



«Fish in the ears». Paolo Mantegazza, Percy Bysshe Shelley and us in San Terenzo 1822-2022

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Abstract. On July 8, 1822, the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley drowned in front of Viareggio due to the shipwreck of his beloved boat Ariel. From that moment, amplified by the cremation of the body on the beach of the village on August 16, «mythology» expands dramatically, swallowing up its artistic value in many cases. Paolo Mantegazza did not escape the charm of the poet. Mantegazza shared, in an ideal way, San Terenzo, Shelley's last home and the doctor's village. In 1885, in fact, in a short article he searched the country for the «relics» of the Englishman, on behalf of Edward Dowden, who was working at that time on a biography of the poet. Starting from these ideas, on January 7, 2022, I made a visit to San Terenzo, reflecting on the construction of memory, measured by secular relics, also given by commemorative plaques and urban writings.

Keywords: shipwrecks, monuments, memory, relics, tourism.

*Processions of priests and religiosi have been
for several days past praying for rain: but the gods
are either angry, or nature too powerful.*

Edward Williams, Leghorn, July 4, 1822

200 YEARS

On Monday 8 July 1822 the *schooner* Ariel with aboard Percy Bysshe Shelley, the English poet, his friend and retired soldier Edward Williams and the Cornish sailor Charles Vivian sank in a storm in front of the village of Viareggio. As Passigli-Piazza noted:

«Il giorno 8 luglio, benché il cielo fosse minaccioso, ma essendo il vento favorevole, tra l'una e le due, il Don Juan abbandonò il porto di Livorno in direzione di Lerici. Un amico del Poeta seguiva dall'alto del faro la piccola imbarcazione; e con l'aiuto d'un cannocchiale poté vederla finché giunse presso Viareggio. Poi l'aria si fece torbida, la nebbia avvolse ogni cosa, il Don Juan scomparve. La fragile navicella non aveva potuto lottare contro l'ira delle onde, che l'avevano travolta e inghiottita col prezioso carico!» (Passigli-Piazza, 1928, 22-23)

This quote summarized in a clear and at the same time fictionalized way, the last moments of Shelley, seen from the *Torre dei Pisani*, Livorno's lighthouse, on that early afternoon of July 1822. It clearly showed how a perfect sea tragedy could unfold, between the mysteries of the fog and the fury of the waves. At the same time, it is a fictionalized telling because it thickened a series of *topos* about Shelley and built from that moment a solid *mythology*. «*L'amico del Poeta*» was Captain Edward Williams, who had accompanied Shelley to Livorno on July 1 without embarking again (Petriccioli, 1907, 7).

The name of the boat was significant: his friend Edward Trelawny had chosen *Don Juan*, in homage to Lord Byron and his composing poem, already partly published and which he will not be able to finish by death in 1824. But Shelley had entitled the poem *Ariel*, like the spirit of the air in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In the second scene of the first act the ship of the King of Naples is wrecked, although without consequences and the travellers reach the island of Prospero any way.

Shelley's body was found on July 18, 1822, on Viareggio's beach. It was hastily buried waiting to be cremated, as established by the health regulations of Lucca and Tuscany (*Decreto*, 1816; *Istruzione*, 1844). The cremation, the first in modern times in Italy, took place on August 16.

It is interesting to note that the travellers were headed to San Terenzo, where Shelley with his wife Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin had moved, after a long pilgrimage to Italy, in the late spring of that year (Rossetti Angeli, 1911).

It is well known by scholars of Italian anthropology that Paolo Mantegazza from the 1860s had frequented San Terenzo. He bought villa «La Serenella» and resided and died there in 1910. Mantegazza was buried in the local cemetery of San Terenzo (Fig. 1).

Man of land, Monza citizen, Mantegazza had become a seaman of San Terenzo. In 1885 Mantegazza published an article in the Sunday magazine of the Roman newspaper «Il Fanfulla» – in which he recalled Shelley's stay in the village: *Le reliquie di Shelley a San Terenzo* (Mantegazza, 1885; Mantegazza 1910).



Fig. 1. San Terenzo seen from the castle and on the right, isolated, with the portico, Villa Magni, inhabited by Shelley, in the background at center, in front of the tallest building there is «La Serenella», photo before 1888.

A fragment of the article, the description of Shelley's house, was reported, with an image, in a pamphlet: *La Spezia a P.B. Shelley. 27 ottobre 1907*, which collected tributes, of crucial documentary value, of the poet. Three tombstones were also discovered on the façade of San Terenzo's villa.

2022 marks 200 anniversary of the death of the English poet: the spectacular of his passing and the public funeral in Viareggio, conditioned his memory and fame, with the *myth* of the heart collected unburned from the ashes transforming him into a *relic* of himself.

On the anniversary, following the traces of Mantegazza's article which multiply on several levels of narration and interpretation, I summarize the original plot by making a visit to San Terenzo myself on January 7, 2022.

PAOLO MANTEGAZZA AND PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY IN SAN TERENZO

Paolo Mantegazza's relationship with San Terenzo is intense: in an unusual obituary, published in the «Official Gazette of the Kingdom of Italy», his link to the village is remarked, and interestingly even Shelley is included in the description:

«A San Terenzio [the country is also so indicated], nel golfo di Spezia, lungo quella riviera incantevole dove solo ebbe pace ed ispirazioni sublimi l'anima di Shelley e alto vibrò il sentimento dell'amicale poesia in Giorgio Byron, ieri, si spegneva, sereno nella fede sublime della scienza, Paolo Mantegazza. [...] A San Terenzio, nel cui modesto cimitero prescisse di essere sepolto senza apparati di religione – egli che profondamente credeva nella Scienza – domani

*sarà sepolta la salma lagrimata, sulla quale poseranno il fiore dei loro cuori
quanti riveriscono il sapere e lo spirito d'umanità, la poesia sublime che canta
l'inno della salute e per la scienza combatte.»* (Paolo Mantegazza, 1910)

Most of the books about Shelley also included drawings, various illustrations and photographs of San Terenzo. Often there are details or perspectives of Villa Magni, in a redundancy of visions rarely able to convey the real perception of the place and its memories. San Terenzo, over time, becomes a diary in absence, where the villa appears a «wreck», in a dimension that stands out from reality. Shelley is *tout court* the building, which seems over time, overwhelmed by the turns of the place, forced to an inescapable mutation but at the same time fixed on the poet.

Despite that, Mantegazza in 1885 applauded the absence of battalions and cannons in San Terenzo, present instead in other areas of the gulf, on September 28, 1922, and at 2.58 there was a tremendous explosion. Apparently, a on a military powder keg, in an armoury built in the nineties around Falconara at Punta Galera, was ignited during a thunderstorm. The explosion almost destroyed the town, with over 150 dead and 800 wounded. It damaged Mantegazza's villa and joined the chronicles once again his name with Shelley due to the devastation of some of the Shelley «relics» as seen by Mantegazza himself (Moggi, 1922).

Mantegazza writes about San Terenzo more for simulation than for certainty and transforms it in the plot of two of his books. The first is *Un giorno a Madera* (Mantegazza, 1868), reprinted both in Italian and in multiple translations (French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Dutch, Croatian). This novel is an epistolary one and is opened with a «political» preface dated *San Terenzo (Lerici), 27 luglio 1868* and dedicated to his voters in Monza. He presents it as a «compensation» to his voters for the poor participation in Parliament, in a response where *profit* and *morale* are intertwined in an invention book but with a solid background of social thoughts. The events of the protagonists, William and Emma, were tied to the village, described with a style that recalls the visits of aesthetes to Shelley's last home (Mantegazza, 1868, 44).

The second book is *Testa* (Mantegazza, 1887), certainly not of less importance, and it was translated in the main European languages even in Hebrew (1933) and Chinese (1948), published in «response» to *Cuore* by Edmondo De Amicis (1886) and with the same protagonist, Enrico – is largely set in San Terenzo.

This novel was also political (Fagioli, 2021) and presented information and opinions about the village and its inhabitants, embodied by *Zio Baciccia*, who is Mantegazza himself (Mantegazza, 1887, 4-5). The book highlights his relationship with the country, describing a place that is not exotic. Loved and well known for its oleograph, in a well-constructed rhetoric that distorts

the patina of the good feelings of *Cuore* even with a certain rhetorical and pedagogical emphasis (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. *San Terenzo, the castle, and the gulf in a photograph of an unknown German soldier, 1944 (property S. Fagioli).*

Percy Bysshe Shelley, in a reading afterwards of his life rather than his work, appears deeply linked to San Terenzo. Born in Horsham, Sussex, on August 4, 1792, to a family of the landed aristocracy, he soon devoted himself to literature. His approach was libertarian and based in a radical and egalitarian spirit. Shelley was strongly anticlerical, and he had an intolerance for conventions. His character led him on a continuous wandering in Europe beginning in 1811. In 1814, he wed Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin – daughter of the philosopher William Godwin whose economic and social theories Shelley had long followed. Mary Wollstonecraft was herself a philosopher, and liberal feminist – and together they immediately fled to France, Switzerland, Germany. Then they moved permanently to Italy, settling in San Terenzo from 30 April 1822.

Mantegazza's article at a first reading seems more like an ode to San Terenzo and its non-natives: the Mantegazza himself, Byron and Shelley. However, then curiosity takes over and the theme is introduced: the relics of the poet.

Dowden requested Mantegazza research about Shelley in San Terenzo, that will be used in his *The life of Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1886*. The same research will be resumed by Guido Biagi (Biagi, 1892; Biagi, 1898).

In contrast to Mantegazza's previous treatment of Foscolo (Mantegazza, 1871; Fagioli, 2019a; Fagioli, 2019b) he does not analyse the mortal remains, as he did in the case of Foscolo where he was able to directly analyse the bones and skull. In the case of Shelley, Mantegazza, attempted to look at some *relics*, but they were minor things, not «fetishes», Mantegazza did not even write about the legend of the heart on the beach in Viareggio: as a doctor, he perfectly understands its real development and did not fall into the trap of the superstructures that from that July 8, 1822, encrust the poet's corpse.

The clearest answer to *the symbolic* visions on Shelley was given, just over a hundred years after 1822, by a picture taken in 1925 in Viareggio, by John Drinkwater. Drinkwater was an English poet, and playwright, with an archival cataloguing of the image which is further significant. It was in fact found together with the report of the cremation of Shelley written by Marianne Hunt, wife of Leigh Hunt, present in Viareggio on August 15, 1822 (*Account*, 1822) (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. *The place of Shelley's cremation seen by John Drinkwater in 1925 (London, British Library, Ashley MS 915, 1822).*

Drinkwater, on a very personal trip to Italy, stopped in Viareggio on Shelley's trail. The same year he published an essay about the poet in the volume *The muse in council. Being essays on poets and poetry* (Drinkwater, 1925).

Of this trip there were two photos taken in Viareggio, and one was

particularly significant: a note on the back of the author indicates that it shows the area of the beach where Shelley was cremated. The image is, in its simplicity, completely explanatory because it highlights what was in Viareggio after the distant August 1822: the emptiness.

SAN TEREZO AND US

*A parte che nel mare c'era gente insospettabile
 Persino gli idealisti ci nuotavano benissimo
 E poi cambiao pelle
 E non sapevo e non capivo che
 Andarci dentro è facile
 Tornare no
 E quanti pesci nelle orecchie
 Adesso ho...*

Roberto Vecchioni, Pesci nelle orecchie (1975)

I have been to San Terenzo three times, in an ever-deepening approach to the village. The first one in autumn, 2018 was a fleeting passage, driven by the *mythological* echo of Mantegazza. It was a short winter day and the sunset suddenly surprised me on the coast dedicated to the doctor, glimpsing only shadows. In August «my» anthropologist Paolo Chiozzi had died, and I was looking for a *map*. The second in March 2019, in a more complete visit that took me to the gate of the *Serenella* and the cemetery. The third on January 7, 2022, in a planned visit path to *observation* and reflection.

Now, in our time we have been added those of Mantegazza to the *relics* of Shelley. If indissolubly Shelley and Mantegazza are San Terenzo (and vice versa) it is necessary to consider especially for the first, the entry, indeed the return, after 200 years from his death, in a completely mythical sphere that the shrewdest critics are hardly able to scratch, in either Italy or Great Britain. Shelley's biography has turned into a *tautology*, despite the effort in the Anglo-Saxon world of accommodation in reality at least since the end of the nineteenth century. If we take for good the popular events – the unburned heart is the unburned heart – we can correctly speak of a *mythology* of Shelley that is placed in a *different* plane than the *true story*, completely intangible to the real, including San Terenzo. The same is largely true for Mantegazza, 112 years after his death, for his eclecticism that makes him «indigestible» to specialists and the public (Loconsole, 2019).

There are many reports of visits to San Terenzo scattered especially in American and English magazines. Typically, you arrive from the sea – like the protagonist of *Un giorno a Madera* – with Shelley's villa that appears suddenly in the gulf, indicated without deception by the boatmen: «Behold! Shelley's House!» *Ejaculated the boatman, as we rounded the point of San Terenzo, after a two*

hours' sail with favoring winds from Spezia, and our boat danced on the waves of the Bay of Lerici — 'this divine bay,' as Shelley called it» as a correspondence published in a Chicago periodical in 1904, with the significant title of *The last home of Shelley*, written by Anna Benneson McMahan, curator of letters and collections by Shelley, Byron, Shakespeare, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett, with particular attention to Florence and Tuscany (Benneson McMahan, 1904, 55).

Does this mean that discussing San Terenzo today makes it necessary to have the pragmatism of Guido Biagi towards Shelley? Can hints be taken from the toponymy of the village? Via Paolo Mantegazza stretches along the seafront, in front of the Shelley villa, away from the waves. There is a park dedicated to the poet next to it but without the honour of a street dedicated to him or Mary and not even a Via Byron. There is no *Mantegazza Museum* nor a *Shelley Museum*.

San Terenzo on January 7, 2022 was deeply in a dimension of indescribability, not so much obviously for the physical «place» that a visual and photographic observation can or could return, as for the dynamics of the hundreds, thousands of people who crowd the seafront, not the country, just the seafront, on a weekday, dazzling with sunshine, at the same time of a long weekend in the short period between the feast of the Epiphany and the weekend: it is Friday and the schools will reopen only on the 10th.

A temporary tourism, it is well understood, that from the car parks on the edge of the village poured into a constant flow in «movement». The promenade was a place of continuous passage with some points of short stop, a «local» market of clothing near the Castle, bars, benches with a sea view or on the beach itself, but precisely «dynamized» without visitors relaxing doing nothing. And then in the canonical lunchtime the flow moved towards the restaurants always on the seafront, animated by a coming and going of reservations here perhaps for a few moments there will be peace. Here, now Covid was absent, even never existed, evoked only by the face masks that come and go. The village, both the «old» one and the newer areas behind the promenade were «empty», if not for the directions that lead from the parking lots upstream.

Villa Magni, precisely on the seafront, was fully in the dynamic flow, however without intercepting it: it was a ghost in time and space, no one seemed to see it. I stopped to observe who passed by who touched it, in the comings and goings of cars, in front of the sidewalk it was possible to walk without moving by the sea. No one stopped to read the tombstones on the facades, no one looked at the terrace that housed the Shelley's, schematically designed by Mary in a letter of August 15, 1822. Apparently, no one thought that that building, bizarre in shape, deserved a look. Transformed for some time into a «Boutique Hotel» it was completely abandoned and, in this

sense, «indescribable». There was an absence of the «genius loci», although reconstructable by four tombstones and an information panel of varied history, but which are themselves in practice invisible, in the haste of the passage. An old panel on the porch says it is a member of the *Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane*, but from the association's website it no longer appears.

On the front toward the sea there is Ceccardo Roccatagliata Ceccardi's commemorative plaque a Ligurian-Tuscan poet and intellectual:

DA QUESTO PORTICO IN CUI SI ABBATTEVA L'ANTICA OMBRA DI UN
LECCIO
IL LUGLIO DEL MDCCCXXII
MARY GODWIN E JANE WILLIAMS ATTESERO CON LAGRIMANTE ANSIA
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
CHE DA LIVORNO SU FRAGIL LEGNO VELEGGIANDO
ERA APPRODATO PER IMPROVVISA FORTUNA
AI SILENZI DE LE ISOLE ELISEE

O BENEDETTE SPIAGGE
OVE L'AMORE LA LIBERTÀ I SOGNI
NON HANNO CATENE

The text does not shine of poetic value and on the contrary, it is lost in an ambiguous rhetoric. The plaque was inaugurated in September 1907 and Ceccardo published it, almost like a poetry, in 1910 in the volume *Sonetti e poemi*, published at the expense of the *Comitato ligure-apuano* (Roccatagliata Ceccardi, 1910, 298).

On the sides of the portico there are two other tombstones, contemporary to the main one, with two poetic fragments of Shelley. Finally, under the porch, to the left of the entrance, there is another tombstone, the most invisible of all, which although recent is almost illegible, in a discoloured and baroque marble:

I POETI SONO SPECCHI DELLE GIGANTESCHE
OMBRE CHE L'AVVENIRE GETTA
SUL PRESENTE. FORZA CHE NON È MOSSA MA CHE MUOVE.
I POETI SONO I NON RICONOSCIUTI
LEGISLATORI DEL MONDO. PERCY B. SHELLEY
LERICI GOLFO DEI POETI
BICENTENARIO DELLA NASCITA
1792 1992

Still a phrase of Shelley transformed into a chocolate aphorism. The main one reports in large «Percy Bysshe Shelley», so the inattentive tourist can look, but then he gets lost in the narrowness of the general text and without

knowing, perhaps, who Shelley was, considering that the tragic text recalls the shipwreck instead of his poetry. Of course, in these considerations there is no moral, neither about Shelley nor about Ceccardo or nor about tourists: the empirical data tells me that nobody looks those tombstones, but they do not even see them. In that place the memory of Shelley (or for Shelley if you like) is *defused*.

The tombstones could lead us to reflect on who Shelley is in 2022 and who he was in 1907, when the tombstones were placed with great ceremony. The answer about 1907 comes from an incendiary and polemical author, who was very close to Mantegazza: Giovanni Papini, for some years secretary and librarian of the *Società italiana di antropologia, etnologia e psicologia* (Aveto, 2016).

Papini wrote in 1910 about Mantegazza in «La Voce» (Papini, 1910) shortly before his death. Papini on October 27, 1907 in honour of Shelley, was invited to give a testimony of the poet and showed us his *verve* criticism –since the title, *Un po' di sincerità a proposito di Shelley* – caught in a riot of happy and rhetorical voices (Papini, 1907, 25). Given the purpose of the publication it could be assumed that Papini was not censored because he was close to Mantegazza, here with the rescue of the fragment already published and the debacle of the tombstone, is placed in the background. Papini's words well define San Terenzo of today, the Shelley of 2022 to those who pass along the seafront and do not even turn a quick glance towards the «epigrafi rampicanti» who would like to show off on Villa Magni but are more interested in «discorsi spumosi»

On the façade of the parish church, dedicated to the Natività di Maria, an «inscription» not at all worn out like those of Shelley, indeed well cared and shiny shows us an almost unsuspected measure:

PERCHÉ
 ALLA MEMORIA DELLA MADRE BUONA
 JACOBITA DE TEJADA NEI MANTEGAZZA
 DAL POPOLO DEVOTO DI S. TERENCE
 FOSSE BENEDETTO
 GIULIO MANTEGAZZA
 VOLLE
 DI QUESTA CHIESA
 RESTAURATA LA FACCIATA
 SU LA TORRE
 COLLOCATO L'OROLOGIO
 RIFUSO IL CONCERTO CAMPANARIO
 1930 IX

Jacobita, who he met and married in Argentina in 1856 was Mantegazza's first wife. She was the mother of his five children, Giulio, Attilio, Jacopo, Laura, and Manuel: Jacobita, born in 1941, died at the age of fifty in 1891.

After her death Mantegazza remarried with Maria Fontoni and had another child, Maria in 1892. The memory of Jacobita was still so strong years later in San Terenzo (Fig. 4).

Giulio Mantegazza, Paolo's son, promoted an important renewal of the Church in the 1930, in memory of the «madre buona» and for the «popolo devoto». It is not the restoration of the façade or the bells that make us arrive at this conclusion – in that year IX *defused* – but the placement on the bell tower of a clock. Clocks were, in the villages, towns, cities, objects of great interest, because they had far beyond the measurement of time, a decisive political value. Industrialization brought clocks to the factories, both to measure work time and to specify that is a secular time, perhaps compared the church time. Here, in 1930, the clock is on the church, which, in the name of *another* Mantegazza (Giulio), defines secular influence.



Fig. 4. San Terenzo, commemorative plaque on the Parish church (S. Fagioli 2022).

Again, on the seafront, on the wall that hides the slightly peeling dome of the church, with the view partly hindered by a bus shelter with *San Terenzo* written on it, squeezed between a kiosk and a coffee shop, there is a large tombstone, with a bronze portrait. The location, the conservation and above all the bus stops do not favour the reading. However, Mantegazza enter in the story of this monument:

IL PADRONE
 PAOLO AZZARINI
 CHE LA FORTUNA MI HA FATTO
 INCONTRARE SULLA TERRA
 DOMINATA DAI TEDESCHI – MI
 HA TRASPORTATO SU QUESTA
 D'ASILO – TRATTANDOMI EGREGIA-
 MENTE E SENZA INTERESSE
 G. GARIBALDI

PORTOVENERE V-IX-MDCCCXLIX

It was inaugurated on November 5, 1899, with the celebration of Azzarini's death on April 6 of the same year (Fig. 5). The text reproduces a note by Garibaldi granted to Azzarini on September 5, 1849, in Portovenere after he had landed the General, saving him on September 2 in Cala Martina, near Follonica, after the experience of the «trafila». The long march had begun after the fall of the Roman Republic, on July 2, and the most famous way winds from Comacchio to the Tuscan coast.

Paolo Mantegazza narrated, in a witty and detailed way, Azzarini's events in *Testa*, in chapter XII, entitled *La storia di Ipsilonne, il salvatore di Garibaldi* (Mantegazza, 1887, 157-170). The sequence of events is exemplary to Mantegazza: he resumed it in *Elogio della Vecchiaia* (1895), referring the reader to *Testa* in a more anthropological portrait of the character (Mantegazza, 1895, 200-207).



Fig. 5. San Terenzo, tombstone for Paolo Azzarini, known as Ipsilonone (S. Fagioli 2022).

Villa *La Serenella* is wedged in via del Campo and immediately refers to the visitor echoes that fit perfectly to the spirit of Mantegazza (Fig. 6): «*Ama e ridi se amor risponde / Piangi forte se non ti sente / Dai diamanti non nasce niente / Dal letame nascono i fior / Dai diamanti non nasce niente / Dal letame nascono i fior*» (Fabrizio De André, *Via del Campo*, 1967, the music is by Enzo Jannacci). A bilingual panel relates about the doctor and the villa. Now there are four mailboxes at the gate of the villa and with curiosity I looked for the one «Prof. P. Mantegazza» in a time warp always possible but without any result. Someone lives there, the windows are open, the large maritime pine

stands imposing in the garden and next to it there is a satellite dish that I do not remember from my previous visit. In the impossibility of getting closer to the villa, protected by a gate and a perspective that makes it invisible to those who do not know it, even here everything is played in absence and who knows where *Ipsilonne's* lemons (*Ipsilonne* was Azzarini's nickname) are, he cared for the doctor's garden, I sniffed the air in search of their scent.



Fig. 6. «E ti sembra di andar lontano / Lei ti guarda con un sorriso / Non credevi che il paradiso / Fosse solo lì al primo piano» (Fabrizio De André, photo S. Fagioli 2019).

The road that intersects via del Campo, via XX Settembre, a street but a date, also invisible but certainly dear to Mantegazza, leads straight to the cemetery, towards the hill, cutting the newest part of the village, with narrow condominiums on the tight space of the coastline, so precipitous that even *Google Street view* has not mapped it.

Shelley in 1822 chose San Terenzo because out of the *grand tour's* places that he had obsessively visited: Florence, Naples, Rome, Pisa, Livorno. Villa Magni was quite isolated. The aesthetics of the villa was enough to turn it into an ideal home, with the sea on the door and the undertow that laps the windows of the first floor during the storms.

Legends tell us of a community of English, libertarians and libertines, a «commune» *ante litteram* that made a confusion in the seaside village. And they also tell us about Percy's death nightmares and about Mary's abortion, in June, the blood around the bathtub with a lot of cold water to stop the bleeding.

Percy on June 18, 1822, wrote to Trelawny in Livorno in a well-known letter (but we do not know how emblematic) in which he mentions the search for poison: «I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present, but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest. The Prussic Acid is used in medicine in infinitely minute doses; but that preparation is weak and has not the concentration necessary to medicine all ills

infallibly. A single drop, even less, is a dose, and it acts by paralysis...» (Trelawny, 1858, 101). And Mary speaks in a letter written on August 15, 1822, as *«the last miserable months of my disastrous life ...»* (Marshall, 1889, 11).

Before arriving at the cemetery, always from Via XX Settembre, I run down a bumpy path to *Shelley Park*. The entrance near Villa Magni is now closed. There is a tangle of greenery, a metaphorical forest where the visitor can get lost, shielded from the clamour of the seafront, and from the reflections of the sun. There are old discarded and worn chairs, a sign here of a *post-pandemic* world where a lone nature tries to reclaim the space, as well as crumbling walls and strolling grass eaten by gravel. It appears as a scene from unknown world.

On a wall a big *tag* reminds me of new poetics, as well as the *stencil* almost on the seafront, at the entrance of Via O. Turini *«Medaglia d'argento 9.7.1941»*: I always look for these signs when I visit a place for the first time, they show me without filters what it is and what it will be (Figg. 7-8).

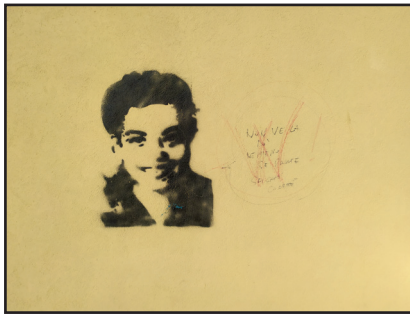


Fig. 7. *San Terenzo, the stencil in via Turini* (S. Fagioli 2022).



Fig. 8. *San Terenzo, the tag at the Shelley Park* (S. Fagioli 2022).

Now is the time for the cemetery, which is on a hill, and I can feel most of the stories I have far mentioned. There is the sea and all its metaphors, between shipwrecks and emigration; the explosion of the Falconara of September 28, 1922, a hundred years ago; the symbols of Mazzini's civil religion; a grave with a whole three-dimensional chessboard on the tombstone. There is a great sculpture *Strage degli innocenti* by Odoardo Fantacchiotti (Bernini and Moradei Gabbrielli, 2021; Bernini 1998) carved in marble in Florence in 1858 for the Marquis Filippo Ala Ponzoni.

Paolo Mantegazza's grave is the most monumental. A massive Doric temple with high columns, surrounded by a low iron fence and the entrance barred by a heavy iron gate. The interior is inaccessible, but I peek from the grills of the half-open doors.

Mantegazza's tomb is *disturbing*. Or better, it is the Mantegazza expressed with *the* grave. It is evident that a tomb is a simulacrum of the body contained and that it is not at the same time the body itself. The two aspects may not coincide, as well as in modern graves, where there is no room for inscriptions and the names of the deceased, and the extremes of life are not *his* life.

The obituary published in the «*Illustrazione Popolare*» in 1910 (*Negli ultimi numeri...*, 1910) showed us another Mantegazza and so the other «*cocodrilli*» published: the memories, everyone was a Mantegazza, but was not the same one of the graves.

We have many images of Mantegazza. There are portraits, photographs, sculptures, which were all related to his popularity, so his figure in a very general sense might be in a range of «*recognizability*». However, 112 years after his death in 1910, it is understandable that little visually is recognizable. Here, in San Terenzo, I did not recognize him. The cemetery was deserted, no one today came that day to remember someone. The paths play with the sun, but there are areas not yet illuminated. Cemeteries grow like puzzles, one piece at a time, with the oldest part on the top and then going down. Modern tombs are shiny, regular, mute. Falconara's dead make a quiet murmur, that is easy to feel. Each tells a story in their own way and the pictures on the tombstones tell other stories, the plastic flowers, the dust of the time of dissolved families.

I kept my ears open, but the tomb of Paolo Mantegazza and Maria Fantoni was silence. How is it possible that it does not tell a story? What is inside? Bodies undone, ashes, mummies, or nothing. The *omega* Ω that stood out on the tympanum of the grave/temple, above the inscription *Mantegazza* was even more disturbing, because it set an indelible seal: there was no *alpha* of new hopes. That tympanum was a definitive stab wound to our positivist. Two sculptures peeked out from the inside, in the yellowish light of the sun and stained-glass windows that deform their features, drawing deep shadows. Paul in the light, in the reflections was a Christ on the cross, sorrowful, and even exhausted, perhaps. Mary polished in marble was an empty and unnatural *maschera*: photographed from the *portugali* the sculptures were blurred and confused images.

A rare photo of the Mantegazza's spouse, published in 1908 in «*La Donna*», in support of an article entitled *Una visita a Paolo Mantegazza*, (Gianella, 1908) where, of course, you mention Shelley, visit made on October 31, 1907, on the tomb was more appropriate, more human (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Maria Fantoni and Paolo Mantegazza from the piece on «La Donna», 1908.

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