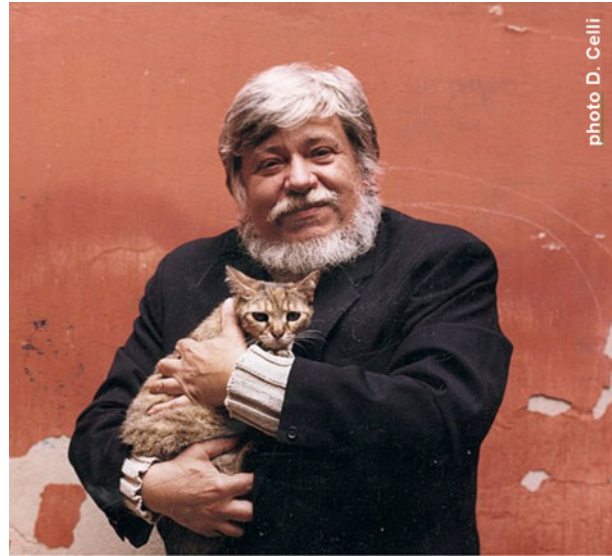


In memory of Giorgio Celli (1935 - 2011)

I like to remember Prof. Giorgio Celli, who passed away on June 11, 2011, as a fleeting vision in a dream.

There he is, look! He's standing in line to enter the conference, yes, it really is him: a casque of silver-grey hair, carefully uncombed, a white beard surrounding the round face with its deep, light-blue eyes, broad shoulders and plump belly, contained inside a shabby red jacket, zipped up to the neck, out of which a neck-scarf protrudes; creaseless, light-blue trousers that stay up miraculously and enclose the narrow hips, grey sports shoes (unbranded) with white stripes. It's Giorgio Celli, the professor. But what's he doing in line? No, it isn't the entrance to a conference hall. Giorgio is going into a cinema in the outskirts of town. The line of people has got longer, now they have to climb a long flight of steps, it starts to rain, some people swear, others open their umbrella, it's cold, but he, quite calmly, goes up the steps, I see he has one shoulder literally sawn into by a shoulder-bag. The blue bag with white stitching is heavy, surely full of books and papers that you can see sticking out of the half-closed zipper. The bag is leaning against his stomach. I'm with other people - entomologist friends? - I make my way towards him to help him climb, then I think twice and take heart! Giorgio you're the same as ever, in great form! But how come? Aren't you sick? Don't you have trouble climbing? Do you need a hand? I can carry your bag for you, look I won't be offended! Well, I say, then we'll have dinner together. The steps get even longer, they are those of an emergency unit in a hospital; it's true then, Giorgio you're out of hospital? Call everyone, it really is him! Come and join us! You're not dead - Giorgio what are you doing on the steps? Look everyone, he's here!! Now he's gazing at me with his rather sly face, and I wake up, with his gaze still fixed in my mind.

I'll always see Giorgio like this, puffing and loaded down with books, his cell phone ringing that he can't find in his pockets. A great friend, colleague and teacher, in happy moments during "hearty meals". Days of intense work, of discussions and hours spent at conferences on "biological and integrated control" where his speeches were much admired by the public, and it was hard too for them not to be appreciated by his so-called enemies - supporters of conventional chemical pest control, of a 'preventive' type that sprayed pesticides against insects even when below the economic threshold of damage. But to describe and remember the figure of Giorgio is now truly complicated. Here I will concentrate prevalently on his role as an entomologist, leaving it to other friends and to the internet to deal with the long list of books he produced, his photos, his fame as a popular scientific broadcaster in his television programme about animals, his theatre, his poetry, the hundreds of prefaces to books, art series and so on. He published countless articles for the cultural pages of daily newspapers, scientific essays, obviously about insects but also about other animals and their behaviour. One title, just to give an example: "*Quattro*



zampe... più due" [Four legs... plus two]. As well as cats (his favourites) and other pets, in this book published in 1989 Giorgio also tells stories about hexapods. He was involved in politics too, particularly at the European parliament. Unfortunately we do know the contents of the speeches he made in Brussels in defence of the environment and nature. I've been told that they would make splendid contemporary lectures. After he retired, his artistic and theatrical expertise allowed him to embark on new ventures and to found the "*Club di Fantomas*". And so in his final years, when the illness was beginning to tell, he was able to dedicate himself not only to insects but also to his great passion, the theatre, which represented one of his last important undertakings.

To avoid any oversights and to give an idea of his many-sided personality, I will pass the word directly to Giorgio, who offered a few personal notes to his close friend Claudio Beghelli (to whom I am extremely grateful for this extract from an unpublished interview that is now in press).

"I've always been someone who has lived at the margins. This is also because my choice was to explore the confines of many different disciplines, the borderline zones of culture are those that interest me most: I could define myself a 'confino-logist'. I'm fascinated by the many points where not only art and science but also countless other realms of knowledge interact, converge... I think that my interest in this area has made even me a man who doesn't really know who he is. Personally speaking, I have had moments in my life where I devoted myself mainly to theatre and nothing else, others in which I devoted my energies mainly to intense scientific research, and not to theatre, and others still when I wrote poetry... So my life is made up of a mosaic of varying experiences: different cycles at different times. Today, I tend towards an eclectic mixture of all these things, I don't know where this will take me... Anyway,

all in all I've had an awkward life: for the poets I was a great scientist, for the scientists a man of letters; the spiritualist philosophers considered me a materialist scientist, while the materialists saw me as a scientist with forbidden leanings towards metaphysics. All things considered: I've always had difficulties, in the sense that I've always ended up – through no fault of my own – I've always ended by setting out in different directions, in pursuit of my demon as some people call it”.

Different directions, including that of entomology and more precisely the university. His curriculum ranges from the degree in Agricultural Sciences gained with full marks and distinction in Bologna in February 1961, to the awarding, fifty years later, of the title Professor Emeritus of the *Alma Mater Studiorum* – the University of Bologna. For two three-year terms, from 1992 to 1998, he directed the “Guido Grandi” Institute of Entomology, taking over from Professor Giovanni Briolini. After his degree he was a grant-holder and assistant, at first unpaid then fully contracted, in Agricultural Entomology. Afterwards he was Associate Professor and in 1986 Full Professor. He was undoubtedly struck, right from his student days, by the charisma and exceptional competence of Professor Guido Grandi. Subsequently it was Professor Maria Matilde Principi who guided the young Giorgio towards studying insects in a way that was less conventional (i.e. the classic studies of morphology, anatomy and systematics of insects) and he was encouraged to carry out scientific investigations in applied entomology, that is to say the relations in the agroecosystem between beneficial insects (predators and parasitoids) and insect pests. In other words, investigations into biological and natural control against insect pests using techniques alternative to the chemical pesticides that were employed almost exclusively by farmers in the ‘60s and ‘70s. Therefore, right from the start of his entomological research, Giorgio's main scope was to do his utmost to limit the use of pesticides in agriculture through the application of innovative biological pest control techniques and the use of what is now known as integrated production. He worked side by side with the farmers (even though they unfortunately didn't always fully understand the importance of using insecticides only when necessary). He loved to invent expressions like: “Snow-white's poisoned apple”, or “don't associate with the porno apples” when speaking of the beautiful red apples, which looked perfect but shouldn't be touched or eaten because they were contaminated by a mixture of residues of acaricides, fungicides and insecticides that were “presumably” toxic for our health. He also contested certain data that clearly falsified the truth. I will quote an extract taken from his book published by Mulino in 1991 entitled: “*Bugie, fossili e farfalle*” [Lies, fossils and butterflies], in a chapter called precisely “*La Mela di Biancaneve*” [Snow-white's apple] and dedicated “*to my companion in ecological struggles Giovanni Briolini*”. Giorgio wrote: “*I would now like to talk of a quite special craft - the art of lying-without-lying, where scientific data is manipulated, so that it won't be interpreted as it should be and therefore appearing unpleasant, but rather as one wishes, for instance sweetened for the purpose. It is just a small*

semantic trick, which I have dealt with in person, that was aimed at sending the common person along the wrong track”.

The conflicts of interest, Giorgio repeated, are always lurking behind the scenes. The multinationals, he said, can supply public research groups with modern equipment at their own expense. Moreover, these corporations can also sponsor study grants, provide research funds for their collaborators and finance field trials. And so as a result the scientists find themselves in serious difficulty! The researcher, who has benefited from the pesticide manufacturers, will try to “cover up” the negative data emerging from the analysis so as not to state explicitly that a given product is bad for the health, as well as for the beneficial arthropods, not to mention the environment. Giorgio could never have envisaged what has now become “almost” obligatory! Namely, to look for private sponsors, given that public money to finance the university and state research centres is becoming increasingly more scarce.

Giorgio was particularly skilled in obtaining public funding for our research. In the '80s a project named “Stato di Salute del Territorio” [Landscape health status] was set up with the support of the Forlì Provincial Authorities. The team was thus established. The next step was made with the support of the Regione Emilia-Romagna and ENEA. On his own initiative and with the backing of various collaborators, the first biofactory in Italy for the production of beneficial organisms was founded at the Centrale Ortofrutticola in Pievesestina di Cesena (the book published in 1991, “*La fabbrica degli Insetti*”, explained how it is possible to defend crops against harmful insects in a more ecological and sustainable fashion as opposed to the sole use of pesticides). The predatory arthropods used initially included the green lacewing *Chrysoperla carnea* and the predatory mite *Phytoseiulus persimilis*, employed in protected crops respectively against aphids and the two-spotted red spider mite infesting strawberries. Subsequently, predatory bugs were studied and then adopted in an integrated control against thrips and pear *Psylla*. Other beneficial insects were used against leaf miners, white flies and other pests potentially harmful to crops. Studies involving egg parasitoids such as *Trichogramma brassicae* were sponsored directly by the Ministry of Education and more recently work has been carried out with funding from the Ministry of Agriculture. And Giorgio's interests could not help but include (starting from the '70s) the protection of the honey bee, unfortunately still very much prone to suffering from the harmful side-effects of pesticides, at both acute and sublethal levels.

It was thanks to Giorgio that the project investigating the bee as an environmental sentinel for the presence of pesticides, radionuclides, heavy metals, etc. became a point of reference for the whole of Italy and a model for the development of similar programmes internationally. The project began about forty years ago and involved various collaborators including Dr Claudio Porrini (the most assiduous of them all and still today fully involved in the issue of defending bees against the dangers resulting from environmental pollution). Giorgio focused on

the ethological side of apidology and in particular studied the visual perception of honey bees and bumble bees.

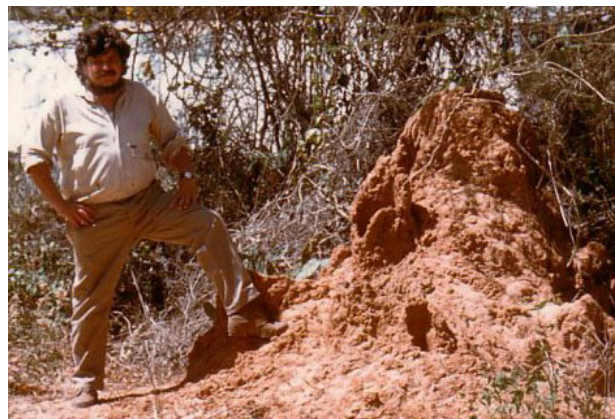
In his book *“La mente dell’ape”* [The honey bee’s mind], published in 2008, he tackles the dramatic topic of pesticides in an amiable and down to earth manner: here again I will quote, word for word, what Giorgio tells us through the mouth of Sherlock Holmes: *“The diffusion of molecules, old and new, that for over fifty years have invaded the cultivated field, contaminating the entire territory, is preparing the way for an ecological catastrophe. Consider also that, like the cultivated field, the hive too is subjected to numerous chemical treatments, to combat unwelcome visitors to the bee’s home. This flood of chemicals can only have brutal consequences resulting from the simplification of biodiversity. We notice the disappearance of bees because we breed them, but how many other beneficial insects are vanishing? In the spring we just see the occasional erratic butterfly flying around”*.

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson are figures that Giorgio also used in a previous, inspired book entitled *“Come fu ucciso Umberto Eco”* [How Umberto Eco was killed] (in the 2000 edition the apocryphal murder appears alongside various other short stories). Giorgio’s evident fondness for Conan Doyle’s heroes can be linked to the scientific approach adopted by these characters, without the aid of DNA testing, in order to arrive at the discovery of the murderer without a shade of error. His knowledge regarding the semiochemicals of insects (in this case the sex pheromones) and his vivid imagination brought about the killing, by “semantic” means, of his highly envied friend/enemy Umberto Eco (defined in Wikipedia as an Italian essayist, philosopher, writer, academic, semiologist, linguist, massmediologist and bibliophile of international repute). I will therefore borrow the words of Eco: *“Celli has always done the job of others with tools entirely of his own making”*. Umberto Eco had known Giorgio ever since the times of the intellectual literary group named the ‘Gruppo 63’, and this phrase appears in the introduction to Giorgio’s book *“La scienza del comico”* [The science of the comic] of 1982.

Coming back to the realm of applied entomology, Giorgio and his colleagues worked on the biological control of mosquitoes and noxious dipterans in farm animals, in collaboration with the Centro Agricoltura e Ambiente “Giorgio Nicoli” in Crevalcore (Bologna), which he himself founded. He also took part in various investigations to assess the efficacy of enhancing the natural control of harmful arthropods by pursuing agroecological strategies. In recognition of his commitment to the protection of the local environment and the development of culture in general, the municipality of San Giovanni in Persiceto awarded Giorgio the honorary citizenship of the town. This is just one of many acknowledgements he received for his work in defence of the environment, as well as for his activity in quite another field, that of literature and art. From 1988 Giorgio was a member of the Italian national Academy of Entomology.

Giorgio’s principal “profession” as an entomologist was fully accredited and widely appreciated also on an

international scale. As Prof. Emeritus David Pimentel from Cornell University wrote to me: *“He was an outstanding person and entomologist. I will remember him for his stimulating conversations and his entomological intellect”*. Dr Franz Bigler from ‘Agroscope’ Zurich remembers him like this: *“From the very beginning of his professional career, he was strongly advocating for Integrated Pest Management and Biological Control, and he was convinced that pest problems can be solved by better understanding and managing agro-ecosystems”*. And again in the words of Franz Bigler: *“Giorgio Celli was one of the pioneers and driving forces in Europe to develop ideas on the Integrated Pest Management and Biological Control of Arthropods in apple orchards, pears, strawberry plantations and in other crops”*. He also recalls the “message of Ovronnaz” (a resort in the Swiss Alps where five entomologists – Baggiolini, Steiner, Celli, Schneider and Altner – met to discuss methods of defending agricultural productions in a sustainable way). During the course of this round table held in 1976 the first bases were set down for the integrated and biological control of pests: *“...important elements and produced a document that can still be considered as one of the corner stones of modern Integrated Production. An interesting and colourful participant of the Ovronnaz meeting was G. Celli of the University of Bologna. He was not only a most innovative entomologist but also a gifted author and writer of theatre dramas”*. The drama he refers to is *“Le tentazioni del Professor Faust”* [The temptations of Professor Faust] (Milan, Feltrinelli, 1976) a work that was translated into English by Prof. Malcolm Sanford from Florida University, another entomologist and expert in bees. The play was also performed, in a French translation, during a congress of the International Organization for Biological Control held in Vienna in 1979. And in 1975 the same work won him the “Premio Pirandello”. Giorgio was highly praised on several occasions by the well known “agro-ecologist” from California, Prof. Miguel Altieri. In fact, in the “Ecologia series” by the publisher Muzzio, Giorgio had immediately understood the importance of the studies carried out by Miguel and edited the first edition (1991) and Italian translation of his book “Agroecology”. In 1990 Giorgio edited the publi-



Giorgio in his youth next to a termite mound during a trip to Africa.



Giorgio and his team and his co-workers (*il Gruppo Celli*) January 1999, in front of the entrance to the Istituto di Entomologia "Guido Grandi" (then in via Filippo Re 6, Bologna).

cation "Ecosistemi" for the series of "Scienze Quaderni". Despite the passing of more than twenty years, the introduction remains highly interesting and topical. The final sentence of the piece reads: "*The optimism of Lovelock seems just as dangerous as the pessimism of the knights of the Apocalypse* (Giorgio was often, and mistakenly, defined a catastrophist). *Our new-found awareness of being a constituent part of the ecosystem and of personally taking part, as victims and perpetrators, in its destruction, makes us realize that by polluting the environment we are poisoning our very selves. That when fish die in the rivers, the same poison that killed them will soon arrive in the jug of so-called drinking water on our table. That when we sell a forest for a paltry sum, we have sold, with all the trees that have been cut down, part of our heritage of oxygen, that along with the bee killed today by synthetic molecules our hope in future flowers dies too*".

Moreover, I should stress that those who scorned and claimed that Giorgio was an extremist who didn't recognise the advantages of insecticides, of the green revolution of Prof. Norman Borlaug and in particular accused him of demonizing DDT, didn't really understand his way of thinking. These people didn't know that the principle underlying his aim to popularize science amounted to a veritable "democratization of science". He summed up his view of the case of DDT as follows "*Ecology discovered the evils of DDT, the ecologist made them public domain. The politician subsequently outlawed the use of DDT. But the fight, so to speak, must continue, because DDT, compared to many other molecules in circulation throughout our planet, wasn't, after all, the worst offender*".

It should be acknowledged that part of his formation sprang directly from the university where Giorgio gave lectures on the "Techniques of Biological Control" and where he was able to find teachers and worthy collaborators.

Giorgio told me how, in the 60s, he often had long conversations, in the study of Professor Guido Grandi, about entomology, biology, ethology and also evolution. It was doubtlessly these meetings that fuelled his great yearning for knowledge, study and experience that enabled him to write about the entomologist Jean Fabre, about Charles Darwin and Darwinism, about the muta-

tionism of Hugo de Vries, about Konrad Lorenz (in particular, regarding the aggressiveness of animals, see the book: "*Konrad Lorenz. L'etologo e i suoi fantasmi*" [Konrad Lorenz. The ethologist and its ghosts].

During his lectures a relation of mutual interest and discussion was set up between Professor Giorgio and his students. It was from these very classes that the students, having passed their exams, went on to further their studies, to write their PhD thesis and thence to develop practices for biological control against harmful insects or for the protection of bees and insect pollinators against pesticides. It was these "youngsters" that gave rise to the academic "spin offs". The students who took their thesis in Entomology with Giorgio paved the way for the Biofactory with the production of beneficial organisms, the Centro Agricoltura e Ambiente, Eugea, Seizampe and the "Laboratorio dell'Insetto" in San Giovanni in Persiceto.

In other ways, however, the university was not particularly generous to Giorgio. His pupils were not always able to find research posts and these difficulties were resolved only partially and after some time with the establishment of the "spin offs" mentioned above. The only researcher who managed to enter a university career (after around ten years of temporary contracts) was Giorgio Nicoli, untimely deceased. His name is now remembered as the co-founder of the previously mentioned Centro Agricoltura e Ambiente in Crevalcore. For Giorgio the university also represented something that was not entirely clean, just like politics, where the "do ut des" is always waiting around the corner. In his last and posthumous novel "*Il gatto del rettore – delitto all'università*" [The Rector's cat – murder at the University] we find these words spoken by a character of the crime story: "... *Let's admit it: the University is a small-scale mafia, where making a career doesn't depend so much on your merit, but more often on being friends with the right people, belonging to a political party in power at that moment or holding an important position in a lodge*". But who is there that has never lapsed into such moments of bitterness and shame?

One must always move forward, study, research and as Giorgio often reminded us: "*modern man seems determined to look for the keys to the future in the past,*

and to contaminate science, at last, with a little wisdom". In 1988 a group of 19 collaborators and graduate students signed the so-called "Manifesto della lotta biologica" an event marking one hundred years of scientific affirmation of this method of controlling harmful insects, which we celebrated, together, with these words: "Biocontrol is a strategy for improving natural control, for fighting nature with nature. Unlike chemical control, biocontrol does not simplify the ecosystem, but renders it more complex and thus more stable and does not enhance environmental mutagenesis."

And finally the memory of the meeting held in Bologna in 2001 entitled: Agroecology: toward a new agriculture for Europe. This was Giorgio's message: "Agroecology consists of a set of strategies, or of techniques if you prefer, capable of producing sustainability while aiming at eco-production. The latter word is intended to dissipate any doubt that sustainability means poor production. The prerequisite is to obtain the proper yield of agricultural produce by respecting the environment and the consumer. This is the challenge awaiting us. Remember that problems are no longer merely technical. Although advances are continuous, most of the technical problems have already been solved. The problems consist of policy choices".

Giorgio would have wanted to continue his attempts to resolve the problems surrounding the use and abuse of natural resources. Such "global" issues lead us directly to inequality, poverty, exclusion. Will it be possible to build a more sustainable, fairer, more pacific world and one that also shows more respect for future generations?

I would say that these few lines sum up the stance taken by Giorgio, ecologist *ante litteram*, both as an entomologist and also as a broad-minded scientist, a great man of letters and skilled popularizer who knew how to win the love of the general public but perhaps to a lesser extent that of his colleagues and stakeholders.

Stefano MAINI

List of Giorgio Celli's papers in entomology, agriculture and environmental topics

- CELLI G., 1960.- Ricerche sui parassiti di tre Microlepidotteri minatori delle foglie di Melo. (*Nepticula malella* Staint., *Leucop-
tera scitella* Zell. e *Lithocolletis blancardella* F.).- *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Entomologia della Università degli Studi di Bologna*, 24: 271-279.
- CELLI G., 1962.- Gli afidi dei fruttiferi.- *Frutticoltura*, 24: 697-701.
- CELLI G., 1962/1963.- Contributi allo studio degli Imenotteri parassiti di Insetti minatori. II. Nota preliminare sui parassiti di *Paraleucoptera sinuella* Reutti.- *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Entomologia della Università degli Studi di Bologna*, 26: 207-216.
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- CELLI G., 1965.- Il "funebre lamento" dell'*Acherontia atropos* L.- *Natura e Montagna*, 5 (1): 19.
- CELLI G., 1966.- Qualche considerazione elementare sugli istinti.- *Natura e Montagna*, 6 (4): 154-158.
- CELLI G., 1966/1967.- Contributi allo studio degli Imenotteri parassiti di Insetti minatori. IV° Contributo. Notizie su alcuni Eulofidi rinvenuti come parassiti di *Messa hortulana* Klug (Hymenoptera Tenthredinoidea), minatore delle foglie del Pioppo.- *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Entomologia della Università degli Studi di Bologna*, 28: 233-239.
- CELLI G., GIORDANI G., 1966/1967.- Ricerche sull'attività del *Bacillus thuringiensis* Berliner in riguardo all'*Apis mellifera* L. I° Contributo.- *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Entomologia della Università degli Studi di Bologna*, 28: 141-175.
- BRIOLINI G., CELLI G., 1967.- Problèmes de échantillonnage des microlepidoptères mineus et leurs parasités dans un verger de pommiers traité avec des produits phytatriques.- *Entomophaga, Memoires HS*, 3: 73-76.
- BRIOLINI G., CELLI G., GIUNCHI P., 1967.- Problemi riguardanti la difesa dei frutteti dalle infestazioni di microlepidotteri minatori.- *Atti Giornate Fitopatologiche*, 1967: 365-372.
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- CELLI G., 1968.- I chemiosterilizzanti nella lotta contro gli insetti nocivi.- *Informatore fitopatologico*, 18 (11): 223-230.
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