

## Carlo Emilio Gadda's *Luigi di Francia*

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### ABSTRACT

The work that Gadda prepared for publication from the series of broadcasts on Louis XIII-XV of France during 1952 has largely been overlooked by critics. It is the aim of this article to show that, although there are certain unusual features in the text of *I Luigi di Francia* which arise from its origins in radio scripts, the work is recognisably Gaddian in its main stylistic and thematic concerns. In tracing some of the background to the text, due acknowledgement is made of the scholarly work already done on the history of the text by Gianmarco Gaspari, the compiler of the Notes on this text for the Garzanti edition of Gadda's *Opere*; Gaspari's implied conclusion that this is not the least Gaddian of the author's work, and his important conclusions about the degree to which the work was based on source material, offers the opportunity here for an analysis and explicit statement of the nature of the text and of its reflection of significant points in the span of Gadda's writing.

Gadda's own, cautiously optimistic comment on *I Luigi di Francia*, made to Livio Garzanti on the eve of its publication, is recorded by Gianmarco Gaspari in his *Note* to accompany the Garzanti edition of the *Opere*: "un lavoro non privo di qualche interesse, e, in ogni modo, un po' inconsueto".<sup>1</sup> The word "inconsueto" might puzzle us today, and we might wonder whether Gadda was only referring to readers' expectations that this new text would be akin to his recently published narrative, which had been described as "baroque". *I Luigi di Francia* is instead a fairly sober treatment of factual information about 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century France; neither the less flamboyant style nor the subject matter is in fact totally out of character, but perhaps not all readers then remembered the reviews and essays of earlier decades that had clearly signalled Gadda's interest in history. There has been relatively little critical interest shown in *I Luigi di Francia* which suggests that it was, and perhaps still is, considered uncharacteristic of Gadda's writing.<sup>2</sup> With the benefit of the scholarly publications that his writing has since received, we can take a more comprehensive view of his work than was possible in 1964, the year *I Luigi di Francia* was published; readers today know that any of Gadda's writing is likely to reflect his core concerns and that it is difficult to confine him as a writer. The following discussion, therefore, takes up the implication in Gaspari's comment that *I Luigi di*

*Francia* “è potuta sembrare la meno ‘gaddiana’” of his works (Gaspari 1992: 959, *emphasis added*), and considers the connections between this text and other areas of Gaddian territory.

The volume published by Garzanti in 1964 as *I Luigi di Francia* originated in the spoken word as a series of talks produced in 1952 for the *Terzo Programma* during Gadda’s period of employment with the *Radio Italiana*. It had been intended that the series would include the Kings of France from Louis XIII to XVI, as had been stated in the first of the announcements carried in the *Radiocorriere*. In the issue for 23-29 March 1952, under the heading “I quattro Luigi: Luigi XIII”, Gadda wrote.<sup>3</sup>

Luigi XIII, figlio di Enrico IV e di Maria de’ Medici è il primo dei quattro Luigi che dalla morte del Navarrino alla Rivoluzione si succedettero per centottant’anni sul trono di Francia (coi soli intervalli delle due Reggenze). I suddetti Luigi daranno il nome a quattro trasmissioni del Terzo Programma nel corso del 1952.

In the event, however, the radio programmes did not go beyond Louis XV, and this is also the case with the text that has come down to us.

The twelve-year delay in publishing *I Luigi di Francia* was not a record in terms of the editorial process surrounding Gadda’s texts, as we know from the comments of various colleagues involved in the process; this was partly because of the writer’s working practice, but also because these years were ones of intense literary activity for him. His complaint to his cousin about the “furia libidinosa” of editorial houses to get their hands on his unpublished work gives us a hint of the exasperation Gadda experienced in relation to such matters during this period, and perhaps explains the nature of this work which in various ways reflects its spoken origin. Although it would be interesting to have more details about his recasting of the radio programmes for a reading public, it seems that the gaps in our knowledge about this process are likely to remain. The conclusions drawn in this regard by Gaspari, after his examination of the relevant material in the Garzanti Archives, are that, in the absence of documentation for the radio transmissions, it is simply not possible to say whether the printed text of *I Luigi di Francia* corresponds to the scripts transmitted in 1952 (Gaspari 1992: 976), except in the case of the first programme on Luigi XIII which was published in the periodical *L’Approdo* in the April-June issue of that year.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the absence now of the scripts, other indications suggest that they provided a hinterland that shaped the literary concept of the later printed text. In particular, a sign of the text’s provenance is to be detected in the relative simplicity of its presentation. The frequent use of uncommented *testimonianze* in *I Luigi di Francia* is a constant reminder of the original aims of the radio programme to structure the material so that it could easily be apprehended through the spoken word alone; it is likely that much of the narrative distance that accompanies the quoted or paraphrased material in the text is present as a result of the original choices regarding presentation to a radio audience. Apart from this unusual preponderance of factual material in proportion to comment, there is the overall absence of Gadda’s more far-branching syntax to signal that this text was not based on his usual narrative preparation.

To compensate, possibly, for the loss of the acoustic effects of the original radio transmissions, readers of the 1964 and 1992 Garzanti editions of *I Luigi di Francia* (though not the readers of the edition in the *Opere* edited by Dante Isella) are given an

extra-textual aid in the thirty-seven photographic illustrations that accompany the text, which is comprised of three sections, with a total of thirty-one sub-units and a final “Entr’Acte”. The photographs provide a pictorial compendium of the important figures selected for treatment from these reigns, mainly for the years 1601-1774. The radio broadcasts had also been provided with a supplement in the form of the already mentioned programme notes which were published in the *Radiocorriere* to precede the transmissions on 25 March (Luigi XIII), 21 July, then repeated slightly abbreviated on 22 September (Luigi XIV, *prima parte*), 24 September (Luigi XIV, *seconda parte*), and 11 December (Luigi XV).<sup>5</sup> These notes offer a further dimension for our reading of the printed text.

Compared with the text of *I Luigi*, the first programme note is immediately recognisable as having been written solely for a reader, rather than for a listener: in it Gadda was using the style he usually displayed in his essays; the language and syntax follow that range and balance of expression that link it to the “maniera [...] logico-razionalistica [...] seria, cerebrale” defined by the author almost thirty years earlier.<sup>6</sup> The note supplies a brief overview with the kind of modern judgement that was clearly not intended for the transmissions and that is still only a minor facet of the printed text:

Luigi XIII è figura meno determinata e meno significativa del Re Sole, Luigi XIV, e del Re Beniamino, Luigi XV, e forse perfino di Luigi XVI [...] Il tempo di Luigi XIII e del suo regno è segnato dal vigore intellettuale e dalla genialità politica di Richelieu, così come la sua personalità di uomo e di sovrano è dominata da quella del grande Cardinale. Sotto il suo regno tuttavia vengono a precipitare i fermenti e a delinarsi le promesse e le forme pratiche che caratterizzeranno per due secoli la politica dello Stato francese. (*SGF I*: 1012)

Among the variety of areas alluded to in the note concerning the two programmes dedicated to Luigi XIV, there is the following summary on the effective policy of this king, a summary clearly made with the benefit of the hindsight gained from subsequent history:

Luigi accoglie ed el[a]bora le “istanze” della politica francese (unità, ordine, potenza), imprime loro il carattere della grandezza [...]. Talora in dissidio aperto con Roma, revoca (d’altra parte) l’editto di Nantes, la carta delle libertà ugonotte. [...] Accudisce a montare pezzo per pezzo la gran macchina dell’amministrazione [...]. Egli è, forse, maggiore dell’opinione che si ha di lui, anche dagli storici “imparziali”. [...] La vita di Luigi XIV, il regno, la Corte, hanno conosciuto ore drammatiche [...] non ultima causa del formarsi di quel desiderio di “ordine accentratore”, desiderio, oltre che del re, di tutta l’opinione francese, a un certo momento. (*SGF I*: 1012-14)

The final programme note, that concerning the reign of Luigi XV, also casts a sweeping glance over a general historical perspective and adds a catalogue of the events and patterns of behaviour the author identifies as most exemplary in creating an impression of the period. In relation to Louis XV, the note reads:

I successivi “tempi” del regno sono contrassegnati dal succedersi dei ministri e delle amanti del Re. [...] Il lungo regno è ricco di avvenimenti interni più ancora che di esterni. [...] La rivoluzione “aristocratica” dei Parlamenti (assemblee di giudici) è, dopo la Fronda, la seconda prova, o almeno il secondo assaggio per quel futuro e non lontano capovolgimento del regime monarchico che sarà il ’92. [...] La vita di Luigi l’Amatissimo fu indubbiamente accesa non soltanto dal piacere della caccia, ma dall’amore delle belle. (*SGF I*: 1015-16)

The first of these notes outlined the direction the series would follow, i.e. it would give attention to the “eventi di più significativo o di più drammatico risalto, alle zone di più colore nella vistosa fattispecie, alle ombre psicologiche dei personaggi” (pp. 1011-12). The areas indicated here tend to counter any expectations that may have been raised earlier about the intentions of the programme coordinator: rather than critical-historical analyses of the periods, the announcement emphasises the representational nature of the programmes which are to be illustrated by “testimonianze dell’epoca, scritti vari, e spunti dai memoriali e dai diari” (eight are named, as well as “anonimi”), and “pagine di storici e scrittori a noi più vicini”.

We have now no way of assessing the effect of Gadda’s original presentation on his listeners, but we know that he had become aware of the specific requirements for communicating to a radio public. In at least two instances we have his statements of the best practice to follow in writing for the microphone, the first of these being in the advice he sent to Gianfranco Contini in February 1951 concerning the preparation of a programme of *conversazioni* on the *stilnovisti* for transmission later that year. His letter to Contini says:

Ogni conversazione dovrebbe comprendere un tuo largo intervento storico-esegetico-critico, anche biografico nella misura dell’utile, indi una lettura del o dei poeti presentati. La trasmissione avverrebbe a due o più voci: una voce leggerebbe il tuo testo, le rimanenti voci i testi poetici. Puoi anche ricorrere a larghe citazioni intercalate nel tuo discorso, ove ti sembri inopportuno esibire integralmente un dato componimento. [...] Unico vincolo: quello di una sicura accessibilità dell’esposto da parte dell’ascoltatore-tipo (molto tipo). Il testo radiofonico non si può rileggere; fugge davanti agli occhi di chi ascolta.<sup>7</sup>

In this letter Gadda may simply have been advising Contini of the norms already established at the *RAI* prior to his arrival a few months earlier (in October 1950), but he was later to take a more active role in producing guidelines, since in 1953 he was entrusted with writing the booklet *Norme per la redazione di un testo radiofonico*.<sup>8</sup>

It would be reasonable to suppose that in writing this set of instructions for the use of contributors to the *Terzo programma* Gadda made capital of his own experiences the year before in composing and transmitting his programmes on the *Luigi di Francia*. A disciplined approach to a literary task, such as conforming to norms that had been shown by experience to lead to a successful transmission, was not alien to Gadda’s literary practice which, we now know from his early (1924) preparatory notes, his “Cahier d’études” for the *Racconto italiano di ignoto del novecento*, had begun with the most rigorous planning and critical assessment of his own literary capacity and preparation. In December 1951, in an interview with Massimo Franciosa, Gadda remarked on the influence that his own technical experience had had on his writing, acknowledging his responsiveness to technical precision and his tendency towards “una disciplina espressiva eminentemente concreta”.<sup>9</sup> By the time of this interview Gadda had already been employed with the *RAI* for little more than a year, carrying out duties allied to the technical aspects of the writer’s activities and thus his reflections on the interaction between his own different careers were well-founded.

The opening emphasis in the *Norme* on the guiding principles of “accessibilità fisica, cioè acustica e intellettuale [...], chiarezza, limpidezza del dettato, gradevole ritmo” led to considerations about solving the “problema ‘durata’”, and under this aspect the

structural choices were made for the original script. In writing about the strategy of using a variety of voices, Gadda mentions again “il metodo della citazione, frammessa al discorso di chi parla”, and then adds the following advice concerning the extent to which the *testimonianze* should be used in order to represent “un ambiente” or “un’epoca della cultura”: “devono superare in estensione il commento critico, l’esposto informativo: il quadro, in altri termini, non dev’esser sopraffatto dalla cornice” (*SGF I*: 1083). In other words, as in a dramatic presentation, the pre-existing text enhanced by the presentation-performance is all-important and the expert, having chosen and edited the material, is now meant to withdraw to a space reminiscent of Manzoni’s “cantuccio”. The principle of enlivening the presentation through a variety of voices was maintained in the text of *I Luigi di Francia*, perhaps for a range of reasons but among them no doubt also for the reason that the technique had been shown to have worked.<sup>10</sup> We might be a little suspicious of the fact that Gadda’s text should continue to rely to any extent on quotations from the work of others, given his desire for independence, as indicated by the following statement from an interview in December 1957:

il mio scrivere palesa, purtroppo una insofferenza delle formulazioni espressive che mi sono via via ritrovato nelle camere timpaniche e la costante ricerca d’una espressione a mio giudizio adeguata ed esatta: sciolta, comune, dagli ancoraggi di ogni petizione di principio.<sup>11</sup>

However, in *I Luigi di Francia* the use made of quotations is not quite what it seems, and it could be said that in his treatment of his material Gadda is being playful. The opening segments (concerning Luigi XIII) cite works from the period, with attributions at the foot of the page, and are accompanied by brief parenthetical comment from the author. By the third segment the structure on the page is divided between quoted and unquoted passages, apparently giving way to a greater authorial presence, and then more and more the references are introduced in such a way as to suggest a paraphrase of the original. Some segments, approximately one-third, make no reference to citations. One might at first wonder if in the preparation of the printed text the author had decided to move away from the original structure of reporting voices. In this regard, however, the details given by Gaspari in relation to his research into the sources are interesting (Gaspari 1992: 967-74): Gadda’s translations of the French sources, like his translations in other instances, show a propensity to reflect his own expression, even his own additional phrases; also, Gaspari notes that in some instances material in *I Luigi* has been based on the work of Pierre Gaxotte, one of the “storici e scrittori a noi più vicini” mentioned but not otherwise specified at the end of the programme note for Luigi XIII.

The second attribution in the text (for a quotation providing details of the official ceremony of baptism, in September 1606, of the Dauphin, the future Louis XIII) is given, without further detail, as “Dall’inviato speciale del *Mercure Français*”, which raises further questions about the author’s sources, and his keeping faith with his readers. Apart from the fact that the term “inviato speciale” draws attention, discordantly, to its modern meaning of newspaper correspondent, one wonders whether the attribution to the *Mercure Français* and not to its earlier name of *Mercure de France* was simply a *svista* or an intentional blurring of the level of authenticity of the source cited.<sup>12</sup>

Without a more detailed study of the correspondences between possible sources and the text of *I Luigi*, it is difficult to gauge the degree of Gadda’s transforming-deforming impact on the material he was working with. In the presence of the text, however, it is

possible to catch echoes of one of the most consistent of Gadda's signature marks: his tone of irony. Whatever the tonal level handed on from the source material, in the restatement of the material on the page of our present text there is the intermittent Gaddian tone that turns on the juxtaposition of disparate elements (tropes, linguistic levels, even narrative segments), bringing the whole sentence, paragraph, page or larger unit into imbalance and undermining the inherited status (linguistic or factual) of the utterance. As an illustration of Gadda's application of this strategy in *I Luigi*, the following passage in the section on Luigi XIV is typical:

"Fronda!". Un errore di traduzione dal francese che ha avuto fortuna. "Fronde", in francese manco si sogna di voler dire fronda. Vuol dire "tirasassi", cioè fionda o frombola: "instrument", sostiene autorevolmente il lessicografo [...] "Frondeur" è il fromboliere. Frondeur per eccellenza il temibile giovanotto che riuscì, con un sasso ben piazzato, a far fuori Golia. Michelangelo, infatti, non ha ommesso di corredargli la mano del sullodato "instrument". "Ceux de la fronde", "quelli del tirasassi": la ragazzaglia, o la teppaglia [...] la futura "sainte canaille" dei poeti della rivoluzione; in senso esteso il popolo e il Parlamento di Parigi insorti e uniti contro Mazarino e la Regina, contro il ministro italiano e la reggente spagnola.

La Fronda è una grave crisi di tipo rivoluzionario (l'ultima), che ha interrotto, o almeno ritardato, l'evoluzione della Francia verso la monarchia assoluta. Anche prima della decapitazione di Carlo Stuart – che si perfezionò a Whitehall il 30 gennaio 1649, pochi minuti dopo le due pomeridiane – si può ravvisare nel contegno del Parlamento e del popolo di Parigi un certo "spirito di imitazione" nei confronti del Long Parliament e in genere della rivoluzione inglese. I buoni esempi sono contagiosi. A parte l'imitazione, e l'esempio d'oltre-Manica, la Fronda rappresentò il moto d'insofferenza e l'indisciplina di un po' tutti i ceti e le classi: in un paese stanco di trent'anni di patemi d'animo o di guerra combattuta, economicamente esaurito, che vedeva Mazarino arricchirsi con la strafottenza del despota, e la noncuranza dello straniero, sui malanni di tutto un popolo. [...]

All'uscita dal solenne Te Deum cantato il 26 agosto a Notre-Dame, per rendere grazie all'Onnipotente della vittoria, si provvide ad arrestare alcuni parlamentari, i più faziosi, i più protervi. Il coraggio e la sconsideratezza di Anna, in quell'occasione, furono degni della tremenda stangata che Condé aveva inferto all'Arciduca. [...]

Il Parlamento, in corpo e deputazione, si reca allora a Palazzo per chiedere i fermati. La Regina aveva appena finito di pranzare [...] Rossa in volto, piena di rosbiff e di collera, "Ve li restituirò", disse, "ma morti!". E sparì, sbattendo l'uscio sul viso dei rappresentanti.

[...] Altri tornarono a Palazzo, implorano. La Regina era più furiosa e più paonazza che mai. Le principesse le si inginocchiarono davanti. Mazarino tremava. Codesta donna insensata, tutta presa nella digestione de' suoi arrostiti, parlava di far appendere quei disgraziati alle finestre di Palazzo.

Solo quando la principessa d'Inghilterra uscì a dire che vedeva Mazarino seguir la sorte di Stafford, il ministro inglese impiccato dalla rivoluzione, solo allora il bel Giulio si decise. Due lettere con sigillo, a tambur battente: "Liberare immediatamente Broussel". (*SGF II*: 143-48)

In the 1929 essay "Le belle lettere e i contributi delle tecniche", Gadda's affirmation of each writer's contribution to a developing cultural entity is consistent with such stylistic measures as he adopted above and elsewhere in creating his *pastiche*:

La tecnica d'uno scrittore tallisce in certa misura da uno sfondo preindividuale che è la comune adozione del linguaggio vale a dire il consuntivo semantico (signiferatore) d'una storia-esperienza che sia stata raggiunta e consolidata [...] L'adozione del linguaggio è riferibile a un lavoro collettivo, storicamente capitalizzato in una massa idiomatica, storicamente consequenziato in uno sviluppo, o, più generalmente, in una deformazione [...]

Insisto sul concetto di lavoro collettivo e di sviluppo storico in che esso si manifesta: lo scrittore ha davanti a sé delle realtà storiche, esterne, come il cavatore ha dei cubi di granito da rimuovere.

[...] Lo scrittore a sua posta rimuove e coordina queste realtà date (storiche, esterne), o le ricrea, o, meglio, conferisce ad esse quel supersignificato che è il suo modo d'espandersi".<sup>13</sup>

Turning for a moment from considerations of a formal nature, we find in the subject matter of *I Luigi di Francia* an area of interest that belongs to one of Gadda's many reading passions, attested to by listings of his collection of French diarists, memorialists and writers of histories. However, the use he makes of history in *I Luigi di Francia* is literary-cultural rather than professional, as can be seen from the treatment he accords here to the French monarchy, in the attention he gives to a series of close-up portraits or comments with illustrative, and rarely analytical, value. The narrator's skill in creating a total impression from selected aspects of significance is what draws our attention throughout, and that total impression is consonant with the concern we meet elsewhere in his writing to record the continuing development of interrelationships in the inhabited world. His early essays and reviews, especially those concerning historical topics, offer a consistently-stated world-view which fits neatly into the narrative theories exemplified in the passage quoted above:

Il modo stesso per cui [i sognatori] si inoltrano nell'astrazione, il meccanismo attuante la fantasia li induce a non veder più il contenuto della vita interpretata come successione temporale, quindi come attività, quindi come attività storicamente consequenziata e legata ad effetti, quindi come dovere. (*SGF I*: 562)

In questo suo studio [...] Riccardo Bacchelli accumula vasti materiali informativi ai fini d'un documentato rapporto circa le condizioni dello Stato Estense in sul trapasso dal quattordicesimo al quindicesimo secolo. [...] Egli deriva questa sua documentazione da fonti le più diverse [...] da tutto insomma che possa cospirare a una rappresentazione completa del mezzo, a una relazione vividamente ambientatrice.[...] In fondo si svolge qui un processo storicamente consequenziato, sfociante all'unità politica del territorio, detta nel cinquecento "monarchia". Né diverso processo né meno crude lotte conobbero la Francia dei Re Cristiani al formarsi nella sua unità [...] (*SGF I*: 732-736)

La storiografia presuppone una memoria, una percezione del nostro essere di genti o famiglie umane, che sia vasta e profonda al possibile. Dobbiamo vederci e sentirci consecuzione vivente di chi ha vissuto. (*SGF I*: 833)<sup>14</sup>

The "processo storicamente consequenziato" that he so applauded in other writers is recognisably the process Gadda himself was intending to convey through narrative terms in *I Luigi di Francia*. Although this text shifts its focus from the normal milieu of Gadda's writing, the Italian society of the first half of the twentieth century, to the narrower social span of the French Court in the century and a half preceding the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the author's gaze remains as attentive as ever to human interaction, however inconsequential it may seem in a wider perspective, for what it may reveal about the multiple causes of future outcomes.

In this conjunction of social and literary-cultural expression, *I Luigi di Francia* shows that it exemplifies a number of the characteristics we find in Gadda's writing, and reinforces the theory and practice of his career from the 1920s to this point; the relative serenity throughout the text is in keeping with the fact that this is among the last of his writings, one in which the effortless blend of linguistic and cultural signs sits lightly on the page. In the sense that it is a work of maturity carried with grace and elegance, one can agree that Bàrberi Squarotti's definition of it as a "divertimento 'storico'"<sup>15</sup> is fitting.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gianmarco Gaspari *I Luigi di Francia. Note ai Testi* in *Opere di Carlo Emilio Gadda IV, Saggi Giornali Favole II*, C. Vela, G. Gaspari, G. Pinotti, F. Gavazzeni, D. Isella, M. A. Terzoli (eds) (Milan: Garzanti, 1992), pp. 957-89, at p. 960. This most informative essay resulting from Gaspari’s research into the history of *I Luigi di Francia* has been of great assistance in the writing of this article. Reference to the text of *I Luigi di Francia* is to this volume, pp. 85-211.

<sup>2</sup> Even his cousin Piero Gadda Conti, one of the earliest readers of the printed text, tells us that he was disconcerted enough at its publication to raise with Gadda his doubts about the “opportunità della pubblicazione de *I Luigi di Francia*, ricavati da sue conversazioni radiofoniche”. Cf. Piero Gadda Conti, *Le confessioni di Carlo Emilio Gadda* (Milan: Pan Editrice, 1974), p. 126. In the continuation of this passage, Gadda Conti includes the relevant part of Gadda’s reply to him of 26 August 1964: “*I Luigi di Francia* mi sono stati presi a forza [...] dopo trattative con la RAI, da un editore-benefattore. Il titolo non è



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mia invenzione: l'ho dovuto accettare, data la solita furia libidinosa con cui gli stampatori investono i miei manoscritti ancora disponibili. Ecco da dove il Luigi è 'saltato fuori' per usare la tua corruciata espressione”.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the section “I quattro Luigi” which groups the relevant announcements of these programmes under *Scritti dispersi in Opere III, Saggi Giornali Favole I*, L. Orlando, C. Martignoni, D. Isella (eds) (Milan: Garzanti, 1991), pp. 1011-1016, at p. 1011.

<sup>4</sup> In the case of the first transmission, however, Gaspari advises that “È da ritenere che esso [Luigi XIII] coincida pressoché alla lettera con quello tempestivamente pubblicato nel numero 2, aprile-giugno [1952, pp. 35-54] dell'*Approdo* [...]” (cf. *SGF II*, pp. 963-64). A comparison of the article in *L'Approdo* with the first section of the text of *I Luigi di Francia* shows that differences in the latter mostly involve slight changes of wording without alteration to the sense. However, on page 48 of the *Approdo* article, at the end of the sub-section “Il peggio è facile, il meglio è difficile”, there is authorial comment that is not carried forward into the printed volume: “Così, o press'a poco, dovrebbe continuare il giornale radio che volesse riassumere gli incredibili avvenimenti dell'epoca. Noi gireremo la chiavetta su una più amabile rubrica”.

<sup>5</sup> “I quattro Luigi: Luigi XIII” in the *Radiocorriere*, XXIX, n. 13 (23-29 March 1952), p. 13; “I quattro Luigi: Luigi XIV”, *ibid.*, n. 30 (20-26 July 1952), p. 12; “I quattro Luigi di Francia: Luigi XV”, *ibid.*, n. 50 (7-13 December 1952), p.13; cf. “I quattro Luigi”, in *Scritti dispersi, SGF I*, pp. 1011-16.

<sup>6</sup> The relevant note begins: “Le maniere che mi sono più famigliari sono la (a) *logico-razionalistica*, paretiana, seria, cerebrale – E la (b) *umoristico-ironica*, apparentemente seria, dickens-panzini. Abbastanza bene la (c) umoristico seria manzoniana: cioè lasciando il gioco umoristico ai soli fatti, non al modo d'esprimerli: l'espressione è seria, umana: (vedi miei diarii, autobiografie)”. The passage continues, listing two further *maniere*. Cf. the “Nota Cr 2. – (24 marzo 1924 – Ore 16.30)” in his *Racconto italiano di ignoto del novecento (cahier d'études)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), now in *Opere V\* Scritti Vari e Postumi*, A. Silvestri, C. Vela, D. Isella, P. Italia, G. Pinotti (eds) (Milan: Garzanti, 1993), pp. 379-613, at p. 396.

<sup>7</sup> Carlo Emilio Gadda, *Lettere a Gianfranco Contini a cura del destinatario (1934/1967)* (Milan: Garzanti, 1988), pp. 75-76.

<sup>8</sup> The first edition on sale to the public was that published by Edizioni RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana (Turin, 1973); in his Preface to this edition Leone Piccioni says “In quello stesso anno (1953) Gadda si dette a preparare, sempre per la radio, una serie di ampie conversazioni sui Luigi di Francia che raccolse in volume diversi anni più tardi. Singolare notare che, per lo più, nella stesura di quei testi si attenne quanto più era possibile a quelle Norme che aveva dettato, non solo per gli altri, ma evidentemente, anche per se medesimo” (at p. 8). As indicated, others have situated the writing and

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broadcasting of *I Luigi* firmly in the year 1952. All further references to the text are taken from the edition in *SGF I*, pp. 1081-91.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. “*Per favore, mi lasci nell’ombra*”. *Interviste 1950-1972*, ed. C. Vela (Milan: Adelphi, 1993), p. 252; Gadda is reported as saying, in the interview published in *La Fiera letteraria*, VI, 48, 16 December 1951, pp. 1-2, “Provenendo dal lavoro ingegneresco, sono stato largamente influenzato, anche nella produzione letteraria, da un certo tecnicismo – sia nel linguaggio sia nel contenuto narrativo. Ho espresso un tale punto di vista su *Solaria*, nel 1927, in un saggio dal titolo: ‘Il linguaggio e l’approdo espressivo delle tecniche’. In tale saggio dicevo sostanzialmente [...] che molte volte il linguaggio tecnico raggiunge una sua chiarezza, una precisione, una autorevolezza – vale a dire una forza di ‘precisione’ – che può mancare a un linguaggio più estroso e meno carico di responsabilità espressive.[...] Sia le visioni di guerra, sia quelle del lavoro, mi hanno innegabilmente costretto a una disciplina espressiva eminentemente concreta, che dovrebbe costituire di per sé una validità in letteratura”.

<sup>10</sup> The reasons for Gadda’s retaining the basic format of the radio scripts in the printed text can only be imagined (though foremost among these reasons there may have been the need to simplify his task when faced with the difficulty of keeping abreast of the other demands being made on him). In any case, this is a work of his mature years and perhaps we need to take more account of his own description, in the “Intervista al microfono” (1950) in *I viaggi la morte* (cf. *SGF I*, pp. 502-505) of the changes in his work over the years.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. “Quattro domande” attached to the interview by Alberto Cavallari, carried in the *Corriere d’Informazione* (afternoon edition), 13-14 December, 1957, p. 3, now in “*Per favore, mi lasci nell’ombra*”, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> A search of relevant catalogues leaves a doubt also about the possibility of a date as early as 1606 for the *Mercure di France*.

<sup>13</sup> This text was published in *Solaria* in 1929; cf. *SGF I*, p. 475.

<sup>14</sup> These passages were first published as follows: the essay “I viaggi, la morte” in *Solaria*, II, n. 4 (April 1927), 21-49 and n. 5 (May 1927), 28-36; the review of Riccardo Bacchelli, *La congiura di Don Giulio d’Este* in *Solaria*, VI, n. 11 (November 1931), 49-55; the review of Riccardo Bacchelli, *Il mulino del Po* in *L’Ambrosiano*, 23 February 1939, 3.

<sup>15</sup> *La narrativa italiana del dopoguerra* (Rocca San Casciano: Cappelli, 1968), p. 43.