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**ITALIAN POETRY IN THE MODERN TIME -  
 1900 TO POST SECOND WORLD WAR**

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**Introduction:**

Italian poetry in the twentieth century can be identified to be lyrical in nature and is found to exhibit a great deal of subjectivity. This has been a subject of contention over the years by a number of critics. The need for objectivity and its relation lack of realities exhibited by the poets in their inability to define a particular role thereby limiting the expression is something which needs to be discussed (Martel, 2011). At this juncture the researchers would like to quote Squarotti who indicated that in modern Italian poetry there is still an ongoing battle to liberate the subject matter from the tyranny of the "subject" himself. This can be observed from the comment on search for "*a punto di vista diverso dall'io come fonte del discorso poetico*". Along with this aspect there is also recurrence of the themes related to concept of the poet being considered as a "vate" one who is inspired by a divine power or one who narrates in a quasi-prophetic voice. This type of poetry is also quite common in modern Italian poetry as observed from the works of Ungaretti to Pasolini. Nevertheless this also in its broad outlook is found to form a part of the phenomenon of a "*rifiuto dell'io*" which dominates this period as the search of the poet to express himself (Ó Ceallacháin 2007).

Along with this concept of subjectivity there has been a great deal of involvement of egocentricity at its extreme limits and is often presented with a poetic voice which is completely subjective. With the impact of the world wars and the industrialization there was a change from lyrical subjectivity to poetic realism (Payne, 2004). There were some poets who engaged directly in the objective reality of the world and moved away from the subjective impact of the same on their lives. With this background in mind the authors now delve into more specific themes between the years 1900s to early 1950s. The classification presented by Ó Ceallacháin (2007) has been used to discuss the same. These classifications are not very clear and may overlap periods at different points.

**Avant Garde Experimentation (1900-1920):**

This period extends from the beginning of the century to the end of the First World War when there was an in depth range of innovation and experimentation (Lorenzini, 1999). This phenomenon has been identified to lead to the use of a label "*avanguardia storica*" dealt with the work of futurists (Moroni and Somigli, 2004). Some of the most popular poets in this era included the famous Corazzini, Marinetti and Campana. The views presented by these authors presented contrasting temperaments among varying authors strongly drawn from the views of symbolists of the 19th century (Mazzoni, 2002).

The poetry by Govoni, Corazzini and Gozzano (Mengaldo, 1978) can be identified to be dominated by the theme of melancholy. However their works also presented the first significant challenge associated with the perception of crisis in terms of ideological and artistic certainties. A very good example is the declaration of "*Io mi vergogno. si, mi vergogno d'essere un poeta*" by Gozaano indicating his shame. Similar presentations by Corazzini and Govoni indicate that there was a great deal of crisis as well as uncertainty which had befallen the society as a whole due to the rapid urbanization brought about by industrialization and consumerism (Govoni 2000, Corazzini 1978). Thus it can be concluded that most poets in this era had different views in terms of intellectual themes, poetic subjectivity.

### **Lyrical introspection (1915-1945):**

This generation is often identified as the Hermetic Generation and was marked by the publishing of the book "*La Poesia ermetica*" by Francesco Flora (1936) wherein the use of the term hermetic marked the beginning of a long process of critical discussion. In his critical review Flora indicates that modern Italian poetry maybe considered being obscure and sterile and is dependent on the French symbolist tradition (Payne, 2004). Following this anthologies published by Luciano Anceschi identified that a better terminology to identify with the works in this era involves an approach called as "*lyrica nuova*" or the lyrical introspection years. Anceschi identified that despite the equivocal nature of the term ermetico there is a need to acknowledge an atmosphere in terms of '*crisi della parola*' and "*crisi dell'uomo*" (Anceschi, 1952).

The poets who were famous in this era involved Mario Luzi, Piero Bigongiari and Alessandro Parronchi, Salvatore Quasimodo and Algonso Gatto. All these poets presented a central theme that was found to revolve around aesthetic and ethical ideals which promoted the concept of moral commitment which may be achieved through poetry (Ó Ceallacháin, 2007). The poetry in this era also contained a large amount of mysticism associated with it and promoted the concept of redemption through poetry. The strength of the poetry in this era involved the promotion of purity of poetry in a manner that it is not touched by the mundane and non bona fide realities of life.

### **Realism and existential lyricism (1945 - early 1950s) :**

Even during the avante garde years and the period of the hermetic movement there where personal issues and subjectivity was most often discussed themes there were some poets who chose to look at the reality of the external world when it comes to their poetry (Martel, 2011). A very good example of this fact was observed in the work of Cesare Pavese whose collection *Lavorare Stanca* reflected the tragedies of the war and the harsh realities of life (Giancarlo 2000). Following his seminal work there were a number of other authors including Sandro Penna and Attilio Bertolucci. Both these authors dealt with realities as reflected from the emotional and physical realities presenting a delicate balance discussed by Bertolucci and the highly crafted style presenting the views of realities. This era marked by the fall of Mussolini in 1943 along with the liberation from Fascism in 1945 resulted in the rise in poetic realism. This era marked the emergence of new themes and new voices which had realism as its focus. This can be identified as the year of neo realism wherein there is representation of historical and social realities (Moroni and Somigli, 2004). This can be observed by the idiosyncracies exhibited in the voices of Giovanni Giudici and Giovanni Raboni. These two authors have made personal contributions to poetry in terms of "linea lombarda" dealing with the harsh realities of life. The poems which were presented in this era were found to engage the audience wherein the author is found to extend beyond the self (Ó Ceallacháin, 2007).

### **Conclusion:**

While this paper has been an attempt to summarize the major themes in Italian poetry in modern times any such attempt involving a schematic reduction of a multi-faceted and inherently complex body of work will definitely be associated with the risk of gross simplification. In this paper the authors have justified the central theme as the framework for classification however it can be seen that there can be application of entirely different frameworks based on author style and other elements of poetic tradition to analyze the work of Italian poets in the twentieth century. This work has attempted to present a literary mapping by presenting the affiliations between generational as well as geographical relationships of poetic themes.

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