

BARICCO IN ROSSINI'S MIRROR

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Abstract. *This paper provides a comparative analysis of Alessandro Baricco's examination of Rossini's operas from both a musical-philosophical perspective and in relation to his literary works. This simultaneous examination encompasses, on the one hand, the theoretical perspectives articulated by the author in the essay *Genius on the Run: Two Essays on the Musical Theater of Gioachino Rossini*, as well as within a specific series of plays titled *Totem*, and on the other hand, selected passages from Baricco's novels. Implicit in this study is the assertion that numerous themes and processes acknowledged by the author as distinctly Rossini's may also be attributed to Baricco himself. They share a commonality in dismantling established conventions, questioning the notion of purposefulness, and challenging the absoluteness of the concept of madness, a persistent emphasis on themes such as journey, change, impermanence, imaginary elements and rhythms. Beyond the previously cited sources, the research extended to encompass eight additional literary works by Baricco.*

Key words: *Rossini, opera, essay, madness, dream, journey.*

1. INTRODUCTION: ROSSINI AND BARICCO

The beginnings of the career of today's world-famous Italian writer, Alessandro Baricco (1958-), were shaped by two dominant areas of interest at that time, philosophy and music. In 1980, he completed his philosophy studies at the University of Turin, defending a thesis in the realm of aesthetics of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin with the famous Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. He is also skilled at playing the piano and is regarded as a knowledgeable enthusiast of classical music. His first work *Genius on the Run: Two Essays on the Musical Theater of Gioachino Rossini (Il genio in fuga. Duesaggisulteatromusicaled I GioacchinoRossini)*, published in 1988 by the publishing house Einaudi, represent a

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creative synthesis of the knowledge acquired in the fields of philosophy and music up to that time.

Genius on the Run is an absolutely personal, philosophical analysis of Rossini's operas, which provides an insight into both an original vision of the great composer's artistic oeuvre and the essence of Baricco's poetics itself. This essay allows the reader to understand that Baricco's novels are the fruit of a "conscious and clear aesthetic-philosophical choice" (Nicewicz 2010, 122). Although his world fame has been brought to him primarily by his novels embraced enthusiastically by the reading public, literary criticism exhibits a more reserved response. Baricco's numerous collections of essays have been equally read and translated, which, unlike his novels, are regarded by literary criticism as the pinnacle of his creative achievement. Although a profound admirer and connoisseur of classical music, particularly opera, and even hosting a series of shows on RAI 3 titled *Love is a Dart* (*L'amore è un dardo*)¹, Baricco shares a unique connection with Rossini, to whom he dedicates his inaugural work. He perceives Rossini as a significant revolutionary in opera music, indirectly aligning himself with the composer by attributing to Rossini's work qualities that literary criticism and ordinary readers unmistakably recognize as hallmarks of Baricco's poetics. Thus, in contemplating Rossini, his work, and his aesthetics, the author effectively establishes the foundations of his own poetics and aesthetics.

On the other hand, Rossini also gains from Baricco's deep admiration. As a globally acclaimed writer, Baricco redirects the focus of the cultural audience to his cherished composer, bringing resonance to Rossini's name and work through his philosophical and musical analyses. Baricco received the honor of having his words, in both Italian and English, featured at the entrance of the Rossini National Museum in Pesaro, established in 2019. For Baricco, Rossini is, and will always be, a genius on the run.

He was a genius on the run.
From his times, from mediocrity,
from the revolution,
from music of the future,
from his country, from obviousness,
from pedants, from modernity.
Of course, like everyone else,
also from himself.

Era un genio in fuga.
Dal suo tempo, dalla mediocrità,
dalla rivoluzione,
dalla musica del futuro,
dalla sua terra, dalle ovvietà,
dai pedanti, dalla modernità.
E ovviamente, come tutti,
da se stesso (Museo Nazionale Rossini)

2. GENIUS ON THE RUN – OPERA BUFFA AND TOTEM "COMPLETE AND ORGANIZED MADNESS"

His work entitled *Genius on the Run, Two Essays on the Musical Theater of Gioachino Rossini* (*Il genio in fuga. Due saggi sul teatro musicale di Gioacchino Rossini*), consists of two essays. The first is an essay on Rossini's comic operas titled *Die of Laughter. An essay on the transcendental character of Rossini's comic theater* (*Morire dal ridere, Saggio sul carattere trascendentale del teatro comico rossiniano*). The second is an essay on Rossini's serious theater titled *The Bat and the Porcelain: An Essay on Rossini's Morbid*

¹"The concept of the series was such that each of the shows was dedicated to one of the topics dealt with in operas: falling in love, fate, revenge, the topic of return home, jealousy, divorce, enthusiasm, long distance love" (Petrović 2019, 50).

Theater Between Tancredi and Semiramide (Il pipistrello e la porcelina. Saggio sul teatro serio rossiniano Tra Tancredi e Semiramide) In these essays, the author explores various philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of Rossini's work, focusing our attention on just a few of them.

The author states that in the 18th century, comic opera endeavored to "anthropomorphize music" aligning it with the cadence and logic of human speech (Baricco 1997, 36). It is asserted that only with Rossini music ceases adhering to the rational model of human language and starts relying on its inherent logic. According to Baricco, the abundance and excellence of Rossini's coloraturas create confusion within the melodic structure, disrupting its cohesion and autonomy. In this context, the melody loses its role as an expressive support for the words and even, as Baricco notes, "boycotts their meaningful function" (Ibid. 32–34). Baricco contends that since the coloratura, or the "virtuoso passage", represents a "neutral sound figure", Rossini's music, in his perspective, tends toward becoming inexpressive (Ibid. 33–34).

It evolves beyond being a mere imitative art and embarks on championing a "new language of its own", complete with a distinct system of meaning that operates independently of human language. Baricco draws parallels to Stendhal's characterization of Rossini's comic operas as "complete and organized madness". He clarifies that these words denote "the possibility that the world, liberated from the dominance of the subject, still uncovers its inherent order, its own objective form". Baricco asserts that Rossini's "language" embodies the crystallization of this very form (Ibid. 42).

Nearly all of Baricco's characters conform to the model of "complete and organized madness". If they are not by nature locked in their inner worlds, but fit into the clichés of rational and socially acceptable behavior, at one point they come to a stage when they believe they have overcome it and suddenly and voluntarily withdraw and lock themselves into the obsessiveness of their own ideas. In Baricco's world, this is neither regression nor defeat; it is akin to coloratura in Rossini, where one "ceases to follow rational models" and instead relies on one's own logic. In the novel *Ocean Sea*, the painter Plasson, at the pinnacle of his fame retires and settles on the seashore, trying to paint the sea with seawater, and this obsession will not leave him for the rest of his life. In the same novel, the acclaimed scientist Bartelboom together with Plasson stands for hours on the seashore, observes measures and calculates in trying to determine the physical limits of the sea and write an *Encyclopedia of limits encountered in nature with a special appendix dedicated to the limits of human capabilities*. The protagonist of the novel *Mr Gwyn*, Jasper Gwyn, forsakes the fame and success he achieved as a writer to embark on the art of writing portraits. In the case of Farinelli from the *Spanish Party*, the pursuit involves constructing a glass palace in the water. Numerous instances exist where characters abandon commonly accepted logic in favor of their own, varying degrees of irrationality. This shift is not regarded as a decline or degradation but, much like in Rossini, as a form of personal internal evolution.

Baricco goes back to the theme of "organized and complete madness" in Rossini, a decade after publishing the essay *Genius on the Run*, in one of the performances of the play *Totem. Reading, sounds, lectures*. This time, the focus of his analysis is Rossini's final opera, *William Tell*. Baricco concludes that madness hides "under the skin" of almost everything written by this composer. This time, he identifies this madness in what he terms Rossini's "one-note playing," where the repetition of the same note in the background is compared to the obsessive, automated actions of a madman. Baricco substantiates everything he discusses, every detail of his analysis, with audio recordings and excerpts from the opera *William Tell*. In particular, concerning the obsessive repetition of the same notes, the author illustrates this with his personal

interpretations of some of Rossini's melodies on the piano highlighting the distinct roles of his left and right hands. While the left hand guides the musical narrative, the right hand consistently repeats the same note or notes serving as the "madman" in that musical tale, notes Baricco (Baricco 2009).

Baricco's insistence on descriptive repetition is easily recognized in his literary works, where words, phrases, sentences and entire paragraphs recur like a leitmotif, appearing more or less frequently throughout the entire novel or only through some of its parts. According to Baricco, this type of storytelling turns the literary text into music, gives it rhythm, for which he once again finds a role model in Rossini, whom he deems revolutionary for insisting on the element of rhythm in the opera (Baricco 1997, 42). Rhythmic repetitions in the literary text can also serve as a means of characterization. In the novel *This Story*, Ultimo's mentally impaired brother is limited in his thinking, mental processes, and verbal expressions, making reflexive repetition a natural feature of both his thought and expression:

I might feel fear, yet fear eludes me, instead, I find myself laughing, I could be fearful of the thunderous noise just above our heads, yet fear does not grip me, in fact, I'm laughing, I could be afraid of that noise and of that black shadow passing just above our heads, but, instead, I'm laughing out loud (...) (Baricco 2005, 215)².

Often, the frequency of travel is underscored by emphasizing repetitions at the linguistic level. In *The Pianist*, for instance, rather than providing a descriptive account of the transoceanic ship's route, the author achieves this through a straightforward, lengthy enumeration of geographical landmarks, condenses the expression, accelerates it through the absence of any punctuation marks, and introduces an additional element of rhythm:

Liverpool New York Liverpool Rio de Janeiro Boston Cork Lisbon Santiago de Chile Rio de Janeiro Antilles New York Liverpool Boston Liverpool Hamburg New York Genoa Florida Rio de Janeiro Florida New York Genoa Florida Rio de Janeiro Florida New York Genoa Lisbon Rio de Janeiro Liverpool Rio de Janeiro Liverpool New York Cork Cherbourg Vancouver Cherbourg Cork Boston Liverpool Rio de Janeiro New York Liverpool, Ocean, mid-Wednesday (Baricco 2022b, 40)³.

The protagonist of *Silk*, Hervé Joncour, is a silkworm trader who regularly travels between France and Japan. At intervals of every twenty pages in the work, which typically comprises no more than 100 pages, there is a recurrence of one page featuring an identical, detailed description of his journey:

He traversed the police station near Metz, passed through Württemberg and Bavaria, entered Austria, and arrived in Vienna and Budapest by train, from where he continued on to Kiev. He crossed two thousand kilometers of the Russian steppe on horseback, he crossed the Urals, entered Siberia, and took forty days to reach Lake Baikal, which the

² Potei spaventarmi, ma non mi spavento, e anzi rido, Potrei spaventarmi per quel frastuono a sfiorare le nostre teste, ma non mi spavento, e anzi rido, Potrei spaventarmi per il frastuono e l'ombra nera che sfiora ne nostre teste, ma la verità è che non mi spavento, e anzi rodo forte (...) (Baricco 2005, 215).

³ Liverpool New York Liverpool Rio de Janeiro Boston Cork Lisbona Santiago del Cile Rio de Janeiro Antille New York Liverpool Boston Liverpool Amburgo New York Amburgo New York Genova Florida Rio de Janeiro Florida New York Genova Lisbona Rio de Janeiro Liverpool Rio de Janeiro Liverpool New York Cork Cherbourg Vancouver Cherbourg Cork Boston Liverpool Rio de Janeiro New York Liverpool Santiago del Cile New York Liverpool, Oceano, proprio in mezzo (Baricco 2022b, 40)

locals call the sea. He followed the course of the Amur River, following the Chinese border all the way to the ocean (...) ⁴ (Baricco 2016, 5–6).

The theme of madness is a recurrent motif in Baricco's works, populated by eccentrics and madmen, each exhibiting unique motives and manifestations of their eccentricity or madness. The musician Pekisch is the protagonist of the novel "Castles of Wrath", and has his descent into madness which is intricately linked to his profession as music explodes in his head:

All in all, music exploded in Pekish's head. There was no help. You can't live with fifteen orchestras playing so intensively, all day long, trapped in your head. You can't sleep, you can't talk, you can't eat, you can't laugh. You can't do anything anymore. You can just lie down and try to endure. What else can you do? Pekish was lying down and trying to endure (Baricco 2022a, 234–235) ⁵.

Entire collectives can also fall victim to Baricco's "complete and organized madness" with the space for depicting such scenes often drawn from real tragic events: *The First World War* and the Italian defeat in the Battle of Caporetto in 1917 is a subject addressed in the novel *This Story*, and the stranding of the frigate Medusa in 1816, which serves as the subject of the novel *Ocean Sea*.

While the author does not explicitly mention the Medusa frigate, numerous coincidences with historical data strongly suggest that it is indeed the subject. Notably, 147 individuals were placed on an improvised raft measuring 12 x 6 meters, as lifeboats were absent, and deceptively set adrift in the open sea. After 13 days, sea currents fortuitously brought them near a ship, but only 15 passengers on the raft had survived. This event's account is provided by one of the survivors, Dr. Savigny, whose name and profession Baricco adopts from historical writings and incorporates into one of his characters:

(...) the specters of madness thrive, in that unique slaughterhouse, a gruesome battlefield engulfed by waves, bodies strewn on all sides (...) an incoherent earthquake of the dead, the dying, a pavement of mortal raptors wedged into the dilapidated skeleton of the raft on which the alive –*alive*– wander around stealing senseless trifles from the dead, but, above all, evaporating into madness one by one, each in their own way, each with their own weaknesses, driven from sanity by hunger, and thirst, and fear, and despair (...) They shout, but no one listens (...) after conversing with the sea, in a whisper, he says something to it while sitting on the edge of the raft, wooing it, and one might say, listening to its answers (...) some eventually succumb to its beguiling responses, and thus persuaded, in the end, they simply slip into the water and surrender to their great friend who devours them and carries them away (...) (Baricco 2006, 105–106) ⁶.

⁴ Varcò il confine vicino a Metz, attraversò il Wurtemberg e la Baviera, entrò in Austria, raggiunse in treno Vienna e Budapest per poi proseguire fino a Kiev. Percorse a cavallo duemila chilometri di steppa russa, superò gli Urali, entrò in Siberia, viaggiò per quaranta giorni fino a raggiungere il lago Bajkal, che la gente del luogo chiamava: mare. Ridiscese il corso del fiume Amur, costeggiando il confine cinese fino all'Oceano (...)

⁵ Insomma, gli era scoppiata la musica in testa, a Pekisch. Non c'era più niente da fare. Non si può vivere con quindici orchestre che ci danno dentro, tutto il santo giorno, blindate dentro la testa. Non ce la fai a dormire, non ce la fai a parlare, a mangiare, a ridere. Non ti riesce più nulla. Stai lì e cerchi di resistere. Che altro puoi fare? Pekisch stava lì, e cercava di resistere (Baricco 2022a, 234–235).

⁶ (...) i fantasmi della follia, fioriscono su quella specie di macello, orrido campo di battaglia sciacquato dalle onde, corpi dappertutto (...) sconnesso terremoto di morti, morenti, selciato di agonie incastrate nel pericolante scheltro della zattera su cui i vivi – i vivi – si aggirano derubando i morenti di miserie da niente ma soprattutto

3. GENIUS ON THE RUN – OPERA SERIA THE CREATION AND DESTRUCTION OF ARCHETYPES

Barrico finds the basic scheme of Rossini's dramaturgy in the opera *Bianca e Faliero*. While this opera does not hold a chronological precedence, as it was composed in 1819, Barrico identifies it as the archetypal foundation for all of Rossini's subsequent serious operas. The story, like all archetypal stories, is elementary: There are two people who love each other, Bianca and Faliero, a father who opposes their love, an inevitable conflict and, after numerous ups and downs, a triumph and a happy ending. Barrico claims, however, that authentic drama emerges where "lovers do not love each other, fathers are no longer fathers, heroes lose, wars devastate what should be preserved, where people strive for death instead of life" (Barrico 1997, 76).

Beginning with the opera *Bianca e Faliero*, Barrico traces the evolution of the fundamental archetype by systematically analyzing Rossini's serious operas: *Tancredi*, *Othello*, *Elizabeth Queen of England*, *The Woman from the Lake*, *Semiramis*, *Mohammed and the others*, *Moses in Egypt*, culminating with the opera *Armida*, where Barrico identifies a definitive "collapse of the archetype". There are no fathers, no children, no rivals, no drama; it's actually a fairy tale: a beautiful witch descends from the sky, takes the knight away from the war and gives him all her love. *Armida*, however, does not have a happy ending like other fairy tales, and yet "it's not a story that ends badly", claims Barrico, "it's just a dream, which ends abruptly, and that's the extent of it" (Ibid. 112).

Barrico employs a comparable narrative in one of his most famous novels, *Ocean Sea*, where he tells the story of people who are brought by different fates to the Almayer Inn, on the seashore. At the end of the novel, as the final guest departs the inn, everything that appeared concrete and real until that moment fades away, transforming into a dream behind his departing figure:

The next morning the man departed from the inn. The sky was unusual, one of those skies in a rush, eager to get back home. The wind was blowing strongly but without much noise. The man loved to walk. He took his luggage and his bag full of papers, and went along the road that led from there, along the sea. He walked quickly without looking back. In such a way that he did not see the Almayer Inn detach itself from the ground shattering into a thousand pieces resembling sails, it ascended into the air, fell, rose again, and soared, carrying everything with it, away, both the land and the sea, the words and stories, everything, whoever knows where to, nobody knows, perhaps one day someone will be tired enough to find out (Barrico 2006, 227)⁷.

evaporando nella follia uno ad uno, ognuno a modo suo, ciascuno coi suoi fantasmi, estorti alla mente dalla fame, e dalla sete, e dalla paura, e dalla disperazione (...) Gridano, e nessuno li ascolta (...) qualcuno parla al mare, a bassa voce, gli parla, seduto sul bordo della zattera, lo corteggia, si direbbe, e sente le sue risposte (...) alcuni alla fine cedono alle sue risposte astute, e convinti, alla fine si lasciavano scivolare nell'acqua e si consegnano al grande amico che li divora portandoseli lontano (...) (Barrico 2006, 105–106).

⁷ L'uomo lasciò la locanda la mattina dopo. C'era un cielo strano, di quelli che corrono veloci, hanno fretta di tornare a casa. Soffiava vento da nord, forte, ma senza far rumore. All'uomo piaceva camminare. Prese la sua valigia e la sua borsa piena di carta, e si avviò lungo la strada che se ne andava, di fianco al mare. Camminava veloce, senza voltarsi mai. Così non la vide, la locanda Almayer, straccarsi da terra e disfarsi leggera in mille pezzi, che sembravano vele e salivano nell'aria, scendevano e salivano, *volavano*, e tutto portavano con sé, lontano, anche quella terra e quel mare, e le parole e le storie, tutto, chissà dove, nessuno lo sa, forse un giorno qualcuno sarà così stanco che lo scoprirà (Barrico 2006, 227).

Indeed, Baricco's work is permeated, to varying degrees, with elements reminiscent of fairy tales and dreams. These ethereal components intertwine seamlessly with realistic elements, forming a distinctive and intricate tapestry in his storytelling. In the novel *Ocean Sea* there is a character who communicates exclusively telepathically (Adams) and a boy (Ditz) who reads dreams and even offers dreams to the guests of the Almayer Inn. In the novel *Mr. Gwin*, the main character, engages in consultations about crucial matters with his deceased acquaintance encountering her in physical form and in real-time. In *The Pianist*, Novecento, the protagonist, engages in a unique interaction by dancing with the ocean:

(...) Novecento (was) playing without taking his eyes off the keyboard, he seemed to be somewhere else, and the piano followed the waves, and he went and came back, and turned around, rode straight to the big glass door, and when he got there, he would pause a mere millimeter away then gently slide back, (...) He wasn't just *playing*; he was *guiding* that piano, you know, through the keys, the notes, I don't know, he led it wherever he wished, it might sound crazy, but that's exactly how it was. And as we weaved through the tables, lightly brushing against the lamps and armchairs, it dawned on me, right then, the realization struck me, what we were engaged in, what we were *truly* doing: we are dancing with the Ocean, the Ocean and us, like half-crazed dancers, yet perfectly in sync, embracing each other in a sort of haunting waltz, on the night's golden parquet (Baricco 2022b, 28)⁸.

The novel *City* vividly brings forth the perplexity of reality, intertwining Gould's imaginative tales of the boxer Larry and Shatzy Shell's Wild West narratives with the author's own storyline, characters, and plot, "despite the acknowledgment that these elements are products of the characters' imagination, the reader engages with the narrative as if it possesses complete independence" (Panić 2007, 67). Dreams and reality are followed equally and in parallel, with hyperbole and paradox serving as dominant stylistic figures. So, the main character, Gould, has his two companions, two avatars in the computer sense of the word, Diesel and Poomerang. Poomerang is 2.47 cm tall and mute, yet he communicates by non-saying: "Pumerang literally stuck to that spot. It threw him into a coma. He repeated it, non-saying it to everyone, as if it were his name" (Baricco 2002, 178)⁹.

4. ROSSINI, BARICCO AND ODYSSEY

In the epilogue of *Genius on the Run*, Baricco, among other things, draws a parallel between Rossini's dramaturgy and the myth of Odysseus and notes that they have many motifs in common: the motif of departure, travel, escape, search, staying in another place (Baricco 1997, 151). On the other hand, it becomes apparent to the reader that Baricco's work is replete with references to Odysseus and Penelope. In *Silk* the main character makes

⁸ Novecento (che) suonava e non staccava lo sguardo dai tasti, sembrava altrove, e il piano leguiva le onde e andava e tornava, e si girava su se stesso, puntava diritto verso la vetrata, e quando era arrivato a un pelo si fermava e scivolava dolcemente indietro (...) non *suonava* semplicemente, luo lo *guidava* quel pianoforte, capito?, coi tasti, con le note, non lo so, lui lo guidava dove voleva, era assurdo ma era così. E mentre volteggiavamo, tra i tavoli, sfiorando lampadari e poltrone, io capii che in quel momento, quel che stavamo facendo, quel che davvero stavamo facendo, era danzare con l'Oceano, noi e lui, ballerini pazzi, e perfetti, stretti in un torbido valzer, sul dorato parquet della notte (Baricco 2022b, 28).

⁹ Era il passaggio che faceva letteralmente sbiellare Poomerang. Era la cosa che lo faceva impazzire. Non lo smetteva mai di ripeterla. La nondiceva a tutti, come se fosse il suo nome (Baricco 2002, 178).

an annual journey to Japan to collect silkworms: "every year, at the onset of January, he embarked on his journey, covering a distance of one thousand six hundred miles by sea and eight hundred kilometers by land (...) then he would turn around and travel eight hundred kilometers by land and one thousand six hundred miles by sea and returned to Lavilledieu"¹⁰ (Baricco 2016, 1), meanwhile, his wife, Ellen, waited for him. Mr. Rail, the main character of the novel *Castles of Wrath*, would leave and return for no apparent reason, you never knew when he would leave, or when he would return, or where he had been in the meantime. During that time, Mrs. Rail could only wait for him:

From time to time, Mr. Rail would come back. As a rule, this would happen sometime after he had traveled. This, in turn, attested to a certain internal, psychological, and, one could say, moral constitution of his personality. (...) It was difficult to ascertain why he left from time to time. There was never a genuine, plausible reason for his departures, nor any specific season, day, or circumstance. He would simply travel away (Baricco 2022a, 20)¹¹.

Many of Baricco's heroes remain without coordinates of departure and arrival, trapped in places without identity and transit spaces - in non-places: ocean liners (*The Pianist*, *Castles of Wrath*), inns, gardens (*Ocean Sea*), trailers (*This Story*, *The City*), trenches and the cleared spaces between the trenches (*This Story*). Explaining the distinction between place and non-place, Marc Augé asserts that it revolves around flexible antipodes, wherein "the place is never completely erased, and the non-place is never non-place completely". Due to the lack of identity characteristics, he compares the non-place to a palimpsest, where "murky mechanism of identity and relation" is continually rewritten (Augé 2005, 76). In the context of the First World War, non-places are trenches and no-man's land between enemy lines that trap people, nature and objects, and deprive them of time and space coordinates:

It was called no man's land, and it is almost certain that nothing so monstrous had ever existed anywhere. These are bodies and objects – like nature itself – lying completely petrified, outside of time and space, and it seemed as if all the death of this world had gathered in that petrification (...) (Baricco 2005, 86–87)¹².

Just as the identity of the places in Baricco's literary oeuvre is questioned, so is the identity of the characters who inhabit them. A prime example of this is Novecento (*The Pianist*):

The ocean was his home. And as for the land, he never set foot on it. He saw it, from the ports, of course. But he never got off (...) More precisely, Novecento did not exist at all, for the world: there was no city, no parish, no hospital, no prison, no baseball team where his name was recorded anywhere. He had no homeland, no date of birth, no family. He was eight years old: but he was never officially born (Baricco 2022b, 22)¹³.

¹⁰ Ogni anno, ai primi di gennaio, partiva. Attraversava milleseicento miglia di mare e ottocento chilometri di terra (...) Poi si voltava, attraversava ottocento chilometri di terra e milleseicento miglia di mare e rientrava a Lavilledieu (Baricco 2016, 1).

¹¹ Di tanto in tanto il signor Rail tornava. Di regola ciò accadeva un certo tempo dopo che era partito. La qualcosa testimonia l'ordina interiore, psicologico e si potrebbe dire morale del personaggio (...) Meno facile era da capire perchè lui, di tanto in tanto partisse. Non c'era mai una vera, plausibile ragione perchè lo facesse, nè una stagione o un giorno o una circostanza particolari. Lui, semplicemente, partiva (Baricco 2022a, 20).

¹² Lo chiamavano la terra di nessuno, ed è dubbio che il creato abbia mai trovato altrove uno stato di più vertiginosa indigenza. Corpi e oggetti – la natura stessa – vi giacevano in un'immobilità sterminata, fuori dal tempo e dallo spazio, dove sembrava essersi concentrata tutta la morte a disposizione (...) (Baricco 2005, 86–87).

¹³ L'Oceano era casa sua. E quanto alla terra, be', non ci aveva mai messo piede. L'aveva vista dai porti, certo. Ma, sceso mai (...). A voler essere precisi, Novecento non esisteva nemmeno, per il mondo: non c'era città, parrocchia, ospedale,

In contrast to Odysseus, whose journeys have a clear purpose – to return home to Ithaca – Baricco argues that Rossini's poetics defy explanation by identifying a destination, it signifies primarily a "realization from something", whereas the point of arrival in Rossini's poetics is consistently a "blind spot", implying that "arriving from a place should be exempt from having a destination" (Baricco 1997, 143). The terms employed by the author to characterize Rossini's poetics are entirely relevant to his own. Baricco frequently, in various contexts, either indirectly or explicitly discusses the illusory aspect of setting goals. He emphasizes that every movement and action is fulfilled in itself, not in the pursuit of a specific objective. In the novel *Castles of Wrath*, this theme is explored within the context of trains:

(...) the sole genuine purpose of a train is to race accros the surface of the earth at a speed that surpasses that of any person or object (...) essentiallyit desn't need to reach anywhere, as its function is to travel at a speed of a hundred kilometers per hour around the world, rather than arriving at a particular place (Baricco 2022a, 78)¹⁴.

In the novel *This Story*, the main character, Ultimo, envisions himself on a journey toward a goal that is a "blind spot". He daydreams about constructing a flawless race track that "will lead nowhere" but will encompass "all the tracks of this world, and will be where everyone who has always set out will dream of arriving" (Baricco 2005, 134)¹⁵.

5. CONCLUSION

Examining Rossini, Baricco appears to be gazing at himself in a mirror. Although he doesn't explicitly draw a parallel between himself and the great composer in any specific instance, the connection is discernible to literary critics and ordinary readers familiar with Baricco's body of work. The revolutionary elements that the author identifies in Rossini's work are, in essence, reflective of his own small revolutionary literary endeavors. In response to acknowledging Rossini's introduction of rhythm in opera, Baricco counteracts by infusing rhythm into his own prose. The acknowledgment of the repetition of notes within Rossini's arias corresponds to the obsessive repetition of smaller and larger linguistic units and segments in Baricco's literary works, all aimed at achieving stylistic effects. Similar to Baricco recognizing in the opera *Armida* elements that abolish dramatic conventions and metamorphose into a fairy tale and a dream, the reality within the writer's works dissolves into the realm of the imaginary, plunging the reader into a realm of blurred reality. The characters' escapism from reality leads to the exploration and problematization of the theme of the relationship between normality and madness. Baricco responds to this by presenting a multitude of heroes who straddle the boundary, with one foot in reality and the other in madness, or who exist entirely on the other side. Similarly, Stendhal characterized Rossini's comic opera as "organized and complete madness" (Baricco 1997, 42). Escape from reality implies escape from the physical attributes of that reality, escape from place and time, so that both artists find themselves in an eternal state of escape, journey and search which, deprived of a goal, becomes a purpose in itself.

galera, squadra di baseball che avesse scritto da qualche parte il suo nome. Non aveva patria, non aveva data di nascita, non aveva famiglia. Aveva otto anni: ma ufficalmente non era mai nato (Baricco 2022b, 22).

¹⁴ (...) l'unico vero senso di un treno è quello di correre sulla superficie della terra con una velocità che nessun'altra persona o cosa è in grado di avere (...) in generale, non ha bisogno di arrivare da nessuna parte essendo il suo compito quello di correre a cento all'ora in mezzo al mondo e non di arrivare in qualche posto. (Baricco 2022a, 78).

¹⁵ „non porterà da nessuna parte (...) sarà tutte le strade della terra strette in una, e sarà dove sognava di arrivare chiunque sia mai partito” (Baricco 2005, 134).

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BARIKO U ROSINIJEVOM OGLEDALU

Rad predstavlja komparativni prikaz Barikove muzičko-filozofske analize Rosinijevih opera i Barikovih književnih dela. Uporedo se sagledavaju, sa jedne strane, teorijski stavovi koje autor iznosi u eseju Genije u bekstvu: dva eseja o muzičkom pozorištu Đoakina Rosinija, i u jednoj od niza predstava pod zajedničkim nazivom Totem, i, sa druge strane, izabrani odlomci iz romana ovog pisca. Ispostavlja se da mnoge teme i mnogi procesi koje autor prepoznaje kao autentično Rosinijeve, zapravo pripadaju i njemu samom. Zajednično im je rušenje ustaljenih konvencija, problematizacija pojma svrhovitosti i relativizacija pojma ludila, insistiranje na temi putovanja, promene, nestalnosti, na imaginarnim elementima i ritmizaciji ponavljanjem. Osim na već spomenutim izvorima, istraživanje je sprovedeno i na još osam Barikovih književnih dela.

Ključne reči: *Rosini, opera, esej, ludilo, san, putovanje.*