

## FROM LITERARY TEXTS TO MUSICAL SOUNDS: MAWLÂNÂ'S MESSAGE IN ITALY

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### ABSTRACT

Italians' fascination for Rûmî and the "whirling dervishes" can be traced back to the time of European travellers visiting the lands of the Ottoman Empire, as it is demonstrated by the description of the *semâ* held at Galata Lodge, in Istanbul, written by Edmondo De Amicis in his book *Costantinopoli* (1877).

Nevertheless, compared to other countries, in Italy there was not an abundant amount of studies about Rûmî and his works.

Indeed, it was only during the 1950s that translations of Rûmî's poems and writings, made by.

Well known academics as Alessandro Bausani and Martino M. Moreno, started to appear on the Italian ground.

Differently from the past, the last two decades provided a more fertile period for the spreading of Mawlânâ's message in Italy, not only with literary translations but, often, through re-adaptation of Rûmî's works or creation of new novels.

Thus, the aim of this study is to explore different ways in which Rûmî's work had been re-interpreted and proposed to the Italian public. In order to pursue such study, firstly, it will be provided a general overview of the existing literature about Rûmî in Italy.

Secondly, the article will consider new forms used for conveying Rûmî's message to the people, mainly through the analysis of songs' texts.

As a matter of fact, the use of Mawlânâ's words as text's songs provided a successful way for spreading his message through the world.

In this case, Italy is not an exception; on the contrary, Rûmî's words reached the Italian public in the form of direct translations from *farsi* language, in English texts and, sometimes, in Italian re-adaptations. Such argument will be proved with the example of Rûmî's translations made by the Iranian Cultural House in Venice and later sung by a group of women artists (*Ensemble Mehr*).

**Key Words:** Mawlânâ, Mavlavî practices, Italian literature, Music.

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## EDEBİ METİNLERDEN MÜZİĞİN MELODİLERİNE: MEVLÂNA'NIN İTALYA'DAKİ MESAJI

### ÖZET

İtalyanların Rûmî'ye ve Mevlevî dervişlere olan ilgilerinin kaynağı Edmond De Amicis tarafından yazılan Konstantinopolis isimli (1877) kitapta İstanbul'da Galata Mevlevîhânesi'nde yapılan bir sema gösterisinin de işaret ettiği gibi Osmanlı topraklarını ziyaret eden Avrupalı seyyahlar dönemine gitmektedir.

Diğer ülkelerle karşılaştırılınca İtalya'da Rûmî ve eserleri üzerinde çok da fazla sayıda çalışma yoktu. Aslına bakılırsa, Rûmî'nin şiirleri ve yazıları ancak 1950'lerde tanınmış akademisyenler Alessandro Bausani ve Martino M. Moreno'nun yaptığı çevirilerle İtalya topraklarında görülmeye başlandı.

Geçmişten farklı olarak, son yirmi yıl Mevlâna'nın mesajının İtalya'da yayılması açısından sadece çeviriler yoluyla değil fakat sıklıkla Rûmî'nin eserlerinden yapılan uyarlamalar ve yeni romanlarla oldukça verimli bir dönem olmuştur.

Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı Rûmî'nin eserlerinin yeniden yorumlandığı ve İtalyan kamuoyuna sunulduğu farklı yöntemleri araştırmaktır. Böyle bir çalışmayı yapmak için, öncelikle İtalya'da Rûmî ile ilgili mevcut literatür gözden geçirilecektir.

İkinci olarak, makale Rûmî'nin mesajını halka aktarmada kullanılan yeni formları genelde şarkı metinlerini inceleyerek ele alacaktır. Gerçekten de Mevlâna'nın sözlerini şarkı metinleri olarak kullanmak onun mesajının dünyaya yayılması için başarılı bir yöntem olmuştur.

Bu konuda İtalya bir istisna değildir; aksine, Rûmî'nin sözleri İtalyan kamuoyuna Fars dilinden doğrudan çevirilerle, İngilizce metinlerle ve bazen de İtalyanca uyarlamalarla ulaşmıştır. Bu görüş İtalya'daki İran Kültür Merkezi tarafından yapılan Rûmî'den çeviriler ve daha sonra bir grup kadın tarafından söylenen şarkılarla (Ensemble Mehr) kanıtlanacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mevlâna, Mevlevî Geleneği, İtalyan Edebiyatı, Müzik.

The fascination of Italians with Rûmî and the “whirling dervishes”<sup>1</sup> can be traced back to the time of European travellers visiting the lands of the Ottoman Empire, as it is demonstrated by the description of the *Semâ* (as whirling dance) held at Galata lodge, in Istanbul, written by Edmondo De Amicis in his book *Costantinopoli* (1877).

Nevertheless, compared to other countries, in Italy there was not an abundant amount of studies about Rûmî and his works.

Indeed, it was only during the 1950s that translations of Rûmî's poems and writings, made by well known academics as Alessandro Bausani and Mario Martino Moreno, appeared on the Italian ground.

Differently from the past, the last two decades provided a more fertile period for the spreading of Mawlânâ's message in Italy, not only with literary translations but, often, through a re-adaptation of Rûmî's works or creation of new novels.

Thus, the aim of this study is to explore different ways in which Rûmî's works had been re-interpreted and proposed to the Italian public<sup>2</sup>.

In order to pursue such study, firstly, it will be provided a general overview of the existing literature about Rûmî in Italy. Secondly, the article will consider new forms used for conveying Rûmî's message to the people, mainly through the analysis of books intended for the general audience and songs' texts.

As a matter of fact, the use of Mawlânâ's words as lyrics provided a successful way for the spreading of his message through the world.

In this case, Italy is not an exception; on the contrary, Rûmî's words reached the Italian public in the form of direct translations from Farsi language, in English texts and sometimes in Italian re-adaptations. Such arguments will be proved with the example of Rûmî's translations made by

<sup>1</sup> Presentations on Rûmî and Mavlavis generally involve the use of different languages and transliteration systems. Within the present text, the transcription of names and places will be simplified as much as possible; therefore, preference will be given to the contemporary Turkish writing system (i.e. Mevlâna Celâleddin Rûmî instead of Mawlânâ Jalâl ad-Dîn Rûmî or other forms as Mowlânâ Jalâloddîn...). Nonetheless, whenever required, Persian, or other forms will be used.

<sup>2</sup> A previous study related to the Italian existing literature on Mevlâna and the Mavlavis was exposed by Gabriele Mandel Khan, in the presentation «La Bibliographie Italienne Sur Mevlâna», *I. Milletlerarası Mevlâna Kongresi*, (Konya, 3-5.5.1987), Konya, 1988, pp.123-129.

the Iranian Cultural House in Venice and subsequently sang by a group of women artists (*Ensemble Mehr*).

The methodology applied in this study follows the steps traced by the anthropologist Aslı Iğsız, in her article “Polyphony and Geographic Kinship”, published in the book *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* (2007), edited by Esra Özyürek<sup>3</sup>.

According to Iğsız, during the analysis of books’ texts it is important to consider not only the “body” of the book, but also framing texts as covers and brochures. Those parts, far from being accessories, introduce the topic to the reader (or watcher/listener in the case of CD/DVD), influencing his decision on the acquisition; and yet, those texts embody another semiotic feature, since they could carry the ideological message of the translator /author as well as the message chosen by the publisher<sup>4</sup>.

Early traces of Italian encounters with dervishes.

According to Franklin Lewis D., one of the earliest depictions of Mavlavi dervishes, in Western languages, was given by Georgius de Hungaria (c.1422-1502), who reported about his dealings with dervishes, during his captivity, in the Ottoman lands. Georgius narrated that he had frequented a Turkish sect (*Secta Turcorum*) and described a session of the Mavlavi *semâ* (*czamach*). In his *Tractatus de Moribus, Conditionibus et Nequicia Turcorum* published in Rome in the year 1481<sup>5</sup>. Within this narration, it is possible to

<sup>3</sup> Iğsız Aslı, “Polyphony and Geographic Kinship”, in Esra Özyürek (ed.), *the Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007, pp. 162-187.

<sup>4</sup> In presenting her analysis on the social and political implications of the revivals of *rembetika* -an original Greek music performed by outlaws- Aslı Iğsız provided a critical definition of “cultural works”, which are produced and circulated through institutions and their agents; their reception and interpretation are closely linked with the way in which these works are presented to the audience” (*Ibid.*, pp. 169-177). Exploring the usage of cultural works, she goes back to the approach adopted by the “French narratologist”, Gérard Genette (1982), who explored the meaning of “auxiliary texts”, which he calls *paratexts*, such as the title, the preface, or epigraph accompanying the main text. These shorter texts introduce, frame, and present the texts, they may lengthen and comment upon it, and ensure and effect its reception” (Genette, in *Ibid.*, p.169).

<sup>5</sup> Lewis Franklin D., *Rûmî, Past and Present, East and West: the Life, Teachings and Poetry of Jalâl al-Din Rûmî*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 2000), p. 499; Ambrosio Alberto Fabio, “La danse des Mavlavis histoire et symbolique”, in Ambrosio Alberto Fabio, Feuillebois Ève, Zarcone Thierry, *Les derviches tourneurs: doctrine, histoire et pratiques*, Paris: Les Éd. du Cerf, 2006, p. 154. The French edition of Georgius de Hungaria’s treaty is signalled in Ambrosio: Georges de Hongrie, *Tractatus de Moribus*,

find one of the most recurrent feature of travellers' reports since, as Lewis explains, these descriptions were often:

"The remarks of independent travellers, often present a mishmash of fact and imaginative fantasy born of observation, along with a great deal of misinformation or simple misimpressions left to them by guides"<sup>6</sup>.

This statement should also be kept in mind when talking of whirling dervishes described in ancient Italian "travelogues".

Due to the presence of Italian colonies in the Ottoman capital, and thanks to commercial and economic interests in the Mediterranean basin, Italian diplomats and travellers had always paid visit to the lands of the Ottoman Empire; thus, giving detailed accounts about of their "encounter" with the Turkish speaking people. Those earlier accounts were often the result of travellers' curiosity about different customs and manners, and of course, about the religious life style of their hosts<sup>7</sup>.

Early Italian accounts on Sufi brotherhood were available, at least, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Those narrations reported especially on Mavlavis, who were more open toward foreigners and benefited of a very central location with their lodge (*Mavlavikhane*) built in the European district of Galata (Istanbul)<sup>8</sup>.

Probably, this site had been visited by the traveller Luigi Bassano di Zara (d.a. 1552), since, in his journey's chronicle, published in the year

Conditionibus et Nequicia Turcorum, *Traité sur Les mœurs, le coutumes, et la perfidie des Turcs*, trans. from Latin by Jöel Schnapp, Toulouse: Anarcharsis, 2002. (Ibid., p.154).

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, *Rûmî, Past, and Present...*, p.499.

<sup>7</sup> Hereafter there are enclosed some examples of the most famous chronicles left by Italian travellers: Giovan Maria Angiolello, "Breve narratione della vita, et fatti del Signor Vssvncassano. Fatta per Giouan Maria Angiolello", in Giovan Battista Ramusio, *Delle navigationi et viaggi*, in Venetia, Appresso i Giunti, 1583; Paolo Giovio, *Turcicarum rerum commentarijs*, Parissis, Ex officina Roberti Stephani, 1539; Antonio Menavino, *I cinque libri della Legge, religione et vita de' Turchi et della corte et d'alcune guerre del Gran Turco*, Venetia, appresso Valgrisisio, 1548; Francesco Sansovino, *Historia vniversale dell'origine et imperio de Turchi*, raccolta da M. Francesco Sansovino. Nella quale si contengono la Origine, le Leggi, l'Vsanze, i Costumi, con Religiosi come mondani de Turchi. Oltre a ciò ui sono tutte le guerre che di tempo in tempo sono state fatte da questa natione, Cominciando da Othomano primo Re di questa gente fino al moderno Selim. - Con le uite di tutti i Principi di Casa Othomana, in Venetia, Appresso Stefano Zazzara, 1568.

<sup>8</sup> Lifchez Raymond (ed.), *the Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992.

1541, he reported about “dervishes”; although, he left a confused description in which elements of the Bektashi brotherhood are mixed up with those of other orders.

On the other hand, the traveller Pietro della Valle (1568-1652)<sup>9</sup>, who visited the Ottoman Empire, Persia and India, left a detailed report of a Mavlavi *semâ* session, observed and described in a letter dated October 1614, the 24<sup>th</sup>. According to Ambrosio, Della Valle was deeply impressed by the exhaustion provoked by the whirling, during which the “dancers” could reach the mystic ecstasy, determined: “*par la musique et le mouvement corporel qui résultant de l’excitation de l’intellect illumine par Dieu*”<sup>10</sup>.

Similarly, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the central location of Galata Mavlavi lodge did not fail to attract the attention of Italian speaking travellers, who left several description -both in written and visual form, of their visit to the lodge, as it is showed by the account of the *semâ* written by Abbé Giambattista Toderini (1728-1799)<sup>11</sup>.

Early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the beginning of a period for interpretation and representation of Orient and its subjects. If the narration and the visual depictions of 18<sup>th</sup> century travellers had been characterized by their curiosity for the East, the “travelogues” of Westerners who had visited the Ottoman Empire during the 19<sup>th</sup> century often showed a great sensibility for political and social changes that affected the Ottoman society<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Pietro della Valle described his travel to the Orient in his letters addressed to the friend and doctor Mario Schipano. The section concerning his travel in Turkey was, firstly, published in Rome in the year 1650, while the other letters were published from the year 1657 to the year 1663. See: Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il pellegrino, con minuto ragguaglio di tutte le cose notabili osseruate in essi, descritti da lui medesimo in 54 lettere famigliari, da diuersi luoghi della intrapresa pellegrinatione. Mandate in Napoli all’erud.to, e fra’ più cari, di molti anni suo amico. Mario Schipano. Diuisi in tre parti, cioè la Turchia, la Persia, e l’India, co’l ritorno in patria*, 4 voll., in Bologna presso Gioseffo Longhi, 1672.

<sup>10</sup> See also Cardini Chiara (ed.), *La Porta d’Oriente: lettere di Pietro della Valle: Istanbul, 1614*, Roma: Città Nuova, 2001, pp. 119-120; also mentioned by Ambrosio, in “La danse des Mavlavis..”, p.154.

<sup>11</sup> For Giambattista Toderini’s travel reports, see Toderini Giambattista: *Letteratura turchesca dell’abate Giambatista Toderini*, 3 vols., in Venezia : presso Giacomo Storti, 1787

<sup>12</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century had been labelled as the “age of reforms”, since it saw the proclamation of the Edict of Gülhane (1839), which affirmed the adoption of European models of government, the introduction of a parliamentary system and resulted in several administrative changes. See Zürcher Erik J., *Turkey. A Modern History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London, New York: Tauris, 2004.

The impact of urban modernization occurred in Istanbul, particularly in the European side, changed the shape of the city, providing Western style environments as the Gran Rue the Pera, located close to the *Mavlavik-hane* of Galata. Yet, for many European travellers, Mavlavi dervishes were still part of the collective imaginary on the Oriental world, as it is explained by the words of a Western traveller:

“Pera and Galata, the only busy quarters of Constantinople are not longer and of all lands, each country administrating its own laws, exercising its own religions, circulating its own money, distributing its own letters. Here are various banks, consulates and embassies, churches and chapels, including the dancing dervishes, who display themselves on stated days<sup>13</sup>.

It is in this period that many Westerners paid their visit to Mavlavi lodges in the Ottoman capital, as it is showed by eminent reports as those written by the English travellers Julia Pardoe<sup>14</sup>, and the French writer Théophile Gautier<sup>15</sup>. Almost in the same period, the Italian writer Edmondo De Amicis (1846-1908)<sup>16</sup> observed a *semâ* at Galata and reminisced it in his book *Costantinopoli*<sup>17</sup>. However, differently from other visitors, he was not so impressed by the mystical side of the dance as much as the gracious movements and wearing apparel of the whirling dervishes. It is worth noting that the French edition of De Amicis's book was embellished with engravings, portraying Mavlavi dervishes, made by the Italian artist Cesare Biseo (1843-1909)<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Elliot: 1893, *cit.* in Bartu Ayfer, “Rethinking Heritage Politics in a Global Context: a view from Istanbul”, in Nezar al Sayyad, *Hybrid urbanism: on the identity discourse and the built environment*, Westport Conn.: Praeger, 2001, pp.133.

<sup>14</sup> Pardoe Julia, *the City of the Sultan*, London: Henry Colburn, 1837.

<sup>15</sup> Gautier Théophile, *Constantinople*, Paris: Nou ed Eugène Fasquelle éditeur, 1910.

<sup>16</sup> Following his military career, the Italian writer Edmondo De Amicis became a correspondent journalist for the Florentine newspaper *Nazione*. In this period, his travel reports were revisioned and repropesed in travel books, as *Spagna* (1873), *Olanda* (1874), *Ricordi di Londra* (1874), *Marocco* (1876), *Costantinopoli* (1877), *Ricordi di Parigi* (1879)

<sup>17</sup> Among the different editions, one of the most famous versions of *Costantinopoli* was the 7<sup>th</sup> edition, including 2 volumes, published by Treves, in Milano (1877). For the French edition, see De Amicis Edmondo, *Constantinople*. Ouvrage traduit de l'italien... par M.me J. Colomb et illustré... par C. Biseo. Paris: Hachette, 1883.

<sup>18</sup> Biseo's illustration *Mavlavi dervişlerinin seması*, *The ceremony of Mavlavi dervishes* is reported in Sevim Mustafa, *Gravürlerle Türkiye in gravures I. Giysiler Portreler: Garments portraits*, 1

In many cases, portraits made by artists were not often “truthful” but in many cases they were a representation of the ecstatic rapture of the dervishes as it was seen by the artist. It is in this light, it could be also seen as the representation of a dancing dervish made by Amedeo Preziosi (1816-1882)<sup>19</sup>, whose images were lately collected in a lithographs’ album, *Stamboul: Recollection of Eastern life*, published in the year 1858.<sup>20</sup>

Early academic approaches to Rûmî in Italy.

Systematic studies on Rûmî and the whirling dervishes appeared quite late in Italy, compared to French studies, where Mavlavis were mentioned in the section on Persian literature of the encyclopaedic dictionary, *Bibliothèque Orientale* -compiled by Barthélémy d’Herbelot (1623-1695)<sup>21</sup>- or to the English tradition, in which studies on Persian religions were carried out by eminent scholars as Edmond Granville Brown (1862-1926), Professor of Persian language at Cambridge, who was the teacher of Raymond A. Nicholson (1868-1945), the famous translator of Rûmî’s collection of lyrical poems (*Dîvân-ı Şems-i Tebrîzî*)<sup>22</sup>.

Nevertheless, among the first examples of Italian scholars dealing with Rûmî there was the Turin based professor Italo Pizzi (1849-1920), who introduced the life and the poetry of the eminent 13<sup>th</sup> century master in his

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*vol.* Ankara: *Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları*; 1997, ill. n.149. In Sevim’s book, there are also representations of Mavlavi dervishes published in Giulio Ferrario, *Il Costume Antico e Moderno di tutti i popoli: O Storia del Governo, della Milizia, della Religione, delle Arti, Scienze ed Usanze di tutti i Popoli antichi e moderni*, 26 voll, Firenze: Celli e Ricci, 1830-1843.

<sup>19</sup> For Preziosi’s representations of whirling dervishes, see the catalogue for exhibition organized by the Italian Cultural Institute in Istanbul, published by the publishing house Yapı Kredi Yayınları in Istanbul (2007), which contains a reproduction of the painting “Semazen” (painting on canvas, mixed technique), belonging to the Enver Collection, (*Amadeo Preziosi*, p.100; *Ibid.*, p.132). A different painting is also included in the same catalogue (*Ibid.*, p.209). See also Lewis, *Rûmî, Past, and Present.*; Lifchez, *the Dervish Lodge.*, p. 280.

<sup>20</sup> For further information on Mavlavi representation made by Western artists, see: Uzluk Şabettin, *Mevlevîlikte Resim Resimde Mevlevîler*, Ankara: İş Bankası Kültür Yay, 1957; other investigations are available in Öztürk Yaşar Nuri, *the Eye of the Heart. An introduction to Sufism and the tariqats of Anatolia and the Balkans*, Istanbul: Redhouse Press, 1995 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1988).

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *Rûmî, Past, and Present.*; p.528.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 530-531. The *Dîvân-ı Şems* is also known under the names: *Dîvân-ı Kebîr*, *Küllî-yât-ı Dîvân-ı Şems*.



compendium *Storia della Poesia Persiana*<sup>23</sup> (1894), adding five passages from the Rûmî's narrative didactic poem (*Mathnawî*) and six poems from the *Dîvân*<sup>24</sup>.

Translations from the *Mathnawî* were also provided by Mario Martino Moreno (1892-1964) in his anthology *Antologia della Mistica Arabo-Persiana* (1951)<sup>25</sup>. In the preface Moreno explained limits and difficulties encountered while translating Rûmî's passages for Italian readers, thus, he operated a selection of what he considered the most representative passages, in order to let the reader taste the spirit of Sufi authors<sup>26</sup>. Within the section dedicated to Rûmî, there is an interesting presentation of the first 18 lines of the *Mathnawî* along with a commentary for the Italian reader<sup>27</sup>.

The following scholar, who had written several works on the literary style as well as the religious thought of Rûmî, is Alessandro Bausani (1921-1988) a prolific scholar, well-versed in many Oriental languages.

A section explaining Rûmî's religious thought, with special regard to his theosophy, is included in Bausani's textbook *Persia Religiosa, da Zaratustra a Bahá'u'lláh* (1959)<sup>28</sup>. However, in order to understand Bausani's

<sup>23</sup> Pizzi Italo, *Storia della Poesia Persiana*, Torino: U.T.E., 1894. See: Lewis, *Rûmî, Past, and Present...*, p.546.

<sup>24</sup> Although, it had not been possible to revise the text, it is worth saying that, in the year 1902, an article devoted to Rûmî appeared on the magazine *Giornale arcadico di scienza, lettere e arti*, written by the writer Ugo Mioni (1870-1935). See Mioni Ugo, "Un Grande Lirico Persiano (Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî)", *Giornale arcadico di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 3rd s., 9, 1902, 321-328, 353- 361. ss.

Moreover, in 1913, it was published, in Rome, a book entitled *Derviches Tourneurs* (Roma: Casa Editrice Italiana). The author, Hachim Veli, is portrayed on the cover as "docteur in theologie and Imam de l'ambassade impériale ottomane" in Ambrosio A., Feuillebois È., Zarccone T., *Les derviches tourneurs...*

References to Mavlavis could also be searched in Nallino, Carlo Alfonso, *Raccolta di scritti editi ed inediti*. Vol. II: L'Islam. Sufismo. Confraternite, Istituto per l'Oriente, Roma, 1940.

<sup>25</sup> Moreno Mario Martino, *Antologia della Mistica Arabo-Persiana*, Bari: Laterza, 1951 (a new edition was published in 1994). Regarding the section on "Rûmî", see: pp.63-89.

<sup>26</sup> In the preface, Moreno affirmed: "Ci siamo quindi ristretti agli autori più rinomati e ai brani più rappresentativi, e abbiamo sacrificato gli scrittori all'argomento, -nel senso che non abbiamo tanto mirato a rendere la fisionomia di ogni scrittore, quanto a far conoscere nel suo insieme pigliano un po' dell'uno e un po' dell'altro, il pensiero sufico, -e l'argomento agli scrittori in quanto di ogni dottrina abbiamo scelto le parti più stilisticamente presentabili" (*Ibid.*, p.14).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

<sup>28</sup> Bausani Alessandro, *Persia Religiosa, da Zaratustra a Bahá'u'lláh*, Milan: Saggiatore, 1959.

interpretations of Mawlânâ, not less important than his books are his presentations at conferences, as the International conference organized in Rome, in the year 1974, as tribute to the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rûmî's death<sup>29</sup>.

Following Seyyed Hossein Nasr's intervention on the history of Sufism<sup>30</sup>, and Mehmet Kaplan's explanation of the role exerted by Mawlânâ and Mavlavis on the creation of the Turkish Culture<sup>31</sup>, Bausani offered a close examination on the innovation of Rûmî's poetical style, combined with the religious content of his words<sup>32</sup>. Selecting some *ghazal* from the *Dîvân*, he evidenced Rûmî's peculiarities, his literary licences, as the usage of everyday expressions, along with a fine rhetorical style<sup>33</sup>.

And yet, it is on the religious topic that Bausani pronounced his last words, introducing a theme so dear to his studies, the reflection on the alleged *pantheism* in Rûmî's words, on which he was really claiming cautiously that, far from seeing a pantheistic approach in Rûmî, it is necessary to better comprehend his belonging to the Islamic world and his profession of the Islamic faith<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> The conference *Nel centenario del poeta mistico persiano Galâl-ad-Dîn Rûmî*, held in Roma, 18-19 January 1974, organized by the Institute, had been prepared for the commemoration of Mevlânâ's 700<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The event had been also organized as part of Unesco's programmes for the commemoration of Rûmî (*Nel centenario del poeta mistico persiano Galâl-ad-Dîn Rûmî*, Roma, 18-19 Gennaio, 1974, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Fondazione Luciano Caetani, Roma, 1975).

<sup>30</sup> Nasr Sayyed Hussein, "Rûmî et la Tradition Soufie", in *Nel centenario...*, pp.3-23.

<sup>31</sup> Kaplan Mehmet, «L'influence de Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî sur la culture Turque en Anatolie», in *Ibid.*, pp.25-41.

<sup>32</sup> Bausani Alessandro, "Tradizione e novità nello stile del Canzoniere di Maulânâ Gialâlû'd-Din Rûmî", in *Ibid.*, pp.43-62.

<sup>33</sup> Bausani Alessandro, "Tradizione e novità..", p.50.

<sup>34</sup> See: Bausani Alessandro, "Il Pensiero Religioso di Maulânâ Gialâl al-Dîn Rûmî", in *Oriente Moderno*, Vol. 33, N.4, April, 1953, pp.180-198; Bausani Alessandro, "Mevlana Celaleddin Rûmî'de Dini Düşünce", *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Konya, 3, 1994, pp.347-365 [trans. İsmet Kayaoğlu]; Bausani Alessandro, "The Religious Thought of Maulânâ Jalaluddin Rûmî", in *Iqbal*, Vol. 13, 1965, pp.61-86; Bausani Alessandro, "Theism and Pantheism in Rûmî", in *Iranian Studies*, 1, 8-24, 1968, pp.5405; Bausani Alessandro, «Hudâperestî ve Vahdet-i Vucûd der- Âsâr-i Mevlevî», *Ferheng ve Zindegî*, 16, pp.135-150 [trans. Ahmed Muhammedi]. For a comparison: Chittick William C., "II Sufismo operativo in Rûmî.", in *Conoscenza religiosa*, 3, 1975, pp.272- 288.

The Italian scholar had also concentrated his speculations on Rûmî in the forewords to his translation of Rûmî's poetries in the *Dîvân*, published in *Poesie Mistiche* (1980).<sup>35</sup>

Another scholar involved in Rûmî's studies is Anna Masala, Professor of Turkish Language and Literature at Università di Roma "La Sapienza". Throughout her long academic career, Professor Masala had devoted her attention to the investigation of Anatolian Sufism, writing several publications on exponents as Yunus Emre and Mawlânâ. Surprisingly, among her works, there are few examples available in Italian language<sup>36</sup>; while there are many articles written in Turkish<sup>37</sup>, as the text prepared in cooperation with Prof. Bausani, for the Third Seminary on Mawlânâ (*Uluslararası Üçüncü Mawlânâ Semineri Bildirileri Konya 15-17 Aralık 1978*)<sup>38</sup>. In this short text, it is possible to evince her focus on Sufi brotherhood born in the Anatolian *milieu*, and other recurrent themes of her studies, as the comparison among Anatolian mystics and Christian mystics –i.e. San Juan de la Cruz and San Francesco<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, the text contains her reflections on the actuality of Rûmî's thought in the modern world<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Rûmî *Poesie mistiche*, ed. and trans. Alessandro Bausani, Milano: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1980 (7 ed. 2000) [or. Tit.: *Dîvân*]. A new version was published in: 1997, Fabbri: Milano by (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2000).

<sup>36</sup> Although it was not possible to revise the text, it could be possible that Rûmî would have been mentioned in Masala Anna, *Il Tulipano e la Rosa. Mistici turchi dal XII al XX secolo*, Roma: Semar, 2005.

<sup>37</sup> Masala Anna, "Hasret", in *Bildiriler, Uluslararası Mevlâna Bilgi Şöleni, (15-17 Aralık 2000)*, Ankara: 2000, pp.331-335; Masala Anna, "Ölümsüz Mevlâna", in *Kültür ve Sanat*, Ankara, N.36, 12, 1997, pp.10-11; Masala Anna, "The Line from Mevlana to Bediüzzaman", in *International Symposium*, İstanbul, 1992, Sözlür, 1993, pp.17-21. Turkish version "Mevlâna'dan Bediüzzaman'a Uzanan Çizgi", available at: [http://www.sorularlarisaleinur.com/subpage.php?s=author\\_detayles&id=20](http://www.sorularlarisaleinur.com/subpage.php?s=author_detayles&id=20).

<sup>38</sup> Bausani Alessandro, Masala Anna, *Uluslararası Üçüncü Mevlana Semineri Bildirileri* (Konya 15-17 Aralık 1978), *Türkoloji Defterleri*, Roma, 1978.

<sup>39</sup> Bausani Alessandro, Masala Anna, *Uluslararası Üçüncü...*, pp.18-19.

<sup>40</sup> The spreading of Mevlâna's message into the Western world has often been based on the universality of his teaching, as it reported in the following example given by Anna Masala: "Mevlâna'nın insanlığa bir diğer önemli mesajı da şudur: yaşamaktan ve ölmekten korkmamalıyız. Çünkü bu hayat geçicidir, çünkü ölümden sonra gerçek bir hayat başlar" (*Ibid.*, p.18). On this topic see also: Tridente Michele, «L' Oecuménicité Authentique Dans le Oeuvres de Mawlânâ: Universalité et actualité», in *I. Milletlerarası Mevlâna Kongresi*, (I, Konya, 3-5.5.1987), Konya, 1988, pp.37- 42.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, in the universities' environments appeared several anthologies on Persian and Turkish literature, which often included a section on Rûmî<sup>41</sup>; among those works, there is the anthology *Poesia d'amore turca e persiana*, edited by Michele Piemontese and Gianroberto Scarcia (1973)<sup>42</sup>.

Along with translations from the *Dîvân*, there is a small section of poetries written "contemporary" Turkish authors, among whom there are two eminent personalities related to the Mavlavis as Feyzi Halıcı, who is described as a "*Turkish poet of mystic inspiration, born in Konya*"<sup>43</sup> and Asaf Halet Çelebi, descendant from the family of Mawlânâ, and famous writer, lived in the first years of the Turkish Republic<sup>44</sup>.

Why Rûmî? Italian interest for the great Master.

In the last twenty years, there was a growing interest for Rûmî's masterpieces and poetry works, Mavlavis' traditions and, more generally Oriental philosophies and religions.

The reasons for this attention to the East could be attributed to several factors; as the increasing number of people interested in Oriental studies at Italian Universities, but it could also be inferred that general curiosity for Rûmî, and other Sufi masters, was also due to the diffusion of New Age ideas in the late 1980s and 1990s<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Pagliaro Antonino, Bausani Alessandro, *La Letteratura Persiana*, 1st. ed., Milano: Sansoni/Accademia, 1960 (later edition: 1968).

<sup>42</sup> Scarcia Gianroberto, Piemontese Michele, *Poesia d'amore turca e persiana*, Novara: EDIPEM, 1973; Scarcia Gianroberto, "Masnavi", entry in *Muse*, 144, 1966, p.328; Scarcia Gianroberto, "Rûmî", entry in *Muse*, 207, 1967, pp.282-283; Scarcia Gianroberto, "Sufismo", entry in *Muse*, 232, maggio, 1968, pp.345-346. Scarcia Gianroberto "Letteratura Persiana", in *Storia delle letterature d'Oriente*, edited by Botto, vol. II, Milano, pp. 243-452. In the same book, see also Scarcia, "Letterature Turche", pp.453-579.

<sup>43</sup> Scarcia G., Piemontese M., *Poesia d'amore...*, pp. 328. For some examples of Feyzi Halıcı's works, see: *Feyzi Halıcı'nın İtalyanca Şiirleri (The Italian Poems of Feyzi Halıcı)*, translated by Anna Masala (1987).

<sup>44</sup> Scarcia G., Piemontese M., *Poesia d'amore...*, p. 331. According to Zarccone, Asaf Halet Çelebi (107-1958) had published: "dans les années 1950, des études sur la spiritualité et le Mavlavis, une traduction française des rubai' du saint de Konya et de nombreux poèmes mystique", Zarccone Thierry, «De Mawlânâ à la Confrérie Mavlaviye» in *Les derviches tourneurs...*, pp.127.

<sup>45</sup> For studies on the New Age, see: Lewis James R, Melton J. Gordon (ed.), *Perspectives on the New Age*, Albany (New York): State University of New York Press, 1992 Haanegraaff Wouter, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*.

According to Annemarie Schimmel, in the last decades there was an overall diffusion of undefined, syncretistic, and heterogeneous movements, which taking inspiration from several religious or spiritual traditions converged in the "New Age" universe. As the author reports, music was a powerful vehicle for the diffusion of those new movements; often, remixing Oriental rhythms in order to meet the expectation of the Western audience<sup>46</sup>.

The interest for the Orient was witnessed by the amount of texts related to Sufi that were published in those years, as the anthology *I mistici dell'Islam. Antologia del Sufismo*, edited by Eva De Vitray Meyerovitch (1991)<sup>47</sup>, or the short text on the history of Sufism, *I Sufi. Mistici dell'Islam*, edited by Jean Chevalier (1996)<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, it was in this time that books written by personalities related to the contemporary interpretative approach of Sufism, as Idries Shah, were newly proposed to the Italian public<sup>49</sup>.

Although the reason for studies on Sufism, and within them on Rûmî stemmed from different sources, it unequivocally leads to a proliferation of publications. Actually, the bibliographic landscape that resulted by the flourishing of these works is a variegated one, regarding both themes and approaches. In the following paragraphs, there will be an attempt to present different typologies of works (monographs as well as articles) published in Italy, but also works, mainly on the academic ground, published by Italians abroad.

*Translations of Rûmî's main works.*

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Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1996; Heelas Paul, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

<sup>46</sup> Schimmel Annemarie, *Sufismo. Introduzione alla mistica islamica*, ed. Tottoli Roberto, Brescia: Morcelliana, 2001 [or. tit. *Sufismus*].

<sup>47</sup> De Vitray – Meyerovitch Eva (ed.), *I mistici dell'Islam, Antologia del Sufismo*, 1st. ed. Parma: Guanda, 1991, [or. tit. *Anthologie du soufisme*] (new version published in 2002); also De Vitray – Meyerovitch Eva (ed.), *I mistici dell'Islam. Antologia del sufismo*, Milano: Tea, 1996.

<sup>48</sup> Chevalier Jean, *I sufi. Mistici dell'Islam*, Xenia, 1996 [or. ed. *Le soufisme*, Paris, 1974].

<sup>49</sup> See Idries Shah, "I Sufi", Roma: Mediterranee, 1990, previously published as "La strada dei Sufi", Roma: Ubaldini, 1971. According to Lewis: "Shah's promotion of Sufism in the English-speaking world during the 1960s, a time when many young Westerners turned to Eastern philosophy and religion (particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, and only to a lesser extent to Sufism), played an important role in the later canonization of Rûmî as one of the patron saints of the New Age spirituality during the 1980s and 1990s" (Lewis F. D., *Rûmî, Past, and Present...*, p.517).

As it was seen before, one of the most popular “best-sellers” of Mawlânâ in Italy was the selection of poetries, contained in the *Dîwân*, edited by Bausani in his *Poesie Mistiche*<sup>50</sup>. For his edition, the Italian scholar relied on the version of Badî'-az Zamân Forûzânfarr<sup>51</sup>. However, as the author stated, he didn't operate a philological translation since the book was not intended for specialists of Oriental studies. Therefore, as Bausani admitted:

“I tried my best for reproducing –till the possible soil- the impression that the reading of the odes, in their original version, could have produced on somebody who knows Persian language”<sup>52</sup>.

When it was not possible to follow the Persian version, he operated a “contamination” with the version provided by Nicholson<sup>53</sup>.

If it was not simple to get the poetries translated into Italian, it seems to have been even more complicated to get an entire version of the *Mathnawî*.

Following the above-mentioned partial translations, provided by Bausani and Moreno, one of the first adaptation was the adaptation from *Mathnawî* edited by Leonardo Vittorio Arena<sup>54</sup> and published in the book *Il Canto del derviscio (parabole della saggezza sufi)* (1993). As the author himself stated, his intention was not to provide a mere translation but a paraphrases of *Mathnawî*'s tales, since:

“a mere translation would have not been truthful to the didactic intention of the poet, while paraphrases will better satisfy the expectation of contemporary people”<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Rûmî. *Poesie Mistiche*..

<sup>51</sup> The original version used by Bausani: Badî'-az Zamân Forûzânfarr, *Kulliyât-i Shams*...Tehrân, 1958-1959, 9 voll., cit. in *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>53</sup> R. A. Nicholson, *Selected Poems from the Dîwânî Shamsi Tabrîz*, Cambridge, reprint. 1952, cit. in *Ibid.*.

<sup>54</sup> Leonardo Vittorio Arena have been teaching several courses in Philosophy at Istituto di Filosofia, Facoltà di Lettere at the University of Urbino. He had published several works on Oriental Spirituality and Religions, as *Antologia della filosofia cinese* (1991), *Storia del Buddismo Ch'an* (1992).

<sup>55</sup> Rûmî Jalaloddin, *Il canto del derviscio (parabole della sapienza sufi)*, ed. Leonardo Vittorio Arena, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Milano: Mondadori, 1993. The second edition came out in the year 1997; while, a new edition was published in the year 2000.

A second version of *Mathnawî's* tales was prepared by Massimo Jevolella<sup>56</sup>, within the text *Rumî. Racconti Sufi*<sup>57</sup>. Actually, the book is an Italian rendering of the French text *Le Mesnevi. 150 Countes Soufis*, edited by Ahmed Kudsi Erguner and Pierre Maniez (1988). In the foreword, the author describes his difficulties -not as much for the stylistic form as for the concepts- encountered while translating the *Mathnawî* for the Western readers. Nonetheless, he tried to keep what he had envisaged to be the didactic function of Sufi tales: the ability to present the essence of knowledge by the functionality of hilarity<sup>58</sup>. The Italian author also presented, in re-adapted versions, stories easily understandable as the tales of the "elephant". Basically, the story tells the inability of different individuals to perceive in a similar way the ambiguous shape, hidden in a dark room; until they open the light, discovering that the "object" was an elephant. As the author explains, the narrative strategy allows the reader to get the symbolism hidden behind the mere of facts of the story. Thus, the reader will discover that the elephant is God, whose real identity is revealed to the ignorant people only after their firing of the candle, which represents the intellectual light<sup>59</sup>.

The same narrative expedient had been used by Jevolella in his second book *Il Tesoro nella cenere e altri racconti sufi* (2003)<sup>60</sup>.

Few information are available in the book *Il canto dello Spirito*, edited by Anna Maria Martelli (2003), which appeared to be another selection from the *Mathnawî*, since the text is out of catalogue<sup>61</sup>.

Finally, it was only in 2006 that the first, complete, translation of the *Mathnawî* was provided to Italian readers, with the publication of

<sup>56</sup> Graduated in Philosophy, Massimo Jevolella studied Arabic language and Islamic History. Among his publication there is the translation, from the Arabic original of *Il Libro dei Cerchi (Kitâb al-hadâ'iq) di Ibn as-Sîd*, Milano: Arché, 1984. He also directed the journal *Meridiani*, moreover, as expert in Islamic studies, he cooperated with the journal *Sole-24 Ore*

<sup>57</sup> Jevolella Massimo, *Rumî. Racconti Sufi*, Como: Red, 1995. [or. tit. *Le Mesnevi. 150 Countes Soufis*, ed. Ahmed Kudsi Erguner and Pierre Maniez, Paris, 1988. Trans. Barbara Brevi].

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.108.

<sup>60</sup> Rûmî, Gialal ad-Din *Il tesoro nella cenere e altri racconti Sufi*, ed. Massimo Jevolella, Novara: Boroli, 2003 [Trans. Barbara Brevi].

<sup>61</sup> Rûmî Ğalâl al-Dîn, *Il canto dello spirito*; aneddoti del Matnawi. *L'opera fondamentale di un maestro persiano del sufismo medievale*, ed. and trans. Anna Maria Martelli, Milano: Mimesis, 2000.

*Mathnawî: il poema del misticismo universale / Jalâl âlDîn Rûmî* (2006)<sup>62</sup>. The editors for this work are Carla Nûr Cerati-Mandel and Gabriele Mandel Kĥân, an Afghan-Italian psychologist, writer, painter and professor and reported leader of the Italian Cerrahi-Halveti branch, who had already published different books on Sufism<sup>63</sup>.

Mandel's translation is based on several editions already available of Rûmî's majestic work. Firstly, he based his work on the "manuscript of Konya" (Konya Mevlâna Müzesinde, Ms 51, 1278)<sup>64</sup>; then, on the *Mathnawî* edition that he labels "Tehrân edition" (1957)<sup>65</sup>. He also compared his version with the one provided by Eva De Vitray Meyerovitch<sup>66</sup> and the Persian version of Nicholson's edition<sup>67</sup>. Furthermore, he relied on his own translation of the Holy Quran for Italian rendering of quotations taken from the Holy Book<sup>68</sup>.

The book, which contains an interesting explanation of the Mavlavi *semâ*<sup>69</sup> and a chronology of Rûmî's life<sup>70</sup>, it is introduced by the preface written by Halil Cin, Rector of the Selçuk State University of Konya, who emphasized the importance of translations as a way to publicize Rûmî's

<sup>62</sup> Rûmî, Jalâl âlDîn *Mathnawî :il poema del misticismo universale*, ed. and trans. Gabriele Mandel Kĥân, Nûr Carla Cerati-Mandel; pref. Halil Cin, Milano: Tascabili Bompiani, 2006.

<sup>63</sup> See, Mandel Khan Gabriele, *Saggezza islamica; le novelle dei sufi*, Milano: Edizioni Paoline, 1995;

*Storia del Sufismo*, Milano: Rusconi, 1995. *Rûmî e il Sufismo*, Bergamo ILC, Gorle, 1996.

<sup>64</sup> Art edition in fac-simile, Published by the Turkish Ministry for Culture and Tourism, 1667. Directorate for Publications, book series: Classic of the Turkish Literature, n. 34. Ankara (*Ibid.* p.12).

<sup>65</sup> As Mandel explains, the Tehran University Edition, Muhammad Este'lâmiy, Tehran: Ed. Ketâbfurûsh, 1951, 6 voll. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (*Ibid.*).

<sup>66</sup> Mandel refers to the version of Eve de Vitray Meyerovitch, with the help of Djamchid Mortazavi, *Djalâl-od Dîn Rûmî. Mathnawî. La Quetê de l'absolu*. Paris: Édition du Rocher, 1990 (Rûmî, Jalâl âlDîn, *Mathnawî ..*, p.13).

<sup>67</sup> Nicholson's version mentioned by Mandel: Reynold Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Jalâl-lu'ddîn Rûmî*, 1924-40. *farsi* edition Âmir Kabîr (ed.), of Reynold Nicholson, Mûsasah İn-tashârâtu, Tehrân, 1957 (H. 1376; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (*Ibid.*, pp.12-13).

<sup>68</sup> *Il Corano Versione letterale integrale con testo a fronte; e appunti storici, teologici e filologici*. A cura di Gabriele Mandel Khan, Novara: De Agostini, 2000 (lux edition); Torino: Utet: 2004 (economic edition) (*Ibid.*, p.13).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44-48.



heritage through his works, rightly defined "masterpieces of the humanity"<sup>71</sup>.

*C'è quel che c'è: Italian versions of Rûmî's Fîhî mâ Fîhî.*

The first Italian edition Rûmî's unique speculative text, the book *Fîhî mâ Fîhî*, was published in the year 1995, under the name *L'Essenza del Reale. Fîhi mâ fîhi (C'è quel che c'è)* (1995)<sup>72</sup>. Being a young academic scholar and connoisseur of Persian language, the editor, Sergio Foti, based his translation on the version of the *Fîhî mâ Fîhî* edited by Badî'-az Zamân Forûzân-farr (Tehran: 1952)<sup>73</sup>. In his preface, Foti advised the reader about the profound spiritual nature of the book, and its leading theme: the relation of man with God. He had also made an effort to frame Rûmî's words into the wider Sufi tradition; then, referring also to the school of Ibn 'Arabî<sup>74</sup>.

Another version of the *Fîhî mâ Fîhî* was given with the publication of the text "*il Libro delle Profondità Interiori*", published by Luni in the year 1996<sup>75</sup>.

Poetries. Quatrains. *Rubâi' yât.*

Poetries' translations had always exerted a greater fascination on Italian readers. Therefore, it is not a surprise that poetic translations of Rûmî were collected in separate anthologies, specially edited for the Italian public<sup>76</sup>.

An interesting example is the anthological selection of 200 quatrains *Canzone d'amore per Dio (Rubâi'yât)*, edited by Maria Teresa Cerrato (1991)<sup>77</sup>, also based on the original Persian edition of Badî'-az Zamân Forûzân-farr. As the editor claimed, in the Italian translation, rhythm and rhymes were sacrificed in order to give more attention to the content of the quatrains

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>72</sup> Rûmî Jalâl ad-Dîn, *L'Essenza del Reale. Fîhi mâ fîhi (C'è quel che c'è)* ed. and trans. Sergio Foti, Torino: Libreria editrice Psiche, 1995 [or. tit. *Fîh-mâ fîhi*].

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>75</sup> Rûmî Jalal-ud-Din, *Il libro delle profondità interiori*, Milano: Luni, 1996 (also, 2000; 2004) [ed. or. *Djalal-ud-Din Rûmî, Fîh-mâ fîhi*, ed. and trans. Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch - Paris-1982, Italian trans. Raul Schenardi].

<sup>76</sup> Lewis F. D., *Rûmî, Past, and Present...*

<sup>77</sup> Rûmî, Gialâl ad-Dîn, *Canzone d'amore per Dio. Rubâi'yât*, ed. and trans. Cerrato Maria Teresa, Torino: Gribaudo, 1991.

over the form. In order to simplify the reading, Cerrato divided the work into four sections, symbolizing the soul's mystic journey, starting from the separation until the rejoice with God, a journey signed by different stages of suffering, sacrifice, praying, death, intoxication, love <sup>78</sup>.

Other examples of publications of Rûmî's quatrains can be given with the Mandel's selection, *Trecento quartine* (1986)<sup>79</sup> and, above all, the text *L'amore è uno straniero* (2000)<sup>80</sup> the Italian version of Kabir Edmund Helminski's book *Love is a stranger*.

Helminski<sup>81</sup>, originally an expert of transpersonal psychology, is well known to the public interested in Rûmî and Sufism for being the exponent of the American "Mavlavi Order", having been initiated as Sheikh, during the 1980s, by one of the last Dede, Süleyman Hayati Dede (d. 1985), who had emigrated to the United States in 1976, following the closure of the dervish lodges (1925)<sup>82</sup>.

*Translation of Sultân Walad's Works.*

<sup>78</sup> Cerrato's text presents a remarkable introduction, made by the publisher himself, who openly declared the reason for choosing such a title *Canzone per Dio* (Song for God), claiming that the Western world had loosen its ability to cast a joyful look at God, as he said: "I nostri occhi divenuti calcolatori non riescono più a percepire i limiti del loro sguardo avendo assunto l'uomo –sé e gli altri- al centro dell'universo senza accorgersi che, più si diminuisce Dio, più si diminuisce l'uomo. Qui sta il guaio di fondo. E qui sta il senso di questo libro" (Piero Gribaudi, in *Ibid.*, p.7).

<sup>79</sup> Rûmî Jalal al Din, *Trecento quartine*, ed. Gabriele Mandel, Casamassima: Edizioni dell'Università Islamica, 1986. See also: Rûmî Jalal al Din, *Trecento quartine*, ed. Gabriele Mandel, Milano: Arcipelago, 1989.

<sup>80</sup> Rûmî, Jelaluddin *L' amore e uno straniero: poesie scelte*, ed. Edmund Kabir Helminski, Roma: Astrolabio Ubaldini, 2000 [or. tit. *Love is a stranger*].

<sup>81</sup> A second translation of Helminski's books had been given with *Sufi: la Presenza qui ed ora Contatto con l'Infinito*, Torino: Amrita, 1998 [or. tit. *Living Presence: a Sufi way to Mindfulness and the Essential Self*, New York, 1992 ].

<sup>82</sup> See Lewis F.D., *Rûmî, Past, and Present.*, p. 521. On the historical events of the lodges' closure and its impact on the Mavlavi order, see: Masala Anna, "Le confraternite turche e Kemal Atatürk", *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova Serie, Anno XVII (LXXVIII), Vol. 3, 1998, pp. 467-477; Zarcone Thierry, "Sufismo e Confraternite in Turchia nel XX secolo", in Stepanyants Marietta, *Sufismo e Confraternite nell'Islam Contemporaneo. Il difficile equilibrio tra mistica e politica*, Torino: Centro di Studi Religiosi Comparati Edoardo Agnelli, 2003, pp. 123-160.

Along with Rûmî's works, it is necessary to mention the Italian version of the *Walad nâmeh*<sup>83</sup>, the text written by Rûmî's son, Sultân Walad (1226-1318), credited to be the real founder of the Mavlavi order.

The Italian edition of the *Walad nâmeh* is a translation from the French *La parole secrète*, edited by Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch, with the help of Djamchid Mortazavi (1988), and based on their critical edition of the *Walad nâmeh* of Jalâl-od Dîn Hâmâi (Tehran, 1936). Revised by Gianpaolo Fiorentini and translated by Norge Russo, the Italian edition preserves the foreword written by the authoritative pen of the two French scholars<sup>84</sup>. As it is reported in this section, the *Walad nâmeh* had been written as a commentary on Rûmî's words, intended for those who had not yet achieved the comprehension of the great master's teachings.

The book is a rare example of filial devotion to a father who had been one of the greatest master ever lived. Therefore, it is with great humility that Sultân Walad presented the essoteric and esoteric dimension of Sufism, addressing to several targets, mainly divided in individuals possessing a different kind of knowledge and awareness.

Italian works on Rûmî's poetic language.

In order to explore new studies carried out on Mawlânâ's literature, metaphorical and poetical language, once again, it is necessary to turn back to the academic environment.

One of the most recent publications is *Persia Mystica. Poeti Sufi dell'età classica* (2004)<sup>85</sup>, edited by Virginia del Re, who studied for several years Farsi language. Del Re's book is basically divided in two sections, while the first aims to introduce the topic of Sufism, the second section deals with the Persian literary tradition, among which is necessary to locate Rûmî's works. Following theoretical explanations, Del Re selected and discussed

<sup>83</sup> Sultân Walad, *La parola segreta. L'insegnamento del maestro sufi Rûmî*, ed. Gianpaolo Fiorentini, Libreria Torino: Editrice Psiche, 1993 [Tit. or. *La parole secrète*, Paris: 1988, trans. Norge Russo].

<sup>84</sup> In the preface Eva De Vitray Meyerovitch and Djamchid Mortazavi affirmed that they relied upon the version of Jalâl-od Dîn Hâmâi, a unique critical edition of 400 pages, based on the copy of the "Olfat Manuscript" preserved at the London Library, and on the copy kept at the National Library at Tehran. The French scholar edited and reassumed some part of the text in order to avoid repetition and to simplify the text (*Ibid.*).

<sup>85</sup> Del Re Virginia, *Persia mystica. Poeti sufi dell'età classica*, Pisa: Ets, 2004.

some poetries dividing them in selected themes (love, dance..) <sup>86</sup>. Although Rûmî is not the central focus of her study, there are several examples, presented and commented, drawn from his conspicuous body of works <sup>87</sup>.

Another Italian scholar dealing with Rûmî's poetical style is Carlo Saccone <sup>88</sup>, whose observations had been exposed in his article "Mistica islamica e teologia della bellezza: il Bel Testimone (*shâhed*) nel poeta persiano Rûmî (XIII secolo)", comprised in the *Il Dio dei Mistici* (2005) <sup>89</sup>.

Starting with a general introduction on mysticism and Sufism, Saccone explored the issue of God as object of the mystic poetry <sup>90</sup>. Subsequently, he investigated Rûmî's poetries. As a result of his study, Saccone considers that the general Persian poet:

"Literary invents the evanescent figure of the "friend" (*yâr, dust*), a character to whom addresses his entire love enthusiasm, although he seems to be deprived of all the historical-individual concreteness. He often, significantly, calls with a different name, *shâhed*, which in the common language means "beauty, or lovers", but etymologically it signifies "testimony". Among other things, it is also worth noting that *shâhed* is one of the "99 beautiful names of Allah" <sup>91</sup>.

In a different way, Rûmî's poetry detaching from this tradition of an impersonal, unnamed witness, it is addressed to a precise human being, his friend and master Şems-i Tebrîzî. Nonetheless, this description should not mislead the reader: the lover, the friend sung by Rûmî's is the "lover spoiled

<sup>86</sup> Zanolla Valentina, "Chashm/Occhio in Sanâ'i, 'Attâr e Rûmî", in *Quaderni dell'Istituto Culturale della Repubblica islamica dell'Iran*, Roma, 1995, pp.39-136; "Simbolismo del mondo naturale nella lirica mistica neopersiana", in *Il Semicerchio. Rivista di poesia Comparata, Altri medioevi. Il linguaggio del mondo nella poesia persiana, celtica, bizantina*, N. XIV XV, 2002, [http://www.unisi.it/semicerchio/numeri/testi/24\\_25\\_zanolla.htm](http://www.unisi.it/semicerchio/numeri/testi/24_25_zanolla.htm).

<sup>87</sup> Del Re Virginia, *Persia mystica...*, pp. 113-114. For the Italian rendering of Persian poetries, Del Re referred to the works of Bausani, Arberry, Schimmel, Nicholson, and Helmiski (*Ibid.*, p.13).

<sup>88</sup> Carlo Saccone teaches Persian Language and Culture at the Faculty of Foreign Literatures and Languages, in the University of Bologna.

<sup>89</sup> Saccone Carlo, "Mistica islamica e teologia della bellezza: il Bel Testimone (*shâhed*) nel poeta persiano Rûmî (XIII secolo), in Zambon F. (ed.), *Il Dio dei Mistici*, Milano: Medusa, 2005, pp. 41-76. See also Carlo Saccone, *Il maestro Sufi e la bella cristiana. Poetica della perversione nella Persia medievale*, Carocci, 2005.

<sup>90</sup> Saccone, "Mistica islamica..", p.52.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

from all historical traits and biographical details"<sup>92</sup>. As Saccone affirms: *the friend (dust) known, and loved, in Konya, was transformed in a pure witness (shâhed) of the unseen world*<sup>93</sup>.

In this metaphorical process of transformation, Rûmî operated a sublimation of the theological concept of the divine beauty. In the opinion of the Italian scholar, this is precisely one of the main features of Rûmî's poetry, his ability, as heir of the platonic tradition, to tell us about God while rediscovering the theological dimension through the human experience of love and beauty<sup>94</sup>.

The Italian approach to Mavlavi ritual ceremonies and music.

Fascination for Oriental dances and ritual ceremonies is one of the topics that had never ceased to appeal to Westerners. Therefore, it is not a surprise to discover that among the most researched topics there is the analysis of the Mavlavi's practice, often labeled the "ritual dance", of the mystical audition (*semâ*).

A detailed study of *semâ* is provided by the Historian of Religion, Pio Filippini Ronconi, in his article "L'audizione mistica (*samâ*) Nell'Islâm" (1983)<sup>95</sup>. As the author explains, the aim of his study was not to show how such practice had been transmitted in the Islamic world, but to study the phenomenon itself, in order to find the "secret" that allows a normal sensorial experience to be transformed into a "theopathic experience", which lead to a different dimension of the individual subject's personality<sup>96</sup>. Therefore, according to Ronconi, the *semâ* can be described as:

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74. As Saccone explained: "Rûmî contravviene la regola, nominando il Suo *shahêd*, Shams od-din (sole della fede). ..La narrazione dell'incontro e di come Shams rappresenta la sapienza esperienziale e non teorica" (*Ibid.*, p.56).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>95</sup> Ronconi Pio Filippini, "L'audizione mistica (*samâ*) nell'Islâm", *Islam. Storia e Civiltà*, n. 3, II, 2, 1983, p.73-82. Ronconi was professor of Religions and Philosophies of India at Istituto Orientale, in Naples (Italy) and professor of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>96</sup> "lasciando da parte la trasmissione di una simile esperienza nell'ambito dell'islam, ci interessa studiare il fenomeno in sé, il segreto procedimento per cui una normale esperienza sensoria, si trasforma in un'esperienza teopatica conducente alla trasposizione della personalità empirica del soggetto in una dimensione che potremmo chiamare cosmica" (Ronconi P. F., "L'audizione mistica (*samâ*)" p.78).

“A form of ecstatic audition focalized on the passage from the melodic sound (*awaz*), in the chant (*naghma*) or in the poetic recitation (*shi'r*), sized as hypertone, of which the word, and the sentence, is weaved to the phoneme-idea (*mani*), which already is an act of the incessant realization of the Verb (*kalima*) in the shapes and the things: it is required to reach and penetrate within the underlying reality beneath the audible fabric of sound that is reflected in objects and events, realizing the fulfilled essence of a “voluptuous warmth”, summoned through ejaculatory and ritual dance (*raqs*)”<sup>97</sup>.

Subsequently to this premise, Ronconi proceeds to explain the Mavlavi *semâ* affirming that the circular dance, as it is performed by the whirling dervishes, is a transcendental passage from stage to stage, revolving around a central axis, “the world axis”, mentioned as *ghawth* or *qutb*, which the light of consciousness comes from. This consciousness, deriving from Him, it is generally hidden in the spirit of each human being but could be rediscovered while whirling<sup>98</sup>.

The understanding of the Mavlavi *semâ* as a ritual practice was also explored in the works of a promising Italian scholar: Alberto Fabio Ambrosio, whose academic instruction will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

In one of his first articles, “La danse des « derviches tourneurs » et la création d'un espace sacré<sup>99</sup>” (2004: 97-105), he argued on the relation between the *semâ* practiced by the whirling dervishes and the sacredness of the space in which they perform, supporting his argument with explanations drawn by the commentary on the *Mathnawî*, the book *Minhâj'ul-fuqarâ*, written by the Mavlavi Ismâ'îl Rusûkhî Anqaravî (m. 1041/1631)<sup>100</sup>. Further presentation of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Mavlavi speculations, are also given in his second article «Écrire le corps dansant au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Ismâ'îl Rusûkhî Anqaravî» (2006)<sup>101</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> Ronconi P. F., “L'audizione mistica (*samâ*)”, p.77.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82.

<sup>99</sup> Ambrosio “La Danse des Derviches Tourneurs et la Création d'un Espace Sacré”, in *Journal of the History of Sufism*, 4, 2003-2004, pp.97-105.

<sup>100</sup> Ambrosio, “ La Danse des Derviches.. ”, p.99.

<sup>101</sup> Ambrosio Alberto Fabio, «Écrire le corps dansant au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle : Ismâ'îl Rusûkhî Anqaravî», *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, N°113-114 - Le corps et le sacré en Orient musulman, novembre 2006, pp.195-209. For further information on studies about the *semâ*, see: Ambrosio Alberto, Zarcone, Thierry:

Remarkable is the excellent analysis on the symbolism of sema provided by Ambrosio in his chapter "La danse des Mavlavis: histoire et symbolique", appeared in the recently published monograph on the whirling dervishes, edited with the French scholars Thierry Zarcone and Eve Feuillébois<sup>102</sup>. Here, Ambrosio offered an excellent presentation of five possible approaches that had been used to explain the symbolic meaning of the *semâ*, ranging from the most widespread theory of the *semâ* as cosmic dance to the more refined hypothesis, which considers the Mavlavi *semâ* as an *épiphany du flux créateur*.<sup>103</sup>

Completely different for their tones and approaches, are the works presented by Kassim Bayatly, *Il corpo svelato* (1996)<sup>104</sup> and *La memoria del corpo Sotto i cieli dell'Islam. Tradizione, riti, feste e spettacoli* (2001)<sup>105</sup>.

From the last book, it is possible to quote his observations on the nature of the Mavlavi *semâ* as collective rites:

"In the Mavlavi order, differently from other rites, the dance of the ritual immersion happens without screams or convulsive movements, it is manifested and developed as no other exterior changes would happen; yet, it follows a precise order in which the interior flow absorbs the physical totality of the adept dancer. In the interior flow of the dancing figure, during the ritual process, there is an incessant invocation of God's remembrance,

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<sup>102</sup> Ambrosio, "La danse des Mavlavis..", pp.123-172.

<sup>103</sup> According to Ambrosio: "l'être humain éprouve le besoin de revenir à son état de perfection spirituelle et à juste titre, il se produit une désaltération spirituelle. Cette désaltération, où l'homme et ses facultés les plus corporelles sont orientés vers le spirituel et vers le flux créateur, est un mouvement qui rappelle aussi le mouvement créateur. C'est pour cette raison que l'on peut voir la danse giratoire comme un épiphany de l'amour divin qui régit tout l'élément dans l'univers" (*Ibid.*, p.167).

<sup>104</sup> Bayatly Kassim, *Il corpo svelato*, Torino: Ananke, 1996. Bayatly Kassim, *La memoria del corpo Sotto i cieli dell'Islam. Tradizione, riti, feste e spettacoli*, Milano: Ubulibri, 2001, pp. 37-62. See also: Mandel Gabriele, *La danza dei dervisci giranti (il Semâ dei Mavlavi)*, Torino: Cerriglio, 2003.

<sup>105</sup> Kassim Bayatly is an Iraqi theatre director. Together with Gabriele Mandel and Paola Mandel, he published the book *Teatro Sufi*, Milano: Coopli, 1995. The preface of the book contains an exemplification, about the relation between Sufi practices and the act of playing, written by Bayatly: "l'operazione teatrale e il lavoro dell'attore divengono così una possibilità di penetrare ciò che è manifesto per avviarsi verso ciò che è celato, ciò che è ignoto. Esattamente ciò che avviene nel teatro sufi in cui il recitare è Re-Citare, cioè ripetere il ricordo: in questo caso la continua ripetizione del ricordo di Dio" (*Ibid.*, p.7).

without cross nor perturbation; thus, it is realized a progressive immersion into the state of spiritual inebriation (*sukr*)<sup>106</sup>.

In addition to the above mentioned approaches, there is the book-reports written by Marie-Gabriele Wosien, *Sufi. La preghiera in movimento* (2007)<sup>107</sup>, which narrates the experience of Bernhard Worsien (1908-1986), dancer and choreographer, who had participated in an eighteen days intensive and introductive course to the technique of the Mavlavi whirling dance, during the years 1967-68<sup>108</sup>.

The text is integrated with a listing of the Italian bibliography on Sufism, compiled by the translator<sup>109</sup>.

Concerning Italian works dealing with Mavlavi music, there is a wave of fresh productions, mainly written by specialist within the field of music studies as Giovanni De Zorzi and Stefano Leoni.

Leoni is an expert musicologist, actually teaching in Urbino<sup>110</sup>. His academic interests revolve around the history of Western music but he had also explored its relation with Oriental music, focusing also on the issue of music within the Sufi tradition, as it is possible to evince from his article

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

<sup>107</sup> Wosien Maria-Gabriele M., *I sufi e la preghiera in movimento*, Roma: Hermes, 2007 [or. tit. Die Sufis und Das Gebet in Bewegung, Metanoia-Verlag, 2006, trans. Enrica Albites-Coen]. Wosien's text contains some historical generalizations, as dates concerning the issue of the revitalization of semâ's ceremonies, reported by the author in the 1960s, while it is generally believed that they started during the 1950s (Lewis F. D., *Rûmî, Past, and Present.*; Ernst Carl, *Il Grande Libro della Sapienza Sufi*, Milano: Mondadori, 2000 [or. tit. Sufism, 1977].

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.123-124.

<sup>110</sup> Leoni Stefano A. E., "Kanz al-tuhaf (al-mûsîqî). The Casket of (Music) Rarities: Ars Musica and Musica Practica between Islam and Christianity", in *International Review of Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Dec., 1996), pp. 167-183; Leoni Stefano A.E., "L'Orient: toute une autre musique. Quand' la musicologie de l'Ouest regardait au-delà du Bosphore. Paradoxes apparent dans l'espace sonore non-européen. Imaginaire et mémoire musical entre orientalisme et exotisme», in Lacchè M. (ed.), *L'imaginaire musical entre création et interprétation*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006, pp. 31-58. "L'Oriente: tutta un'altra musica. L'Oltre-Bosforo come catalizzatore dell'immaginario musicale occidentale alle soglie dell'età moderna", in *Musical/Realtà*, n. 75, 2004, pp 101-122. Leoni's biographical references are available at:

<http://www.stefanoleoni.altervista.org/stefano%20leoni%20web-site/the%20English%20page.html>.



"La musica e l'estasi: Samâ", in the book edited by Grasselli and Tarallo, *I Monasteri del mondo* (1997)<sup>111</sup>.

Having considered the debate about the licitly of music in Islam, and quoting the opinion of the 10<sup>th</sup> century scholar Al-Hudjwîrî, author of the most ancient Persian treaty on mysticism -*Kashf al-mahdjûb*<sup>112</sup>, Leoni offered an interesting explanation on the ambiguous terms of *semâ* as a practice that invites to the listening of music:

"For the Sufi Islam both the music that acts on the listener and the musical auditing are *samâ*, in contrast with the profane musical art, defined in several ways (although it could bring to a certain ecstasies defined *tarab*) and with the theoresis, the philosophy of music or the normative for the composition that is called, from Greek, *mûsîqî*"<sup>113</sup>.

Then, he described the Mavlavi's ceremony (*mukabele*), in which he recognized:

"a kind of musical ritual finalized to the achievement of the "*wadj*", the mystic trance. This could be "musicata" or "musicante", and so, involving the listeners (as well as dancers) or the players"<sup>114</sup>.

Combining a solid academic formation with practical experiences, the *ney* (reed flute) virtuoso Giovanni De Zorzi<sup>115</sup> had also written a relevant

<sup>111</sup>Leoni Stefano A. E., "La musica e l'estasi: Samâ", in Grasselli-Tarallo (eds.), *Monasteri del mondo*, Casale M.to: Piemme, 1997, pp.79-81.

<sup>112</sup> See also: Leoni Stefano A. E., "Mas'ala fi'l-sama'. A Question on listening to music", in *Atti 5° ICMS*, Bologna, 1999. Italian version available at "Mas'ala fi'l-samâ" (Dell'ascoltar la musica) La teiresi Araba e gli affetti ed effetti della musica", in *Anthropos & Iatria*, Anno III, N. II, Aprile-Giugno 1999, at: <http://www.medicinealtre.it/1999/leoni-2-99.htm>.

A short version was published in English in: Stefani G., Tarasti E., Marconi L eds.), *Musical Signification Between Rhetoric and Pragmatics. Proceedings of the 5th International Congress on Musical Signification - BOLOGNA 14-16 NOV. 1996*, Bologna: Clueb, 1998. Also available at: <http://www.airesis.net/ArtedelleMuse/muse%201/leoni%20-%20teoresi%20araba.htm>.

<sup>113</sup> Leoni, "La musica e l'estasi..", p.80.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>115</sup> In 2006, De Zorzi achieved the Ph.D. title in History and Analyses of Musical Cultures, ad the Department of Anthropological-Glottological and Musical Studies at the University of Rome "La Sapienza", with a thesis entitled *Gli zikr della confraternita sufi yasawiyya nella valle del Fergana (Uzbekistân, Kazakhstân, Kirgyzstân)*, thesis supervisor: Prof. Francesco Giannattasio, assistant supervisor: Prof. Giovanni Giuriati.

number of articles on sufi music in journals<sup>116</sup>, books<sup>117</sup> and entries in a music encyclopedia<sup>118</sup>.

In his widely accessible article “Il Ney, le sue implicazioni storiche, poetiche e simboliche”<sup>119</sup>, he focused on the history of the instrument, starting from the iconographic evidences of the Egyptian Pharaonic time (3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty, 3300-2370 A.C.) and, than, tracing the path of its spreading and evolution in the Turkish-Persian area, distinguishing its employment within court music or in the field of sacred music. However, it is not just the “functional” approach that interests the Italian scholars but also the symbolic meaning of the instrument<sup>120</sup> Therefore, he referred to the connection between the instruments and its literary symbolism, evinced from the first 18 lines of the *Mathnawî*.

In order to explain the meaning of those lines, De Zorzi introduced two commentaries: one of an ancient exponent of the Nakshbandi order, Molla Nurdoddin ‘Abdorrahman Jāmī’ (1414-1492)<sup>121</sup>, and a second commentary, extrapolated from the lectures (*sohbet*) of Ahmet Kudsi Erguner, a Paris

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<sup>116</sup> De Zorzi Giovanni. “Il ney. Lo strumento e le sue implicazioni storiche, poetiche, simboliche.” in *World Music*, in. 34, Roma:1998, pp.36-46; also available at <http://www.sufi.it/sufismo/nay.htm>.

De Zorzi Giovanni. “L’ascolto, il silenzio e il suono nel pensiero e nell’azione sufi” in *Riza Scienze. Mensile di scienza dell’Uomo*, n. 129, Milano, 1998, pp.80-87.

<sup>117</sup> De Zorzi Giovanni. “Il ney: uno strumento e i suoi sovrasensi. Musica e poesia come pratiche iniziatiche in epoca ottomana.” in *Etnomusicologia. Scritti*, edited by Daniele Sestili, Biblioteca di Civiltà Musicale, Firenze: LoGisma Editore, 2002, pp. 13-28; De Zorzi Giovanni. “Ascolta il ney com’esso narra la sua storia’. Riflessioni con musiche della tradizione sufi ottomana” e “La Via dell’Oro di Osmânî Musiqî” in *Le Vie dell’Oro*, Caerano di San Marco: Fondazione Villa Benzi-Zecchini, 2000.

<sup>118</sup> De Zorzi had also published some entries (“Musica Araba”, “Musica Turca”, “Musica Persiana” and “Musica d’Asia Centrale”) in the dictionary *Le Muse. Grande dizionario critico di arti visive, letteratura, musica e teatro*, Novara: De Agostini, 2004.

<sup>119</sup> De Zorzi Giovanni, “Il Ney. Lo strumento e le sue implicazioni..”.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>121</sup> Jami’s commentary on the first 18 lines of the Mesnevi was initially proposed by Scarcia Amoretti Bianca Maria in her article *Il commento di Jami ai primi due versi del “Mathnawi”*, in *Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale*, Napoli (A.I.U.O.N.), vol. XV, Napoli, 1965, pp. 319-329. A second version had been included in “Il libro del flauto” edited by Gianroberto Scarcia, with the revision of Riccardo Zipoli (Venezia: Università Ca’Foscari, 1988), which was published in a limited edition. Finally, the commentary is also present in the new text *Poesia dell’Islam*, also edited by Gianroberto Scarcia, Palermo: Sellerio, 2004.

based musician, whose family could boast a long tradition as *ney* players, affiliated to an Mavlavi branch from Istanbul.

Writings on Mavlavi Architecture and Mavlavikhanes.

In the field of architectural studies on Mavlavi buildings, Italian studies are well represented by the works of the Architect Giuseppe Fanfoni, and his entourage who had actively directed the restoration of the Cairene Mavlavi Architectural Complex (the *semâhane*, the *medrese* of Sunqur Sa'di, the Palace of Qusun-Yasbak-Aqbardi, the Mausoleum of Hasan Sadaqa)<sup>122</sup>.

In a long sequence of articles, exhibition catalogues<sup>123</sup>, books<sup>124</sup> and finally CDs<sup>125</sup>, Fanfoni described the evolution and the different stages of their work on the complex<sup>126</sup>.

<sup>122</sup> Fanfoni Giuseppe is the Director of the Italian-Egyptian Centre for Restoration, located in the Islamic quarter in Cairo. He had followed the restoration of the Mavlavi complex in the Egyptian city for over thirty years. Among his writings there are: "Il Complesso Architettonico dei Dervisci Mavlavi in Cairo", in *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, Università di Roma 'La Sapienza', LVII, 1983, pp.77-92. For a detailed report of their activities in Cairo, see Centro di Formazione Professionale per il Restauro: <http://www.cfpr.it/Ilcomplesso.htm>.

<sup>123</sup> Fanfoni Giuseppe, "Il restauro della Sama'Khana dei Dervisci Mavlavi", *Catalogo della mostra didattica*, Cairo, 1988; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "Restauro del complesso architettonico dei Dervisci Mavlavi al Cairo", in *Architettura nei Paesi Islamici, II Mostra Internazionale di Architettura - Biennale di Venezia*, 1982, pp.258-259.

<sup>124</sup> Fanfoni Giuseppe, *Il restauro della Sama'Khana dei Dervisci Mavlavi*, Cairo 2006 (2<sup>a</sup> edizione ampliata; in italiano, inglese, arabo); Fanfoni Giuseppe, *La madrasa di Sunqur Sa'di e il museo Mavlavi. The Sunqur Da'di Madrasa and the Mawlavi Museum*, Il Cairo, 2002.

<sup>125</sup> *Il Sama' dei Dervisci Mavlavi nella sama' khana del Cairo. The Sama' of the Mavlavi Derwishes in the Sama' khana in Cairo*. DVD. Directed by Canova Giovanni, editing by Francesco de Melis, 2005, eleven minutes.

Fanfoni Giuseppe. *Proporzioni geometriche della sama'khana Mavlavi al Cairo e Aspetti simbolici del sama. Geometrical Proportions of the Mavlavi Sama'khana in Cairo and Symbolical Aspects of the Sama*. DVD. 2006. 9 minutes.

<sup>126</sup> Fanfoni Giuseppe, "La conservazione del Cairo storico. Palazzo Yashbak - Madrasa di Sunqur Sa'di -Takiyya Mavlavi", in *Cento anni in Egitto -percorsi dell'archeologia italiana*, Milano: Electa, 2001, pp.196 - 213.

Also available at: <http://www.cfpr.it/palazzoyashbak.doc>; english version with illustration; Fanfoni Giuseppe, Centro Italo-Egiziano per il Restauro e l'Archeologia - Attività per la cultura della conservazione - Il Cairo 1999; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "I Mavlavi al Cairo", in *La Storia delle cose*, N. 45, Firenze, 1999; pp.16-19; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "The Recovery of the Mawlavi Architectural Complex in Cairo", in *Culture in sustainable development - an Italian Strategy -research*, L'Erma di Bretschneider Roma 1999; pp.27-30; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "Ricerche e scavi archeologici nell'ambito dei lavori di restauro del Complesso Architettonico Mavlavi al Cairo", in *Missioni archeologiche italiane*, Ministero

Different articles are works co-edited with other authors<sup>127</sup>, as Luisa Bongrani<sup>128</sup>, who had been the director of the excavation inside the *iwān* at the *medrese* of Sunqur Sa'di, since the year 1995.<sup>129</sup>

Undoubtedly, those works represent a perfect introduction on the topic of conservation and restoration of Mavlavi buildings and relevant structures. And yet, those works are not only an illustration of the functionality<sup>130</sup> of dervishes' dwellings and ceremonial spaces but a clear analysis over the symbolic meaning of Mavlavi spaces<sup>131</sup>.

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degli Affari Esteri, L'Erma di Bretschneider, Roma, 1998, pp.33-36; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "Training activity and restoration at the "Italian-Egyptian Centre in Cairo", in Mediterranean Magazine -Science, Training & Tecnology, N°0 Marzo, 1997, CNR Bari; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "The Italian-Egyptian Restoration Center's Work in the Mavlavi Complex in Cairo", in *The Restoration and Conservation of Islamic Monuments in Egypt*, The American University in Cairo Press, 1995, pp.59-75; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "Attività del "Centro Italo-Egiziano per il Restauro e l'Archeologia", In *Dalla Nubia al Delta- Le missioni archeologiche in Egitto*, Il Cairo, 1990; pp. 13-14; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "Il Teatro dei Dervisci Mavlavi", in *Cooperazione*, n.87, sett., 1989, pp.72-73, 84-87;

<sup>127</sup>Fanfoni Giuseppe, Burri Carla, "The Mawlawiyya and the Madrasa of Sunqur Sa'di with the Mausoleum of Hasan Sadaqa", in *A.A.R.P.*, XVI, 1980, pp.62-65; Fanfoni Giuseppe, Burri Carla, "Notes on the Restoration of the Small Theatre of the Dancing Dervishes at Share Helmeia in Cairo", in *A.A.R.P.*, XIV, 1978, pp.75-76. Other on the complex were carried out by other experts in Arabic studies as Giovanni Canova, whose epigraphic studies were published in the article in *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* ("Iscrizioni e documenti relativi alla takiyya dei dervisci Mavlavi del Cairo", in *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 17, 1999, pp.123 – 146).

<sup>128</sup>Luisa Bongrani (Ancona, 1939) is an Italian Egyptologist. She was the vice-President of the Restoration Center "Centro di Formazione Professionale nel Restauro" and vice-Director of the "Centro Italo-Egiziano per il Restauro e l'Archeologia". Since the year 1989, she has been teaching courses of Restoration History and Excavation Techniques at "Centro Italo-Egiziano per il Restauro e l'Archeologia", in Cairo.

<sup>129</sup>Bongrani Luisa, Fanfoni Giuseppe, "Advanced restoration techniques against the effects of the soluble salts in the stone of the Egyptian monuments", in *Egyptian-Italian seminar on -geosciences and archaeology in the mediterranean countries*, Cairo, 1995, pp 253-260. Bongrani Luisa, Fanfoni Giuseppe, "La Tekkeya Mawlaweyya al Cairo", in *Nautilus -Architettura. Restauro*, N.6/7, 1992, pp.17-30. Also: Bongrani Luisa, "Metodi di schedatura bibliografica e di catalogazione di monumenti e materiali archeologici", in *Quaderni di cantiere*, Il Cairo, 1989; Bongrani Luisa, " A re-used Block from a Temple of Ramses II in the Tekkeya Mewlewya in Cairo", in *Göttinger Miscellen*, N. 117-118, 1990, pp.143-152.

<sup>130</sup>Departing from a comparative prospective, Masala Maria had proposed some observation on cloisters' kitchen as social spaces in both the Christian and Islamic world, see: "Le cucine dei conventi", in Adelia Rispoli (ed.), *I Quaderni d'Istanbul*, N. 2, Tipografia di Predestina, Roma, 1989, pp.77-110. For other works of the same author on Mavlavis, see:

Other works related to the architectural studies of *Mavlavikhanes* were carried out by Paolo Cuneo<sup>132</sup> and Tiziana Battain<sup>133</sup>, whose article "Architettura e misticismo Sufi: la Tekke Mawlawi del Cairo" also focused on the symbolism of Mavlavi spaces.

Having considered that, often, the architectonical development of dervishes' spaces is itself the result and the actualization of the symbolic mystical and philosophical ideas contained in Sufism, the Venetian Art Historian investigated the architectonic explication of the Mavlavi rite. In this regard, the example of the Ottoman *semâhane* of the Mavlavi lodge in Cairo represents an invaluable case study, since it was built when the Mavlavi ceremony had already reached its final form<sup>134</sup>.

*Academic Thesis related to Mawlânâ and the Mavlavīs.*

Although this section is not an exhaustive listing of the entire possible thesis written on topics related to Rûmî and the Mavlavīs, yet it aims at presenting some works made by Italian, or Italy based, students in order to show the interest for those themes.

Directly related to Rûmî's thought, it is the work of Farhoud Tebiani, a Italy based Iranian student, who attempted to analyze, by quoting and

Masala Maria, "Ali Bey" Seyahatnâmesi'nde Konya", in *Bildiriler, Uluslararası Mevlânâ Bilgi Şöleni, (15-17 Aralık 2000)*, Ankara, 2000, pp.197-201.

<sup>131</sup> Fanfoni Giuseppe, "The Foundation and Organization of the Cairo Mawlawiyya", in *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 17, 1999, pp.105-122; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "Historical and architectural aspects of the Cairo Mawlawiyya", in: M. Kiel, N. Landman & H. Theunissen (eds.), *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Turkish Art, Utrecht - The Netherlands, August 23-28, 1999* (= *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies, Volume IV (2001)*, 1249 pp.) Available online. Internet Address: <http://www.let.uu.nl/EJOS>; Fanfoni Giuseppe, "An underlying geometrical design of the Mawlawi Sama`Hana in Cairo", in *Annalis Islamogiques*, I.F.A.O, Cairo, 1989, pp.207-232. Also available at: [http://www.ifao.egnet.net/doc/PubEnLigne/AnIsl/Sommaires/AnIsl\\_024.php](http://www.ifao.egnet.net/doc/PubEnLigne/AnIsl/Sommaires/AnIsl_024.php); Fanfoni Giuseppe, *Il Cosmo in una danza*, [www.cfpr.it/pharaon/dervisci.pdf](http://www.cfpr.it/pharaon/dervisci.pdf).

<sup>132</sup> Paolo Cuneo (1936-1995) was professor in History of Architecture at the University of L'Aquila. Concerning his publications on Mavlavi architecture, see Cuneo Paolo, "Restauration de la Sama`Khana des Derviches Tourneurs", in *Observatoire urbain du Caire contemporain*, N.21, Juin 1990, pp.10-12; Cuneo Paolo, "Verso una "Scuola Italiana" di studi e restauri di architetture e città del mondo islamico", in *Bollettino d'Arte del Ministero Beni Culturali e Ambientali*, N. 39-40, Roma, 1986, pp.9-10.

<sup>133</sup> Battain Tiziana, "Architettura e misticismo sufi: la Tekke Mawlawi del Cairo", in *Islam, Storia e Civiltà*, anno IV, N.3, luglio-, sett., 1985, pp.165-173.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171.

translating several passages, the conception of manhood in Rûmî's works<sup>135</sup>

Of another sort of approach are the two thesis prepared by Giovanni De Zorzi, whose articles we had already find in the previous paragraphs.

The first thesis, entitled *Ascolta il ney, com'esso narra la sua storia*, presented at Università Ca'Foscari, in Venice, drew its inspiration from the first line of the Mesnevi for analysing the "implication" and properties embedded in the instrument as well as the its history. Providing a metaphorical parallel with the seven holes of the instrument, De Zorzi chose seven fields of investigation, departing from the "organological" approach, which considers the physical evolution of the flute and its geographical diffusion, and arriving to the gnoseological analysis, in which he explores the issue of knowledge, explaining concepts as gnosis -*erfan*, *ma'arifat*- as well as the concept of taste (*zowq*)<sup>136</sup>.

His second thesis, *Le ney dans la Turquie contemporaine. Situation actuelle d'un instrument «passeiste»*, was prepared for achieving the DÉA (Diplome d'Étude Approfondi), at the French Institute EHÉSS (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales). Supervised by the eminent ethnomusicologist Jean During, who had already published monographs on Sufi musical tradition in Iran, De Zorzi's thesis is an amazing survey on the historical and contemporary musical tradition of *ney* players, providing also explanations on the role of Mavlavi musical traditions in the aftermath of the closure of dervish lodges<sup>137</sup>.

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<sup>135</sup> Tebani Farhoud, *L'uomo nel pensiero di Moulânâ Jalâl Ud-Din Rumi*, Tesi di Laurea in Lettere e Filosofia, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", Napoli, 2003, Thesis supervisor: Prof. Alberto Ventura (Islamology). Unpublished Thesis. Available on-line at: <http://www.artistibahaiditalia.it/admin/pdf/Tesi%20di%20Tebani.pdf>

<sup>136</sup> De Zorzi Giovanni, *Ascolta il ney com'esso narra la sua storia. Uno strumento e le sue implicazioni*, Tesi di Laurea in Lettere e Filosofia, , Università "Ca' Foscari" di Venezia, Venezia, 1998. Supervisor: Prof. Maurizio Agamennone (Ethnomusicology). Assistant Supervisor: Giampiero Bellingeri (Turkish Language and Literature).

<sup>137</sup> De Zorzi Giovanni, *Le ney dans la Turquie contemporaine. Situation actuelle d'un instrument «passeiste*, Thesis presented for achieving the DÉA (Diplome d'Étude Approfondi) at the French Institute EHÉSS (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales), Paris, 2001. Thesis supervisors: Gerard Delille; Assistant Supervisor: Jean During.

De Zorzi had also assisted another Italian student, Maria Giuliana Rizzuto, to prepare her thesis "*Lo studio del ney per accedere al semâ Mavlavi: un'esperienza diretta*", discussed at Università degli studi di Palermo<sup>138</sup>.

Concerning studies on Mavlavi architecture and buildings, a thesis compiled by Santangelo M. on the cloisters' typologies in the Islamic world had been mentioned by Paolo Cuneo (1989)<sup>139</sup>; this thesis should have been written during a major project carried out by Prof. Cuneo himself on architectural buildings in Galata (Istanbul), but there are no other information available on whether, and how, Mavlavi buildings had been investigated.

Stemming from an investigation of Galata *Mavlavikhane's* social and symbolic aspects, the thesis *La tekke Mavlavi di Galata: da loggia a museo*, prepared by Valeria Ferraro, presented at Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa in Naples, explored the social role that the Mavlavi lodge exerted in the European side of Istanbul and its museumification process<sup>140</sup>.

Regarding post-graduate studies, it is impossible to forget Alberto Fabio Ambrosio, who is going to discuss his Ph.D. thesis on doctrines and practices of the whirling dervishes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire at University of Paris IV (Sorbonne)<sup>141</sup>.

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<sup>138</sup> Rizzuto Maria Giuliana, *Lo studio del ney per accedere al sema Mavlavi: un'esperienza diretta*, Tesi di Laurea in Lettere e Filosofia, Università degli studi di Palermo, Palermo, 2005. Unpublished Thesis.

<sup>139</sup> This is the only information available from Cuneo's text: "Santangelo M., *Le tipologie conventuali del mondo islamico: ribat, zawiya, khoya, tekke. Storia ed organizzazione spaziale dell'architettura delle confraternite sufi*. Relatori: C. Bozzani. Correlatore O. Iolita, P. Cuneo" (Cuneo Paolo, "recenti studi italiani di Galata", in Rispoli Adelia (ed.), *I Quaderni d'Istanbul*, Roma: Tipografia di Via Prenestina, 1989, pp.49-64).

<sup>140</sup> Ferraro Valeria, *La tekke Mavlavi di Galata: da loggia a museo*, Thesis for the Master in Management of European Art and Cultures, Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa di Napoli, Naples, 2005. Supervisor: Prof. Marino Niola (Anthropology) Unpublished MA thesis. The results of this preliminary study had been summarized in the working paper "*Musealizing Sufism: the Lodge of Whirling Dervishes at Galata, Istanbul*", presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Social and Research Meeting at the European University Institute in Florence, it is available (with the consent of the author) at [www.iue.it/RSCAS/Research/Mediterranean/mspr2006/Papers.shtml](http://www.iue.it/RSCAS/Research/Mediterranean/mspr2006/Papers.shtml).

<sup>141</sup> Following his studies at the University of Strasbourg, where he learned Turkish and Persian Language, Alberto Ambrosio began his Ph.D. researches in Paris. In addition several publications, he participated to conferences of international eminence, as the conference *Wondrous Words: The Poetic Mastery of Jalal al-Din Rum* (13-15 September 2007), organized by Iran Heritage Foundation in conjunction with the British Museum the British Museum,

Sufi tales for children.

The employment of Sufi tales for children literature is a new and intriguing phenomenon; although, it has some precedent as the Italian translation of Yoltaş's book *Dervisci Danzanti e Storie di Mawlânâ*<sup>142</sup>.

Being halfway between a guide book and a text for children, the Italian version of Yoltaş's book had kept his introductory section on the Mavlavi world, describing the places in which they lived, their organization, and rituals, as the initiation rite consisting in the 1001 days of trial (*çile*)<sup>143</sup>. The second part of the book includes a selection of stories from the *Mathnawî* in the form of illustrated comics.

Also for young readers, there is Andrée Grau's book *La Danza* (1999)<sup>144</sup>, presenting a short paragraph entitled "Dance and Cult", in which the author explains how dance could be linked to religion; thus, embodying a sacral for people who perform them. Although the main example is about the Indian dance, called *Bharata Nayam*<sup>145</sup>, a mention it is given on the "Pirouettes of dervishes", otherwise defined "Turkish Muslim monks"<sup>146</sup>.

However, the most interesting case of book for children, it is the recently published *The Merchant and the parrot* (2006)<sup>147</sup>. This elegant version for children, in both Italian and Farsi it is an illustrated version of the correspondent tale taken from the *Mathnawî*. Being originally a fairy story

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on the occasion of international celebrations for the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rûmî's birthday, where Ambrosio conferred on "Mowlana Jalal ad-Din Rûmî's metaphor of samâ".

<sup>142</sup> Yoltaş Niyazi, *Dervisci Danzanti e Storie di Mevlana*, Istanbul: Minyatur (199-?). [or. tit. *Dönen Derviş - Mevlâna'dan Öyküler*, İstanbul, 1983]. The Italian version had been prepared with the help of Prof. Anna Masala.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>144</sup> Grau Andrée *La Danza*, Novara: Istituto geografico De Agostini, 1999 [or. tit. *Dance*, Londra, 1998].

<sup>145</sup> Grau Andrée *La Danza*, p.35. As the author explains, the term derives from the union of the two words *bhava* (emotion) *raga* (melody), *tala* (rhythm), *natya* (drama).

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>147</sup> Rûmî Jalal al Din, *Il mercante e il pappagallo*, text written by Marjan Fuladmand; ill. Ahmad Khalili; trans. Taraneh Zahmatkesh, ed. Maurizio Pistoso, Roma: Sinnos, 2006 [or. tit. *Tooti va Bazargan*].



from India, the story had subsequently been narrated by 'Attar and, than, by Rûmî<sup>148</sup>.

Writing on whirling dervishes: from esoteric books to fiction.

Although it was presented by the author as one of the first text ever published in Italy on Sufism, the text *Il Sufismo, Vertice della Piramide Esoterica* (1977)<sup>149</sup>, edited by Gabriele Mandel, could well be located among those text that had anticipated the New Age's fashion publications in Italy, since it combines explanation of Sufi theories, along with other Oriental philosophies and theories with a psychological implant.

Within this strand, it is not a surprise to find references to the whirling dervishes in Italian publications on Gurdjieff (c.1872-1949), as it is witnessed by Rafael Lefort's<sup>150</sup> book *I maestri di Gurdjieff* (1991)<sup>151</sup>. This books aims to present what had been defined as "Gurdjieff's system", a combination of personal training with Sufi and Oriental teachings<sup>152</sup>

A later example of this "fusion" of knowledge and techniques used for developing the individual self, it is showed by the essay of the journalist Alberto Samonà, who in his work "*La tradizione del sé*"<sup>153</sup> (2004) explores different methods for acquire an interior freedom, among which are listed alchemy and whirling dances<sup>154</sup>.

The last case is just one of the numerous examples of how the image of the whirling dervishes, and Rûmî as their founder, came to represent, for the average reader, a symbol of the entire Sufism.

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<sup>148</sup> Moreno, *Antologia della Mistica...*

<sup>149</sup> Mandel Gabriele, *Il Sufismo, Vertice della Piramide Esoterica*, Milano: Sugar Co, 1977.

<sup>150</sup> According to Lewis, "Rafael Lefort" could be a pseudonym used by Idries Shah, for more information, see Lewis, *Rûmî, Past, and Present...*, p.513.

<sup>151</sup> Lefort Rafael, *I maestri di Gurdjieff*, Roma: Mediterranee, 1991 [or. tit. *The Teachers of Gurdjieff*, London, 1966].

<sup>152</sup> It is not easy to describe in few words the life and teachings of the Greek-Armenian Giorgio Ivanovitch, who was the promoter of a mystic teaching that aimed to persuade individuals to follow a training for the their spiritual evolution.

<sup>153</sup> Samonà Alberto, *La tradizione del sé*, Roma: Atanòr, 2004.

<sup>154</sup> See also Giovetti Paola, *L'uomo e il mistero. 13. Medianità, benessere e guarigione, sufismo e dervisci rotanti, i misteri delle piramidi e dei Templari, memoria dell'acqua, meditazione*, Roma: Mediterranee: 2005.

This process is also reflected in contemporary literature<sup>155</sup> and multimedia, in which general mention of dervishes lead to the image of a whirling, white dressed, men.

This was the case for the romance *Il derviscio e la morte*<sup>156</sup> (2001), written by Selimovic Mesa<sup>157</sup>, telling the sad story of a Bosnian sheikh –Ahmed Nurudin- whose brother’s unfair death -having been killed for a crime that he had not committed- provoked in the main character a profound transformation of himself that will finally lead him to commit an infamous injustice<sup>158</sup>.

The romance had been transposed on the screen by the Italian film director Alberto Rondalli, with the dramatic movie *Dervis – il Derviscio* (2001). However, setting the story in Anatolia, the movie had cooperated to link the image of Sufism with whirling dervishes<sup>159</sup>.

#### Listening about and from Mavlavis

One of the most popular sentences attributed to Rûmî says: “*Many ways bring to God. I chose that of dance and music...*”.

Indeed, it should not be a mistake to affirm that insofar music and public performances of whirling dancers had probably exerted more influence on the Italian audience than the recent flourishing of written publications.

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<sup>155</sup>In the recent literary market, books with historical references and enigmas became widespread. Dancing dervishes, as symbol of Oriental mysticism and wisdom, appeared together with elements of certain appeal as the Templar Knights, in the plot of Carlo Scirocchi’s romance, *L’enigma Stradivari* (Vicenza: Il Punto d’Incontro, 2005), narrating of the plot of adventures that happen among loves and mysteries, revolving around the presence of musical instruments capable of producing supernatural sounds.

<sup>156</sup>Selimovic Mesa, *Il derviscio e la morte*, Milano: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2001 [or. tit.: *Dervis i smrt*, trans. and ed. Lionello Costantini].

<sup>158</sup>Rondalli Alberto, *Dervis – il Derviscio*, Dramatic Movie, Italy-Turkey, 2001, h 2.03.  
A scene with whirling dervishes was also represented in the movie *Il mercante di pietre* (2005), directed by Renzo Martinelli as symbol of peace. The story itself is quite harsh, being a critic of both Islamic fundamentalism and social xenophobia; yet, the scene with the whirling of dervishes was purposely inserted as a symbol of tolerance and hope.

<sup>159</sup>Together with movies that portrayed dervishes as part of the collective imagination on the Orient, there were also documentaries, as: Pergolizzi Vincenzo, *Mavlavi, mistici della tolleranza*, *Documentario*, DVD, Italia Turchia – 2006, 30 minutes.

Rûmî's words and teachings filtered through the medium of lyrics, re-produced in CDs; conquering the international audience after a refined reprocessing for meeting the Western musical tastes. However, sometimes, Sufi teachings influence in various manners artists and singers themselves; thus, their production cannot be simply labelled as "artistic", since it also tries to communicate the philosophical or religious thought of the artist.

A peculiar case, within the Italian musical panorama, it is the example of the singer and composer Franco Battiato (Jonia, 1945).

Having personally experimented the fascination for the Orient, in the musical field as well as in his private life, Battiato made constant references to the whirling dervishes, in his songs, operas and also in his paintings<sup>160</sup>.

In particular, examining his production from the late 1970s, it is possible to find a mix of Oriental and philosophical suggestions with pop rhythms. Explicit traces are evident, as early as the year 1979, in the album *L'eco del cinghiale bianco*, in which the song *Il re del mondo*<sup>161</sup> presents references to the white dressed followers of Rûmî.

Then, other references are evident in the Italian songs *Voglio vederti danzare*, contained in the album *L'Arca di Noè* (1982) and in the album published in 1985, *Echoes of Sufi Dance*<sup>162</sup>.

Recollection of Sufi teachings are also present in Battiato's Operas: *Genesi* (1987), conceived as an operas in 3 acts, in which there was also an

<sup>160</sup> For information about Battiato and his relation with Sufism, see Guerrera Guidi, *Franco Battiato. Un sufi e la sua musica*, Firenze: Editrice Loggia de' Lanzi, 1994; Scarnecchia Paolo, *Battiato. Un arabo mitteleuropeo*, Milano: Gammalibri, 1995.

<sup>161</sup> In the song *Il Re del Mondo* (title taken from the writings of René Guenon), included in the album *L'eco del cinghiale bianco*, EMI Records, 1979, there are words related to whirling dervishes: "nei vestiti bianchi a ruota.. / echi delle danze sufi.." (also in the album *Mondi Lontanissimi*). Also in the album *L'Arca di Noè* (EMI Records, 1982), references are made with the song *Voglio Vederti Danzare*: "Voglio vederti danzare / come i Dervishes Tourners / che girano sulle spine dorsali / o al suono di cavaliere del Katakali. / E gira tutt'intorno la stanza / mentre si danza, danza / e gira tutt'intorno la stanza / mentre si danza. There is an English version of the album: *Echoes of sufi dances*, EMI Records, 1985, which keeps the song *I want to see you as a dancer*: "I want to see you as a dancer / Like dervishes tourneurs / Who twist around around their back-bones / To the sound of ankle bracelets of Katakali / The walls are turning turning all around us / As we are dancing Dancing / The walls are turning turning all around us / As we are dancing.." Finally, there is also a Spanish version of the album: *Ecos de Danza Sufi*, 1985

<sup>162</sup> Information on Battiato's production are available in his personal webpage: [www.battiato.it](http://www.battiato.it)

adaptation from Turkish texts, among which figures a piece entitled “Hazreti Mawlânâ”<sup>163</sup>.

Also in the second opera, *Gilgamesh* (1992), references to Rûmî can be detected, in particular, in the section entitled “seven Sufis” (2<sup>nd</sup> act)<sup>164</sup>. Those works were rightly defined by the journalist Daniele Martino as the “experiment of spiritual musical theatre”<sup>165</sup>.

Generally speaking, direct quotations from Rûmî are often proposed in booklets published together with CD of Sufi Music. This was the case for the CD *Vision 2: Spirit of Rûmî*, in which a collection of lyrics composed on the basis of Rûmî’s quatrains were sung by several international artists, as the *qawwali* singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Israeli singer Noa, under the direction of the Australian composer Graeme Revell, the success of the album was due to the fusion of Middle Eastern rhythms with ambient music. Inside the cover, there was an English reproduction of the lyrics with the words attributed to Mawlânâ<sup>166</sup>.

In the same period, there was the outcome of *Sufi. La Danza del Cosmo* (1997; CD and book)<sup>167</sup>, a selection of songs played by the Turkish musician and expert in music therapy Oruç Güvenç and his ensemble TÛMATA. Together with the CD, there is enclosed a booklet, prepared by Massimo Jevolella, providing some general information on Rûmî and

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<sup>163</sup> The opera *Genesis* (Fonit Cetra, 1987) was represented for the first time in Parma. Within the opera there is the piece *Hazreti Mevlana* (text from Turkish arranged by Franco Battiato and Tommaso Tramonti): “Hazreti Mevlâna hakikatın dostu \ sen cenabî hakkîn sevdiği \ yaratanın es’i olmayan peygamberi \ Dostum, Sultamîm \ Cihanın en mükemmel, en asil varlığı \ Dostu sen cenabî hakkîn sevdiği”. Italian rendering: “Sua Santità Mevlana “amico della verità \ tu sei il prediletto di Dio \ Tu sei il profeta \ senza simili al Creatore \ mio amico, mio sultano \ tu devi essere più perfetto e più elevato dell’universo \ Amico tu sei il prediletto di Dio”. Reference: <http://solitarybeach.altervista.org/home.htm>.

<sup>164</sup> *Gilgamesh*, Emi Records, 1992.

<sup>165</sup> Daniele Martino, “Battiato is back”, *EDT*, <http://www.edt.it/musica/articolo.php?id=202>

<sup>166</sup> Graeme Revell and Roger Mason, *Vision II- Spirit of Rûmî*, Angel, 1997. Titles of the lyrics recall some of the essential points of Rûmî’s teachings: i.e. “Seek in your hearth”; “the Center”...

<sup>167</sup> Güvenç Oruç, *Sufi. La Danza del Cosmo*. Como: Red (CD and book) 1997; Güvenç Oruç, *Musiche mistiche dell’Islam. La danza cosmica dei sufi*, Red/Studio Redazionale, 2003 (Libro + CD audio).

whirling dervishes, integrating the text with poetries, and explaining concepts as the *semâ*<sup>168</sup>.

A different way for the spreading of Rûmî's message is the association of poetries sung or read with musical accompaniments. This was the case for the concert "Ghaza'ye-Ru: il nutrimento dello spirito" of the *Ensamble Meher*, held in Cagliari (15 September 2007). The group is composed by young Iranian ladies, playing traditional Iranian instruments.

As a matter of fact, the ensemble sung poetries of eminent Iranian poets and Sufis as Rûmî, 'Attar and Hafez. In occasion of the above mentioned concert, the Iranian Cultural House in Venice had prepared a special booklet *Persia Mistica: Suoni e canti d'amore*<sup>169</sup>, in which they explained the link between words (poetry), chant and music within the Persian tradition<sup>170</sup>.

As the representative of the Iranian Cultural House Mehdi Jaghourî explained, it was not easy to translate the selected poetries for the Italian audience. Actually, they found that many Italian translations did not respect the original meanings of the words. Therefore, he promoted an interesting experiment: having decided to give the translation task to Iranians living in Italy, he committed the readings of those poetries to second generation members of the Iranian community based in Venice. According to

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<sup>168</sup> Although the booklet offers a nice introduction to the general reader; nonetheless, there are some mistakes on the cover, on which the flute (*ney*) is described as a pan flute (*syrix*). Also, the entire work seems to relate the musical discourse with the Mavlavi tradition, while the original title of the CD, *Ocean of Remembrance. Sufi Improvisations and Zikrs*, clearly affirms the nature of the musical content. Once again, it seems that relating a product to the image of Mavlavis is a market strategy for appealing to the public. Nonetheless, these works could stimulate the curiosity of the buyer; thus, leading him to carry on more studies on Rûmî and the whirling dervishes.

<sup>169</sup> For recording available in Italy, see also: Galal-al Din Rûmî, *Il sole di Tabriz*, Registrazione sonora, Studio record, [199-?] Jalal al Din Rûmî, *Dîvân-i-Shams-i-Tabrîz*, edited and translated by Iraj Anvar; foreword by Peter Chelkowski; introduction by Mohammad Ali Movahed, Roma: Semar, 2002 (CD and Text).

<sup>170</sup> "Nella cultura persiana, poesia, canto e musica coesistono in un unico indissolubile e splendido linguaggio. La musica, aspirando ad un'evocazione di tali espressioni, vive nella ri-creazione del repertorio tradizionale, con un ampio spazio dedicato all'improvvisazione. I musicisti dialogano tra loro in un'esecuzione estemporanea che nasce dalla memorizzazione un repertorio canonico chiamato "*Radif*" che sta alla base di tutta la creatività della musica classica persiana" (*Persia Mistica...*, 2007).

his opinion, this young generation is better equipped to perceive the nuances of both Italian and Farsi language<sup>171</sup>

The example below illustrates the final result for the rendering of the translation of the first 18 lines of the *Mathnawî*, compared to those translated by Bausani:

<p><i>...Ascolta il suono del ney, [canna/flauto] come narra la sua storia e piange le separazioni-</i></p>	<p><i>Ascolta il flauto di canna, com'esso narra la sua storia, com'esso triste lamenta la sua separazione:</i></p>
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<p><i>Dicendo: sempre, da che fui diviso dal canneto, al mio lamento gemono uomini e donne.</i></p>	<p><i>Da quando mi strapparono dal canneto, ha fatto piangere uomini e donne il mio dolce suono!</i></p>
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<p><i>Voglio un petto lacerato dalla separazione, per spiegargli la pena del desiderio d'Amore..</i></p>	<p><i>Un cuore voglio, un cuore dilaniato dal distacco dall'Amico, che possa spiegargli la passione del desiderio d'Amore;</i></p>
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<p><i>... ..Fuoco è questa voce del ney, non fiato di vento: sia nulla chi questo fuoco non possiede!</i></p>	<p><i>... Fuoco è questo grido del flauto, non vento: e chi non l'ha, questo fuoco, ben merita di dissolversi in nulla!</i></p>
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<p><i>E' il fuoco d'Amore che è nel ney, l'ardore d'Amore che è nel vino...</i></p>	<p><i>E' il fuoco d'Amore ch'è caduto nel flauto, è il fervore d'Amore che ha invaso il vino..</i></p>
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(Casa della Cultura Iraniana,  
*Persia Mistica: Suoni e Canti  
d'Amore*, Venezia, 2007)

(*Rûmî Poesie mistiche*, ed. and  
trans. Alessandro Bausani, Milano:

<sup>171</sup> Mehdi Jaghourî, personal communication, Cagliari (14/09/2007).

Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1980,  
p. 27)

### Conclusion

Although it was often said that in Italy there was a limited tradition of studies related to Rûmî and the Mavlavi, yet there are several examples that show how the Italian interest for Rûmî's poetical language and religious thought, together with the fascination for the ritual of the whirling dervishes, had left many traces in Italian literature, historical accounts, visual arts and music.

Italian contribution to the spreading of knowledge on Mavlavis had been particularly evident in the field of academic studies, thanks to the efforts of experts in Persian Language and History of religions.

However, the following generation of scholars presents a wide range of interests, spacing from studies on Rûmî's literary style, researches on Mavlavi musical tradition, surveying of ancient commentaries of Mawlânâ's writings, to go on over studies about Mavlavi architectural typologies.

Furthermore, in the last two decades, the interest of Italian public for Oriental religions and philosophies, due to several factors, ranging from the improvement in the circulation of knowledge of Sufism to the spreading of New Age movements in Italy, had produced a new demand for simplified translations.

Indeed, the quality of the translations, not only of Rûmî's works but also those of other Sufi masters, remained one of the most controversial issues.

It is quite clear that in order to reach the mass, even famous scholars, had to simplify the language and the style, preferring the content over the form. Moreover, there is the general problem on the ability of the translator to rely on original sources: it is evident that many translations of Rûmî's writings in Italian had been done on the basis of French sources.

On the other side, the translation issue was also related to a different perception of Sufism, which led to new approach with the narrative material, as it is explained by Arena:

"In the end, Sufism is not a doctrine nor a religion, nor a philosophy. Nonetheless, it is a way of a way of being, an incisive mental training and extraneous to every form of dogmatism...Sufism has elaborated an copious

repertory of didactic stories, which lack of a particular receiver and are intended for humanity in its totality. Thus, everyone could understand them according to its awareness"<sup>172</sup>.

However, this approach is not without risk, since it could lead to a misinterpretation of Rûmî's words. This issue had already been envisaged by Bausani, in his search for "unity" within Mesnevi's stories. As the eminent Italian scholar affirmed:

"There is unity, but it is not a unity as we intended it, it is the sign of "another" unity, the more true, which is "outside", in the world of invisible things and of things that "are not here anymore". Although, they are more powerful than any other things, intended as a superior unit which follows another order, which could seem a non-order and casual juxtaposition to profane eyes. Thus, it is too easy for an expert translator, or too less sensible to the essentially religious value of Rûmî, let him say things that he would have never said"<sup>173</sup>.

Nonetheless, in the last years, there have been many efforts to present Rûmî and the Mavlavis to the Italian public, in the form of cultural meetings<sup>174</sup>, readings and performance of whirling dance.

Generally, those activities, organized by private centres, as well as universities, contribute to the spreading of information on Rûmî's thought and messages, providing to the public both theoretical information and a moment of leisure, offering concerts a musical excerpts. This kind approach provided successful results, as it is possible to evince from the discourse of Elvio Arancio -president of the European Study Center *Ibn Sina* in Turin-

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<sup>172</sup> Arena Leonardo Vittorio, *101 storie sufi*, Vicenza: Il punto d'incontro, 2003, p.10. (The same book had a previous edition: *Il bimbo e lo scorpione*, Milano: Mondadori, 1996).

<sup>173</sup> Bausani Alessandro, "Il Pensiero Religioso di Maulānā..", p.187.

<sup>174</sup> Indeed, some Universities' conferences were organized in the frame of inter-religious dialogue. On the comparative approach to monotheistic faiths, see: Fabris Adriano ed., *il Dio condiviso / Gialal ad-Din Rûmî Rabbi Israel ben Elieser, detto Baal-Shem-Tov*, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Roma: Edizioni lavoro, 2001.



presented at the International Symposium on Mawlânâ, held in Manisa (2005)<sup>175</sup>.

Quoting the example of the European Study Center *Ibn Sina*, some final observations could be made on the grade of receptivity of the Italian audience. In fact, according to Arancio, there was a massive participation to the meeting in honour of Mawlânâ, organized by his center at the municipal palace of Turin, in 2002. During the two-days meeting, notices about the life and the works of the great master were given to the public, projecting also a video featuring the *semâ*. Questions posed by the public were related to the life of Rûmî (paralleled to the life of one of the Italian most eminent saint: San Francesco d'Assisi<sup>176</sup>), but also:

"Those questions underlined the consideration on the universal elements that could be picked up in his poetry. Namely, the insistence on the unique and similar substance presents in every human being. We had perceived enthusiasm and amazement within a public that is not aware, or had forgotten, the scientific and doctrinal contributions of Islam to the European Culture; a public that shows a general ignorance on the conspicuous Islamic poetic production and the knowledge of a classic-literary tradition within Islam".

Thus, it could be that efforts for spreading a better knowledge on Rûmî, on his tolerant attitude and his recall to the beauty of God, could also contribute to a more benevolent gaze of the Italian public to the Islamic religion itself. Inshallah.

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<sup>175</sup> Arancio Elvio, "Jalal al-Din Rûmî e Mavlavia: esperienze italiane", working paper presented at Manisa, 2005 (for gracious concession of the author). In 2005, the European Study Center had also published a boon on Rûmî and the *semâ*.

<sup>176</sup> According to Salvatore Bono, in the occasion of the Anniversary for the 800 years of San Francesco's birth, it was organized a meeting in Spoleto (25-27 ottobre), in which Bausani illustrated the examples of Arabo-Persian mystic tradition, thus, mentioning Rûmî ("San Francesco e l'Islâm. Un convegno a Spoleto" in *Islâm. Storia e Civiltà*, 2, II, 1983, 1, pp.29-32).

