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featuring translations most congenially undertaken by
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**Three Italians who have 'Pataphysics*

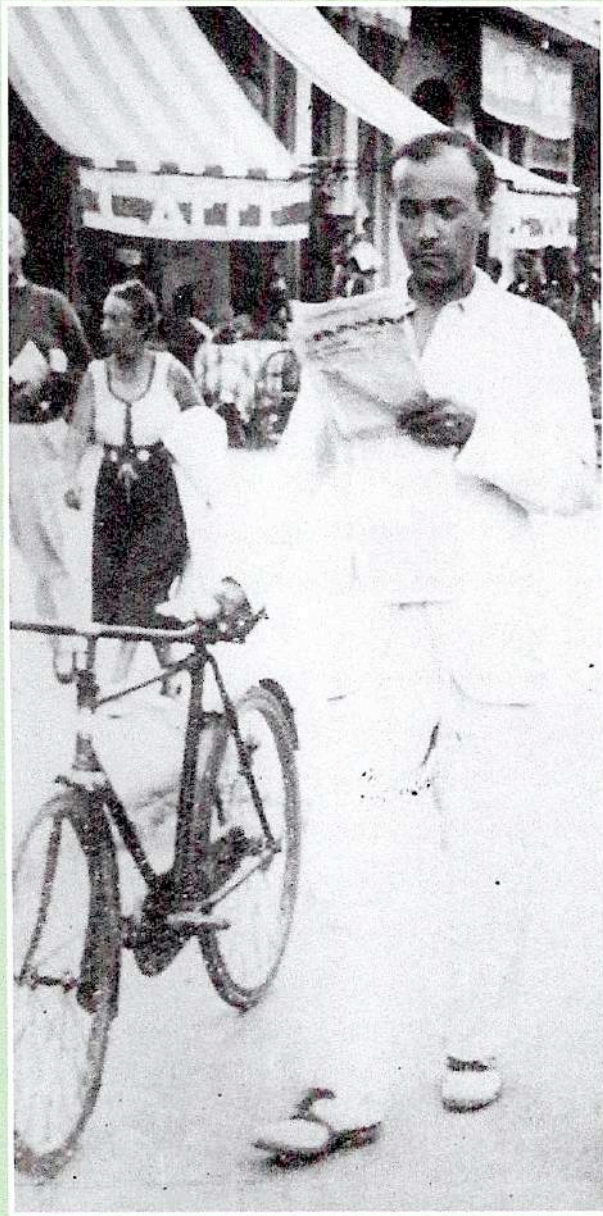
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**ANTONIO DELFINI
&
THE ACCADEMIA DEGLI INFORMI**





Antonio Delfini in 1936.

ANTONIO DELFINI

When Antonio Delfini (1907-1963) founded the Accademia degli Informi (Academy of the Formless), he clearly revealed its pataphysical intentions in his *Discours de reception*, which is to be found in the memoir by his friend, the poet Gaio Fratini, that follows. Delfini was from a moderately well-off background, but he had little formal education after primary school level and was mostly self-educated. A Baudelairean flaneur and aesthete absorbed by what he was fully aware was a *fabricated* vision of the Italian culture of the past, he dedicated his life to literature, and his love for it was only matched by his dislike for *littérateurs* and the literary “scene”. Even so, when he ventured for brief periods of a few years from his home city of Modena, just north of Bologna, he was well received by his fellow writers, and had close friends among them who were far better known than he. Delfini would always soon return to Modena, however, where he lived for most of his life. He joined the Fascist Party as a teenager but ran guns to Communist partisans during the war, and his sole political work was a manifesto for a Conservative and Communist Party he had invented, and for which he intended to stand as a candidate. It is unsurprising that his *oeuvre* consists of only a few short works, but they were highly valued by some of his contemporaries, as the brief text by Pasolini bears witness. He was close to the founders of the Rome Institute of Pataphysics, especially Vicari.

Fratini’s memoir contains all we have of Delfini’s *Discours de reception*¹ for the Accademia (we do not know why the whole of it was never printed in *Il Caffè*), and it is enough for us to greatly regret that the remainder is lost. It seems at first contradictory that, despite the broad scope of this truncated manifesto, the Accademia itself was to be devoted almost entirely to literary matters. This contradiction can perhaps be resolved by the fact that for Delfini, as we see in this *Discours*, literature was something all-encompassing;

1. The name of the address given by new members on their election to the Académie Française.

it was there that he found a supplementary world sufficiently “substantial” and wholly separate from the vulgar “chimera” of what passes for reality. In *Journal* 21,² we referred to the supposed resemblance between the structure of language and how the world appears to us, and it is worth considering how literature would stand were this resemblance to be granted any validity — as an imaginary solution that at once perfects and perverts it? It seems, at least, that it was in this way that literature could be something like 'Pataphysics for Delfini, and, after all, he was only following a path similar to that of Jarry, who, according to Rachilde, “wanted the world to conform to his literary programme”.³ The College has formalised a separation between conscious and unconscious pataphysics, and one of the purposes of the Accademia, judging from its proclamations, was to instigate a similar distinction, between an idea of pure (and excoriating) literature on the one hand and, on the other, any other sort of life, and especially the “literary life” of official prizes, a career and social or political involvements of various sorts. His dislike for the latter, expressed in the “desecration” described by Pasolini, was very close to the College’s strictures with regard to engagement and utility.

In an unpublished article, “Antonio Delfini, Pataphysician”, the author and editor, Paolo Albani finds the pataphysical in other aspects of Delfini, such as when, in his *Diary*,⁴ “He declares his intention to write articles on literary inutility and the artistic bluff as an attitude”, or complains that “The West has lost its sense of idleness. Among the many things that are difficult to achieve, idleness, in the West, has become the most difficult. Idleness should be taught...” And he cites this “Mini-Ballad” from the 1930s:

2. Page 14.

3. It is even possible to imagine, while admitting that there is no evidence to support this supposition, that Jarry’s definition of 'Pataphysics, written between 1893 and 1897, may have been, initially, an attempt to define the literary doctrine with which he was then involved — previous attempts to define the meaning or intentions of Symbolism had proved inadequate — before he radically recast it as something more universal and exuperative. We can imagine a definition such as this:

“Symbolism reconciles the virtualities of objects with [their] lineaments.”

Such a rewriting would be a pataphysical act in itself, extending a definition of a literary doctrine until it applied to “life”, and fully in line with Rachilde’s observation.

4. *Diari*, Einaudi, 1997, pps. 107 and 143.

I Don't Care

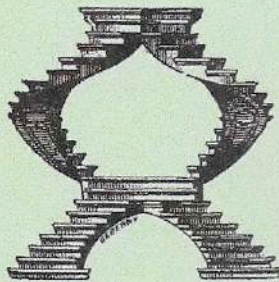
I don't care I don't care
I don't care I don't care

I don't care I don't care
I don't care I don't care

I don't care I don't care
I don't care I don't care

I don't care I don't care I don't care
I don't care I don't care I don't care

I DO NOT CARE



One cannot disagree with Albani's observations, but this poem dates from some twenty years before the Accademia, which was contemporary with the only collection of Delfini's poetry published in his lifetime, *Poems of the End of the World* (1962).⁵ Here we find a fulminating poet who is far from indifferent.

Despite its apparatus of membership cards, headed notepaper, and elaborate administrative structure, as related below, the Accademia made itself known almost entirely by its pronouncements in *Il Caffè*, which appeared under the title of *Chronicles of the Formless*. It is necessary to point out that the selections following give only a very abbreviated idea of Delfini's project, not to mention his invective. His attacks are often very specific and concern individuals that will be unfamiliar to English readers and, by now, to most Italians too. We have therefore chosen only a few of his more general texts in order to give a flavour of the *Chronicles*. This makes the exceptionally summary existence of the Academy seem even more brief than it was, but we should not estimate the value of such initiatives either on their results or the longevity of their realisation, it is instead a question, as in all criminal exploits, of *intention*.

The *Chronicles* are preceded by two memorials by close friends and admirers of Delfini. Pasolini's is the text of a speech he gave at the Sala di Cultura at Modena in 27 October 1963. Fratini's text appeared in *Il Verri* 7, February 1963.

5. Apart from a slim self-published volume some 30 years earlier.