

WRITING AN IDENTITY: THE CASE OF FRANCESCA DURANTI

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Sommario

Nei romanzi di Francesca Duranti emerge un nuovo modo di interpretare la realtà femminile dove la mise-en-abyme diventa un dato di fatto. Nel gioco di "speculazioni" si colloca anche la ricerca di un'identità individuale. La realtà presentata in questi testi è prodotta nel quadro della corrispondenza fra mondo e lingua. Duranti esprime una duplicità costantemente presente nella parola che permette di interpretare la lingua come creazione dell'umanità e quindi suo specchio.

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place
Will not stay still

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton* (Section V)

Writing in the 1980s shifted away from literature as social document, as overt exposure of women's lesser status¹ and women writers have become a powerful force in the Italian cultural and literary industry. While searching for the balance between autonomy and difference on the

¹ Work by Paola Capriolo, *La grande Eulalia* (1988), *Il doppio regno* (1991); Fabrizia Ramondino, *Althénopis* (1981); Laura Mancinelli and Ginevra Bompiani, *L'incantato* (1987) demonstrates a search for new styles, a broadening of scope, an increased intellectual confidence, an aesthetic sophistication.

one hand and emancipation and equality on the other, contemporary women of letters have been able to resolve the tensions between womanhood and authority through a re-definition of subjectivity/identity as it relates to writing, in particular to narrative fiction².

Subjectivity is a central issue both for feminism and deconstruction. Derrida has defined the subject as “a logocentric concept, neither a neutral category of existence, nor a natural category of Being” (1985:16), i.e. the subject is necessarily always a political subject, produced by and within the *polis*. Feminism understands the subject in terms of identity: the political subject is that which remains identical to itself in the face of contradictions. To be a political subject, then, is to have a political identity, a self, a consciousness to call one’s own.

Some women writers attempt to articulate the interconnectedness of differences and identities. In a way, this indicates a subtle return to Hegel’s position that difference should not be understood in terms of pure antinomies, of binary oppositions. The Hegelian dialectic contrasts with Kantian antinomies in that within the thesis stands the difference of the antithesis and vice versa, within the “I” there is always the “Not-I”. In other words, difference is seen as always undermining identity so that it would be more accurate to understand identity as a production “which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (S. Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, in Rutherford, 1990:222).

In the writing of differences and identity, women find themselves paradoxically at an advantage today in relation to men. Marisa Volpi (in Testaferri, 1989) affirms that women’s literature carries in itself a profound and protective unawareness of what we call historicist vision. There is still a great love in women for the civilizing word, a confidence in the power of words³. Women writers cultivate the dream of subverting

² For example, Adriana Cavarero searches for a philosophy “which thinks being male and being female as something originary which demands dual conceptualisation, an absolute duality, a sort of paradox for the logic of the one/many”. While Wanda Tommasi adheres to the so-called “temptations of the neuter”: “access to universal thought is possible, myth tells me, on condition that I become a neuter being, unsexed, who, like the nymph, Echo, loses her body, that I forget my sexual difference” (*Diotima*, 1991: 41-79; 81-111).

³ “When human silence fills space in an allusion to death, a voice [...] is heard from outside: it tells of an everlasting, omnipresent, active force - as if sound, or language, had a universal power more enduring than social communication, able to guarantee links of affection and emotion” (Marina Camboni in Kemp & Bono, 1993: 90).

what Ingeborg Bachmann referred to as “the bitter language of life”. To do so they have, in living, to be aware of the presence of an Utopia postulated by the writing, failing which we have inert literary fiction, mannerism.

The need which drives them towards writing and narration with obsessive passion is in itself so vital that it does not allow itself to be denied by theory. In difficult times, women have increased their ways of participating in the act of creating, allowing them paradoxically to ignore “the crisis of the novel” (the sociological reasons behind it) and to work closely with issues of style, conserving reserves of unimaginable vigour.

The power of language as a social product is [...] significantly re-appraised. [...] Women [are] certain of this space, created from the silence of cultural language and from a universal and inalienable inner power. (Marina Camboni in Kemp & Bono, 1993:90-91)

Women’s novels in the late Eighties do not deal with the social and political role of women in contemporary Italy, nor do they indulge in writing as denunciation or aggressive affirmation of self. Moving away from fiction as documentation of external reality, they share the postmodern aesthetic fascination with intertextuality and the possibilities offered to the creative imagination by pastiche, rewriting and a self-conscious encounter with other texts and different genres.

Like Gertrude Stein, many Italian women writers consider language to be the seat of possibility. Language can lead you to explore worlds in which boundaries between what is possible and what is impossible are continually crossed.

What Stein is looking for in her writing is not *identity* but *entity*: not what makes one identical but what makes one different. [...] Exploring the world through language is a bit of a *game*. A game which distracts from productive and reproductive work; a game which places the creative ego at the centre of the board and impels it to play according to – and beyond – the rules. (Camboni in Kemp & Bono, 1993: 91)

I share Marina Camboni's opinion that linguistic games are one of the most significant ways in which twentieth-century women writers have created their identities. Play increases the range of meanings of words and things, and renders the sense of that meaning more accessible. The truth of a word lies in the cohabitation of meanings within it. This truth reveals the coexistence of tensions within a human being.

The interweaving of life and art, of vital and creative forces shaping identity and subjectivity are illustrated in exemplary fashion in the novels of Francesca Duranti in which she weaves a complex web around the two axes of life and writing.

In Francesca Duranti's 1984 novel, *La casa sul lago della luna*, the protagonist, Fabrizio Garrone, works as a literary translator while aspiring to be a "Germanist". He accidentally comes across a reference to a virtually unknown Viennese writer, Fritz Oberhofer, and decides that he can achieve the status he desires by tracking down and translating Oberhofer's obscure masterpiece, *Das Haus am Mondsee* (The House on Moon Lake). After several futile attempts to find the novel, Fabrizio discovers the last surviving copy in an inn in Mondsee. He returns home with photocopies of this "beautiful novel" and translates it "without effort": "la lingua tedesca si rovesciava con naturalezza per fluire e assestarsi in un italiano parallelo e armonico" (83). His translation so impresses his publisher that he is asked to write the biography of the Austrian writer. Fritz seems to actively assist Fabrizio "nella sua fervida missione di riportarlo in vita" (111), the biography proceeds effortlessly, until Fabrizio attempts to trace the events which relate to the last three years of Fritz's life, during which time the masterpiece was written, and is confronted by a blank wall. Not wanting to admit defeat, Fabrizio decides that "l'unico mezzo a sua disposizione per superare l'ostacolo era di inventare tutto" (116); this includes fabricating the woman who was Fritz's last great love and who inspired him to write *Das Haus am Mondsee*.

Fabrizio "naturally" chooses the name "Maria" (119) for his unattainable ideal of femininity. The evocation of Maria is a triumph of naming: Fabrizio's ideal is created not through an amalgamation of real women but through the organic suggestiveness of botanical and mineral categories (119-120).

Effectively, she is created to establish the "perfetto circolo chiuso in cui Fabrizio era creatore e adoratore, Maria era creatura e dea" (129).

The reciprocity Fabrizio fails to achieve in his earthly life becomes irrelevant in the regressive, totalising and narcissistic fantasy (the *Narcissus Poeticus*) which he creates for himself⁴. Durante comments “Maria is an ideal woman precisely because she doesn’t exist. It’s not that she doesn’t exist because she’s ideal; she’s ideal because she doesn’t exist” (in Wood, 1992).

Fabrizio’s delirium begins at the point where **translation** becomes **interpretation**, i.e. when he ceases the activity of transferring meaning from one language to another and indulges in a narcissistic appropriation of the imaginary (Kristeva). Language detached from its object evokes not reality but apparitions⁵.

The boundary between imagination and reality becomes blurred both for Fabrizio and the reader. The perfect circle, which had been formed by Fabrizio’s creation of his ideal woman, is now ruptured. Maria rejects her role as extension and property of Self and the ethereal ideal becomes an all too real “Other” as readers of Oberhofer begin to supplement Fabrizio’s faked biography with memories of her from the past.

The subject becomes an emptiness to be filled by a world with the “status of mirror, sign, or representation of the self ... a kind of depth-less surface” (Cahoone in Kochhar-Lindgren, 1993:5). The notion of the unified self is replaced by a subject that is divisively constituted by the ways that language “speaks itself”. Narcissus exists just **as** a reflection, a simulacrum⁶.

⁴ A prevalent image in 20th Century discourse is that of Narcissus as a textual subject. His gaze is not directed to the world around him nor to those who reach for him with desire but to the evanescent reflection of himself. “This obsessive self- reflection leads not to the wisdom of self-understanding [...] but to death: Narcissus’s own and that of Echo, the primary other of the tale. The narcissistic logic of this self-reflection, which is simultaneously murderous and suicidal, is a truncated symbolic dialectic that lacks the capacity to recognise that which is other than itself” (Kochhar-Lindgren, 1993:1).

⁵ “Delirium is a discourse which has supposedly strayed from a presumed reality. The speaking subject is presumed to have known an object, a relationship, an experience that he is henceforth incapable of reconstituting accurately. Why? Because the knowing subject is also a desiring subject, and the paths of desire snarl up the paths of knowledge [...]. This dynamic of delirium recalls the constitution of the dream or the phantasm” (Julia Kristeva, “Psychoanalysis and the Polis” in Moi, 1986: 301-320; 307).

⁶ Narcissus’s first and most abiding home, his sign, is the self-reflexivity of narrative. The mirror of fiction does not naively and mimetically reflect its subject matter. Rather, fiction transforms the writer, the reader and society by a critical unmasking of the forms of death.

The reflection of Maria in the figure of Petra Ebner, her supposed granddaughter, completes the effect of a narrative hall of mirrors. Petra produces letters ostensibly written by Fritz to Maria, writing confirms the reality of existence and a tautological interdependence of life and art is established:

La donna che non era mai esistita aveva sistemato lo scrittore morto: nella casa rimanevano faccia a faccia le due propaggini dell'una e dell'altro, i due tentacoli protesi nel presente. (182)

Fabrizio continuously questions the reality of the situation in which he finds himself: all certainty falls away and he ceases to feel as if his mind is a centralising mechanism with the power to discern and to unify. His obsessive self-reflection leads not to the wisdom of self-understanding but to death. Fabrizio's narcissism is a turning away from the reality outside the ego, an avoidance of the expenditure involved in separation and the energy involved in existence.

The novel is inspired by the traditional ambiguity between the glorification and the damnation of a literary vocation. The (creative) passion which generates art cannot permit life: in order to bring back to life that which has been, the artist violates and destroys that which is/exists (150).

Writing itself is not creation *ex nihilo* as much as it is re-creation, mediation between a private observation and possession and a language for everyone. That is why, in Durante's words, the protagonist is a translator, an intermediary between the real and the imaginary. In the novel the intermediary gives in to the mesmerising power of the imaginary but, in comparing himself to an alchemist (179-180; 172-3). Fabrizio, even if only as an interlocutor, still manifests the illusion of controlling both the world of the living and that of ghosts, of being a demiurge (i.e. of having creative power) and not an "impotent spectator" (182; 175).

Valentina, the protagonist of *Effetti personali* (1988) is a literary translator like Fabrizio and her quest for self is also mediated through art.

Valentina's quest is to find the best selling author Milos Jarco and to interview him in order to establish just how he manages to maintain a perfect ideological equilibrium in his writing between East and West and

how his books have achieved major critical acclaim while being a great commercial success. This quest is inextricably linked to the search for her own identity and for the “via di mezzo” (22-23; 126).

The protagonist’s ex-husband appropriates what remains of her identity by removing the brass name plate from the front door of their (now her) apartment⁷. Thus her name no longer names her, it has no solidity. This moment of revelation comes to her early in the novel (9) and her recognition of herself as a subject inhabited by lack and without “personal effects” acts as the narrative motor.

Dovevo poter dire *mio* riferendomi a qualcos’altro [...] Non avevo [...] mai avuto occasione di poter veramente dire *mio*; o di pensare *mio*. [...] ora per la prima volta vedevo che l’inevitabile conseguenza era di non saper più da che parte cominciare per dire *io*, ecco tutto. Altro che *Avere o Essere!* *Avere per Essere!* Io non avevo più niente, quindi non ero più niente, ecco tutto. E anche risalendo nel passato non riuscivo a trovare qualcosa di solido su cui fermare lo sguardo e dire [...] quella lì sono io. Vedevo solo nebbia. Chi è io? Che roba è? (11)

She embarks on a journey which seeks to fill the absence, the planned interview with the elusive author representing her only hope of survival by allowing her to keep on writing.

The novel demands an interactive reading: through her confrontation with the circularities and false trails of the foreign city (and of the text), the narrator/explorer (and with her the reader) must choose which path (and thus which reading) to pursue. The act of writing is equated to the charting of unknown territories.

The “punto di mezzo” becomes a recurring motif in the novel. The broad, deserted Hapsburg avenue which divides the city in half, creating two antithetical cities, is its physical representation:

città doppia, due caotici emisferi cuciti insieme da [un’] anacronistica Promenade austro-ungarica dove nessuno mette piede altro che per

⁷ “Tutto il mio lavoro dei dieci anni lo hai capitalizzato sul tuo nome, e il tuo nome te lo sei portato via [...] svitando la targa d’ottone della porta di casa [...] e io ho cessato di esistere” (37).

schizzare rapidamente da una parte all'altra [...] ha anche una doppia verità. (64)

la vita della città si svolge a destra o a sinistra del viale asburgico, il quale da parte sua, funge da linea di demarcazione virtuale, piuttosto che da elemento topografico reale. (77)

The street has the disconcerting effect of altering the characters' spatial perspective (94) when they cross from one side to the other, raising complex questions around truth and falsehood (104, 166). It seems as though the world exists only as artifice, misunderstanding, falsehood. A perception which culminates in the discovery that the author for whom she is searching turns out to be the product of a great literary fraud. There is no Ultimate Author, only a textual architect (150) who has perfected the recipe for writing stories (139, 151): the perfect "literature machine".

On the journey back, with Ante's book "posato sul sedile accanto a me come un passeggero, [che] mi parla e mi ascolta come fossi tu, angelo, ormai mio per sempre" (166), the narrator (and the reader), saturated with emotions and with writing, begins to apprehend not merely the accumulation of obstacles the text has set up against the quest for "a" meaning, but, more significantly, the fact that the text itself has become both quest and obstruction. The text has first written itself into being through the intervention of the reader, and then "erased" itself as part of the same process.

Valentina realises that true maturity comes from being able to return with a renewed spirit to a past made up of trifling habits and of everyday affections, to a "sistema di oggetti" which, if initially considered inadequate (11), now is repropounded in a reassuring, even consoling manner. It is the only base from which one can start to found an existence and to give it a solid, warm orientation, beyond ideals and ideologies. The reference to the "pezzo di carta e [il] pennarello per fare una nuova targhetta provvisoria intanto che ordin[a] quella di ottone" (166) is evidence of this renewed vital charge. Thus, while it is obvious that the novel aims to render the reader suspicious of words and of the consequent identities that are constructed through language, at the same time it demonstrates how "reality" and identity can be constructed by

writing and how writing can become “life”: “nel punto esatto dove l’ultima illusione è caduta, lì comincia la commedia” (167).

The novel manipulates the idea of similarity but also of difference between the two protagonists. To paraphrase Wilhelm von Humboldt⁸, one could hazard the hypothesis that these stories show a profoundly formal instance of the duality which is inscribed in the universe (night and day, earth and sky, the two sexes ...); in the human mind as categories (being- non being, I-World, thesis-refutation) and in society as the basis for interaction (I-you, I-s/he)⁹.

The flow of two concurrent tales (Valentina’s quest and Ante’s story) creates concentric, labyrinthine narrative movements in which the characters lose themselves as if besieged by duplicity, overcome by a wave of memories, doubts, solitude. The questions which accompany the labyrinthine journey are at times “inquietanti, inutili, come ipotesi senza fondamento, lontane anche dalla parvenza della verità. Del resto l’infedeltà percorre un identico labirinto e al fondo rimanda la stessa luce, questa però è solo il riflesso di uno specchio” (Morazzoni, 1988:126-7).

Beyond mere reversibility, there is a negativity inherent in projecting desire: the attempt to *give form*, to create an ideal to counteract the sterility of existence leads only to a mirage of desire, an empty fantasy that will disappoint the desires projected upon it, thus suggesting the kinetic nature of desire in fantasy, even when accompanied by a knowledge of the real. Duranti’s novel “embodies the sense in which we control and yet are controlled by language, in which we write and are written” (Faris, 1988:4).

The theme of counterfeiting/falsification is central to Duranti’s writing. Fabrizio’s creation of Maria (doubly false because a fictional character creates an-other fictional character) in *La casa sul lago della*

⁸ Cfr. Vallini’s discussion on the languages expressed by the two genders in Arru e Chialant, 1990:261-272.

⁹ In this context, Cristina Vallini’s perspicacious linguistic reading of the biblical Creation story notes that Adam (archetype of Man in Western culture) “si nomina per la prima volta *al femminile (ish-a)* nel momento in cui *si* riconosce nell’aiuto “simile a sé”, e dopo che ha completamente allontanato da sé il resto del mondo, nominandolo [...] Il riconoscimento dell’uomo nello “specchio” femminile coincide - significativamente - con la creazione tutta umana della grammatica (*ish-a* è forma flessa): in questo quadro il “cantico” di gioia di Adamo di fronte alla Donna (“carne della mia carne, osso delle mie ossa”) fa emergere, nella sua stessa struttura, la *forma* della differenza nell’identità” (in Arru e Chialant, 1990: 271-272).

luna; the collective fraud perpetuated in the creation of the “false writer” in *Effetti personali*; the forgery of ancient works of art in *Lieto fine* (1987) by the protagonist, Aldo, who then amasses a vast fortune by selling them, all suggest the artist’s difficulty in the 20th century with coming to grips with reality directly.

The focus of Duranti’s novels, except perhaps in her first and most autobiographical, *La bambina* (1975), has been on the representation of writers/artists. Although Duranti draws on her own life as a source for her art, as a self-conscious literary artist, she takes the complex relationship between life and art, and thus the intermingling of truth and fiction as her actual subject.

Appropriately, the cover illustration of her latest book, *Ultima stesura* (1991), reproduces a fifteenth century French miniature which depicts a painter painting her own self-portrait, while looking at herself in the mirror. The book is explicitly a meta-narrative and the “I”-narrator is a woman writer, writing about her own earlier work¹⁰, thus the illustration acts as an over-arching *mise en abyme*. The *mise en abyme* structure, the self-reflexive game of mirrors become ever more complex:

*Ho scritto il racconto di una che scrive il racconto di uno
che scrive un racconto mentre cerca di vampirizzare un
altro scrittore allo scopo di spremere un romanzo dalle sue
riluttanti viscere. Siamo arrivati alla quarta potenza del
meta-meta. (160)*

Of course, Duranti as the “external author”, the creator of the whole, is writing and reflecting about her own act of writing¹¹. The infinite deferral of the *mise en abyme* structure¹² is used by Duranti to make “us

¹⁰ There are explicit intertextual references such as the one Duranti’s first novel, *La bambina*: “Dopo che ho ritrovato quella bambina, raccontarla è stato un volo. Centosettanta pagine scritte, corrette, riscritte. E pubblicate” (68).

¹¹ The self referentiality extends to a comment about her themes: “Sui risvolti di copertina dei miei libri, o nelle recensioni, si parla continuamente di viaggi alla ricerca di se stessi” (123).

¹² “Originally a heraldic term, a *mise en abyme* is a representation in which the relation of part to whole is inverted: the “whole” image is itself represented in part of the image. Thus the Quaker Oats man appears on the Quaker Oats box holding a small box, which depicts the Quaker Oats man holding a box with a Quaker Oats man.... and so on *ad infinitum*” (Elam, 1994: 27). See

more aware of the infinite possibilities of women” (Elam, 1994:28). The *mise en abyme* opens a spiral of infinite regression and representation and readers are forced to confront the fact that they are never able to capture the image fully.

Part of the function of the *mise en abyme* is to upset the assumed relationship between subject and object in the scene of representation. – The subject and object infinitely change places within the *mise en abyme*: there is no set sender or receiver of the representation, thus there is no possibility of a stable subject/object relation.

While the operation of the *mise en abyme* is not limited to representations of women, it is especially important for women, because it demonstrates that if there is no object or thing-in-itself called “women”, neither is there an adequate account by a subject of the phenomenon “women”. (Elam, 1994:30)

In *Ultima stesura* Duranti questions the subject/object relationship – by putting it “into *abyme*”. The career of the “I”-narrator closely follows that of the external author, and in collecting eight of her short stories, representative her entire production, she is careful to identify the moment in which each story was given its final shape and to relate this moment to an event in her personal history¹³. Regardless of the stories’ settings or narrative voices¹⁴, the interaction between her experience and her writing clearly emerges:

dal momento che non si può:
né solo scrivere;

also A. Benjamin, *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992: 13-17).

¹³ The typographical lay-out of the novel recalls Calvino’s *Le città invisibili*: the parts in italics constitute the “real frame” and can be read independently of the inserted narratives. Like Calvino’s “prose poems”, Duranti’s inserted stories represent the inner landscapes of desire and fantasy.

¹⁴ Duranti, in yet another *en-abyme* layering, informs the reader through the female narrative voice of the frame tale that she (i.e. the internal author) likes to use “*un Io Narrante maschile; mi piace scrivere di una donna che non possa in nessun modo essere una mia proiezione. Un personaggio che non sono io racconta di un personaggio che non sono io*” (38).

né solo vivere;
né stare a metà strada tra scrivere e vivere: che fare?
Non rimane che produrre degli ectoplasmi in forma di sosia,
che si immergano nell'avventura della vita per trarne il
necessario nutrimento, mettendo in moto; la macchina della
mistificazione con la benzina della verità. (11)

Duranti's novel displays the narrative strategies and formal properties common to women's texts: prologues, epilogues, author's notes, professional disclaimers, pleas of urgency and apologies for stylistic lapses. As Shari Benstock points out, these seem to make "the act of writing a shield against the *effects* of that writing". These "defensive tactics employed by the [...] writer to ward off the effects of textual production" (Benstock, 1982: 139) come from her contradictory urge towards writing. Duranti's "I"-narrator simultaneously desires and fears the product of her own literary urges.

For creative writing of a literary work has much in common with the procreative capacity.

Ora non scriverò niente per qualche settimana, poi comincerò a partorire il figlio letterario di Attilio Radi. Ho già in mente la vicenda, che non avrà niente a che fare con la vita del mio ispiratore, ma ne conterrà tutto l'insostenibile orrore. (160)

The assumption by a woman that her creative desires could produce a monster is a biological metaphor of powerful inhibitory force. Since this creation 'issues' from her body (as her writing does from her pen), this fear is as debilitating to women's productivity and creativity as is the male fear of castration or impotence (Benstock, 1983).

In this novel the difficult quest for identity (true self) is evoked right at the outset with the first chapter on names. The **name** chosen by the "I"-narrator for her writing, Teodora Francia, symbolizes the union of "writing" and "living" combining as it does her baptismal name with the

surname of her second husband (and corresponding to the same choice made by the external author)¹⁵.

The self-reflexiveness goes even further: Teodora's maiden name was Garrone. The protagonist of *La casa sul lago della luna*, Fabrizio Garrone, had a sister named Teodora¹⁶. This intertextual reference combined with the allusion to a book written by Teodora, entitled *The Germanist* (125), tempts us into a reading of this text as if it were the story of Fabrizio's sister, allowing us to examine the entextualization of the human subject from the other side of the mirror, as it were, and to determine a way "beyond narcissism", enacted through a dialectic of fictionalizing that breaks the rigidifying gaze of the same.

The narcissistic motif is explored in the episodes in which Teodora constantly looks at herself in the mirror on putting away her writing and going to greet her returning husband (14, 66), only to discover that

le cose in sé non vogliono dire niente, non servono a niente, non insegnano niente. Solo la rappresentazione che se ne dà riesce a decodificare il caos, rispecchiandolo in un'immagine dotata di forma e di senso. (14)

For Teodora, the very gesture of picking up a pen or using any other "writing tool" and transcribing thoughts into words recalls the utopian energy contained in writing; it is a way of subverting the *unwholesome* language of daily living.

The process of transforming her personal experience into writing has enabled Francesca Duranti to find her own linguistic space. Eliminating the distance between external author and fictional character in a literary game of mirrors, Duranti negates any objectifying gaze. Affirming a new subjectivity which lends authority to her discourse through the admission of uncertainty as much as through the demonstration of mastery.

¹⁵ "Teodora era il nucleo inalienabile - segreto, geloso, solitario, senza sesso e senza età, moltiplicabile per mille o per mille miliardi, ma inguaribilmente scompagnato: partecipabile a tutto il mondo ma impossibile da accoppiare a un altro singolo essere umano. Francia significava la vita condivisa, il miracolo quotidiano dell'amore. Teodora Francia era quindi una che aveva tutto, beata lei" (7).

¹⁶ "Teodora, il viso insolente e volitivo, le idee spregiudicate, gli abiti stravaganti [...]. Aveva azzeccato la misura ideale tra l'essere simile e l'essere diversa" and "aveva sposato un uomo molto ricco" (Duranti, 1984:19, 50).

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