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Dirk Sacré

AN ITALIAN IN HOLLAND: GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIGATO (1910-1976)
AND THE *CERTAMEN HOEUFFTIANUM*¹

Floruit adflicto divina e corde poesis.²

Though Giovanni Battista Pigato was one of the most productive and creative Latin poets of the twentieth century, as well as a fascinating personality, the man and his work are hardly known today. Admittedly, there exists, in Como, the city in which he worked for many years, a 'sentiero Padre Pigato'; furthermore, a few specialists of modern Latin poetry will have chanced upon his name while browsing through the names of the winning poets of the Amsterdam *Certamen Hoeufftianum*, since Pigato earned the gold medal once and five times *magna laus* in the 1950s;³ and he was awarded prizes in other competitions as well.⁴ And, sure, in 2006 his collected poems, some 700 pages of *Opere poetiche latine* with Italian translations and introductions were issued by a former pupil of his, Piero Camperini.⁵ Nevertheless, even this edition remained fairly unknown: the *Karlsruher virtueller Katalog* does not mention one single public library having a copy of it. Besides, we shall see that these *carmina collecta* are incomplete; an additional edition would be welcome, which should include hundreds of hitherto unknown Latin verses of Pigato. Finally, studies of Pigato and his output are scarce; the most important ones are two bio-bibliographical précis put together in the early 1980s, some five years after the poet's death.⁶

Just a word on this priest's life.⁷ He was born in a poor family in Villaraspa,⁸ a village in the province of Vicenza, Northern Italy, in 1910. Educated by the Somaschan fathers and by the Jesuits in Milan, he himself entered the religious order of the Somaschi as a novice in 1926, aged 16, and was ordained a priest in 1933. World War II had a lasting influence on his mind and work: for he served as an officer and a chaplain ("curio militum et tribunus", as he wrote) to a regiment of *Alpini*, and in that capacity fought in Albania, occupied by Mussolini but under attack of the Greeks; during this campaign, Pigato was severely injured and had to remain in the hospital for a long period; after his recovery he was sent to the Russian front,⁹ becoming part of the *Armata italiana in Russia*: thus he fought for two years, 1942-1943, in the Soviet Union, where the Italians suffered terrible losses – he later wrote an emotional *poemetto* on an event he had witnessed there.¹⁰ After the War, he obtained his degree in Letters from the

¹ I want to thank Father Maurizio Brioli C.R.S. and dr Xavier van Binnebeke for their help.

² *Iurgium* 1970, 13 (line 52).

³ Giustiniani 1979, 106-107.

⁴ At the *Certamen Mingarellianum* in Bologna in 1950, the *Certamen Capitolinum* in Rome in 1953 and the *Certamen Vaticanum* in Rome in 1968.

⁵ Pigato 2006.

⁶ Tentorio 1981 and Brioli 1982. See also Tentorio – Gueglio 1986 and Pigato 2006, 23-31. In the summer of 2016, a colloquium and an exhibition (entitled *Ingredimini – P. G.B. Pigato C.R.S. Mostra su opere e giorni di Padre Pigato*) were organized at the Pontificio Collegio Gallio of Como.

⁷ Tentorio 1981, 3-4; Pigato 2006, 33-45.

⁸ In his last poem, written shortly before his death, Pigato mentioned his parents in the elegant verse "ac sine divitiis dites virtute parentes" (Pigato 2006, 698 (line 159)).

⁹ Pigato 1985. This book also contains some Latin poems of Pigato related to the war.

¹⁰ The poem *Pax in bello* which obtained *magna laus* at the *Hoeufftianum* in 1959. Text in Pigato 2006, 453-468; the story goes back to a personal experience in Russia, January 1943, which the poet noted down in his war diary

Università Cattolica in Milan (1944) and in philosophy from the State University of Genoa (1948). His superiors then wanted him to work as a teacher of classics and a headmaster, particularly in Como (1948-1963 and 1969-1976) and Rapallo (1963-1969), two cities he was fond of; he also taught some Latin classes at the Università Cattolica in Milan, where the Latin poet Olindo Pasqualetti (1916-1996) was his colleague. His talents as a Latin poet became evident in the early 1950s. He was an assiduous reader and took an active part in the cultural life of post-war Italy writing numerous articles and giving talks on a variety of topics.¹¹ He died in Como in 1976 from the consequences of a brain tumour, but his health, both physical and mental, had been poor since a long time; he undeniably suffered from serious, recurrent depressions. From the 1960s on, the nervous quinquagenarian considered himself an old man, standing *in limine mortis*.¹²

I came across Pigato's name in the early 1980s when I was studying the Latin *Nachleben* of Lucretius, on whom Pigato had written a remarkable *poemetto*.¹³ While I was living for some months in Milan, a colleague of the late Pigato advised me to contact Father M. Tentorio (1913-1993), who was in charge of the Somaschan archives (then at Genoa) and had been a dear friend of the poet. Making good use of the documents, especially the correspondence, kept there, I could publish some manuscript letters from Pigato's correspondence and write a few articles on the Latin poet.¹⁴ But it was only at the start of the new millennium that I could read more than eighty Latin letters Pigato had written to his Leuven friend Jozef IJsewijn (1932-1998) between 1960 and 1975.¹⁵ Together with the recent discovery of the *Hoeufftianum*-archives in Haarlem, where some unknown poems surfaced, this captivating correspondence of Pigato, which I intend to issue in print, incited me to revisit Pigato's Latin poetry. Apart from the unknown epigrams they contain, these letters throw light on Pigato's poetic career and his literary interests, his favourite readings, his early attentiveness to Neo-Latin literature and to poetic competitions, and so on. Furthermore, they offer a key to a better understanding of his personality, and thus can help us to elucidate his oftentimes very personal poetry. Indeed, Father Pigato's Latin verse very often alludes to his innate melancholy and mental despair, his ups and downs. In addition, the correspondence is written in a natural, but polished Latin style which at

(Pigato 1986, 50). Other poems dealing partially or entirely with the World Wars are the 1969 *In Caroli Gnocchi sacerdotis misericordis honorem* (Pigato 2006, 527-543; Gnocchi, too, had served in Russia during World War II), the final section of his 1955 *De iis qui mortem appetivere scientiarum provehendarum studio*, dealing with the Nagasaki radiologist Takashi Nagai (1908-1951) (Pigato 2006, 309-343), and the poetic gem *De milite redivivo*, which has to do with a soldier who had died in the Alps during World War I (published in 1970: Pigato 2006, 507-525); the first War and particularly the heavy losses at river Piave also occur in an early composition from 1933: Pigato 2006, pp. 65-73 (especially lines 5-12).

¹¹ He also had an ample network of correspondents (most of these are mentioned in Tentorio 1981, 36-38) and was a talented Latin letter-writer. How much he appreciated classical, elegant Latin, becomes clear from a 1946 'letter to himself' (*Johannes Baptista Pigatus sibi ipsi*): "Preces ad Deum lege statutas effundere me piget, quod a pura latinitate abhorrent. An in caelo lingua Ciceroniana vel Horatiana utuntur? (Etiam nunc, quod 'in caelo' scripsi, mihi subirascor: malueram 'in campis Elysiis')." (The text of this letter can be found in Brioli 1982, 7).

¹² How the teacher Pigato – an inveterate smoker, who looked like an old man in his early fifties – impressed his pupils is suggested by the testimony of Ganci 2010.

¹³ Entitled *Lucretius* and awarded the *magna laus* at Amsterdam in 1956: Pigato 2006, 379-416.

¹⁴ Sacré 1986, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1992.

¹⁵ In the near future, Pigato's letters to IJsewijn will be handed over to the archives of Leuven University. Many letters written by IJsewijn to Pigato are kept at the Somaschan archives, now in Rome, and have been digitized (Fondo Pigato, PGB 0600-1165, passim).

times comes close to poetic prose.¹⁶ It looks as if Pigato, whom IJsewijn had praised for his poetic merits,¹⁷ had decided to open his heart to his Belgian correspondent, felt the need to commit his soul to paper and thought he could do so without any risk, for his friend lived far away from Italy and the letters were in Latin. Some extracts from Pigato's letters to IJsewijn may well illustrate his pervasive *animi aegrimonia* and his *corporis et animi morbi*, that sometimes resulted in disillusionment with mankind, in crises and conflicts with his colleagues and superiors or in severe depression and at times even led to a longing for death.

The following extract exudes feelings of lethargy and depression:

Nam mihi ipse videor eo inertiae esse redactus, ut sint pluris existimandi aselli quam ego. Praeterea hoc novi in me accidit, ut ipse librorum aspectus fastidium et satietatem pariat [...]. (Pigato to IJsewijn, 19 August 1962; unpublished)

This fragment, then, comes close to a poetical confession; it was written after Pigato had been forced to leave his beloved Como College in 1963:

Res sic se habent. Comi iam non sum, moderator Lycei non sum, iuvenum magister non sum, nimirum nullus plane sum. Quae rerum mutatio minus duabus horis facta est: iusserunt, reculas meas coacervavi, profectus de nocte sum [...]. Sodales meos mei non miseruit, at caelum: nam effusis imbribus pluebat, et aquae decedentes ad urbis lampades verae lacrimae esse videbantur, ut eodem sensu rerum naturam esse diceret, quo animus meus esset. At quaeres quid hic agam. Instar tigilli in flumine sum: vehor, vel melius abripior temporis dierumque cursu quasi sine voluntate sim. (Pigato to IJsewijn, 8 October 1963; unpublished)

A week later, he wrote to IJsewijn:

Sed equidem ex imo pectore et memoriâ stimuli existunt ac renascuntur, ut quotidie fere in novam colluctationem eamque difficilem incidam. Ita fit ut etiam locorum pulchritudines per maerorem perspectae minus appareant minusque valeant ad animum quietandum (Pigato to IJsewijn, 15 October 1963; unpublished)

Three years later, the poet was suffering once more:

Quo modo ipse valeam quidve faciam, dicere summo opere me pudet. Nihil enim facio nisi vivo, id est aëra duco, pauco cibo me sustento, pedibus moveor. [...] Sed haec sic a me fieri videntur, quasi a quadam velut machina, impetu extrinsecus illato, non voluntate et ingenio meo. [...] Saepe enim numero tam acriter sententiis sodalium meorum adversor, et quidem palam, ut iis qui me parum noverunt lites exercere velle videar. [...] Saepius in dies ex capite ita laboro quasi clavi in tempora infigantur. [...] Ut vides, mi Iosephe, rapido flumine me devolutum aetas mea in altum aeternitatis mare demittet. Vela igitur colligamus. (Pigato to IJsewijn, 1966; unpublished)

And, again, in 1967:

Adde quod quicquid his diebus de morte lego sic me afficit, ut non modo ea omnia in me amarissimas radices agant, sed etiam, quasi iam mortuus sim, ab omni industria tamquam re inutili abarceant. Ac nisi officia gravissima instarent, cubiculo clausum me tenerem, sodales, discipulos, homines omnes vitarem, vel cibi pertaesus. Utinam vere illud divi Pauli usurpare possem: 'Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo'.¹⁸ (Pigato to IJsewijn, 15 October 1967; unpublished)

¹⁶ His prose manifests a long writing practice. There still exist several diaries of Pigato, written in Latin, also during the last year of his life; these are kept at the Archive of his order: cp. Tentorio 1981, 33 (nos. 15, 16, 36).

¹⁷ IJsewijn 1961, 64.

¹⁸ Vulg. Philipp. 1, 23.

Similar statements and atmospheres one encounters in his Latin poems; they make it clear that we are dealing with fundamental characteristics of his personality.¹⁹ Although Pigato, inspired by Giovanni Pascoli (1855-1912) whose influence was dominant in 20th-century Latin poetry, favoured narrative *poemetti*, even his 'epic' poems were actually introspective, directly or indirectly dealt with his own sentiments and convictions, and betrayed a lyrical impetus. Take the aforementioned poem on Lucretius, awarded *magna laus* at Amsterdam.²⁰ as a matter of fact I think this poem reveals as much about Pigato as it tries to interpret Lucretius; Pigato undoubtedly identified himself to a large extent with the Roman poet. He concentrated upon the latter's alleged suicide, which according to the modern poet had everything to do with Lucretius' fundamental *maeror*, a consequence of the horrors of war, of the civil wars Lucretius had experienced and had not managed to overcome: it was exactly the problem Pigato himself had to cope with, but obviously, as a priest, to some extent surmounted with the help of his deeply rooted catholic faith that Lucretius obviously could not profess.²¹ Or read his 1954 *Lapurdum*, that also was awarded *laus* in Holland: it is not so much a christian poem about the Virgin as the combination of a hodoeporicon bringing Pigato from Como to Nice, Nîmes and Lourdes, and a meditation on the deficiencies of a frustrated artist, on artistic imperfection that disheartens the poet to such a degree that only faith can make his life tolerable and worthwhile – the poet had undertaken the pilgrimage to Lourdes to overcome his aforementioned melancholy, pessimism and despair -. Concerning his continuous but frustrating poetical efforts, he wrote:

Scilicet ut vates poliendo sedulus instet
 (ursarum exsuperans notas in pignora curas),
 Degenerabit opus semper tristemque pigebit
 Artificem, ex homine exierit quasi simia turpis. (...)
 Ipse ego, Pieridum vehementi qui actus amore
 Parnasi in iuga iam teneris protendor ab annis,
 Quid nisi consector refugum procul usque cacumen?²²

Reading Pigato is a constant challenge. Even the *Hoeffftianum* judges had to confess now and again that there were lines or sentences they failed to understand. There is more than one reason to this. Firstly, an average reader of 20th-century Latin poetry will find Pigato's vocabulary exceptionally rich;²³ secondly, if one compares his lines to, for instance, Francesco Sofia

¹⁹ Most significant in this respect is perhaps one of his shortest poems, the elegy *Ineunte anno quid senserim* (Pigato, 2006, 561-568). But see also, for instance, his powerful *Elegia pro juventute* (Pigato 2006, 601-612) and *Sacerdos moriens*, lines 75-86 (Pigato 2006, 690-692)

²⁰ Pigato 2006, 379-416.

²¹ At this point, Pigato, following the traditional view with regard to Vergil as a successor to Lucretius, opposed Vergil's philosophy, which according to the modern poet, announced Christianity (lines 317-330), to Lucretius' epicurism. The jury of the *Hoeffftianum* rightly regarded Pigato's poem (that, of course, had been sent in anonymously) as the work of a Catholic priest with an unacademic, but poetically defensible way of looking at Lucretius.

²² Pigato 2006, 345-377 (lines 219-222 and 242-244).

²³ Though it does not contain as many rare and exquisite words as his contemporary Fernando Maria Brignoli (1901-1970) liked to display. Occasionally, Pigato turned to neologisms, such as the adjective *nesciolus*

Alessio (1873-1943), one soon perceives how Pigato deliberately avoids *iuncturae tritae* and is constantly on the lookout for unexpected groups of words or *callidae iuncturae*, and how often he inverts the natural or usual word order. His syntax, too, is often complex: he tends to write intricate sentences, accumulating complements and subordinate clauses, not seldom with a certain *inconcinnitas*. His syntax resembles Lucretius much more than it does Ovid or Vergil. His versification, too, has an undeniable Lucretian flavour: it is frequently harsh, produces unusual hexametrical rhythms, at times accumulates monosyllables or admits elisions of the latter;²⁴ as a result, his poetic rhythms having nothing in common with the smoothness of, for instance, Hermann Weller (1878-1956). Pigato favoured the hexameter and the elegiac couplet, but his longer poems are frequently polymetric, most probably after the example of Pascoli.²⁵ Admittedly, in modern Latin poetry, a rich and intricate style sometimes conceals straightforward concepts, ideas or feelings, as it often does in the beautiful, linguistically sophisticated poems of Fernando Maria Brignoli. But this is not the case for Pigato, whose imagery is at times abstruse and hard to follow; furthermore, his poems often progress by way of association of images, dreams and visions. Just one example: as unbelievable as it may seem, one of his most famous poems, which deals with his impressions as he was walking through the ruins of Pompeii at night, has a long epyllion inserted, which has nothing to do with Pompeii, but is situated at the banks of the river Don in Russia and is based on Pigato's memories of the Russian campaign during World War II and, reminiscent as it is of Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe, eulogizes the marital and parental love of an elderly couple, living in a Russian farm and committed to Christian faith in times of communism.²⁶ Dreams, visions, imaginary travels in the air or to distant landscapes, past and present, imaginary music which resounds decades or centuries after it has been produced: all these elements come together in his poems or follow each other in rapid succession: they immerse the reader in a rich, but confusing and partly elusive poetic universe. However, due to the fact that this imagery and these techniques reappear constantly in his poems, that the poet expressed his ideas more unambiguously in the compositions of his last years, and thanks to the fact that we can consult the aforementioned correspondence with IJsewijn, we are able to enter his way of thinking and feeling, and to form a picture of his *Weltanschauung*.

Merely from a documentary point of view, too, Pigato's aforementioned letters to IJsewijn offer us important information: for instance, they reveal that Pigato was an adept of Neo-Latin poetry since his early youth; that he read the Latin journal *Alma Roma* (which contained many modern Latin poems) from the late 1920s on; that he had been fascinated by the Latin poems of Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494) and Marco Girolamo Vida (1485-1566) *a puerulo*, as he says, and wanted to imitate these;²⁷ that he admired such Neo-Latin poets as Janus Secundus (1511-

('somewhat ignorant'; Pigato 2006, 178 and 190) or the verbs *favillare* ('to twinkle'; Pigato 2006, 178, 190 and 238) and *saltillare* ('to hop'; Pigato 2006, 238).

²⁴ See, for instance, Pigato 2006, line 222 (with five monosyllables) of *De iis qui mortem appetivere scientiarum provehendarum studio* ('A quo cum iam bis legati ex nave columbi') and for his 'cumulative' way of constructing sentences, the marvellous images of an ominous silence in lines 227- 232: *Omnia sed circum subito siluere stupore, / non alios ex se ferme promentia sensus / quam quibus opprimimur, nimium si tardat amicus / de gravibus rebus prompte scripsisse rogatus, / induitur vel cum in plumbum et deflere videtur / caelum, ducatur quoddam quasi in aethere funus.*

²⁵ See, for instance, Pigato's *Somnium* and his *Nox Pompeiana* (Pigato 2006, 191-208 and 217-257).

²⁶ Pigato 2006, 250-253 (*Nox Pompeiana*, lines 243-298).

²⁷ Pigato, letter to IJsewijn, 29 June 1971; unpublished.

1536),²⁸ Michele Marullo (1458-1500)²⁹ and, unsurprisingly, Pascoli, that he was a man of wide readings, familiar with Milton, Goethe and Heine,³⁰ with Baudelaire, and, obviously, with such Italian classics as Dante, Leopardi and many others; that he had learnt about the existence of Latin competitions in 1931, when he read some verses written by Acaste Bresciani (1882-1969), the winner a Latin competition organized at Aquileia on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the burial of the *milite ignoto*, in 1931.³¹

This, however, does not mean that we have to take for granted whatever he confessed in the letters he dispatched to his Belgian friend, not even when it comes to his taking part in Latin competitions. In January 1960, Pigato wrote to IJsewijn about his allegedly first participations in the *Certamen Mingarellianum* (Bologna) and the *Certamen Hoeufftianum* (Amsterdam):

De certamine Mingarelliano non multa scio. Nam cum sodalis quidam meus, qui in Athenaeo Mediolanensi litteris operam dabat, olim ex albo edictum certaminis lectum transcriptumque mihi attulisset et hortatus esset ut contendere auderem, ego ut illi morem gererem, non recusavi duoque poemata paucis diebus condita Bononiam misi. Quibus nescio quo pacto adrisit "vocatus Apollo"³² impulitque ut etiam ad certamen Hoeufftianum [*sic*] Amstelodamense, metu repulsae superato, accederem. Etenim post Ioannem Pascolium nemo Italus est quin istud certamen plurimi faciat victoresque laudibus ad caelum extollat, idemque non pertimeat illud discrimen. (Pigato to IJsewijn, 21 January 1960; unpublished)

So, in 1950, he says, after he had learned by accident about the existence of the Mingarelli Latin contest, Pigato had sent to Bologna, on a friend's advice, two 'hastily written' poems, both of which met with success. Immediately afterwards, so shortly after 1950, he would have found the courage to dispatch some poems to the *Hoeufftianum*, too, the contest Pascoli's victories had made so respected among Italian classicists. This looks like a natural succession. Indeed, we know that Pigato won two prizes at the *Mingarellianum* of 1950,³³ and that he obtained the gold medal in Amsterdam in 1952 with his poem *Nox Pompeiana*, which marked the beginning of a series of Holland victories that ended with the poem *Pax in bello*, granted *magna laus* in 1959. And yet, in this section of his letter Pigato gave in to window-dressing and departed from the truth, as if he wanted to construct his *persona poetica*. The archives of the Hoeufft contest leave no room for doubt about this: they make it clear that Pigato competed in the Hoeufft contest not during some ten, but during almost forty years! Indeed, it appears that from 1934 on (that is, one year after he had been ordained to the priesthood), Pigato had been submitting Latin poems to the *Hoeufftianum* and that he continued to do so until 1972 (for the 1973 contest). Now, whenever he was not awarded a prize in Amsterdam (or in another competition), he would usually refrain from having his entry published elsewhere; an unpublished letter sent to the Hoeufft judge Wagenvoort in Utrecht suggests Pigato was really upset every time a composition of his had not met with success at a contest.³⁴ Some copies of these unsuccessful

²⁸ Pigato, letter to IJsewijn, 9 August 1971; unpublished.

²⁹ For Milton and Marullo, see Pigato's aforementioned letter from 29 June 1971.

³⁰ He translated Heine's *Lorelei* into Latin (Pigato 2006, 652-655).

³¹ Pigato, letter to IJsewijn, 1 February 1960; unpublished.

³² Verg. *georg.* 4, 7.

³³ With *De arte poetica in nostrae aetatis philosophos* and *Somnium* (Pigato 2006, 165-190 and 191-208).

³⁴ (Rapallo, 22 May 1968). This letter must refer to his poem *De Adamello monte*, mentioned as H 1968 in the survey below (no. 21): "Ad carmen meum quod attinet, plaustrum perculi, ut dicitur. Sed dolor pudorque irritae spei iam remisit." The epistle can be found at the Somaschan Archives in Rome, Fondo Pigato, PGB 0243. In some

poems he would keep, often without indicating that they had been competition poems; they would end up in the Somaschan archives in Genoa, now in Rome, and would only be published after the poet's death by Camporini in 2006; other poems did not even make it into the archives of his order and now survive as manuscripts or rather dactyloscripts in the Hoeufft archives, where the entries can easily be identified as products of Pigato, mostly on account of the concomitant and transparent envelopes bearing the poet's name, often also because of the characteristic handwriting of Pigato, who time and again had to correct the mistakes his pupils had made while typing out his manuscripts and felt obliged to send his corrections to the Academy at Amsterdam; and not seldom on account of the themes dealt with and the style of the poems. This way, Pigato's output can be supplemented substantially. The number of hitherto unknown verses of his amounts to more than 2000 lines, that have to be added to the c. 4500 verses known so far from the posthumously published *Opere poetiche latine* (Pigato 2006).

Needless to say that I cannot present each of these 'new' poems in detail. I will, however, try to review them concisely and to contextualize them against the background of Pigato's entire Latin output.

Let me first give a survey of the poems with which Pigato has entered the *Certamen Hoeufftianum* between 1934 and 1972. In the following list, capitalized titles refer to poems that were successful in the Dutch competition (the year of which is preceded by 'H') and have been published both in the annual booklets issued by the Amsterdam Academy and in Pigato 2006. For the 'new' poems, there follows an indication of their present locations within the Hoeufft archives, that are part of the Archives of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences (indicated with 'NHA 64'), now kept at the *Noord-Hollands Archief* in the city of Haarlem.

1. H 1935 *Duo pupilli* (169 lines, hexameters; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-848, no. 7)
2. H 1938 *Orphanorum pater. Carmen de divo Hieronymo Aemiliano* (316 lines, hexameters; a substantial revision of H 1935; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-850, no. 16)³⁵
3. H 1950a *Vates* (489 lines [!], polymetric; unpublished, apart from the final section, considered part of an unknown poem in Pigato 2006, 417-432; NHA 64-838, fasc. 1, no. 10)
4. H 1950b *Daedalus vatum* (241 lines, hexameters; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-838, fasc. 1, no. 17)
5. H 1951a *Vitae commentarium* (190 lines, polymetric; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-838, fasc. 2, no. 2)³⁶
6. H 1951b *Symphonia Beethoviana* (96 lines, elegiac couplets; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-838, fasc. 2, no. 5)
7. H 1951c *Horatius* (present in two slightly different versions; 163 lines [164 lines in the second version], hexameters; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-838, fasc. 2, no. 3)

cases, Pigato reworked his unsuccessful poems and submitted them a second time to the contest. Exceptionally, he turned to another contest: see no. 21 in the list below.

³⁵ For the *Hoeufftianum* during the years 1923-1943, see the inventory by van Binnebeke 2020.

³⁶ It is somewhat strange that this poem has not been included in Pigato 2006; indeed, a manuscript copy of it, there entitled *Satura Horatiana de discipulo quodam. Inter pueros* (171 lines), sent by the poet to Father M. Tentorio in 1952, is kept in the Somaschan archives: cp. Tentorio 1981, 33 (no. 12).

8. H 1952 *NOX POMPEIANA* (gold medal)
9. H 1953a *LVDI* (*magna laus*)
10. H 1953b *Arenacum* (118 lines, hexameters; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-839, fasc. 1, no. 10)
11. H 1954a *Batavia victrix* (362 lines, hexameters; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-839, fasc. 2, no. 5)
12. H 1954b *EPISTOLA AD DISCIPVLVM* (*magna laus*)
13. H 1955 *LAPVRDVM* (*magna laus*)
14. H 1956 *LVCRETIVS* (*magna laus*)
15. H 1957 *Post Catullocalvom* (334 lines, hexameters; unpublished, unknown, but see H 1958 for a revision of this poem; NHA 64-840, fasc. 3, no. 3)³⁷
16. H 1958 *Catullus* (210 lines, hexameters; revision and reduction of H 1957 [207 lines in the version published in Pigato 2006, 433-452]; unknown as a competition poem; NHA 64-841, fasc. 1, no. 7)
17. H 1959 *PAX IN BELLO* (*magna laus*)
18. H 1960 *Iuvenes* (222 lines, hexameters; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-841, fasc. 3, no. 12)
19. H 1961 *Amores* (222 lines, hexameters; unpublished, unknown; a revision of H 1960; NHA 64-841, fasc. 4, no 1)
20. H 1962 *De arte poetica* (73 lines, hexameters; unpublished, unknown; NHA 64-842, fasc. 1, no. 23; not to be confused with the totally different poem *De arte poetica in nostrae aetatis philosophos*, awarded a prize at the *Certamen Mingarellianum* of 1950)
21. H 1968 *De Adamello monte* (116 lines, hexameters; unknown as a Hoeffft poem, but resubmitted to the *Certamen Vaticanum* of 1969 and awarded *laus* there; with the new title *De milite redivivo* [144 hexameters in Pigato 2006, 507-525]; NHA 54-844, fasc. 1, no. 2).
22. H 1970 *Ultima ecloga* (112 lines, hexameters; unknown as a Hoeffft poem; NHA 64-844, fasc. 3, no. 3; published in Pigato 2006, 545-560)
23. H 1973a *De iuventute ad senes elegia* (probably 96 lines, elegiac couplets; in the Hoeffft archives, the text itself is missing in NHA 64-844, fasc. 6, no. 2; yet, the poem must coincide with Pigato's *Elegia pro iuventute*, first published in a local journal in December 1973 and reissued in Pigato 2006, 601-612; in an unpublished letter to J. IJsewijn (1 January 1974), Pigato uttered his indecision concerning the title: "Una cum his litteris tibi elegiam mitto, quam cum conderem, 'de senectute' inscripseram, deinde, carmine ad umbilicum adducto, malui 'pro iuventute' inscribere. Utrum aptius conveniat, tu videris.")

³⁷ The title undoubtedly refers to Pascoli's homonymous poem (cp. Pascoli 1999, 7-10), of which Pigato was very fond (Pigato 1959, 10-12).

24. H 1973b *De navigio divino* (172 lines, hexameters; unknown as a *carmen Hoeuftianum*, but coinciding with the poem *Iter maritimum*, published after the poet's death in Pigato 2006, 613-631 from the archives of the Collegio Gallio in Como; an older version, bearing the same title as the Hoeuft poem and dated November 1972, is kept at the archives of the Somaschi: cp. Sacré 1986; NHA 64-844, fasc. 6, no. 4).

Reading these for the most part 'new' poems one feels like witnessing Pigato's development as a poet. Especially the first two pieces (nos. 1 and 2 of the list), dating from the 1930s, are interesting in this respect. Here, we see the priest trying his hand at a *poemetto* on the merits of San Girolamo Miani or Emiliani, the 16th-century Venetian patrician, who was the founding father of the Company of the Servants of the Poor, called the Somaschi later on, that is, Pigato's own religious order. Pigato tried to outline how Emiliani's charitable mission had come to being; he concentrated on one particular experience of the patrician. Admittedly, the poet brought in some pathos in describing the affection Emiliani felt for the little *pupilli* or orphans he decided to take care of; Pigato compassionately described the misery of an orphan girl named Alda; here he was clearly influenced by Pascoli's very last Latin poem *Thallusa*, both in his evoking the state of mind of the little girl – a mental confusion coming close to Thallusa's *aeque memor, immemor aequae* (line 180)- and in his wording.³⁸ But, on the whole, Pigato's epyllion, though not a mean work at all, is an unexceptional historical *poemetto*, comparable to many poems that were submitted to the Amsterdam contest every year, but did not really stand out.

In the late 1940s and the early 1950s Pigato found his own voice, acquired his easily recognizable personal style and fully developed his powerful and often original imagery. Yet, some of the newly discovered compositions take a special position in his oeuvre. *Daedalus vatum*, for instance, written in 1949, was quite exceptional as an attempt at stressing the importance of Livius Andronicus, the first Latin poet in Rome. Pigato even imitated archaic Latin in this poem, and thus inevitably added a perfume of *ioco-serium* to his poem. He made Andronicus ask Tibullus and Vergil in the Elysian Fields whether or not his *Odusia* still found approval in Rome:

Narrate, duonei,

Si Romad vos, quoi cecini olim carmina primus.

Topper ne ite, sed heic mecum consistite, quaesso:

Livius ex Graio Romanus sum clueoque. (lines 6-9)

The two classical poets shrugged Andronicus off as a rustic poet from prehistoric times. Pigato then expands on Andronicus's historical importance as the first great poet of Rome, and as the vates whose famous *carmen* for Juno Regina had propitiated that goddess and helped Rome to obtain a decisive victory over Carthage. Furthermore, the modern poet stages a meeting between Andronicus and Augustus in the underworld; Augustus happens to be familiar with Andronicus' poetry; the deceased emperor, who has had some contacts with Herodes, suspects

³⁸ *Duo pupilli*, lines 56-60: "Mamma!" puella flet. At genetrix silet. Illa iterato / appellat matrem, rebusque tacentibus audit / tandem aliquam procul et procul. Ista vocat te, / mammam te vocat ista: age dum, sis mamma puellae. / Quid non efficit Echo? Censet se Alda vocari.' This comes close to Pascoli's *Thallusa*, where *mamma* also occurs and where we can read, i.a. (lines 145-147; cp. Pascoli 1999, 44): 'Tremibundo palpitat omnis / vagitu domus. Infelix Thallusa, vocaris! / Novisti vocem. Matrem vox illa vocat te.'

that a new religion will come to Rome and will secure the immortal role of Latin, so that Andronicus' works will be saved from total oblivion, and that is a source of great joy to Andronicus. In the end we see Augustus and Livius Andronicus strolling together through the Elysian fields:

Tunc una Elysios pariterque ibatis amici,

Hinc dominus Romae, vates hinc; primus uterque. (lines 240-241)

In the eyes of the Amsterdam judges, this piece of work (which indeed incorporated a fair number of ancient testimonies on Andronicus and fragments of his poems) was rather a philological than a poetic achievement. To some extent, this may be true, but let us not forget that only one year later, another poet, Giambattista Pighi (1898-1978), would earn the gold medal with his *Rudens resartus*, allegedly a dialogue between Plautus and his musical composer Marcipor, in which Pighi had imitated the old-time style of Plautus: that was a piece of philology as well!³⁹ Apart from that, the poem is already typically Pigatian in that a living, 20th-century person addresses an ancient poet – Pigato used the device of visions and dreams more than once – ; furthermore, Pigato had an affinity with Andronicus insofar as the old poet complained about receiving little recognition: Pigato, too, from his early years on felt underappreciated as a poet.

Another peculiar poem is *Batavia victrix* from 1953, the theme of this long *poemetto* being the famous North Sea flood of January 1953, which affected especially Holland, and caused almost 2000 deaths. In a way, this is a traditional narrative poem, which, unsurprisingly, proposes some episodes of heroic behaviour on the part of some Dutch citizens (*victrix* in the title hints at the new dikes the Dutch planned immediately after the disaster). It is quite possible that the poet had chosen this Dutch topic because he assumed that it would flatter a jury that was composed of three Dutch professors.⁴⁰ But as a matter of fact, the topic put him on a disadvantage: though one member of the Hoeufft jury, the Utrecht professor Hendrik Wagenvoort (1886-1976),⁴¹ was fond of the poem, the two others were afraid to bestow a prize upon it, foreseeing critics who would accuse the Dutch judges of chauvinism. The themes of heroic self-sacrifice and altruistic relief efforts in a dramatic situation definitely appealed to the poet. Pigato's poem was not perfect – the jury found some lines obscure, again -, but here too, the images and descriptions offer proof of Pigato's craftsmanship. The picture of the blowing up of the terrible storm, with which the poem opens, reveals a characteristic talent of his; most typical is the length of this breathless, rushing sentence which mirrors nature's violence; the harsh sounds fit perfectly with it, too:

At nunc, dum frustra undoso quatit ariete muros

³⁹ On this poem see Traina 2001, 236-237.

⁴⁰ Other poets acted likewise, such as Fr. Pavesi (*Hollandia*, 1876), G. Caldana (*Harlemi campus*, 1917), or Fernando Bandini (1931-2013), whose first (still unpublished) submission to the *Hoeufftianum*, dating from 1963, was entitled *Anna Frank*. Among the other poems submitted without success to the *Hoeufftianum* and dealing with the Low Countries, it may be enough to mention the poem *Universitas studiorum Nederlandica*, sent in in 1969 by Enrico Conti (who is probably identical with the parish priest of Cogolonchio, 1914-1984; Conti was a friend of Enrico Maffacini, 1902-1956, a priest and a fellow townsman of his; Maffacini is known as a Latin translator of Collodi's *Pinocchio*; Conti's poem is to be found in NHA, 64-844, fasc. 2, no. 17).

⁴¹ Wagenvoort, in my opinion a conscientious and sensitive judge of the poems submitted for the competition, became a good friend of Pigato; many letters of his to Pigato are kept in the aforementioned *Fondo Pigato* of the Somaschan archives.

Oceanus barathrisque novas educit ab imis
 Vires, quaque magis retro obice pellitur, illac
 Insurgit maiora minans seque ipse flagellat,
 Par irae immensi, ventre exstimulante, leonis,
 Extrema a Thule [*Greenland*] pinnis glacialibus actus
 Coniurat cum illo Boreas, sparsisque potitus
 Orcadibus locat hibernas lato orbe procellas,
 Scilicet e rapidis gyris, quas nauta 'cyclonas'
 Appellat, vitatque petens vel inhospita cursu. (lines 20-29)

Holland reoccurs in another new poem, entitled *Arenacum*, sent in for the 1953 competition. In this poem Pigato enthusiastically describes the impressive annual remembrance of the battle of Arnhem at the end of World War II. This poem once more testifies to the poet's obsession with the Second World War; as often in Pigato, it evokes the horrors of war, but also pays tribute to the heroic behaviour of soldiers fighting for freedom. Another typical feature is the mysterious but real presence of the fallen soldiers during the ceremony, a presence evidenced by a light rustle in the air – similarly, Pigato would have the simple songs of a first World War soldier echoing through the mountains fifty years after the latter's death.⁴²

Nimirum levibus quidam fremitus vagus alis 50
 Insolito insinuat supra circumque volatu,
 Huc illuc pariter, pariter procul et prope et idem
 In nostros animos, secreta ubi cauta teguntur,
 Atque foras, sensu prohibens aliena retunso,
 Elysiis nisi laetantes hic forte relictis 55
 Sint ipsi et qui praesenti decorantur honore,
 Fortia in atroces passi nisque Alamannos (...) (lines 50-57)

We know from various statements that Pigato was fond of the music of Giacomo Puccini,⁴³ and even more of Beethoven's symphonies. In his 1950 poem *De arte poetica*, granted a prize at the *Certamen Mingarellianum*, he called Beethoven a divine composer letting the listener rise above himself:⁴⁴

Atque sonis alios deus ille tonantibus excit
 Beethovius mundos, sceptroque gubernat et arte

⁴² Pigato 2006, 512-519 (*De milite redivivo*, lines 24-101).

⁴³ Cp. Pigato 2006, 656 (*Paraphrasis cantici Pucciniani a verbis "Un bel dì vedremo" incipientis*).

⁴⁴ Pigato 2006, 165-190. Cp. also an unpublished letter written to IJsewijn, 8 January 1972: "Quae de meis elegidiis Lovaniensibus scripsisti, ita mihi visa sunt, quasi esset symphonia Beethoviana".

Et tibi te eripiens attollit vortice in illos. (lines 228-230)⁴⁵

In that same year 1950 he sent to Amsterdam a poem entitled *Symphonia Beethoviana*, a fascinating, but in my eyes very difficult work,⁴⁶ which, if I am not mistaken, tries to express in greater detail the effect Beethoven's symphonies had on the poet, and illustrates Beethoven's own quote *Durch Leiden Freude*.⁴⁷ All the same, Pigato identifies himself, it seems to me, with Beethoven: the feelings he found in the composer's works are similar to the ones the Latin poet used to put into words: Pigato, too, sees life as a struggle, Pigato, too, often vacillates between despair and hope through faith, between ideals and disappointment, between a longing for death and a desire for life; Pigato, too, often suffers from depression. And thus, Beethoven's symphonies carry the poet away to the realm of death, but then reconcile him with life, with the miracles of creation, with nature's unstoppable vitality, with men.⁴⁸ These opposites we find for instance in these lines:

Ipse mihi videor vivente in morte superstes

Ac cumulata miser tristia utrimque pati. [...]

Non ego te metuam, non, quamvis mille timores

Inicias taetros: iam, Libitina, vale.

Vos etiam missis, homines, consurgere curis

Sentio et alatis fundere verba modis. [...]

"Tu mihi stella nites", iuvenis per prata puellae;

Ex horto illa: "Nites tu mihi solus, amor". (lines 47-48, 83-86, 89-90)

Pigato's poem bears some resemblance to another poem on Beethoven, written by Giuseppe Albini (1863-1933) in 1922 but published only in 1988. Further research is needed here, but my guess is that both Pigato and Albini had read some popular works on Beethoven, such as Romain Rolland's (1866-1944) *Vie de Beethoven* (1903), with its very romantic interpretation of the composer's life and works, or (an Italian translation of) Beethoven's correspondence, and that this accounts for the similarities between the two poems.⁴⁹

Pigato's characteristic ideas and images are prominent in another number of these newly discovered poems that are even more in line with his hitherto known works. In his *Horatius*,

⁴⁵ Slightly changed, these lines reoccur in the poem *Vates*, written around the same time (lines 138-140 of part 2).

⁴⁶ Until now, I have great difficulties in interpreting the presence here of a person named Lagarus, who appears both at the start and at the end of the composition.

⁴⁷ "Wir endliche mit dem unendlichen Geist sind nur zu Leiden und Freuden geboren, und beinah könnte man sagen, die ausgezeichneten erhalten durch Leiden Freude" (Beethoven to countess Erdödy, 19 October 1815; cp. van Beethovens 1907, 45-46 (no. 367).

⁴⁸ But when referring to himself, Pigato as a priest of course places more emphasis on his own faith. He explicitly links the opposition between deluge / destruction and hope / rebirth with the story of Noah in the Bible (verses 51-70).

⁴⁹ For Albini's poem (entitled *Musaeus Bonnensis*) and some notes on it (referring to R. Rolland), see Albini 1988, 63-77. One might also compare the poetic inscriptions of Lino Crovara (1913-2002) on Beethoven, such as this one: "E SVPERIS HAVSTVM / LVDOVICE BEETHOVEN / IN SYMPHONIAM INFVDISTI LVMEN / MAEROR VT DELERETVR OMNIS / VITAMQVE MIRE / GIGNERENT SEPVL CRA NOVAM" (Crovara 1968, 72).

written in 1950 in the style of the latter's *Sermones*, he stages a dream or an imaginary encounter with Horace (this reminds us of his poem on Livius Andronicus, written the year before; and Pigato used this device more than once).⁵⁰ Horace poses questions to Pigato on the actual state of letters. According to Pigato, 20th-century literature and morals are in decay: the dominant themes are physical love and sex; beauty queens are being elected now in every country, youth indulges to trivial love songs, poetry is dealing predominantly with 'Priapus'. Marxist ideas carry the day. The prototype of this, in Pigato's eyes perverted, literature, is the work of an author whom he calls 'Morobias', adding in a note that this nickname is very similar to the man's real name:

<Hor.> "Nemon' scribendis clarescit versibus?" - <Pig.> "Immo,

Te nisi surpuerint fata imperiosa, videbis

Carmina festinum revocantia spissa popellum,

Perspicuo ex vitro pictis prostantia zonis.

Nec desunt qui emant, gracilem dum alata legentem

In viridaria devectent et regna Priapi." –

<Hor.> "Quorsum?" - <Pig.> "Concelebrat sua ubi sacra rusticus olim,

At nunc molliculus puerisque virisque Priapus,

Unicus eversa iam relligione superstes." (...)

<Pig.> "Plura scies, paucis nummis si rite solutis,

M o r o b i a n (tali dici vult usque facetus

Nomine homo), Veneris Sthenelum, opportunus adibis." –

<Hor.> "Moecham tu narras Musam! Iam parce vomenti!" (lines 21-29, 79-82)⁵¹

I am pretty sure *Morobian* stands for Alberto Moravia (1907-1990) and his allegedly unedifying novels, that were the target of Pigato's criticism, since the Italian novelist had depicted the emptiness of life of bourgeois people motivated by money and sex only (*Gli indifferenti*, 1929; *Agostino*, 1944). Intrinsically, Pigato's satire is a conservative piece of work; as an author who was fundamentally an idealist and a romantic, and as a Catholic priest rooted in traditional values, he did not have any affinity to the modernity of Moravia.

Poetry and teaching are recurrent themes in the Latin compositions of Pigato, who was an impassioned teacher with a strong commitment to the younglings he formed and a great interest in their later lives. Some of his poems must have been inspired by his practical experience; moreover, his daily contacts with his young pupils brought about reflections and meditations on his own childhood and youth. His poem *De arte poetica* from 1961 centres on 'poetry' versus 'real life', and on a teacher's warm feelings for his pupils. This remarkable story of

⁵⁰ See, for instance, the 1950 polymetric poem *Somnium* (Pigato 2006, 191-208), where Pigato, while reading Horace, has a dream in which he encounters Lucretius, Horace, Vergil and Tibullus; Tibullus improvises an ode to faithful love. This device of visions, dreams, imaginary colloquies with ancient poets is timeless, of course. Thus it reoccurs often in a very recent collection of Latin poems by Michael von Albrecht (*1933): cp. von Albrecht 2022.

⁵¹ From the revised version, which arrived in Amsterdam a week after the first one, in October 1950. On line 80, Pigato added a note: "Est autem nomen nonnihil immutatum itali cuiusdam scriptoris (...)".

disappointment and reconciliation is about a young man in whom the teacher Pigato had seen a future poet, but who, to Pigato's disillusionment, had abandoned his poetic endeavours; a few years later, Pigato met him again, and, much to his surprise, saw him in the company of his wife and a beautiful little daughter, both of whom the father and husband adored.⁵² Isn't this kind of love as good as a poetical existence, Pigato asked himself, is it not actually a form of poetry?

Another story about a pupil, which one can read in the 1959 poem *Iuvenes*, and which the poet revised in 1960, giving it the title *Amores*, is more pessimistic: here a form of charity, or call it humanity and generosity, causes a young and talented girl to decline higher education: she decides to devote herself to assist a fellow pupil, a young man from a broken family and having dozens of problems; she falls in love with him, as the teacher-poet notices:

(...) puros reflexit ocellos
 Ad iuvenem, vitreae flaventem a luce fenestreae.
 Ut mihi inaudito vultu pulcherrima fulsit
 Tum virgo, laetae similis similisque timenti,
 Delibans oculis avidis refugisque sodalem! (lines 71-75)

Not only will she help him, but she also naively states that she will become his companion in life in order to mend his wretched heart: "Ipsa meo faciam in florem mutetur amore" (line 185)⁵³ There is no happy end to this particular love-story, for the young man is past redemption; in this poem, too, the teacher meets his former pupil a few years later and learns about the sad outcome of this unequal relationship of this young woman and her shabby fellow.⁵⁴

I want to end this *tour d'horizon* of recently discovered Pigato poems with two most typical examples of his craftsmanship. First of all, there is the poem *Vates*, dating from 1949. It is a triptych, which combines, as in some of his later poems, his vision of the world, his ideas about poetry and faith, and the story of his own life, his development as a poet and a priest. The first part is about the child Pigato, an admirer of nature and especially of the sky, a dreamer who has his head in the stars and who according to his father will never manage to earn his living. His earliest memories carry him back to the dark years of World War I, when the noises made by aeroplanes made him flee his home in the company of his mother; but there he had a vision of the Virgin, whose brilliant image, as a sign of hope, he saw in the clouds, a vision surpassing in beauty everything visible on earth. And already as a boy he would write poems:

Quo facilis dictante deo facundia venit,
 Quo numeri, nova quo percussi agitatio cordis,

⁵² Pigato's views on the purity of little children one finds, i.a. in the third part of *Vates* (lines 89-125; cp. Pigato 2006, 426-429).

⁵³ In the first version (*Iuvenes*), this line is followed by the following seductive verses: "Illi ego mater ero, soror et ..." flammisque rubescens / virgo oculis complet verba intermissa beatis." (lines 193-194)

⁵⁴ As often in Pigato's poetry, an opposition is made between worldly love relationships and a more universal love, inspired by faith. In this poem, the girl, whose love was concentrated initially on one single person in need of help, decides to resume her studies and to go for medicine, which will enable her to help many more people. From this perspective, there is a positive aspect to this unhappy love affair. The idea of love of and care for mankind, inspired by Christ's love for humanity, is present in several poems. One finds it for instance in his *De arte poetica in nostrae aetatis philosophos*, lines 199-201 (Pigato 2006, 184): "Namque amor ex vera verus dulcedine cretus / in vitas gaudet sese diffundere multas. Nec Deus ipse alio motus generavit amore."

Ut migrare animum iam crederet alta petentem? (part 1, lines 114-116)

The second section is about the adolescent and young adult, who now more and more feels that he is different from his group of peers, who do not understand him,⁵⁵ who do not appreciate poetry as a whole, and do not grasp Pigato's lofty concept of it, as the latter expressed it in Latin lines that gave voice to an inner fire, coming from God, an inner fire that enabled the poet to portray the perfection of God's creation before it decayed in man's deficient behaviour, and to attract the reader's attention to that neglected and eternal perfection through the beauty of his poetry. These are difficult, philosophical lines, indeed:

Sic unam efficient gentem res quaeque creatae,
Praeteritae et quae nunc vigeant etiamque futurae,
Donec erit vates hominumque Deique prophetae.
Vatem non alium recte appellaveris ergo
Quam qui materia victa se infundit amando
Et vitam rebus tribuit, quae exuberat ipsi,
Atque Deo similis vocitetur et ipse creator. (part 2, lines 145-151)

The third part of the poem articulates Pigato's love for Our Lady and his determination to concentrate on heavens, since everything living on earth is disappointingly imperfect:

Te satis usus sum, satis una lusimus ambo,
Terpsichore, lyrici dulcis amica modi.
Nunc tamen invitat Deus altius ipse volare,
Qua caelum stellis surget ab axe novis.
Debueram iam tunc rebus me offerre severis,
Cum primum hic vidi luminis esse nihil. (part 3, lines 133-138)⁵⁶

During this same period, between 1948 and 1950, Pigato wrote what he originally called a *satura Horatiana* in 1948, but while revising it entitled *Vitae commentarium* in 1950, and rightly so, because this is not a Horatian satire, but a 'satura' insofar as the poem contains sections written in different metres. In this work, Pigato expresses nearly the same concepts and ideas we find in his previous poem, but in other words and images. Without a shadow of doubt he writes about himself, about his own frustrations and his own aspirations. Here, too, the poet, from the awareness of the purity of the heavenly stars, invites his fellows to soar into the air, and to distrust this world's imperfection, as the following asclepiadean lines tell:

⁵⁵ This is also one of the main themes of *Ludi*, a poem which received *magna laus* at the *Hoefuffianum* in 1953 and deals with his own childhood and youth. The concept of the poet who feels isolated and misunderstood is also present in Pigato's last poem, *Sacerdos moriens* (Pigato 2006, 673-701, particularly lines 68-81).

⁵⁶ And in Pigato 2006, 428 (lines 131-136) – since what is a mysterious *Pars tertia* in Pigato 2006, 417-432, coincides largely with the third part of *Vates* -.

Ex illis [*aetheris luminibus*] oritur castus amoribus
Vates, arte sacra nec minor Orptheo,
Qui secum in superam ducat originem
Infixos homines immemores humi. (lines 21-24)

But the poet suffers: the lack of respect he encounters, the sense of loss of pureness and the miseries of life with all its shortcomings and flaws make him doleful and turn him into a solitary man, as these sapphic stanzas declare:

Segregat nunc se iuvenis seorsum
Nube velatus tenebrosa ocellos,
Gressibus lentis velut agnus errat
Matre relicta.
Antea risu nitidus decoro,
Intumet vultus subitis querellis,
Quaeque iam tempus sepelivit, ardens
Excitat ira. (lines 81-88)

And it is only while concentrating his efforts and his heart on faith and on God, that he can overcome his downheartedness and engage into an active life as a teacher and a priest in the service of his fellow men; this he expresses by means of a vision he has received:

Vidi etenim per curva poli, dum cuncta silerent,
A reliquis voltum disiectum corpore membrisque
Adnuere his altum dictis: "Enitere in astra!
Pax illic habitat: facile ipsa duce traheris,
Exemptas modo sorde datas direxeris alas."(lines 178-182)

Many of these images and ideas reoccur much later, in a posthumously published, impressive poem, entitled *Sacerdos moriens*,⁵⁷ started in 1974 and completed in 1976 during the last weeks of his life. The poet was suffering from cancer and racked with pain.⁵⁸ In this final poem, he presented himself (in the third person) as lying on his deathbed, already unable to move and to speak, but still clearheaded, while some persons were standing around his bedside:

Is tamen immotus manibus, iam mutus et ore
Vi morbi, clausis oculis et pectore anhelus,

⁵⁷ Pigato 2006, 673-701.

⁵⁸ Cp. N.N. 1976, 95: On 14 May 1976, the rector of the Collegio Gallio at Como informed the editors of the journal *Moreana* on the death of Pigato with a Latin letter, saying, *i.a.*: "acerrimos corporis corporis cruciatus perpeusus, Pigatus noster, servus bonus et fidelis, a.d. V Nonas Maias intravit in gaudium Domini sui."

Pervigil ast animo primis remeabat ab annis

In reliquum spatium, fausta aqtue infausta revisens. (lines 8-11)

So, the dying priest is going through his life, recalls his aspirations and so to speak Platonic ideals, his joys but also his sorrows and disappointments, his standing strong in Christian faith. Once again, he reminisces about his childhood, about that glimpse of pure and eternal beauty he had seen as a youngster and that inspired him during his life, inciting him to the pursuit of beauty in his poetry, about his early poetic experiments that, to his great dismay, often fell on deaf ears, about the horrors of war, about his fundamental melancholy, his restless nature and the relief he found in his devotion to our Lady and to Christ, about his commitment to teaching⁵⁹ as well as to spreading the good word, about his beliefs concerning priesthood. All these themes were fundamental to our poet. Over the years, Pigato's poetic universe remained pretty stable and constant.

In limine mortis, there is no bitterness in the poet's heart, but the firm belief that his attempts at doing good have not been wasted. In the final section of *Sacerdos moriens*, Pigato imagines his own passing away in unforgettable verses. Before his mind's eye he sees old friends, former comrades-in-arms, pupils, his deceased parents, the faithful he had assisted, who from heavens invite him into their company. In his agony, the priest opens his eyes, murmuring a warm hello to all these persons; the bystanders are worried about Pigato's sudden agitation; but the poet has found peace at least:

Nunc autem proferre caput conatus 'havete'
Murmurat, ex oculisque iubar manavit apertis,
Victor ut in stadio populo subridet ovanti.
Qui circum adstabant, haec inconsueta paventes
Inclinant sese pleni anxietatis in aegrum.
Is vero gaudens aeterna in templa volarat
Ad scatebras pulchri vereque perennis amoris;
Et testis fuit in placido lux ore pererrans. (lines 166-173)

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⁵⁹ In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, however, Pigato was upset by the student protests and the new mentality of the youngsters and thus wondered if he had not become an antiquated teacher. His 1973 *Elegia pro iuventute* (Pigato 2006, 601-612) voices these low spirits and doubts.

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