

## ANECDOTAGE OF AN INTERPRETER: OLIVIA ROSSETTI AGRESTI (1875-1960)

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One hundred and thirty years have elapsed since Olivia Rossetti Agresti's birth and 45 since her death. Thus, her professional life covers the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the first chapter of conference interpreting as we know it —a burning question in our officially polyglot European Union. This paper is inspired in the original title she conceived for a collection of her memoirs that she intended to publish towards the end of her life. The *Anecdote* was never finished and remains unpublished, notwithstanding Ezra Pound's invitation in a letter addressed to her at the end of 1948: «I think you wd/ make more by candid memoirs than by translating work inferior to yr/ own...»<sup>1</sup>. We have had access to two chapters of the *Anecdote*<sup>2</sup>. Our additional sources are unpublished documents from Agresti's file at the League of Nations (LN)<sup>3</sup>, as well as the collection of letters between Ezra Pound and Agresti<sup>4</sup>. In this volume we find correspondence from 1937 till 1959, mostly from the period of Pound's incarceration in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., as mentally unfit to stand trial for treason<sup>5</sup>. Besides, we have consulted two of Rossetti Agresti's works: *A Girl Among the Anarchists*, written with her sister under the pseudonym of Isabel Meredith<sup>6</sup>, and *David Lubin: A Study in Practical Idealism*<sup>7</sup>. We wish to acknowledge the help of librarians from the LN Archives in Geneva, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale (particularly Public Services Assistant, Ms Naomi Saito), and Chief Librarian of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Library in Rome, Ms Jane Wu, without whom this research would not have been possible. We also wish to thank María Teresa López Lago for her help from New York and Anne Barr for revising this text.

Our attention was drawn to the fact that, in choosing the title *Anecdote of an Interpreter*, Olivia Rossetti Agresti must have considered that her interpreting career had a leading role in the story of her varied life. This is quite uncommon in the early days of the profession, when very few people —least of all a woman— would have identified themselves with the trade. We are aware that a daughter of William Michael Rossetti and a niece of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, both founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, would surely deserve a brighter and more detailed portrait. However, our picture —based mostly on Agresti's own writings—, will focus on aspects related to her activity as an interpreter, with impressionistic rather than pre-Raphaelite results.

### Olivia Rossetti Agresti's brief biography (1875-1960)

Olivia Rossetti Agresti, the eldest daughter of William Michael Rossetti, was born in London on September 30, 1875. In 1892 she and her younger sister Helen began printing and distributing their own Anarchist journal, *The Torch*, an adventure described in her novel *A Girl Among the Anarchists*, published under the pseudonym Isabel Meredith in 1903.

Olivia married author and journalist Antonio Agresti in 1897, and the couple settled in Florence and later in Rome. In 1904 she was hired as a secretary and interpreter by David Lubin, founder of the International Institute of Agriculture, and worked closely with him until his death during the 1918 influenza epidemic. She joined the staff of the Italian delegation to the League of Nations in Geneva in the following year. Throughout her life, she continued to

Via ciro Menotti, 20  
Rome, 25-VII-'24

Dear Captain Dennis,

I have yours of 23<sup>rd</sup> and am glad to say that my husband is now so far recovered from his recent serious and prolonged period of ill-health that I feel I can safely undertake to be in Geneva for the Assembly in Sept. It will not, however, be possible for me to leave Rome before Aug. 30<sup>th</sup> as I have to publish 3 bulletins at the end of each

month for the General Confederation of Italian Industries.

If possible I would ask to interpret for the Economic and for the Financial Commissions, subjects which I understand, and to be relieved from White Slaves, Obscene Literature, and Noxious Drugs, subjects about which I know nothing at all.

Yours sincerely  
Olivia Rossetti Agresti.

work as an interpreter at international conferences held in Italy and at the annual assemblies of the League of Nations.

In 1921 she joined the staff of the Italian Association of Joint Stock Companies as the editor of their monthly newsletter, a position she held until 1942. After Antonio's death in 1926, Agresti continued her work as editor and interpreter, and also lectured several times in the United States on such topics as «The Historical Development of the Italian Garden», «The Growth of Italian Industries», and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement. She also converted to Roman Catholicism and adopted two Italian girls.

Agresti's published works include *Giovanni Costa: His Life, Work and Times* (1904); *David Lubin: A Study in Practical Idealism* (1922); and *The Organization of the Arts and Professions in the Fascist Guild State* (1938), the last with Mario Missiroli. While she disapproved of Pound's antisemitism and his attacks on religion, she shared his approval of Fascist Italy and his belief that he had not committed treason, and in 1954 translated «Prometheus Bound», the text of a Vatican Radio broadcast on Pound's case, as a contribution to efforts

to free him from St. Elizabeth's. In her later years, Agresti began work on a memoir and frequently visited Schloss Brunnenberg, the home of Pound's daughter Mary de Rachewiltz. Olivia Rossetti Agresti died in Rome in 1960.

## Background

At the time of Rossetti Agresti's school age, social class determined in Britain the education a child received, and not even primary education was guaranteed for the less privileged in society. It seems that she received her education at home, as was the case with a number of children of well-to-do families. Although Isabel Meredith describes a fictionalized character, the following words probably reflect accurately Agresti's own experience:

He [my father] had never sent us to school, preferring to watch in person over our education, procuring us private tuition in many subjects... Our father was a great believer in liberty, and, strange to say, he put his ideas into practice in his own household<sup>9</sup>.





«Sin título», 2005.

Olivia Rossetti Agresti's father was a civil servant with an interest in art and literature from a young age. «My father was not a Mason; he was agnostic (not an Atheist); Shelley was his hero both as poet and man»<sup>10</sup>. He was art critic, biographer and bibliographer. Co-founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, he was secretary and chronicler of that movement. He edited *The Germ* (the group's magazine) and composed its opening sonnet and preface<sup>11</sup>. Her mother was Ford Madox Brown's daughter, so Olivia Rossetti Agresti and writer Ford Madox Ford were first cousins. Her aunt, Christina Rossetti was a poet.

This family environment explains her linguistic, literary and artistic background. It also accounts for her early political commitment —which lasted all her life under different ideological allegiances— and her idealism. Both the knowledge of languages and the *culture générale* were necessary ingredients for the performance of her tasks as a translator and interpreter. Her first-hand

contact with the literary and artistic world was very important, particularly for the latter period of her life, when she had to teach English literature to sustain her adopted family.

Generally speaking the middle-class youngster knew nothing and cared less for the problems from the social conditions and movement I have outlined. But the young Rossettis of the 1890's had grown up in a different atmosphere, an atmosphere pervaded by Shelley, Victor Hugo, and the trumpet calls of the French Revolution, and they listened eagerly to the new ideas that trickled through to them from the Socialist and Anarchist speakers who held forth in the Sunday meetings held in the London Parks, where the supporters of the most widely different views, ranging from the Salvation Army (in those days the butt of rowdy cockney crowds) to the several sects of Christian non-conformists, to Conservatives, Republicans, Irish Home-Rulers, trade-unionists, and the aforesaid Socialists and Communists who all expounded their several and violently conflicting views under the protection of the London policemen who looked on to

maintain order and saw that the rules of the game were observed. As long as there was no breach of the peace, no interference with traffic, and no direct incitement to crime, all these varying theologians, economists and politicians were free to express their opinions and give vent to their feelings. The English of that day —and I think of this also— have always believed it unwise to «sit on the safety valve».

It was at these Sunday morning meetings in Regent's Park, within an easy walking distance of our home, that I and my brother and sister came into contact with the revolutionary movements which had spread from the Continent to England. And this leads to another chapter in my *Anecdote*, that of *The Girl among the Anarchists*, the title of a book I wrote in 1903 jointly with my sister Helen, which was published by Duckworth (London)<sup>12</sup>.

The episode of the anarchist printing press ended in 1893 when, according to Ford Madox Ford, the two girls were expelled from the basement of their house, where they printed the journal:

My uncle William was a man of the strongest —if slightly eccentric— ethical rectitude and, as soon as my aunt was dead and the house became his property, he descended into its basement and ordered the press and all its belongings to be removed from his house. He said that although his views of the duties of parenthood did not allow of his coercing his children, his sense of the fitness of things would not permit him to sanction the printing of subversive literature in the basement of a prominent servant of the Crown. *The Torch* then had to go<sup>13</sup>.

Olivia Rossetti Agresti's intense experience as publisher of the anarchist journal must have been very important for her self-development. *I seemed to have lived ages*, says her autobiographical character in *A Girl Among the Anarchists*.

After assuming her duties with Lubin, she was in close contact with circles of experts in Economics, and this economic background was decisive for her activities as editor of an economic journal and as translator and interpreter.

All that period of literary innovations in England and Paris, the period in which my cousin Ford played a prominent part and of which you were one of the main exponents, I never came into contact with. In the '90's I was all wrapped up with such people as Prince Kropotkin, and Stepniak and many who shared their views but were totally unknown to fame, Errico Malatesta, Alexandre Cohen, Salverio Merlino, with at times a glimpse of Louise Michel; and there was Antonio Agresti whom I married and came to Italy, and was there soon absorbed with David Lubin and his work, which brought me in touch with prominent economists such as Maffeo Pantaleoni, and Luzzatti, and then there were a few survivors from a previous age, the painter Giovanni Costa who had fought with Garibaldi at the siege of Rome in 1849. And there was a group of artists and art-critics and

poets and philosophers, but none of them in touch with *Blast* or *Vortex* [respectively paper and movement created by English painter and writer Wyndham Lewis, as a derivation from Cubism and Futurism, our note] or any of those movements. Of one thing I am glad, and that is that Marx and his doctrines were always repulsive to me; human personality, the right of the individual to express himself, the distrust of bureaucracy and of stifling and interfering governments. Then the Great war and its great enthusiasms, and then the great disappointment, and then the hope that corporativism might bring a solution of the social question outside the dragooning shibboleths of Social Democracy and then the disappointment of seeing «les nains sapant sans cesse l'ouvrage des géants», and all the little Jacks in office using their little brief authority to hasten the world on to ruin. And now in my 78th year I see how utterly hollow was the faith in «PROGRESS», «ENLIGHTENMENT» and all the other shibboleths. I had worked hard and honestly to promote international relations, I had hoped that something would come of Conferences, Congresses, etc. etc. that were to bring about peace and justice, and I have seen that they were used by rascals to deceive fools. I agree with you that the only hope would be in work for «alberi e cisterni», aqueducts, bonifica, soja, arachidi, acero, and Pelopardi's soil cultivation. But my active days are over. I have all I can manage to do in helping this little adopted family of mine to keep afloat, and from morning to night I am busy with lessons —teaching young people who want to take university degrees in English literature, and who have to read the Elizabethan dramatists, and John Donne, and Pope, and then Swift and the Satirists —of whom it seems to me that Aldous Huxley with *Ape and Essence* is one of the finest— and the Romantics and I do a lot of translations but none of this remotely literary. I am a great lover of Blake. [...] <sup>14</sup>.

In these words we can find some of the key elements of Agresti's training, but also of her ideological evolution, which went from Anarchism to her conversion to Roman Catholicism and to a justification of Mussolini's corporative state. It is *the world according to Olivia Rossetti Agresti*, evolving from the optimism and idealism shared by the generation that witnessed the creation of the LN —whose diplomacy by conferences was meant to replace the period of confrontation that had led to WWI— to her expression of a «paradise-lost» feeling, while her early idealistic faith is eroded by troubling events.

In the following letter, she vindicates Italy's political maturity during the Fascist period and attributes the failure of Mussolini's corporative State to his abandonment of the real Italian spirit under negative foreign influences.

When Fascism fired the Italian imagination it was above all by seeking a solution for a world-felt need, that of harmonising the interests of capital, management, and labour in



the Guild or Corporative State. Time may yet show that the «politically immature» Italian has blazed a path along which others are travelling in many climes. The «Guild State» may yet save the world from the «Servile State».

It was when Mussolini ceased to be guided by his Italian instinct, when he attempted to link up Italy to an aggressive military power, to teach the Italian to feel contempt for the African and hatred for the Jew, that he failed. The Italian neither despises the African nor hates the Jew, in whom he sees facets of the great unitarian whole, humanity, of which each individual deserves respect and the whole forms the mystical body travelling towards its ultimate destiny.

When Fascism rejected parochialism (the individual) and internationalism (mankind) for nationalism it ceased to be Italian, and it died before the «Liberators» arrived. But a day will come when the contribution fascist Italy made to the solution of both local and universal problems will be studied and perhaps understood<sup>15</sup>.

In her prolonged correspondence with Ezra Pound, she shared some of his very controversial ideas, but not his antisemitism:

I look upon Hitler as a raving homicidal lunatic and am simply filled with disgust at the wholesale massacres of Jews under the most horrible circumstances, though I am far from being inclined to believe in every tale of «atrocities» served up by propaganda<sup>16</sup>.

### Interpreting activity

Olivia Rossetti Agresti stands out as a highly qualified woman who began her activity in the male-dominated Victorian society in which professional posts were usually occupied by men. She covers from beginning to end an era of interpreting. We can assume that her early experience as an interpreter was spontaneous, without previous specific training for the job, as was the case with most of her contemporaries and also of her future colleagues at the League of Nations. If we were to believe what she says in the novel *A Girl Among the Anarchists*, we could safely state that she was exposed to contacts and relations with people from very different countries, *foreigners of all tongues* some of whom *knew nothing of the English language*, who shared the anarchist ideas reflected in *The Tocsin (The Torch)*.

Immediately after she published that novel, she started working as an interpreter and as a secretary with David Lubin. Lubin went to Rome in 1904 with the intention of visiting the King of Italy, after having failed to convince high officials of other countries of the importance of creating an international organisation devoted to agriculture. Lubin's ideas materialised in the International Institute of Agriculture, a predecessor of the LN and of FAO. According to Agresti, it seems that

part of the responsibility for Lubin's failure in France was due to the lack of a good interpreter.

...he was unfortunate in his interpreter. A Cook's guide is hardly the person one would select to explain such a proposition as Lubin's to an economist of note. Mr. Lubin always suspected that guide of being a radical of sorts; he said he got into a debate with Yves Guyot, of which he (Lubin) understood nothing beyond the fact that the French professor got very angry; anyhow, his effort came to naught<sup>17</sup>.

She points out in these words that the interpreter's lack of extralinguistic training was the reason for the difficulty in communicating Lubin's complex ideas. It is interesting to note the existence in those days —much as it is the case also nowadays— of a category of tourist guide/interpreter, very helpful for the usual travellers' needs but hardly adequate for high level meetings. It seems that Lubin learned the lesson, because,

[h]e had not been in the city [Rome] an hour before he started work by a search for an interpreter, and it was in that capacity I met him, and took down from dictation a letter to the editor of the *American Agriculturist* of New York...<sup>18</sup>.

Agresti was Lubin's interpreter and secretary until his death in 1918. In her biography she mentions some examples of her assignments but she was not present at the interview between Lubin and Victor Emmanuel, the King of Italy:

I pointed out that there was no need for me to accompany him [to visit the King of Italy]. «Oh, yes», he replied, «you must come. If the King does not speak English, or only pidgin English, you must be there to interpret». Lubin was closeted with Victor Emmanuel for some three quarters of an hour while I sat in the little anteroom...<sup>19</sup>.

She interpreted regularly at the International Institute of Agriculture —at least until Lubin's death—, in the first conference of the International Labour Organisation in Washington in 1919, and in other international conferences before she started her regular interpreting duties at the annual Assembly meetings of the LN in Geneva, where she worked from 1922 till 1930. Her first assignment with the LN can be related not only to her previous experience but also to the recommendation of Count Attolico, an Under Secretary-General of the League, a High Commissioner for the LN in Dantzig (1920-21) and, years later, the Italian Ambassador in Germany who would inform Adolf Hitler that Italy was not ready in August 1939 to join Germany in war, an information which made Hitler cancel (temporarily) his orders to attack Poland.

Dear Captain Dennis,  
 I wish to call your particular attention to the desire expressed to me recently by Sig<sup>a</sup>. Agresti Rossetti to be placed on the reserve list of interpreters of the League of Nations. Sig<sup>a</sup>. Agresti may be said to enjoy a world reputation as an interpreter, having acted for many years past as sole interpreter for the International Institute of Agriculture at their bi-annual Assemblies, and on several occasions for the International Labour Office at their Conferences (Washington, Genoa, Geneva, etc.). She was recently in Genoa, where her interpretations both in Italian and English won her considerable distinction. I can myself give Sig<sup>a</sup>. Agresti the very highest recommendation, not only for her singular gifts as an interpreter, but for her exceptional grasp and knowledge of international economic questions. P-S. I should perhaps add that English is Mme. A.'s native tongue.  
 Signed: B. Attolico<sup>20</sup>

We can find in his comments an interesting quality assessment, which takes into account her gifts as an interpreter, that is, her communication skills and her linguistic fluency, as well as her extralinguistic knowledge of the issues dealt with in the meetings. Olivia Rossetti Agresti was aware of the importance of being familiarised with the topic and in the letter accepting her annual contract with the League in 1924, he writes the following:

If possible I would ask to interpret for the Economic and the Financial Commissions, subjects which I understand, and to be relieved from White Slaves, Obscene literature, and Noxious Drugs, subjects about which I know nothing at all<sup>21</sup>.

There are two other documents in Agresti's file at the League which are worth mentioning to illustrate two interesting facts related to the interpreters' workload in the organisation. The first one is a memorandum from Dennis, the Editor, to a Personnel officer, asking for a contract for Agresti, because of the absence of staff interpreter Russell: «In the event of Mr. Russell returning in time, I should be able to make the fullest use of the extra interpreter thus freed for documentary work, which is more in arrears than for many months past»<sup>22</sup>. It shows that staff interpreters did also written translation work during the periods in which their interpreting services were not required.

The second is another memorandum from Dennis, this time to the Under Secretary-General in charge of Internal Administration, asking for another contract for our interpreter, in fact the last one found in her LN file.

The English interpreters have been having about double work of the French, there are night sittings in sight, and the committees are about to begin. For at any rate 10 or 12

days I think her necessary. She has been authorised by the Italian Delegation to be detached for our work and I suggest that a contract should be made out for her at her usual rate of pay, i.e. 60 francs a day (15 September 1930, File *Rossetti Agresti*, LN Archives, Geneva).

At least three things should be noted. First, the unequal workload of English and French interpreters, a fact which we can witness also today, but in the opposite direction. In the League, an officially bilingual organisation, French continued (in those days) to be a more common vehicular language than English, in a proportion of two to one. Second, she was working at that time for the Italian Delegation, which means that she was required for translation and interpreting services in Italian. And third, the daily rate of 60 Swiss francs a day represents a very well paid job.

Olivia Rossetti Agresti continued interpreting presumably during the 1930's, but the only further information we have, from her unpublished memoirs, refers to her last assignment, immediately after World War II, when circumstances had changed also for the interpreting profession. In that context, it is interesting to underline her feelings and her assessment about the simultaneous interpreting mode, which would be adopted by international organisations after its success in the Nuremberg Trials. Her description coincides to a large extent with the reflections made by other former consecutive interpreters who qualified the new system as aberrant and unable to convey the nuances of the original speech. Besides, they would add, it rendered the simultaneous interpreter a machine-like element, devoid of the human touch that consecutive interpreters had undoubtedly possessed.

When World War II closed in 1945 the net result of the crusade which was to make the world safe for Democracy and assure the right of all peoples to self-determination, was that the great capitals of Central and Eastern Europe —Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Warsaw, Bucharest, Sophia, Belgrade— were behind the Iron Curtain, the Baltic Republics had been wiped out, and a ruthless Eurasian Communist tyranny was threatening the Western World, while my beloved Italy lay in ruins around me. Orwell's 1984 seemed imminent.

In 1943 I was out of my twenty-one year job with the Italian Association of Joint-Stock Companies as the Information Services, which was my branch of the work, had had to shut down during hostilities. Then in 1945 came my last appearance as an interpreter when the then Prime Minister, Alcide de Gasperi, asked me to accompany him to London where he was summoned *ad audiendum verbum* before the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Allied Powers meeting in St. James's Palace to consider the preliminaries of peace.

This was the last occasion on which I was to sit at the table with Ministers of Foreign Affairs of many countries to

interpret their words and ideas, and I think it must have been one of the last occasions on which the business of interpreting was still unmechanised. Now the interpreters, one for each language, sit secluded in little boxes, translating into a telephone-receiver the speech transmitted to them through the ear-caps they wear, and those who need translations to understand the proceedings sit in the hall and through their ear-caps hear the steady undertone of the interpreter. Of course this system saves time—a very important consideration—but the interpretation must inevitably lose the spirit and characteristics of the original. At St. James's Palace I was sitting between De Gasperi on my left and the British Foreign Secretary, the Labor member Edward Bevin, on my right. Bevin struck me as typical of the good sense and good nature that characterise the British working class to which he belonged. The meeting was presided over by the American Under-Secretary of State, markedly courteous to the Italian delegates; and midway up the table to my left was the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotoff, who made a very disagreeable impression on me. When De Gasperi had delivered his address and I had translated it into English a few comments were made, but the agenda did not provide for discussion, and the Italians were politely requested to withdraw. I remember that in the adjoining room to which we were retired the Yugoslav delegate came and spoke to me in very courteous and friendly terms. There were no further meetings calling for an interpreter, and I spent the next four days at the Italian Embassy, where I was a guest, busy translating documents for our delegation<sup>23</sup>.

Her comments about her last high-level interpreting assignment, at this late stage in her life, reflect her views about the revolutionary change in the interpreting tradition from the consecutive to the simultaneous paradigm. Her words also show that her services were required by the Italian delegation not only for oral but also written translation. They also illustrate that she was a keen observer of reality from behind the scenes. Ezra Pound was aware of the fact that Agresti, as interpreter, could not be a primary actor in the conferences, although, in his view, she should have had her own voice:

(...) UNESCO, dirty organ of usurocrats is NOT attempting to promote understanding but to impose the same swine etc. as have corrupted Europe for 2000 years. Too bad the interpretress at several dirty convegni has never been able to get a little love of truth into the buzzards she has had to interpret for. It would have been useful to TELL snake-face...<sup>24</sup>.

## Conclusions

In our view, several conclusions can be drawn from this paper. We think that historical research in the field of interpreting studies is a useful tool for training would-be interpreters and to promote a critical perspective from past practices among current practitioners. Olivia

Rossetti Agresti represents a pioneering example in the sense of being one of the few women who participated in a predominantly male environment of international conferences in the first half of the 20th century, an environment which, as interpretation is concerned, has dramatically evolved into a mostly feminised profession in our days. Although far from the literary quality of other members of her family and of other women of her time, Rossetti Agresti indeed had *a room of her own*—symbolised by the basement where she published *The Torch*—for as long as she could remember. She got into interpreting and translation through practice on the job, with no special training, as far as we know, simply taking advantage of her *natural* multilingualism and her cultural background. A *Kind seiner Zeit*, she did both interpreting and translation work—apart from teaching and lecturing—which proves the undefined contours of the professions during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Up until then, the interpreting tasks were traditionally performed by multifaceted characters, such as Rossetti Agresti, who arrived at their jobs by sheer chance. She is a metaphor of the interpreter who had a name and shone amidst their clients, astonished by the feat of the smooth crossing of the language barrier, as opposed to the anonymity of the future (present) generations. She joined the LN interpreters team thanks to her professional prestige and to the mediation of a high rank Italian official. Interpreters enjoyed then a social consideration which has taken a lot of hard work for associations like the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) to preserve. Her commonsense intuitive awareness of the importance of preparing the meetings beforehand is an example of good practices which our students should keep in mind.

Finally, her comments about the new simultaneous mode sound very much like a balance sheet of an era characterised by the consecutive mode and like a forecast of the new simultaneous paradigm which would increasingly replace the previous one.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *I Cease not to Yowl*: 17.

<sup>2</sup> «The Red Romantics» and «The Stormy Sunset - The Curtain Falls», deposited in the *Ezra Pound Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature*, at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

<sup>3</sup> File *Rossetti Agresti*, R-871, LN Archives at Geneva.

<sup>4</sup> Edited in 1998 by Demetres P. TRYPHONOPOULOS and Leon SURETTE under the title *I Cease not to Yowl* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago).

<sup>5</sup> *I Cease not to Yowl*, «Introduction» xii-xiii.



<sup>6</sup> (1903) Internet version at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/7gata10.txt>. There is a paperback version published by Bison (1992).

<sup>7</sup> University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles 1941 [1922].

<sup>8</sup> <http://webtext.library.yale.edu/wml2html/beinecke.agresti.com.html#a2>.

<sup>9</sup> *A Girl Among the Anarchists*, chapter I «A Strange Childhood».

<sup>10</sup> *I Cease not to Yowl*: 241-243.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/biog/Ross\\_WM.htm](http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/biog/Ross_WM.htm).

<sup>12</sup> «The Red Romantics»: 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> *Return to Yesterday*: 113, quoted by TRYPHONOPOULOS and SURETTE (eds.). *I Cease not to Yowl*: xv.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Olivia Rossetti Agresti to Ezra Pound, 5 November 1952, *I Cease not to Yowl*: 96-97.

<sup>15</sup> Letter of 25 February 1948, sent by Olivia Rossetti Agresti to Dallam Simpson, editor of *Four Pages*, but there is no evidence that it was published, *I Cease not to Yowl*: 9.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Olivia Rossetti Agresti to Ezra Pound, 29 September 1951, *I Cease not to Yowl*: 77.

<sup>17</sup> *David Lubin*: 168.

<sup>18</sup> *David Lubin*: 169-170.

<sup>19</sup> *David Lubin*: 180-181.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Attolico to Dennis, the LN Editor, responsible for translation and interpretation services, dated in Geneva 23 May 1922, File *Rossetti Agresti*, LN Archives, Geneva.

<sup>21</sup> Handwritten letter from Olivia Rossetti Agresti to Dennis, dated in Rome, 25 July 1924, File *Rossetti Agresti*, LN Archives, Geneva.

<sup>22</sup> 8 May 1928, File *Rossetti Agresti*, LN Archives.

<sup>23</sup> *Anecdote of an Interpreter*, Chapter XV. «The Stormy Sunset-The Curtain Falls»: 12-14.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Ezra Pound to Olivia Rossetti Agresti, 27 July 1954, *I Cease not to Yowl*: 162.

## RESUMEN

### Anecdotario de una intérprete: Olivia Rossetti Agresti (1875-1980)

Utilizando como título el que la propia Rossetti Agresti quiso darle a unas memorias que nunca se publicaron, el autor repasa la historia profesional de esta intérprete, que abarca toda la primera mitad del siglo XX, cuando la interpretación se consolidó como profesión. Rossetti Agresti perteneció a la familia anglo-italiana de los Rossetti y estuvo relacionada con círculos culturales de los dos países. Fue secretaria e intérprete de David Lubin, cuyo Instituto puede considerarse como predecesor de la FAO y, por tanto, del sistema de organizaciones internacionales. Mantuvo una larga y nutrida correspondencia con Ezra Pound, de la que algunas cartas se utilizan como fuente para este artículo. Su evolución ideológica es un reflejo de las diferentes corrientes del siglo XX y sus observaciones sobre la interpretación, en la Sociedad de Naciones y en otros ámbitos, constituyen testimonios valiosos para quien se interese por la historia de la traducción y la interpretación.

En la versión electrónica de *Pliegos de Yuste* (<http://www.pliegosdeyuste.com>) se hallará la versión castellana de este artículo.

