



Adventures in Turin

The Monster of Via Della Consolata

This is probably the single most lovecraftian piece of news from the early 20th century Turin. It was later made into a rather lurid novel, in the thirties, called *"Il Mostro dai Piedi di Fauno"* ("The Monster with Faun Feet"), but what follows are the bare facts as recently reprinted. The novel has been long out of print. It all begins in Turin, former capital of the Kingdom of Italy, in the winter of 1902.

January 12th, 1902 (sunday) - Veronica Zucca, aged 5, disappears in broad daylight while at play in the Piazza Savoia/Via della Consolata Area (an upper class neighborhood in the very center of town). Police investigation leads to the arrest of 16 year old Alfredo Conti, a former waiter in the coffee house managed by Veronica's father. Conti, that can give a convincing alibi, is set free in a few hours.

In the following days, further investigations lead nowhere.

April 1902 - in Via della Consolata, begins the refurbishing of Palazzo Paesana, home of the family of Count Paesana-Saluzzo - an ancient family with plenty of ties both in political and academic circles - (the grandfather of the current count was the founder of the Accademia delle Scienze in the 1800s). Angelo Damiano, one of the carpenters at work on the mansion, enters the maze-like basement of the building and, upon perceiving a distinctive bad smell, finds the body of the child inside a wooden box. Medical examination reveals that Veronica was physically abused, raped, and then killed with 16 knife stabs in the back.

The case is again in the news. Talk about "Il Mostro della Consolata" (the Consolata Monster) begins.

Alfredo Conti is jailed again, on the strength of a very confused story told by one of the local children, but again proves his innocence beyond doubt.

Needing a culprit to quiet down the public opinion, the police arrests Carlo Tosetti, 40 years of age, coachman to Count Paesana-Saluzzo. There are no proofs, and the man claims his innocence, but to no avail - in the press he is described as a hulking monster, and death penalty is asked for him. Only after 55 days of jail, the whole thing folds, and Tosetti, clear of all charges, is set free. He has lost his job and the mark of the monster is upon him in the public's eye. He will disappear shortly after, moving out of town.

Once again, further investigations lead nowhere.

May 1903 - Teresina Demaria, aged 5, disappears in broad daylight in Via della Consolata. Informed of the fact, Carlo Tosi, a keeper in Palazzo Paesana, remembering the previous case, runs to the basement and, in short time, finds the child still alive, but in terrible conditions (she has been stabbed three times).

Shortly, Giovanni Gioli, aged 22, a dust-man with free access to the basement, is arrested by the police.

Pressed by the interrogators, he confesses the acts of violence on both Teresina and Veronica, plus more similar acts on a number of other small children.

About the stabs that killed one child and nearly killed another, he denies the charge, saying that *"The knife was no good at slashing, it only punctured"*.

In the following days, he is examined by doctors and psychiatrists; asked about the reason of his acts, he replies that the cause is bad dreams: he has been suffering from nightmares, recently; he dreamed (in his

own words) *"of water, vast quantities of water... and a big shadow, a ghost"*; the big shadow apparently chased him in his dreams, and forced him to commit his crimes. The man acts like a moron, and is found to be completely insane.

January 1904 - Giovanni Gioli is found not guilty of first grade murder by the Court of Justice, benefits from the insanity plea and is sentenced to 25 years and two months in a mental hospital, the first three of which he will spend in a high security compound.

A lynch-mob quickly forms outside of the Court, and only the intervention of the Carabinieri (military police) prevents the lynching to take place.

And Gioli, that up to this moment has been acting like a mental deficient, suddenly stands tall, and laughing and shouting, hails the mob, grinning and repeating *"A quarant'otto anni sarò fuori"* ("I'll be out when I'm 48").

And that's all.

Nobody ever mentioned again Giovanni Gioli in the newspapers.

But if all went as expected, he was again free on the streets of Torino, aged 48, in 1929.

Lo Smemorato di Collegno

Starting in Turin in 1926, what was probably the most famous and controversial "case" to appear in the Italian papers during the late 1920s soon assumed national proportions. It is generally remembered as the "Bruneri-Canella" affair or, with its more popular nickname, as the case of the "Smemorato di Collegno" ("The Collegno Amnesiac").

Here's the facts,

● March 10 1926 - A man "of the apparent age of 45" is arrested on a charge of theft in the Turin Cemetery. He has no documents and, after pleading innocent ("I'm not a crook"), he says he can't remember his identity nor his past. In his pocket a postcard is found from "his affectionate Giuseppino". Clearly an amnesiac, he is taken to the Collegno asylum - inmate number 44.170. He seems quite cultured and well groomed (he quotes Ovid and Nietzsche), but his diary is often plagued by childish spelling mistakes, and he shows dramatic mood swings and can't remember a thing about himself.

● January 1927 - the direction of Collegno asylum decides to take the case to the press. The man's photograph is published in the major national newspaper, and the "Smemorato di Collegno" nickname is created. The case gets quite a bit of press coverage.

● February 26 1927 - "The case is closed": Giulia Canella, daughter to a wealthy landowner, states officially that the "Smemorato" is her long lost husband, Giulio Canella, philosophy and pedagogy teacher, director of the "Normal School" in Verona, contributor to the "Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica", reported missing in 1916 during the war. They have a son called Giuseppe (or more familiarly Giuseppino).



The identification comes after many visits to the asylum by family members and a brief letter exchange. According to the amnesiac, seeing his family has awakened some kind of faint memory within himself.

● March 6 1927 - "Giulio Canella" arrested; according to police investigation, he is Mario Bruneri, a small time crook from Turin and former typesetter in a small printing shop, wanted on various charges of theft and swindle. He has a wife, Rosa Negro, and a son called Giuseppe (or more familiarly Beppino). He supposedly ran away from his family and his duty (another charge, by the way). She, too, with many other witnesses, positively identifies the man as her husband. The case is re-opened, and it's a feast for journalists everywhere.

The public opinion splits up between "Bruneriani" and "Canelliani", and the case is the talk of the day.

● December 28 1927 The Court of Justice in Turin comes to a dead end, despite the great number of witnesses, experts and other people involved, or maybe because of them. The amnesiac now states he is professor Canella, but after all, the alternative is rather bleak. The judges ask for a "State Sentence", passing the case to a higher court.

● November 5 1928 - the Civil Court in Turin comes to the conclusion that the man, former inmate 44.170 in the Collegno Asylum, is Mario Bruneri.

Giulia Canella is once again a widow. She goes to the Appeal Court.

● August 7 1929 - according to Turin Appeal Court, too, the man is Mario Bruneri. The sentence is later

invalidated, and the case passed to the Florence Court.

● March 1931 - according to Florence Appeal Court there's little doubt: the man is Mario Bruneri, and he is jailed.

Set free after a short detention on grounds of good behaviour and ill health, the man finally leave Italy for Brazil together with Giulia Canella and the two children they had in 1928 and 1931.

"Professor Giulio Canella" died in Rio de Janeiro in 1941.

He never admitted being anybody else.

A few final considerations:

● documents surfaced only in 1960 show without a doubt that the man was Mario Bruneri. He sent a letter home from Collegno explaining his escape from his family.

● the exact role of Giulia Canella in the whole story is still subject to speculations to this day. Was she only the victim of Bruneri's final swindle, or was she somehow in the know?

● supernatural explanations were of course proposed at the time of the case and after by various mediums and spiritualists; the most popular "explanation" placed the souls or memories of both men inside a single body (Bruneri's or Canella's or someone else's altogether, that's another matter), due to some kind of "twin metempsychosis".

It did not receive much credit.

● some of the experts' explanations presented in Court were rather outlandish themselves, on the other hand. According to someone, the amnesiac was Canella, thinking he was Bruneri and pretending he was Canella for fear of being jailed.

The Tattooed Man

According to the few available data, the first of november 1962 had been a quiet day, without anything worth printing in the news, apart from the case of two 11/12 years old caught by the police as they were driving their father's car.

So, when the newspapers were informed, late in the evening, that "*a dead man covered in monsters*" had just checked-in in the morgue of one of the city's largest hospitals, reporters and photographers were dispatched straight away in search of something printable before closing time.

The following account is based upon the recollection of the reporter from the now defunct "Gazzetta del Popolo", a local newspaper.

The dead man in the morgue was middle aged, with black hair, wore nondescript clothes and carried no identification papers.

He was the victim of a car accident, having been hit by a small car as he was leaving one of the city's graveyards in the northern suburbs - this fact not being significant, as the first two days of november are traditionally dedicated to the remembrance of the dead.

As soon as his clothes were removed for medical examination, his whole body was found to be totally covered by multi-coloured, weird looking tattoos; this fact led the police constable on duty at the hospital to postulate that the man was some kind of former convict - tattoos being at the time restricted almost totally to either seamen or criminals.

The tattoo represented "*exotic demons and buxom naked women*" engaged in various activities, most probably obscene given the innuendo-laden reticence of the journalist. The whole seemed to be the work of a highly skilled tattoo artist, and probably the result of a single planned job, rather than a successive accumulation of random images.

The tattoo "centerpiece" was a bare breasted woman, wearing jewelry reminiscent of the kind usually adorning indian deities - "*A Khali of sorts, judging by her ornaments*" - portrayed on the man's chest in the act of taming or subduing two grotesque, green-scaled sea-things "*that might have been forefathers to our more pleasant everyday sea-horses*".

Among the many weird-looking symbols on the man's body, the only intelligible thing were two lines, reading "*M.T.Gay - 1.11.62*", tattooed on his arm.

All this was taken down for publication, in the hope that it might help to identify the man.

But as photographs were taken of the body, both for forensic use and for publication, part of the mystery was solved by the arrival of the man's widow, apparently informed by some bystander of her husband's accident.

The man was therefore positively identified as Ramon Navarro (just like the Hollywood actor).

According to the widow, the man had acquired his impressive tattoos during his stay in Australia, between 1939 and 1950, where Navarro had taken various jobs as a hodman and carpenter, the same job he currently held in Italy.

He met his wife in 1950, upon returning home from down-under, and they got married straight away, after a brief courtship.

The marriage had been a reasonably happy one, the only problem being Mr Navarro's predilection for

alcoholic drinks - a problem that was growing with the man's age, and also caused violent reactions in some instances.

At this point, for the police the whole business was taking a rather predictable turn: a slightly intoxicated Navarro, coming home after a few drinks with his pals down at the bar, on a foggy street, too late seeing the incoming small, dark blue Fiat 500, unable to dodge it...

It all figured, and was generally confirmed by the medical examiner.

Quite a routine assignment for the reporters, after all.

Until they got the name of the car's driver: a young switchboard operator, 23 years old called Maria Teresa Gay.

Further questioning, of course, led absolutely nowhere.

Maria Teresa Gay had never known the man; she resided about 50 kms outside Turin, and was passing that way that evening by chance.

The police tried to find some elements to connect her to Navarro, but to no avail and, after what was probably the weirdest night in her life, Ms. Gay was finally free to get back home.

The widow, on the other hand, and some old photographs she produced as evidence, confirmed the uncanny fact that Navarro had carried both his killer's name, "M.T. Gay", and the date of his demise "1.11.62" at least since 1950.

No explanations were offered.

Germana Grosso and the Spacemen

On the 14th of July 1963, Germana Grosso, a kindly middle aged lady living in central Turin, called a local newspaper.

Now, miss Grosso had been quite often in the papers, ever since 1960...

The fact was, Germana Grosso was telepathically linked with an *something*: she had received her first mental contact in 1957, from a tibetan master calling himself "the master of the winds", that was later to introduce her to a group of alien visitors; she was in the habit of typing all the communications she got, accurately filing them.

Her main alien contact was *Ithacar*, who was on Mars but was not a martian, who often visited Earth undercover - passing for human even if he was not - to meet "envoys" living among us and periodically reporting to him. He also had a wife called *Loring*, that was really interested in human children. *Ohritz*, another earlier visitor, supposedly hailed from Neptune.



As soon as the word of mouth got hold of the story, the local papers were running stories about "The lady and the martian" in the local news section.

Germana Grosso did not make a big deal of all this.

OK, so she was talking with a spaceman. So what?

She did not know how this happened, nor why it happened to her in particular.

She used some of the things he told her as an inspiration for her paintings (as painting landscapes was her hobby). She had no problem lending the typewritten text of the alien communications to the journalists, that were just too happy to print them during the "silly season", when proper news were few and far between.

The stories were printed and forgotten.

She did not like the publicity, but was probably too kind to slam the door in the journalists' faces.

Thirty-odd years on, some of the description in her writings are rather interesting: there's a passing description of a solar sail, and a hint about nanotechnology ("*the smallest of robots, collecting and assembling basic elements*"). She also described one of the vehicles used by the aliens in the Earth's atmosphere as some kind of variable-geometry, vertical-take-off supersonic plane. Ithacar also told about dolphins used for deep-sea reconaissance, thanks to their "*almost human intelligence*".

Not all aliens, however, were friendly and animated by good intentions; Ithacar and his team often mentioned the presence on Earth of the "Negatives", sometimes characterized more like an alien political faction than a proper alien race.

However, newspapers and magazines took a lot of interest in her between 1960 and 1962, then interest ebbed, as she was (probably) too mundane a character.

But on sunday 14 of July, 1963, things were a little bit different.

Germana Grosso had just received the following:

A conspiracy, as you call it, a plot is under way, and it represents a serious menace to the life of president Kennedy.

The message then went on saying that some (alien) elements had landed, and were forming a "special sector" to infiltrate the government of the USA.

As her alien confidant said,

President Kennedy should take care, as their aim is true.

Apart from informing the news, Germana Grosso called the American Embassy, and finally succeeded in sending copy of the message to the White House.

On September 24th she received a neutral printed reply, together with an autographed photograph of JFK. Clearly her warning had gone nowhere.

President Kennedy was killed by a sniper on November 22nd 1963 (in case someone missed that movie...)

End of the first part of our story, the second part of the story begins on the night of November 23rd 1963.

The alien Ithacar was on line again, this time live and direct from Dallas, Texas.

And he was tracking the killer.

The *real* killer.

Here's a translation of the typed message:

I found Kennedy's killer. His name is Jacob Fulthon Ills, he is thirtyseven years old, black hair, not too tall. He's hiding in a cellar. Now I'm really close to him, and I perceive his thoughts. In this house there are three persons who are part of the conspiracy and that are hiding him because he is the one that killed Kennedy. I am certain. Fulthon Ills' hands are visibly shaking. His mind is a chaos of bloody thoughts. He killed coldly, with sadistic gusto. He got an enormous reward. Now he is hiding in this cellar. Is he going to stay long? This I can't say. I'm close to him and my invisible hand is on his shoulder: his face is hard as stone, his stare is fixed. He's sitting and keeps smoking. There's no books here, only newspapers covering the murder... Now Fulthon stands up and walks around.talks to himself. He'd like to get out to spend the money they gave him. His mind is focusing on the image of a woman. Within himself he calls to her and thinks only about the moment he will unite with her, smothering that feeling of rebellion and blood-drenched abomination.

The message goes on for about another few paragraphs, without adding much more info, but making clear that Fulton is a common criminal, probably already on file.

It was printed integrally on a local paper (now defunct afternoon paper Stampa Sera, I'd say - but I can't be certain) on the 24th of November 1963.

Nothing followed.

Germana Grosso kept receiving, typing and filing messages from her alien friend well into the seventies

and eighties. She kept painting her alien landscapes, too.

The newspapers found something else to write about.

The lady should still be alive, but if she is really one of the two "Germana Grosso" currently living in Turin and listed on the phone directory, I can't say.

Addendum

🌀 The Kennedy affair is not the only instance of Miss Grosso's aliens interfering with human activities. In december 1960, Ithacar and his crew even intercepted and appropriated the Russian spacecraft Sputnik 6, that according to official records disintegrated upon re-entering the atmosphere. In may 1965 they abducted the crew of Lunik 5, a supposedly unmanned Russian mission to the moon, saving them from the crash of their vehicle. The two men were treated in the subsurface Moon base of the aliens and offered the opportunity to stay there. In a few other instances Ithacar assumed the responsibility for other abductions.

🌀 Germana Grosso still lives in Turin, and resurfaced recently (mid-90s), thanks to the works of Giuditta Dembech; a former radio journalist currently publishing books about new-age spirituality, miss Dembech covers the "contacts" experienced by Germana Grosso in a volume dedicated to the presence of angels in everyday life.

Ithacar and co. have thence been positively identified as angels? And what of the "Negatives"?

We do not know if this new interpretations of the facts as experienced by miss Grosso represents a change in her perception or simply an opinion of the writer publishing the facts.

As the poet said, it's a new song for old faces.

The Devil in Suburbia

Luciana Berardi was a single mother living in a suburban flat in a popular district in Torino, in the mid '60s, the years of the industrial "Boom" as it was called.

Her husband Sebastiano had left home soon after their only child Igor was born, and Luciana was managing how she could, working home as a darning and tailoress. Igor grew up spending alone most of the time, as kindergarten admission was too stiff for his mother to manage.

It came to no surprise, then, that at the age of about four or five, he started talking with an imaginary friend.

His mother was rather saddened by this fact, but not overly preoccupied.

This went on for a few months without any problem, except that maybe Luciana felt sad for the evident loneliness of her son.

Then, one day, Igor started asking questions about "Satan", as his invisible friend had told him that this Satan guy was a strong and powerful lord and was to be adored.

Luciana was of course taken aback.

Yet the boy kept to this version.

She severely scolded her son, and prohibited him to go on with this foolishness about an invisible friend.

But the boy kept talking to the invisible friend (fiend?) when he thought that she could not see.

The following Christmas the boy was given a toy train as a gift by his grandmother.

Upon returning home from shopping a few days later, Luciana was surprised in finding that a large cupboard had been moved so that the train track could follow a perfect circle in the main room of her small apartment.

When she asked for explanations, the boy told her that his invisible friend had moved the cupboard to help him place the tracks in the best positions.

The cupboard in question was over 100 kgs.

All windows were closed, the door was locked, there were no signs of effraction.

Nobody had been in the house while Luciana Berardi was out.

A few days later, she came home to find the apartment in utter chaos: broken plates, stuff pulled out of drawers.

The kid explained that had been his friend, enraged because Igor had refused to go out and play on the street with him. Once again, further interrogation and scolding gave no result: the boy was sticking to this story.

From that moment, Luciana began to systematically lock Igor up in his room if she had to go out, fearing that he could harm himself pulling some other kind of weird and dangerous stunt.

A few days later, she began finding her son's door open when she returned home, and the kid playing in

the living room.

His invisible friend, of course, usually set him free as soon as she was out.

Or so Igor claimed.

There were no signs on the door and lock, and she had the only key.

Things were taking a weird turn.

When a few weeks later the kid started saying that either his father was Satan or his father was dead, because so his friend had told him, and going in hysterics if told to stop that, Luciana finally went to see a psychiatrist.

The doctor told her that it was all probably due to loneliness and the nefarious influence of television, and suggested that she saved money somehow and sent Igor to the kindergarten straight away, where he could make some real friends and stop living out this absurd and unpleasant fantasy.

So Igor was sent to the kindergarten.

He did not make friends, at the beginning at least, preferring to stay on his own.

The teachers tried to involve him into some kind of activity, and on seeing the results of a whole afternoon playing with coloured pencils, sent for his mother.

Igor had drawn a few pictures of some kind of multicoloured horned demon, armed with a wicked looking knife and stabbing kids to death. The image of course represented Igor's imaginary companion.

Luciana was told to talk this out with the boy, and to keep an eye on what kind of comic books and tv programs he was fond of.

It all led nowhere, of course.

Igor was dismissed from the kindergarten a week later, after he attacked without reason one of his new friends, biting and scratching him until he bled.

Luciana was told to consult a professional, as her son clearly had some real problem.

The boy defended himself saying that it had been his invisible friend that had attacked the other kid; he had even tried to protect the other boy, getting in the way, and that was the reason why the teachers accused him of the deed.

The specialist visited the boy, finding him in general good health but a bit too much introverted.

He prescribed some tranquilizers.

About one month later, while she was working in her home's main room, Luciana Berardi heard some kind of suffocated cry coming from her child's room, and upon entering found him soaked in blood.

He had been stabbed once in the chest.

Help arrived too late.

The following day, Luciana Berardi was arrested for the killing of her own five years old son.

Police investigation had uncovered a pair of scissors, covered in blood, at the bottom of a drawer in a cupboard.

The woman was totally shattered and she defended herself relating the whole story to the judges, pleading innocent.

She was finally locked up in a criminal sanitarium, having been found guilty of "murder while in a state of mental alienation".

She always denied the charge.

Mount Musiné From Cursed Mountain to UFO Landing Base

Mount Musiné is one of the first peaks encountered upon entering from the Italian side the Susa valley that connects Italy with France.

The mountain is 1.150 meters high, and characterized by a supposedly "sterile" belt, in which nothing grows, midway up. Also, optical anomalies have been recorded in the Musiné area, resulting in strangely distorted photographs, double shadows and similar oddities.

A serious geochemical analysis of the true nature of the "sterile belt" (a rather patchy belt, if truth must be told) has never been done or even proposed, but softer naturalistic studies have shown that similar stripped areas on mountain sides are rather common in Italy, usually connected with ore deposits in the rocks *and* with legends dealing with creatures burrowing in the mountain (Mount Verugoli, near La Spezia, Etna and the metal-ore bearing hills of Tuscany).

Originally called "*Mons Asinarius*" (Donkey's Mountain) by the Romans, Musiné was always considered ominous by the locals. From the earlier times, strange lights have been seen by night and sudden fires have scarred the sides of the mountain.

One of the best documented cases was witnessed by many **in 966**, while on the opposite side of the valley, on Mount Pirchiriano, the newly built S. Michael monastery and shrine was being visited by Bishop Amizone. Lights (described as "*planks and globes made of fire*") were seen by the monks during the night; they started on Musiné mountain, then rose in the sky and started circling around the new building.

Similar events are documented ever since the IV century A.D., and have been ascribed both to angels and demons, depending on the chronicler's inclinations.

Just to be on the safe side, a large iron cross was placed on the top of the mountain.

In much more recent times, the lights on the mountain have downscaled their targets, scaring witless young couples necking in the bushes instead of bishops, and the Musiné has become the favourite playground of at least three categories of people.

🕒 **UFO watchers.** Both the *CISU* (Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici) and the *CUN* (Centro Ufologico Nazionale), plus lots of "independents", are keeping an eye on the mountain. Many cases of UFO sightings have been reported and documented in the area in the last 25 years. According to this people, the "sterile belt" could be caused by radiations leaks from some UFO engines. Also, the mountain is said to be riddled with galleries, originally of volcanic origin and later artificially enlarged, to be used as a UFO base.

It must be noted that:

1. radiation levels are in the normal,
2. Musiné has no volcanic affinity.

Neolithic graffiti found on the mountain represent people kneeling in front of three suns (rising, high and setting); the rising and setting suns have a bowl-like shape that has been variously interpreted as a "flying saucer".

🕒 **Satanists.** Musiné is considered a "place of power" by occultists, and is often used in night ceremonies by the (many?) satanic groups that supposedly have their seat in Turin.

A few altars have been found over the years, and Black Masses witnessed by reliable persons. Rituals

suddenly going out of control have been seen as the main cause of the various fires that often ravaged the mountainsides in the late '70s.

• Various **Psichic Researchers and New Agers**. Once again the "place of power" interpretation, this time with a more positive bias (expecially in the case of the New Agers). These were delighted when a metal plaque was placed in the early '70s, not far from the iron cross, by people unknown.

The text of the plaque seemed to imply that the mountain is broadcasting the planet's positive energy.

Other researchers, putting the "radiating psichic energy" postulated by some (see further on) and the UFOs witnessed by many in the same boat, see **the mountain as a space beacon** of sort, a role that Musinè has in common with Easter Island and two not better identified "points" in Tibet and the Andes.

Various mysterious characters are also somehow connected with Mount Musiné.

• A person calling himself "**ECHNATON**" has been known to send letters to people showing interest in the Mount, and in the criptic plaque expecially; his (?) messages usually contain instruction to use the mountain's energy to improve oneself's being, to act for the common good and the improvement and growth of future generations "*not only of Turin but of the whole of Europe*". According to some sources, the mountain has "an alchemical meaning of the highest level" - a level so high that the meaning is only known to initiates, and ECHNATON would then be one of these.

• Mount Musiné "caught fire" (causing no small problem to the local Fire Department) on the evening december the 14th 1973, in connection to the visit of "spaceman" **Absu Imaily Swandy**, a man claiming to be 256 years old and coming from a distant planeth, that gave a series of widely publicized lectures with the help of never-heard-before *SIC* (Sedereal Intercontacts Center), that provided the media coverage by contacting magazines and newspapers and offered ready-made press releases. The stay of the man in Turin was preceded and followed by anomalous phenomena and lights in the sky over Musinè. In particular the mountain fire, that destroyed many acres of forest, was announced as a retaliation for a debate, organized by Turin newspaper *La Stampa*, with the intent of bebunking the self proclaimed spaceman. Absu Imaily Swandy - very tall, with long white hair and beard, dressed in black - resurfaced in 1991, being sighted in various Turin locations, but apparently he no longer seeked the attention of the media (too busy covering Desert Storm to care, anyway).

Shrouded Ladies and Other Ghost - A Survey

1 - Shrouded Ladies

According to a rather informal survey dating from the early '70s, "shrouded lady ghosts" are rather common in Italy.

They come in a variety of shroud colour (white, green, red, black) and are generally characterized as sensuous spirits, practicing in death the same kind of loose lifestyle they held when still in the world of the living. Which is funny, since the "shrouded lady" statue often placed as a funerary monument in old Italian graveyards supposedly represents faith and chastity.

Here's some of the most famous cases.

• In Naples (Napoli), the shrouded ghost of the late queen-cum-public-scandal **Giovanna the Second** (said to be deceitful, lusty and debauched) still haunts the places she visited with her various paramours.

• In **Villa Mansi**, near Lucca, a scenic artificial pond is said to be haunted by the shrouded ghost of **Lucida Mansi**, one-time local beauty, still searching for new lovers four hundred and odd years after her untimely demise.

• **Countess Matelda**, haunting **Poppi castle in Tuscany**, is liable to grab young men by the throat, leaving red marks upon them. As she was used to strangle her lovers in the alcove, her current ghostly activity is rather unsurprising.

• The white-shrouded ghost of a medieval lady, killed by her husband having betrayed him with many of the soldiers manning the bastions, haunts the Southern Appenine fortress of **Vicalvi** (in the Abruzzo region) - now a ruin after the German forces used it as a base and hospital in 1943.

• In Turin, Russian princess **Barbara Beloselski**, who died in 1792 at the age of 28, first appeared in search of male company in 1794, a scant two years after burial.

In a rather well documented account, artillery lieutenant Enrico Biandrà told how an attractive young lady, of evident foreign origin and wearing a thin black veil over her face, sort of picked him up in a fashionable coffee house, and asked him to escort her home - not far from San Lazzaro graveyard. In the following days, she often visited him in his small apartment. Lieutenant Biandrà's account does not give away any detail about their activities in his house, apart from a passing reference about drinking a cup of hot chocolate (at the time considered a powerful aphrodisiac).

A few days later, she asked once again to be taken home, and upon arriving in front of **San Lazzaro graveyard**, she revealed herself to be a ghost, showed him her grave and disappeared. Leaving him somehow shaken, we can imagine.

The princess appeared quite a few times in the following years, but her activities were never recoded with the detail that Biandrà used.

In 1830, her body was moved to another graveyard, **San Pietro**, at the time standing outside of the town area, and a shrouded lady monument was placed on her grave.



The ghost was again sighted in the following years.

This lady's description is consistent with the one given by Biandrà, and she usually asked to her lovers to escort her somewhere not too far from her new graveyard.

In the early '70s, with an idea evidently ripped off from "Poltergeist", the Turin administration decided to dismantle the S. Pietro graveyard - now surrounded by apartment blocks and in sight of one of FIAT's main factory complexes - putting a public park in the same area instead.

Works were completed by 1977.

A black clad lady was sighted a few times in the following years, often by kids playing football in the park, but rarely if ever made the news.

Given her tastes, we can suppose that the current population of the park does not reach the required age.

But the late Princess is not the only supernatural manifestations found in Turin.

2 - Classic Hauntings

The case of the Via Bava Poltergeist, in 1900, was the starting point for a haunting fad that led to a survey of the most significant hauntings in the Turin Area by psychic researchers and antiquarians, leading to the collection of a corpus of "classic" hauntings.

❖ **The Via Bava Poltergeist**- according to witnesses, in the basement of a building in Via Bava n.6, strange noises could be heard at night, accompanied by small lights, objects moving without apparent causes, bottles flying from one shelf to the other and further assorted phenomena. Experts tended to explain the observation as the product of "forces unleashed by conflictual unconscious circumstances in young boys and girls." **Cesare Lombroso**, criminologist and investigator of the supernatural, spent a night in the basement and concluded that many of the observed phenomena were without objective explanation. To be fair, we must add that Lombroso's attitude in his investigations of the supernatural was not the most skeptical and objective possible, and in fact he was a rather gullible observer.

❖ **Hotel Inghilterra** - the first floor of the hotel is historically haunted by a mischievous ghost, centering its activities in Room number Nine, later dedicated to Saint Desiderio for protection of the guests.

❖ **La Bela Caplera** - "The Pretty Hat-maker" was a woman living in Piazza Carlo Emanuele II (generally called Piazza Carlina by Turin people, not far from Via Po), and there she was guillotined as an adulteress and murderer (having killed her husband). Her ghost supposedly haunts the attics near the square, and in Via San Francesco da Paola, where her crying and lamenting can be heard according to witnesses.

❖ The ghost of Filippo San Martino di Agliè is said to haunt the **Monte dei Cappuccini**, traditional seat of the monastery dominating the town from the Turin Hill on the other side of the river.

The **Via Garibaldi** sector of town, today totally different due to the post-war reconstruction, and formerly housing the town's Court of Miracles, was considered the most haunted area in Turin (and, by extension, in Italy)

❖ **Via dei Pasticceri** - today part of Via XX Settembre, the former "Candyman Road" was

infested by the ghosts of a man and a woman, apparently going around in search of their relatives, perished like them in the Turin fire of 1861.

• **Via Delle Fragole** - on the corner of today's Piazza Palazzo di Città (seat of the Town Hall), an unidentified entity used to cause furniture to move, walls to shake and strange noises to be heard at night.

• **Via della Basilica** - haunted by a female ghost that used to look on the street on the nights of the tenth of each month, casting a strange light; the mysterious lady made it to the text of popular ballads with her activities.

• **Piazza delle Erbe** - in the rope-maker district, a street is supposedly haunted by the ghost of a government clerck that hanged himself from a eaves gutter pipe.

Further hauntings in this same area, include a ghost in **Via del Gallo** and a female apparition, known as "**lo spettro della lavandaia**" (the washerwoman's ghost), on Rice Market Square. A boy accidentally killed on **Via Cappel Verde** still haunted the premises, moving the furniture about. Three ghosts haunted **Contrada delle Maschere** (The Mask District) by Saint Peter's church, belonging probably to three medioeval travellers killed in the area (three skeletons were found in the area, probably in the late 18th century); the three spectres sometimes disturbed the dreams of the locals with images of three slick black coffins. Still in Via delle Maschere, the **Fucina Hotel** was theatre of some reported uncanny facts connected with a poltergeist.

• Historical Buildings

- **Royal Palace of Turin** - three or (according to other sources) four ghosts, including a "royal dame in a pale dress with a long tail" and a ghost said to forewarn with his apparitions of incoming disasters.
- **Palazzo Madama** - two ghosts, one haunting the main staircase, plus various presences discontinuously signalled in the dungeons



- **San Giovanni Cathedral** - two ghosts often sighted in the crypts
- **San Filippo Church** - a "strange and noteworthy entity" was often sighted in the crypts.
- **Palazzo Barolo** - haunted by Elena Matilde Provana (see below)
- **Palazzo Levaldigi** - haunted by the ghost of a dancer killed during a three-day revel

It is interesting to observe that students of the occult at work on the Turin hauntings were adamant in their dismissal of the supposed apparitions of "famous spectres", judging them more a product of popular belief (what we'd call today "urban legends") than genuine revenants.

So were dismissed two "Madame Reali" (consort princesses) haunting a summer residence each, king Carlo Alberto, a mischievous page haunting the royal palace and the late Laura Bon, lover of king Vittorio Emanuele II.

But these ghosts, together with many other "unreliable" apparitions, finally got their share of the public attention thanks to the many supernatural enthusiasts and would-be-ghostbusters haunting - if we can say so - the town of Turin since the 1970s.

3 - The Last Days of the Century

As a new wave of interest in hauntings recently swept the town, gaining media space for the unexplained phenomena, some new entries - often less than accurately observed or studied - were added to the old list.

Such later additions to the canon include the ghosts supposedly haunting the first floor of the **Hotel Nazionale**, in Piazza CNL, where during the German occupation of Turin the local Gestapo unit was stationed, and the ghost of **Rosa Vercellana**, alias "La Bela Rosin" (Pretty Rosie), lover and later wife of King Vittorio Emanuele II. The Bela Rosin ghost, dismissed as an unreliable rumour by researchers in the early years of the century, made the news in the early '70s, when her long abandoned mausoleum, the Pantheon at the southern outskirts of town, was adopted by various cultists and self-styled Satan worshippers for their nightly rituals. **Villa della Tesoriera**, today housing one of Turin's many libraries, is said to be haunted by the ghost of a Napoleonic Army officer, that in the villa was killed and secretly buried.

The **Royal Palace in Venaria**, on the northern outskirts of Turin, is supposedly haunted by the ghost of King Vittorio Amedeo II, riding a ghostly horse, wielding a sword and holding a candle. The spirit was seen by many visitors, and once at least photographed - if an out of focus shot of a horse's head can be taken as conclusive proof.

The new researches have also moved the **Via Bava Poltergeist** on the other side of the road, and two doors away, to number 9, adding apocriphal "strange deaths and strange deeds" to the facts documented by Lombroso and others in 1900.

The female ghost haunting the **Tunnels under the Pietro Micca Museum**, an underground structure dating back to the Turin Siege, has recently received some media coverage, but is almost certainly explained by a publicity stunt built around some damaged photographs.

A **ghostly friar** appears every evening after sunfall in front of the gates of the **Madonna del Carmine church**. The haunting has been often in the news, and was widely documented by eyewitnesses' accounts and photographs. But a correct observation of the images and a daytime walk around the church allow the serious student to easily identify the ghost with the shadow cast by an old style, out of work street lamp.

• The ghost of Matilde Provana haunting **Palazzo Barolo** represents a curious case of a returning infestation. **Elena Matilde Provana di Druent**, that died of a broken heart in 1701 haunted her family's building as a pleasant and helpful presence for nearly a century and a half. The last documented sighting according to the classic sources was in 1840, when she announced that her soul was finally at rest. But not an *eternal* rest, apparently, as Matilde's ghost is currently described as a regular presence in the building, wandering the halls of her ancient house in Via delle Orfane 2 on full moon nights for the delight of nighttime thrillseekers.



• The **Palazzo Levaldigi ghost**, tormented soul of a ballet dancer killed (according to the documents of the time) by a stiletto wielded by an unknown hand during a three day celebration in the late 18th century, has also been somewhat refurbished by latter students, so that according to current sources the poor girl died either of excess fatigue or drug abuse (!) during a week-long orgy. Palazzo Levaldigi, current seat of a bank, is extremely popular with occultists, both because of its finely worked gate depicting devils and many other strange creatures (and known as "*La Porta del Diavolo*", the Devil's Gate), and for the fact that it housed a tarot factory during the 19th century.

• **Palazzo Madama**, already mentioned thanks to the four ghosts haunting the premises according to the classic studies, has recently been hosting **ghostly baroque dances** on the first floor. The accounts come from unnamed sources and are probably part of a publicity stunt.

• Visitors of the **Artillery Museum** claim to have sometimes been rebuked by a stern **ghostly Savoia Dragoon**, that usually stands in front of a glass cabinet in the Flags Room, again on the first floor of the building.

• Finally a "reliable source" (are there any?) claims that recently Church-sponsored exorcists were called to solve the problem of a few **dancing African statues** in the **Ethnographic Museum**.

The Turin Shroud

Note: it was not my intention originally to cover the Turin Shroud; first, because the object has spawned such controversy that a detailed coverage would fill a few large books, and second, because I generally prefer to let matters of belief out of my gaming sessions (as not everyone's sensibilities are the same).

And yet, occultists, mystics and general crackpots have shown during the years such an interest in the Shroud, weaving it in the occult history of the town, that ignoring it would severely limit the scope of this collection of data.

What follows is a run-down of the chief elements of the Holy Shroud fact and legend.

Much of it comes from a detailed Reuters article, with subsequent additions and corrections.

The whole thing is dedicated with affection to the Strange Aeons "Old Timers".

1 - Factual Data

The Turin Shroud is a fragile, yellowing linen cloth measuring 4.4 by 1.2 metres (14.5 by 3.9 feet) on which a ghostly full-length image of the front and back of a man is visible as if in a photographic negative. According to some sources, the image first came to light 100 years ago when a photographer, Secondo Pia, took the first picture in 1898. And yet frescoes and pictures dating from well before that portray the shroud showing the image on it.

The Shroud, which some Christians believe is nearly 2,000 years old, is believed to have been brought to France from the Middle East during the crusades in around 1356.

In 1453, it became the property of the Duke of Savoy, who took it to the French town of Chambery, his feudal seat, on the french side of the Alps.

Later, the House of Savoia (or Savoy) took it to its seat new in the city of Turin in 1578 [currently the Shroud is papal property as king Umberto II (exhiled) bequeathed it to Pope John Paul in 1983]

The Turin Shroud is kept in a silver casket that was housed in the Guarini Chapel and later behind the high altar of Turin's cathedral, or Duomo, a little off Piazza Castello and sharing a corner with the former Royla Palace.

The first thing anyone looking at the Shroud sees are triangular patches added after a fire in 1532, water marks and stains. The image itself appears on closer inspection like a photographic negative of a bearded man with shoulder-length hair and his hands folded. Some of the marks look like blood stains.

The first to notice anything particular about the Shroud was Second Pia (1855-1941), the first man allowed, in 1898, to take photographs of the Shroud. The Savoia family (at the time the owners of the relic) only gave their permission after much boot-licking and arm-twisting on the part of Pia and his highly-placed supporters (including Baron Manno, head of the Shroud commission).

Pia decided to work by night, and used two electric lamps to which were added frosted glass filters (supposedly to correct the uneven light diffusion). Two attempts were needed to get the images (50x60 cms plates).

The first attempt (May 25th 1898) failed because, after a short time in front of the projectors, the heat caused the frosted glasses to crack.

A second attempt had to be made three nights later, placing thicker frosted glass farther from the

projectors.

So the definitive photos were taken on the night of May 28th 1898, starting at 9.30 P.M., and as we know show the negative image of a shape that has been taken by some to be that of Jesus Christ.

Marks corresponding with Gospel descriptions of Christ's crucifixion -- including a crown of thorns, the sign of lashes and a lance wound in the side -- are also visible. There are no signs of decomposition -- consistent with the Church's teachings that Christ was resurrected after three days.

According to recent anthropometric studies, the man was 1.77 metres (5 feet 10 inches) tall, weighed 70 kg (154 pounds) and was aged 30-35.

Analyses have found type AB blood from a man on the cloth.

No one has proved conclusively how the image -- which is three-dimensional, heat-resistant and apparently indelible -- was transferred onto the cloth.

The image was at one time attributed to master Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci, but most scientists now say it cannot have been painted or printed. One theory is that an image slowly emerges after a body has come into contact for a time with a cellulose material, such as linen.

The most controversial analysis of the Shroud's authenticity was carried out in 1988 when scientists in Oxford, Zurich and Tucson, Arizona, conducted carbon-dating tests. Their sensational verdict was that the Turin Shroud dated between 1260 and 1390 -- suggesting to many that it was a mediaeval fake.

Some scientists say traces of pollens from plants growing around Jerusalem at the time of Christ's crucifixion have been found on the Shroud. Others say contamination of the cloth over the centuries -- from water damage and fire, for example -- were not sufficiently taken into account and could have distorted the results of the carbon dating tests.

2 - Further Interpretations

The Shroud has according to some led a charmed life, narrowly escaping destruction by fire three times. Burns, scorch marks and repairs carried out after a serious fire in 1532 are still visible. While by many these hair-breadth escapes can be explained by faith, and others simply call upon the statistical laws to explain the facts, a much less orthodox interpretation is the so called "magical-initiatory" interpretation.

According to the supporters of such theory, the Shroud - independently from its religious significance - is a mystical beacon contrasting the many sources of darkness in town.

The talismanic meaning of the Shroud, according to some, comes from the fact that it reunites in a single object the four elements (Earth to generate it, Water and Air through which it travelled, Fire that is the spirit of the man represented on its surface).

Connected with the above-mentioned interpretations is the theory that sees in a discharge of nuclear energy the cause that put the image on the Shroud in the first instance.

From this point on, the reason for the discharge has been variously identified with extraterrestrial activities (the Shroud-Man would be an alien or an atom-powered android), aural energy (and connected Kirlian experiences), kundalini, unknown physical processes and the like.

Another theory - as much apocriphal as the others - connects the Shroud of Turin with the Templars (that in fact had one of their houses in Moncalieri, just across the river in the Turin Hill) and the unconfirmed theories that place the Holy Grail nonetheless under one of the town's major churches (La Gran Madre, on the other side of the River from piazza Vittorio).

Researches led by doctor Marcello Canale and his staff in the Forensics Medicine Department of the

Genoa University, the DNA traces found on the Shroud belong to a woman, and not to a man (or not only to a man).

Various causes have been postulated to explain this, ranging from the unwilling contamination of the shroud hypothesis to the "a being above mundane male/female distinctions" interpretation.

3 - Legends

• ***The Healing Touch*** - according to this legend, a man that touched the Shroud in 1532 to save it from a fire was severely burned by the contact, but later he was healed by an angel and received the power to heal the others by touching them.

• ***The Blinding Light*** - in various instances, persons touching the Shroud with mischievous intent were according to the legend blinded by a white light and fled. Such tale is related, for instance, about a group of French officers during the war in 1556.

Gustavo Adolfo Rol (1903-1994)

He was the stuff of legends. *"He is in Turin but people take pictures of him in New York"* (newspaper headline, '70s). He was able to pass through closed doors and walls. He could read any book in any library without taking it physically off the shelf. He was able to *"create watercolour pictures out of thin air"*. He knew things about Napoleon that only Bonaparte himself could know. He could read minds. He always discouraged any interest in the occult and the supernatural. He always laughed at the opinion his believers held about him (*"They think I'm a wizard!!"*) He always assumed a rather uncompromising Christian stance on matters of faith.

Was Gustavo Adolfo Rol a man possessed of dangerous and ill-received supernatural powers (as the hardcore believers think)?

A great thinker mistakenly considered a "phenomenon" (the image he most probably tried to promote)?

Or a clever exploiter of popular credulity, working stage magics and speaking in riddles just for kicks (as the skeptics see it)?

Opinions on the subject are varied and cover the whole spectrum.

In general, the compiler of data faces a character that can be all and its contrary, depending on the opinions of various commentators. The only viable course is to put together the clearest and straightest set of data available.

Born and raised in Turin, G.A. Rol was certainly a man of wide and varied culture. His often outspoken philosophical world-view was mainly derived (as he admitted freely) from thinkers such as Kant, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Croce, with religious elements variably distributed in the whole. And many of Rol's "revelations" are to the clinic either idle observations, firmly grounded in common sense, or phrases of difficult interpretations, that can be seen as "higher truths" as long as you are running on faith. He was also used to recycle other people's catchphrases, such as *"God does not play dice"*.



Coming from a well to do family - his father was a banker, he lived in a luxury flat whose furniture alone was worth a fortune, and he collected Napoleonic memorabilia - Rol never asked his followers for money, a fact that at least places him a little bit higher than Cagliostro, the famous adventurer to which he was often compared. According to many, he was probably much more interested in building some kind of cult of his personality than to increase his material riches.

Courted by jet-setters - from which he normally took his distance - he was consulted on delicate matters by such diverse characters as Benito Mussolini (that saw him privately during his various Turin visits) and movie director Federico Fellini.

He was particularly harsh with journalists, that he called *"lie-mongers, rare expression of a class living on a presumption of knowledge, without moving a muscle to increase their meager learning"*.

He was otherwise extremely nice to the category.

On their part, his critics normally accused him of taking advantage of *"a presumption of knowledge"*.

The fact that never, in his whole, uncanny career, Rol's supposed powers were precisely described (with possibly one exception, in 1978, by skeptic journalist and writer, Piero Angela) or classified does not help

an objective study; terms like "incorporeità" (disembodied state) o "trasmutazione della materia" (transmutation of matter) are often used by believers.

Even if he was referred to, in print, as "*the most famous psychic in the world*", Tutrin-based Gustavo Adolfo Rol was not particularly famous outside of Italy, and was described by his critics "*a contemporary Cagliostro*", that somehow "*was able to convince a lot of people of the fact that he had supernatural powers by simply executing some easy parlour games*".

It's a fact that never a stage magician was admitted in his presence or to observe his powers in action, but from descriptions, many experts (including well known debunker Randi, and Italian star magician Silvan, that often tried to meet him face to face) recognized many of the supposedly mystical events as classical sleight of hand numbers; Rol seemed to be really fond of a card trick known as "Out of the World", invented by manipulator Paul Curry.

In the game, a member of the audience is invited to arbitrarily divide a shuffled deck in two, working with cards covered (face down); once turned face up, the two packs are made entirely of red cards one and black cards the other. But Rol himself, on the other hand, always admitted that his were only tricks, as that was what the people wanted from him.

Other often-quoted tricks include a "flash reading" of closed books chosen by another person and the materialization of pictures on subjects "*taken from a bystander's mind*", both tricks being rather impressive but also easily explained by sleight of hand.

Rol's attitude towards skeptics, his strict refusal to accept a serious study of his actions (a refusal that extended to the recording of his experiments on film), are used by both factions to fuel their arguments; the skeptic see in this the clearest proof of the fact that it was all a scam, while believers are wont to interpret this as a form of superiority towards everyday frames of mind.

Also, his constant discouraging of any interest in the supernatural was taken by skeptics as a subtle form of self promotion; certainly, many still see this attitude as the sure proof that he knew "something" and that something was neither pleasant nor safe.

The Case of Rodolfo Amedeo Pelvoux

Part 1 - 1918

Rodolfo A. Pelvoux (1889 - 1938?) first appears in Turin in the last months of 1918, after spending the war years in "*rambling travels*", as he will write in one of his own diaries in the following years.

After a short time as a guest in some friend's home on the Turin Hill, he buys and furnishes a small independent house in a street by Corso Massimo D'Azeglio, a few hundred yards from the Valentino Park; here he makes his home, with a pair of servants (Filiberto Barba, gardener and handyman and his wife Giuseppina, cook and maid) and soon the place is famous with the neighbours for the loud music - american jazz during social evenings, or more frequently, opera - that a gramophone by a window on the first floor plays on summer evenings.

In the first months of 1919 (march-april) he discusses his degree paper at the Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia (Letters and Philosophy Department), where he is registered as an extracurricular student; the paper "*Un Caso di Uniformità Religiosa nell'Europa Pre-Cristiana*" (On a Case of Religious Uniformity in Pre-Christian Europe) is controversial and, according to some sources, was refused by the University of Pisa for its delicate (at the time) subject matter and for some of the conclusions, open to be interpreted as an openly anti-clerical statement.

In Turin, the paper is praised for "*the brilliancy and the courage of the hypotheses*", but severely criticized both on matters of style - a trait that will stay unaltered in all following works by Pelvoux and that will hopelessly undermine any attempt at the paying market - and on matters of contents, because of the few proving instances presented in support of the most unheard of conclusions.

Part 2 - 1920 to 1925

"*Uniformità Religiosa nell'Europa Pre-Cristiana*", privately published in 1920 in a limited number of copies, anticipates many of the theories that will become later popular through Margaret Murray's work, "*Witch Cult in Western Europe*" published in 1921.

For the public at large, Rodolfo A. Pelvoux is (relatively) renowned as a rather unsuccessful poet and essayist on various papers and magazines, as a translator from French and German, and also as an eccentric collector of rare books on the subject of philosophy and history - according to many, this could be just an affectation, and Pelvoux would not even read the books he pays dearly for.

He is also a popular guest in 'tabarins' and dancehalls and a familiar face on the Italian Riviera.

Those closer to him regard him generally as a vain young man, maybe a bit too arrogant for his own good but charming enough when he wants, and maybe gifted with unrequired imagination and enthusiasm.

His parties (often practicing an open-house attitude) are greatly appreciated by the ever- starving student population of Turin University, and "*benefit*" from the imprimatur of the Pontefice Massimo della Goliardia (the students' mock General Commander), often the last person to leave the House after a particularly successful evening. Pelvoux is always eager to show his new guests around the building, and his books collection is open to his friends - that nonetheless seem to be normally more interested in his refreshments (generally provided by the famous caterers to the gentry, the Steffanone Bros.) and in his collection of imported Jelly Roll Morton recordings, that he has sent for directly from the United States by courier.

To his numerous critics, he is also known as "*Il D'Annunzio dei poveri*" (the poor man's D'Annunzio) His translations, together with a small private income are at this time his main sources of money.

Often he travels, both in Italy and abroad.



In 1921 he is in Great Britain and Ireland (april-may), and later in Sicily (september). In april 1922, travelling by Orient Express, he visits Turkey, later pronouncing himself disappointed about the experience in a short piece published in the weekly "*La Domenica del Corriere*"; from Turkey he brings the first archaeological pieces that will become the core of his collection of antique and curious.

In 1923 he is in Romania (april-may)

With a much publicized "*Gran Tour delle Alpi*" in may 1924, Pelvoux starts his long and uneasy collaboration with the Turin section of CAI-UGET (the Italian Alpine Club), probably the only non esoteric club that he will join during his stay in Turin. The Alpine Club magazine will later publish some of his pseudoscience pieces. More domestic are his outings in 1925, in Vienna (april) and Lyon (september).

Pelvoux's poetical career is not overly popular, and accusations of obscurity and small familiarity with the structure of verses lead the author to a public and overacted renunciation to poetry after the sinking of his collection "*Le Luci del Nord*" (Northern Lights, 1922). Despite this act, in 1923 he will briefly try his hand at poetry once again, and once again publishing at his own expenses, with "*Altri Ricordi*", a collection of poems and sketches, published under an alias.

Meanwhile, his researches in the occult field lead Pelvoux to contact various characters and esoteric groups in Italy (the Società Teosofica Torinese, and probably Alister Crowley), in Europe (some letter exchanges with members of the German Thulegesellschaft), and in the United States (a discontinuous exchange with the novelist and painter Robert Blake and some other members of his circle).

With the publication of his brief essay on the "*Book of Dzyan*" ("*Dall'Atlantide - Un'introduzione alle Stanze di Dzyan*" - From Atlantis - an introduction to the Dzyan Stanzas, 1922), his relations with the Theosophical Society turn for the bad and finally (in 1924) they break totally.

Again in 1924, following suit the discovery of the Glozel findings, Pelvoux publishes a second printing of his degree paper, expanded to include the new material and to incorporate part of the Murray theories in his own conclusions.

"*Il Mito di Thule*" (The Thule Mythos 1925), sort of an appendix to the main thesis that incorporates the Atlantis myth and the northern pantheon in a general picture of a pre-Christian, sciamanic cult of continental proportions, is generally better received in Germany - where it is promptly published in the author's own translation - than in Italy.



An ill-fated Spanish edition is prepared but never published.

Part 3 - 1925 to 1930

The second half of the 20s brings a subtle change in Pelvoux's lifestyle and daily routine. The wild parties spiced with jazz (a music now frowned upon by the Regime), that had been getting fewer and farther apart since 1924, stop altogether in 1926.

Pelvoux is still perceived as an oddball, attracting the curiosity of his neighbours with his loud music, (a radio and a piano have been added to his musical arsenal), his yellow sports car (a costly Alfa Romeo RL Sport) and the parcels that he often receives from his various foreign friends and suppliers; but all in all his manner is more discreet and private when dealing with the neighbourhood.

And despite all this, his outings seem to increase in number and frequency.

It is in fact the many deliveries from foreign addresses (letters, small packets, even in some cases large crates) that first awaken the interest and curiosity of the Fascist authorities that in two instances, in the winter of 1926 and again in 1928, burst into his house and proceed to search the premises, but uncovering nothing that can cause any difficulty to the master of the house - moreover, a member of the Fascist Party since 1924.

The introduction of the "*Leggi fascistissime*" (with their crackdown on various organizations, including the Freemasons) between 1925 and 1926 does not affect Pelvoux's researches in any significant way, as he was never compromised despite his many contacts with various groups.

Also in 1926 his activity as a translator suffers from an unprecedented stop when, following some troubles over one of his translations that the publisher refuses to print, Pelvoux quits his position .

The work in question, "*Azathot and others*" by the Edward Pickman Derby, an american with whom Pelvoux briefly exchanged letters, is published privately in 1927, in a limited edition of 200 copies illustrated by Pelvoux himself, and goes almost completely unnoticed.



The interest for esoteric matters, strenghtened by a trip in Egypt (1926) - resulting in a collection of impression in form of travelogue published as "*Egitto - una grandezza dimenticata*" (Egypt - a Forgotten Grandeur) - leads him to study ancient geroglyphics and Egyptian archaeology. Pelvoux becomes an assiduous and opinionated visitor of the Egyptian Museum collections.

An Egyptian influence can be seen in some of the paintings that he will show, together with some previous works, in 1928 - once again to the general lack of interest. His collection of sculptures and archaeological findings now includes many Egyptian pieces.

In 1927 the request presented by Pelvoux to be included in the Italian mission on the peaks of the Karakorum as "*consultant*" is dismissed and ridiculed (expecially by geologist and mountaneer Ardito Desio), despite his offer to personally finance his participation. Maybe to answer back to the effront, and to underline his prowess as a mountaneer already shown-off in his Alpine tour of '24, Pelvoux arms in record time an ascension on the Cervino (Matterhorn), that ends tragically with the death of a guide. Pelvoux sees to the needs of the man's whife and sons, setting up an income.

His membership in the Italian Alpine Club has meanwhile become an embarassment for many of the other members, that do not greatly appreciate his scarce enthusiasm for grup enterprises, and soon the frictions find a way of expression. A Pelvoux lecture held in 1929 in front of the club members, about some so-called "pre-cambrian" fossils of unknown provenance, and that are later revealed to be badly executed fakes marks the unofficial end of his collaboration with this institution.

From 1927 hails Pelvoux's only true literary success, "*La Verità Nuda*" (the Naked Truth) a short satirical pamphlet published by a small Turin-based printer as an attack against the proposal of moving -



for reasons of "public morality" - the monument celebrating scientist Galileo Ferraris from Piazza Castello to Corso Galileo Ferraris. The booklet, published under an alias, and often quoted in various articles by the newspaper "*La Stampa*", risks once again to cause him troubles with the Fascist authorities.

In the summer of 1928 Pelvoux is once again on the Riviera, and spends a few days as a guest of the Marquis Scotto, in his mansion in Millesimo. In February 1929 he is in France, where he visits various places of archaeological interest, including Glozel.

On the night between April the 30th and May the 1st, a woman's screams coming from Pelvoux's house force the neighbours to call the Police, that arrives a few minutes later together with a squad of Fascist Milizia (only too eager to be able to crash in the building once again). Pelvoux greets personally his unsuspected "*guests*", opens his house to their inspection and appeals to their "*gentlemen's discretion*". In the following days many wild rumours are traded in the area about the facts, but nothing reaches the newspapers.

The most widely accepted version would have an unappreciative young lady guest refusing Pelvoux's advances and, thanks to a few too many liberal drinks, losing her control and attracting unwanted attention.

Fact is, a young woman belonging to the Turin society and often a guest at Pelvoux's house will no longer be seen on the premises, and will also severely reduce her public presence from this day on.

On the 17th of May the Barbis are fired and leave Turin for an unknown destination. Pelvoux's social life is further reduced.

In the winter of 1930, Pelvoux starts working on a monumental translation of some of the less known papyri in the Drovetti Collection at the Egyptian Museum.

Part 4 - 1930 to 1935

Rodolfo Pelvoux's public appearances are further reduced in number and frequency.

In circles in which, less than ten years earlier, Pelvoux was an appreciated guest for the more informal evenings, rumours about growing money problems - seen as the true reason for the dismissal of his servants - begin to spread. Almost as a proof of such rumours, the yellow Alfa Romeo is sold in February 1931.

Rumours about a mysterious illness are dispelled by Pelvoux himself, that reappears in public, a bit sickly-looking but otherwise perfectly healthy. He can be seen twice a day, as he walks the distance (about 3 kms) between his house and the Egyptian Museum at 8.00 a.m. and back again at 6.30 p.m.

In July 1931, at the climax of an unexplained angry fit, Rodolfo Pelvoux hurls from a window his gramophone on which he has been playing uninterruptedly for the last 36 hours Scriabin's Ninth Sonata for pianoforte. The neighbours do not know whether to greet the fact with relief or with apprehension.

In the fall of the same year his long time planned second visit to Egypt is suddenly cancelled, and Pelvoux goes to Marseilles instead; he is back in Turin greatly fatigued, after two weeks.

The CAI-UGET refuses to leave his rooms for a lecture by Wilhelm Teudt, an Evangelic minister that Pelvoux first met in Vienna in 1925 and whose astro-archaeological theories - partly derived by the work of the British Watkins - were presented in "*Germanische Heiligtümer*" (German Holy Places).

The lecture is then held in the house of Pelvoux, to a smaller than expected audience featuring also some Regime "observers". This is the last time that Pelvoux will open his house to strangers.

Good possibilities, not only in a financial sense, seem to appear between 1931 and 1932, with the Fascist Regime opening towards Germany, and the subsequent offer from a Milan-based publisher for a Pelvoux-translated and annotated "*Mein Kampf*", the book by Adolf Hitler that is causing much curiosity in the public at large.

Pelvoux saw the book upon its original publication, and according to his diaries he was able to "*read much deeply this book [coming to] appreciate and share many of its author's points of view*".

The project finally sinks due to Pelvoux's apparent inability to meet the editor's deadlines, and the whole operation is cancelled after a few months.

On June the 16th 1932 in the Egyptian Museum Library, in front of a small audience hand-picked by Pelvoux himself, a first summary of his translation work on the minor texts of the Drovetti Collection - originally ignored by Champollion himself - is presented.

Many of the Egyptologists in the room - severely outnumbered by the enthusiasts, the oddballs and the romantically-inclined - soon leave the premises, followed by the members of the scientific press.

A distinguished British bulletin will briefly cover the evening ("*A new Aegyptian Glozel hidden in Turin*") with uncompromising irony and ridicule.

Despite all this, Pelvoux means to continue in his work and, by the end of the evening, he announces further unprecedented revelations in a short time. Pelvoux appears unusually focused, and rumours about a mysterious foreign financier spread among his increasingly estranged entourage. And yet, his visits to the Egyptian museum decrease in number.

For the whole of 1933 Pelvoux is seldom at home, alternating periods of total seclusion with long absences. As no visas or papers are requested in his name in this time fuels the assumption that he is travelling around Italy.

September 1934. An unknown male vaguely fitting Pelvoux's description is arrested by a Carabinieri as he is attacking, armed with a heavy hammer, the pre-dynastic findings exposed in Turin's Anthropological Museum. The man, obviously in a state of confusion, wears fine clothes, talks wildly in an unknown language and resists the arrest. Carried outside the building and disarmed, struggles, frees himself and runs away, disappearing in the alleys around Via Cavour.

Similar attacks are repeated in the following days, at the expenses of a showing at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna and in some private galleries around Via Garibaldi. The mysterious man is never arrested.

In January 1935, Rodolfo Pelvoux surprises everyone by attempting to enroll as a volunteer in the Italian Army invading Ethiopia, but he is refused a commission during the medical exam, and described as "clearly unhealthy under psychological and character profiles".

In the following months, Pelvoux sends various letters to the newspapers, the Government - especially to the former governor of Somalia, De Vecchi - and the commanders of the Italian forces in Africa, inviting those responsible of the mission to collect information about some rituals as performed by some of the indigenous groups in the freshly conquered lands.

The letters are ignored almost completely: a Fascist Milizia delegation visits his house and "*convinces*" Pelvoux that it is best for him to stop making such a fuss.

It is suddenly wise, for the people in Turin, to have the least possible connections with Pelvoux.

The evening at the Chiarella Theater, in the winter of '35, to listen to Louis Armstrong, marks the last public outing of Rodolfo Pelvoux, once a fixture in the Turin nights, now a self-imposed recluse.

His last years are spent in shadow.

Part 5 - Epilogue

In the night between april the 30th and may the 1st 1938, after having destroyed all the pieces in his collection with a hammer, cut up his canvases and burned his collection of books, Rodolfo Amedeo Pelvoux sits in his house and lets the fire kill him.

The following investigations about the fire, devastating but oddly limited only to the building of Pelvoux's house, are neither deep nor detailed. The fire is explained as the last act of a disturbed mind.

No close relatives are found, and the body will never be positively identified.

Rodolfo Amedeo Pelvoux is officially pronounced dead on january the 3rd 1939. The remains are interred in a small nondescript grave in the Cimitero Generale in Torino, with a brief service attended by a few friends of old.

Appendix

Rodolfo Amedeo Pelvoux, A Short Annotated Bibliography

All the books are privately published unless noted otherwise. The reading data are meant for the complete book only (and not for extracts or condensed versions).

(*) the book gives 1 point in the Occult skill;

(**) the book gives a check on the Occult skill

📖 **"Un Caso di Uniformità Religiosa nell'Europa Pre-Cristiana" (A Case of Religious Uniformity in Pre-Christian Europe)** The original paper. Only three copies existing, bound in red leather: one by the Turin University archives, one with the original tutor of Pelvoux (unknown, probably in Pisa University), one in Pelvoux's library.

0/-1 san; +1 Mythos; one week *

📖 **"Uniformità Religiosa nell'Europa Pre-Cristiana"** Slightly changed version of the original work. Small volume, hardbound, illustrated. 1200 copies printed.

0/- 1d2 san; +1 Mythos; one week; **

📖 **"Gran Tour delle Alpi"** Magazine article in four installments, published by the CAI magazine, with maps and pencil sketches. *

📖 **"Le Luci del Nord" (Northern Lights)** Collection of 16 poems and 3 sketches. Small (10x20 cm) paperbound volume. 1000 copies.

0/-1d2 san; +1 Mythos; three days;

📖 **"Altri Ricordi" (Other Memories)** Collection of 16 poems and as many sketches, published under the pen-name of "Amadis Asinarius". Hardbound volume, high quality reproductions of the pictures. 850 copie.

-1/-1d3 san; +2 Mythos; three days; **

📖 **"Dall'Atlantide - Un'introduzione alle Stanze di Dzyan" (From Atlantis - An introduction to the Stanzas of Dzyan)** A commentary on the Blavatsky work. Paperbound volume. 800 copies. An extremely shortened version of the first two chapters published on two numbers of the "Rivista Teosofica".

-1/- 1d4 san; +4 Mythos; two weeks; **

🌀 **"Padre Dagon dall'Africa Nera al Mediterraneo" (Father Dagon from Black Africa to the Mediterranean)** Originally meant to be published by the Italian branch of the Theosophical Society. About 50 copies were bound.

-1/- 1d4 san; +4 Mythos; three weeks.

🌀 **"Uniformità Religiosa nell'Europa Pre-Cristiana"** Second expanded edition, incorporating the Glozel findings and notes on the African cults of Dagon. Paperbound 12x18 cm volume. 1200 copies in Italian. 250 copies in French. Excerpts appear in various occasions on the CAI magazine.

-1/- 1d2 san; +2 Mythos; one week; **

🌀 **"Il Mito di Thule" (The Thule Mythos)** Contains a condensed version of the original university paper and part of the Glozel additions, with new material making up the remaining 50% of the book. Hardbound volume with four colour dust-jacket. 1000 copies in Italian. 2500 copies in German.

-1/-1d3 san; +2 Mythos; 10 days; **

🌀 **"Azathot e altri" (Azathot and others)** Translation of the Darby original, with new pictures. Small paperbound volume with fold-out pictures on parchment. 200 copies

-1/- 1d4 san; +4 Mythos; one week; *

🌀 **"Egitto - una grandezza dimenticata" (Egypt - A Forgotten Grandeur)** A collection of travelogues, sketches, short stories and poems. Hardbound volume with 50 b/w illus. and 4 colour prints. 1300 copies

-1/- 1d6 san; +5 Mythos; three weeks; **

🌀 **"Vita prima della Vita" (Life before Life)** Booklet with the full text of the lecture on the supposedly pre-Cambrian fossils. Number of copies printed unknown. A condensed version with photographs of the specimens and sketches appeared on the CAI magazine.

-1/1d2 san; +1 Mythos; 2 days

🌀 **"La Verità Nuda" (The Naked Truth)** Satirical booklet, published reviving the "Amadis Asinari" alias. "Il Satiro" editions. 1000 copies of the first edition, paperbound; 1500 copies of the second edition, paperbound. 3500 copies of the third edition, chapbook.

🌀 **"Quando le Stelle sono al giusto posto" (When the stars are in the right place)** Text of the Teudt lecture. Number of copies unknown.

-1/- 1d4 san; +3 Mythos; three days; *

🌀 **"Su alcuni frammenti predinastici raccolti dal Drovetti" (On some pre-dynastic fragments collected by Drovetti)** The Egyptian Museum lecture, and the most hard-to-find Pelvoux work. A surviving box with 100 copies of the booklet lies under a few boxes of Faber-Castell pencils in the basement of the Museum.

-1/- 1d6 san; +5 Mythos; one week; **



TORINO

0 100 200 400 600 800 1000

- ① Palazzo del Governo
- ② Casa del Fascio
- ③ Municipio
- ④ Questura
- ⑤ Sede Prov. del R.A.C.I.
- ⑥ Poste e Telegrafi