

'Affentheater: Italian Itinerant Migration around Europe between Nineteenth and Twentieth Century'ⁱ

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Theatre of the Apes of the Taddei family. Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.

From farmer to *commedianti*. From Mount Pelpi to the world.

The phenomenon of 'itinerant migration' started taking place on the mountain range dividing Emilia Romagna from Liguria during the modern age, and it blossomed specifically on the territories of Alta Val di Taro between the provinces of Parma and Genoa. From these areas, young and old men, and

in some cases entire families, left their homes to start ambulant jobs of different natures - initially these people did it inside the borders of Italy, later they emigrated to Europe and to other continents - from that of the ambulant artisan to *colportage*¹ and in some cases they were becoming real beggars.

The work of *commedianti* was originated in the area among the municipalities of Bardi, Bedonia and Compiano

and more specifically in the burg around Mount Pelpi. Their work consisted in training exotic and ordinary animals - dogs, goats, horses, parrots, monkeys, camels and bears - in order to guide them during street performances. This is the reason because one of the many names used to label the wanderers coming from this area was '*pelpini*', a name with which the ambulant artists from Val di Taro probably wanted to reclaim their common geographical origin.

Orsanti or *scimmianti*² (other names used to label habitants from this area) started getting so specialized in this kind of art that subsequently they reached the most remote regions of Europe to come back home just every three or four years. Some of them managed to organize companies of several men and arrived to own real circuses. Some of these *commedianti* raised considerable amount of money and generation after generation they kept reinvesting their profits in this singular job, that in the eyes of many still looked like nothing but an alternative to poverty.

That of the animal trainer is nothing but an aspect of the wider phenomenon of ambulant jobs of which we already have many examples during the modern age. This ambulant phenomenon invested many other municipalities on the Apennine range going from Genoa to Tuscany.

The case of *orsanti* has found just a small place in the great number of studies generically dealing with the phenomenon of wanderers on a national scale³; it has been mainly debated by non-academic researchers like local history experts, geographers and simple amateur historians. The main works covering

this subject, as a matter of fact, comes out from the studies of Marco Porcella, a local history researcher and expert in migration from Liguria during the modern age⁴: examining different kind of sources - materials coming both from public and private archives - he has analyzed deeply this topic in a book titled *Con arte e con inganno. L'emigrazione girovaga nell'Appennino ligure-emiliano*⁵, and in other books dealing more generically with the migratory issue⁶.

It is important to notice how, inside the monumental work of synthesis *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana* - a text in which, as underlined by the same curators and editors, 'the declared intent was to synthesize the whole phenomenon of Italian migration abroad with a rigorous and accessible language but with an authentically divulgative spirit' - an essay written by Porcella was included, covering emigration during the first half of nineteenth century, in which he also speaks about animal trainers⁷.

Among the most recent studies, a text must be mentioned written by Giuliano Mortali and Corrado Truffelli, who are respectively a 'researcher and a local memories collector' and a lecturer of economic-geography, authors of other works dedicated to other aspects of migrations related to their territories. This book covers the history of migration of Val di Taro and Val di Ceno. It starts with the emigrations of these Apenninic populations from the modern age, and then tackles about the seasonal, then wandering and finally permanent emigration of the nineteenth century. They also wrote about the intense phenomenon of depopulation that touched these areas during the twentieth century.



The company of the Agazzi family. Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.

Every chapter examines the different aspects - economic, social or cultural - that characterized these movements that could have happened on a small, medium or long lapse of time. They have used different kind of sources: from oral to written memories, from materials found in public archives to that found in private ones⁸.

It may be helpful to read the work by Marco Ascari, that consists in a research largely based on the documents deposited in the State Archive of Parma, above all on those contained in the *'Dipartimento Affari Esteri'* fund that contains the memories of the diplomatic relations between the different offices and organs of the State⁹.

Earlier to these works is the book of John Zucchi *'The Little Slaves of the Harp'*, published in Montreal in 1992, that dealing with the activity of the am-

bulant musicians during the nineteenth century, putting the accent on the numerous aspects of exploitation of 'child labour'. This text is quite useful since it faces the adversities encountered by thousands of minors around Europe and America (above all ambulant musicians, but also itinerant sellers of plaster figurines, chimney sweepers, animal exposers...), and offers a good panoramic view of the socio-economical conditions of Val di Taro during the nineteenth century. Beside that, it represents an interesting attempt to reconstruct the origins of emigration in that area and those of the work of animal exposers¹⁰.

That of wanderers is an ancient 'long-period phenomenon' and was not often that geographically restricted; as a matter of fact we encounter exhibitors of animals, buskers, sellers of ink, sellers of images made out of chalk, and sim-

ple beggars scattered all over Europe. For what concerns European capitals, researchers locate this phenomenon around the sixteenth century. With the outbreak of the First World War and with the consequential frontier restrictions, a sensible decrease in temporary migrations occurs. Some documents show that the activities of *commedianti* didn't stop also during and right after the end of the First World War with a 'ray of action' drastically reduced: since they couldn't cross the borders, habitués from Val di Taro have kept proposing their exhibitions just in Italy.

That of wanderers can be labeled as a 'mass phenomenon' *ante litteram* on a local scale, as a matter of fact it concerned entire villages and communities: official statistics say that from a fifth to a third of the whole population has been directly invested by this process. For example in Fontanabonardi - a small municipality next to Bedonia, one of the villages with the biggest density of *commedianti* - among the 84 families reported in the 1768 census, the request for 71 passports, 52 of which have been given to companies or single animal exhibitors, has been recorded. We are still speaking about mountain communities and, as shown later, they were far from being so 'isolated' or so 'sedentary' as conventionally asserted by a big portion of our recent historiography.

Where did these people learn these professions and above all how to train exotic animals like bears, camels, monkeys and parrots? Many hypotheses have been made: according to some theories, during their many peregrinations, local shepherds have met artists who taught them how to do it¹¹. According to other

hypotheses some paths followed by people from the Parmesan mountains brought them to north-east reaching Russia, later they passed from Turkey and north Africa, then they came back to Europe through Spain and France and finally they returned back to Italy; this exchange of information, through which they have learnt this profession, probably happened when they touched the major capitals.

What is behind the origin of this migratory phenomenon? There are many hypotheses regarding its cause, for some geographers the basic reason of this migration has to be found in the environmental causes linked to territory, as a matter of fact a series of landslides have been recorded on Mount Pelpi around the end of the fourteenth century and this natural disaster probably forced people to move in order to get a better living. These authors have found a justification to their thesis in the data stored in the State Archives of Parma. According to this theory the farther we move from the epicenter of the landslide, the less we find people asking for a passport to cross the borders of the then Ducato di Parma. Realistically speaking, this is just one of the many possible theories that, if considered alone, could bring forth a too deterministic point of view. More realistically this is probably one of the causes being strictly linked to other explanations.

To address the migration of these population simply to the need for subsistence would be oversimplified or, even worse, wrong. Without any doubt poverty is the main cause of migration, but beyond this conclusion it doesn't necessarily implies that low income and



The company of Antonio Bernabò in Germany. Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.

migratory index follow a parallel path, and it does not signify that the socially marginalizing activities like the wandering ones are quite characteristic of the most miserable communities: in the migration choices, several non-economic factors that can be defined as 'cultural' have a considerable weight, of which we still don't know that much¹². Analyzing some documents contained in the Communal Archive of Bardi, and confronting them with the migration data from the same period, we can also agree on the fact that the choice to migrate didn't automatically coincide with a miserable life condition. Besides that, we just need to think that in the same Valley di Taro only five commons out of eleven (Bardi, Bedonia, Compiano, Comolo) had been interested by the *commedia* phenomenon and not exactly for the fact that they were the poorest¹³.

Animal trainers could have been labeled *orsanti*, *scimmianti* etc. according to their specialization. We encounter an incredible array of trained animals: from white mice to squirrels, from goats to stags, from dogs to monkeys, from camels to bears. Quite often these animals had been bought abroad (as monkeys that were coming from Spain) and subsequently trained in Val di Taro by locals, in this way many habitants of the area turned in professional trainers: once the animal was trained, the habitants sold it to a company. The training phase, above all that of bears, started when animals were still really young, it didn't take less than a month and required a praxis as ingenious as cruel.

Considering the high price of animals, quite often buying and selling was filtered by mediators, as the famous Rossi from Compiano, who - at the beginning

of nineteenth century – monopolized the animal trade between Africa and Parmesan Apennine¹⁵. Those who didn't want to adopt this method could choose to buy the animal together with other wandering artists to successively divide the income in four parts¹⁵.

The transport and the exhibition of beasts like bears could represent a strong effort: it was not so rare to see *orsanti* associating in companies, that's an embryonic form of equestrian circus. Even though companies of many sorts were created, their basic profile required the presence of some specific elements: a titular role, addressed to take care of the bear; a *scimmiante* that had to take care of at least four monkeys; a tambour player, necessary to get the attention of the audience; a younger boy (a boy or a servant) that had to take care of the begging at the end of the show. Often this kind of company was also equipped with a wagon hauled from a horse. In the quite common case in which we also had a camel or dogs, some other members (in charge of these additional animals) would have joined the company. Half of the proceeds had to go to the partners, half of it had to cover the expenses. Often in autumn, the company took a break from touring and recovering animals in a stall. While waiting for the spring, two members of the company went back home while the others remained there with the animals.

The trajectories followed by the companies coming from Val di Taro, were preventively planned and not casual. The pre-established destinations were quite often the same, for example, from the lecture of the '*carner*' (a sort of 'travel register/permit register') belonged to

the Dallara family we can assume that in forty years (between the seventies of nineteenth century and 1914) the company of Bernardo Dallara crossed mainly a couple of regions of the Germanic empire (Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg) and five of the Austro-Hungarian empire (south and north Austria, Carinzia, Stiria, Slovenia), touching just shortly Italy, Swiss, Croatia and Bosnia Erzegovina¹⁶. We can presume that wanderers were traveling very fast and that they were not stopping in every town that appears in the stamps on the documents, but they were probably headed directly in those towns where they were sure they would have gained a good amount of money. Probably, then, these companies knew quite well the territories they crossed - reinforced by their customary route. The towns where they used to do shows were quite often small and not that populated: no big town and no metropolis was included in their itineraries. That had to do with the fact these spectacles, for their nature, were more suitable for big and dusty squares of small country villages, much more than to crowded urban streets: big animals could create problems, wagon could have hampered the traffic flow and, perhaps, it is not properly wrong to imagine that the urban audience was more disenchanted and was probably wishing to see more articulated, mundane and 'modern' shows. For what concerns the criteria of the migration we have two tendencies. One 'pioneer' was testing a new area and according to his indications his relatives, friends and countrymen decided if they had to follow his itinerary: it let us know as the news concerning the journey and the habits of wanderers were known by



The company of Antonio Bernabò in Fulda, Germany. Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.

their countrymen. Once decided which were the best routes, generation after generation the families tended to follow the trajectories of their forerunners.

Usually wives, especially if old or in need of taking care of small kids or family fields, remained back home. Many *commedianti*, mostly during nineteenth century, resulted being born abroad: it probably means their mothers were pregnant women that crossed the border following their husbands since young women doing ambulant works 'by themselves' were accused of malpractice. The strong patriarchal tradition diffused in these areas and also the laws, quite often has kept women far from emancipation by denying the possibility to see the recognition of certain rights or more simply of some needs. Wives, according to the laws, couldn't obtain the

necessary documents to expatriate without the agreement of their husbands, that in many cases were unavoidable: in these cases they were forced to ask for an allowance to the authority, obviously male, that was substituting the chief of the family, a praxis that often was not bringing forth a positive response. Anyhow, it all must be said without forgetting that frequently, when the 'husbands and the fathers' were abroad the respective 'wives and daughters' had to take care of the farming activities at the village of where they came from and managed to do it quite well.

Governments from the *ancien regime* on, adopted liberal politics for what regards wandering migrations, that while respecting national and international laws. Ducati di Parma and Piacenza in particular never opposed firmly to the

emigration of his ambulant people, being unable to take care of the needs of his 'mountain people'; as a matter of fact they were afraid that - lacking the primary resources in the place of origin - these people would have fled down to the valleys and into the towns of the ducal territory causing problems of public order. What we said is shown by the many expatriation permits recorded at the end of eighteenth century and released to every wandering artist with the hope that the other States would have been as permissive as those from which he was coming from. That's why in the squares of the capital, beside parmesan people we had people coming from Piemonte, Veneto, Liguria, Swiss, Germany and India: the animal trainers could also come from abroad, but in these registers we can see that *commedianti* from Val di Taro that where exposing dogs, steer, monkeys, bears and other wild animals were the majority of them¹⁷.

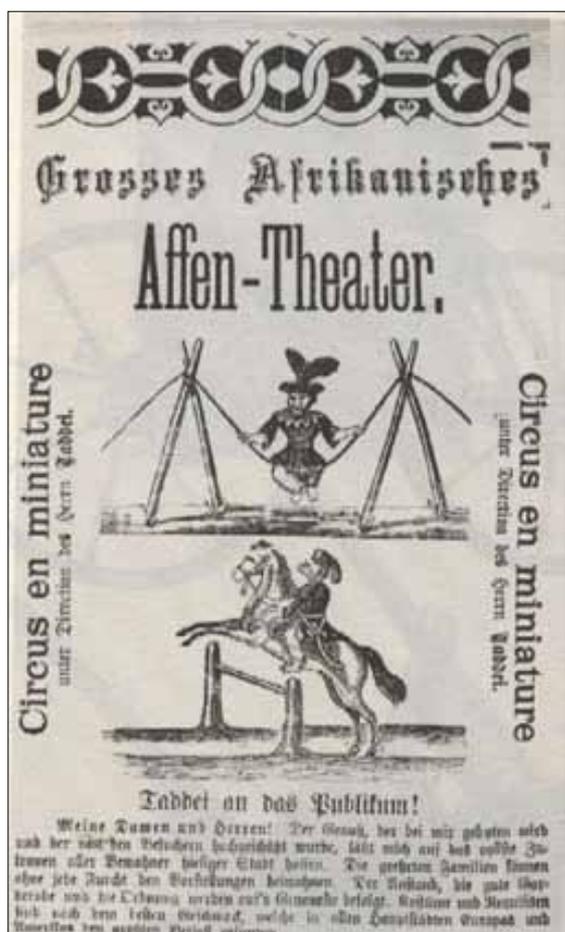
With the annexation of France in 1801, the population from Val di Taro, used for centuries to a good amount of autonomy, was then forced to relate more frequently with government authorities: the temporary migratory activity had to face the conscription duty imposed by the new emperor with the law of 13th august 1802¹⁸. From the general census based on the 'Stati d'anime' (a 'family registry', it was essentially an annual census conducted by parish priests) of the churches started by the French imperial government around 1805 - first census of this kind ever done in these areas - resulted that a considerable portion of the male population was draft dodgering because they were absent from their domicile: in the Apennine department

alone this fluctuant mass was estimated around 4-5000 people. Prefects were charged to discover the reason of a desertion of these proportions and the reports they compiled between 1810 and 1813 constituted the first recognition on a large scale of temporary migrations in these areas. From this moment was introduced the requirement to have a modern passport, released from the police: for a long time it has become the only instrument of migration control and for its own nature it has become, almost immediately, a 'pertinence of the police'¹⁹.

II. Ambulant artists' writing.

To reconstruct the history of these people the few researchers that studied this subject have used both literary sources and public archives. We can find some signifying comparisons by checking notarial deed, but also documents coming from the police and judicial archives. Other interesting information can be obtained when we have the luck to analyze the correspondence of wanderers with their homes.

Thanks to some literary resources we can find a world that had already attracted the interest of the public opinion at the beginning of nineteenth century. That's happened for several reasons: first of all for the fact in these valleys there was a good number of polyglots that attracted the curiosity of many people crossing these areas; it had also been noticed how this particular migratory form caused the migration of whole communities; it attracted the interest of the public opinion (not just in Italy, but also in the other countries where the wan-



Flyer written in German by the Taddei Family, *Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.*

derers were headed) in a really negative way, the exploitation of 'child labour' perpetrated by these wanderers.

Public archives are full of interesting documents that can be useful for our research work, above all in the case wanderers had problems with the justice system. Among the documents saved in the State Archive of Parma we can read the memories of consuls coming from the embassies all over Europe, they reported the presence of compatriots involved in ambulant-jobs performing in the streets and in the squares of the main European capital cities. Of great importance are also the municipal archives where letters



Flyer written in Bulgarian by the Bernadò Family, *Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.*

can be found sent by wanderers to authorities: one of which, written by Giovanni Filiberti on the twelfth of January 1898 and (saved in the historical archive of the town hall of Bedonia) can be classified under the typology of those 'letters to the authorities' to obtain permits for the collection; this is another of those activities that, besides being judged negatively, was transferring money to the place from where those artists come from. Church archives represented another good source of information for this specific study.

For our research, we used this kind of sources, confronting them with some interesting documents found in the private archives of those families involved in ambulant-jobs. Here we have found posters, photos, passports, diaries and

private letters. This helped us to reconstruct the life and the adventures of families like Dallara, Taddei, Belli...etc.

The analysis of documents concerning the families working as ‘*commedianti*’ (a good example of it could be the accidentally found documents belonged to wanderers) helped us to paint a more vivid picture of some of the families that for at least three generations have been involved physically and economically in this particular occupation. The investigation on written materials to reconstruct the singular life of many protagonists helped us to consider the phenomenon from an unusual and privileged perspective. Private documents and letters of these families contributed in defining, and in some cases in re-defining, the aspects of a rural society composed by farmers and small land-owners that developed an intense and at the same time unusual the practice of writing²⁰.

One of these families, as we have seen, is the Dallara family from Fontanabonardi. They owned a company of wandering artists that included three persons, a camel, a goat, four monkeys and a bear. The reconstruction of the trajectory followed by this family (but this can also be said for many other families from the same area) shows how these people were not following a random path: every family was following the same route.

Bernardo Dallara, born October 24, 1854 in Fontanabonardi, has left us three notebooks beside many documents related to his family. Owner of several farms, Bernardo has been owner and prime-mover of a small company of wandering artists until the beginning of World War I. Several times this particu-



Show permit for wandering artists issued to Bernardo Dallara in Switzerland in 1887. Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.

lar job had forced him to stay away from Bedonia and from Italy for a while. We can draw a map of the wanderings of his company by the analysis of many documents and in particular the entrance and residence permits they got while crossing different countries. We have found hundreds requests for transit and show permits; following these itineraries we can see that Germany and the Austro-Hungarian area were the favorite countries of this company. It is hard to see a company of artists following two times the same itinerary twice, on the contrary it may happen to see them visiting the main European cities during the same periods in which these towns



Passport for travelling within the Italian borders issued to Bernardo Dallara in 1918. Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare – University of Genoa.

were organizing the most important trade-fairs and events. Often during the aforementioned happenings this people were receiving some news concerning their families: at the same time this was a good occasion to buy and sell animals or the company itself.

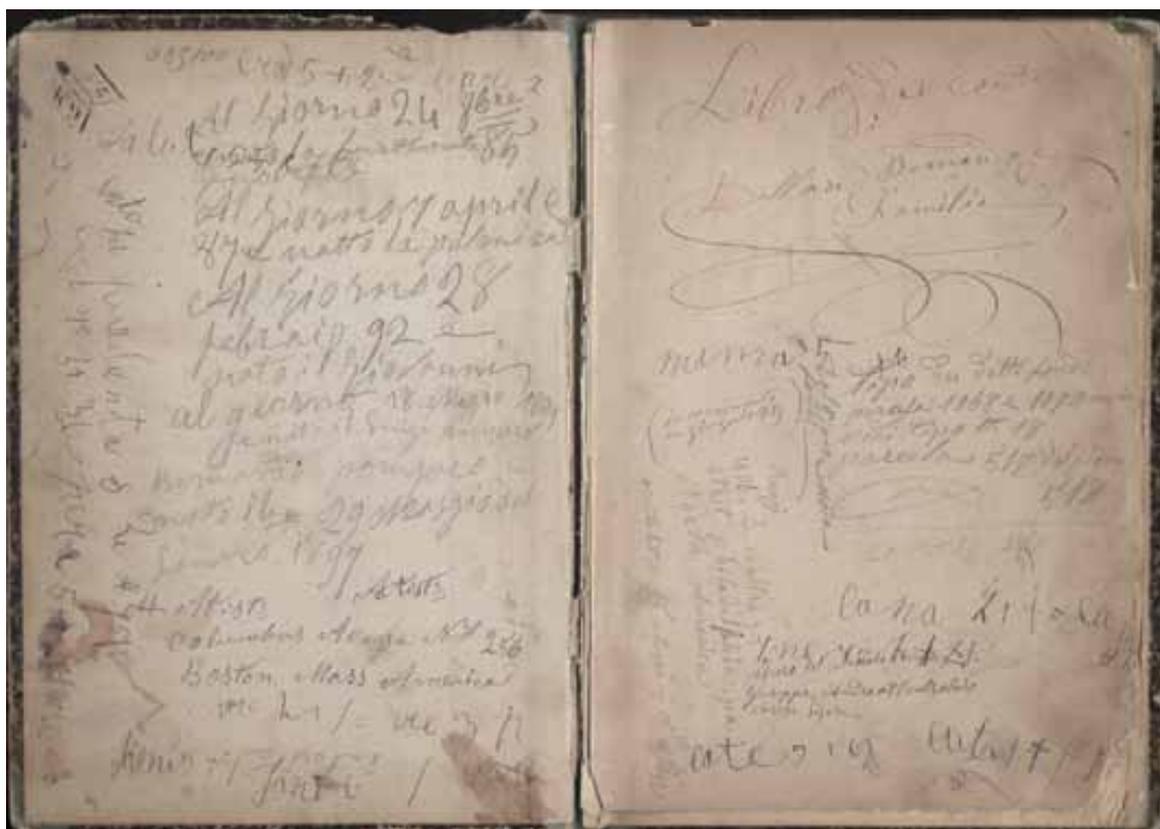
Bernardo Dallara used to face these long tours with a couple of helpers that were working for him: for several years they have been Antonio Roffi and Luigi Agazzi. Among animals they were carrying, there was a bear, a camel, a deer, a domesticated goat, four monkeys and a horse. Mittel-European countries like Germany the Austro-Hungarian empire remained Dallara's favorite places to tour. On the other hand, other companies of *orsanti* from Bedonia during their tours were crossing Russia and the main middle-eastern and north-african towns. Some of them even went to America but

without carrying animals with them, it was due to the fact that entering in the United States with animals was really expensive for them, both for the cost of the journey and for the quarantine imposed by the severe rules of the States. Wandering artists with a few exceptions preferred to move around Europe by foot, this kind of strategy was also useful for the fact in this way they could have continued to do shows and so they could have earned a living while moving.

The aforesaid notebooks owned by the Dallara family, have been presumably written between 1862 and 1935. Chronological extremes are referred to dates reported by the authors themselves inside the pages of the notebooks, but it is possible they have been corrected by interventions after 1935.

The one with more pages presents some characteristics common to many family notebooks. As reported by the author himself on the first page («Account book of Dallara Bernardo and family. (started in June 1889)»), the text originated from the need to take care of family finances, but it shows immediately that the notebook is much more than a simple account book. The first and the last but also other pages of the notebook have been written and rewritten many times for a lot of different reasons. The initial writing is nothing but the framework of a personal diary, a plural and trans-generational diary where the Dallara family is both the sender and the recipient, both the context and the channel of this writing. These characteristics can also be found in the family books²¹.

Bernardo Dallara, is the principal author of the writing, but not the only



Extract from the Dallara family's account book, Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.

one: it looks like he meticulously noted every detail concerning his own business. Unfortunately these notebooks are not undamaged, all of them lacking some pages and none of them really completed or concluded. They represent a sort of collective memory (the family history of several different generations), but also the occasion for a deep and personal reflection: in some words they have become a personal locus dilated.

Judging from the pages left, it appears that the author was used to write regularly, if not daily. Pages follow one after the other alternating different subjects and the different paging choices help the reader - and also the author - to see the change of topic. To read sequentially

these notebooks is almost impossible, part of this uneasiness has to do with the fact the handwriting is not easily decipherable and also paging sometimes changes all of a sudden. The confused cross-reference to other pages prevent the author to write linearly: this proves that many different reasons brought the author to write.

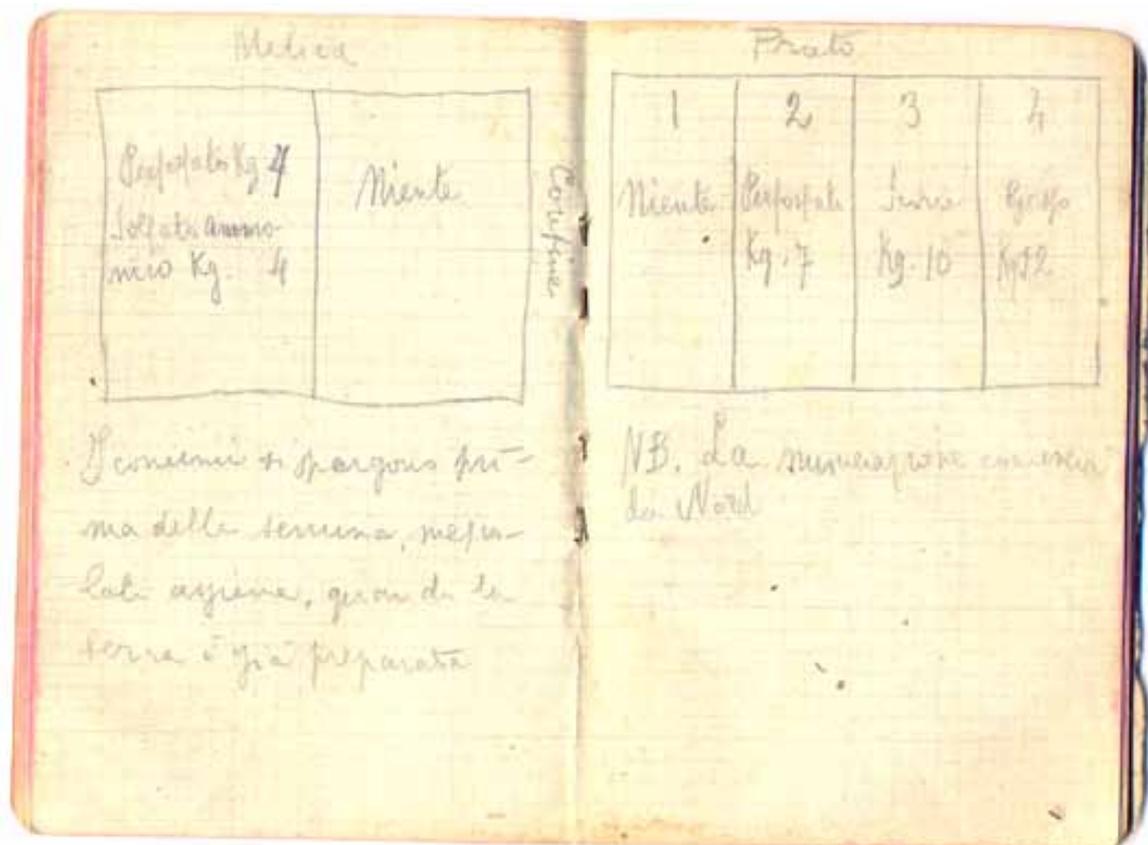
The notebook somehow appears to be an impersonal text, but at the same time here and there it is probably meant to update the reader. The need to communicate and to have a concrete memory aid emerges from a writing that formally is far from being correct or fluent, but simultaneously expresses everything it has to communicate. Dallara's pri-

mary need is to remember dates, facts, names or administration figures but at the same time his words want to give detailed information to any reader, that most of the time is a member of his family. As underlined many times by historian Daniel Fabre, Bernardo Dallara, in this case was forced to write for financial reasons, shares the same kind of urgency of many other writers without writing skills: he was writing 'to remember' the past and the present²².

We don't know exactly if Dallara was bringing this notebook with him during his many peregrinations with his company. From many details we can guess he was leaving his notebook back home so that his wife or his relatives could have

checked it whenever they needed and so that they could update the financial situation of the company owned by their family. These notebooks somehow were the concrete substitute of Bernardo Dallara himself for what concerned his role of financial administrator of the family business. The notebooks had a multiple role: that of an account book, but also that of a family book where reports of births, deaths and other important family facts can be found.

Also information related to trade: Bernardo was making a deal with a sharecropper, and this alone could turn it also into a sort of 'farmer's notebook'. Some pages in fact report the transcription of a contract of sharecropping stipulated



Extracts from the Dallara family's notebook, Archivio Ligure della Scrittura Popolare, University of Genoa.

by Dallara himself: the text apparently looks quite simple, maybe the result of the work of many hands and it betrays a strong oral essence, but it is useful to testify the relationship of the landlord with his sharecropper. Judging from what he has written, Bernardo Dallara was probably quite used to draw up a farmer's notebook.

This example introduces many facets related to the use of writing for those classes normally not used to this kind of exercise. That underlines again how complex is the problem of production in different social classes and how remote were the attempts to write chronicles, reports, memories coming from popular classes. Officially Dallara was registered as an ambulant artist and like many of his colleagues he was known to have a modest cultural upbringing. At least that is what emerged from many of official population censuses, that tells us about a world full of illiterate and poor people. Dallara belongs to that 'grey area' in which we can include small owners, ambulant artists with scarce writing skills but that were used to write on a daily basis as fully testified by the notebooks. Even more astonishing is the fact that he could speak at least three different languages and he was having an intense epistolary exchange with the other members of his family. This is not a marginal aspect of the text: it is the author himself who defines the nature of his relationship with family, friends and employees.

The family notebook had gradually become a collection of information, a real unintentional portrait of the late '800 rural society and consequentially it also became a recollection of informa-

tion about daily life and thus easy to be checked regularly: a source of information that could be easily consulted, safe from getting lost. Most of the information was written on the same page, but probably in different periods. From this analysis we get the image of a life full of encounters, events and above all we get the picture of thick web of relations, an entrepreneur's world where writing becomes an indispensable work tool.

From what emerges from the account book, he had four sharecroppers working for him, several bank accounts open in the banks of Bedonia and a flourishing company of ambulant artists: a considerable amount of money that Dallara never esitated to lend to his acquaintances, friends and relatives, applying interest rates that he calls '*frutto*'. 'Fruits' that increase consistently the amount of money that, for example, in the Parmesan Cooperative Bank by April 12th, 1898, amounted to 19000 liras. During the same years he sold houses and started with the construction of '*fabbriche*'²³, he had a strong net of links with many of the habitants of Fontanabonardi, of many close centers and obviously with Bedonia. A private writing useful to remind to the sharecropper his duties and to the landlord his rights. A written agreement between two partners that evidently didn't have the same contractual weight. Dallara imposes clearly his conditions to sharecroppers, through writings that with the passing of time become more and more synthetic. Through the years his writings tended to resemble a scheme and to leave the shape of an oral agreement, here Dallara reported data and numbers referred by the tenant farmers.

We can also read about *orsanti* and the relation that linked Dallara to the owners of other wandering artists's companies. If with the tenant farmers Dallara showed openly his dominant position, with his colleagues of other companies the relation was characterized by a mutual respect. Unfortunately many of these pages got irremediably lost, some have been erased by the author himself, some other pages have been torn from the notebooks later. From the pages left we can however rebuild the events linked to this difficult work. Dallara was probably used to trade animals and the equipment for the exhibition with other companies and was doing it on a regular basis. Some writings report an intense correspondence that anticipated of by several weeks the meeting of different companies in some of the most important European capitals.

Another interesting conclusion is that Dallara was alternating text written to be read by somebody else to notes and text that were probably addressed to himself, administrative data mixed with some other current events of the time that were hardly comprehensible for somebody who had not lived those occurrences. All of these texts are open to many interpretations since they show us a beautiful but complex world in which the members of the Dallara family have been able to move. Writing here becomes a magnifying lens on the subjective history of many men and women who lived through these complex and controversial times; their history testifies how the experience of these wandering people was much more than mere art of surviving.

Notes

- ⁱ *From peasants to commedianti. From Mount Pelpi to the world* is written by Francesca Gogliano; *Ambulant artists' writing* is by Carlo Staccini. English translations by Andrea Ferraris.
- 1 *Colportage* is the work of 'colporteur', French alteration of Old French 'comporteur', from 'comporter' that means 'to conduct, to peddle', influenced through folk etymology by 'porter à col', to carry on one's neck.
 - 2 These terms that derived from the Italian words 'orso' (bear) and 'scimmia' (monkey).
 - 3 The work of Piero Camporesi, published for the first time in 1973, has been pioneeristic in this field: Piero Camporesi (cured by), *Il libro dei vagabondi. Lo 'Speculum cerretanorum' di Teseo Pini, 'Il vagabondo' di Rafaele Frianoro e altri testi di 'furfanteria'*, Milano: Garzanti, 2003.
 - 4 On this subject: Marco Porcella, *La fatica e la Merica*, Genova: Sagep editrice, 1986 e Marco Porcella, *Maggiolungo*, Genova: Sagep editrice, 1996.
 - 5 Marco Porcella, *Con arte e con inganno. L'emigrazione girovaga nell'Appennino ligure emiliano*, Genova: Sagep editrice, 1998.
 - 6 'Premesse dell'emigrazione di massa in età prestatistica (1800-1850)', in: Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, Emilio Franzina (cured by), *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana. I: Partenze*, Roma: Donzelli editore, 2001, pages 17-44; 'Da girovaghi a emigranti. Lettere da Filadelfia 1826-1831', in: Piero Conti, Giuliana Franchini, Antonio Gibelli, *Storie di gente comune nell'Archivio Ligure di Scrittura Popolare*, Università degli Studi di Genova, Acqui Terme (Alessandria): Editrice Impressioni Grafiche, 2002, pages 15-47; 'Da birbanti a emigranti. Itinerari della povertà contadina', in: Antonio Gibelli, *La Via delle Americhe*, Genova: Sagep Editrice, 1989, pages 37-42.
 - 7 BEVILACQUA, DE CLEMENTI, FRANZINA 2001, pages 17-44.
 - 8 Giuliano Mortali, Corrado Truffelli, *Per procacciarsi il vitto. L'emigrazione delle valli del Taro e del Ceno dall'ancien régime al Regno d'Italia*, Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 2005.
 - 9 Marco Ascari, *L'Emigrazione girovaga parmense a metà Ottocento (merciai, orsanti,*

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- 10 John E. Zucchi, *The Little Slaves of the Harp. Italian Child Street Musicians in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, London and New York, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.
- 11 We're speaking about 'skomorokhi', ambulant cantors coming from Russia. See ZUCCHI 1992.
- 12 On this subject see PORCELLA 1998, page 19, and also the essay of Giovanni Pizzorusso 'I movimenti migratori in Italia in antico regime', in: BEVILACQUA, DE CLEMENTI, FRANZINA 2001.
- 13 Communal Archive of Bardi, *Relazione sulla produzione agricola del 1806; Relazione sull'annata agricola del 1808*, e MAIC, *Statistica del Regno d'Italia. Popolazione, Censimento di Parma*, Torino, 1862-1864.
- 14 Rossi appears in London around 1833. See: Raniero Paulucci di Calboli, *I girovaghi in Inghilterra ed i suonatori ambulanti*, Città di Castello: S. Lapi Tipografo, 1893, page 34.
- 15 On this subjects see also: C. McFarlane, 'Ballo degli orsi, Bear-Dancing, at Rome' in: *Popular Customs, Sports of Italy*, London: Charles Knight & Co, 1846, pages 163-176.
- 16 *Quaderni*, 1874-1914, Dallara Fund, Archivio Ligure di Scrittura Popolare, Università degli Studi di Genova - Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia - Dipartimento di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea.
- 17 State of Parma Archive, *Periodo borbonico. Rubriche, Registri e Copialettere, Estrazione, ed Introduzione di generi, e Licenze pei ciarlatani, Registri 1788-1795*, n. 254-257-261-265. The surnames we find inside these lists would have become well known among animal exposers and animal trainers during the next century: Barberi, Belli, Bernabò, Berni, Bertani, Biasotti, Caletini, Cappellini, Caramatti, Corte, Loporati, Moglia, Rossi, Zamboni.
- 18 See: Carlo Zaghi, *L'Italia di Napoleone*, Torino: Utet, 1989.
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- 21 For an exhaustive definition of these 'family books' see: Raul Mordenti (cured by): *I libri di famiglia in Italia. Geografia e storia*, Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2001, page 15.
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- 23 This construction probably was some sort of steer farmhouse used as animal retirement or a warehouse for the maintenance of cheese.

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