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Review of "Reading Italian Psychoanalysis"

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► **To cite this version:**

Giuseppe Iurato. Review of "Reading Italian Psychoanalysis". 2017, pp.99 - 105.
10.7565/landp.v6i1.1568 . hal-01495780

HAL Id: hal-01495780

<https://hal.science/hal-01495780>

Submitted on 26 Mar 2017

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Book Review

Review of *Reading Italian Psychoanalysis*. Edited by Franco Borgogno, Alberto Luchetti and Luisa Marino Coe. London, UK: Routledge, 2016, 738 pages, ISBN: 978-1-138-93285-2 (hbk).

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The book springs out from the will, expressed by some American psychoanalysts in 2010, to have a collection of some of the most representative Italian contributions to psychoanalysis, in that Italian psychoanalysis had undertaken an original and interesting theoretical and technical configuration yet not fully known abroad. So, history and epistemology of psychoanalysis needed of such a source.

All the book's contributions have been recollected, per-argument type, in six parts.

Part I has two contributions having historical nature. The first one, by Giuseppe Di Chiara, gives a comprehensive historical outline of the Italian psychoanalytic school and its institutionalization, from the first steps, with Edoardo Weiss and Marco Levi-Bianchini at the early of 1900s, up today. The second contribution, due to Anna Ferruta, is an exposition of the developments of the knowledge and diffusion of psychoanalytic thought in Italy since the institutional foundation and the official recognition of psychoanalysis in Italy. It starts with an historical recognition of the related literature and publishers. Hence, it outlines the various trends of the Italian psychoanalytic teaching, clinical practices and applications, quoting, in a detailed manner, the related protagonists, their ideas and the main works.

Part II provides an overview of some metapsychological trends of Italian psychoanalysis. These have been mainly influenced by second and third analytic generations of different analysts and scholars, amongst whom are Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, Donald Winnicott, Wilfred Bion, Jacques Lacan, Jean Laplanche, André Green and Jean B. Pontalis. This gave rise to a rich and variegated psychoanalytic approach in Italy, featured by certain original reformulations of Freudian thought in the light of other, subsequent analytic developments. The contributions collected in this second part are a sample of some of these perspectives undertaken by Italian metapsychology. They are centred on: the original work of Ignacio Matte Blanco; the epistemological revisiting, by Francesco Corrao, of the foundations of Freudian psychoanalysis, pointing out the intrinsic metaphenomenal nature of its concepts which distinguish psychoanalysis from other disciplines; the work of Jacqueline Amati Mehler on the concept of Ego, and on the different conceptualisations of the notion of *object*, with respect either to theoretical context and clinical setting; the analysis of Ferdinando Riolo, clinically based, of the concept of *transformation*, from the Freudian thought to Bion's conceptions; the wide epistemological reflections of Alberto Meotti on Freud's psychoanalysis, from the general standpoint of philosophy of sciences and their methodology; the work of Francesco Napolitano on the

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philosophical and scientific prolegomena to the Freudian psychoanalytical thought, with a particular attention to the history of the concept of transference; the original rethinking of the notion of transference by Antonio Alberto Semi; the deep considerations of Giuseppe Civitarese on certain main aspects of the fundamental pair transference-countertransference and its clinical consequences; the incisive reflections by Francesco Corrotto on the general notion of *reality*, pursued from a theoretical psychoanalytic outlook; the historical-critical recognition of Francesco Barale and Vera Minazzi on the development of the representational psychic functions in child according to Freud, in comparison with the aesthetic and artistic phenomena, their perception and next psychic elaboration; and, the penetrating remarks by Fausto Petrella on the role and position of every individual, contextualized inside her or his own society and culture and their influence in the birth and development of the related metapsychological dimension, analyzed from an historical stance.

Part III relates to clinical and therapeutic context, gathering the witness of some Italian analysts. The first essay by Glauco Carloni argues on that crucial moment occurring at the first encounter patient-analyst with the related problematic of communication, hence suggesting the right modalities of carrying out the analytical setting, on the basis of Sandor Ferenczi method. The testimony by Stefania Turillazzi Manfredi is turned to the reconsideration of those techniques that James Strachey wished to adopt in an analytic setting, that is to say, countertransference, *mutative* interpretations and *listening*. Giuseppe Di Chiara introduces and defines new moments of an analytical setting, i.e., *meeting*, *telling* and *parting*, considered as main axes around which an analysis should turn; he also emphasizes the encounter patient-analyst, in its chief components such as affect and empathy, as a fundamental step in setting up and performing an analysis which should be carried on with a variety of communicative approaches (bodily, other non-verbal channels, and so forth). The intervention of Jorge Canestri revolves around the right moment in which to pick up the correct interpretations along an analytical setting, by means of transcriptions and constructions of the oral experience of the analytic discourse patient-analyst, rightly contextualized. The contribution of Antonino Ferro is centred on the notions of *grasping* and *casting*: the first one refers to those multilayer arguments which issue from setting, while the second one refers either to the past history of the patient or to the current events in the encounter with the analyst as well as other more recent aspects of patient's life which have still to be explored emotionally. Hence, Parthenope Bion Talamo presents some points of the theory of her father, Wilfred Bion, exposed through her own personal history and experience, sharing memories and the years of her childhood in order to explain some of the themes dear to her father, like the analytic attitude of being without memory and without desire, as well as the searching of the possible origins of the analyst's mental attitude. Then, Franco De Masi discusses a possible approach to serious psychic pathologies, in particular, he explores what in his view are the necessary technical judgements in the analysis of non-neurotic pathologies when classic analytical approaches are inefficacious. Gilda De Simone highlights, another time, the need to considering the relationship and interdependence between patient and analyst, above all in regard to the specific case of the crucial question of terminability of the analysis, pointing out, on the basis of the previous work of Donald Winnicott, that the conclusion of an analysis should never be the outcome of a unilateral decision. Anna Maria Nicolò exposes then an original theoretical and clinical approach due to her, with a particular care to the aspects of transference in the analysis of adolescents. Loredana Micati hence centres her

discussion on the subjective aspects felt by analyst during analytic setting, set out in regard to the transference-countertransference model. Finally, Giovanna Ambrosio revisits, in a detailed manner, the dynamic of transferral and countertransferral movements in the clinical work with a specific class of patients, namely those who are perennially in search of their ‘personal truth’.

Part IV specifically deals with the person of analyst, countertransference phenomena and the field of analytical relationships established during a clinical setting. In that, Italian school has spent a long and intense period of study just devoted to these arguments and aspects of psychoanalytic praxis. The first contribution is that of Luciana Nissim Momigliano, which, starting from the conception of the analytic setting as carried out inside the so-called *analytic couple* patient-analyst, she basically highlights how to see non-traditionally the two-way relationships which are being established between them during the related analytic dialogue; in this regard, Nissim Momigliano states that much care and attention should be put by analyst, setting up her or his mind in such a way to really and deeply feel the psychic sufferings of the patient through her or his projective identifications. According to Davide Lopez, then, the personality feature of the analyst, besides to be unavoidable and not to be meant egotistically and narcissistically, should be considered as the only, real element of otherness which allows the analyst to enter into deep contact and in affective-emotive tuning with the patient to perceive, quite emotively, her or his feeling and lived experience, in order to be of helpful for her or him. Hence, it follows the contribution of Stefano Bolognini, centred on the empathic feature of the interaction patient-analyst, till to speak of a *psychoanalytic empathy* by analyst, just to emphasize the peculiarity of the analyst’s empathy, without which no real analysis might be carried out, and that is nothing but a complex intra- and inter-psychic phenomenon which requires a certain capacity to be owned and used by analyst to reach the aims of an analytic setting. Domenico Chianese, above all on the wake of French cultural tradition, retraces the pathways of his clinical work in searching of those precious moments in which patient and analyst encounter, putting attention to the first *sight* they shed of each other, so establishing that first hidden touch upon which will be then built up the whole next setting; this preliminary *visual* level sets up, from a sensory-perceptive point of view, a kind of pre-figuration of the analytic field which next will enable that needful symbolical access allowing the analytic relationship to name and represent verbally the related images therein involved. The subsequent intervention of Roberto Speciale-Bagliacca is aimed to broaden the concept of *reverie* meant as a psychic activity having a main visual nature, not intuitive and not subjected to attention (therefore, not worked out by consciousness), as well as to propose a possible method for promoting its use in the analytic setting; furthermore, he suggests to set up and improve analyst’s ability to get time enough before assigning a meaning to the various psychoanalytic events occurring during the setting. The essay by Claudio Neri is then turned towards an investigation of the analytic field, claiming attention on the occurrence of trans-personal and trans-generational factors, which however are part of the personality of the patient (as well as of every human being) although unconsciously transmitted, but that often can interfere with the own self; moreover, Neri points out the basic bi-laterality which characterizes every analytic field (*bi-personal field*) carried out by the analytic couple, underscoring the limits of the patient and analyst actions reciprocally performed within analytic space. Then, Lucio Russo speaks of theoretical and clinical features of the narcissistic and melancholic dispositions of human psyche, highlighting in particular the

countertransference phenomena and the analyst's self-analysis when one treats these areas of the mind, characterised either by an indifferentiation state and by an archaic affectivity, which he calls *originary*. Finally, in continuation with Russo's essay, Vincenzo Bonaminio provides a 'living and human' picture of the analyst figure at work, once again pointing out on the fundamental countertransference phenomena as well as on the functions of interpretation and reconstruction exploited on the basis of patient's responses and messages which often are enigmatic, confused, tortuous and, for the analyst, anxiogenic; where the latter should then be meant as main outcomes conveyed through the communication occurring from one unconscious to another unconscious, within the analytic setting.

Part V is particularly dedicated to trauma, that, independently of the specific way in which it manifests, is always linked to the psychic features of the environmental context in which it emerges, so that the main contributions of this fifth part discuss how chief forms of trauma dependent on the poorness of those basic environmental conditions which should allow a regular psychic development. The first contribution is a reprint of a work of Edoardo Weiss (1889-1970) on trauma dating back to 1935, in which, considering this as mainly having an internal nature, he focuses on the Ego's responses consequent to the defence mechanisms activated for coping and facing external's stimuli, and that, in dependence on the degree of the reciprocal mixing of life and death drives, may accordingly trigger or not trauma. On the same line is the subsequent essay, where Roberto Tagliacozzo starts to discuss on trauma, considering it as mainly due to a lacking of environment in which patient lives and grows up, rather than originated internally; in particular, he claims the fundamental importance of family in the psychological growth of the child, for which a great role is played by the various parental objects (in the Kleinian sense) and their relations with drives and fantasies of the individual, above all during schizoparanoic and depressive positions. On the wake of previous essay, the next discussion of Dina Vallino Macciò also focuses on the importance of family in child's growth and development, identifying those so-called *pathogenic identifications* which will generate later a so-called *anxiety of non-existence* by which an individual feels herself or himself to lie on a *deathly condition* hindering the explication of the main individual features, like to understand own emotions with respect to the other ones; in such patients, it seems that any form of personal mental existence be missing, so Vallino Macciò outlines, accordingly, some possible lines of therapeutic intervention, suggesting how to treat analytically them as well as exposing what phenomenology stands out from the related analytic setting. Hence, the next intervention of Franca Meotti begins with the consideration of those possible relationships and analytic situations which are being established between patient and analyst, during an analytic setting, that negatively and deconstructively interfere, for instance, with transference and countertransference phenomena underpinning the setting itself, so making this latter ineffective; hence, she identifies their origins into an inadequate (Kleinian) maternal object (by Meotti, named *parasitic object*) with which such patients precociously identified themselves, but that denied them any initial childish expression of vitality such as needs, demands, desires and fantasies, notwithstanding the caregiver taken pretty good care of the child, in a material sense. Starting with the witness of a particular clinical case, also the next essay by Franco Borgogno is on the continuation of the same line of discussion undertaken by Vallino Macciò and Meotti; indeed, he describes how the first elements of a certain missing psychic agency can gradually spring out from an analysis conducted in a patient who is lacking of it, by

means of an analyst who temporarily identifies herself or himself with the same illness afflicting the patient, and showing then, just to this latter, how the analyst herself or himself felt and experienced all the related involved processes and feelings through her or his own Self. Afterwards, in respect of Winnicottian tradition, Andreas Giannakoulas argues on the difficulties of the task of reparation and restitution of an absence, as well as on the impact of the general mother's mood, with a particular attention to the "dead mother" state and to the maternal depression, either on patients and on the growth process of the child, showing too which disorders may accordingly arise, among which are mind-body dissociation from the mother's depression, depersonalization linked to insufficient self-representation by an unelaborated mourning of parents, etc. Again in regard to family, Giovanna Goretti Regazzoni stresses the main importance of its structural completeness, pointing out what psychic damages may give rise the "emotional" absence of one parent or both; she also mentions the occurrence of violence and mental abuse by one parent, trauma producing. Furthermore, Goretti Regazzoni claims, in particular, to pay very much attention to the severe traumatic consequences arising from the many ways in which mental space of a child may be traumatically compromised and violated within familial context, just due to certain behaviours performed by parents. The last essay by Tonia Cancrini is then turned to discuss the guilt in childhood and adolescence, experienced, above all, in a conflictual (e.g., due to separations) and variously problematic (e.g., for the occurrence of a mourning) familial environment; she also examines, on the basis of her clinical experience, what dangerous psychic situations may give rise not-well overcome Oedipal conflicts, so claiming what crucial, unavoidable and primary role is played by a good internal and external parental couple, not only for children, but also for adults, and even for analysts when considered as a kind of "outside parents".

The last Part VI is mainly centred on a particular but important topic, that regarding the origins of the mind and some related phenomena, paying attention to its emotive-affective components as issuing from the early fusional experiences child-mother; further contributions of this sixth part are also on certain emotive-affective involvements occurring during analytic setting. The first two contributions are reprints of works due to Eugenio Gaddini (1916-1985) and Franco Fornari (1921-1985). Gaddini's work argues on *imitation*, considered as a 'primitive' psychic phenomenon, prior to either introjection and identification, occurring in disorders of the identity as defective process of identification in which object is not perceived as such but rather as a prolongation of own body, hence belonging to the bodily Self; from an early primitive stage, imitation may then evolve singularly or together other psychic processes with which will become more or less integrated. The work of Fornari is on the origins of affectivity in the child, that he retraces as early in the intrauterine life, whose mnestic traces unconsciously will trigger the desire to go back to that lost blissful world of unity with mother where there were neither needs nor desires. So, according to Fornari, it is just from this nostalgic and unavoidable tension towards the initial intrauterine lived experience that next psychic life affectively will spring out, with the rising of the soul which is already deeply rooted in the maternal womb, the real place of the first *psychic birth* from which every other thing comes from. Hence, it follows the essay by Simona Argentieri on the pre-verbal, pre-symbolic and pre-object aspects of the mind conducted through an historical-critical review of the various defence mechanisms from Freud to contemporary times, so accomplishing, at the same time, to a useful comparison among some different patterns of

psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice. The intervention of Eugenio Gaburri is then turned to claim attention to those pre-verbal moments occurring during analytic setting which are, in a certain sense, difficult to be identified among the emotive and affective forces present in the inherent analytic field; he also discusses some related projective identification phenomena standing out from this situation of undifferentiated pre-verbal emotive interactions, like the so-called *personifications* by analyst, which are prodromic to the occurrence of countertransference. Then, in some particular clinical cases, like in those dealing with psychotic subjects, the emotive atmosphere becomes so turbulent to make difficult the identification of the many, various objects involved in the analytic exchange patient-analyst, so Gaburri provides, to this end, some related possible suggestions of clinical practice. Afterwards, the essay by Marta Badoni has a chief clinical-therapeutic aim, telling us what happens when analyst treats patients suffering of a mind-body separation, trying as well to identify the possible causes of this breaking. Her experiences say us that, often, this situation should bring back to events occurred between child and mother and, above all, to her carelessness in regard to that plethora of child's messages which must be taken into account. It follows the intervention by Adolfo Pazzagli, on the analytic treatment of those forms of, so to speak, minor psychosis which he calls *white psychoses*, mainly characterised by certain disturbances of the boundaries of the own Self, sensations of dispossession and alienness, suggesting clinical methods at psychoanalytic level, mainly turned toward the investigation of the primitive memories of the patient. Then, the contribution by Agostino Racalbutto revolves around hysteria and its psychoanalytic pattern, considered to be the heart of the clinical practice and of the theoretical framework of psychodynamics, as its history confirms. In discussing such a disorder, Racalbutto identifies a primary hysteric nucleus, as a non-pathogenic germ of this possible illness, just cultured in the early, fusional relationships child-mother which are liable to potentially make pathogenic this archaic nucleus later, when such relationships have not been tuned in a right emotive and affective tone with respect to that archaic and overwhelming maternal pole which would tend just to pathologically prevail without the intervention of the suitable paternal action warranting the basic dialectic female-male, so predisposing otherwise to the hysteric syndrome releasing in the body. The last essay is due to Riccardo Lombardi which is mainly a clinical witness on those psychic phenomena which are placeable between mind and body, are said to be primitive mental states, and are mainly due to a hiatus existing amongst body, emotions and thought, featuring patient's discourse. So, Lombardi suggests to set up analysis at a sensitive-perceptive and bodily level, in order to re-establish a gradient among those different mental states which are subtended by either her or his bodily phenomena and the related abstract themes of her or his discourse uttered along setting.

In conclusion, we may say that this book has surely given a great and original contribution to the history of psychoanalytic movement in Italy, of course providing a wide yet limited portrait which, notwithstanding its comprehensive amplitude, necessarily excludes other as much respectable Italian scholars and psychodynamic trends (among which are the Jungians, the Lacanians, the Adlerians, the anthropoanalysts, also the antipsychiatrists, and so on) but without the intention to alluding to any possible hierarchic classification among them, besides currently not possible to be performed at the epistemological level.

We furthermore appreciate the constant intertwinement between theory and clinical practice, always present in almost every contribution to this book, with included, where possible, the related historical context and right epistemological stance. Moreover, as many contributions treat singular and special clinical cases, so proposing accordingly clever and original theoretical interpretations and frameworks as well as precious psychotherapeutic insights, the book is surely indicated for both theoretician and clinicians. Furthermore, the related new analytic techniques, employed in many clinical cases and witnesses there described, will surely turn out to be very useful and innovative.

So, we expect and wish that every country may publish a similar book related to the history of own psychoanalytic tradition, to be widely shared in order to everyone may appreciate the psychoanalytic contribution of own country or of abroad. Because, generally speaking, we think that, only maintaining a constant, constructive and useful comparison among different cultural traditions, whatever be the involved discipline, the vital dialectic between different cultures may give rise to a real and effective progress of human knowledge. This is, according to us, the best outcome that such a book may give, from either an historical-epistemological standpoint and a more properly psychoanalytic stance.