

**Dino Buzzati and Anglophone Culture:  
The Re-use of Visual and Narrative Texts  
in His Fantastic Fiction**

Submitted by Valentina Polcini to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Italian, July 2010.

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between Buzzati's fiction and Anglophone culture, particularly the re-use of narrative and visual sources in his works. The analysis of the intertextual stratification in Buzzati brings to the fore the author's urge to convey the significance of imagination through the fantastic mode. It also reveals an optimistic and playful side of Buzzati, which lies behind a pervading pessimistic tone. Buzzati's re-working of images from other authors and of generic *topoi* is aimed at decrying the loss of imagination occurring in the transition to adulthood as well as a general disregard of fantasy characterizing modern technologized societies. Nonetheless, intertextual practices are a means to recover and originally re-present the fantastic imagery conveyed by the artists from whom Buzzati drew inspiration.

Buzzati was especially keen on Anglophone literature and art; hence, the focus of this thesis, which is divided into four chapters. Chapter One deals with Buzzati's re-use in his fiction of drawings by the English illustrator Arthur Rackham; this is a process in which visual memory and intermedia translation are paramount. Chapter Two investigates the link between Joseph Conrad's heroes and the characterization of Buzzati's (anti-)heroic figures; they are trapped in the mechanisms of lack of courage and time but eventually find their own ways to self-redemption. Chapter Three considers Buzzati's reversal and borrowing of *topoi* belonging to the sea monster story and the ghost story; these practices are aimed at emphasizing the importance of fantasy. Chapter Four places Buzzati's Christmas fiction between the Italian and the Dickensian tradition, showing how Buzzati re-works the genre's stereotypes to recreate the Christmas spirit.

Whether Buzzati engages in an intertextual dialogue with individual authors or literary traditions, examining the connections he established with Anglophone culture allows a reassessment of his work. Indeed, the Buzzatian fantastic reveals itself as poised between gloominess and faith in the redeeming power of imagination; the fantastic alternatives Buzzati offers against the dullness of reality also evince his enjoyment of the artistic creation *per se*.

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