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When crises became economic: an analysis of Italian journals and literature in the 19th century

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Wealth and poverty[1]

[1] Etchings printed in: "Il Giornale Illustrato", 6-12 January 1866.

INTRODUCTION

"One of the greatest inconveniencies of a commercial system are the incidents and the crises it is subject to from time to time" (Giuseppe Pecchio)[2]

What emerges from a preliminary survey of Italian literature of the nineteenth century is mostly a vague perception of the momentous change from a traditional society largely based on agriculture to a society centered in cities and divided in new classes. How much the latter depended on the economic cycle was a question posed and answered even at the end of the century only in economic journals and academic writings, but not in literature at large. The life of the common man was still much more influenced by famine than economic turmoil.

The perception of modernity was so confined to a general reappraisal of agricultural life, in positive or negative, to the clear perception of a growing bureaucratization of life, in the last part of the century particularly in relation with the setting up of the national state, and of changes in the structure of society, although limited to the few urban spaces influenced by a slow industrialization.

Crises found their definition abroad. Gerolamo Boccardo[3] so derived the general structure of the voice on Crises of his *Dictionary of political economy* from French antecedents[4]. Crises were "more or less deep perturbations of the social interests" [5], momentarily perturbations, by definition, otherwise they wouldn't be mere crises but a chronical malady capable of bringing society to its death.

It is worthwhile to cite the subdivision of crises that Boccardo proposed to his readers, because this taxonomy would recur in many subsequent authors till the last decades of the nineteenth century. Boccardo classified crises in three main categories: crises that afflicted agriculture, disturbing the production of necessity goods; industrial crises, arising in manufactories, causing disorders in their production and in the related interests; commercial crises, perturbing the trading market, in the currencies, in credit, in the means of communications or transports[6].

Less than ten years later, in 1864, Francesco Ferrara edited the fourth volume of the second series of the *Biblioteca dell'Economista*[7]. The volume dealt with the history of trade and included works by Gilbart[8], Scherer[9] and Stirling[10]. Ferrara introduced it with a lengthy essay on economic crises. Definition and taxonomy perfectly corresponded to Boccardo's Dictionary. Ferrara, through his pictorial and metaphoric language, vividly described economic crises as distresses of nations' economic life, quite similar to a

[2] Giuseppe Pecchio, *L'anno mille ottocento ventisei dell' Inghilterra*, Lugano, Dai Tipi di G. Vannelli e Comp., 1827, p.129.
[3] See: Daniele Besomi, *Gerolamo Boccardo on internally generated economic crises*, in Daniele Besomi(ed.), *Crises and Cycles in Economic Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias*, London, Routledge, 2012: pp.249-264.
[4] Gerolamo Boccardo, *Crisi*, in: *Dizionario della economia politica e del commercio*, vol. 1, Torino, Sebastiano Franco e Figli e Comp, 1857, pp.731-738.
[5] Gerolamo Boccardo, *Crisi*, in: *Dizionario della economia politica e del commercio*, vol. 1, Torino, Sebastiano Franco e Figli e Comp, 1857, p.731.
[6] Ibid.
[7] I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864.
[8] James William Gilbart, *Lectures on the history and principles of ancient commerce*, London, Waterlow & sons, 1847.
[9] Hermann Scherer, *Allgemeine Geschichte des Welthandels*, 2 vols., Leipzig, Hermann Schultze, 1853.
[10] Patrick James Stirling, *The Philosophy of Trade; or, Outlines of a Theory of Profits and Prices*, London, Oliver & Boyd, 1846.

physiologic disease: an epidemic menacing the orderly functioning of the economic body[11]. The crisis had three main forms of appearance: insufficient production, excessive production and scarcity of money[12].

As Boccardo had already underlined, Ferrara too stressed how the subdivision concerned the sectors involved, so as to say: the symptoms, but that in reality a crisis could involve more than one sector at a time[13]. The three typologies could all follow from the same cause, as might be war, and arise at the same time, or one could cause the other in a seemingly circular path of economic growth and decay[14].

A change in terminology and taxonomy was proposed, in 1878, by Salvatore Cognetti de Martiis in his essay on *Shapes and Laws of Economic Perturbations*[15]*,* published on *Giornale degli Economisti*. Cognetti ignored the term crisis and spoke only of perturbations. He introduced, though, the concept of cycles as defined by Clément Juglar[16]. On the base of longtime empirical observations, he even ventured to identify a precise law regarding the cyclical nature of economies: "to a period of general depression and lethargy unerringly follows a period of progressive and general activity that, achieved at a certain moment a culminating and critical point weakens and diminishes at once, becoming a more or less extended depression" [17]. Economic perturbations were phenomena of disequilibrium that took place in the boundaries of these cycles. Depending on the market involved, the one for labor, goods, money or credit, crises should have been considered industrial, commercial, monetary or financial. Thanks to an accurate historical analysis Cognetti identified then other three laws concerning crises: they tended to diffuse from one market to the other; they arose when the discount rate reached a level from 7% to 10%; they served to purify the market.

"The perturbations of the economic currents – concluded Cognetti – are phenomena, like any other of the cosmic order, natural and in their irregularity regular. They have their reason of existence and their laws and so it is possible to construe a scientific theory on them" [18]. Crises depended mainly on man's vices of reasoning: "speculation excites him, competition inflames him, prospective wealth exalts him. His brain functions are upset" [19]. Frenzy and panic were the consequences of such disordered human sentiments. As for a solution, Cognetti had none, if not the spread of the conscience of a common solidarity in all participants to a market: social capital in today's terms.

Crises, though, except the quoted essays, were not popular among Italian economists, not even at the end of the century. In the *Essay on Italian Economic Bibliography* for the years 1870-1890, compiled by Angelo

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[11] Francesco Ferrara*, Introduzione. Delle Crisi Economiche*, in: I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864, p.v.

[12] Francesco Ferrara*, Introduzione. Delle Crisi Economiche*, in: I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864, pp.vi-xi.

[13] Stefano Perri, *Crisi, moneta e credito in Francesco Ferrara*, "Annali Della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi", 14, 1980, pp. pp. 411-50.

[14] Francesco Ferrara*, Introduzione. Delle Crisi Economiche*, in: I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864, p.xi.

[15] Salvatore Cognetti de Martiis, *Forme e leggi delle perturbazioni economiche*, "Giornale degli Economisti", marzo 1878, pp.431-452, reprinted as: Cognetti de Martiis, *Forme e leggi delle perturbazioni economiche*, Padova, Tipografia alla Minerva, 1878.

[16] Clèment Juglar, *Des crises commerciales en France de l'an VIII à 1855*, « Annuaire de l'économie politique et de la statistique », Paris, Guillaumin, Vol. 13, 1856, pp. 555-581

[17] Salvatore Cognetti de Martiis, *Forme e leggi delle perturbazioni economiche*, Padova, Tipografia alla Minerva, 1878, p.10.

[18] Salvatore Cognetti de Martiis, *Forme e leggi delle perturbazioni economiche*, Padova, Tipografia alla Minerva, 1878, p.22.

[19] Salvatore Cognetti de Martiis, *Forme e leggi delle perturbazioni economiche*, Padova, Tipografia alla Minerva, 1878, p.23.

Bertolini, crises were included in the general section on trade, national and international[20]. The section listed 110 titles of which only nine actually referred to economic crises. Two of them tried to explain the trading problems of Italian wine and spirits[21] others referred to the crisis of Italy's economy in the late '80s[22], one particularly in relation with the institutional framework of the stock exchange[23]. Only Max Wirth was quoted addressing the problem of crises from a more theoretical point of view[24].

Many more interesting researches, it seems, might so be done on Italian economic thought of the nineteenth century, than an analysis of the concept of crisis. Shun by literature, tolerated, with few exceptions, by intellectuals and economists, crises were much more thrilling in countries like England and France, where their repetitive and destructive recurrence sparked the most remarkable theoretical advancements and many literary recollections and representations.

A closer scrutiny of the main periodicals of the nineteenth century, till Italy's unification, though, with the aid of the taxonomy proposed by Boccardo and Ferrara, permits a more precise appraisal of how and if, in Italy, economic crises were perceived by intellectuals and even common men: a worthwhile research object.

In Italy the most recurrent form of crisis for the whole century remained famine and as such was widely discussed and represented in literature as in journals (paragraph 1). The idea of overproduction crises, instead, almost unknown as a contemporary reality, came to coincide in the imagination of Italians with the idea of England itself, a nation rich and powerful as any, but plagued by a diffused misery, unknown in such measure on the Continent (paragraph 2). Some conclusions will be drawn from this study, hinting at how the repeated financial and economic crises at the end of the century spread among intellectuals and in popular periodicals the idea of economic determinism (paragraph 3). After a century of struggles for political independence and unification, Italians learnt that they still had to pay for it.

[20] Angelo Bertolini, *Saggio di bibliografia economica italiana (1870-90) (continuazione)*, "Giornale degli Economisti", II series, vol 5, 3, 1982, pp.93-101.
[21] Fil Cantalamessa, *La crisi dell ' alcool e del vino : osservazioni e proposte*, Torino , tip . Subalpina, 1888; Ang. Snider, *La crisi degli spiriti e dei vini in Italia: esame e proposta di rimedi con alcuni appunti per uno schema di legge. Memoria*, Milano, Tip. C. Civelli, 1889.
[22] Riccardo Dalla Volta, *Sulla recente depressione economica. Memoria letta nella seduta del 5 Agosto 1888 all'Accademia dei Georgofili*, Firenze, M. Celini e C., 1888; A. Z. de Johannis, *Sulla situazione economica dell'Italia*, "Rassegna Nazionale", 16 June 1885; E. Montaldo, *Ancora della nostra situazione economica*, "Rassegna Nazionale", 1 July 1885; V. Tanlongo Berna, *Relazione sulla crisi economica nazionale, approvata dalla Camera nella seduta del 21 Marzo 1889*, Roma, Tip. Della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1889; César Usigli, *La crise italienne et ses causes*, Roma, Forzani e C, 1890.
[23] Carlo Bonis, *Del riordinamento delle borse*, Torino, Tarizzo e figlio, 1889.
[24] Max Wirth, *L'équilibre économique et les causes de la stagnation actuelle des affaires*, Roma, Botta, 1886.

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"…prolonging life by the scanty food obtained, as it were, by chance, in such a disparity between the supply and the demand" (Alessandro Manzoni)[25]

In 1864 Francesco Ferrara, in his survey on the economic literature about crises, described the insufficient production of one or more goods as the first historical appearance of economic crises[26]. A trifling occurrence in case of wares unnecessary to survival, but of biblical gravity in the case of primal needs. "Caused by meteorological occurrences, the infancy of agriculture, errors and infamous passions of rulers" famine and starvation, noted Ferrara, had afflicted the roman world, recurring during the Middle Ages every ten years at least. Although, Ferrara further observed, famines had become rarer during the nineteenth century, they still had severely afflicted Europe with regularity. In 1847, in particular, the recurrence of a food shortage, plaguing most of Europe, sparked in Italy manifold debates about related economic policies and theories.

The *Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio*[27]*,* published a long series of articles, starting in 1846, registering all phases of the famine[28]. Floodings and bad harvest had rapidly caused a shortage of grain and other agricultural products, increasing their prices. What mattered

[25] "The others, who, for more or less time, had haunted the streets of the city, prolonging life by the scanty food obtained, as it were, by chance, in such a disparity between the supply and the demand, bore expressed in their looks and carriage still deeper and more anxious consternation. Various in dress (or rather rags), as well as appearance, in the midst of the common prostration, there were the pale faces of the marshy districts, the bronzed countenances of the open and hilly country, and the ruddy complexion of the mountaineer, all alike wasted and emaciated, with sunken eyes, a stare between sternness and idiocy, matted locks, and long and ghastly beards; bodies, once plump and inured to fatigue, now exhausted by want; shriveled skin on their parched arms, legs, and bony breasts, which appeared through their disordered and tattered garments; while different from, but not less melancholy than, this spectacle of wasted vigour, was that of a more quickly subdued nature; of languor, and a more self-abandoning debility, in the weaker sex and age". Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.413.

[26] Francesco Ferrara*, Introduzione. Delle Crisi Economiche*, in: I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864, p.vi-vii.

[27] On this important periodical edited by Francesco Lampato in Milan, see: Sergio La Salvia, *Giornalismo lombardo: gli Annali universali di statistica (1824-1844)*, Roma, Elia, 1977.

[28] Francesco Lampato, *Notizie statistiche inerenti ai provvedimenti adottati da alcuni governi per la scarsezza del raccolto, per la malattia delle patate, e per le inondazioni*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 10, 29, 1846, pp.177-192; Francesco Lampato, *Continuazione delle notizie statistiche inerenti ai provvedimenti adottati dai governi per la scarsezza del raccolto e per le inondazioni di quest'anno 1846*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 10, 30, 1846, pp.299-309; Francesco Lampato, *Continuazione delle notizie statistiche intorno ai provvedimenti adottati dai governi per la scarsezza del raccolto e per le inondazioni nell'anno 1846*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 11, 32, 1847, pp.193-212; Francesco Lampato, *Continuazione delle notizie statistiche intorno ai provvedimenti adottati dai governi per la scarsezza del raccolto e per le inondazioni nell'anno 1846*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 11, 33, 1847, pp.317-335; Francesco Lampato, *Continuazione delle notizie statistiche intorno ai provvedimenti adottati dai governi per la scarsezza del raccolto e per le inondazioni nell'anno 1846*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 11, 35, 1847, pp.207-215; Francesco Lampato, *Continuazione delle notizie statistiche intorno ai provvedimenti adottati dai governi per la scarsezza del raccolto e per le inondazioni nell'anno 1846*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 11, 38, 1847, pp.197-221.

most to the editors of the journal, adhering to the Italian school of public economy[29], was the response of Italian and European states to the ensuing crisis. The articles listed all provisions issued by many countries, to easy the import of grain from taxes and levies, while prohibiting the export of the local agricultural production. A policy, was candidly noted, that, contemporarily adopted by all states, could not generate any positive effect. Russia, in fact, was, to be in the end the savior of Europe by consenting the export of its grains.

Famine became so, in Italy, an occasion to call for liberal policies. It was not the first time. In Italy the severe food shortage of 1764-65 had determined the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo to adopt liberal trade policies in Tuscany, while Richard Cobden openly admitted that the Irish potato crop failure had brought about the occasion to repeal England's Corn Laws[30]. Not incidentally at the time of famine of 1847 Cobden was actively campaigning for free trade, obtaining enthusiastic support all over Italy[31]. The *Annali universali* were full of reports of all stop-overs of Cobden's travel in Italian states[32]. In his discourses Cobden did not fail to address the problem of famine. "The occurrence of this year's famine – was he reported to have said in Trieste – proves that trade cannot be better protected than through free trade. Exactly when the crisis of crops was heavily felt all over Europe the mobile scales and all other provisions were removed so that, through a new equilibrium, alimentary goods could run freely were necessity was felt and replenish the locations where necessity was deeper"[33].

The overwhelming success of Cobden's tour, though, relied more on political motives than on his prospected solution to the problem of food scarcity. The *Annali universali* precisely listed all politicians and economists who participated to the numerous banquets in honor of the English economist, holding speeches in favor of free trade. In Genova, where Cobden arrived from Spain, the celebrations were presided by Massimo d'Azeglio; in Florence by Vincenzo, father of Ubaldino, Peruzzi, in Venice, the banquet, organized, among others, by Daniele Manin, Leone Pincherle and Agostino Sagredo, was chaired by Nicolò Priuli; in Neaples Cobden was presented to the local Academy of Sciences by Pasquale Stanislao Mancini; in Turin the feast was directed by Filiberto Avogadro di Collobiano; in Milan the reception at the *Società di Incoraggiamento di Arti e Mestieri* was opened by a speech of Cesare Giulini della Porta.

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[29] For a definition of this school and the polemic against Francesco Ferrara on its coherence and consistency, see: Giuseppe Sacchi, *Biblioteca dell'Economista art. VII*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 32, 94, 1852, pp.34-48.

[30] James Montgomery Stuart, *Storia del libero scambio in Toscana*, Roma, tip. della Gazzetta d'Italia, 1876, pp.44-52.

[31] See: Roberto Romani, *The Cobdenian Moment in the Italian Risorgimento*, in: Anthony Howe e Simon Morgan (eds.), *Rethinking Nineteenth-Century Liberalism: Richard Cobden Bicentenary Essays*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006 pp.117-140.

[32] Petitti, *Cobden a Genova. Lettera al Compilatore sull'adunanza tenutasi a Genova per il rinomato sig. Cobden*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 11, 31, 1847, pp.102-109; Francesco Lampato*, Il rinomato Cobden presentato all'Accademia delle scienze a Napoli*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 12, 34, 1847, pp.88-91; *Banchetto pubblico dato in Firenze per onorare Riccardo Cobden*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 12, 35, 1847, pp.215-221; Francesco Lampato*, Un cenno sull'arrivo di Cobden a Torino*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 12, 35, 1847, p.221; M. T., *Riccardo Cobden a Milano*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 12, 36, 1847, pp.321-329; *Cobden a Torino*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 12, 36, 1847, pp.329-333; A. Sagredo, *Cobden a Venezia,* "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 12, Appendix, 1847, pp.369-370; *Banchetto dato a Cobden a Trieste*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 13, 37, 1847, pp.88-90; *Discorso del Conte Camillo di Cavour diretto a Cobden al banchetto di Torino*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 13, 37, 1847, pp.90-92.

[33] *Banchetto dato a Cobden a Trieste*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 13, 37, 1847, p.89.

Evidently the list comprises many names that were heavily involved in the revolutionary and reforming movements in all Italian states in 1848 and further became primary political figures in the Italian state after unification.

The most influential among the enthusiasts for Cobden's free trade movement was indubitably Camillo Benso, Count Cavour, leading mind of Italy's unification and first prime minister of the Kingdom of Italy to be. It is worth to mention and quote at length a passage of the discourse he held in Turin on the occasion of the formal dinner in honor of Richard Cobden:

"Oui, monsieur, nous croyons pouvoir nous affirmer avec certitude ; l'Italie qui a vu eclore dans son sein la science économique, ce pays ou Genovesi et Verri ont écrit, ou Scialoja professe, ne sera pas de derniers à mettre pleinement d'accord les principes scientifiques avec les préceptes de la pratique. La liberté du commerce doit avoir pour l'Italie des conséquences dont il est impossible d'exagérer l'importance ; si elle est utile dans un grand pays qui possède un vaste marché, elle est indispensable au développement de l'industrie et du commerce d'un contrée divisée par des nombreuses lignes de douanes où les produits du sol et du travail rencontrent à chaque pas des obstacles fiscaux qui les repoussent, et qu'ils ne peuvent surmonter. Mais cette liberté doit aussi, ainsi que vous et notre savant professeur d'économie politique l'avez si bien fait remarquer, avoir pour notre pays des résultats d'un ordre plus élevé. C'est pourquoi nous sommes convaincus qu'en travaillant à abaisser les barrières qui nous divisent, qu'en travaillant à étendre nos relations commerciales extérieurs, nous travaillons au progrès intellectuel et moral de l'Italie aussi bien qu'à la prospérité matérielle. Tel sont, Monsieur, nos esperances et nos vœux."[34]

Just a few phrases to underline how the call for free trade had become in Italy, through the pressure of starvation, an economic equivalent to the request for independence and national unity at political level. When censure and military control impeded to openly speak about a united Italy, adherence to liberal economic thought allowed to mobilize public opinion and organize reunions around the question of freedom, scientific only in appearance. The wish for the economic unity of Italy, the quotation of a glorious tradition of Italian economic thought, the coincidence between economic liberalism and moral and intellectual progress, underlined by Cavour, were all part of the of the ideology of Risorgimento: the hopes and wishes of Italians at the eve of 1848. History, certainly, was full of examples, as Francesco Ferrara noticed in his writing of 1864, of food crises followed by meritorious and beneficial consequences in terms of institutional change. Such the cases of the Baronial crisis in England in 1258 and of the Pseudo-Demetrius I, Tsar of Russia between 1605 and 1606, so the revolution of 1789 and the repeal of the Corn Laws[35]. Why not Italy?

Alessandro Manzoni shared the view of Cobden's circles, to which many of his relatives and friends adhered. In September 1848 he anonymously published an article on the journal *La Concordia* titled *Political independence and economic liberalism*[36] in which he professed affinity with the views of liberal economists like Jean-Baptiste Say, Adam Smith, Frederic Bastiat and Richard Cobden[37]. His favor towards

[34] *Discorso del Conte Camillo di Cavour diretto a Cobden al banchetto di Torino*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, geografia, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 13, 37, 1847, pp.91-92.
[35] Francesco Ferrara*, Introduzione. Delle Crisi Economiche*, in: I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864, p.vi.
[36] Alessandro Manzoni, *Indipendenza politica e liberalismo economico*, "La Concordia", 15 September 1848.
[37] It should be underlined that Manzoni, although convinced of many aspects of the liberal theory, did not subscribe all of it and expressed, for example, many doubts about some passages of the works of Jean Baptiset Say. Again, he absolutely refused any moral implication of the utility principle. See: Alessandro Manzoni, *Del Sistema che fonda la morale sull'utilità*, Torino, Paravia, 1924.

free trade, though, was not occasional, nor politically justified, but derived from an in-depth study of these same authors[38]. Manzoni possessed a thorough knowledge of the most important works of political economy of his time and left long notes on his many volumes on the matter[39].

In his annotations, Manzoni defended with clarity the principle of free trade, exactly describing how protective measures favored internal producers at the expense of consumers[40]. He also addressed the problem of famine and protectionism. In so doing he recalled the same image evoked by Cobden, that of a necessary and desirable flow of grain from abundant countries to famished ones in consequence of the adoption of liberal policies. "Les récoltes – he wrote, commenting Say's *Cours complete d'Économie politique pratique* - sont inégales de deux manières : elles sont inégales dans le même pays d'une année à l'autre; elles le sont aussi dans la même année d'un pays à l'autre. L'abondance , ni la disette, ne sont jamais générales dans tout le monde , elles le sont même difficilement dans un pays un peu étendu. C'est sur cette seconde espèce d'inégalité que s'appuie principalement l'opinion en faveur de la liberté, qui est le moyen général de faire aller le blé des endroits où il surabonde (et l'on peut être presque sur que dans toutes les années il surabonde quelque part) aux endroits où il manque"[41].

The question of famine and free trade also imbibed Manzoni's major literary work, the historical novel *The Betrothed* [42]. Food scarcity made its first appearance in the twelfth chapter, describing the arrival of Renzo in the city of Milan. No difference can be ascertained between the facts Manzoni staged in November 1628 and what happened in the famines that plagued Italy in the middle of the nineteenth century, as in 1836, 1847, 1854 and 1856. Scarcity was the result of hostile meteorological conditions, "the adverse character of the season" but was also caused "partly by the agency of man", as in the case of wars, military costs and excessive taxation[43]. First symptom of the malady was the dreaded rise in bread prices: "scarcity quickly made itself felt, and with scarcity its melancholy, but profitable, as well as inevitable, effect, a rise in prices" [44]. Statistics available about grain prices in Italy in the nineteenth century, confirm that in all major crises, up to the 1870's, Manzoni's picture maintained its verisimilitude (Table 1 and 2).

What followed was seemingly a collateral effect of all crises: "But when the price of food reaches a certain point, there always arises (at least, hitherto it has always arisen; and if it is so still, after all that has been written by so many learned men, what must it have been in those days!)—there always arises an opinion among the many that it is not the effect of scarcity" [45]. People were willing to believe all sort of conspiracy

[38] On Manzoni and his understanding of political economy see: Piero Barucci, *La "cultura" economica di Alessandro Manzoni*, "Rassegna Economica", VII, 1977, pp. 279-312; Luigi Derla, *Manzoni e l'economia politica*, "Nuova antologia", n. 2024, 1969, pp. 508-531; and Tullio Biagiotti, *L' economia di Alessandro Manzoni*, "Giornale degli economisti e annali di economia", november-dicember 1975, pp. 710-733.
[39] Manzoni's comments to Ferdinando Galiani (Ferdinando Galiani, *Della Moneta*, Scrittori Classici Italiani di Economia Politica, vol. III, Milan, DeStefanis, 1803), Pietro Verri (Pietro Verri, *Dell'Annona*, Scrittori Classici Italiani di Economia Politica, vol. XVI, Milan, DeStefanis, 1804); Melchiorre Gioja (Melchiorre Gioja, *Nuovo Prospetto delle scienze economiche*, Milan, Pirotta, 1815); Jean Baptiste Say (Jean Baptiste Say, *Traité d'Economie politique*, Paris, Rapilly, 1826 and Jean Baptiste Say, *Cours complete d'Économie politique pratique*, Paris, Rapilly, 1828); and Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi (Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, *Nouveaux Principes d'Economie politique ou de la Richesse dans ses Rapports avec la population*, Paris 1819) have been transcribed in: Alessandro Manzoni, *Opere inedite o rare*, Milan, Fratelli Rechiedei, 1885, pp.119-231.
[40] Alessandro Manzoni, *Opere inedite o rare*, Milan, Fratelli Rechiedei, 1885, pp.190-191.
[41] Alessandro Manzoni, *Opere inedite o rare*, Milan, Fratelli Rechiedei, 1885, p.217.
[42] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898.
[43] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.175.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

explanations for the change in prices and claim justice toward imaginary speculators and fraudulent bakers[46]. Much too often they found an eager and sympathetic ear in politicians bent on populist measures. "As, however, all human precautions, how vigorous soever, can neither diminish the necessity of food, nor produce crops out of season; and as these individual precautions offered no very inviting terms to other countries where there might be a superabundance, the evil continued and increased. The multitude attributed such an effect to the scarcity and feebleness of the remedies, and loudly solicited some more spirited and decisive measures" [47].

The most terrible consequences of scarcity, riots, violence, pillage and even revolutions, arose, in Manzoni's view, from this spiraling interaction between the ingenuity of a starving population and the stupidity of governing bodies, trying to find a solution in protective measures and price controls. Milan, as Renzo entered it, was so described swept by a wave of plundering, with bake-houses ruined and then set to fire as by-standers cried: "Hurrah for plenty! Death to those who would starve us! Away with the famine! Perish the Court of Provision! Perish the junta! Hurrah for plenty ! Hurrah for bread !" [48]. "To say the truth, - Manzoni noted, ironically - the destruction of sieves and kneadingtroughs, the pillaging of bake-houses, and the routing of bakers, are not the most expeditious means of providing a supply of bread; but this is one of those metaphysical subtleties which never enter the mind of the multitude." [49]

While Manzoni followed the plot, by relating the misadventures of Renzo and Lucia, the food shortage shrinks in the background of the novel. The author, though, came back to Milan and famine in chapter XXVIII of *The Betrothed*, pages that contain an accurate historical analysis of what happened in Milan in 1629, but also want to reconstruct in detail the chain of reactions that Manzoni attributed to famines in general, at least up to the French Revolution. The chapter is purely historical and none of the characters of the novel appear in it. Only Cardinal Borromeo is quoted in passing, but as an historical figure.

Beyond description, Manzoni, as an historian, looked for precise causal relations that could forge explicative theories[50]. His method of historical analysis was innovative and a clear rupture toward those historians who merely produced "descriptions of long periods of time, looking for the mutations they induced in the interests, in the miserable policies of a few". What Manzoni intended to do, instead, was to retrieve the history of an entire society, "taking as a base of analysis the habits, the administration and the effects of laws on the people for which they were designed"[51]. He looked for "facts near in time and similar in nature, so that they can be compared with theories that comprise them all", such theories should, then, be extensive, "without going into that indetermination and generality that covers the historian from particular criticisms, because it makes almost impossible to find errors, but leaves the reader in uncertainty

[46] "Corn monopolists, either real or imaginary, large landholders, the bakers who purchased corn, all, in short, who had either little or much, or were thought to have any, were charged with being the causes of the scarcity and dearness of provisions; they were the objects of universal complaint, and of the hatred of the multitude of every rank. The populace could tell with certainty where there were magazines and granaries full and overflowing with corn, and even requiring to be propped up ; they indicated most extravagant numbers of sacks; they talked with certainty of the immense quantities of grain secretly despatched to other places, where, probably, it was asserted with equal assurance and equal excitement, that the corn grown there was transported to Milan. They implored from the magistrates those precautions which always appear, or, at least, have always hitherto appeared, so equitable, so simple, so capable of drawing forth the corn which they affirm to be secreted, walled up, or buried, and of restoring to them abundance" (Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.176).

[47] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.176.

[48] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.185

[49] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.185.

[50] See : Luca Badini Confalonieri, *Les Régions de l'aigle et Autres études sur Manzoni*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2005.

[51] Alessandro Manzoni, *Storia e filosofia con saggi di opera inedite*, Torino, Paravia, 1927, p.8.

about having learned a true and important observation or just an ingenious hypothesis" [52]. Inspiration he took in Sismondi and La Mennais and their idea of a novel historiography rooted in romanticism.

Chapter XXVIII begun were the twelfth had ended: "The multitude had tried to procure abundance by pillage and incendiarism; the legal arm would have maintained it with the galleys and the scourge". What immediately Manzoni underlined, though, was the primary cause of "these strange measures": "each was an inevitable consequence of the antecedent one; and all of the first, which fixed a price upon bread so different to that which would have resulted from the real state of things. Such a provision ever has, and ever must have, appeared to the multitude as consistent with justice, as simple and easy of execution: hence, it is quite natural that, in the deprivations and grievances of a famine, they should desire it, implore it, and, if they can, enforce it" [53].

Aside from the unavoidable natural causes of bad harvest, Manzoni, again, credited bad policies with worsening the famine of 1629. By altering the "real" price, as resulting from free market intercourse, the government of Milan had abided to the false idea of justice of the starving population, impeding what damage limitation would have been possible through international commerce or the use of public funds. "Scarcity itself, -he described - was operating without a check, and exerting its full force. It was not even checked by the introduction of a sufficient supply of corn from without, to which remedy were opposed the insufficiency of public and private means, the poverty of the surrounding countries, the prevailing famine, the tediousness and restrictions of commerce, and the laws themselves, tending to the production and violent maintenance of moderate prices" [54].

This chain of causation Manzoni found exactly reiterated in France at the eve of Revolution[55]. In both cases, but the reasoning held also for many measures taken by European governments between 1846 and 1847 and described by the The *Annali universali di statistica,* the ignorance of the population had prevailed on law makers. No advancement of culture, it followed, could help when confronted with insufficient education of the population at large. A clear call for the spreading of liberal economic thought as was done in wake of Cobden's travel in Italy and was openly advocated by Cavour.

What economic moral, then, to *The Betrothed?*

Manzoni described in painful detail the starving to death of Milan's population[56] but not as a mere chronicle. Manzoni himself cleared the purpose of this historical account, by introducing the *History of the*

[52] Alessandro Manzoni, *Storia e filosofia con saggi di opera inedite*, Torino, Paravia, 1927, p.9.
[53] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.410.
[54] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.411.
[55] "We may be permitted to remark here in passing a singular coincidence. In a country and at a period by no means remote, a period the most clamorous and most renowned of modern history, in similar circumstances, similar provisions obtained (the same, we might almost say, in substance, with the sole difference of proportions, and in nearly the same succession); they obtained, in spite of the march of intellect and the knowledge which had spread over Europe, and in that country, perhaps, more than in any other; and this, principally, because the great mass of the people, whom this knowledge had not yet reached, could, in the long run, make their judgment prevail, and, as it was there said, compel the hands of those who made the laws." Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.410.
[56] "At every step, the shops closed ; manufactories for the most part deserted; the streets presenting an indescribable spectacle, an incessant train of miseries, a perpetual abode of sorrows. Professed beggars of long standing, now become the smallest number, mingled and lost in a new swarm, and sometimes reduced to contend for alms with those from whom, in former days, they had been accustomed to receive them. Apprentices and clerks dismissed by shopkeepers and merchants, who, when their daily profits diminished, or entirely failed, were living sparingly on their savings, or on their capital; shopkeepers and merchants themselves, to whom the cessation of business had brought

infamous column, spin-off of the first edition of *The Betrothed*. That historical work recollected the processes held during the plague of 1630 against people accused of spreading the contagion, processes devoid of any rational charge and practiced with the extensive recourse to torture. Manzoni introduced it, explaining: "By proposing to patient readers to fix their gaze again upon well-known horrors, we believe that it will bore a new and not trifling fruit, if the disdain and refusal that always arise from such a lecture will be aimed also and mainly against those passions that cannot be banned, as false systems, nor abolished, as bad institutions, but can be made less powerful and tragic, in recognizing their effects and refusing them"[57].

Manzoni's description of Milan's famine of 1628-1629 had the same rationale as the *History of the infamous column*. First, and easiest scope was the ban of false systems of beliefs. Famine and black death had only highlighted how the culture of the seventeenth century had underpinned the spreading of injustice, suffering and prejudice. The description of the library of Don Ferrante in chapter XXVII of *The Betrothed* clearly marks Manzoni's despise for the frivolity and stupidity of the interests of the time. The enormous amount of books owned by Ferrante, a treasure of 300 volumes, mostly regarded astrology, antique philosophy, *naturalia*, magic and witchcraft, some politics and history, but most of all chivalry[58]. Such system of beliefs would, in the end, cost Don Ferrante his life. At the end of chapter XXXVII, convinced through Aristotelian reasoning that no malady could spread from one body to another, Don Ferrante would die in pain, amidst his useless books[59].

It took Italy more than a century, noted Manzoni in an essay on the decadence and renewal of Italian letters, to emerge from this state of ignorance and the effort of many man had been needed to reject old ideas and create the new language that would serve to generate an entire new culture[60]. Part of this renewal, particularly in regard to famine, had to be the acceptance of liberal economics.

The second change, invoked by Manzoni to lessen the dreadful effects of famine, was, then, institutional change. Liberal economic culture needed liberal institutions. Italy's unification was a first desirable step in that direction. Passions, though, were another matter entirely. The aim of literature and historical narrative was particularly fecund here. In the diffusion of social disdain toward individual actions that were hurtful for society, Manzoni pointed out the most important fruit of his art. On this particular topic he was completely at odds with the liberal tradition of economic thought: utilitarianism could not constitute or substitute a moral theory. The wealth or welfare or utility of a nation would not automatically proceed from the utilitarian action of every man. Manzoni professed, so, the belief that no change in institutions or

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failure and ruin; workmen in every trade and manufacture, the commonest as well as the most refined, the most necessary as well as those more subservient to luxury, wandering from door to door, and from street to street, leaning against the corners, stretched upon the pavement, along the houses and churches, begging piteously, or hesitating between want and a still unsubdued shame, emaciated, weak, and trembling, from long fasting, and the cold that pierced through their tattered and scanty garments, which still, however, in many instances, retained traces of having been once in a better condition; as their present idleness and despondency ill disguised indications of former habits of industry and courage. Mingled in the deplorable throng, and forming no small part of it, were servants dismissed by their masters, who either had sunk from mediocrity into poverty, or otherwise, from wealthy and noble citizens, had become unable, in such a year, to maintain their accustomed pomp of retinue. And for each one, so to say, of these different needy objects, was a number of others, accustomed, in part, to live by their gains; children, women, and aged relatives, grouped around their old supporters, or dispersed in search of relief elsewhere". Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.412.

[57] Alessandro Manzoni, *Storia e filosofia con saggi di opera inedite*, Torino, Paravia, 1927, pp. 22-23.

[58] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, pp.403-407.

[59] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, pp.563-565.

[60] Alessandro Manzoni, *Storia e filosofia con saggi di opera inedite*, Torino, Paravia, 1927, pp. 14-15.

laws could be effective if not combined with a change in the moral attitudes of the population at large. Liberal economics, with its policies and institutions, had to be accompanied by Christian faith for the new Italian society to hold.

In *The Betrothed* the adventure of Renzo can so be read as a *Bildungsroman*, in particular in economic terms. The starting point is that of an Italian countryside where the working of land, joined by home working in sectors as linen and silk, could guarantee a certain measure of wealth, even in times of scarcity. In the words of Manzoni: "Work became more scarce from day to day, but the continual emigration of the workmen, attracted to the neighboring states by promises, privileges, and large wages, left sufficient occupation for those who remained in the country. Renzo possessed, besides, a plot of land, which he cultivated, working in it himself when he was disengaged from his silk-making, so that in his station he might be called a rich man"[61].

The plague of bad institutions, though, represented by absolutist rule, corruption and extended injustice, plunged Renzo in the inferno of a city where famine and the ensuing black death brought the fragile social order to collapse. Renzo, with a great deal of help from Manzoni's Providence[62], had so to learn how to successfully deal with mass dynamics, fraud, bureaucracy and injustice. This educational and moralization process forged a man that, at the end of the novel, could successfully buy-off the heir of a silk-mill owner, "a dissolute young fellow", who "wanted the money down upon the spot" so that "he might instantly expend it with unproductive prodigality" [63]. Renzo so came to manage a silk-mill near Bergamo, having well in mind all lessons learned from his adventures in Milan. Manzoni described him continuously repeating such teachings to himself and to his wife: "he always finished by enumerating the great things he had learnt from them, for the better government of himself in future. " I've learnt," he would say, " not to meddle in disturbances: I've learnt not to make speeches in the street: I've learnt not to drink more than I want: I've learnt not to hold the knocker of a door in my hand, when crazy-headed people are about: and I've learnt not to buckle a little bell to my foot, before thinking of the consequences. And a hundred other things" [64].

Read as a *Bildungsroman*, Manzoni's *The Betrothed* contains a profound reflection on the changes implied by the passage from an *ancien régime* to a modern society. It did not suffice to claim and proclaim freedom, in economy or politics, to generate a free man. Neither did a man obtain liberty by following masses, as the ones resulting from the migration flows out of the countryside to the biggest Italian cities. Class conscience was as detrimental to liberty as had been absolutistic rule. Moral conscience, the knowledge of a trade, attachment to the family and most of all faith in God's Providence, could grant Renzo the freedom that he could not obtain from institutions or revolutions. Such men as Renzo had become one, could successfully manage manufactures and trade and constitute pillars of a new society.

What about crises, then, what about plague and famine? When they were the result of misgovernment they were easily avoidable, with the adoption, for example, of free trade policies. When they were the consequence of inevitable events, instead, although being inescapable, they could still be, in Manzoni, providential. This the lesson learned by Lucia from her misadventures: "when they come, whether by our

[61] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.18.
[62] On the complexity of the concept of Providence in Manzoni, see: Franco Triolo, *Manzoni and Providence*, in: Matteo Sante and Larry H. Peer (eds.), *The Reasonable Romantic. Essays on Alessandro Manzoni*, New York: Peter Lang, 1986, pp. 245-257.
[63] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.579.
[64] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.581.

own fault or not, confidence in God alleviates them, and makes them conducive to a better life" [65]. An invisible hand, Manzoni's Providence, capable of even greater feats than the one of Adam Smith.

Not everyone in Italy, though, would subscribe Manzoni's providential view of crises and the opposite positivistic view should at least be mentioned. Could the new Italian culture, born out of Enlightenment accept without question the unavoidability of meteorological accidents and mysterious diseases? Often using the same statistical methods of the public economy and professing a new scientific approach to agriculture, food shortage crises found their representation in many journals, sharing the same folios with the mentioned articles on free trade or other questions of economic theory. One page dedicated to prices, the next one to chemical compositions and cultivation experiments.

Object of study were the destructive diseases that plagued, in the middle of the century, Italy's most precious agricultural productions: silk[66] and wine[67]. Francesco Ferrara reported with exactitude the extension of the agrarian crisis of 1856 in which: "the grain production in the South of Italy diminished in measure of 8 million hectoliters, vines were heavily damaged by crittogama, silk worms were attacked by an epidemic and the cotton harvest in the United States was significantly reduced" [68]. A war seemed to escalate between nature's disastrous involvement in human's affairs and positivistic science. First results arrived in the 1870's, when Italy's silk production almost reached again pre-crisis levels. At the same time, though, famine returned on stage, hand in hand with recurring epidemics of cholera[69]. In their wake, many of Italy's agricultural and cultural journals published studies in which men and plant diseases were treated in the same experimental way. "The primary cause of the oidio plaguing the vine – was written, for example, on the *Annali d'agricoltura* - is still controversial as is the one of cholera-morbus. It is disputed if

[65] Ibid.

[66] The mysterious atrophy of the silk worms concerned the best minds of Europe for a long time. See: *Atrofia nei bachi di Seta; Memoria del Dott. Lomeni*, "Giornale agrario lombardo-veneto e continuazione degli annali universali di agricoltura di industria e d'arti economiche", Vol. 3, 1 - 3, 1835, pp. 12-13; *Cagione della malattia delle gattine, macilenza o atrofia nei bachi da seta in Francia e Spagna, e modo di preservarli*, "Annali d'agricoltura in continuazione del giornale agrario lombardo-veneto", Vol. 3, 1- 6, 1855, pp. 17-19; *Esperienze col solfito e coll'iposolfito di soda dirette a curare o prevenire l'atrofia del baco da seta: di Giovanni Polli*, "Annali di chimica applicata alla medicina cioè alla farmacia, alla tossicologia, all'igiene, alla fisiologia, alla patologia e alla terapeutica", Vol. 38, 1, 1864, pp. 78-93; *Esperienze col solfito e coll'iposolfito di soda dirette a curare o prevenire l'atrofia del baco da seta: di Giovanni Polli*, "Annali di chimica applicata alla medicina cioè alla farmacia, alla tossicologia, all'igiene, alla fisiologia, alla patologia e alla terapeutica", Vol. 38, 2, 1864, pp. 145-160;

[67] The oidio had been spread in the 1850's and caused from then on recurrent epidemics . See for example: G. B. Ronconi, *L'Incoraggiamento. Sulla epifitozia delle viti. Sunto delle osservazioni fatte dal dot. G. B. Ronconi sopra l'invasione dell'Oidio nelle viti*, "Giornale agrario lombardo-veneto e continuazione degli annali universali di tecnologia, di agricoltura, di economia rurale e domestica, di arti e mestieri", Vol. 9, 2/3, 1853, pp. 143-152; Giuseppe M. Bozoli and G. B. Ronconi, *Sulla epifitozia delle viti. Sunto delle osservazioni fatte dal dott. G. B. Ronconi sopra l'invasione dell'Oidio nelle viti. (Continuazione e fine)*, "Giornale agrario lombardo-veneto e continuazione degli annali universali di tecnologia, di agricoltura, di economia rurale e domestica, di arti e mestieri", Vol. 9, 4, 1853, pp. 232-238.

[68] Francesco Ferrara*, Introduzione. Delle Crisi Economiche*, in: I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864, p.vii.

[69] *Statistica dei casi di cholera-morbus asiatico notificati nella città e provincia di Milano, durante le epidemie contagiose delle quattro importazioni avvenute negli anni 1836, 1849, 1854 e 1855*; etc., "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, legislazione, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 9, 25, 1856, p.97; G. S., *Relazione della commissione sanitaria di Milano sul cholera-morbus nell'anno 1855*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, legislazione, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 9, 26, 1856, pp.115-116.

the latter is epidemic or contagious, of the former if it is external or congenital to the plant"[70]. Alarmed studies would even test the possibility for plant diseases to infect men [71].

Not even climate would escape a thorough scientific study. Confronted with the umpteenth famine, in 1856 the *Annali d'Agricoltura* printed a provocative article titled: "Is it possible to forecast the weather?"[72]. Although admitting that he would have answered the same question negatively just a short time before, the author related all the extraordinary advancements in communications recently achieved, so extraordinary that it was thinkable to alert locations about the arrival of storms and hurricanes in time to avoid the worst damages to crops. The invention of telegraph, along the precise and scientific measurement and surveillance of weather conditions undertaken in most parts of the world, could so reduce to a minimum the influence of weather conditions on the agricultural produce.

Culture, as in Manzoni's wish, had undoubtedly changed in the course of the nineteenth century. Liberal economics claimed the existence of a natural order following natural laws that, without the interference of men, could reduce crises to trifling local and short lived events; all the while scientists opposed an entire new stack of new chemical weapons, mechanical devices and medicines to famines and epidemics. Institutions would soon change too: Italy was to be united and the newly elected Parliament would be full of economists and scientists. Agriculture, though, remained, in most of the Peninsula, backward and unproductive. Innovations were only slowly adopted, capital scarce. Famine was avoided through massive emigration, while the remaining population was subject to endemic diseases caused by malnutrition like pellagra[73]. What went wrong?

Manzoni would have had a ready answer. Passions could heavily damage the order of a society and of an economy. In united Italy, the recurrence of war, the unjust distribution of the weight of taxation, megalomaniac investments in railways, financial speculations could all be interpreted as the result of wrong decisions on part of public administrators, while the population was still prey of ignorance. Morals had been lost in the positivist euphoria. Still, God had His own way, through Providence, to enter the scene, even the economic one. Free trade, better growing and conservation methods were, so, in the eyes of Manzoni, only palliatives and short-term solutions for a population that in the long run would outgrow every melioration of agriculture. Manzoni could not fail to ironically comment Say's chapter on famines becoming less frequent in the future: "Et puisque la population rattrape toujours, dans un certain laps de temps, les subsistances, cette augmentation sera illusoire dans le second avenir. *Non: l'avenir n'est à personne, Sire: l'avenir est à Dieu!* a dit un de vos poètes[74]. En attendant, cette amélioration dont vous parlez expressément vous l'avez eue (au moins en ce qui regarde la délivrance des forbans , car le reste est encore dans cet avenir qui est à Dieu) par le moyen de quelqu'un, de qui vous ne l'attendiez probablement pas. Pauvre superbe des rois! Pauvre superbe des auteurs! Pauvre superbe des chiffonniers!"[75].

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[70] *Cosa c'insegni l'esperienza intorno alla natura ed al modo di propagarsi della malattia della vite*, "Annali d'agricoltura in continuazione del giornale agrario lombardo-veneto", Vol. 5, 1 – 6, 1856, pp.101-103.
[71] *Sull'oïdio della vite e sull'atrofia dei bigatti: pensamenti di Giovanni Ruspini*, "Annali di chimica applicata alla medicina cioè alla farmacia, alla tossicologia, all'igiene, alla fisiologia, alla patologia e alla terapeutica", Vol. 39, 4, 1864, pp. 231-233.
[72] *Si può egli ragionevolmente predire che tempo farà?*, "Annali d'agricoltura in continuazione del giornale agrario lombardo-veneto", Vol. 6, 7 – 12, 1856, pp.111-116.
[73] An accurate disanima of the agricultural sector in Italy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is: Mario Romani, *Storia economica d'Italia nel secolo XIX (1815-1882)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1982, pp.308-344.
[74] The quoted poem is "Les Chants du crépuscule. Napoleon II" by Victor Hugo.
[75] Alessandro Manzoni, *Opere inedite o rare*, Milan, Fratelli Rechiedei, 1885, p.220.

Table 1. Medium prices of 100 kilos of grain in Italy from 1801 to 1885[76]

PREZZI MEDI DI UN **QUINTALE DI FRUMENTO** IN ITALIA DAL 1801 AL 1885. (1)

ANNI	PREZZI	ANNI	PREZZI	ANNI	PREZZI	ANNI	PREZZI	ANNI	PREZZI
1801. . . .	41.68	1818 . . .	22.48	1835 . . .	15.85	1852 . . .	21.67	1869 . . .	25.69
2. . . .	34.52	19 . . .	17.81	36 . . .	19.25	53 . . .	29.05	1870 . . .	27.67
3. . . .	28.15	1820 . . .	20.43	37 . . .	21.88	54 . . .	34.55	71 . . .	31.36
4. . . .	25.90	21 . . .	21.96	38 . . .	21.55	55 . . .	31.53	72 . . .	32.77
5. . . .	29.16	22 . . .	17.53	39 . . .	21.93	56 . . .	31.77	73 . . .	36.96
6. . . .	25.64	23 . . .	16.40	1840 . . .	21.85	57 . . .	28.81	74 . . .	37.55
7. . . .	18.77	24 . . .	14.01	41 . . .	19.57	58 . . .	20.88	75 . . .	28.27
8. . . .	17.27	25 . . .	12.33	42 . . .	20.59	59 . . .	22.93	76 . . .	29.49
9. . . .	17.87	26 . . .	15.48	43 . . .	20.35	1860 . . .	25.23	77 . . .	34.40
1810. . . .	22.89	27 . . .	21.63	44 . . .	19.95	61 . . .	28.68	78 . . .	32.13
11. . . .	32.45	28 . . .	22.29	45 . . .	19.79	62 . . .	28.52	79 . . .	32.06
12. . . .	30.28	29 . . .	22.60	46 . . .	23.00	63 . . .	26.36	1880 . . .	32.99
13. . . .	23.87	1830 . . .	20.69	47 . . .	31.05	64 . . .	25.57	81 . . .	27.19
14. . . .	25.56	31 . . .	20.99	48 . . .	26.11	65 . . .	24.01	82 . . .	26.24
15. . . .	38.24	32 . . .	20.84	49 . . .	23.28	66 . . .	27.30	83 . . .	23.81
16. . . .	49.16	33 . . .	19.63	1850 . . .	19.19	67 . . .	31.24	84 . . .	22.29
17. . . .	41.97	34 . . .	17.81	51 . . .	18.53	68 . . .	32.69	85 . . .	22.01

(1) I prezzi per gli anni 1866-1883 sono qui espressi in valuta legale. Del resto la loro riduzione in oro si trova negli specchietti che precedono.

Table 2 Price series of grain (red line) and corn (blue line) in three Italian cities from 1800 to 1877[77]



[76] Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, *Movimento dei rezzi di alcuni generi alimentari dal 1862 al 1885*, Roma, Tipografia Eredi Botti, 1886, p.XVI.

[77] Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, *Movimento dei rezzi di alcuni generi alimentari dal 1862 al 1885*, Roma, Tipografia Eredi Botti, 1886, Appendici grafiche.

AN AGRICULTURAL IDYLL OPPOSED TO AN INDUSTRIAL NIGHTMARE: CRISES OF OVERPRODUCTION IN JOURNALS AND LITERATURE

"At every step, the shops closed ; manufactories for the most part deserted; the streets presenting an indescribable spectacle, an incessant train of miseries, a perpetual abode of sorrows" (Alessandro Manzoni)[78]

Notwithstanding that food shortage crises still caused havoc in Italy, Francesco Ferrara envisaged already in the first half of the nineteenth century their loss of relevance in respect to the impact of overproduction crises on an economy [79]. He connected this change directly to the process of industrialization. Overproduction had been of no interest "when and where industry had been in its infancy, production done at home and trade limited". Lately, observed Ferrara, overproduction crises had, instead, become more general, sometimes even "dreadful and clamorous", so for the first time in Great Britain following the peace of 1815. "This phenomenon of congestion (English authors call it *glut*) impressed some economist on the Continent so much, that a school was formed, under the direction of Sismondi, that chose as theme of its reproaches *industrialism*, the excess of industrial activity". Economists as Malthus, Torrens, Say and Ricardo, all participated in the following heated debates. The question, though, had been mostly theoretical in the eyes of many, mainly an English problem, till the catastrophe of 1848 in France "when, amidst a general scarcity, all was abundant for a complete absence of trade". "From then on - concluded Ferrara – the industrial world has learned to fear feast much more than famine". Common wisdom had become that overproduction crises were "an unavoidable fatality, imposing a pause to industry from time to time, a pause needed for the odious necessity to devour, amidst bankruptcies and the ruin of the most splendid fortunes, all that an imprudent activity will have produced in excess".

A thorough analysis of Italian journals in the first half of the nineteenth century confirms the impressions of Ferrara. Many periodicals reported the debates on industrialism. The problem, however, was strictly linked to England and to the image Italian intellectuals had of that country. Industrialism was not something that could really concern Italy. On the contrary, the polemics were often interpreted as a proof that an economic development based on agriculture and productions like silk, wine and oil, would prove much more stable, not only in economic terms but also socially, than the English alternative of industrialization. Only the universal expositions of London and Paris could shake such certainties and only in the second half of the century.

First traces of the debate appeared in 1819 on the pages of *Il Conciliatore*[80], a short lived scientific and literary periodical, founded in Milan by a group of liberals near to romanticism[81]. Pietro Borsieri, writing the programmatic points of the journal, included among them the diffusion of the new principles of the economic science and of practical knowledge as agricultural good practices, new machines and whatever else might serve to augment the wealth of a society. Albeit this generic program, *Il Conciliatore* soon

[78] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*, New York, Appleton & Company, 1898, p.412.
[79] Francesco Ferrara*, Introduzione. Delle Crisi Economiche*, in: I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864, pp.vii-ix.
[80] All quotations from this periodical, cited in the paper were taken from the edition: Vittore Branca (ed.), *Il Conciliatore Foglio scientifico-letterario*, 3 vols., Firenze, Le Monnier, 1953-1965.
[81] On this and further quoted periodicals see: Massimo M. Augello, Marco E.L. Guidi, *The Emergence Of Economic Periodical Literature In Italy (1750-1900)*, "History of Economic Ideas", Vol. 4, 3, 1996, pp. 15-62.

established itself as the periodical of the opposition to the Austrian Regime and with regard to economic science as a critical voice against the liberal school.

Giovanni Arrivabene, for example, reviewing[82] *On the Economy of the Human Race*, by Adeodato Ressi, openly spoke out his faith in the possibility to improve society, through institutional changes and education. A society that evolved, though, could not be subject to natural economic laws and abide to a theory claiming that nonintervention would be the best policy across time and space. He so wrote: "But the doctrine of perfectibility had another kind of adversary, much more dangerous. They are some Optimists who, believing everything good, consider devoid of sense trying to purge society from the vices that afflict it, and they even attempt to prove that the vices and social disorders are useful and necessary, because they are the pillars of the present social and economic order"[83]. What use could enlightened intellectuals, bent on reforming society and educating the population, make of a theory that paralleled economic interaction to the eternal and equilibrate movement of planets?

The purpose of meliorating a society continuously changing was so a key point of the editorial line of *Il Conciliatore,* inspired mainly by Melchiorre Gioja, who believed in a process of industrialization guided by the government as in France under the Empire[84]. The economic positions of *Il Conciliatore*, though, were also stimulated by the scope of diffusing romanticism that occupied so many of its articles on history and literature. Sismondi was, in consequence, one of the preferred authors of the journal, as an historian but also as an economist. In one occasion these two souls of the journal came to a clash, but there was no doubt on the result. Giuseppe Pecchio, reviewing the essay of Melchiorre Gioja on *National Manufactures and Excise Duties*, commented the repeated and meticulous criticisms toward Sismondi thusly: "we hope that the confutations were aimed at discovering the truth more then to the boastful intent of depressing a name that must be particularly dear to Italy" [85]. Sismondi was an icon not to be touched.

There was no real incompatibility, however, between Gioja's approach and romantic historiography[86]. In his essay, Melchiorre Gioja later admitted, he had defended the protectionist policy of Austrians with more acquiescence to the government than real belief and had deserved the critics from the editors of the journal. Otherwise *Il Conciliatore* subscribed many a stance by Gioja. In particular those concerning the acceptability of a certain measure of protection in order to stimulate the adoption of innovations in industry. So the case of France as described by Chaptal in *De l'Industrie Françoise* and reviewed by Giuseppe Pecchio[87], so, contended the same Pecchio, in Italy during the Napoleonic Era[88].

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[82] Giovanni Arrivabene, *Dell'Economia della Specie Umana di Adeodato Ressi ART I*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 38, 1819, pp.37-41; Giovanni Arrivabene, *Dell'Economia della Specie Umana di Adeodato Ressi ART II*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 41, 1819, pp.85-89; Giovanni Arrivabene, *Dell'Economia della Specie Umana di Adeodato Ressi ART III*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 48, 1819, pp.197-200; Giovanni Arrivabene, *Dell'Economia della Specie Umana di Adeodato Ressi ART IV*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 48, 1819, pp.225-228.

[83] Giovanni Arrivabene, *Dell'Economia della Specie Umana di Adeodato Ressi ART I*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 38, 1819, p.39.

[84] On Melchiorre Gioja see: *Riccardo Faucci, L'economia politica in Italia*, Torino, Utet, 2000, pp.135-142.

[85] Giuseppe Pecchio, *Sulle manifatture nazionali e le tariffe daziarie*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 3, 104, 1819, p.250.

[86] Proof can be that at the eve of the revolutions of 1848, writings of the two authors were published together in Paris to incite the Risorgimental spirit: Melchiorre Gioja, Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde Sismondi, *Opinioni di Melchiorre Gioja e Sismondo Sismondi sulle cose italiane*, Paris, Lib. Maire-Nyon, 1846.

[87] Giuseppe Pecchio, *De l'Industrie Française ART I*, "Il Conciliatore", vol 2, 64, 1819, pp.427-434; Giuseppe Pecchio, *De l'Industrie Française ART II*, "Il Conciliatore", vol 2, 66, 1819, pp.460-469.

[88] Giuseppe Pecchio, *Progressi dell'industria italiana ART III*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 67, 1819, pp.475-486.

It was again Pecchio to review the *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population* of Sismondi[89] in three articles published in 1819. It cannot come as a surprise that he particularly appreciated Sismondi's definition of political economy: the research of the means, through which the maximum number of people could participate to the maximum of physical welfare, that depend on government. "A definition – wrote Pecchio – so compliant to the interest of human race that could only have been conceived by the historian of *The Italian Republics of the Middle Ages*, an historian who didn't simply value the glory of arms, the growth and decay of governments' power and the capacity to prevail upon any circumstance, but always judged events for their effect on the welfare of populations"[90]. The need for state intervention followed then from this necessity to guarantee a share in a nation's welfare to every men. A line of reasoning that was not new in Italy, where Melchiorre Gioja, underlined Pecchio, had already formulated it before Sismondi. The two authors had autonomously reached the same conclusions and no tangible distance could be ascertained between their respective positions.

As a consequence, regarding the problem of industrialism, Pecchio stressed particularly how Sismondi considered cases when protective measures and the introduction of machines in the production process had not been harmful but instead had helped to revive a slouch economy. Pecchio reiterated what he had already exposed in his article on the industrial progress of Italy: in the case of Lombardy the mechanization of cotton spinning and wool carding, granted by state incentives and protectionist policies during the few years of the Kingdom of Italy, had procured work and a better existence for many. "The significant imbalance – concluded Pecchio - in the trade account of Lombardy toward foreign countries in almost all manufacturing goods makes us believe that the introduction of machines and the extension of industry would be useful to our population and our wealth"[91]. Different the case of England, though, were unemployment, excessive working hours and wages under subsistence had caused social unrest and revolts against the use of machines.

The best solution, perhaps, might have been to follow the agricultural vocation of Italy, maintaining the rural structure of society, even if enhanced by the use of agricultural machines[92] and the development of local manufactories. A development strategy particularly dear to Tuscany's intelligentsia. So Luigi Serristori[93] reported on *Il Conciliatore* the utopian and pedagogical experiment of Hofwyl and the definition of agriculture given by Philipp Emanuel von Fellenberg[94]: "This art was born with humanity and has for

[89] Giuseppe Pecchio, *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population, par J. C. L. Simonde De Sismondi ART 1,* "Il Conciliatore", vol 2, 83, 1819, pp.727-731 ; Giuseppe Pecchio, *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population, par J. C. L. Simonde De Sismondi ART 1,* "Il Conciliatore", vol 3, 89, 1819, pp.34-41 ; Giuseppe Pecchio, *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population, par J. C. L. Simonde De Sismondi ART 3,* "Il Conciliatore", vol 3, 90, 1819, pp.50-60.

[90] Giuseppe Pecchio, *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population, par J. C. L. Simonde De Sismondi ART 1,* "Il Conciliatore", vol 2, 83, 1819, p.728.

[91] Giuseppe Pecchio, *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population, par J. C. L. Simonde De Sismondi ART 3,* "Il Conciliatore", vol 3, 90, 1819, p.58.

[92] Luigi Serristori, *Applicazioni che potrebbero farsi delle macchine a vapore, singolarmente in Toscana*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 91, 1819, pp.71-75.

[93] Luigi Serristori, *Sopra gli stabilimenti del sig. Fellemberg a Hofwyl ART I*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 45, 1819, pp.142-149; Luigi Serristori, *Sopra gli stabilimenti del sig. Fellemberg a Hofwy ART II*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 45, 1819, pp.161-167.

[94] The exemplary estate of Hofwyl, near Bern, was devised by Fellenberg to create a new rural society through education and moralization. His social experiment found ample echo in Italy, with many articles published on *Giornale Agrario Toscano*, *Giornale Della Società D'Incoraggiamento Delle Scienze e Delle Arti*, *Atti della I. E. R. Accademia*

every man the same scope in every region and every climate. In consequence, agriculture is necessary, permanent and extensive. The application of labor to agricultural reproduction bears the most durable and moral sentiments"[95].

The few sketches that have been derived by reading the articles dedicated to economic matters in *Il Conciliatore*, can be easily recognized as the base on which Manzoni construed his historical novel. The final lines of *The Betrothed* depicted a happy family, blessed by a numerous upspring, living in a rural surrounding enriched by silk manufactures as much as by fertile fields. The society supporting the family was founded on moral sentiments much more than personal interest or, God beware, class interests. The position of Manzoni is a further proof that as much as the novelty of mechanical and chemical advancements could arouse enthusiasm and interest in Italy's intellectuals, there always remained a strong dose of skepticism toward the ungoverned industrialization process as represented by English cities.

Against the social problems caused by the passage from an *ancien regime* society to an industrialized one, Manzoni invoked the invisible hand of God, His Providence, Gioja the visible hand of the State: two opposite solutions, and Manzoni's harsh criticisms to Gioja testimony it, that rested, however, on the same ideal representation of the present and future conditions of the two countries, Italy and England. This value judgment, frozen in the images of an evoked rural Italy with no misery or social conflict, blessed by fertility and diffused manufactures, and a richer and industrialized England, characterized by unequal distribution of wealth[96] and extreme poverty of the working class, became in time part of the national identity of the newborn Italian state, showing an impressive cultural resilience.

After the closing down of *Il Conciliatore* in 1819, due to the censure of the Austrian government, the canonization of England's negative image continued on many other journals. In particular the *Antologia*, periodical published in Florence between 1821 and 1832, in its first issues published a series of letters, on the situation in England after the crisis of 1816, that contained all the same alarming and distressing details underlined by Sismondi and reported by Pecchio on *Il Conciliatore*. Not per chance the letters had been originally written by a mysterious S. James in 1819 to answer the fears that Italian capital invested in England would be swallowed by an impending revolution[97].

The real problem of England, in the perception of the author, had been the centuries long concentration of wealth in the hands of a few monopolists of land and capital, concentration that had left an enormous mass of proletarians not only without the means of survival but with no bond whatsoever toward the existing social order. One ninth of the population possessed all sources of production and thusly supported another ninth of England's people, as clerks, servants etc. The remaining seven ninths, though, worked in agriculture (4 millions) or in manufacture (3 millions)[98]. The overproduction problem followed the fact that the enormous amount of people working in the manufacturing sector needed a potential number of

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economico-agraria dei georgofili in Firenze, *Giornale d'Agricoltura*, *Annali universali di tecnologia, di agricoltura, di economia rurale e domestica, di arti e di mestier*i.

[95] Luigi Serristori, *Sopra gli stabilimenti del sig. Fellemberg a Hofwyl ART I*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 45, 1819, p.145

[96] On the problem of the distribution of wealth see also: Silvio Pellico, *An inquiry into the nature, ecc. Ricerca sopra la natura e l'origine della pubblica ricchezza, e sopra i mezzi e le cause del suo accrescimento. Del conte di Lauderdale. Seconda edizione. Edimburgo, 1819*, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 60, 1819, pp.367-371; Silvio Pellico, *An inquiry into the nature, ecc. Ricerca sopra la natura e l'origine della pubblica ricchezza, e sopra i mezzi e le cause del suo accrescimento. Del conte di Lauderdale. Seconda edizione. Edimburgo, 1819*, ART II, "Il Conciliatore", vol. 2, 70, 1819, pp.530-536.

[97] S. James, *Lettera I*, "Antologia", Vol I, 1, 1821, pp.71-74.

[98] S. James, *Lettera II*, "Antologia", Vol I, 1, 1821, pp.74-.78.

consumers, in the estimate of S. James, of 56 million of foreigners, summed to the nine of the internal market. Of those foreigners, England had lost its monopoly power over one fourth in consequence of Waterloo, condemning at least 600.000 artisans to destitution. No help was possible for such unemployed artisans, in contrast to peasants in Italy or France, who always had the opportunity of retrieving their subsistence from agriculture, in case of failure of their homework activity as spinners or weavers[99].

After having further described England's finances and political situation[100], S. James returned to the question of unemployment in the tenth and eleventh of his missives, suggesting possible policies. The English government could offer to the destitute artisans a "magical" solution, in form of faith in a potential future work, or a more real possibility of employment in public works as the cultivation of fallow land, the drying of swamps, digging of canals and paving roads[101]. A more advisable solution, though, would have been, in the opinion of the author, to restore the general community of interest that had been lost to England's society. To recreate such harmony of interests between manufacturers and workers, these last should have been given the property of small units of land near their home, so as to be able to grow there the food for their families' subsistence. In agriculture, instead, the mass of small tenants that had been expelled from extensive land estates should have received back their employment, so as to diminish the mass of 600.000 indigent proletarians. Thusly reintroduced into the social pact, "we will see them, -claimed S. James -like the peasants of Val d'Arno, bless their landlord, to whom they shall give a share of the gifts the Lord wants divided among all men" [102].

The conclusion of this letter [103] raises many doubts on the English identity of the author, on whom nothing more is known beside the name. What is of interest, though, is how these letters perfectly corresponded to an already rhetoric representation of the social problems arisen in England as a consequence of industrialization. Other articles on the economic situation of England, published in later years only confirmed this depiction[104]. The proposed solution to English economic misortunes was a objectively utopian one: to transform the greatest commercial and military nation of the West into a wider Tuscany, regulated by tenant farming and sharecropping.

As had been in the editorial line of *Il Conciliatore*, this interpretation of the causes of England's crisis of 1816 was accompanied in the *Antologia* by a thorough admiration for Sismondi's historical work. Given the friendship uniting the editor, Giovan Pietro Vieusseux[105], and Sismondi, the Florentine journal was the

[99] S. James, *Lettera III*, "Antologia", Vol I, 2, 1821, pp.175-178.
[100] S. James, *Lettera IV*, "Antologia", Vol I, 2, 1821, pp.178-181; S. James, *Lettera V*, "Antologia", Vol I, 2, 1821, pp.181-182; S. James, *Lettera VI*, "Antologia", Vol I, 2, 1821, pp.182-187; S. James, *Lettera VII*, "Antologia", Vol I, 2, 1821, pp.187-190; S. James, *Lettera VIII*, "Antologia", Vol I, 2, 1821, pp.190-192; S. James, *Lettera IX*, "Antologia", Vol I, 3, 1821, pp.417-423.
[101] S. James, *Lettera X*, "Antologia", Vol I, 3, 1821, pp.423-427; S. James, *Lettera XI*, "Antologia", Vol I, 4, 1821, pp.42-48.
[102] S. James, *Lettera XI*, "Antologia", Vol I, 4, 1821, p.48.
[103] The "Antologia" published two more letters of S. James, that do not contain any more reference to participation practices but only political suggestions: S. James, *Lettera XII*, "Antologia", Vol I, 4, 1821, pp. 49-51; S. James, *Lettera XIII*, "Antologia", Vol I, 4, 1821, pp. 52-54.
[104] *Lettera al Direttore dell'Antologia, sulla situazione economica dell'Inghilterra*, "Antologia", Vol 12, 34, 1823, pp.1-17.
[105] On Viesseux and the culture in Florence at the times of *Antologia*, see: Luigi Mascilli Migliorini , *"L'Atene d'Italia": identità fiorentina e toscana nella formazione dello Stato nazionale*, "Meridiana", 33, 1998, pp. 107-123.

first[106] to present to its readers the monumental work *History of the French*, reprinting the introduction in its entirety. "History – wrote Sismondi in it – is the fundament of al social sciences, because it offers us the collection of all experience's lessons (…). In giving form to society, the legislator must look for all that can contribute to the moral advancement of mankind and to its welfare. Only experience can guide him in this research"[107]. The historicism of part of Italy's tradition of economic thought derived from the profound influence Sismondi and this kind of romantic historiography had in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Such influence should be measured not only and not primarily by the reception of Sismondi's theories in their entirety, but by the fact that he contributed to diffuse a language and a system of concepts that addressed all subsequent reasoning and thought; a main example being the widespread discussion that involved Italian intellectual till the middle of the century on the concept of civilization, evolution of enlightenment's ideal of progress, as the art of government.

In 1824, though, in Italy erupted the debate about Sismondi's article *On the balance between consumption and production* published at first on the *Revue Encyclopedique*[108]. The article was translated and reprinted both in the *Antologia*[109] and *Annali* [110], presented as the latest study of the most renown scholar of the *History of the Italian Republics*[111], "generous author that Italy glories itself in considering, due to an ancient ascendancy, one of its children" [112]. Notwithstanding all this deference, in Italy the reception of Sismondi as an economist was much more problematic than the diffusion of his theses on romanticisms and of his historiographical method[113]. In Florence, for example, the *Accademia dei Georgofili* discussed at length the problem of machines, and Giuseppe Gazzeri refuted decidedly the theory of Sismondi. His lecture held at *Georgofili* the 7th March of 1824 was later published by *Antologia*[114], as was another article on *Machines* that attributed without doubt the English economic crisis not to the mechanization process but to protectionism[115]. Given the long standing Tuscan tradition of free trade, the Academia of *Georgofili* could not subscribe Sismondi's position [116].

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[106] The *Biblioteca Italiana* introduced the work of Sismondi only in 1822. See*: Regno Lombardo-Veneto - Storia de' Francesi, di J. C. L. Simondo de Sismondi, tradotta da B. Perotti. Vol. I al 3°*, "Biblioteca Italiana ossia Giornale di letteratura scienze ed arti", Vol. 27, 1822, pp. 115-116.

[107] *Histoire des Français ec. Storia dei Francesi ec. di J. C. L. de' Sismondi. Parigi presso Treuttel et Wurtz. vol. I. II. e III. che contengono la storia dei Francesi sotto le due prime dinastie* , "Antologia", Vol III, 7, 1821, p.134.

[108] For a recent assessment of Sismondi's work see: Thomas Sowell, *Sismondi: A Neglected Pioneer*, in: Thomas Sowell, *On Classical Economics*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 104-128.

[109] Della proporzione fra il consumo e il prodotto, discorso del sig. Sismondi, tratta dalla Rivista Enciclopedica, "Antologia", vol. 15, 44, 1824, pp.49-76.

[110] Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, *Della bilancia delle consumazioni colle produzioni. De Sismondi (traduzione di L. F.)*, "Annali universali di viaggi, geografia, storia, economia pubblica e statistica", Vol. 1, 2 /3, 1824, pp. 192-233.

[111] On the fame and fortune of this historical work of Sismondi and its importance in the movement of *Risorgimento*, see: Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi*, Istoria delle Repubbliche italiane, di J. C. L. Sismondo de Sismondi*, "Giornale agrario lombardo-veneto e continuazione degli annali universali di agricoltura di industria e d'arti economiche", Vol. 14, 7, 1840, p. 68.

[112] Della proporzione fra il consumo e il prodotto, discorso del sig. Sismondi, tratta dalla Rivista Enciclopedica, "Antologia", vol. 15, 44, 1824, p.49.

[113] See: Marco Manfredi, *La ricezione di Sismondi nella cultura italiana della Restaurazione*, in: Letizia Pagliai e Francesca Sofia (es.), *Sismondi e la Nuova Italia*, Firenze, Polistampa, 2011, pp. 71-124.

[114] *Memoria letta dal Prof. Gazzeri nell'adunanza del dì 7 Marzo 1824 della R. Accademia dei Georgofili*, "Antologia", vol.14, 41, 1824, pp.102-122.

[115] *Macchine*, "Antologia", vol. 16, 46, 1824, pp.78-93.

[116] Ferdinando Tartini Salvatici, *Riflessioni sugli effetti della libera concorrenza. Memoria letta all'Accademia dei Georgofili nell'adunanza del 10 Aprile 1825*, "Antologia", vol.19, 55, 1825, pp.19-31.

In the *Annali* Sismondi's article was published in the very first issues, when the influence of Melchiorre Gioia and his interventionist stance was still dominant. The only comment attached to the writing of Sismondi was, so, a brief claim that the theses of Sismondi had already been exposed in Gioja's *Nuovo Prospetto delle Scienze Economiche* in 1816[117]. In his work Gioja had already "stigmatized as visionaries those writers who, as if in possession of some magic wand made manufactories pop up exactly when needed and attributed to all places in the world that union of knowledge, interests and power that could be found in London, Manchester and Liverpool" [118]. "From these ideas – concluded the reviewer – evidently follows that between the maximum ignorance and the maximum civilization, between the maximum poverty and the maximum wealth, between the maximum inertia and the maximum activity of the nations, it might often happen that industry is in want in respect to demand and the laborer remains unemployed in consequences of changes in fashion, of mechanical innovations, of new trading routes... These theory is of the cited Italian author. De Sismondi seems to have used it as a fundament of his article, but reaching different conclusions"[119].

The renewed English crisis of 1826 sparked novel debates on industrialism. The *Antologia,* by publishing the personal observations of Giuseppe Pecchio, who was visiting England at that time, observed that "the big commercial crisis of 1826 has made epoch in the history of economic thought, not so much for its immediate effects, but for the scientific discussions it ignited again", so that "no one who is interested in the evolution of science can omit to cite this point of contemporary history" [120]. As a consequence Florence's journal dedicated several articles to the crisis[121], but maintained its liberal position even amidst heavy criticisms. The lawyer Paolini, for example, called back to life the half a century old debate on agricultural protection, discussing in front of the assembly of the Georgofili the possible benefits of the introduction of protective measures on the agricultural production of the Maremma senese[122].

At the same time also Sismondi's *Nouveaux principes d'éeconomie politique* were reviewed again in their second edition[123]. The commentator, Carlo Bosellini[124], attributed Sismondi's erroneous interpretation of the causes of England's crisis to his excessive philanthropic interests, while he, himself, judged the origin of the present malady in the unequal distribution of wealth produced by flawed legislation and institutions. Whenever the social construction was not aimed at the welfare of the population, every adverse casualty, however little, could origin enormous negative consequences. Given this assumption, the rapid solution of

[117] *Riflessioni sulla bilancia delle consumazioni ec. di M.*, "Annali universali di viaggi, geografia, storia, economia pubblica e statistica", Vol. 1, 2/3, 1824, pp.233-236.
[118] *Riflessioni sulla bilancia delle consumazioni ec. di M.*, "Annali universali di viaggi, geografia, storia, economia pubblica e statistica", Vol. 1, 2/3, 1824, p.236.
[119] Ibid.
[120] *L'anno 1826 dell'Inghilterra, colle osservazioni di Giuseppe Pecchio*, Lugano, 1827, "Antologia", vol.27, 81, 1827,p.19.
[121] *Ribellione di operai in Inghilterra*, "Antologia", vol. 22, 65, 1826, pp.168-173. The article was translated from "The Globe"; *L'anno 1826 dell'Inghilterra, colle osservazioni di Giuseppe Pecchio*, Lugano, 1827, "Antologia", vol.27, 81, 1827,pp.19-36.
[122] Aldobrando Paolini, *Alcune idee di supplemento ai cenni sulla Maremma Senese dell'avvocato Paolini ,* "Antologia", vol.27, 80, 1827, pp.47-70. The essay was reviewed by the Annali Universali: *Alcune idee di supplemento ai cenni sulla Maremma Senese dell'avvocato Paolini*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", vol. 14, 1827, 41, 1827, pp.221.
[123] Carlo Bosellini, *Osservazioni sull'articolo della Revue Encyclopedique, settembre 1826, n. 93, Nouveaux principes d'éeconomie politique, segnato J. C. L. de Sismondi*, "Antologia", vol.26, 78, 1827, pp.1-24.
[124] On this author see: Massimo Augello, *Imprenditorialità e innovazione nel pensiero di Carlo Bosellini*, "Rivista Di Politica Economica", vol.66, 8/9, 1976, pp.989-1001; Daniela Parisi Acquaviva, *Carlo Borsellini storico del pensiero economico*, "Rivista internazionale di scienze sociali", 1, 1980, pp.141-

the calamity forecasted by Say could not become reality. "Without the said reforms of civil law, the English people could never attain the scope of a stable welfare and social order" [125] concluded Bosellini. The model to be imitated was obviously the Tuscan one, were the participation of all men to the agricultural wealth of the region, thanks to the tradition of sharecropping, granted the desired stability of the social order. On the same lines, the review of *L'industrie et la morale* became an excuse to glorify Tuscany, characterized by liberal policies and a participative distribution of wealth, in opposition to the moral improvement invoked by Dunoyer in France through the coercion of the State[126].

On the *Annali* the English crisis of 1826 was analyzed, from the point of view of economic theory, by Giuseppe Sacchi[127]. Sacchi, moved by "the miserable display of a population eminent among all others for its agriculture, industry and commerce, that, abruptly swept in a dangerous collapse, worries the other nations, preoccupied of similar misfortunes" [128], compared at length in two articles the works of Álvaro Flórez Estrada[129], Jan Baptiste Say and Sismondi concerning the English situation. Sacchi heavily criticized the idea expressed by Estrada that the origin of England's malady was to be found in the scarcity of precious metals, due to their ceased import from the Americas and the excessive capital export of England toward other European countries, stimulated by speculation. Estrada had based his reasoning on false data, as easily shown at hand of studies of Gioja and other authors. Sismondi, again, was treated with more respect, "a profound thinker used to look at science with passionate eyes", worthy of gratitude by all men of good faith "for having diffused in the public economy the philanthropic sparks of social charity[130].". Nonetheless his analysis of the causes of England's crisis as written in his *Nouveaux Principes* was erroneous. Sismondi confused cause with effect. "The reason of the crisis – argued Sacchi – had to be searched in the international relations of England with foreign countries, as would be further explained. When the crisis exploded, it spread among manufacturers, laborers and peasants. So that it was not production that grew in respect to consumption, but the erroneous distribution of products in relation to consumption that accelerated the crisis" [131]. Say, lastly, identified the source of the crisis in the excess of money, a speculation ignited to the extreme by the activities of banks. In the opinion of Sacchi, though, even Say confused cause with effect, because the speculation he described was only the most recent link of a chain of effects that originated somewhere else completely[132].

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[125] Carlo Bosellini, *Osservazioni sull'articolo della Revue Encyclopedique, settembre 1826, n. 93, Nouveaux principes d'éeconomie politique, segnato J. C. L. de Sismondi*, "Antologia", vol.26, 78, 1827, p.16.
[126] *L'industrie et la morale ec. L'industria e la morale considerate nele loro relazioni con la libertà. Opera di Carlo Bartolomeo Dunoyer*, "Antologia", vol.23, 67, 1826, pp.65-79.
[127] Giuseppe Sacchi, *Osservazioni intorno alle opinioni di A. F. Estrada, L. Sismondi e G. B. Say sulla crisi commerciale dell'Inghilterra (Articolo I.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 11, 31, 1827, pp 48-57; Giuseppe Sacchi, *Osservazioni intorno alle opinioni di A. F. Estrada, L. Sismondi e G. B. Say sulla crisi commerciale dell'Inghilterra (Articolo 2° e ultimo)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 11, 32, 1827, pp 150-167.
[128] Giuseppe Sacchi, *Osservazioni intorno alle opinioni di A. F. Estrada, L. Sismondi e G. B. Say sulla crisi commerciale dell'Inghilterra (Articolo I.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 11, 31, 1827, p. 48.
[129] Carlos Rodri´Guez Braun, *On this Asturian economist see: Álvaro Flórez Estrada. Compromised Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Spain*, "The Independent Review", vol. 13, 1, 2008, pp. 81–98.
[130] Giuseppe Sacchi, *Osservazioni intorno alle opinioni di A. F. Estrada, L. Sismondi e G. B. Say sulla crisi commerciale dell'Inghilterra (Articolo I.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 11, 31, 1827, p. 54
[131] Giuseppe Sacchi, *Osservazioni intorno alle opinioni di A. F. Estrada, L. Sismondi e G. B. Say sulla crisi commerciale dell'Inghilterra (Articolo I.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 11, 31, 1827, pp 54-55.
[132] Giuseppe Sacchi, *Osservazioni intorno alle opinioni di A. F. Estrada, L. Sismondi e G. B. Say sulla crisi commerciale dell'Inghilterra (Articolo I.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 11, 31, 1827, pp.55-57.

The reasoning that Sacchi himself volunteered in the second of his articles[133]on the origin of England's predicament, aimed at uniting all the explanations offered by the other authors, by identifying the righteous succession of events and causation effects. Sacchi, so, proceeded to depict the long civilization process of England as bearing a fruit of immense wealth in the form of goods, credit means and precious metals. The manufacturing and trading activity of England had so caused an enormous amount of gold and silver to flow into the country, procuring the flourishing of trade, but also the devaluing of specie. In consequence metals had flown out the country toward speculations abroad, while in England itself they had been substituted by means of credit. The production, though, excessively stimulated and financed by credit, had reached a point where it couldn't find a demand, not even in foreign countries, so that the letters of credit and the debt issues could not be repaid. Here the origin of the crisis with its consequences on the financial sector, with the loss of faith in credit means, and the run on banks in the desperate attempt to convert them in gold or silver, and on production, with price deflation, bankruptcies and unemployment.

With this comment on the English crisis of 1826, Sacchi, for the first time on Italian journals, attempted an explanatory theory that comprised in an unique casual chain all typologies of crises, shortage of production, shortage of demand and financial imbalances. Similar attempts would be made, as seen, only in later years by Gerolamo Boccardo and Francesco Ferrara.

In 1826 the *Annali* , in search of some explanations of trade disorders and commercial imbalances, also reexamined the positions of Malthus and his criticisms towards Ricardo, but concluded the debate in favor of the latter[134]. Melchiorre Gioja, instead, took occasion from the novel discussion to personally review the second edition of Sismondi's *Nouveaux principes ,* this time not on the *Annali*, but on the *Biblioteca Italiana*[135]. The criticism was harsh and dismissive. "Sismondi – he wrote – led astray by his disproportionate sensibility, while examining the causes of the latest crises afflicting England, blamed the principles of modern economy, and from particular circumstances, extraordinary and limited to that isle, deduced general conclusions valid in all nations. He could be compared to a man that having seen a physicists stroked by lightning, would begin to lecture against Franklin's rod" [136].

Although, as in these examples, in Italy the reception of the Sismondi's economic ideas was scarce, the problems he raised as an historian continued to inform the research and publishing activities of Italy's intellectuals. An example of such influence were the writings of Giandomenico Romagnosi[137] and his guidance of the *Annali Universali di Statistica* up to his death in 1835. Even if liberalism was from then on

[133] Giuseppe Sacchi, *Osservazioni intorno alle opinioni di A. F. Estrada, L. Sismondi e G. B. Say sulla crisi commerciale dell'Inghilterra (Articolo 2° e ultimo)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 11, 32, 1827, pp 150-167.

[134] *Osservazioni sui principj dell'economia politica di Malthus, contrapposti ai principj di Davide Ricardo. (Art. ° I.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 10, 28, 1826, pp. 13- 28; *Osservazioni sui principj dell'economia politica di Malthus, contrapposti ai principj di Davide Ricardo. (Art. ° I.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia e viaggi", Vol. 10, 29, 1826, pp. 142-156.

[135] Melchiorre Gioja*, Nouveaux principes d'économie politique, par S. De Sismondi Art. I*, "Biblioteca Italiana ossia Giornale di letteratura scienze ed arti", Vol. 47, 1827, pp.84-101; Melchiorre Gioja*, Nouveaux principes d'économie politique, par S. De Sismondi Art. 2 e ultimo*, "Biblioteca Italiana ossia Giornale di letteratura scienze ed arti", Vol. 47, 1827, pp.238-258.

[136] Melchiorre Gioja*, Nouveaux principes d'économie politique, par S. De Sismondi Art. 2 e ultimo*, "Biblioteca Italiana ossia Giornale di letteratura scienze ed arti", Vol. 47, 1827, p.258.

[137] On the common features and divergent points of the doctrines of Sismondi and Romagnosi, see: Luca Mannori, *Sismondi e Romagnosi : due costituzionalismi a confronto*, in: Letizia Pagliai e Francesca Sofia (es.), *Sismondi e la Nuova Italia*, Firenze, Polistampa, 2011, pp. 195-216.

defended with much more rigor than in the first issues, influenced by Gioja, the *Annali* continued to share many themes and the same *Problemstellung* with the older *Conciliatore*. Giuseppe Sacchi would so affirm in a programmatic article that "the eminent scope of the science of the social order of wealth is to suggest the ways and means through which the property of enjoyable things would be equitably diffused in all classes of people useful to society. Because if there wouldn't be this equitable diffusion of comforts, the economic science would only be a bewitching counselor of privileges and monopolies and a disastrous commander of acts of injustice, given that a just persons only sits were every man receives what competes to him"[138].

Regarding the state of the art of the economic science in Italy he would continue: "Thanks to Providence the economic order of wealth in most of Italy's states abides to the good and healthy norms of social justice and the Italian economic authors cannot easily contrast in their doctrines the model of equity and good government of their land; from here derive the healthy theories of the equitable diffusion of comforts among all, through the untouched principle of the common liberty; from here the maintained freedom of economic competition internally and externally; from here the constant effort of eradicating all obstacles and impediments to the progressive evolution of wealth; (…) from here the instinctive aversion towards all foreign doctrines that give as norm and direction to the civil economy the disordered impulse of personal profit of individuals, profit guided by interests not mitigated nor harmonized to the necessities of others or of common existence or of good government"[139].

In the wake of the English crisis Romagnosi himself published an article on the place that free competition should assume in the general order of wealth[140]. Although he heartily defended the rationale for free trade, Romagnosi remained attentive to social problems. In 1829 he so wrote an article on pauperism in England[141], in which, after refusing the Malthusian argument on the growth of population as origin of unemployment and scarcity, he concluded declaring: "The Providence of nature that ordered things with weight, number and measure and didn't prescribe but wished for human civilization, so as to render men more social and helpful, from the heights of Its sapience and decrees laughs at these interested follies, designed for the dominance of a few. Even amidst losses and inconveniences deriving from a badly devised social state, Providence provokes us to pursue that holy equity and charity, invoked by reason and sanctioned by Religion in the most clamorous manner".

All editorial activity of Romagnosi was further dedicated to the holistic effort of reuniting reason and Religion in the intent of civilization. His own definition of civilization became the object of a series of

[138] Giuseppe Sacchi, *Sulla distribuzione delle ricchezze e sulle sorgenti delle imposte*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 31, 92, 1832, p. 158.
[139] Giuseppe Sacchi, *Sulla distribuzione delle ricchezze e sulle sorgenti delle imposte*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 31, 92, 1832, p. 153.
[140] G.D. Romagnosi, *Come raffigurar si deve la libera concorrenza nell'ordine sociale delle ricchezze*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", vol. 14, 1827, pp. 113-130),
[141] Giandomenico Romagnosi, *Del Pauperismo britannico all'occasione di un articolo della Rivista Enciclopedica intitolato Ricerche sui progressi e lo stato attuale del Pauperismo in Inghilterra dopo il regno di Elisabetta fino ai nostri giorni*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 19, 57, 1829, pp. 225-255.

articles published in 1830's on the *Annali* with the title "What is civilization?"[142] and of books and essays that obtained a great success and were reviewed by other periodicals like *Biblioteca Italiana*[143].

With the passing of the threshold of the 1830's, it is evident from the content and tone of the articles reviewed that the time of crisis following Restoration had given way to a period of relative stability and economic growth. Journals lacked the verve of the theoretical debates of the 1820's and became full of reports on technological and agronomical innovations if not of poetry and ancient history. Censure had its hand in this trivialization process, due to ever more stringent norms and controls.

When crises begun to afflict again the European economy, their nature had changed and no one would speak anymore of isolated gluts or simple overproduction. The financial and monetary sides of crises became manifest, obliging to rethink the problem in more systematic terms.

In 1839 Carlo Cattaneo, disciple of Romagnosi, founded in Milan *Il Politecnico*[144] a journal dedicated to the popularization of science with the aim of giving useful notices on innovative practices and technologies and so stimulate the intelligence and the productive forces of Lombardy. In this first series, up to its closure in 1844, between articles dedicated to steam machines, mining and chemical advancements, the only essay on economic crises was a review, by Cattaneo himself, of *Des Crises Financières: Et de La Reforme Du Système Monétaire*, written in 1839 by Louis Chitti [145]. As the title in itself amply exemplifies the focus of the reviewed essay was the monetary system as origin of the most recent French financial crisis.

In Italy this theoretical jump toward a completely different evaluation of the phenomenon of crises was particularly welcomed, given that the country, before and after Unification, remained a mainly agricultural economy were gluts of manufacturing products, when occurred, touched a minuscule percentage of population. What continued to matter were food shortages caused by meteorological occurrences and, increasingly from Unification onwards, monetary disorders, financial crises and speculative crashes, consequence of the heavy public debt and the increasing financialization of the economy.

The absence of a significant industrialization was also reflected in the complete absence of literature works on the consequences of manufacturing crises: unemployment, laborer's riots, diffused proletarian poverty in cities and the negative image of machines, in brief what abounded in English and French literature of the nineteenth century. The inheritance, instead, that all debates on industrialism, the introduction of machines and Sismondi's historicism left to united Italy was its identity as an agrarian state were

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[142] Giandomenico Romagnosi, *Che cos'è l'incivilimento? (Art.° I.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 31, 92, 1832, pp. 129-140; Giandomenico Romagnosi, *Che cos'è l'incivilimento? Memoria di Gian Domenico Romagnosi (Art.° II°),* "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 31, 93, 1832, pp.241-260; Giandomenico Romagnosi, *Che cos'è l'incivilimento? Memoria di Gian Domenico Romagnosi (Art.° III.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 31, 94, 1832, pp.17-35; Giandomenico Romagnosi, *Che cos'è l'incivilimento? Memoria di Gian Domenico Romagnosi (Art.° IV.°)*, "Annali universali di statistica economia pubblica, storia, viaggi e commercio", Vol. 31, 95/96, 1832, pp.145-194.

[143] Giandomenico Romagnosi, *Dell'indole e dei fattori dell'incivilimento, con esempio del suo risorgimento in Italia, di G. D. Romagnosi: 1° estratto,* "Biblioteca Italiana ossia Giornale di letteratura scienze ed arti", Vol. 69, 1833, pp. 185-199; Giandomenico Romagnosi, *Dell'indole e dei fattori dell'incivilimento, con esempio del suo risorgimento in Italia, di G. D. Romagnosi: Art. 2° ed ultimo,* "Biblioteca Italiana ossia Giornale di letteratura scienze ed arti", Vol. 72, 1833, pp. 182-197

[144] On this important periodical see: C.G. Lacaita, R. Gobbo, E.R. Laforgia, M. Priano (eds.), *"Il Politecnico" di Carlo Cattaneo. La vicenda editoriale, i collaboratori, gli indici*, Milano-Lugano, G. Casagrande, 2005.

[145] Carlo Cattaneo, *Delle crisi finanziarie e della riforma del sistema monetario, di Chitti*, Il Politecnico, Vol. 1, 6, 1839, pp. 541-559.

industrialization would be a desirable but slow process, governed by the public hand in order to maintain the present social order based on participation.

In Italy's first popular illustrated journal , *Il Giornale Illustrato*, published in Florence by the renowned editor Barbera between 1864 and 1867, Italy's economy and society were so represented always through works of art related to an idyllic countryside. An example are the two etchings printed in July 1864 after two paintings by Louis Léopold Robert, at the time expose at the Louvre in Paris. The etchings here reproduced as img. 1 and 2, show happy and merry parties of peasants coming home from a grape harvest near Neaples and a grain harvest in the Maremma. Everyone is well dressed and happy, no signs of the effects of famine, endemic malnutrition or maladies.

Striking the contrast with one of the few representations of extreme poverty and squalor ever published by the periodical: the interior of a London Lodging House (img. 3). A brief article related a visit to one of this Lodging-houses, home for London's homeless and jobless. "You must have entered one of these establishments to really know what misery is", wrote the journalist[146], "you would think to be in one of hell's caverns". "No! - explained he further – Under our warm and charming skies in our districts without industries and working machines, we cannot even imagine such a sight, and what makes it all even more dreadful is to know that so many poor in London are condemned to this existence".

In sum, from the reception of the academic debates between Ricardo and Malthus and between Say and Sismondi at the beginning of the century, to the ideological representation of Italy and England in the first popular journals printed after Unification, the problem of industrialism had seeped down from intellectual discourse to common prejudice, from intellectuals to illiterates. While theorists already discussed the cyclicality of crises and the role of financial institutions and monetary markets in igniting them, the populace of Italy was still fed the mythos of a social order that had never really existed, a past enlightened ideal that was already crumbling under the blows of a culture of class interests, nationalistic identity and extensive state intervention.

[146] *Un Lodging-House a Londra*, "Il Giornale Illustrato", 12/18 August 1865.



Img. 1 Grape Harvest near Neaples (Louis Léopold Robert)[147]



Img. 2 Harvest in the Maremma pontina (Louis Léopold Robert)[148]

[147] Etching printed in: "Il Giornale Illustrato", 28/29 July 1864.
[148] Etching printed in: "Il Giornale Illustrato", 2/8 July 1864.



Img. 3 London Lodging-House[149]

[149] Etching printed in: "Il Giornale Illustrato", 12/18 August 1865.

SOME CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM A FIELD OF MIRACLES

"How far off is the Field of miracles?"

"Not two miles. Will you come with us? In half an hour you will be there. You can bury your money at once, and in a few minutes you will collect two thousand, and this evening you will return with your pockets full. Will you come with us?" (Carlo Lorenzini)[150]

The analysis of Italian journals and literature of the nineteenth century, up to unification, highlights how the relative backwardness of Italy's economy and the almost complete absence of an industrialization process restricted the diffused perception of economic crises to food shortage and famine. The recurrence of such disasters stimulated the economic debate on free trade, particularly at the eve of 1848. Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed* bears ample testimony of the importance of such discussions, widespread in most journals of the time. Particularly in connection with the political demand for independence, the request for an economic united Italy, guided by freedom of trade, became popular among intellectuals as common men.

The debate on industrialism, instead, and the effects of the introduction of mechanical innovations in the production process, was conducted on Italian periodicals only in reference to England and particularly in connection with its grave crises of 1816 and 1826. Factories and machines were so indelibly associated, in the mind of Italians, with the British aisle and the representation of destitute laborers living in unhuman conditions, subject to whims of fate in form of unemployment and misery. The opposite depiction of the Italian countryside, particularly in Tuscany, blessed by participative institutions granting to proprietors and tenants a diffused wealth, become too a recurring theme, spread in most writings of the time.

After unity the evoked images of England and Italy were still part of popular culture, while periodic financial crises called for a change in theorization and an adjourned debate on newspapers and academic journals. Speculations, crashes and frauds, involving banks as the newly formed Italian Parliament, found their way also in literary works. Further research should so be dedicated to an analysis of such masterworks, as Pinocchio, that clearly refer to this last form of crisis as described by Francesco Ferrara in 1864[151]. Italy jumped abruptly, with not minor falls and bruises, from an agrarian economy as depicted by Manzoni, to Pinocchio's field of miracles, where unscrupulous speculators managed to rob foolish and ignorant citizens of their few earnings. The economy changed but population at large, still living in the countryside, employed in agriculture and mostly illiterate, was unaware and even uninterested in it. When realism found its way in Italian literature at the end of the century, Giovanni Verga would still represent an agrarian economy. Only one major difference can be ascertained between his and Manzoni's Italy: Providence is now a fisher's boat that shipwrecks, bringing ruin to the Malavoglia family. What consolation Lucia had found in faith, was no more available to Verga's *Defeated*. To crises there was no solution at individual level: economic determinism had entered history.

[150] Carlo Lorenzini, *Pinocchio*, New York, Philadelphia and London, Lippincott, 1919, p.94.
[151] Francesco Ferrara, *Introduzione. Delle Crisi Economiche*, in: I. W. Gilbart, H, Scherer, P.G. Stirling, *Biblioteca dell'Economista*, series 2, vol IV, Torino, Stamperia dell'Unione Tipografico- Editrice, 1864, pp.vi-xi.