

THREE AEROPOETS OF WAR: BELLANOVA, DE CONCINI, SERBO

PIERO BELLANOVA

Bombarded Naples Sings¹

Naples you are beautiful
with your heavy blue veil
unable to hide
the enticing red mouth
of Vesuvius

The crazed sirens howl

The enemy has motorised itself
so as not to be bewitched
by the spells
of a tremulous mandolin whose notes
rain from the stars
on the sweetness of Mergellina

Hurl yourself with jealous rage
on the magical gulf
that boils cauldrons of lava
mixed with swathes of shadow

From Vomero to Posillipo
flames of hatred ignite

The Volcano shakes

¹ 'Bombardata Napoli canta', in Bellanova, *Bombardata Napoli canta*, cit., pp. 29-30.

Claw

steely lava

from the depths of your bowels

to hurl against the enemy

who you would like to suffocate

with infinite tresses of smoke²

Naples

your blouse

embroidered with rainbow hues

is today spanned by a ruby necklace

of vermillion droplets

It is the blood of your sons

that wants to glorify

your eternal

i n d e s t r u c t i b l e

beauty

² Given that Vesuvius was to erupt in March 1944, seriously damaging around 80 aircraft of the USAAF's 340th Bombardment Group, Bellanova's poem seems remarkably prescient.

Tracer Bullets³

Dynamic cobweb
 against the night's black velvet
 catching
 tiresome metal flies

Anti-aircraft batteries
 launch 100000 tracer bullets
 into the sky
 crossed strings of a
 tempting phosphorescent harp

An enchanted aircraft's wing
 makes them vibrate
 composing
 a tragic harmony of death

A Futurist child
 sweetly claps his little hands
 at the firework display's
 noisy Catherine-wheel

³ 'Proiettili traccianti', in Bellanova, *Bombardata Napoli canta*, cit., p. 59.

ENNIO DE CONCINI

Bombardment of London⁴

C. A. I. corpo aereo italiano⁵

deutsche Kampffliegen

Messerschmitt Junkers

green on meadows already used to the roar of propellers

The divers of the sky chew heartily around the table

60 bottles of champagne from the vineyards of France

Revelry

We leave in ten minutes and those who return will again drink

60 bottles from the vineyards of France

Quickly magazines petrol oil and bombs

of 1800 kilograms

Helmet overalls boots

The narrow fuselage

with feet on glass instruments

The Channel is a mix of sea and fog

we fly in fog and sea

alternately

A black and brown model pierces the mist

Inghilterra

England

⁴ 'Bombardamento di Londra', in De Concini, *Aeropoesie futuriste di bombardamenti*, cit., pp. 23-26.

⁵ See above, Chapter Four, p. 162, n. 91.

The fog is denser
 we fly blind with the radio
 'Longitude latitude maps at two hundred thousand'

The motor roars steadily
 The model has disappeared
 one sees nothing but
 black black black fog

A colleague cleans the machine-gun
 The motor roars

A little white cloud skims over a wing and vanishes
 Listen
 it's the anti-aircraft batteries

The on-board instruments the maps announce
 London

Ah rapacious

Orders counter-orders sudden tuuuurn and smoke
 Six Stukas Messerschmitts
 A Junkers has launched eight bombs simultaneously
 and they blend in a single boom
 Plummeting
 smoke and flames everywhere

London you are all mine in an orgy of fire

Plummeting
 Baaaaanking
 plummeting
 into the London fog

Look at the skyscraper
 shattered by a bomb of 1800 kilos
 Attention
 ready
 B.R. 20⁶
 Stukas
 Diiiiiiivvvveee booom burningmotor
 AAAAAAAAAA
 boom boom boom boom
 sh sh sh sh sh
 AAAAAAAAAA
 bomb bomb bomb bomb
 Bursts of machine-gun fire riddle the buildings
 the Thames with millions of splinters
 UUUUUU the siren waaaails its constant alarm
 A silver aircraft
 falls from the sky like lead onto the ships in the dock
 and the Gloster
 smashes

The left motor's piston is damaged
 and spurts gushes of petroloil
 while the propeller limps

Clouds of anti-aircraft fire
 assaults by Glosters on all sides
 Risible obstacle of barrage balloons
 riddled with lead
 they burn one after the other

With six bursts of machine-gun fire
 a fighter also
 unraaaaaaaavels above the City

⁶ A Fiat aircraft, otherwise known as a 'Stork'.

Bankers attentive to the rise and fall
of the price of flaming lead

And the last bomb is launched

I return with a consumptive motor

R. A. F.

I have destroyed 15 of your craft
Just one of ours has a tubercular motor

And the lights on the airfields illuminate
so that we can gliiiiiidde

UBALDO SERBO

death of the aeroplane⁷

the ejected pilot launched himself into the sky the
 swift impetuous soul of the aeroplane reborn as man entrusted to the
 maternal parachute

and the dying aeroplane
 went down descends rapid inert
 with a smoky death-rattle

hulking
 metal

with the weariness of
 dead things

descending
 slowly
 the pilot
 gazes at it
 with regret
 nostalgia

but in the wreck the devouring fire awakened
 a flicker of life

desperation flowed through its pipes and in vain it sought to change
 the calamitous parabola into a dive and to rise once more into
 intoxicating space

enraged it cries to the air why don't you enter my
 mouth and give furious swift breath to the turbine

⁷ 'Morte dell'aeroplano', in Serbo, *Ubaldo Serbo aeropoeta futurista*, cit. pp. 26-27.

why allow me to fall and not support me
 not lift me back up on high on high on high
 hulking
 spinningwings
 spiralling downwards

the ground rises up

the distant clouds
 call in vain
 they call

anguished
 oscillating
 in the air
 the pilot
 averts his gaze from
 the wide green
 meadow
 soon to be
 strewn
 with burnt
 wreckage

i sang with you in the skies
 escaping the weight of the earth
 on high victorious
 with your wings i embraced
 the dreams of my childhood
 with you i conquered immense spaces
 we let out a roar in our wake
 darting across the great silences

weight
of the earth

the far-distant clouds
stretch out their gentle arms through the azure
in vain they call they call