

## Introduction (an essay by Robert Caruso)

Scapigliatura is the name given to the artistic movement which developed in Italy following the historical period known as Risorgimento, and Italian unification in 1860.

The name (literally "dishevelled", "unkempt") was the Italian equivalent of the French "bohème" (hence "scapigliato" is Italian for "bohemien") and came into vogue after the publication of the novel "La Scapigliatura e il 6 Febbraio" ("Scapigliatura and the 6th of February", 1862), - about a group of young men taking part in an anti-Austrian revolt in Milan in 1853 -, by one of the originators of the movement, Cletto Arrighi (pseudonym of Carlo Righetti, 1830-1906).

The Scapigliatura originated in Milan, one of the major Italian cities, culturally and industrially; it spread first to Turin ("the Piedmontese Scapigliatura") and then to the rest of Italy, throughout the 1870s and 80s.

The writer, critic and journalist Giuseppe Rovani (1818-1874) was possibly the major forerunner of the movement, an inspiration to this group of young, rebellious writers and poets; author of the novel "I Cento Anni" ("Hundred years", 1861), he became a symbol of anti-conformism and literary genius, giving aesthetic lectures at the tables of taverns and writing influential essays such as "Le Tre Arti" ("The three arts", 1874), which contain his synesthetic theories about the correspondences among poetry, painting and music.

The Scapigliati contributed significantly to the process of renewal of what they saw as the parochialism of Italian literature in the second half of the 19th century, largely constituted by the historical novels of many mediocre followers of the great Alessandro Manzoni, and maudlin poets like Prati and Aleardi.

The Scapigliati looked towards Baudelaire and Poe for inspiration (they were possibly the first in Europe to realize Baudelaire's and Poe's greatness and to foretell their future influence on modern literature), the German Romantics such as Heine, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Jean Paul, and French bohemians Gautier and De Nerval.

Anticipating French "poètes maudits" like Rimbaud and Verlaine, they made little difference between art and life, living their bohemian lifestyles to the full.

These website pages are dedicated to the main exponents of the Scapigliatura: the poets Emilio Praga (1839-1875) and Giovanni Camerana (1845-1905) both also painters; the poet and short stories writer Arrigo Boito (1842-1918), who was also a musician composing operas such as "Mefistofele" and writing librettos for Giuseppe Verdi's operas ("Othello", "Falstaff"). Igino Ugo Tarchetti (1839-1869), poet and the main prose writer of the movement, an ultra-Romantic and legendary figure who best represents -with Emilio Praga- the Scapigliatura as "Bohème"; and Carlo Dossi (1849-1910), the most experimental and original of the Scapigliati writers, and also the youngest from the first wave of the movement.

The Scapigliatura developed in the 1860s and 70s; a section of the movement became politically active, and known as "Scapigliatura Democratica", was at the dawn of Italian socialism and the anarchist movement of the 1880s and 90s. Many a scapigliato fought in the wars of liberation of the Risorgimento, as red-shirted volunteers with the legendary guerrilla general Giuseppe Garibaldi. It was a Scapigliato, Eugenio Torelli-Viollier (a friend of Tarchetti's), who founded "Il Corriere della Sera", to this day the major Italian newspaper. The Scapigliatura's influence has been huge, then, and yet its relevance has been largely ignored by Italian "official" culture and Italian schools; Tarchetti's proudhonian beliefs and his anti-militarism, their bohemian lifestyles made of drugs, alcoholism and poverty, their anti-conformism and break with tradition and generally the whole revolutionary character of the movement have proved too much for Italy's Catholic background and the conservative forces which have ruled the nation (from the Savoy royal family through Mussolini to Berlusconi). One can't help but suspecting that the scapigliati's works have been ignored for a purpose.

The Scapigliatura influenced other artistic fields apart from literature: it will be worth remembering here the painters Tranquillo Cremona and Daniele Renzoni, the sculptor Giuseppe Grandi, the musician Franco Faccio, the playwright Giuseppe Giacosa, critics and journalists such as Felice Cameroni, Paolo Valera, Leone Fortis, Eugenio Camerini, also the poet and leader of the parliamentary Radicals Felice Cavallotti, and Camillo Boito, older brother of Arrigo, architect, art critic and the author of short stories, among them "Senso", made famous by Luchino Visconti's film based on it.

A list of other Scapigliati should include the Piedmontese Giovanni Faldella, Giuseppe Cesare Molineri, Achille Giovanni Cagna, Roberto Sacchetti; the minor Milanese Scapigliati Luigi Gualdo, Ferdinando Fontana, Ambrogio Bazzero, Giulio Pinchetti, Salvatore Farina, the older Antonio Ghislanzoni and Giulio Uberti; the Genoese Remigio Zena; Alberto Cantoni from Mantua, Domenico Milelli from Calabria and Mario Rapisardi from Sicily; others writers and poets worth mentioning are Bernardino Zendrini, Cesare Tronconi, Edoardo Calandra, Pompeo Bettini, Giuseppe Aurelio Costanzo, all the way to writer and critic Gian Pietro Lucini and the poet Lorenzo Stecchetti (Olindo Guerrini). The movement lasted until the turn of the century and during the 20th has been seen as the root of movements such as Realism (Verismo in Italy), Naturalism, Futurism, Symbolism, Decadentism and the "Crepuscolari" poets.

Its main exponents, underrated for decades, have become legendary for their loyalty to their ideals, their disillusion about post-Risorgimento Italy with its betrayal of its revolutionary roots, their artistic innovations and bohemian and tragic lifestyles: Emilio Praga, Rovani and Arrighi died through alcoholism, Tarchetti died of T.B. and

typhus aged thirty; Camerana shot himself, like poets Giulio Pinchetti and Giulio Uberti before him.

A love for ultra-Romantic themes (love and death), gothic imagery (graveyards, ghosts, dark omens), their synesthetic theories, their anarco-individualism mixed with a personal type of mysticism, the sheer vibrance of the movement with its struggles and scandals, and myriads of journals, magazines and pamphlets, their foreseeing of future tendencies in art, make the Scapigliatura one of the most interesting artistic avantgardes of the 19th century, one of the most underrated in Italy and obscure in the English-speaking world; hopefully this work will place once and for all the Italian Scapigliati beside their natural brothers: the English Romantics, the French Symbolists, the German Idealists and the American Transcendentalists. This site will be dedicated to biographical notes of the main Scapigliati, and English translations of some of their works, which Robert Caruso is the first to translate into English.

To date Lawrence Venuti has translated and published Tarchetti's "Fosca" ("Passion", Mercury House, San Francisco, 1994) and "Racconti Fantastici" ("Fantastic tales", Mercury House, San Francisco, 1997) in the U.S.A.; in the U.K., Christine Donougher has translated some of Camillo Boito's short stories ("Senso and other stories", Dedalus, Sawtry, 1993).

The first essay about the Scapigliatura to appear in English was G.B. Carsaniga's "Scapigliatura", included in "The Age of Realism", edited by F.W.J. Hemmings (Penguin, Baltimore, 1974). Possibly the best essay so far has been Robert S. Dombroski's "Scapigliatura", included in "Cassell's Dictionary of Italian Literature".