INTRODUCTION

The publication presented here is part of a long-lasting and fruitful co-operation with the Indological institutions of the Universities of Prague, Cracow, Warsaw and Calicut. After the International Seminar organised by Professor C. Rajendran at Calicut University in January 2010 on "Narrative Techniques in Indian Literature and Arts", it seemed of high interest to go on fostering some questions on the broader notions of figurative language and discourse strategies (especially the textual application) and their role in Indian Culture. In particular, research on stylistic devices has yielded a rich and diverse knowledge-base and the scientific interest has been sparked particularly by the emergence of the possibility to explore the different values, usages and meanings of *Rhetoric* (using a classical term) trying to create a platform for several research-fields that may open to cross-fertilization.

The present volume has been planned as follow-up of the interdisciplinary Seminar hosted in September 2010 by University of Milan on "Stylistic Devices in Indian Literature and Arts". The notion of stylistic device is borrowed from Linguistics and discourse analysis, and in fact it will be considered here in its broader meaning, that is not only under a literary point of view, but also under an historical, epistemological and hermeneutical one; indeed, the topics of the contributions are devoted to various aspects of stylistic devices and to their role as interpretative tools to look at Indian Literature and Art, be it an emic approach on a specific figure of speech or the narrative devices as part of an intentional cultural re-adaptation.

Therefore, Pontillo's article stands as the framing *incipit* of the volume representing an inquiry on a single realization of the general theme of the volume, while all other contributions will deal with its usage and

functions within different traditions. The author focuses on the possible origin of the complex metaphor and how it was conceived by indigenous grammarians and *alaṃkāra*-theoreticians. Moreover this article, that happens to be a chapter of broader research on *samastavastuviṣayarūpaka* brought forward together with Giuliano Boccali, tries an intriguing confrontation with Western Linguistics and in particular with the cognitive approach.

Under a literary point of view, the contribution of Marco Franceschini gives an account of Buddhaghoṣa's style in his Sanskrit *mahākāvya* (9th-10th centuries) narrating the life and feats of the "historical" Buddha. Among others, what the author considers "the most striking stylistic feature of *Padyacūḍāmaṇi* is repetition", a feature common to epic and also to Tamil classical literature (see Vacek's contribution). Through this analysis Franceschini leads us to a double comparison on one side with the Buddhist literature, especially with the work of Aśvaghoṣa, and, on the other side, with one of the most celebrated exponents of *kāvya* tradition, Kālidāsa. Moreover, this analysis enables the author to hint at Buddhaghoṣa's creativity and, at the same time, to show the importance of a thorough investigation of his sources. Battistini also deals with the same field where the art of rhetoric has played a dominating role, i.e., *kāvya*, and especially *citrakāvya*, "ornate poetry". He examines a palindrome *laghukāvya* narrating at one time the stories of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the *Rāmakṛṣṇavilomakāvya* exploiting the exaggerate poetic virtuosities typical of medieval courtly poems.

In comparison with Sanskrit tradition, classical Tamil poetical speech is nearly devoid of *alaṃkāra*s, but it freely uses the technique of allusions and hints: Alexander Dubyanskiy provides a specific outline of this technique in love-poetry where the environment is treated symbolically and this poetic device, that according to the author is originated by ancient practice of divination, "appeared to be very productive and became one of the most typical features of Tamil poetic tradition"; indeed the variety of poetic images which symbolically express the meaning of poems ranges from traditional symbols connected with folk and ritual events to individual initiatives. The extensive use of repetitions and variations as a typical stylistic device of formulaic speech is confirmed also in Old Tamil literature and Jaroslav Vacek, who has committed himself to detailed analysis of formal and structural characteristics of formulas in Sangam literature, concludes his survey on specific phrases appearing in the attributive position (subordinate phrases and combination

of two coordinate attributes) with an important statement maintaining "the need to study this phenomenon in full detail with all the possible further implications – concerning not only its stylistic qualities and the statistics of the occurrences of individual formulas, but also the questions regarding its origin (in particular the possible inspiration in an oral tradition)".

Two contributions chose to reflect, among *śāstric* tradition, on *Nāṭyaśāstra* from very different perspectives. Natalia Lidova focuses on the still little studied category of *vṛtti* as a "manner of action": the author strongly suggests to read this term as referring both to the formal outfit of the dramatic structure and to the creative activity of gods, arguing that "this original sacral concept of *vṛtti* survived fairly long" and that due to this link between theatre and ritual we may understand the pivotal importance attributed to *vṛtti* by the authors of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, where it is also said that "*vṛtti*s are the mothers of *kāvya*". On the other side, Klara Moačanin took an altogether different point of view, aiming to outline some of the structural devices of *Nāṭyaśāstra*: the frame story holds together, in the opinion of the author, "all the subjects about which *Nāṭyaśāstra* has much to tell in its other chapters described in *śāstric* way", along Moačanin the structural design of the text, including *chapitres liminaires*, *encadrement*, inclusivism, is in itself a stylistic device. The only contribution on Sanskrit literary prose concerns *kathā* genre and especially the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa. In order to focus the description of Mahāśvetā, Chettiarthodi Rajendran culled some fascinating passages, enlightening several syntactical and compositional techniques, among which one might even recall *Padyacudamaṇi*'s *kulaka*s (see Franceschini's contribution): groups of stanzas whose grammatical subject and main verb are stated once for all at the beginning or at the end of the sequence.

Thank to Stefania Cavaliere, we start to reflect on the idea of stylistic device not much as rhetorical tool but rather in its broader, anthropological meaning as long as the author deploys it to describe a complex of human attitudes. In fact, the analysis of expressive devices in the Hindī *Rīti Kāla* tradition during the 16th and 18th centuries can open up considerations on the social role of men toward woman as lover. Cavaliere clearly points out within the works of the poet Keśavadāsa (*Rasikapriyā* and *Kavipriyā*) that the attitude and behaviour recommended to male lovers are always oriented by "discipline in his conduct" keeping in mind that "Plain words and unprompted behaviour due to passion are admit-

ted only among young inexpert wives compositions". A set of techniques is also at disposal of the betrayer.

If we turn our attention to religious texts, we find a few contributions that advocate the analysis of stylistic devices as means both to express different levels of meaning and to attain extra-linguistic aims: moving on from the link between cultural and linguistic development that was dear to the first historical linguistic, we may see here the allusive power of rhetorical devices as a tool to hint at the world outside. The poets responsible for the earliest text of the Vedic culture conjured up images that are the result of a technique relying on features of style, definable in linguistic terms: the Vedic *ṛṣis* clearly deploy rhetorical structuring devices in order to shape, within an organic unity, an image which goes beyond its ritual context and asserts its own poetical autonomy. The contribution of Elena Mucciarelli is precisely devoted to investigate the narrative technique of a hymn of the *Ṛgvedasaṃhitā* (4.11) in order to define its external referent.

The Buddhist literature offers an example of a semantic break-through that empowered, also through metaphors, similes and other tropes, new interpretations of the world. Daniela Rossella reflects on this linguistic development focusing on the internal differences in the canon. Comparing the *Therīgāthā*s and the *Theragāthā*s, the author relies on the percentage of the occurrences where the condition of *nirvāṇa* is described to point out that this topic is much more frequent in the stanzas of the nuns. Moreover, Rossella argues through the typology of the images that "The nuns, in short, 'let their experiences talk', but vivifying and galva-nizing them with their very fresh and personal touch".

In Puranic literature what we see at work is the dynamic of re-adaptation and inclusion. These functional processes that represent a platform for understanding many cultural development from history of art over philosophical texts and political legitimation, operate also in the encounter of local and global traditions, be it a vertical or hori-zontal relationship, and form the topic of another contribution by Vera Lazzaretti. In particular the *māhātmya*s connecting certain sacred place to the Pan-Indian tradition, which is represented by the Mahāpurāṇas, represent "the geographical equivalent of Sanskritization". The author focuses on *Kāśīkedāramāhātmya* and through an exhaustive account of its content picks up the specific devices that contribute "to adapt and retell the existing mythological material in order to promote a specific rep-resentation of the local dimension". According to Lazzaretti one of the

main devices is the introduction of characters well known in the Puranic tradition. When we consider the use of an element of the Pan-Indian tradition in a local text or the insertion of a local element within a wider tradition, we should read these processes as two realizations of one and same dynamic of inclusion just the other way around.

Stylistic devices are resorted to also in the effort to describe such an elusive text as the one presented by Cezary Galewicz: the *Yāmalāṣṭakatantra*, claiming for itself a position within the *vaidika* Tantra though no direct religious function of it, either doctrinal or ritual, can be seen. In this text the author suggests to read the expressive tools as "appealing to sensitivity inspired by aesthetics rather than religion, or at best a hybrid"; the strategy of flattering unfolds during the dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī – that is a mark of the *śaiva āgama* – performing the transmission of knowledge; going through some *paṭala*s, Galewicz draws the attention to the different literary genres intermingling in the text the epistemological, the poetical and the theatrical one: "Just as all chapters open with formulae of gratitude on the part of Pārvatī who marks her satisfaction and prepares the ground for the next question, each chapter ends with a formula of fulfilling Pārvatī's request and inevitably stimulates a further question in a *paṭala* to follow. One can not help feeling that a different set of qualifications of Śiva with which Pārvatī precedes each and every question (each chapter concerns just one of them) seems somehow to correspond to the nature of particular areas of knowledge desired by Pārvatī". Although the variety of levels of this baroque text doesn't allow for outlining what sort of textuality it presents, Galewicz ends up hinting at *sneha* (love) as the *raison d'être* of the *Yāmalāṣṭakatantra*.

The same issue is to be found in the History of Art: the study of some stylistic elements can clarify the historical development of art production and its migration through South Asia. Adalbert J. Gail convincingly argues for the connection of the Mucilinda-Buddha of Sri Lanka with that of Angkor and this link "testifies that there were close ties between Buddhist Sri Lanka and the heart of the Khmer empire, ties that existed long before the reestablishment of Theravāda Buddhism in Angkor in the 13th century AD". Moreover Gail shows us how the investigation on a specific divine representation has to be considered in the context of religious rivalry, as e.g. that of the sitting Buddha with a serpent which coexisted with so many depictions of the Hindu god Viṣṇu reclining on the serpent-bed (Śeṣaśayana) or sitting on the serpent-throne (Śeṣāsana).

The narrative techniques of sculptors in Indian history of art offer an ample field for inquiring stylistic devices and indeed the possibility to individuate the different structural modes that operate within narratives has been already investigated among others by Vidya Dehejia and David T. Sanford. Following this line of research, Lidia Sudyka introduces a new category that is to be seen in the *kalyāṇa-maṇḍapa* in the village of Lepakshi (Andhra Pradesh) which, according to the author, is a "devotional metaphor executed in stone" connected with the "relationships that exists between deities and [...] the relationships devotees might have with their deities". This narrative technique that Sudyka suggests to call "inclusive" should enable the visitor to feel as one of the guests at the divine wedding between Śiva and Pārvatī.

The power of this topic abides also in its capacity to attract scholars from such different fields of research as e.g. Aesthetics or Cinema. The contribution of Mimma Congedo and Paola Rossi, for instance, proposes a new prospective in the debate on iconism an-iconism: the authors suggest that in the *Vāstusūtra Upaniṣad*, a problematic text reflecting on art and image-making, there is not "the trace of a passage from aniconism to iconism in the Indian tradition – or of the construction of such a passage by a 20th century Pandit – but rather the documentation of the shifting from a symbolic to an allegoric meaning modality" and they support this statement with a survey on the term *yūpa* that according to Congedo and Rossi "represents one of the most significant cases of semantic shift as evidence of cultural 'translation' or process of cultural absorption, which leads to a cultural re-foundation: from the *yūpa* of the Vedic culture to the *yūpa* in the artistic tradition".

Finally, the last two contributions deals with a form of art which is strongly connected with the discourse analysis we mentioned at the beginning, namely Cinema. Regarding "device" not much within a formalistic perspective, but rather with a functionalist one, Alessandro Monti analyses the patriarchal authorisation in love and marriage as a pivotal element in Indian Cinema that can be traced back to Sanskrit drama. Also in connection with the topic of divine and human authorization to marriage, Sabrina Ciolfi investigates the typical devices that enable the abrupt dénouement of the plot in Bollywood films, reflecting on their relation to some essential features of this genre.

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