

Alessandro Serpieri (1935-2017)

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing, on the 6th of February, of the eminent Italian Shakespeare scholar Alessandro Serpieri.

Alessandro was born in the south of Italy in 1935, started his academic career in Bologna in the early seventies, and then moved to the University of Florence, where he served as full Professor of English and where, after retirement, he was nominated Emeritus. From 1979 to 1983 he was President of the Italian Association of Semiotic Studies; and from 1991 to 1993, President of the Italian Association of English Studies.

He was a deep innovator and a generous disseminator of ideas, both as a critic and as a teacher and mentor. Together with Marcello Pagnini, he inspired and raised a generation of students and young scholars by transmitting, both in the analysis of poetry and in the reading of drama, the instruments and methods of Structuralism and, later, the points of view of Semiotics and Hermeneutics. His students and young colleagues read such complex works as those of the Russian Formalists, of V.A. Propp and Jurj Lotman, of Umberto Eco, of A. J. Greimas, and were accompanied, in their personal research, by his open and friendly tutoring.

Young members of his team at the University of Florence collaborated with him in works on the investigation of the sources of Shakespeare's plays, the translation of play texts into performance, the poetry of John Donne and, more recently, the critical apparatus of his translations of *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* (the last is forthcoming).

His interest in psychoanalysis produced a close textual reading and interpretation of *Othello*, while the study of pre-modernist and modernist poetry is reflected in his seminal works on G. M. Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats and W. H. Auden. Fiction was also among his interests, in particular Joseph Conrad's and George Meredith's novels.

Together with Agostino Lombardo, Sandro was one of the few academics to be constantly involved in collaboration with militant theatre. His translations of Shakespeare's plays opened up a long and fruitful collaboration with actor and director Gabriele Lavia, who constantly relied on Sandro's translations and on his contributions during playreading and rehearsal. Their first joint venture was a production of Q2 *Hamlet* in Serpieri's translation. This first experience suggested to Sandro the need to deepen his knowledge of the play by working on Q1 *Hamlet*, whose translation and following critical interventions gave him a deep insight into the play's process of composition.

More than one newspaper entitled their obituaries 'Serpieri, la voce italiana di Shakespeare'. The title could not have been more appropriate. Sandro Serpieri's translations of Shakespeare, his critical essays, his many interventions at conferences and his frequent appearances in the media made him in many ways the Italian voice of William Shakespeare.

For his translation of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (1991), with extensive Introduction and over 300 pages of critical apparatus, won him, in 1992, the prestigious 'Premio Mondello'; in 1998 he was awarded the 'Premio Monselice' for literary translation; and, in 2009, the 'Premio Grinzane Cavour' for his activity as a translator.

His novels (*Mostri agli Alisei*, 1977, and *Mare scritto*, 2007) are complex and intriguing narrative ventures full of echoes of English and American literature, but are also a eulogy of the sea he loved; and his play *Dracula* (1988) is a telling testimony of his lifelong passion for the theatre.

He will be sorely missed.

Carla Dente and Paola Pugliatti