

Josip Torbarina

Arturo Cronia on Dante in Croatian and Serbian Literature

In his little book (129 pages) *La fortuna di Dante nella letteratura serbo-croata* (Padova, 1965) A. Cronia gives a well-ordered, systematic and synoptic survey of Dante's impact on the literature of the Croats and Serbs. In four sections he speaks separately of "Imitations" (pp. 7—33), "Translations" (pp. 35—78), "Echoes" (pp. 79—108), and "Dantean Scholarship" (*Letteratura dantesca*, pp. 109—129).

The first section (*Imitazioni*) is necessarily restricted in space (the old Croatian literature of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia) and time (the 16th and 17th centuries). Cronia begins by dealing with the *Ragusan Canzoniere* of 1507 (Šiško Menčetić and Džore Držić), then speaks separately of the Ragusans Vetranović, Nalješković, Dimitrović and Zlatarić; he finally passes on to the poets of central and northern Dalmatia, to Zoranić, Baraković (both of Zadar) and to Kavanjin (of Split). He goes from forthright quotations (one at least even in the original Italian) through paraphrases and imitations of single passages to whole works inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In the end he adds Frano Lalić in the early 18th century (1679—1724), discovered as an imitator of Dante by M. Deanović, and, as a proof of Dante's fame and popularity among the Croats in the middle of the 18th century, he quotes a passage from the *Razgovor ugodni* where Andrija Kačić Miošić (1704—1760) speaks of "Dante, famous in all the world" ("Po svem svitu Dante glasoviti").

On the whole this section is based on researches of Yugoslav, almost exclusively Croatian, scholars (M. Medini, M. Rešetar, T. Matić, D. Bogdanović, A. Petravić, P. Kolendić, M. Deanović, V. Štefanić, J. Torbarina) and when, rarely, it is not, Cronia is very careful to stress the fact (e. g. "ciò che non è stato ancora notato", p. 17). In passing he also mentions Dantean reflexes in

Serbo-Croat popular ballads, a subject which he has personally investigated ("È tutto illustrato e documentato da A. Cronia", p. 32).

In conclusion Cronia emphasizes the "historical importance" of Dante's influence: "Sono impressioni storicamente importanti perché rivelano in quali e quanti modi Dante, in tempi certo a lui non propizi, era noto e ammirato anche da coloro che portavano incensi al Parnaso slavo". But when he comes to speak of the artistic impressions, although he admits that imitations of Dante in Italy were not better ("Del resto lo stesso genere visionario-allegorico non era fatto per facili e felici riproduzioni o emulazioni. Ce lo provano anche gli imitatori di Dante in Italia"), he uses his notoriously offensive vocabulary. He speaks of the "acque stagnanti di una letteratura riflessa, mimetica, eclettica, passiva" and the old Croatian poets are "modesti rabberciatori . . . opachi e ottusi . . ."! (p. 33). In the last issue of this same periodical (No. 19—20, 1965), dedicated entirely to Dante, I tried to show that traces of *Dante in Old Croatian Poetry* were much more significant and copious than Cronia thinks, and that the poets were much less "opachi e ottusi".

In the second section (*Traduzioni*) Cronia passes from these old "sparuti, sporadici e goffi imitatori" to 19th and 20th century translators "versatili, coraggiosi e dotti" (p. 35). This is the best part of his book. Jolanda Marchiori in her review of it (*Lettere italiane*, Firenze, XVII/1965, No. 2) calls this chapter a "miniera ricca di notizie sicure, documentate e nuove". For reasons of which I will speak later, it is difficult to say how "nuove" these "notizie" are, but here Cronia is certainly more impartial. He is very good on the first translator of the whole *Comedy*, F. Tice-Uccellini, about whom he has a few kind words to say (pp. 51—54), he is enthusiastic about A. Tresić-Pavičić's translations of fragments and single cantos of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, done for the first time in the metre of the original (pp. 55—57), and he writes a panegyric about the latest translation of the whole work executed by M. Kombol and completed by O. Delorko (cantos XVIII—XXXIII of the *Paradiso*). This translation, according to Cronia, is "opera di grande impegno e di grande lustro" (p. 71) and a "versione di alto decoro artistico" (p. 72).

In his next section (*Echi*) Cronia registers exhaustively Dantean reminiscences in the works of Croatian and Serbian writers. He begins with the Montenegrine P. Petrović Njegoš who has the lion's share of ten pages (pp. 79—88), then he speaks of the Serbs J. Sundečić, L. Kostić, M. Car and the more recent M. Rakić, M. Crnjanski and B. Kovačević (by mistake called Kovačić). More numerous are the Croats I. Mažuranić, M. Pucić, L. Zore, A. Nemčić, A. Šenoa, V. Korajac, I. K. Ostojić, A. Tresić-

-Pavičić, I. Vojnović, V. Nazor and the contemporaries A. Cesarec, M. Krleža and O. Delorko. From this long list the only serious omission is A. G. Matoš in whose work, however, the presence of Dante is strongly felt.¹

His last section entitled *Letteratura dantesca* Cronia begins by saying that such a "letteratura" among the Croats and Serbs does not exist: "Di dantologia come scienza e vocazione con pregi specifici non è il caso di parlare" (p. 109). And then on over twenty pages he goes on to speak of "i saggi, gli articoli e i tributi all'Alighieri apparsi qua e là a caso o in determinate circostanze giubilari: per lo più di scarsa importanza e senza pretesa di originalità" (p. 109). He speaks of the work of W. Ljubibratić, I. Kršnjavi, V. Lozovina, M. Car, I. Andrović, M. Gjuraneć, V. Vitezica ("che... celebrò Dante... recensì opere di Croce e Cronia"), M. Deanović, Radovan Vidović (whose name is by mistake contracted into "Radović"), etc. In the work of all these scholars, such as they are, Cronia sees only greyness and monotony from which are saved only a select few. "Da tanto grigiore," he says, "e da tanta monotonia si salvano, se non altro per la loro serietà e novità i già ricordati sondaggi danteschi di Vidović, Gortan, Medini, Matić e Torbarina nell'antica letteratura di Dalmazia e i pure ricordati saggi di Schmaus e di Kastropeli su Dante e Petrović Njegoš, di Skok sulle traduzioni del Preradović, di Bogdanović sull'inferno in generale nella letteratura croata e quei tentativi di avvicinare l'Alighieri alla poesia popolare serbo-croata, che hanno aperta la via ad uno studio particolare di Arturo Cronia" (pp. 118—119). Notice the gradation, the climax by which we are led to the apotheosis, to the crowning glory of Dantean scholarship connected with the literature of the Croats and the Serbs! Cronia's scanty list of "the redeemed" is very brief and personal. Some deserving scholars are absent from it and some might have been left out. In her review quoted before J. Marchiori found it necessary to complete, or rather alter Cronia's list, but the names in her complement seem to have been chosen at random. "Tra i comparatisti e italianisti più illustri," she says, "che hanno offerto i loro contributi a Dante, vengono ricordati Lozovina, Deanović, Vitezica, Vidović e inoltre divulgatori del culto dell'Alighieri quali W. Ljubibratić, I. Kršnjavi e il serbo Marco Car". It is wrong to present this as Cronia's "honours list". With the exception of Vidović, who is included both in her and his list, Cronia is unkind, in some cases with reason, to all the scholars she singles out for praise. He is very unfair to Deanović, slightly kinder to Lozovina, the work of Vitezica is "frutto più di 'amore' che di 'studio'," the essays of Kršnjavi "sono in gran

¹ See M. Zorić, "Naši noviji pjesnici i Dante", *Republika*, Zagreb, XX/1965, No. 5, pp. 189—192.

parte articoli divulgativi che si richiamano a lavori di altri", M. Car, as a translator at least, uses "un linguaggio banale che culmina nel buffo", the two "opuscoli" of Ljubibratić are "rabberciature di roba altrui, plagi male mascherati . . . informazioni erronee e antiquate, assimilate senza metodo e senza buon gusto". This last is the only example where I entirely agree with Cronia, and it beats me why J. Marchiori should have chosen to place, or rather to attribute to Cronia the placing of this forgotten baron among the distinguished "divulgatori del culto dell'Alighieri". Besides, he was "debunked" almost sixty years ago by that "acuto se pur spietato critico serbo-croato" called Henrik Barić (p. 110).

As for myself, I was surprised to find my name among the blessed in Cronia's critical Paradiso, for in the course of his exposition he only casually mentions my work in two footnotes. Perhaps in what follows will appear how and why I deserved this distinction. Anyhow, after this, neither he nor anyone else can accuse me of being partial if I now make about Cronia's own work a few critical remarks.

I must make two serious objections to this study of "the Fortunes of Dante in Serbo-Croat Literature" which may be applied to Cronia's work as a whole. First of all he is very erratic, not to say misleading, in referring to his sources so that often it is difficult to see what is his and what is not, it is impossible to separate what is actually his own contribution to scholarship from the fruit of other people's labours. Secondly, all his judgements, especially those concerning the "letteratura in lingua slava" of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia, are tinged by a very strong political bias which has nothing to do with real scholarship and is generally manifested in the author's extremely abusive language. I will deal with these two aspects of his work in turn.

As a good illustration of the first, I will give a detailed account of the use Cronia made of my *Italian Influence on the Poets of the Ragusan Republic* (London, 1931). He quotes in his book, as his own "discovery", no less than seven parallels which I have noticed and noted between the *Divine Comedy* and the work of the early Ragusan poets. Cronia translates or paraphrases even my accompanying context without ever referring to my book.

1. On the very first two pages (7—8) of his book Cronia says that Dante "appare nella poesia lirica di Sigismondo Menze (Šiško Menčetić, 1457—1527), il quale . . . così si richiama alla famosa terzina del quinto canto dell'*Inferno* (121—123):

. . . ni veće žalosti
ner smišljat u tuzi minute radosti."

Thirty-five years ago (on p. 127) I had written: "Menčetić quotes his (i.e. Dante's) famous saying:

... Nessun maggior dolore,
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria ...

(*Inf.*, V, 121—123)

as follows:

... ni veće žalosti
Ner smišljat u tuzi minute radosti. (VI, 9)"

In his book Cronia here refers to the foot of the page where I naturally expected to find a reference to the page of my book. Instead of which he directs the reader to M. Rešetar's edition of the poems of Menčetić and Držić published in 1937 but, contrary to his custom, here he does not quote chapter and verse. After every other quotation in the book, superfluously but "learnedly", he each time gives the title of the whole collection ("Old Croatian Writers"), the page on which the quoted poem occurs, the number of the poem in question and the lineation of the quotation; for example: *Pjesme Šiška Menčetića i Gjore (recte Džore!) Držića* (repeated in full five times!), *op. cit.* (the cited work is the collection *Stari pisci hrvatski!*), p. 219, n. 361, vv. 21—23. In this case, however, he gives neither page nor number nor line. Why? Because in my book, which he exclusively follows, in this place a printers' error has crept in. Writing before 1931 I naturally could not use Rešetar's edition of 1937, and I consequently refer to Jagić's edition of 1870. The reference here is erroneously given to book VI poem 9 of Menčetić's *Canzoniere* in Jagić's arrangement of the poems. The correct number of the poem is 19; and so Cronia could not find it either in Jagić's or in Rešetar's edition, and I do not believe that he has even re-read it for this occasion because what he has to say about it is sheer fantasy and has nothing to do with the poem in question. What he actually says is that Menčetić "nella frase finale del suo *itinerarium amoris*, nel condannare gli amorosi sensi e nell'implorare la protezione della Madonna, così si richiama alla famosa terzina..." (p. 8). Menčetić does nothing of the sort. He neither condemns his "amorosi sensi", nor implores the protection of the Madonna who is not even mentioned in the poem. May I inform Signor Cronia that in Rešetar's edition this is poem No. 306 on p. 177 and that it bears, in brackets, Jagić's old title "Zavist me rastavi s ljubavlju". I do not know what Cronia means by "itinerarium amoris"; probably Menčetić's *Canzoniere*, or one of the sections of manuscript M in which his whole *Canzoniere* is contained. The MS is divided into two parts, the second of which is again divided into three books. The title of the first part is *Sigismundi Mensii Carmina* and of the second *Sigismundi Mensii Carminum*

Libri Treis. Now, the poem in question is not the concluding poem of any of these four sections. It comes right in the middle of the first part of the manuscript which in Rešetar's edition occupies 223 pages; the poem is printed on p. 177.

Moreover, in his footnote to this quotation Cronia says: "Infatti in un manoscritto contenente le poesie del Menze un amanuense accanto ai versi croati ha segnato anche quelli di Dante; cfr. la prefazione di M. Rešetar . . .". But he does not seem to have read carefully Rešetar's preface either, for there he would have learnt a) that the person mentioned here is not an ordinary scribe (*un amanuense*) but the famous Croatian writer Ivan Kukuljević, and b) that the quotation from Dante does not occur "nella frase finale" but in the very first two lines of the poem. On p. LIX of his preface, to which Cronia correctly refers, Rešetar says: "To se vidi odatle što je Kukuljević . . . uz prva dva stiha od M. 305 . . . prijepisu dodao u napomeni citat *Nessun maggior dolore . . .*".

One more, and final, proof that Cronia is here copying or transcribing from my book and not from Rešetar's edition, to which he refers, is provided by the fact that he is faithfully reproducing Jagić's orthography and punctuation which I of necessity follow. Rešetar has since improved both; in this concrete case he has placed a necessary circumflex accent over the vowel in "ni" and employed inverted commas to mark the beginning and end of the quotation; thus:

"Ni veće žalosti
ner smišljat u tuzi minute radosti".

This is not what we find in Cronia's book. And then, of course, the passage is famous indeed, but it is interesting that Cronia speaks of the "famosa terzina" after my "famous saying".

2. Immediately after this parallel Cronia says (on p. 8) that Menčetić "rieheggia poi la similitudine di

quei che con lena affannata . . .

in

Od morske pučine kad sile popridu . . ."

The original of this is on p. 128 of my book: "Dante's well-known simile of the shipwreck:

E come quei che con lena affannata . . .

is imitated in Menčetić's

Od morske pučine kad sile popridu . . ."

Even my "simile" becomes "similitudine" in Cronia's book. In footnote 2 he again refers only to Rešetar's edition, this time fully and exactly, reproducing correctly his punctuation.

3. Immediately after this Cronia says (on pp. 8—9) that Menčetić “dalla orazione di San Bernardo nell’Empireo prende lo spunto per chiudere il suo canzoniere con una preghiera alla Vergine che incomincia:

Uzmožna Gospođe, tko milos ku žudi...

e che goffamente ricalca... la terzina dantesca:

Donna, sei tanto grande e tanto vali...

I, in my turn, had written (p. 128): “Lastly Menčetić has a verbatim translation of a terzina from St. Bernard’s prayer to the Virgin in the last canto of the *Paradiso*:

Donna, sei tanto grande e tanto vali...”

And then I quote Menčetić’s quatrain beginning:

Uzmožna Gospođe, tko milos ku žudi...

Of course, the phrase “goffamente ricalca” bears the hall-mark of Arturo Cronia.

4. On the same page 128 of my book I wrote: “Držić again in the lines

Nis’ tvrđa kamena, nit može toj biti
gdi s’ vilo ljubljena, da ne ćeš ljubiti

clearly states one of the main principles of Dante’s theory of love:

Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona.”

And Cronia on page 9 of his book repeats: “Nell’invocare dalla sua ‘donna angelica’ l’amore..., egli ricorre al verso di Dante

amor che a nullo amato amar perdona

e con lo stesso virtuosismo etimologico lo arieggia in:

gdi s’ vilo ljubljena da ne ćeš ljubiti.”

In a footnote Cronia again refers only to Rešetar’s edition (p. 345, n. 516, v. 14) although he still copies straight from my book, reproducing from it Jagić’s older orthography (writing “ne ćeš” separately) and faulty punctuation, while in Rešetar’s edition both have been corrected; thus:

gdi s’, vilo, ljubljena, da nećeš ljubiti.

5. Still on the same page (128) of my book I wrote: “In another poem by Držić (No. 116) there is a glimpse of Dante’s Matelda gathering flowers:

upazih nika vil cvit po cvit po polju
gdi štiplje ter u kril svoj slaga na volju.

In the same way to Dante appears

una donna soletta, che si già
cantando ed iscegliendo fior da fiore."

And Cronia, still on the same page of his book (9), paraphrases my text (with improvements!): "Nella rievocazione poi del primo amoroso incontro egli ha presente Matelda, che soletta

cantando ed iscegliendo fior da fiore si già

e, con lo stesso effetto della epanalessi, dell'allitterazione, dell'assonanza vocalica e dell'enjambement, presenta la sua donna

... nika vila (sic!) cvit po cvit po polju
gdi štiple ter u kril svoj slaga na volju."

Once more Cronia refers in a footnote only to Rešetar's edition, but he does not seem to have consulted for this occasion Držić's poem (which is no longer thought to be Držić's and of which he knows only the two lines quoted by me) in this or in any other edition. The poem is an allegorical "capitolo de la castità" and in it there is no trace of the "primo amoroso incontro" which is a pure invention of Cronia's. And still, one would expect Cronia to be very familiar with these old Ragusan poems, for many years ago he made a detailed study of *Il Canzoniere raguseo del 1507* (Zadar, 1927) which, however, does not seem to have been very thorough. Milan Rešetar, to whose edition of the poems of Menčetić and Držić Cronia so often refers, is very critical of it. He considers that Cronia was too severe in criticizing Jagić's edition of the same poets and too superficial in his own perusal of the most complete manuscript of the Ragusan *Canzoniere* which until this last war was preserved in the library of the "Gymnasium" of Zadar. In the Introduction to his edition Rešetar says: "... kad sam revidirao R od prvoga slova do posljednjega, našao sam vrlo mnogo stvari, kojih Cronia nije vidio; ko isporodi kritičke napomene u prvome izdanju (Jagićevu) i Cronijeve dodatke s mojima lako će vidjeti da je gotovo za svaku pjesmu u novome izdanju izneseno nešto više".²

With the example of Dante's Matelda echoed in the anonymous Croatian poem ends Cronia's account of Dante's presence in the *Ragusan Canzoniere*. He limits himself to mentioning the five parallels noticed by me, not adding a single one of his own. On pp. 8—9 of his book he reproduces, not to say literally translates, pp. 127—128 of my book without adducing the source of his information. It is surprising that in thirty-five years he, who is so anxious to prove that the "letteratura...

² *Stari pisci hrvatski* II, Yugoslav Academy of Zagreb, 1937, p. XVII, n. 8.

serbo-croata di Dalmazia è tutta riflesso, trans-poesia, imitazione della letteratura italiana" (p. 7), has not been able to detect one single new "riflesso" of Dante in this large collection of poems. I am pleased and flattered that he is still so satisfied with my Ph. D. thesis published in 1931. I cannot say the same for myself. Though engaged in other matters and intent on other problems, mainly connected with the work of a poet with whom, according to T. S. Eliot, Dante divides the modern world,³ I have since noticed many more, more interesting and subtler, echoes of Dante in the *Ragusan Canzoniere*, as can be seen in my *Dante in Old Croatian Poetry* mentioned before.

His short section (just over two pages) on Dante's presence in the *Ragusan Canzoniere* Cronia concludes with these words: "Ma sono piccole stille che si perdono senza ulteriori richiami nel mare di una poesia viziata, manieristica e frivola che a Dante preferisce Serafino Ciminelli, Antonio Ricco, Baldassare Olimpo da Sassoferrato, Cristoforo l'Altissimo e via dicendo" (p. 9). It is then, and only then that Cronia in a footnote refers to my book. Even then he very mischievously refers only to pp. 93—105 where, in a section ("The influence of contemporary Italian poets") of my long chapter on Menčetić and Držić (pp. 91—137), I actually do speak of the influence of the poets mentioned by Cronia. In other words he calls me to witness asking me to corroborate his statement about the "eclettismo di una letteratura riflessa" (p. 20) and to testify with him that practically the only models of the Ragusan poets were the poor Italian *strambottai* of the time. This is not what I said but, of course, the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. In this same section (on pp. 102—105) I also speak of the more beneficial influence of Luigi Pulci, Lorenzo de' Medici and Angelo Poliziano. This, naturally, Cronia passes over in silence, for it does not serve his purpose which is to prove that old Ragusan literature is "una letteratura riflessa, mimetica, eclettica, passiva" (p. 33). He also passes in silence the rest of my chapter where, under separate headings, I deal with the influence of Petrarch, of Latin literature, of the Troubadours and of the *dolce stil novo* poets on Menčetić and Držić. He is particularly careful not to mention pp. 127—129, the only pages which he should have referred to, where I speak of Dante's influence and which he simply incorporated in his book without any acknowledgement. The procedure is not worthy of a scholar of Cronia's reputation.

His aim was obviously to mislead the reader and to convey the impression that these "finds", such as they are, were the

³ "And take the *Comedy* as a whole, you can compare it to nothing but the entire dramatic work of Shakespeare... Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them; there is no third". *Selected Essays 1917—1932*. London, 1932, pp. 250—251.

result of his scholarly researches. In this he fully succeeded. So, for instance, the reviewer of Cronia's book in the Zagreb weekly *Telegram* (12 March 1965), drawing exclusively on his book, legitimately gives full credit to Cronia for having found "the first Dantean reminiscences already in the poems of the Croatian Petrarchists of the Ragusan circle" ("Prve danteovske reminiscencije autor je sklon da pronađe već u pjesmama hrvatskih pretrarkista dubrovačkog kruga").

Cronia found nothing of the sort. There is no trace of this "detection" in his work published before the appearance of my book.⁴ On the contrary, he makes a point of confuting even the possibility of a claim to this effect. In the first of the two quoted studies he says: "Chè essi (i.e. Menčetić and Držić) sono poeti petrarchisti, popolareggianti e del dolce stil nuovo di Dante non hanno la più lontana traccia" (p. 5). A little farther on the same page he polemizes with Branko Vodnik who had said that Džore Držić's "gospoja" (*Lady*) represented "contemplation of man in divinity", that Držić "called his ideal Grace" and that Grace to him was "Beatrice from the *Divine Comedy* who leads Dante to the throne of God" while Držić's "ideal of beauty" was "permeated by a certain symbolism and mysticism".⁵ To all this Cronia replies: "Sarà bene tratteggiare la figura poetica di questi Dioscuri (i.e. Menčetić and Držić) per stornare eventualmente false interpretazioni, che potrebbero presentare l'influenza di Dante laddove non è mai stata né poteva esserci". Continuing to speak of Menčetić and Držić he says: "Il biondo crine, le nere sopracciglia . . . non possono certo ricordare il dolce stil nuovo di Dante" (p. 7). In the second of his studies he says of the same poets: "Ond'è che fra i petrarchisti e gli 'strambottai' della decadenza non mai qualche fedele imitatore di Dante" (p. 96).

In his *Dante nella letteratura croato-serba*, however, he does find an exception and singles out Vetranović as the only imitator of Dante, speaking of "Mauro Vetranic (*recte* Vetrani) di Ragusa, che nella letteratura croato-dalmata è il primo e l'ultimo imitatore (se pure può chiamarsi così!) di Dante. Dico primo ed ultimo, perchè all'infuori di lui la Dalmazia non ne annovera altri" (p. 8). Concluding to speak of Vetranović he says: "Finendo di parlare del Vetrani, finisco di parlare dell'influenza dantesca a Ragusa" (p. 16). This was written in 1921; but forty-four years later, in his *Fortuna di Dante . . .*, having finished to speak of Vetranović, Cronia adds: "Alle risonanze di Dante nel Vetrani fanno eco a Ragusa altre singole rifrangenze" (p. 18), and then

⁴ "Dante nella letteratura croato-serba". *L'Europa Orientale*, Roma, I/1921. "Riflessi italiani nella letteratura serbo-croata". *L'Europa Orientale*, Roma, IV/1924.

⁵ *Povijest hrvatske književnosti*, I, pp. 92—93, Zagreb, 1913.

goes on to speak of these "rifrangenze" in the work of Nalješković, Dimitrović and Zlatarić. Of course, in forty-four years one can learn much and one can change one's opinion about things. This is quite normal; but why not admit it? Why not say who or what made you change your mind? The Dantean "rifrangenze" in the work of Nalješković and Zlatarić Cronia took directly from my book, translating even the context in which they appear there, but never referring to his source.

6. On p. 139 of my book I wrote that Nalješković "quotes St. Bernard's great prayer to the Virgin in Dante's *Paradiso*:

Vergine madre, figlia del tuo Figlio
(O majko djevice, o kćeri od sina)",

and Cronia on p. 18 of his book says that Nalješković "inizia una sua canzone alla Madonna, anepigrafa traducendo alla lettera con:

o majko djevica (*sic!*), o kćeri od sina

il primo verso della preghiera di S. Bernardo

Vergine madre, figlia del tuo Figlio".

Again no reference to my book, very likely because here Cronia's own original contribution to scholarship is his discovery that Nalješković's *canzone* is "anepigrafa" which means that it has no title (Cronia is fond of "learned" words!).

7. And finally, for obvious reasons it is necessary to quote at length the seventh and most interesting parallel which Cronia "borrowed" from my book. On p. 205 I wrote: "In a long poem on the nature of love he (i.e. Zlatarić) deliberately quotes Gjore Držić:

...nis' tvrđa kamena,
da možeš ne ljubiti, od koga s' ljubljena.

Držić's lines run as follows:

Nis' tvrđa kamena, nit može toj biti,
gdi s' vilo ljubljena, da nećeš ljubiti.

This, as we have seen earlier in dealing with Gjore Držić, is one of the main principles of Dante's theory of love, and Zlatarić, as if to show his acquaintance with Dante, after the two lines quoted, proceeds to translating Dante's 'Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona', in which the idea is epitomized:

Jer zakon ljuveni ki vlada svijeh naju
hoće, svi ljubljene da ljubiti imaju."

And Cronia apes: "Infine Domenico Slatarich... indugiando sulla vecchia concezione idealistica dell'amore ripete quasi alla lettera il verso già da noi citato del Darsa

Gdi s' vilo ljubljena, da nećeš ljubiti

ma, riaccostandosi a Dante che lo ha ispirato [*amor che a nulla (sic!) amato amar perdona, Inferno, V, 103*], lo spiega e lo sancisce in tono di sentenza:

Jer zakon ljuveni ki vlada svijeh naju
hoće, svi ljubljeni da ljubit imaju” (p. 19).

By this time Cronia is quite convinced that what he takes from others is his own. He repeats almost in the same words my “find” that Zlatarić echoes Dante both directly and via Držić (whom Cronia calls Darsa). My “one of the main principles of Dante’s theory of love” becomes the “vecchia concezione idealistica dell’amore”. He speaks of the “verso già da noi (i.e. da Cronia!) citato del Darsa”. I have proved before that this blessed line he did not quote from the original text but from my book and in my context. But there is more to it. When I first quote the line, I faithfully reproduce Jagić’s text, writing “ne ćeš” separately, and Cronia follows suit. When in connexion with Zlatarić I repeat the same line, instinctively but inconsistently (*mea culpa!*) I modernize Jagić’s text and write “nećeš” together. Believe it or not, Cronia does the same! This is a proof, if ever there was one, that he is translating from my book without even troubling to consult Držić’s poem about which he is allegedly writing. He seems, however, to have at least consulted Zlatarić’s poem, for he corrects my wrong reference to the lineation. He corrects it, but not quite. I refer to ll. 149—150, he refers to ll. 48—50 but the correct reference would be to ll. 49—50, for I quote only two lines and, after me, only the same two lines are quoted also by Cronia. And again Cronia does not refer to my book. So far I have carefully avoided using the word “plagiarism”, but here, I am afraid, there is no other term which can describe Cronia’s proceeding.

I could make a similar analysis of the use that Cronia, speaking of Zoranić, made of my article “Strani elementi i domaća tradicija u Zoranićevim *Planinama*”, (*Zadarska revija*, 1959, No. 1). But in this case my task would be more difficult, for here I am not the only one on whom Cronia silently levies his heavy loans. Here the researches of Tomo Matić and of Vjekoslav Štefanić have also to be taken into consideration. It is interesting to compare again what Cronia had to say on the subject in his *Dante nella letteratura croato-serba*, published in 1921, with his account of Dantean reminiscences in the work of Zoranić in his *Fortuna di Dante nella letteratura serbo-croata*, published in 1965. In the earlier work Cronia says: “Anzi dell’influenza di Dante si può dire che fu forte al principio del romanzo (i. e. Zoranić’s *Planine*) e che poi cessò del tutto” (p. 115). And then, having given a few, very few, examples of this “influenza”, he concludes: “E qui finiscono le tracce dei riflessi danteschi, tracce

comprese solamente nel III capitolo in prosa (ib. 12—14), che, di fronte all'influenza del Petrarca e del Sannazzaro nei rimanenti 24 capitoli dell'intera opera, possono ben dirsi puramente ed unicamente esempi di reminiscenza" (p. 117). So we see that in 1921 Cronia found reminiscences of Dante only in chapter III of the *Planine*. Today, in his *Fortuna di Dante* . . . (pp. 20—23) he produces, as his own, proofs of Dante's influence in chapters I, III, IV, V, XV, XXIV, practically all taken from my article. He ends by saying: "Evidente, quindi, e frequente la presenza dell'Alighieri anche nelle *Montagne*, nella loro esiguità tipologica e ornamentale". And then, and only then, he refers in a footnote to the work of T. Matić and myself: "Ce lo confermano: T. Matić . . .; J. Torbarina . . ." (p. 23, n. 1). In other words: This is my opinion based on my personal researches, but if you do not believe it, here are T. Matić and J. Torbarina who can confirm it. This is a very curious way of referring to the literature used and exploited.

Here I have examined, from the point of view of reference to sources, only 17 pages of Cronia's book, limiting myself to references concerning my own work. But, after all this, how is one to gauge precisely what is concretely his own contribution to scholarship? How can one have confidence in Cronia's treatment of material taken from other sources which I have not been able to check, for I should have found it too tedious to do so? This is a great pity for, as a compilation, his work is good, and I am inclined to agree with J. Marchiori who, to quote once more from her review of Cronia's book, says that it "sintetizza in un quadro chiaro e completo tutto ciò che di Dante è stato tradotto e scritto fino ad oggi tra i Serbi e i Croati", and then continues to say that his volume "ha sviscerato a fondo . . . il cospicuo materiale dantesco . . . e lo ha vagliato con attenta cura e precisa documentazione bibliografica, a volte veramente sbalorditiva perché arriva persino agli articoli di giornali e alle recensioni" (p. 224).

But, unfortunately, there is still another and darker blot on Cronia's escutcheon. It is his political bias. As a Dalmatian by extraction, now an expatriate and Italian by choice, he still harps on the old irredentist and imperialist aspirations which today sound very old-fashioned and quite out of date. To him "la clasisca letteratura dalmato-ragusea" was in 1924, and obviously still is, "una prova inconfutabile della secolare dipendenza che lega la Dalmazia alla sua madre patria, la vicina Italia!"⁶ It is strange, however, that Cronia persistently tries to run down this literature and wishes to destroy his "inconfutable proof". But this was not always so. In 1921, in his *Dante*

⁶ *Riflessi italiani nella letteratura serbo-croata*, p. 95.

nella letteratura croato-serba, although even then often passing too severe judgements on this literature, Cronia still used the normal and decent language of scholarship and literary criticism about the "piccola, ma simpatica letteratura croato-dalmata" (p. 8). But having seen his political dreams shattered, he grew acrid and embittered, and he certainly does not seem to mellow with age and experience.

This change of attitude toward the literature of the Croats and Serbs, particularly toward the poets of Dubrovnik and Dalmatia, is outwardly manifested in Cronia's use of their proper names. In his earlier essays (1921, 1924) he calls the Croat writers by their original Slav names giving in brackets their Italian equivalents, or inventing them, if there are not any. So we have "Marco Marulić (*recte* Marulo)", "Šiško Menčetić (*recte* Sigismondo Menze)", "Đore Držić (*recte* Giorgio Darsa)", etc. Sometimes he even forgets to put the *recte* before the Italian form of the name! Today (1965) the order is reversed; the Italianized form comes first and the original Slav name in brackets after it; for example, Marco Marulo (Marulić), S. Menze (Š. Menšetić), G. Darsa (Dž. Držić), etc. But one must not expect too great a consistency in this. In 1924, for instance, Zlatarić was "Aurei"! Today, nearer home, he is "Slatarich". Cronia seems to be very interested in these "dittologie" giving them an undue importance.⁷ Of course, to him the Italian version is always the original one, as if even a pure Italian name were necessarily a sign of Italian nationality. Cronia cannot have forgotten that, before the Italian occupation of Zadar (or Zara) in 1918, one of the chief political leaders of the Croats there was Juraj Biankini (or Bianchini)! As Shakespeare's Juliet says, "What's in a name?"

Cronia's change of attitude toward the old "letteratura croato-dalmata" becomes still more apparent if we compare his pronouncements on single writers "then" and "now". As an example let us take Vetranović. It is true that even in 1921 Cronia thought that in Vetranović's *Pelegrin* "non trovi nè arte nè poesia" (p. 15), that he speaks of the "tono noiosamente lamentevole che accompagna l'intero *Pelegrin*" the poetry of which is suffocated by a "prolissità eccessiva" (p. 16). But on the other hand in it Vetranović "fece sfoggio di tutta la sua genialità, di tutta la sua ricca coltura" (p. 9). And a little farther, on the same page, Cronia says: "Quel sospirare continuo dell'eremita penitente sullo scoglio di S. Andrea... in questo poema è pure la nota più vibrante... Vi trovi un povero pellegrino, che, incarnando in sé il dramma della società umana...".

⁷ A. Cronia, "Di alcune dittologie dell'onomastica dalmata". *Atti e memorie della Società dalmata di storia patria*, Zara, II/1927.

etc. And still farther: "Ma per dare un'idea chiara della struttura, dell'originalità e del valore dell'opera . . ." (p. 10).

The tone and the substance of Cronia's criticism have since been completely changed. Today he does not find a single redeeming feature in the *Pelegrin*. Vetranović is "un ben goffo imitatore" (p. 17), his long epic is "un poemone allegorico . . . in cui . . . sono rievocate, in modi goffi e opachi, le più inverosimili e grottesche peripezie . . ." (p. 14). "Tutte quelle formiche, e orsi, gazze, nottole . . . si immiseriscono . . . nelle loro banali raffigurazioni" (p. 17). Finally he concludes that the *Pelegrin* is "uno pseudopoema, grossolano, disarmonico, oscuro, prolisso e lagrimoso" (p. 18). The same thing applies to Petar Zoranić. In 1921 Zoranić was "uno tra i più felici poetucoli croati della Dalmazia, che nelle loro opere lasciarono pur qualche traccia di poesia e d'arte". His *Planine* were an "esempio di rigogliosa produzione letteraria", they were "un'opera importantissima per i Croati . . . per la poesia patriottica della *bašćina*" (p. 115). Today (1965) in the same *Planine* there is no trace of either poetry or art; the work is "un'opera . . . di scarso valore . . .; un romanzo pastorale in misera prosa e in stentati versi che si muove maldestramente sulle orme dell'*Arcadia* del Sannazaro" (p. 20).

Before, Cronia spoke with sympathy and almost with affection of the "piccola letteratura provinciale della Dalmazia croata" (p. 122). Today he abuses it in violent and undignified terms. On just over twenty-five pages of his book (pp. 7—33) I found, without looking for them, these *epitheta ornantia* about old Croatian literature and its writers: *monotono, grottesco, grossolano, disarmonico, prolisso, misero, duro, caotico, corrotto, stentato, fallito, brutto, adulterato, viziato, inanimato, pessimo, manieristico, ottuso!* This is not the customary language of literary criticism, literary history or comparative literature. These are angry stutterings and virulent invectives of the popular press. In his wrath Cronia well-nigh exhausted the vocabulary of abusive terms and in the end he begins to repeat himself. So he uses *banale, oscuro, barocco, rozzo* several times, but the words he seems to prefer most are *opaco* (four times) and *goffo* (five times)! Finally even his rich inventiveness, his high fantasy seem to have failed him:

All'alta fantasia qui mancò possa.

Both Dante, to whom I apologize for misquoting him so blasphemously, and old Croatian literature have deserved better.

All this is a serious blemish in Cronia's work as a whole. The Croats and Serbs ought to be grateful to him for popularizing their literature in Italy, but one begins to wonder why he spends so much time and energy on a subject which to him is so odious,

so insignificant and especially so uncongenial. As for this particular book on Dante in Serbo-Croat literature, I might end by quoting yet once again, and for the last time, J. Marchiori who concludes her review of it by saying that "il lavoro . . . si impone quale preziosa miniera informativa per gli studiosi di Dante in genere e per quelli della Jugoslavia in particolare". I do not know how useful this book will be to the "studiosi di Dante in genere". As for the two countries which it most nearly concerns, it will be more useful in Italy than in Yugoslavia where, for reasons adduced in the foregoing paragraphs, it cannot be well received. Besides, there it will be almost superfluous, for in the meantime native scholars have produced more complete and more impartial studies of single aspects of Dante's influence. In Italy, on the other hand, in passing the book will give a biased and distorted view of old Croatian literature that at the same time may prove harmful to the cultural relations between Italy and Yugoslavia which are getting better and better every day.