious and likely the strongest force that shapes the revisions to "Una rosa" between 1962 (the early years of Campo's conversion) and 1971 (when her orthodoxy is at its climax). The subtle but unmistakably increased insistence, in the 1971 version of "Una rosa," on the mystical and specifically Christian aspects of "Belinda e il Mostro" may be read throughout the essay. In the first sentence of the seventh paragraph, for example, the reader encounters the first of four occurrences of the word "principe" to refer to the character of the prince so frequently central to fairy tales—in "Cenerentola," for example, and, after the Monster's transformation, in "Belinda e il Mostro." In 1962, the word "principe" appears with the initial lower-case "p": the prince, clearly, is here the handsome aristocrat into whom, at the end of the story, Belinda's Monster is transformed. This figure's allegorical interpretation is ultimately left up to the reader. Significantly, nine years later the same word appears with an upper-case initial: "Principe," then, and no longer "principe"—underscoring Campo's identification, in the Monster-Prince, of God and perhaps, even more specifically, of Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace (this is how Campo describes him in a letter: "Ammirabile, Consigliere, Dio, Forte, Principe della Pace," *Lettere a Mita* 218, December 1967). The word "Principe," we might say, is a capitonym, i.e., a term the meaning of which changes when its first letter is capitalized: just as the Moon is the natural satellite of Earth, and a moon may be any natural satellite, so also a prince may be any son of king, but the Prince is, quite likely in a Judeo-Christian context, the son of God. Whereas the prince of "Una rosa," in 1962, is indubitably human, the Prince of the 1971 version of this same essay may well represent God incarnated—no other reading being any longer likely.

In determining the importance of these small changes—how much credence may we legitimately give to the transformation of a lower-case initial letter into an upper-case one?—it is essential to keep in mind the methods and objectives of textual criticism. Textual criticism "seeks to identify the texts of a work and their various states, determine the relations between the texts, discover the sources of textual variation, and establish a text on a scholarly basis"; thus, although literary critics usually "use the term *text* as more or less synonymous with *work*," textual critics "generally use the term in a narrower sense, to refer to a work's letters, words, capitalization, punctuation, and so forth" (Williams and Abbott, *An*

Introduction to Bibliographical and Textual Studies 68). In this narrower sense, Campo's two versions of "Una rosa" invite an exploration of the relations between them and a determination of the reasons for their changes over the years—however small these changes may appear to be. Thus, a changed typography may indicate, as noted in an earlier quotation from Williams' and Abbott's book, a changed conception of the work and even, I would add, a changed conception of the world: the title of "prince" versus "Prince," for instance, may no longer signify secular aristocracy, pointing instead to the distinguishing mark of divinity.

The presence of the Christian God is continuously and explicitly highlighted in Campo's revised interpretation of Belinda's tale of love for the Monster, such as the one in the sixth paragraph. The Monster's friendship for Belinda is described in 1962 as "una lunga, segreta, tenera lotta," whereas in 1971 it turns into "una lunga, una tenera, una crudelissima lotta": the added anaphoric repetition of the indefinite article combines with the substitution of "crudelissima" for "segreta" to underscore the painful passion (or, we might say, *Passion*) implicit in the Monster's loving commitment to Belinda. His is a fight against, among other things, "i giudizi secondo la carne" in 1962 and "il giudizio secondo la carne" in 1971: whereas the plural "giudizi" may refer to all kinds of judgments—human judgments, first of all—the singular "il giudizio" poetically evokes God's own final judgment (though Campo chooses not to make her meaning too obvious by capitalizing the word "giudizio"). Analogously, the risks that both Belinda and Cenerentola take before finally choosing life with their prince/Prince over their previous existence (by lingering at the ball, for Cenerentola, and by returning to her father's home for a visit, in Belinda's case) acquire more clearly spiritual connotations in 1971: "il rischio di un ritorno nel cerchio magico del passato" (1962) is changed into "il rischio di una ricaduta nel cerchio magico del passato" (1971)—no longer a human return, "ritorno," but, more ominously, a spiritual fall or relapse, a more symbolic "ricaduta." This relapse is "come un gelo fuori stagione" (once more, Campo's analogical imagination is at work, as the use of "come" reveals) which jeopardizes the two young women's fullness of life, their present—expressed with a botanical metaphor recalling the essay's title and placed at risk of devastation by the unseasonable frost that is the past: in 1962, "il presente... attende di sbocciare," which in 1971 is lengthened and intensified into "il presente... ha così lungamente atteso di sbocciare."

Along these same lines, to the initial question of this seventh paragraph of "Una rosa," "Quand'è che il Mostro si trasforma ["tramuta" in

1962] in Principe ["principe" in 1962]?" the two editions give slightly different answers: "Quando ormai questo miracolo è divenuto superfluo," in 1962; "Quando il portento è divenuto superfluo," in 1971. First of all, "tramutare" indicates an essential change (from the Latin "trāns-mūtō": it is used, for example, to refer to the alchemical change of a base metal into gold, "transmutation"), whereas the verb "trasformare" more specifically describes a change in shape or form ("trāns + fōrmō")—a more limited sort of change, if you will: the essence of the Monster does not change, only his external appearance does. In the early version, the transmutation is a miraculous object of wonder, the visible manifestation of a supernatural and essential change ("questo miracolo") at a time that has already happened ("ormai"). Nine years later, the same change, a transformation, appears as a "portento," the intimation of something about to happen and not an unavoidable miracle; it is a sign the timing of which is not specified, alluding, through the word "portento" (a word that is admittedly less obviously Christian than "miracolo"), to the future rather than the past implicit in "ormai."

In the eighth paragraph of the essay, the Monster's metamorphosis, be it through the verb "tramutare" or "trasformare," changes from being "ben naturale," in 1962, to "soltanto ragionevole," in 1971. Nature, that is, gives place to reason: this bodily transformation is reasonable, given the order of things; it is not a "natural" form of evolution from a lower being to a higher one, from ugliness to beauty. Rather, the transformation is the effect of Belinda's spiritual growth and it is therefore not as close to nature as it is to reason: reason, unlike nature, does not represent an alternative to the spirit. At the end of this same paragraph, another typographical modification calls attention to itself: the parentheses that closed off the scriptural quotation in 1962—"('A chi ha sarà dato,' dice il versetto che tanto intriga i fedeli della lettera)"⁸—are removed in 1971, eliminating the distancing effect of these punctuation marks and thus inviting the mysterious words of the Gospel into a more intimate relationship with the body of Campo's essay (more on quotation marks below).

The opening of the ninth and second-to-last paragraph of "Una rosa" highlights the importance of Belinda's metamorphosis by turning the 1962 neutral assertion, "Per condurre a questo punto Belinda," into a definite value judgment, nine years later, on the result of the process of transformation described in Beaumont's tale: "Per condurre a tale trionfo Belinda." In order to bring Belinda to "this point" (1962), or, more gloriously and

⁸ Matt. 13.12; Mark 4.25.

symbolically, to “this triumph” (1971), the Monster “lavorò senza speranza” in 1962. This hopelessness is changed nine years later into obstinate and utter madness: “lavorò con la pervicacia della perfetta follia.” Along with faith and charity, hope is one of the three theological virtues: as a figure of God, the Monster certainly cannot be deprived of it. Folly, on the other hand, is very much a part of the vocabulary of mystical experience. Through his tireless work, the Monster, who in 1962 was simply “celato nell’orrore e nel ridicolo”—in Beaumont’s tale, though not in most contemporary versions of the tale, the Monster is laughably stupid as well as horribly ugly—finds nine years later a different shelter: “chiuso nell’egida dell’orrore e del ridicolo.” Ugliness and ridicule, that is, no longer provide a hiding place for the Monster, but rather a protective guard, a shield, a symbolic aegis.

In the first sentence of the last paragraph of “Una rosa,” the madness of the Monster as a literary incarnation of God returns in a change made in the 1971 version: what used to be, in 1962, “Non meno fa Dio per noi, tutti i giorni” is changed nine years later into a more complex statement: “Non meno—e non meno follemente—fa Dio per noi: notte dopo notte, giorno dopo giorno.” The madness of this divine act and its repetitive nature—the folly of the mystical experience—are underscored through both content and form, i.e., through the anaphoric style that is characteristic of liturgical language. The other notable change in this paragraph is the 1971 specification, through the description of a physical gesture, that Belinda’s request to her father happens at the last possible minute: “e fu quando chiese a suo padre, invece di un gioiello o di una veste sfarzosa, quel suo folle regalo” becomes, in the later version, “Fu quando chiese a suo padre che infilava la staffa, invece di un gioiello o di una veste sfarzosa, quel suo folle regalo.” As Scarsella puts it, “il tratto distintivo della scrittura della Campo è l’introduzione di una cifra fortemente psicosomatica nello scioglimento degli argomenti chiave della sua dissertazione” (Scarsella, “Poetica e ricezione di Cristina Campo” 138). The involvement of the physical world in matters of the spirit, suggested by the role of the rose and of the Monster’s own deformed physique, is accentuated in the later version by the father’s own body, his foot slipping into the stirrup, as the participation of the flesh, until the very end, in final decisions that involve nothing less than salvation itself. According to Lara Corradi, Campo is convinced, that is, that “la vita spirituale, per essere tale, ha bisogno del suo opposto, della vita carnale... E la fiaba, strumento narrativo privilegiato dalle donne, è uno dei mezzi alternativi attraverso cui è ancora possibile rintracciare tale insegnamento” (Corradi, “Cristina Campo e la fiaba” 231-32).

This insistence on the role of the body (the Monster's deformed physique, the father's foot in the stirrup) in matters of the spirit—an insistence not unrelated to the workings of symbolism—appears earlier in the essay, as well, in Campo's evocation of the pumpkin-carriage, mice-horses, lizards-lackeys, rags-dress in Perrault's "Cenerentola."⁹ The third paragraph of "Una rosa," just one line long, briefly introduces the fourth, which consists of a long quotation from the tale of a girl's lost slipper; the quotation relays the fairy godmother's warning about the importance of returning home before midnight, lest the carriage should turn back into a pumpkin, the horses into mice, the lackeys into lizards, and Cenerentola's own ball dress into rags. In the 1962 edition of "Una rosa," this quotation appears only in the original French, whereas the 1971 version prints its Italian translation, without the French original. This publishing choice, more generous to an Italian reading public, may reflect Campo's increased readership (itself a complicated subject: Campo self-consciously wrote for a small audience, her writings having been largely ignored during this author's lifetime except by a small circle of literati).¹⁰ The long quotation, whether in French or in Italian, points to the crucial fact that "L'arabesco saggistico di Cristina Campo nasce in massima parte dalla sobillazione del pensiero e della parola altrui. Glossa, parola 'seconda,' allora, ma che senza posa rivendica la propria 'primarietà' epistemica" (Secchieri, "La lampada e le falene" 119).

It is true that Cristina Campo's work cannot be understood without reference to what Secchieri calls "il pensiero e la parola altrui." Among these thoughts and words are those of fairy tales writers such as Charles Perrault and Madame LePrince de Beaumont—of course. But as well, many of Campo's central ideas developed out of her extensive and intensive readings. Not surprisingly, Campo's dramatic turn towards and, eventually, even beyond Catholic orthodoxy brought changes in her relationship with the writers who had influenced her work—first and foremost, Simone Weil (1909-1943), to whom Campo had been introduced in 1950

⁹ The essay "Sensi soprannaturali," first published in *Conoscenza religiosa* in 1971 and reproduced in *Gli Imperdonabili* (231-248), provides Campo's most sustained reflection on the role of the body in the spiritual life: the five senses are as central to Scriptures and the lives of saints as they are to liturgy and other religious practices.

¹⁰ "Poiché lavorò sempre appartata e schiva, amante della concentrazione, del tutto indifferente al mercato delle lettere; poiché, ancora, non pubblicò molto in vita... e la più parte delle sue pagine venne alla luce dopo la sua morte; poiché, infine, anche quella parte si dimostrò assai esigua" (Farnetti, *Cristina Campo* 9).

and whose *oeuvre* Campo worked assiduously to disseminate in Italy.¹¹ Weil influenced in profound ways Campo's initial conversion to Catholic spirituality. Nevertheless, as Campo became increasingly traditionalist in her beliefs, she disavowed Weil and her complex, heterodox, idiosyncratic approach to religious issues and spirituality. When, in 1972, just one year after the publication of the collection *Il flauto e il tappeto*, Campo wrote an introduction to the Italian translation of Weil's *Attente de Dieu*—this introduction was published under yet another pseudonym, male and ecclesiastic: Benedetto Padre d'Angelo—the Italian author had become highly critical of her French predecessor's religious position.¹² This translation, it is worth noting, was brought out by the Milanese publisher Rusconi, which also published Campo's *Il flauto e il tappeto*. Founded in 1956 for magazines, Rusconi only started producing books in 1969, and had rapidly acquired, also because of the kind of publishing choices encouraged and/or supervised by Campo, a conservative and even reactionary label—"Operazione culturale di destra" is what Pier Paolo Pasolini called this company (in De Stefano, *Belinda e il mostro* 165).¹³ *Fiaba e mistero*, on the

¹¹ In 1950, poet Mario Luzi gave his friend Cristina Campo a copy of *La Pesanteur et la grâce*, an anthology of Weil's *Cahiers* edited and published in 1947, after Weil's death, by her devoutly Catholic friend Gustave Thibon—whose conservative religious sensibilities shaped the volume. Campo, her biographer notes, "riconosce subito nella filosofa francese una sorella. Più intensa, più bruciante. Da quel momento, per Cristina non sembra esserci altro che lei" (De Stefano, *Belinda e il mostro*, 51). In 1958, Campo wrote the poem "Elegia di Portland Road," named after Weil's last address, in London, before her death in 1943; in 1959, Campo edited a section on Weil in the literary journal *Letteratura*, drawing from her own translations of excerpts from Weil's *Cahiers* that had appeared in the *Corriere dell'Adda* six years earlier; in 1963, Campo translated Weil's unfinished play *Venise sauvée*; in 1967, she edited and translated sections of Weil's *La Source grecque* into *La Grecia e le intuizioni precristiane* (for this volume, Campo herself translated *L'Iliade ou le poème de la force*).

¹² In this harsh introduction, Campo interprets Weil's refusal to enter the Catholic Church as based on ignorance and on the absence, in Weil's life, of a capable spiritual guide: "Il tono dell'introduzione è sempre più ironico e freddo," notes Negri, "la critica si fa personale: il tradimento che Weil ha compiuto è nei suoi confronti; le stesse immagini che prima erano fonte di ammirazione, vengono ora usate in tono completamente trasfigurato e sprezzante" (120). The introduction closes with an abrasive criticism of the tragic abandonment of the Latin rite by the Catholic Church.

¹³ For Rusconi, for example, Campo promoted the publication, in 1975, of the Italian translation of Monsignor Lefèbvre's writings, *Un vescovo parla*; in 1970,

other hand, had come out with the older and better-established Florentine publisher Vallecchi, founded in the early 1900s and known for its publication of influential and respected literary reviews, such as *Il Leonardo*, *La Voce*, *Lacerba*, and of the work of poets such as Dino Campana and Aldo Palazzeschi.

Weil's influence in Campo's work is ubiquitous. The very choice of Beaumont's classic literary fairy tale "La Belle et la Bête" points to Weil's recurring interpretation of an analogous animal-husband story, "The Duke of Norrøway"—the Scottish folktale, set in Norway, of a cruelly enchanted black bull who is transformed back into the handsome duke he used to be by a young woman's kindness (like Beauty, she was the youngest of three sisters and the only one who seeks kindness and love, in marriage, rather than wealth and status). Both tales repeatedly appear in Campo's and Weil's writings as allegories of the relationship between God and the human soul.¹⁴ But Campo's changed relationship with Simone Weil from 1962 to 1971 is visible, however faintly, from the very first paragraph of "Una rosa." The changes here are microscopic indeed, consisting simply in the addition of one set of quotation marks and the deletion of another. The removed quotation marks surrounded the phrase "come si coglie un quadrifoglio in un prato," attributed, in a note, to German writer Ernst Jünger (1895-1998). Campo, in this passage, is describing how French writers of fairy tales serendipitously capture a hidden level of meaning, "i misteri più delicati," in the folk voices that inspired their work (unlike the Grimm Brothers, Campo contends, whose systematic quest for meaning was considerably less fruitful).

Of greater interest than Jünger's quotation, because of the far more influential role in Campo's work of the writer being quoted, are the added quotations marks around a phrase by Simone Weil. This instance of changed punctuation merits some reflection, particularly given the other changes in Campo's textual relationship with Weil during this time lapse. The 1971 version of "Della fiaba," for example, eliminates the entire last paragraph of its 1962 incarnation (titled "Fiaba e mistero")—a paragraph

the French archbishop had founded the Society of St. Pius X, leading to an official schism from the Roman Catholic Church in 1988 for the Society's refusal to accept the innovations of Vatican Two; Campo was a great admirer of Lefebvre, whom she met and corresponded with regularly.

¹⁴ For an interpretation of the role of these two fairy tales in the work of Simone Weil and Cristina Campo, see my essay, "The Beauty of the Beast: Fairy Tales as Mystical Texts in Simone Weil and Cristina Campo," 157-74.

that consisted almost exclusively of a quotation from Simone Weil (preceded by Campo's short introductory reflection on it). Weil described fairy tale weddings, in that quotation, as representing the spiritual marriage between God and the soul; this was a topos that Campo continued to rely on, though perhaps she was made uncomfortable by Weil's identification, in some of these fairy tale weddings, of the princess—and not the prince or the Monster—as an image of God and, even, of Jesus Christ. In “Una rosa,” quotation marks are added around a phrase that expresses a Weilian notion pivotal to the thrust of this essay: that eyesight is incomplete, that knowing requires perceiving, that “possedere la vista, non la percezione” (quoted in the first paragraph of “Una rosa”) is not enough. That perception should be superior to sight is central, as well as to Campo's essay, to Weil's pedagogy; in Federica Negri's book-length analysis of Weil's influence on Campo we read, “L'esperienza pedagogica di Simone Weil è mirata a trasmettere una concezione del sapere che coincide con l'esercizio corretto e disciplinato della percezione secondo le possibilità della conoscenza umana” (Negri, *La passione della purezza: Simone Weil e Cristina Campo* 37).

Campo moves from the allusion to Weil in the 1962 version to an overt quotation of her words; allusion and quotation being, according to the essay Marjorie Garber has dedicated to quotation marks, “two practices at different points along the continuum of textual appropriation” (Garber, “ “ ” (Quotation Marks)” 670). Quotation marks, Garber claims, are “typographical signifiers” that “may indicate either authenticity or doubt. Make that ‘authenticity’ or ‘doubt’ ” (Garber 654-55). Is this addition of quotation marks a way for Campo to distance herself from Simone Weil, widely recognized as the most important influence in Campo's thought, and for whom the concept of perception was a central one—an instance, that is, to use Garber's nomenclature, of “doubt”? By distancing, in this case, I don't mean so much an instance of “anxiety of influence” in Harold Bloom's formulation—namely, a need, on Campo's part, to resist and challenge her precursor, Weil, in order to make space for her own original vision, Campo's attempt to free herself from Weil—but rather a marker of the ideological divergences that had developed between Weil and Campo by this time in the latter's life. Or is this addition, conversely, a typographical recognition of Weil's importance in Campo's own thought and text—an insistence on Campo's “authenticity” as confirmed by the writer's conformity to the ideas of someone better known, someone whose authority was more widely acknowledged? If the latter interpretation is true, then Campo may here be using quotation marks, to return to Garber, as “a kind of cultural ventriloquism, a throwing of the voice that is also an appropriation of

authority" (Garber 663). Both readings are valid and indeed complement each other, especially given how variable the effects of quotations can be.

Other allusions to Simone Weil may be read throughout the text of "Una rosa." Thus, in the seventh paragraph, which begins with a focus on the Monster's metamorphosis, Belinda's own transformation washes her "da ogni rimpianto" in 1962 and, more precisely, "da ogni rimpianto adolescente" in 1971. What is left, after this transformative, symbolic washing, is in 1962 Belinda's "anima nuda": the nakedness of a noble soul detached from the world and heedless of its own fate. Belinda's nakedness, as Giovanna Fozzer notes in an essay comparing Campo to the medieval mystical author Marguerite Porete (d.1310), represents faith in its strongest terms: "Questa nudità è nobiltà in quanto distacco, lieta indifferenza a se stessi e alla propria sorte; questo distacco è la fede" (Fozzer, "Attenta anima nuda" 79). In 1971, more specifically and with an explicit nod to Weil, Belinda's naked soul acquires Weil's quality of attention and becomes her "attenta anima nuda." The notion of attention figures prominently in the work of the French philosopher, for example in the pages named "Attention and Will" (Weil, *Gravity and Grace* 116-122), where we read, "The authentic and pure values—truth, beauty, and goodness—in the activity of a human being are the result of one and the same act, a certain application of the full attention to the object. Teaching should have no aim but to prepare, by training the attention, for the possibility of such an act" (120); "Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same as prayer" (117). Attention is added by Campo to the 1962 phrase "anima nuda" (becoming "attenta anima nuda" in 1971) as if to counteract, perhaps, the distance from Weil caused by the addition of quotation marks in the first paragraph; or else in order to confirm the authoritativeness of that initial allusion.

The transition from Campo's incidental reading of "Cenerentola" to her more developed one of "Belinda e il Mostro" takes place in the sixth paragraph, through the evangelical theme, common to both stories, of finding one's life by throwing it away (the scriptural citation, "Chi getterà la sua vita la salverà," Matt. 16.25, opens this paragraph). Cenerentola's willingness to lose her slipper parallels Belinda's ability to abandon her former, comfortable life in order to make a new one with the Monster. Like every perfect fairy tale, Beaumont's describes or shares with the reader ("narra" in 1962, "ci mette a parte" in 1971) a spiritual education regarding others—and otherness itself. As Corradi puts it in an essay cited above, "la fiaba è in grado di insegnarci come farci ricettivi rispetto a ciò che è altro da noi" (Corradi, "Cristina Campo e la fiaba" 240). This is a crucial point in "Una rosa," and what was in 1962, rather generically, "un'amoro-

sa rieducazione *dell'anima—dell'attenzione*—affinché giunga a percepire ciò che soltanto ha valore, ciò che soltanto esiste veramente” (the concept of “attenzione” being drawn, clearly, from Weil’s philosophy) changes, in 1971, into “l’amorosa rieducazione *di un’anima—di un’attenzione*—affinché dalla vista si sollevi alla percezione. Percepire è riconoscere ciò che soltanto ha valore, ciò che soltanto esiste veramente” (italics mine). In 1971, then, greater emphasis is placed on the bond, discussed at length by Weil, between attention and perception, through the use of the latter noun, “percezione,” in addition to the verb “percepire” already present in 1962. Furthermore, Campo trades definite for indefinite articles and indefinite for definite ones, so that *the* soul and *the* attention of the earlier version—the definite article “la” making here a general point and referring to all souls, all attentions—become *a* soul and *an* attention: Belinda may be exemplary in representing, universally, “the soul,” as the 1962 version of “Una rosa” contends; but it is a particular story, her own—“un’anima,” “un’attenzione”—that the narrative recounts, as the later version of “Una rosa” specifies. Contrary to their grammatical definitions, the definite article here refers to a generic entity (every soul) whereas the indefinite article is far more specific: Belinda’s own soul.

Campo’s usage of indefinite articles to refer to particular entities, her allegorical exegesis through upper-case letters, her attention to quotation marks and awareness of the fine shades of lexical detail, all indicate the agility and originality, not to mention the precision and effectiveness, with which this writer employs her critical tools. That, through such minuscule revisions, Campo was able to modify the underlying meaning of “Una rosa” thoroughly yet subtly—indeed almost imperceptibly—provides further evidence of this author’s hermeneutic and linguistic skills. In interpreting “Belinda e il Mostro” in 1962, Campo’s originality lay in identifying the crux of the story not in the Monster’s symbolic transformation but in Belinda’s own. This displacement from the Monster to Belinda constituted the thesis of the first version of “Una rosa”: through the shift in *whose* transformation the story was about, the tale’s own significance was transformed—for what mattered, in this early version, was not that the Monster was changed (from beast to man), but that Belinda was transformed (from adolescent into adult). Nine years later, in the 1971 version of “Una rosa,” Campo operates a different transformation of Beaumont’s tale. The radical change, this time, does not concern the characters—Belinda or the Monster—but rather, more profoundly yet, the very nature of Beaumont’s tale and, therefore, of Campo’s own essay. The author’s revision of an existing text may signal that her conception of it has changed, as I quoted

above. Thus "Una rosa," in 1971, is no longer exclusively an instance of literary criticism, however original or philosophical, but rather it presents itself as a religious exegesis, as well. In the transformations of her own essay between 1962 and 1971, Campo transforms "Belinda e il Mostro" from a literary fairy tale about a young woman who learns to love another person's soul across the symbolic deformity of his body, into a religious parable where the Monster is God, the woman the human soul, and the stakes of the transformation engage nothing less than salvation itself.

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