UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Local/Global Aesthetics:

Cesare Pavese, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Gianni Celati

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Italian

by

Federica Di Blasio

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Local/Global Aesthetics:

Cesare Pavese, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Gianni Celati

by

Federica Di Blasio

Doctor of Philosophy in Italian

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Thomas J. Harrison, Co-Chair

Professor Lucia Re, Co-Chair

This dissertation is an investigation of the local/global tensions shaping the aesthetics of three Italian authors born in the 20th century: Cesare Pavese (1908-1950), Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975), and Gianni Celati (b. 1937). I argue that the relational coexistence of different geopolitical spaces operates in their literary and cinematic aesthetics. In particular, local/global tensions become evident in the ways the aesthetics of Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati expose their understanding of rootedness and uprootedness, locality and universalism, and access to mobility and sense of place. The study presents the changing relationships and tensions between the local and the global as a paradigm of research while also contributing to spatial studies in the humanities.

The dissertation of Federica Di Blasio is approved.

John A. Agnew

Roberto Dainotto

Thomas J. Harrison, Committee Co-Chair

Lucia Re, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

To the journey from Abruzzo to Los Angeles, and all the people who helped me imagine, start, continue, and complete this project.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I can think of many reasons why the local/global is the topic of my dissertation. One reason is that my years in Los Angeles, alternated with summers spent in my home region, Abruzzo, forced me to constantly adjust the "scale" of my everyday life and make swift adjustments of language, vision, and routines. I could not choose between the "global" and the "local" if I were asked to, and the slash in this dissertation title shows this well. I hope the long journey from Abruzzo to Los Angeles has brought me, if anything, some perspective on how the local and the global are so tightly intertwined. I say so not only because I have studied for my Ph.D. in a global city, while coming from a peripheral region of Italy (fun fact! Abruzzo, culturally and economically part of the Italian South, was also the Northern periphery of the old Kingdom of Naples); I say that the local and global are intertwined also because I have seen even the mountainous, remote, and stubborn Abruzzo (where Natalia and Leone Ginzburg spent their *confino*) become more and more global with time. Finishing this dissertation in the midst of the global Covid-19 pandemic was certainly not part of the original plan, but it gave me another good reason to take the local/global very seriously. Globalization has often (rightly so) been the object of concern and debate, but we have recently seen political leaders hypocritically try and cut off the ties with the global, precisely when the responsibilities of their countries on global issues are at stake. Covid-19, but also and more importantly climate change, teach us that there cannot be a veritable "local" without acknowledging that we are all, globally interconnected. On the other hand, struggles for a more equal society, while being global in scope, have no chance to be won if not fought locally. This dissertation has given important answers on how to approach representations of the local/global; at the same time though, it has raised many new

questions, and left me with great excitement for the intellectual challenges that the local/global encompasses and evokes.

I am extremely honored to have had the chance to work with two outstanding scholars as my co-chairs, Thomas Harrison and Lucia Re. They have been equally indispensable at different stages of this project and I am enormously grateful for their informative feedback, essential advice, and continuous support. I am thankful to Lucia Re for teaching me the commitment to and methodology for rigorous research, and for offering direction, support, and substantial feedback on this dissertation as well as projects that led to or are related to this work. I thank Thomas Harrison for his encouraging, stimulating, and decisive supervision, and for helping me understand the writing process not only in relation to the different stages of a dissertation or a paper but also in reference to my own idiosyncratic way of writing and thinking. Both Thomas Harrison and Lucia Re have inspired my work and fruitfully challenged me with their intellectual expertise. Both have offered me excellent guidance on how to navigate the academic profession and created invaluable opportunities for my personal, professional, and intellectual growth, for which I will always be thankful.

I am fortunate enough to have received the support of other exceptional scholars who, directly or indirectly, significantly contributed to this dissertation. John Agnew and Roberto Dainotto have been priceless members of my doctoral committee. I am thankful to John Agnew for the many engaging conversations on globalization, populism, and mobility, and for his support in my projects. I thank Roberto Dainotto for helping me define my research interests, in person or through the resonance of his work, and for offering extremely helpful comments and suggestions on my drafts. I am indebted to Gian Maria Annovi and Shelleen Greene for kindly reading parts of this dissertation and giving precious suggestions to improve my

argument. Many thanks also to Claudio Fogu and Stephanie Malia Hom for offering their feedback after I presented this project at CICIS in 2019. Thanks to Áine O'Healy for meeting with me and giving generous suggestions on this and other projects. I am extremely grateful for all these contributions, advice, and constructive feedback.

The funding I have received at UCLA has been essential to my research. I owe gratitude to the Italian Department for sustaining my work through research funds such as the Giovanni and Ruth Elizabeth Cecchetti Award and the Murphy Chair Summer Research Award. The Graduate Division has allowed me to dedicate myself to writing full-time through the Dissertation Year Fellowship and also supported my research through the Harry and Yvonne Lenart Graduate Travel Fellowship and the Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship. I thank the Center for European and Russian Studies, in particular Liana Grancea and former director Laure Murat, for not only generously sponsoring my research but also inviting me to speak at their Graduate Lecture Series. I extend my gratitude to research institutions in Italy, namely the Cesare Pavese Foundation in Santo Stefano Belbo, which hosted me during the first stage of research for the dissertation, and allowed me to see Pavese's cherished Langhe with my own eyes; Walter Barberis and the Giulio Einaudi Archive at the State Archives in Turin, where I visualized important editorial letters involving both Pavese and Celati; Roberto Chiesi and the Pier Paolo Pasolini Research Center-Archive at the Cineteca of Bologna; Carmelo De Luca and the Gianni Celati Archive, Panizzi Library, in Reggio Emilia.

I thank the UCLA community which has made a difference in my Ph.D. including faculty, graduate students, and staff. I am extremely grateful to Elissa Tognozzi for her exquisite pedagogical advising, and for her support throughout the years. My teaching and confidence in teaching have improved so much thanks to her. So many thanks to Andrea Moudarres for his continuous support and advice, and for giving me the opportunity to join him in the first Summer

Program of our department in Rome in 2019. Thanks to Dominic Thomas for providing opportunities to sustain my research over the summer and also offering feedback on my work. I thank Massimo Ciavolella for his generous support. Thanks also to Edward F. Tuttle for never missing courteous words for my endeavors. Thanks to Kenneth Reinhard and the Experimental and Critical Theory Program for organizing thought-provoking seminars and offering the opportunity to attend lectures by prominent theorists such as Judith Butler, Alain Badiou, and Étienne Balibar. Thanks to Gail Kligman for offering feedback on my work while I was her research assistant, and also for giving me advice on how to balance academia and self-care. Thanks to the faculty of the French Department at UCLA with whom conversations have always been very fruitful: in particular, thanks to Lia Brozgal for giving me useful advice leading to the definition of my dissertation, to Laurence Denié-Higney for her advice on teaching and the academic profession, and to Cécile Guédon, for delightful conversations on French literature. Thanks to the Charles Speroni Endowed Chair professors who enriched the Italian Department: Laura Giannetti, Arielle Saiber, and Roberta Morosini. Thanks to Ornella Spano, Hoang Truong, and Claire Lavagnino for being supportive colleagues while providing precious advice on teaching. Thanks to the incredibly talented graduate fellows who made my years at UCLA so galvanizing and memorable and who supported me along the way: Adele Sanna, Viola Ardeni, Adriana Guarro, Sarah Cantor, Marianna Nespoli, Kelly Roso, Megan Tomlinson, Magdalena Panevska Blaisdell, Jan DeLozier, Nina Bjekovic, and Joseph Tumolo. Thanks to Kerry Allen for patiently and firmly assisting me for any administrative need and to the staff of Royce Hall for always being a kind presence in our building.

Thanks to the people who followed my work before I came to UCLA and which made this doctorate possible. I am indebted to the faculty of Italian at the University of Illinois at Urbana-

Champaign who welcomed me to the US, including Robert A. Rushing, Eleonora Stoppino, and especially Emanuel Rota, who inspired me in so many ways, opened up opportunities, and played a great role in my decision to pursue an academic career. I thank the faculty of the University of Bologna, especially Fulvio Pezzarossa, who unlocked the first doors for me and without whom this journey across the ocean would not have started. Thanks also to Ermanno Cavazzoni who inspired my very first academic work (on French literature) and helped me retrieve essential research material for this dissertation. Thanks to my graduate fellows in Illinois, in particular Jessica Sciubba, for being such an inspiring and supportive colleague, and Daniela Moffa, for being on my side as we both faced the challenges of being international students.

Finally, I wish to thank the people outside my program who nevertheless shared the joys and stresses that have come with graduate school. I thank Carlo for sharing the first leg of this journey with me, and for his encouragements and care throughout the years. To my adoptive family in L.A., Jenny, Maria, Sarah, Joey, Jonathan, Maddie, and Julian: thank you for welcoming me into your house and for all the Monday dinners and amusing celebrations. Thanks to my L.A. sisters, Kim and Edith, for constantly checking in with me, for keeping me down to earth, and for all the hilarious venting and laughing. Thanks to Elen and Gagee for the lovely memories and the mini-adventures by foot or by car, and to my socially-distanced roommates, Misha and Elif, for the support and welcomed distractions. A heartfelt thank you to Ryan who has made the uncertain months I spent completing this dissertation not only bearable but also enjoyable. Thanks to Ryan also for helping me retrieve books, reading all my drafts, and being an excellent coach and chef. Lastly, thanks to the friends and family who were not in the US with me, and yet supported me unwaveringly: Cinzia, Florenzia, Maria Elena, Gabriella, Francesca, Valentina, Beatrice, Antonio, and Anna.

Vita

2015: M.A., Comparative and World Literature, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

2014: Duke University/University of Bologna Summer School on Global Studies and Critical Theory, "Space and Politics in the Global Age"

2012: *Laurea Magistrale*, *magna cum laude*, Modern Philology, University of Bologna
Thesis: *La Disparition* di Georges Perec: problemi e strategie di traduzione

2008: *Laurea/Licence*, European Modern Literatures, University of Bologna/University of Upper Alsace/University of Tours

Selected Publications

"Passeurs: Narratives of Border Crossing in the Western Alps," *Italia senza frontiere (Borderless Italy). California Italian Studies*, Vol. 9, 2020.

"La traduction des jeux des mots dans *La Disparition* de Georges Perec," Angelika Zirker & Esme Winter-Froemel (Eds.), *Wordplay and Metalinguistic Reflection – New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Berlin: De Gruyter, Fall 2015, 135-162.

Selected Presentations

2019: "Pasolini: Precursor of Degrowth?" UCLA, *Pasolini, Poverty, and the Question of Degrowth* (November 13)

"Passeurs: Criminals or Saviors?" Invited Speaker, Pepperdine University, Malibu (April 11)

"Passeurs: Narratives of 'Illegal' Migration Across the Western Alps", Invited Speaker, UCLA Center for European and Russian Studies Graduate Lecture (February 28)

"'No-Border' and 'No-Global.' The Geopolitical Aesthetics of Cesare Pavese, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Gianni Celati, and Andrea Segre," *California Interdisciplinary Consortium of Italian Studies Conference*, Stanford University (March 7)

2014: "Hospitality and the State of Exception: Pasolini and Jabès" Duke University Graduate Student Colloquium: *Ocean Crossings: States of Exception* (March 22)

2013: "La traduction des jeux de mots dans *La Disparition* de Georges Perec" Eberhard Karls Universität, Tübingen, Germany, International Conference: *Wordplay and Metalinguistic Reflection – New Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (March 7)

Selected Fellowships and Awards

2019: Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA

Mellon-Excellence in Pedagogy and Innovative Classroom Fellowship, UCLA

2017: Center for European and Russian Studies Pre-Dissertation Fellowship, UCLA

Giovanni and Ruth Elizabeth Cecchetti Award, Dept. Italian, UCLA

2016: Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship, UCLA

2015: Mellon Fellowship of Distinction, UCLA

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an investigation of the local/global tensions shaping the aesthetics of three Italian authors born in the 20th century: Cesare Pavese (1908-1950), Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975), and Gianni Celati (1937-). As I analyze the tensions between the local and the global in their works, I contend that the relational coexistence of different geopolitical spaces operates in their literary and cinematic aesthetics. Furthermore, I argue that their works seize and react to different "structures of feeling" (Raymond Williams) governing the perception of space and subjective bonds to territories at their different historical times. This interpretation aims to contribute to spatial studies in the humanities by presenting the changing relationships and tensions between the local and the global as a paradigm of research. Indeed, I aim to reframe these authors' works in a global, transnational perspective, showing how "Italianness" is only one of many geopolitical layers of their aesthetics.

Analyzing the works of Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati, this dissertation deals with the tension and interconnection of different approaches to local vs. global and aims to show how much the definition of a national literary canon has occurred at the expense of both local and global dimensions and indeed their interconnectedness. While I do not see "local" and "global" as fixed categories, I recognize the structural role that they play in the definition of the three authors' aesthetics. Moreover, in my analysis I stress the fruitfulness of the tensions between them and thus see my project as joining discussions within the Modern Languages where the "transnational turn" has not only unmasked the constructed nature of the Italian literary "canon" but has also fruitfully questioned and re-imagined the national as an object and method of study. On different occasions, it has been remarked that the national does not operate in isolation but rather in relation to other simultaneous and concurrent spatial orders. Françoise Lionnet and

Shun-mei Shih, for example, echo Saskia Sassen in claiming that "the national is no longer the site of homogeneous time and territorialized space but is increasingly inflected by a transnationality that suggests the intersection of 'multiple spatiotemporal (dis)orders.'"[1] The transnational as such "can occur in national, local, or global spaces across different and multiple spatialities and temporalities."[2] Charles Burdett, Nick Havely, and Loredana Polezzi develop their reflections on the future of Modern Languages and the transnational framework arguing that "the national and the transnational are not antithetical nor mutually exclusive. Rather, they exist in tension, 'contrapuntally,' to use Said's word."[3] In her 2017 book *Pre-occupied Spaces: Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies*, Teresa Fiore proposes to remap the question of Italian identity and culture by recognizing how stories of emigration, colonialism, and immigration coming from apparently disconnected spaces resonate with one another in unexpected, meaningful ways. At the center of this remapping project, Fiore situates "the cultural text, because of its simultaneous powers of documentation, evocation, and imagination at the crossroads of the local, the national, and the transnational."[4] These examples show how the transnational as a framework for Modern Languages complicates previous spatial conceptualizations of culture oriented towards the national without merely replacing them; on the contrary, the transnational reinvigorates literary discussions on different dimensions (the national, the local, and so forth) by stressing their mutual interrelation.

---

[1] Lionnet and Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*, 6. Lionnet and Shih quote from Sassen, "Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization," 221.

[2] Lionnet and Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*, 6.

[3] Burdett, Havely, and Polezzi, "The Transnational/Translational in Italian Studies," 235.

[4] Fiore, *Pre-Occupied Spaces: Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies*, 14.

In this study the local and the global are thus fluid categories acquiring different meanings and nuances in each author. 1) In Pavese, I identify an anti-globalism *ante-literam* in the geophilosophical implications of Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) that Pavese translates in 1932. Conversely, the local corresponds not only to the Piedmont region, but, more broadly, to the rootedness that Pavese expresses throughout his career and particularly in his poetry. His attachment to the land has geopolitical relevance in my view, not only because it legitimates unexpected readings of Pavese as a "Southern" writer (as Carlo Bernari suggests), but also because it stages an exclusive, vertical bond of individuals with their native land. The tensions between local (rootedness) and global (in the form of his fascination for voyages and the Atlantic) are extremely fruitful in Pavese. A national framework —often insisting on the ambiguity of Pavese's ideological positions between Fascism and anti-Fascism—fails to grasp these important aspects of Pavese's work.

2) In Pasolini, the local assumes different meanings throughout his career as a poet, a filmmaker, and public intellectual in the 1950s-1970s, travelling from Friuli, to Yemen and other Middle-Eastern or African settings in which he films his works. The global in Pasolini corresponds to supranational visions that similarly change overtime while maintaining the same hierarchical structure where the local is transcended for the sake of a global or supranational view. When the local corresponds to the Friuli region at the beginning of his career, Pasolini envisions a utopian regionalism where the limits of the local would be overcome by a supranational political idea for Europe. In Pasolini's later orientalist view of the Global South—what Giovanna Trento calls his "panmeridionalismo"—the overcoming of local specificities is also central in a supranational essentialization of the Southern subject. Pasolini's conceptualization of universal peace similarly relies on supranational institutions such as the

United Nations or the Catholic Church which find primary representation in his work. Overall, Pasolini's work is informed by a trajectory of supranational universalism that transcends the local for the sake of a broader view. Pasolini's *échec* arrives as he realizes that his supranational globalism is not all that different from the capitalist globalization that he intended to fight through his aesthetics. This supranational ambition combined with the transcendence of the local defines the specificity of Pasolini's vision, also informing the ways he narrates the changes occurring in Italy in the decades immediately following the end of World War II.

3) By Celati's time the local and the global cannot be easily distinguished anymore because of the cultural homologation marking late capitalism and the generalization of mobility that potentially allows the Western subject to be a tourist anywhere. While the local and the global converge in what I call his "post-touristic aesthetics," Celati attempts to redefine the local and the exotic taking into account the alienation and generalized mobility characterizing the postmodern condition. For Celati, the local becomes a synonym of a "here and now" that tourists can pinpoint in order to appreciate the "outside" but also to remind themselves of their own life and presence. Celati also attempts to reconfigure an understanding of the "exotic" in which the global and the local again coincide. The exotic is not what is distant anymore but, rather, what is simply "outside" the subject. Even so, Celati's treatment of the exotic becomes reminiscent of the colonial world order when he applies his view to African localities that were indeed the object of colonial exoticism. Celati's concern for the local is most commonly associated with his work in the Po Valley where he grew up; yet, his view on the local is global from the outset and responds to the abstract spatialization of late capitalism, beyond the geographic specificity of place.

As I search for the different aesthetic forms that the local and the global assume in the works of Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati, I also situate this work within the growing field of spatial studies in the humanities where the fruitfulness of an interdisciplinary approach, as much as the overlapping of different theoretical perspectives (from the postcolonial to ecocriticism), have been largely presented as successful.[5] While not systematically governing my analysis in the three chapters, the works of three authors, Raymond Williams, Edward Said, and Fredric Jameson, help clarify the framework of this dissertation.[6] I use Raymond Williams' expression "structures of feeling" to speak of the structural role that certain beliefs, visions, or feelings about the local and global assume in Pavese's, Pasolini's, and Celati's aesthetics.[7] Moreover, the idea of anticipation that Williams implies in his structures of feeling allow me to describe the aesthetics of Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati as personal, preliminary aesthetic responses to social structures that become clearer with time: the political tensions of World War II and the Cold War during Pavese's lifetime; the emerging of a new global order with Pasolini; global access to mobility and climate justice in Celati.[8] Williams' work on the country and the city in English

[5] See, in particular, the work by Robert T. Tally, Jr., who writes from a Comparative Literature perspective: *Spatiality*, 2013; *Melville, Mapping and Globalization,* 2009; *The Geocritical Legacies of Edward W. Said. Spatiality, Critical Humanism, and Comparative Literature,* 2015; Tally and Battista, *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism - Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies,* 2016. In terms of spatial studies, my dissertation may be seen as a contribution to "scalar" underdstandings of space. In my analysis I stress the concurrence of different scales and more specifically the fruitfulness of the tensions between them. The coexistence and relationality of scales has been largely discussed in social studies and particularly in recent interpretations of globalization. Saskia Sassen, for example, clarifies that she overcomes the duality of national/global or local/global in her understanding of global cities, transnational communities, and commodity-chains: different scales operate at once in the "space-time compression" defining globalization (Sassen, *A Sociology of Globalization*, 8–9). While being a conventional term in the social sciences, scales still have an undervalued potential to be applied in the humanities. On the notion of scale, see Jonas, "Scale." 26. On the debate pro- or anti-scale in human geography see Marston and Woodward, "Human Geography without Scale" and Jonas, "Pro Scale."

[6] Tally presents Said's work on the "imaginative geography" of imperialism in *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) as an extension of Raymond Williams' project *The Country and the City* (1973) in Tally, *Spatiality*, 90-95. Jameson's work on space and postmodernism, which Tally introduces to a large audience, influences Tally's analysis throughout. See Tally, *Fredric Jameson: The Project of Dialectical Criticism*.

[7] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 130.

[8] Ibid, 130-131.

literature also finds resonance in this dissertation where aesthetic representations of space are understood through a dichotomy of oppositional forces.[9] As for Said, I not only make references to his work to delimit Pasolini and Celati's Eurocentrism but also embrace Said's view on an "imaginative geography," where "ideas, …forms, …images, and …imaginings" shape the struggle over territories as much as physical occupations do.[10] Finally I am inspired by Fredric Jameson's idea of the "geopolitical unconscious," namely, the theory that any act of narration is an attempt to describe the globe's social totality and that there is no clear distinction between aesthetics and ideology. According to Jameson, "ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions."[11] The nexus between aesthetics and politics is geopolitical in as much as all thinking is "an attempt to think the world system as such."[12] In this dissertation, the local and the global assume different aesthetic forms in Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati while also expressing political values that their visions of the world entail. While these geopolitical visions can speak of specific political institutions (as in the case of Pasolini), they can also coincide with broader understanding of one's relationship with territories and right to landscape (as in the case of Pavese and Celati), or hint at an unsolved legacy of European colonialism (as in the case of Celati and Pasolini).

[9] Williams, *The Country and the City*.

[10] Said, *Orientalism*, 49 and Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 7.

[11] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 79.

[12] Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, 4. Jameson's interpretation of postmodernism in terms of "cognitive mapping" is also useful to my understanding of Celati's writing. From Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.

As the emerging transnational turn in Italian Studies mirrors the most recent evolution of Italian contemporary society, it is meaningful to reflect on how we can rethink the "national canon" in ways that are responsive to the values of a diverse society, while also methodologically exploring the interconnection of different spatial dimensions that the transnational turn has made clear. Burdett, Havely and Polezzi point towards this direction by giving examples of how a transnational framework can be applied to the most "national" Italian author, Dante, by focusing on the translation of his work and his reception abroad.[13] The reconfiguration of "national" authors through a multilayered and spatially complex framework seems to be a promising direction of study, to which this project aims to make a contribution. Clearly, Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati do not exhaust the discourse on the local/global and should be considered as a limited set of case studies for this new framework. The three authors do not offer a diversity of point of views in terms of race and gender, being all white men born in the North of Italy. Moreover, to some extent, all three authors embodied conditions of marginality, related to Pavese's provinciality, to Pasolini's homosexuality, and Celati's anti-institutional attitude, which brings him to criticize the cultural industry at different levels, including academia.[14] Yet, all three have achieved significant recognition in Italy and abroad contributing to influential national cultural outlets from the Einaudi Publishing house (Pavese) to *Corriere della sera* (Pasolini), or publications in the classical "I Meridiani" series by Mondadori (Pasolini, Celati). It is useful to study the local/global tensions in Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati not only to shed light on the different aesthetic and geopolitical forms that the local/global assumes in their

[13] Burdett, Havely, and Polezzi, "The Transnational/Translational in Italian Studies," 228-230. The recent book by Guy P. Raffa, *Dante's Bones: How a Poet Invented Italy* (2020), similarly presents the Italianness of Dante as a social construction and its evolution on different scales, from the local (Florentine) to the global.

[14] See Marco Belpoliti and Elio Grazioli in https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/riga-books/gianni-celati. On Pavese as a "provincial writer" see Pasolini's interview with Enzo Biagi from 1972, which can be seen on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEGm3gcdFtk&t=317s (last accessed October 25, 2020).

works, but also to analyze the work of authors living in different and yet contiguous time periods. This holds true even though the three authors have received different levels of visibility in recent scholarship: the 70th anniversary of Pavese's death in August 2020 has occurred almost silently—with the exception of new introductions to his works republished by Einaudi. Luca Peretti and Karen T. Raizen have situated Pasolini in a new global framework in their co-edited volume *Pier Paolo Pasolini Framed And Unframed: A Thinker For The Twenty-First Century* (2019), confirming the increased interest that Pasolini has received in the past decades. An encouraging signal of Celati's emerging recognition abroad came with the international conference "Gianni Celati. Translation, Tradition, Rewriting" at University College Cork, Ireland in 2016. Despite differences in reception, and the limited representation of biographic diversity in the set of authors, this dissertation proposes a new comparative look on Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati, which takes into account the ambitions and needs of a diverse society.

My first chapter proposes to read Cesare Pavese's work in light of an ante-literam *anti-globalism* fueled by the tension between Pavese's aesthetics of rootedness and his fascination for travelling and the Atlantic, famously expressed through his translation of Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Drawing on Franco Cassano's theorization of land, sea, and ocean, I offer a geophilosophical reading of Pavese's work that not only contributes to the significant scholarship on land and sea in Pavese, but also responds to the provocative statement by Carlo Bernari that Pavese could be considered a "Southerner" writer despite being born and raised in Piedmont, because of the system of "rapporti" (relationships, proportions) between natural elements that his work suggests. By reading Pavese's treatment of land and sea, I underline the prominence of a "telluric" sensitivity or attachment to the land. Moreover, I read Pavese's work geopolitically by tracing elements of an ideological vision of individuals' relationship with their native place. I do

so by stressing the verticality and importance of roots that Pavese particularly expresses in his poetry, which resonates with the dystopian narratives of emigration that populate his work. In his novels and poetry, Pavese asks the rhetorical question: "is it worth it to migrate?" only to give a negative answer to it. Key fictional figures in his works—from Cugino in "I mari del Sud," to Ulysses in *I dialoghi con Leucò*, and Anguilla in *La luna e i falò*—express this vision by embodying in themselves figures of travelers who return. Moreover, Pavese's translation of Melville's *Moby-Dick* shows that Pavese "domesticates" the oceanic spirit of this novel through a mythical interpretation of land and sea, where the two elements stand as absolute, opposite terms. In his translation of the most "oceanic" novel, Pavese stays anchored to the land and mitigates the fluidity and drift that this novel so strongly represents. Yet, Pavese's fascination for Melville's novel, and for American literature in general, speaks precisely of the tension between local and global that this dissertation aims to pinpoint. The same global perspective comes to the fore when Pavese rejects the label of "regionalism" to proudly embrace a "provincial" perspective: Pavese's aesthetics goes beyond a conservative representation of his roots in Piedmont, Italy, standing for a broader ideological vision of individuals' relationship to their native land.

The second chapter on Pier Paolo Pasolini develops an analysis of what I call his "trajectory of supranational universalism." I adopt this formula to point at Pasolini's ambition to define a globalism that is different from the monocultural model of capitalism, but also to stress the hierarchical subaltern position that the local assumes in Pasolini, for the sake of larger, supranational geopolitical or orientalist visions. At the beginning of his poetic career, Pasolini is directly engaged in the promotion of Friulian poetry but he does so while rejecting regionalism. His aesthetic views aiming to connect Friulian poetry with the literature in other minor romance

languages parallels his utopian political view of a regionalism that is also open to a supranational, Europeanist, perspective. Later in his career, Pasolini applies a similar supranational logic as he develops an orientalist vision of the "Third World" both in Italy and abroad. Despite geographic differences and local specificities, Pasolini essentializes the Southern subject precisely by subjecting the local to a broader supranational vision, founded, as much as his early poetic period in Friulian, on epistemic analogy. Supranationalism is also the perspective within which Pasolini conceives his notions of global peace (as expressed in *La rabbia* or *Uccellacci e uccellini*). Because of his own supranational vision, in his works Pasolini gives visibility to supranational institutions such as the United Nations and the Catholic Church. In particular, Pasolini feels inspired by Pope John XXIII and intellectually close to Pope Paul VI, who in Pasolini's view embodies the hesitations and contradictions of the Church indulging in the profanity of capitalism. In my reading of the script *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, I emphasize how this work expresses a fruitful parallelism among Saint Paul (the apostle and main character in the script), Pope Paul VI, and Pasolini himself. I recall and contrast Alain Badiou's reading of this script in line with his interpretation of Saint Paul's biography as the "foundation of universalism." Contrary to Badiou's interpretation, I suggest that the script showcases the crisis of Pasolini's universalist views at the end of his life, while also condensing the contradictions of Pasolini's supranational vision that were already apparent in his earlier works.

In the third chapter, I analyze Gianni Celati's work in terms of what I call his "post-touristic" aesthetics. While the importance of tourists in Celati's work has already been discussed by critics, my reading expands on Celati's reflection on exoticism and adventure as essential components of the tourist experience. Celati adopts the tourist condition as a privileged perspective over the "deterritorialization" or alienation typical of the postmodern condition,

anticipating the anthropological reflection on tourism in Italy.[15] While being receptive of the European tradition commenting on "the end of exoticism"—pointing at the end of cultural diversity worldwide because of capitalist homologation—Celati, as much as photographer Luigi Ghirri, does not completely dismiss the "exotic"; in fact, he attempts to reconfigure it as a formal mode of representation of the local or the everyday. In particular, both Celati and Ghirri use vagueness to retrieve the "adventure" originally associated with exotic places. Moreover, Celati adopts the model of the Italian *novella* in his narrative, a genre that is attached to locality in the Italian tradition of oral storytelling, as much as it preserves the marvel of stories speaking of the diversity of the world. For his reconfiguration of the exotic as the celebration of the open or the outside (which we see for example in *Verso la foce*) Celati echoes Victor Segalen (1878-1919) whom I believe to be an overlooked source of Celati. Celati also echoes Segalen as he adopts exoticism as a condition of the self: estrangement is in fact a typical trait of Celati's fictional characters, which also defines Celati's non-fiction, such as his travel writing in Africa. Through his post-tourist aesthetics, Celati develops an approach to the local that is not linked to any specific geographic place as much as it is connected to mindful practices focusing on the specific time and place where "the tourist" happens to be. Hence, Celati's "photographic" style aiming to catch the "presence" of the moment, his insistence on the present, and the narrative or philosophical elaborations of the "here and now" (which I call Celati's "deictic" aesthetics). Another consequence of Celati's post-touristic vision is that the present is accepted in its contingency and not seen as the object of analysis or criticism. Celati's exotic gaze looks at local places (such as the Po Valley) in an unfamiliar and yet refreshing way revealing the unseen or the too obvious to be seen (for example, urban estrangement and pollution). However, when

[15] See Aime, *L'incontro mancato. Turisti, nativi, immagini*.

Celati applies the same exotic look to traditionally "exotic" settings such as a Senegalese village, the legacy of European colonialism comes to the fore. Colonial exoticism is indeed the point of departure of Celati's reflection on deterritorialization (with his collaboration in the collected essay *Letteratura esotismo colonialismo* in 1978), from which Celati moves to develop his own reconfiguration of exoticism even while maintaining a strong Eurocentric view.

Read through the lens of the local/global, Pavese's, Pasolini's, and Celati's works anticipate crucial political questions of our time which are not limited to Italy. I hope that my chapter on Pavese stimulates reflections on the ways our understanding of landscape defines essential aspects of our society including, in particular, the access to citizenship. In his book *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*, John Agnew emphasizes the role of landscape in the formation of Italian identity, and how in particular the lack of a single landscape model characterizes the birth of the Italian nation.[16] In a similar fashion, I suggest the political importance of aesthetic visions of landscape, and claim that Pavese's aesthetics of rootedness speaks of an exclusive *right to* landscape. This resonates with the struggles of second-generation immigrants waiting for their right to citizenship to be recognized in Italy.[17] Pavese's telluric aesthetics speak of an unquestioned bond of blood *and* soil that would grant one an exclusive right to landscape because of their birth and childhood on the land. By not reforming the law on citizenship, which currently still grants citizenship *iure sanguinis* and does not include accessible legislation on account of the *ius soli*, Italy is currently choosing not to adapt its legal system to the effects of global mobility that has transformed the country in the past decades, therefore maintaining the geopolitical vision that Pavese was expressing in the 1930s-1950s.

---

[16] Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*, 36-58.

[17] On the second-generation immigrants in Italy and their access to citizenship see Fiore, *Pre-Occupied Spaces: Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies*, 188-192.

My analysis of Pasolini's supranational universalism speaks of cultural and political visions supporting supranational institutions such as the European Union, to which Pasolini contributes responding to the collective optimism leading towards the treaties of Rome and the foundation of the European Economic Community in 1957. Moreover, the ambitions and limitations of Pasolini's universalist view resonate with contemporary discussions on "glocalism" attempting to overcome the binary opposition between the local and the global.[18] A glocal perspective recognizes that there is no "local" that has remained untouched by global flows and influences—a possibility that Pasolini instead strives to defend. Glocalism also recognizes that anti-global political struggle can occur without sacrificing local specificity and needs—a vision that is present but contradictorily expressed in Pasolini. Pasolini's anti-global criticism seems out-of-date when read in comparison with more recent "glocal" interpretations of anti-global social movements connecting worldwide (starting with the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in 1999).[19] Yet, as much as Pasolini's optimistic view on the future European Union was typical of his time, the flaws of Pasolini's universalism are not idiosyncratic: for example, it has been demonstrated that supranational institutions such as UNESCO have promoted Western values defending universalism and only recently have embraced a pluralistic view.[20]

Celati anticipates the global dimension that environmental and public health issues have reached in recent years by assuming the undifferentiation of the local and the global in his post-touristic aesthetics. In the texts where the environment plays a large role, Celati comments on the impossibility of separating the local from the global, because of the interconnectedness at any

[18] See for example the journal *Glocalism:* https://glocalismjournal.org/, last accessed October 18, 2020.

[19] On "glocalism" and a "glocal" take on anti-global social movements see Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization."

[20] Kalaycioglu, "Governing Culture 'Credibly': Contestation in the World Heritage Regime."

level of economic and cultural production that defines the contemporary world. This aspect of Celati's work is extremely important to pinpoint the political need of a joint, global plan of action against climate change, and the danger of exceptionalist narratives denying responsibilities over this matter—even more so if the narrative of exceptionalism comes from a large producer of CO_2 emissions such as the US.[21] Speaking of late capitalism as a generalized condition of displacement, Celati also notices the illusionary and arbitrary rationale behind tourism. Finally, Celati's work in Africa, as much as Pasolini's, posits essential questions on neocolonialism and the aesthetic representations of pre-colonized places by European authors. As a new framework of research, the local/global can renew our understanding of Pavese, Pasolini, and Celati in ways that contribute to the transnational turn in the Italian Studies while also looking at the specificity of their historical times.

Bibliography

Agnew, John. *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Aime, Marco. *L'incontro mancato. Turisti, nativi, immagini*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005.

Burdett, Charles, Nick Havely, and Loredana Polezzi. "The Transnational/Translational in Italian Studies." *Italian Studies* 75, no. 2 (2020): 223–36.

Escobar, Arturo. "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization." *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 139–74.

Fiore, Teresa. *Pre-Occupied Spaces: Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

[21] The reference is to Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2017, therefore stopping international cooperation on environmental issues. On this matter see Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climate Regime*.

———. *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*. Bloomington; London: Indiana University Press ; BFI Pub., 1992.

———. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Jonas, Andrew E. G. "Pro Scale: Further Reflections on the 'Scale Debate' in Human Geography." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31, no. 3 (2006): 399–406.

———. "Scale." In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Geography*, edited by John Agnew, Virginie Mamadouh, Anna J. Secor, and Joanne Sharp, 26–34. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2015.

Kalaycioglu, Elif. "Governing Culture 'Credibly': Contestation in the World Heritage Regime." In *Culture and Order in World Politics*, edited by Christian Reus-Smit and Andrew Phillips, 294–316. LSE International Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d. doi:10.1017/9781108754613.014.

Latour, Bruno. *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climate Regime*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Medford, MA: Polity, 2018.

Lionnet, Françoise, and Shun-mei Shih, eds. *Minor Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Marston, Sallie A., John Paul Jones, and Keith Woodward. "Human Geography without Scale." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30, no. 4 (2005): 416–32.

Peretti Luca and Karen T. Raizen, eds. *Pier Paolo Pasolini Framed And Unframed: A Thinker For The Twenty-First Century,* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Raffa, Guy P. *Dante's Bones: How a Poet Invented Italy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020.

Said, W. Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books Editions, 1978.

Sassen, Saskia. *A Sociology of Globalization*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007.

———. "Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization." *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (n.d.): 215–32.

Tally, Robert T., Jr. *Fredric Jameson: The Project of Dialectical Criticism*. London: Pluto Press, 2014.

———. *Melville, Mapping and Globalization: Literary Cartography in the American Baroque Writer*. London; New York: Continuum, 2009.

———. *Spatiality*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

———, ed. *The Geocritical Legacies of Edward W. Said. Spatiality, Critical Humanism, and Comparative Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Tally, Robert T., Jr., and Christine M. Battista, eds. *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism - Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1977.

———. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

CHAPTER 1.

Cesare Pavese's Aesthetics of Rootedness: A Geophilosophical Reading

Since Cesare Pavese's death in 1950, different waves of literary criticism have offered contrasting readings of the political implications of his work. On many occasions, Pavese declared disinterest in politics, and he famously did not take part in the Resistance. Yet, he officially joined the Italian Communist Party after many of his closest friends died as partisans. Within the politically-engaged Einaudi publishing house he conducted most of his work as an editor, translator, and writer. The myth of an anti-Fascist Pavese was particularly celebrated in the 1960s and 1970s, but it has been discredited, or at least problematized, since Lorenzo Mondo's publication of a secret diary in 1990—republished by Aragno on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Pavese's death in 2020—where Pavese expresses sympathy for both Mussolini and Nazi Germany.[1]

Commenting on the publication of Pavese's secret diary, Gianni Vattimo responds to the crucial questions of what to do with prominent intellectuals who supported (secretly or openly) authoritarian and murderous regimes, and whether it is right to distinguish their intellectual merits from the moral judgment of their life decisions. Before Pavese, a similar question arose for Martin Heidegger, whose *Black Notebooks* contain clear evidence of antisemitism.[2] Vattimo rejects the idea that the life of these authors should be disconnected from their achievements in their respective specializations. This is particularly true for Heidegger and Pavese, he argues,

[1] Pavese, *Il taccuino segreto*. Particularly celebrated anti-Fascist works of Pavese's are: *Prima che il gallo canti* (1949), *Il compagno* (1947), and the engagé essays for *L'Unità*. On Pavese's conversion to the PCI, see: Baudino, "Pavese firmato PCI." On the *taccuino* see Mondo, "Pavese e il taccuino segreto."

[2] Vattimo, "Pavese: liberiamolo dal suo mito. Non fu vero anti-Fascista, ma perché scandalizzarsi." On Heidegger's Notebooks see: Babich, "Heidegger's Jews."

whose specializations pertain to the humanities. Rather, Vattimo recommends accepting the problematic nature of these authors' works and their human experience. Vattimo concludes that if we agree not to idealize them as paternal, flawless figures, they can teach and ask us provocative questions. In fact, especially after the publication of the secret diary, the risk might be opposite to the one signaled by Vattimo: an analysis of Pavese's political visions risks not being taken seriously because of Pavese's disengaged and ambiguous political declarations, and because of the opinion of Pavese's closest commentators such as Natalia Ginzburg who portrays Pavese himself as an eternal adolescent—a biographical remark that goes beyond Pavese's mythical depiction of adolescence in his literary works.[3] This chapter of mine hopes to offer a possible way out from this impasse, suggesting that we consider Pavese's affiliations with political parties or contradictory political statements to be secondary to the ideology that is clearly expressed through the aesthetics of his published works.

For a complex figure such as Pavese, it is fruitful to think beyond the Fascist/anti-Fascist dichotomy in a way that recognizes the atypicality and ambiguity of Pavese's political view as well as his historicity, considered in a larger and transnational perspective. As disturbing as they might be, Pavese's sketched thoughts in the secret diary do not weigh upon an overall

[3] Ginzburg, *Le piccole virtù*, 27. On the myth of adolescence see Pappalardo La Rosa, *Cesare Pavese e il mito dell'adolescenza*. On Pavese's disinterest for politics, see for example: "La prova del tuo disinteresse per la politica è che credendo al lib (la possibilità di ignorare la vita politica) vorresti applicarlo tirannicamente. Senti cioè la vita politica soltanto in tempi di crisi totalitaria, e allora t'infiammi e contraddici al tuo stesso lib, pur di realizzare presto le condizioni lib. in cui potrai vivere ignorando la politica" in Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere*, 10; "As for politics: here's to you, hoping to encounter you atm y machine-gun's end and have you cry mercy. We'll yet see that, someday, old boy. Perhaps only in the next World-war, we'll find out our true calling. But, honestly, I don't care a damn about the whole lot of it" in Pavese e Chiuminatto, *Correspondence*, 167; "Blatero di politica; ma che cosa me ne importa, dopotutto? Non ho convinzioni, non ho ingegno, non ho capacità: passo dall'isterismo all'idiozia" [to a colleague] Ibid, 219; "Tutti sanno che io non mi sono mai occupato di cose politiche, ma ora pare che le cose politiche si siano occupate di me." To his sister Maria, from Regina Coeli, June 24, 1935 Ibid, 245; "Sono disposto a leggere di tutto, pur di passare il tempo…Unico mio disinteresse – ab aeterno e parlo colla mano sul cuore – la letteratura politica." To Carocci. Ibid, 293; "Fammi il favore di non parlare di politica," to Giuseppe Vuadagna, Ibid, 610.

interpretation of his work, which on many occasions proves to be not easily categorizable within a clear-cut Fascist vs. anti-Fascist political dichotomy. Thus the secret diary does not change the fact that Pavese's works allow for both anti-Fascist readings, such as Valerio Ferme's *Tradurre è tradire*, and anti-anti-Fascist readings such as Vincenzo Binetti's "*L'elogio della fuga*."[4]

The interpretation that I present in this chapter reads Pavese's literature and vision of the world as a form of anti-globalism *ante-literam*, which, while only partially coinciding with the national politics of his time, remains highly relevant today when pro-globalism and anti-globalism (especially in relation to migration) have become current terms in the national and international political discourse. It is conventional wisdom to think about globalization as an unprecedented acceleration of international investment, communication, and human mobility that has changed society since the last decades of the 20th century.[5] Yet a more encompassing historical perspective developed by Immanuel Wallerstein and Giovanni Arrighi among others refers to globalization as the last stage of a capitalist world economy which has been developing since the 16th century, marked by different cycles of accumulation.[6] Insisting on the *longue durée* of globalization helps justify an attempt to retrieve anticipations of an anti-globalist spirit in Cesare Pavese.

Pavese mostly wrote in the decades between 1930 and 1950, when economic integration and migration—two key factors in measuring globalization, according to political scientist Jeffry R. Frieden—dipped to their lowest levels in the 20th century.[7] What can be called Pavese's aesthetics of rootedness not only reflects the "closedness" to the global typical of the time, but

[4] Ferme, *Tradurre è tradire: la traduzione come sovversione culturale sotto il fascismo*; Binetti, "L'elogio della fuga come resistenza politico-intellettuale ne La luna e i falò di Cesare Pavese."

[5] See for example: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/globalization. Last accessed May 2, 2020.

[6] Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*. Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*.

[7] Frieden, "Globalization: Past, Present, Future."

also unfolds a fruitful tension between a rooted provincialism and the ambition to cross local and national boundaries, an ambition that Pavese embodied through his activity as a translator of American masterpieces like Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), and as an author of novels of emigration like *La luna e i falò* (1950).

My interpretation of Pavese's aesthetics results from of a geophilosophical reading that pays specific attention to the political significance of the ways Pavese treats land, sea, and ocean in his work. This reading is partially inspired by Franco Cassano's geophilosophical narrative of land and sea (*Il pensiero meridiano*, 1996).[8] In Cassano's theory, the Mediterranean embodies an anti-global spirit and challenges capitalist globalization as its cultural and ethical alternative.[9] I draw from Cassano my definition of Pavese's aesthetics as "telluric," which I understand as characterized by an ideological attachment to the land, and "anti-oceanic," which I understand as resistant to capitalist uprootedness.[10] The significance of Pavese's work is to give aesthetic form to local/global tensions through a politically significant interpretation of individuals' relationship with land: a relationship that is exclusive and potentially discriminatory despite the absence of a nationalist rhetoric; a relationship that is unbreakable and registers the fascination for the oceanic spirit of capitalist modernity only to prove its delusionary nature.

Clearly, Pavese is not the prototype of "homo mediterraneus," given his association with and his work's celebration of city life in Turin—where he resided for most of his life—and the surrounding hills of Piedmont. However, the question of Pavese and the Mediterranean has been

[8] For the use of the term "geophilosophy" see Bouchard, "Italy's Geophilosophies of the Mediterranean."

[9] Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano*. Cassano is among the most prolific commentators of globalization in Italy, along with Danilo Zolo and Antonio Negri. See Negri and Hardt, *Empire*. Zolo, "Towards a Dialogue Between the Mediterranean Cultures." Cassano and Zolo, *L'alternativa Mediterranea*.

[10] On "telluric" aesthetics see also Dainotto, "Pensiero verticale." where Dainotto applies a similar lens to Vincenzo Cuoco's *Platone in Italia* (1804-1806).

legitimated by a significant bibliography on the relationship between Pavese and the sea: a debate inaugurated by Italo Calvino with his comment on Pavese's poem "Paternità," (1962) and later developed by critics from Pier Massimo Prosio (1992) to Elio Gioanola (2002), Valerio Capasa (2008), and Eleonora Cavallini (2013).[11] More recently, in one of the introductions to the new publication of Pavese's novels by Einaudi in 2020, the collective of authors called Wu Ming have also recalled that the similarity between hills and sea is a recurrent trait of Pavese's literary imaginary.[12] Finally, in 1983 Carlo Bernari discusses the plausibility of considering Pavese a "Southerner" writer, not because of his biographic origins, but for a "Southerner" dimension of the spirit based on internal relationships, and not mere appearances: "vi è un Sud in ogni regione della terra, e così in ogni angolo d'Italia, un Sud che, da fenomeno meramente economico-sociale, diventa dimensione dello spirito; e che funzione dello scrittore è saperne cogliere, non solamente gli aspetti esteriori, ma i rapporti interni ad essi, per restituircene un'immagine capace di riattualizzarsi ad ogni lettura."[13] Land and sea, and in particular the relationship or "rapporto" (in Bernari's words) between these two elements will be the core of my geophilosophical reading of Pavese's work, complicated by Pavese's fascination for and simultaneous domestication of the ocean, which he expresses in his aesthetics of roots, verticality, and return.

[11] See Calvino in Pavese, *Poesie edite e inedite*; Cavallini, "*Da Brancaleone a Forte dei Marmi*;" Capasa, *Lo scopritore di una terra incognita*; Gallot, Pavese. "Paese e Paesaggio;" Prosio, "Lettura di Il Mare di Cesare Pavese;" Gioanola: *Introduzione* in Pavese, *Feria d'agosto*.

[12] Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, 2020, x. Wu Ming's thoughts on the interdependence of hills and sea in Pavese's imaginary, the meaning of the name "Anguilla," and the importance of Ulysses in Pavese's work (which I read in the Einaudi edition of late May 2020) point to the same direction of study proposed in this essay, which I wrote in October 2018-early May 2020.

[13] Bernari, "Noterelle e schermaglie. Ma esiste davvero una letteratura meridionale?," 589.

1.1. Land and Sea: A Cassanian Geophilosophical Framework

In this section I provide an overview of Cassano's theorization of the Mediterranean, and introduce the terms of Cassano's geophilosophical narrative which will guide my analysis of Pavese's work. A crucial starting point for Cassano's discussion of land and sea is Carl Schmitt's essay *Land und Meer*, published in German in 1942.[14] Schmitt presents modern Western history as the dispute of terrestrial and maritime powers until the consolidation of the "oceanic" Anglo-Saxon hegemony—Great Britain first, then the United States. A whale, named Leviathan, and a terrestrial animal, named Behemoth, are mythological figures from the Book of Job that traditionally represent the battle between land and sea. Schmitt understands world history as the confrontation of forces on land and sea; and yet his account is biased towards the land forces. In the very beginning of his book, Schmitt explains that a specific bond with land defines human existence, as we read in the English translation by Samuel Garrets Zeitlin from 2015:

> The human is a land-being, a land-dweller. He stands and walks and moves upon the firmly grounded earth. This is his standpoint and his soil; through it he receives his viewpoint; this defines his impressions and his way of seeing the world. He receives not only his field of vision but also the form of his gait and his movements, his shape as a living being born and moving upon the earth.[15]

Not only is the attachment to the land crucial in defining human existence, but it also serves the purpose of defining what being a human means or not—and this is how Schmitt can dismiss the Jews, a nomadic people who lacked that territorial bond. The Anglo-Saxons are also political enemies that Schmitt implicitly discriminates against, as they represent the unrooted oceanic power, in its different phases. Yet, Schmitt acknowledges how oceanic powers have been a

[14] There is evidence that Pavese knew Carl Schmitt's work, in particular *Die Diktatur* (1921), as he solicited its translation by Giaime Pintor on June 1945. The translation, completed, was never published. Belviso, *Amor fati*, xv, 15, 17. Pavese, *Lettere*, 474.

[15] Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, 5.

determinant to the development of modernity.[16] He emphasizes how whales have been important in pushing sailors away from their shores and inaugurating the oceanic phase of maritime powers. Moreover, in his account of whale hunting Schmitt recognizes the role of technology in determining the spatial revolution that forever changed humans' relationship with the sea. He refers to literature that presents a new geopolitical order, stating that "Melville […] is for the world's oceans what Homer is for the eastern Mediterranean. Melville wrote […] the greatest epic of the ocean as an element."[17]

The juxtaposition of Homer and Melville has become particularly memorable for the Italian reader after contemporary critical and philosophical accounts of the Mediterranean, such as Franco Cassano's *Il pensiero meridiano*, retrieved the distinction and placed it at the core of ethics of resistance to capitalist neo-liberalism: "L'*Odissea* non è un *Moby Dick* timido e imperfetto. La differenza tra l'uomo senza *nostos*, Achab o Nietzsche, e l'uomo che invece vuole ritornare è una differenza preziosa che occorrerebbe imparare a custodire," Cassano writes.[18] It is important that Cassano associates Captain Ahab to Nietzsche, both expressing an unmoderated drive to sail far from their places of origin, which brings them to lose their sense of identity and purpose. According to Cassano, the same destiny distinguishes Dante's version of Ulysses: "l'inizio di una dismisura in cui si mette a rischio anche la sopravvivenza perché si è chiamati dal desiderio dell'esplorazione e della scoperta […] Qui il mare è diventato oceano e tra Ulisse e

[16] See the introductory essays by Russell A. Berman and Samuel Garret Zeitlin in Schmitt, *Land and Sea*.

[17] Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, 26.

[18] Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano*, 44. On *Moby-Dick* as the embodiment of a "nomadic" uprootedness, see also Tally: "*Moby Dick*, in mapping the emergent postnational world system, envisions a space in which this national formation is itself shown to be but a transitory moment, rather than a destination, goal, or norm. The nomad thought of *Moby Dick* thus challenges the State philosophy of American national narrative." Tally, *Melville, Mapping and Globalization*, 70. On the distinction between sea and ocean and the development of Schmittian motifs in a Mediterranean framework see also: Saffiotti, *Geofilosofia del mare*.

Achab la distanza si è ridotta."[19] Nietzsche, Captain Ahab, and Dante's Ulysses are figures of oceanic, excessive uprootedness that Cassano rejects. He presents instead a Mediterranean ethical model based on the idea of measure (*misura*) and return. Cassano chooses slowness over the frenetic speed of capitalist development; he makes it clear that one of the challenges of his anti-capitalism is to take the side of peripheral areas and set them free from the frustration of not being at the center of capitalist development. The decentralization he proposes also takes him far from Carl Schmitt's support of the continental German *Reich*, which Cassano sees as the embodiment of an extreme telluric power.[20]

While Cassano bases his critique of Atlantic uprootedness on Carl Schmitt's narrative of sea and ocean, he also comes to terms with another "anti-oceanic" German thinker, Martin Heidegger. Cassano recalls how Heidegger's thought becomes "telluric" in his later essays, in particular in his critique of technology and his "vertical" understanding of dwelling. Heidegger's questioning of technology clearly opposes a poetic understanding of the earth and of human existence to any instrumental use of the land and natural resources. In his essay "Bauen Wohnen Denken," Heidegger presents the essence of human existence as the fourfold manifestation of "dwelling": "in saving the earth, in receiving the sky, in awaiting the divinities, in initiating the mortals, dwelling occurs as the fourfold preservation of the fourfold."[21] Heidegger chooses a farmhouse in the Black Forest as an example of how dwelling can inform building. Not only has the farm been constructed in harmony with the surrounding nature, but there is also space for meditation, making room for both life (newborns) and death (wood for the coffins).[22] In

[19] Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano*, 44.

[20] Ibid, 14, 43.

[21] Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 353.

[22] Ibid, 362.

Cassano's view, Heidegger's understanding of existence is "vertical." Moreover, this verticality generates a clear hierarchy among natural elements, where water is subjugated to the land. To further insist on the telluric aspect of Heidegger's thought, Cassano focuses on Heidegger's notes on ancient Greece and how he unconvincingly paralleled it to Germany, precisely for its central geographic position on the European continent.[23] Cassano also recalls how Heidegger—like Schmitt—was affiliated with Nazism and how his antisemitism was directed towards the extermination of the Jews: a people with no land.[24] Cassano does not simply dismiss Heidegger's philosophy as a regression to peasant values, as other critics do.[25] While he denounces the extremism of his position, he sees in Heidegger a legitimate reaction to the wave of (Atlantic) capitalism beginning to shape the global order. Cassano makes use of land, sea, and ocean to symbolize specific geopolitical forces and philosophical approaches, when modernity clearly takes the path of global capitalism:

> Quando il mare perde la misura che gli veniva dalla costa, dalla natura duplice di essa, quando esso diventa oceano e fa della tecnica l'unica fonte di sicurezza, quando la nave, l'hegeliano 'cigno del mare,' si trasforma in astronave, quando l'inquietudine perde non solo la capacità ma anche il desiderio di ritornare, allora si fa sentire con la violenza e lo schematismo del contraccolpo la passione per il radicamento, si fa strada la tentazione di ricomporre in uno i frantumi dispersi in tutte le direzioni. Questa fobìa del mare è una reazione allergica alla sua pervasività, una reazione contro la coazione universale a navigare, contro l'eterno andare ad Occidente, contro l'inseguire il luogo mobile in cui il sole tramonta, contro l'equivoco che trasforma il girare sulla sferica Terra nella linea retta dell'illimitato sviluppo.[26]

[23] "Heidegger ha con il mare un rapporto di estraneità-ostilità e gran parte della sua straordinaria riflessione affonda le sue radici nel ritorno dal mare mobile degli enti all'Essere, alla dimora-terra: non a caso né all'improvviso la svolta (Kehre) conduce teoreticamente alla sua Messkirch, al bosco, alle radure e ai sentieri che la circondano, cerca in una fedeltà originaria la possibilità di un superamento degli esiti nichilistici dell'era della metafisica." Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano*, 35.

[24] Ibid, 34.

[25] See for example George Steiner whom Cassano quotes on p. 38.

[26] Ibid, 35.

Excessive dependence on technology, as well as compulsory mobility and uprootedness are the key elements of global capitalism that Cassano targets in his critique. Heidegger's phobia against the sea according to Cassano is a reaction against the oceanic forces pushing individuals to travel westbound, to look for chances of development abroad and leave the land behind. The very fluidity of the aquatic element, however, can blur the distinction between sea and ocean. Cassano preaches the need to avoid the extremisms of both the unregulated uprootedness that capitalism promotes, and the regressive elements of Heidegger's thought. His ideal anti-globalism aims at resisting the forces of capitalism supporting the local while also preserving an openness towards the new and the foreign. This is the alternative to capitalism that the Mediterranean offers in Cassano's view, with its balance of openness and rootedness, of sea and land, of travel and return.

In the next pages I discern: 1) a possible balance of land and sea in Pavese, in response to the comments of critics such as Calvino, Cavallini, and Capasa; 2) the geopolitical meanings of Pavese's telluric aesthetics, both in terms of the specific time period and biographic experiences to which Pavese's texts can be tied, but also in a broader geophilosophical conceptualization of individuals' relationship to places, as already done by Cassano; 3) the geophilosophical shift that the gap between sea and ocean entails, and whether Pavese has inserted oceanic elements in his works; 4) the "anti-oceanic" implications of Pavese's aesthetics of provinces, which shows a specific understanding of global capitalism in terms of centers and peripheries; and 5) Pavese's geopolitical stand in his narratives and figures of return. Following these points as the main inquiries of my analysis, I argue that Pavese's treatment of land, sea, and ocean can be read as structures of feeling speaking of an *ante-literam* globalism. Pavese's hostile attitude towards the ocean is part of a deeper unease with the fluidity of the sea. This runs parallel to his attitude

towards the land, which I define as the mark of his "telluric" aesthetics, and the foundation of a restrictive vision of landscape. Refusing the fluidity and instability of the aquatic element, Pavese reiterates individuals' belonging to places, and a right to the native landscape that does not diminish in the face of economic migration (a key aspect of the "oceanic" spirit of an early global capitalism that Pavese is so interested in representing.) The insistence on rootedness and the retreat to the land can be seen as Pavese's reaction to the ongoing changes of the global geopolitical order. Pavese's concern for certain peripheries of the Western world—Piedmont and the U.S. Midwest—shows how he grasps the global dimension of capitalist development and how he implicitly addresses it through his translations of American literature, in particular *Moby-Dick*. As I will show, Pavese, as a translator and critic, oddly denies an "oceanic" dimension to *Moby-Dick*. Similarly, key figures of travelers and migrants in his works express the ideological need to return: Cugino, Anguilla, and Ulysses. I read the *topos* of the return in Pavese as "anti-oceanic," i.e., as a form of resistance to excessive uprootedness and unbounded commitment to economic growth.

1.2. Land and Sea in Pavese's Beaches

The uneasiness that Pavese felt when confronted with the sea of Calabria during his *confino* of 1934-1935 is well known. In the letters Pavese sent to his friends and family, he talks about the sea as "una gran vaccata;" "antipatico" "innominabile."[27] He also complains about the fish,

[27] "Cinque o sei volte al giorno (e la notte) mi si rinnova così la nostalgia dietro i treni che passano. Indifferente mi lasciano invece i piroscafi all'orizzonte e la luna sul mare, che con tutti i suoi chiarori mi fa pensare solo al pesce fritto. Inutile, il mare è una gran vaccata." To his sister, Maria. Pavese, *Lettere*, 276; "Lei sa come io odi il mare; mi piacere nuotare, però mi serviva molto meglio il Po. Ma a parte il nuotare, che del resto è già finito, trovo indegno della gravità di uno spirito contemplativo quel perenne giochetto delle onde sulla riva e quel basso orizzonte odor di pesce… Sono a pochi km dal paese di Corrado Alvaro. Ma lo preferivo nei libri." To Augusto Monti. Ibid, 281; "Il mare, già cosi antipatico d'estate, d'inverno è poi innominabile: alla riva, tutto giallo di sabbia smossa; al largo, un verde tenerello che fa rabbia. E pensare che è quello d'Ulisse: figurarsi gli altri. La grande attrattiva del paese sono i

which he does not eat, and he is bothered by the beach's smell.[28] If it is clear that the circumstances of confino made the stay at Brancaleone Calabro difficult for Pavese, critics have been debating whether he eventually succeeds in overcoming that sense of uneasiness towards the sea. Calvino inaugurates the discussion by commenting on the poem "Paternità," from *Lavorare Stanca*, where a solitary man eager for paternity faces a desolate, sterile sea. He writes:

> Si tratta di due motivi sempre presenti nella concezione mitologico-agricola che Pavese ha di tutti gli aspetti della vita: il senso della donna-terra, che trasmette la vita; e il senso di sterilità dell'uomo solo, escluso dal ciclo naturale della procreazione. Si noti come il mare in gran parte della poesia di Pavese è un simbolo di sterilità, contrapposto alla terra-donna. Sarà solo con le poesie de *La terra e la morte* e con la annotazione del diario Afrodite è "venuta dal mare" (27 novembre 1945) che i due simboli del mare e della donna-terra si congiungeranno.[29]

For Calvino, in Pavese there is an inextricable bond and identification between woman and land/earth that only at the end of Pavese's life, with the collection *La terra e la morte*, will be reconnected to the sea. In particular, a mythical female figure—Aphrodite—will mark this transition.

The most articulate follow-up to Calvino's insightful comment is Eleonora Cavallini's article "Da Brancaleone a Forte dei Marmi: Pavese e il 'mare greco'" where the researcher looks for traces of the sea in the entire corpus of Pavese's writings and shows how much Pavese owes to Greek mythology in his treatment of the sea.[30] Cavallini argues that Pavese slowly detaches himself from the negative tones of the letters from Calabria: the cultural fascination for Ancient Greek culture, as well as the recurrent stays at the beach (in Forte dei Marmi, for example) makes Pavese better acquainted and reconciled with the sea. Inspired by Calvino, Cavallini

---

pesci, che a me non piacciono, e così mangio pietanza non più che un giorno o due alla settimana, quando ammazzano la vitella." To Mario Sturani, Ibid*,* 305.

[28] See foonote 27.

[29] Pavese, *Poesie edite e inedite*, 246. Quoted in Cavallini, "*Da Brancaleone a Forte dei Marmi*," 6.

[30] Cavallini, "*Da Brancaleone a Forte dei Marmi*."

supports the thesis that Pavese eventually reaches a balance between land and sea. Valerio Capasa confirms the same reading when commenting on the collection *La terra e la morte*.[31]

Insisting on the telluric inspiration of Pavese's aesthetics, I wish to dispute Cavallini's and Capasa's reading. I believe a telluric spirit persists in Pavese's writings and becomes even more prominent in Pavese's last years, when he writes *La terra e la morte*. A useful distinction might be made when studying the role of the sea in Pavese, which does not depend much on the difference between autobiographical experiences and literature, but rather on two different conceptions of the sea itself: the sea as the beach and a site of tourism, and the sea considered in its aquatic element. This distinction makes use of Pier Massimo Prosio's insights from his reading of the short novel "Il mare," where Prosio states that the sea looks almost like the ocean of "I mari del Sud," but clearly very different than the Ionian sea of Calabria, which Pavese finds oppressive, or the sea of *La spiaggia*, "mondano e anodino."[32]

Introducing Prosio's distinction, I want to specify Cavallini's point suggesting that the sea with which Pavese becomes acquainted is the beach—with all the social mundanity and recreational activities that it entails—rather than the sea as an aquatic element. The setting and narrative of the short novel *La spiaggia* (1942), where the narrator joins a group of friends for a vacation on the beach, resonates with the letter to Lajolo that Cavallini reports in her article, where Pavese confesses he has taken "revenge" over the sea, by repeatedly sojourning on the beaches of Varigotti, Forte dei Marmi, and Ostia:

> Eppure il mare io l'ho sentito fin da bambino, avevo l'impressione che dopo Canelli ci fosse subito Genova, e che se avessi potuto salire sulle colline oltre Nizza, avrei già sentito il rumore delle onde. Poi il mare mi aggredì a Brancaleone, mi sentivo più solo e disperso davanti alla sua distesa infinita che mi pareva dovesse per sempre dividermi dalla terra. Era come un'altra prigione. Ma poi mi sono vendicato. Ho voluto essere io ad

[31] Capasa, *Lo scopritore di una terra incognita*.

[32] Prosio, "Lettura di Il Mare di Cesare Pavese," 467.

> aggredire il mare d'improvviso, a scoprirlo: l'ho fatto in ogni parte: a Varigotti, a Forte dei Marmi, a Ostia.[33]

Pavese eventually acquires familiarity with "the beach;" however, when we consider the sea as an aquatic element, with all its attributes of fluidity, vastness, and shapelessness, we find evidence that Pavese does not really change his cautious, almost reluctant approach to the sea.

Looking at Pavese's treatment of the beach as the place where land and sea meet, one sees how the imbalance of the two elements reveals Pavese's preference for a telluric perspective, where the sea is always seen from a distance and hardly put into focus. In maritime settings, Pavese includes the sea in the landscape, but continuous references to the countryside suggest that the sea is not the element where Pavese feels belonging. Pavese's descriptions of the sea are biased toward a telluric perspective which resonates with his own detached experiences at sea as a child, as he writes to Lajolo: "Eppure il mare io l'ho sentito fin da bambino."[34] Even though the sea has always been part of Pavese's imagery, the absence of the sea from Pavese's daily life cannot compare with the traces that land—hills, especially—has left in Pavese's geographic aesthetics:

> Davanti al mare della Pineta, basso e notturno, passando in treno, hai visto i focherelli lontani e pensato che per quanto questa scena, questa realtà, ti riempia di velleità di "dire," t'inquieti come un ricordo d'infanzia, essa non è però per te né un ricordo né una costante fantastica, e ti suggestiona per frivole ragioni letterarie o analogiche e non contiene, come una vigna o una tua collina, gli stampi della tua conoscenza del mondo. Se ne deduce che i moltissimi mondi naturali (mare, landa, bosco, montagna ecc.) non ti appartengono perché non li hai vissuti a suo tempo, e dovendoli poetare non sapresti muoverti in essi con quella segreta ricchezza di sottintesi, di sensi e di appigli, che dà dignità poetica a un mondo.[35]

---

[33] Cavallini, "*Da Brancaleone a Forte dei Marmi*." 12. Source: Lajolo (not specified).

[34] Ibid.

[35] Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere*, 232. Also quoted in Cavallini, "*Da Brancaleone a Forte dei Marmi*," 9. Cavallini suggests that the "pineta" Pavese refers to could be in Versilia, Tuscany.

The sense of belonging towards the sea that Pavese lacks finds a direct reflection in the ways the sea is depicted in his writings. Cavallini emphasizes the connection of "terra e mare" in passages such as the following, from the short novel *La spiaggia* (1942) about his political confinement:

> Tante volte in seguito, rientrando solo, mi capitò di guardarlo sovrappensiero, che è forse la cosa che meglio rivedo di tutta l'estate. Visto dal basso, era nodoso e scarno; ma dalla stanza, quando m'affacciavo, era un sodo blocco argenteo di foglioline secche accartocciate. Mi dava il senso di trovarmi in campagna, in un'ignota campagna, e sovente fiutavo se non sapesse di salsedine. Mi è sempre parso strano che sull'orlo estremo di una costa, fra terra e mare, crescano piante e fiori e scorra acqua buona da bere.[36]

In interpreting this passage, I notice that the narrator cannot stop projecting the countryside in his mind, even though he is in a maritime landscape as he looks at an olive tree, wondering about "*terra e mare*": "Mi dava il senso di trovarmi in campagna, in un'ignota campagna." The insistence on the countryside in maritime settings suggests that even in this novel Pavese does not give up his sense of belonging to the land.

Similarly, in "Gente spaesata," a poem from the collection *Lavorare stanca*, two friends daydream in front of the sea, and yet the sea in its materiality is never the center of focus.[37] The poem opens with references to an overabundance of the sea during the day: "Troppo mare. / Ne abbiamo veduto abbastanza di mare." The past tense suggests that the two friends have long been exposed to the sea, and possibly to the water's most vivid colors during the day. Yet, a

[36] Pavese, *La spiaggia*, 23.

[37] Full text here: "Troppo mare. Ne abbiamo veduto abbastanza di mare. / Alla sera, che l'acqua si stende slavata / e sfumata nel nulla, l'amico la fissa / e io fisso l'amico e non parla nessuno. / Nottetempo finiamo a rinchiuderci in fondo a una tampa, / isolati nel fumo, e beviamo. L'amico ha i suoi sogni / (sono un poco monotoni i sogni allo scroscio del mare) / dove l'acqua non è che lo specchio, tra un'isola e l'altra, / di colline, screziate di fiori selvaggi e cascate. / Il suo vino è così. Si contempla, guardando il bicchiere, / a innalzare colline di verde sul piano del mare. / Le colline mi vanno, e lo lascio parlare del mare / perché è un'acqua ben chiara, che mostra persino le pietre. / Vedo solo colline e mi riempiono il cielo e la terra / con le linee sicure dei fianchi, lontane o vicine. / Solamente, le mie sono scabre, e striate di vigne / faticose sul suolo bruciato. L'amico le accetta / e le vuole vestire di fiori e di frutti selvaggi / per scoprirvi ridendo ragazze più nude dei frutti. / Non occorre: ai miei sogni più scabri non manca un sorriso. / Se domani sul presto saremo in cammino / verso quelle colline, potremo incontrar per le vigne". Pavese, *Le poesie*, 13.

descriptive line only arrives with the evening, when the sea water's colors are fading: "Alla sera, che l'acqua si stende slavata / e sfumata nel nulla, / l'amico la fissa." The friend of the narrator stares at the sea and daydreams following the rhythm of sea pounding. But the narrator dismisses the sea's evocative power: "sono un poco monotoni i sogni allo scroscio del mare." Soon enough, he clarifies the hierarchy between land and sea in his own imagination, stating that "l'acqua non è che lo specchio, tra un'isola e l'altra, di colline, screziate di fiori selvaggi e cascate." The sea is only a mirror of the land, without proper consistency. The narrator agrees on hearing about the sea from his friend, only because the sea reflects the beloved hills. Another good reason is that the two friends can still see through the water, and find the reassuring solidity of rocks underneath: "Le colline mi vanno, e lo lascio parlare del mare / perché è un'acqua ben chiara, che mostra persino le pietre." Soon enough, the hills become the shared object of desire for both friends, taking the shape of erotic dreams: "Vedo solo colline e mi riempiono il cielo e la terra / con le linee sicure dei fianchi, lontane o vicine. / Solamente, le mie sono scabre, e striate di vigne / faticose sul suolo bruciato. L'amico le accetta / e le vuole vestire di fiori e di frutti selvaggi / per scoprirvi ridendo ragazze più nude dei frutti." In the sensual scene that closes the poem, mixing the vitality of the hills to the sensuality of naked women, the sea is no longer present. The hills fill the imagination of the narrator and his friend, and the sea's reflecting surface is only instrumental to spark their erotic daydreaming.[38]

[38] On the sensuality of the hills for Pavese see Riccobono, "Cesare Pavese e il conflitto tra fuga e ritorno alla Madre-terra."

1.3. Land and Sea in the Short Story "Il mare"

Elio Gioanola has largely commented on the vagueness and absence of the sea in the short story "Il mare" included in the homonymous section of *Feria d'agosto*, also developing his analysis towards a comparison with Giacomo Leopardi's poem "Infinito."[39] In this short story, two young boys—the narrator and his friend Gosto— attempt to see the sea but never accomplish their mission. Gosto turns back half way and the narrator ends up going home with a musician from his village. Gioanola notices how the sea is only present in *absentia* here and in the entire section of *Feria d'agosto*. He notices how Pietro, the one person who speaks in the short story to narrate his actual encounter with the sea, is not even happy about it: "– E il mare, Pietro, non l'hai veduto? – gli disse Gosto. Allora ci disse che era stato a Marsiglia e che là il mare l'aveva davanti alla porta. Guardò la piazza dove cadeva l'ombra della casa e disse: – Come fosse qui in piazza. E movimento giorno e notte. Più che il mercato grosso –. Sputò nel sole e tornò dentro."[40] The protagonists of the story can only imagine the sea. Pietro's experience does not help them relate to the sea any better.

In my reading of the short story "Il mare," I want to stress the relationship between land and sea, analyzing important aspects of the dialogue with Pietro. Pavese presents Pietro as the "carradore che ci prendeva in giro perché non sappiamo andare scalzi."[41] The dialogue with him continues as follows:

> Gli chiedemmo com'è fatta la riva del mare, ma non sapeva o non capì quello che noi volevamo. Disse che, sì, l'acqua è verde e sempre mossa e che fa continuamente le schiume, ma dentro non c'era mai stato e non sapeva come sia la terra veduta dal largo. Ci raccontò che i bastimenti hanno un colore tra rosso e nero e che nel porto c'è un odore come nelle stazioni. Disse che carica e scarica più carbone un porto in un giorno che non

[39] Gioanola in Pavese, *Feria d'agosto*, x.

[40] Pavese, *Tutti i racconti*, 59.

[41] "Carradore" refers to the old profession of wheelwright, now almost disappeared.

> carri d'uva tutte le nostre colline. E i marinai, anche stranieri, sono vestiti come noi e non hanno altra idea che tornarsene a casa. – Costa fatica il mare, – diceva. – Bisogna nascerci scalzi.[42]

Pietro, who is an accountable interlocutor who had experience of the sea, nevertheless knows nothing about the "riva" (precisely the point where land and sea meet). He has clearly seen the sea, but he has never experienced being *in* the sea, nor has he watched the land from the sea. Even sailors, according to Pietro, experience the same unease and only wish to go back to the land. Finally, Pietro also traces precise limits to what the narrator and Gosto's expectations of the sea should be. "Bisogna nascerci scalzi" he says referring to the hardness of life in the sea, whereas we know that Pietro makes fun of the two boys because they *do not know* how to walk barefoot. For Pietro, for the two boys, and even for sailors, the sea does not seem to be the right element in which to live. It is not just a reference to the sea's hostility—which, as Cavallini points out, is also a trope in ancient Greek literature; the sea is not the right element for humans to live in, which reminds us of Schmitt's opening of *Land und Meer*, where humans' connection to the land is presented as a distinctive trait of their species.[43]

Parallel to this negative or lacking depiction of the sea as an aquatic element, Pavese insists on the advantages of the land. The narrator signals a clear rupture between land and sea when he explains to Gosto that roads are made for traveling (even to get to the sea), whereas the sea interrupts the roads' flow:

> Gosto è tanto libero di sé che fa tutto quel che gli dicono, ma lui solo non ci arriva. Ancora adesso non vuol credere quando gli spiego che lo stradone non ha fine, come non han fine le strade ferrate, e di paese in paese gira fin che c'è terra senza mai interrompersi. Dice che, se fosse così, la gente non smetterebbe di camminare e tutti girerebbero il mondo. E sul nostro stradone sarebbe un viavai di stranieri d'ogni paese. –

[42] Pavese, *Tutti i racconti*, 60.

[43] Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, 5. Also quoted above.

> Tutte le strade finiscono al mare, – gli dicevo, – dove ci sono i porti. Di là ci s'imbarca e si va nelle isole, dove gli stradoni riprendono.[44]

Roads stop once they get to the sea; one needs to cross the sea in order to continue travel on the roads of an island. Gosto cannot believe that the world is completely connected by roads. Otherwise, he explains, people would always be on the move, foreigners from any country would pass by their road. The narrator explains that, if this is not the case, it is because the sea *interrupts* those roads. Roads do stop once they get to the sea; then, they resume on a different land, maybe that of an island. Presenting the sea as the element that interrupts roads, the narrator stresses the sea's power to separate rather than to connect people. He also presents land and sea as two different realms, reminding him that the sea needs to be crossed just so that humans can resume traveling on their roads.[45] Pavese's characters engage in a meditative self-reflection on their relationship with the two elements, which again, confirms the telluric foundation of their existence.

1.4. Land and Sea in *La terra e la morte*

The collection *La terra e la morte* is not the occasion for a final, harmonious coexistence of land and sea in Pavese's aesthetics, but rather the summa of its strong telluric inspiration.[46] As Allan Williamson argued after translating the collection in 1997, "'Terra'… in *La terra e la morte*, comes to mean so many things—materiality, fertility, sexual power, a peasant groundedness,

---

[44] Pavese, *Tutti i racconti*, 59.

[45] "*Strada*" is a key term in the corpus of Pavese's poems, with 87 occurrences. The first noun to appear on Savona and Sichera's list of concordances is "*donna*" with 144 occurrences; followed by "*terra,*" with 95 occurrences. The comparison with "*mare*" (67 occurrences) clearly signals a leaning towards the land in Pavese, also from a quantitative point of view. Savoca and Sichera, *Concordanza delle poesie di Cesare Pavese*.

[46] Pavese's telluric inspiration continues in later poems, with *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi*, only published after Pavese's death. The third poem of the collection, for example, reads: "…Come / erba viva nell'aria / rabbrividisci e ridi / ma tu, tu sei terra. / Sei radice feroce, / sei la terra che aspetta." Pavese, *Le poesie*, 135.

something inarticulate, something unformed, a fatalism, a connection to death—that lines that seem almost too bald to enter into modern poetry ('You are the earth and death') become triumphs of emotional condensation.[47]" In *La terra e la morte*, Pavese establishes the tie of land with blood that he had previously developed through feminicides and rituals in narratives such as *Paesi tuoi*, *Dialoghi con Leucò* and *La luna e i falò*.[48] While in the previous cases the feminine, land, and death are linked diachronically (the female subject, once she is killed, pours her blood into the soil) the threefold bond is here developed synchronically: the woman ("*tu*"), land, and death, coexist into the same entity: "Sei (1) la terra (2) e la morte (3)." As a figure of the feminine and death, the land becomes Pavese's interlocutor, a pure element whose major attributes are hardness and impenetrableness. But in *La terra e la morte* Pavese also finds in land, or rather the earth, the unstoppable strength of cyclical regeneration: "e tu vivi rivivi."[49] In the celebration of summer's vitality we hear an echo of D'Annunzio's panism, anticipated by Pavese himself who defined his poems as "quasi dannunziane."[50]

Reduced to its essential elements of life and death, earth loses its function of background, organically surrounding humans and participating in their daily activities, as is the case in *Lavorare stanca*. The rarefaction of the earth as we see it in *La terra e la morte* deploys what Comparini describes as "a-spazialità:"[51] In *La terra e la morte* we still read symbols of humans'

---

[47] Williamson, "Pavese's Late Love Poems," 44.

[48] Cavallini, "Cesare Pavese e la ricerca di Omero perduto," 108 (footnote 36), 114.

[49] Pavese, *Le poesie*, 121.

[50] Mondo, "Cesare Pavese," 44. Pavese, *Lettere*, 510.

[51] "... se c'è un aspetto che è (quasi) assente nei *Dialoghi con Leucò*, è l'ambiente dove si svolge lo scontro dialettico tra i personaggi, poiché è impersonato dagli attori. Comparini, *La poetica dei Dialoghi con Leucò*, 135. Pavese is aware of taking this direction when discussing the "image" of his first poems and the symbolism towards which he wants to direct his poetic research after 1940. In an appendix to *Lavorare stanca*'s second edition, he explains how his research of the objective image is first of all the representation of the deep connections between people and their environment. Presenting the figure of a hermit in the poem "Paesaggio I," Pavese insists on the color that links the hermit to the parched ferns of the surrounding countryside. Contemplating landscape and human activity in it as a meaningful whole, in *Lavorare stanca* Pavese presents an organic vision of the land and humans' chances to inhabit

relationship with their landscape, such as the vineyard, but this time they are not evocative enough to trigger a reflection on the poet's past or subjectivity; rather, the vineyard is one of the many attributes of the land or earth that the collection arrays and reduces to the same principles of life and death.[52]

The sea participates in this cycle of life and death, but only as an attribute of the loved woman. The love poems of *La terra e la morte* are dedicated to Sicilian writer Bianca Garufi, with whom Cesare Pavese collaborated for the unfinished novel *Fuoco grande*.[53] References to Aphrodite in Pavese's diary show how much Pavese associated Garufi to ancient Greek culture, and a landscape of both land and sea.[54] The narrator celebrates the maritime origin of the beloved woman through references scattered among four poems:

---

it. ["Il mestiere di poeta," November 1934, in Pavese, *Le poesie*, 111.] In "A proposito di certe poesie non ancora scritte," second appendix to *Lavorare stanca* from February 1940, Pavese writes: "Sarà questione di descrivere – non importa se direttamente o immaginosamente – una realtà non naturalistica ma simbolica. In queste poesie i fatti avverranno – se avverranno – non perché così vuole la realtà, ma perché così decide l'intelligenza. Singole poesie e canzoniere non saranno un'autobiografia ma un giudizio." in Pavese, *Le poesie*, 118.

[52] The vineyard appears at the center of *Feria d'agosto* and is crucial for Pavese's aesthetics of memory. Looking at the immobility of the vineyard in his memories as a child, Pavese can grasp the passing of time and the gap that separates him from the boy he used to be. It is the cyclical reappearance of the vineyard in September, the identity of the things that stay the same, which allow the writer to actually understand time and existence. The vineyard also gives the title to a dialogue between Leucò and Ariadne, where its description confirms the presence of the sea in Pavese's imaginary but also its insuperable distance: "'Tu sei mai stata in un vigneto in costa a un colle lungo il mare, nell'ora lenta che la terra dà il suo odore? Un odore rasposo e tenace, tra di fico e di pino? Quando l'uva matura, e l'aria pesa di mosto? O hai mai guardato un melograno, frutto e fiore? Qui regna Dioniso, e nel fresco dell'edera, nei pineti e sulle aie... gli dei sono il luogo, sono la solitudine, sono il tempo che passa." in Pavese, Pavese, *Dialoghi con Leucò*, 140. In *La luna e i falò*, the vineyard moves Anguilla and strikes him as the sign of the countryside's vitality: "Invece traversai Belbo, sulla passerella, e mentre andavo rimuginavo che non c'è niente di più bello di una vigna ben zappata, ben legata, con le foglie giuste e quell'odore della terra cotta dal sole d'agosto. Una vigna ben lavorata è come un fisico sano, un corpo che vive, che ha il suo respiro e il suo sudore." To Anguilla, the vineyard is also the ultimate reason to return, a source of comfort he cannot find in his travels abroad, nor in the city: "Io sono scemo, – dicevo, – da vent'anni me ne sto via e questi paesi mi aspettano. Mi ricordai la delusione ch'era stata camminare la prima volta per le strade di Genova – ci camminavo nel mezzo e cercavo un po' d'erba." Similarly, the absence of vineyards marks Genoa's desolation: "C'era il porto, questo si, c'erano le facce delle ragazze, c'erano i negozi e le banche, ma un canneto, un odor di fascina, un pezzo di vigna, dov'erano?" Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, 53, 54.

[53] Pavese and Garufi, *Fuoco grande*. For Pavese and Garufi's correspondence, see Masoero, *Una bellissima coppia discorde il carteggio tra Cesare Pavese e Bianca Garufi, 1945-1950*.

[54] "Dorme Astarte-Afrodite-Mèlita. Si sveglierà scontrosa…. Afrodite è 'venuta dal mare.'" Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere*, 303.

1) Tu vieni dal mare, / dal verde riarso…/ non sai quanto porti di mare parole e fatica…/ le olive del tuo sguardo addolciscono il mare;

2) Sangue di terra dura. / Sei venuta dal mare. Tutto accogli e scruti / e ripudi da te / come il mare;

3) Di salmastro e di terra / è il tuo sguardo. Un giorno hai stillato di mare… Di salmastro e di terra / Hai le vene, il fiato /… Ti sbatti come il mare /…sei riarsa come il mare;

4) Sempre vieni dal mare / e ne hai la voce roca, / …Cosa ignota e selvaggia / sei rinata dal mare.[55]

Despite the mythical references to Aphrodite, born from the sea, *La terra e la morte* celebrates rootedness and groundedness. A telluric sensitivity prevails over the aquatic realm. While describing the sea, the narrator never puts himself at sea and limits his observations to the effects that the sea has on earthly species, including the beloved woman. She was born or reborn from the sea, and brings within herself the effects of marine salt on biological materials: "sei riarsa"; "voce roca."[56] The movement of the sea that "tutto accogli[e], scrut[a] e ripudi[a]" is that of the wave hitting the land at shore.[57] Rather than insisting on the aquatic element, the poet praises the land's capacity to absorb impacts: "Ti sbatti come il mare… Cogli / come la terra gli urti, / e ne fai vita, fiato / che carezza, silenzio."[58] When describing the maritime landscape, the poet chooses maritime plants such as agave and oleandro: plants rooted to the ground.[59] When describing the maritime fauna, among all the many species of fish living in the sea, Pavese chooses mussels on wave-washed rocks: *"*Sei riarsa come il mare, / come un frutto di scoglio."[60]

[55] Pavese, *Le poesie*, 121, 124, 126, 127–28.

[56] Ibid*,* 126, 127.

[57] Ibid*,* 124.

[58] Ibid*,* 126.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

The aquatic element slips out of focus when the poet dwells on the woman's birthplace, going from "mare" to "gerani tra i sassi": "Terra rossa terra nera, / tu vieni dal mare / dal mare riarso, / dove sono parole / antiche e fatica sanguigna / e gerani tra i sassi."[61] Conversely, earthy life is described with much variety and sharpness: "l'urto / della secchia nel pozzo, la canzone del fuoco, il tonfo di una mela; le parole rassegnate / e cupe sulle soglie, il grido del bimbo… la cantina chiusa, / dal battuto di terra… la camera buia…"[62] And the list continues: "il grido / della quaglia nascosta"; "il tepore del tasso"; "fatica" and "dolore" associated with the life of the "contadino"; "la roccia e l'erba."[63] In the poems of *La terra e la morte,* Pavese thinks about objects and events recurrent in peasants' daily life as independent, mythical entities.[64] In portraying the myths of human experience on earth, Pavese keeps a distant look over the sea, even when sea and land seem to be equally represented in his poetry.

My interpretation of the telluric inspiration of *La terra e la morte* therefore contrasts Cavallini's and Capasa's. The latter, in particular, writes that: "L'acqua è luogo di vita e desiderio, termine dell'aspirazione poetica, mentre la terra sembra definire la condizione presente, la lotta a cui necessariamente è chiamato il poeta."[65] Capasa recognizes the vital impulse of water in lines such as the following: "Tu non attendi nulla / Se non la parola / Che sgorgherà dal fondo / Come un frutto tra i rami."[66] I notice how the verb "sgorgare," generally associated to liquids, refers here to the hidden strength of underground roots, and only becomes

[61] Ibid, 121.

[62] Ibid, 124.

[63] Ibid, 126.

[64] See also Pavese's letter to Fernanda Pivano from June 27, 1942: "Descrivere poi i paesaggi è cretino. Bisogna che i paesaggi – meglio i luoghi, cioè l'albero, la casa, la vite, il sentiero, il burrone ecc. – vivano come persone, come contadini, e cioè siano mitici." Pavese, *Lettere*, 425.

[65] Capasa, *Lo scopritore di una terra incognita*, 334.

[66] Pavese, *Le poesie*, 122.

apparent in fruits: solid objects celebrating the vitality of land. Representations of the sea, even when numerous, remind the reader of the earth's materiality, diversity, and solidity.

1.5. Land as Refuge during the War

In his reading of *La terra e la morte*, Capasa also connects the land/sea dichotomy to the binomial (chaotic) history versus (clear) myth: "L'origine mitica si scontra con la storia, entra nel suo terreno caotico, buio e confuso cercando di portarvi senza ingenuità o velleità regressive ordine e chiarezza."[67] In fact, the land has a salvific function for the poet despite the chaotic unfolding of history of which hills are the primary settings. Two poems in the collection refer to the experience lived during World War II. Among them, the poem "Tu non sai le colline" contrasts the hills where many partisans were killed during WWII to the hills where the narrator and other men find refuge during the war. The first lines "Tu non sai le colline / dove si è sparso il sangue," followed by the description of the poet and others' decision to avoid fighting—with the exception of one—ends with the image of a woman waiting for the survivors "alle colline."[68] The second poem, starting with the line "E allora noi vili," similarly synthetizes the impressions developed in the novel *La casa in collina*: the sense of guilt and cowardice for not taking part in the Resistance, but also the strong sense of survival that the poet, among other "vili," feel as their life has been spared: "sapemmo di essere soli e vivi."[69]

---

[67] Capasa, *Lo scopritore di una terra incognita*, 334.

[68] "Tu non sai le colline / dove si è sparso il sangue. / Tutti quanti fuggimmo / tutti quanti gettammo / l'arma e il nome. Una donna / ci guardava fuggire. / uno solo di noi / si fermò a pugno chiuso, / vide il cielo vuoto, / chinò il capo e morì / sotto il muro, tacendo. / Ora è un cencio di sangue / e il suo nome. Una donna / ci aspetta alle colline." Pavese, *Le poesie*, 125.

[69] "E allora noi vili / che amavamo la sera / bisbigliante, le case, / i sentieri sul fiume, / le luci rosse e sporche / di quei luoghi, il dolore / addolcito e taciuto - / noi tendemmo le mani / alla viva catena / e tacemmo, ma il cuore / ci sussultò di sangue, / e non fu più dolcezza, / non fu più abbandonarsi / al sentiero sul fiume - / - non più servi, sapemmo / di essere soli e vivi." Ibid, 129. On Pavese's sense of guilt see Donatella Di Pietrantonio's introduction to the 2020 edition of *La casa in collina*.

The connotation of the land as refuge is even amplified in the novel *La casa in collina*, published in the book *Prima che il gallo canti* (1949). Through this publication, Pavese makes a statement about his alleged "betrayal" of the Resistance, for which he did not directly fight. The land provides a form of escape and resistance to the geopolitical pressures coming from the outside world. While WWII aligns Italy to the sorts of other European and extra-European countries, the war sanctions the end of the world as Pavese once knew it. The war threatens the provincial identity of Pavese's geographic space. Several passages from *La casa in collina* signal the advancement of the war as a traumatic breech of known geopolitical borders; foreign geopolitical forces invade Italy's geographic space, which is also perceived as a breech in Italian discourses and language:

> Adesso nei caffè, per le strade, si discuteva solamente del mondo. La Sicilia era tutta occupata.[70]
>
> Dino giurò che era passato anche un inglese, un prigioniero di guerra, che sapeva soltanto dire ciao.[71]
>
> Senza volerlo, mi svegliavo all'alba e correvo alla radio…[72]
>
> Ormai non c'era più dubbio. Accadeva da noi quel che da anni accadeva in tutta Europa: città e campagne allibite sotto il cielo, percorse da eserciti e da voci paurose.[73]

In *La casa in collina*, not only does the arrival of foreign military troops on the Italian soil generate anxiety, but knowing that Italy is living in the same conditions as other countries in the world is also disturbing to the narrator.

[70] Pavese, *Prima che il gallo canti*, 197.

[71] Ibid, 210.

[72] Ibid, 212.

[73] Ibid, 216.

Facing a geopolitical invasion coming first from the sea (notice references to the occupation of Sicily and to the arrival of English soldiers) the narrator sees a chance of salvation in the land. As the site of a reassuring, cyclical mode of existence, the land is a refuge from all geopolitical pressures. In the novel, the narrator first hides in the countryside, where he has the chance to spend some time with his ex-lover Cate; later, he finds shelter in a monastery, a "nest" ("*tana*")[74] where he still has a chance of normality:

> Quel giro di portico intorno al cortile, quelle scalette di mattoni per cui dai corridoi s'andava sotto i tetti, e la grande cappella semibuia, facevano un mondo che avrei voluto anche più chiuso, più isolato, più tetro. Fui bene accolto da quei preti che del resto, lo capii, c'erano avvezzi: parlavano del mondo esterno, della vita, dei fatti della guerra con un distacco che mi piacque... Avrei voluto che la soglia del collegio, quel freddo portone massiccio, fosse murata, fosse come una tomba...[75]
>
> In sostanza chiedevo un letargo, un anestetico, una certezza di essere ben nascosto.[76]

The narrator envisions an isolated, walled world to save himself from the geopolitical pressures of the outside world. He thinks about a world that is "chiuso," "isolato," "tetro." Elsewhere in the novel, references to soil amplify his feelings of cowardice, but also this essential need for safety, stability, and protection: "Avrei voluto essere radice, essere verme, e sprofondare sottoterra… Gregorio, che almeno era vecchio, era come la terra, come gli alberi."[77] *La casa in collina* portrays land as refuge from the horror of the war, and the land's salvific function survives the "chaos" pointed at by Capasa. This salvific function also appears in *La terra e la morte*, confirming the persistence of Pavese's telluric inspiration in this collection.

[74] "Non cambio vita, cambio tana," Ibid, 257.

[75] Ibid, 242.

[76] Ibid, 243.

[77] Ibid, 198.

1.6. Pavese's "Fourfold": An Aesthetics of Belonging and Estrangement

In her 2002 article "Pavese: *paese et paesaggio*," Muriel Gallot raises provocative questions about Pavese's vision of landscape and how it operates in his aesthetics.[78] Reporting excerpts from Pavese's journal *Il mestiere di vivere*, his letters, and works of fiction, she points to troublesome aspects of Pavese's aesthetics, where the celebration of memory and individuals' bond with their native landscape ends up defining a vision of the world made of autarkic systems, closed to outsiders and based on the idea of land as a private right, coming from blood and descent. Among the most significant of these passages:

> Cosa vuol dire non essere nato in un posto, non averlo nel sangue, non starci già mezzo sepolto insieme ai vecchi."[79]
>
> Perché non posso trattare io delle rocce rosse lunari? Ma perché non riflettono nulla di mio, tranne uno scarno turbamento paesistico, quale non dovrebbe mai giustificare una poesia. Se queste rocce fossero in Piemonte, saprei bene però assorbirle in un'immagine e dar loro significato."[80]
>
> Quando si capita in un luogo nuovo – nuova regione, altra natura, altri usi, altre case e facce – molte viste mi colpiscono che, se avessi vissuto sempre nella regione, sarebbero ora ricordi d'infanzia. Perciò ho l'impressione, aggirandomi, di scostare e violare sogni altrui."[81]

The examples I recalled point to an important aspect of Pavese's geopolitical ideology: the sense of private property or exclusive right to landscape that informs individuals' relationship with their natural environment, a relationship arising since birth. Making birth and childhood crucial aspects of the creative act as Pavese does implies a clear political stance: accessing a place physically and aesthetically is a right exclusively restricted to few, on the basis of their sense of

[78] Gallot, "Pavese. Paese e Paesaggio."

[79] Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, 1955, 11. Also quoted by Gallot.

[80] Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere*, 10. Also quoted by Gallot.

[81] Ibid, 253. Also quoted by Gallot.

belonging and blood. Gallot makes a crucial connection between these disturbing implications of Pavese's aesthetics of landscape, and his dislike for the sea. Yet, much more can be said about the geopolitical stakes of Pavese's attachment to the land, in reference to the telluric and vertical ideology that Cassano describes as crucial components of Heidegger's thought.

Pavese's telluric aesthetics is connected to an understanding of human existence that resembles the vertical structure of Heidegger's fourfold as analyzed by Cassano. Heidegger presents the "fourfold" as the gathering of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities.[82] Each of these elements taken in itself recalls the fourfold, and only the fourfold gives meaning to human existence. Humans *dwell* on Earth, which means that they exist as mortal beings and in interdependence with nature. Accepting humans' finitude, and also respecting their natural surroundings, humans can grasp the essence of their existence and make sense of it.[83] In a recent publication exclusively dedicated to Heidegger's fourfold, Andrew Mitchell points to the phenomenological nature of this concept, but also to the "relationality" of things that the fourfold implies:

> The simple things around us—indeed, the things themselves—become the focus of [Heidegger's] attention, lending to his work of the period a unique phenomenological density disencumbered of all formal transcendentalism. The fourfold provides an account of the thing as inherently relational. Thanks to the fourfold, these things unfold themselves ecstatically, opening relations with the world beyond them.[84]

[82] Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 343–63.

[83] "To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence. The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we recall that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth. But 'on the earth' already means 'under the sky.' Both of these also mean 'remaining before the divinities' and include a 'belonging to men's being with one another.' By a primal oneness the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in one." Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 351.

[84] Mitchell, *The Fourfold*, 3.

Cassano interprets the relationality signaled by Mitchell as vertical and telluric, when he comments: "In quella quadratura nel cui orizzonte siamo invitati ad 'abitare', ci sono solo cielo e terra e uomini e dei, c'è solo verticalità, non sono possibili uscite, esiti laterali, tutto avviene nella fermezza del rapporto tra alto e basso. L'acqua è subalterna alla terra, semplice parte di essa."[85] Indeed, Heidegger's understanding of the earth is one that excludes the sea as an essential element: "Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal."[86] Describing earth as "blossoming and fruiting," Heidegger shows telluric understanding of water as an element, one that recalls Pavese's: the latter similarly celebrates the vitality of water in the solid fruits of the land, rather than presenting water in its unshaped materiality.

The verticality of Heidegger's fourfold pointed at by Cassano comes from the top-down relationship between sky and earth, which in Heidegger's view is crucial for an understanding of humans' finitude as mortals. Heidegger connects the idea of dwelling with the act of building in his lecture "Bauen Wohnen Denken": While not all buildings allow humans to dwell, Heidegger praises a farmhouse built two hundred years earlier in the Black Forest as a good example of what building to dwell means. Not only is the construction in harmony with the landscape and the weather of that region, but it also allows different generations to follow one another in the human cycle of life and death:

> Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build. Let us think for a while of a farmhouse in the Black Forest, which was built some two hundred years ago by the dwelling of peasants. Here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and sky, divinities and mortals enter in simple oneness into things ordered the house. It placed the farm on the wind-sheltered mountain slope, looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave it the wide overhanging shingle roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and that, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the

[85] Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano*, 37.

[86] Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 351.

> storms of the long winter nights. It did not forget the altar corner behind the community table; it made room in its chamber for the hallowed places of childbed and the "tree of the dead" …in this way it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time. A craft that, itself sprung from dwelling, still uses its tools and its gear as things, built the farmhouse. Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.[87]

Heidegger insists on the different architectonical components of the house and how they serve a specific purpose to serve life as a whole. His praise of the farmhouse in the Black Forest insists on the harmonization of human life and the surrounding nature by also suggesting a sense of belonging and ownership that the farmers' family maintain generation after generation. The farmhouse in the Black Forest is an example of how Heidegger's telluric and vertical understanding of existence translates in terms of humans' relationship with their landscape. It significantly epitomizes the absence of the sea in Heidegger's fourfold. It also shows how Heidegger insists on the need to preserve and safeguard elements of the landscape that speak of an *inherited* relationship with one's surroundings.

I believe that the vertical and telluric aspects that Cassano stresses in Heidegger's fourfold are also at work in Pavese. Like Heidegger, Pavese searches for a "fourfold" that aims to make sense of human existence. While he develops the metaphysical relationship between divinities and humans in *I Dialoghi con Leucò*, Pavese's search for a "fourfold" is particularly evident in the geophilosophical connection he establishes between earth and sky. This connection is one that celebrates roots and earth as it keeps the sea at a distance. It is also a kind of connection that seals individuals' sense of belonging with their birthplace, therefore speaking of individuals "right" to place.

[87] Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 362.

Before Carlo Bernari, Furio Jesi argues that Pavese sees myth as "sistema di rapporti esistenti nella natura."[88] Jesi compares this "sistema di rapporti" to the relationship among colors that the painter tries to reproduce on the canvas when painting a natural landscape: "Pavese ha operato come se in natura esistesse un sistema oggettivo di rapporti fra immagini mitologiche che… se si vuole… 'interpretare poeticamente un pezzo di natura', bisogna rispettare."[89] Pavese's search for a balance or proportion of "rapporti," which I read as a Heideggerian "fourfold," is particularly evident in the poem "Paesaggio V" from *Lavorare stanca,* and written in 1934. It reads as follows:

> Le colline insensibili che riempiono il cielo
> sono vive nell'alba, poi restano immobili
> come fossero secoli, e il sole le guarda.
> Ricoprirle di verde sarebbe una gioia
> e nel verde, disperse, le frutta e le case.
> Ogni pianta nell'alba sarebbe una vita
> prodigiosa e le nuvole avrebbero un senso.
> Non ci manca che un mare a risplendere forte
> e inondare la spiaggia in un ritmo monotono.
> Su dal mare non sporgono piante, non muovono foglie;
> quando piove sul mare, ogni goccia è perduta,
> come il vento su queste colline, che cerca le foglie
> e non trova che pietre. Nell'alba, è un istante:
> si disegnano in terra le sagome nere
> e le chiazze vermiglie. Poi torna il silenzio.
> Hanno un senso le coste buttate nel cielo
> come case di grande città? Sono nude.
> Passa a volte un villano stagliato nel vuoto,
> così assurdo che pare passeggi su un tetto
> di città. Viene in mente la sterile mole
> delle case ammucchiate, che prende la pioggia
> e si asciuga nel sole e non dà un filo d'erba.
> Per coprire le case e le pietre di verde
> – sì che il cielo abbia un senso – bisogna affondare
> dentro il buio radici ben nere. Al tornare dell'alba
> scorrerebbe la luce fin dentro la terra
> come un urto. Ogni sangue sarebbe più vivo:

[88] Jesi, *Il tempo della festa*, 76–77.

[89] Ibid.

anche i corpi son fatti di vene nerastre.
E i villani che passano avrebbero un senso.[90]

In this poem Pavese portrays a landscape by directing his gaze on the "things" that make human existence, or rather humans' dwelling, on earth. The hills, the fruit, the houses… there is no ontological difference set between humans and objects populating the landscape, being alive or dead, built or natural. We see a typical land/sea dichotomy that not surprisingly disadvantages the sea. While being aesthetically useful in the frame, the sea is described for its sterility.[91] Throughout the poem, Pavese raises the question of the "senso," the meaning of existence that is life blooming on the hills: if the hills were green, with fruit and houses scattered among them, then "ogni pianta nell'alba sarebbe una vita / prodigiosa e le nuvole avrebbero un senso." The "senso" that Pavese refers to and that would find expression in the blooming of the hills signals a search for meaning that is ultimately evoked for humans (the "villani" at the end of the poem). But this "senso" comes to humans from the sky ("le nuvole"), and only as a reflection of the life blooming on earth ("le colline.") Pavese's fourfold, therefore, is a search for purpose or meaning in human existence, where humans are strictly connected to the life of the nature surrounding them. Humans' dwelling on earth means taking care of other living species, and cultivating life through agriculture ("le piante.") The absence of vegetation makes the sea sterile, while the cliffs are "nude" and eventually meaningless (see the rhetorical question: "hanno un senso le coste…?") But the act of building itself can be meaningless if not directed towards true dwelling: "Passa a volte un villano stagliato nel vuoto, / così assurdo che pare passeggi su un tetto / di città.

[90] Pavese, *Le poesie,* 43.

[91] As noticed by Calvino. The motif of sterility connects this text to other poems of the collection such as in "Paternità" and "Lo Steddazzu." In most of the other poems of the collection *Lavorare Stanca* featuring the sea, the latter has a marginal or secondary role in the narrative (see for example "Indisciplina;" "Mediterranea;" "Luna d'agosto;" "Terre bruciate;" "Mattino;" "Estate;" "Tolleranza;" "Paesaggio VIII;" "Parola del politico." A beach scene is described in "Donne appassionate;" The Mediterranean setting of "Mito," is an anticipation of Dialoghi con Leucò for Gianni Venturi and Valerio Capasa. See Capasa, *Lo scopritore di una terra incognita*, 277.

Viene in mente la sterile mole / delle case ammucchiate, che prende la pioggia / e si asciuga nel sole e non dà un filo d'erba." The conclusion of Pavese's thinking is that in order for places to have a meaning, and for people to also have a meaning, roots are necessary: "radici ben nere" would equally feed people and the places they inhabit. Roots mark the difference between land and sea; between a meaningful existence, and a meaningless one. Roots directly connect humans to the earth, and through it to all the species that bloom and participate in the same principle of life. It would make no sense for the peasant to walk on the roof of a house in the city. "Ricoprire le colline di verde" is the peasant's purpose, and what allows him and nature to thrive in unison. I interpret the image of an organic existence on the land, where humans feel they belong to places through their roots as telluric or Heideggerian, in Cassano's terms. It is an attachment to the land which also signals an attachment to specific modes of existence, based on harmony between humans and nature, but also on a bond that individuals create with places since their birth. Similarly, in the Black Forest, Heidegger makes room for the different stages of existence, and finds the sense of Being in harmony between humans and their natural surroundings.

In Pavese, the bond of individuals with their birthplace is profound and meaningful but at the same time also generates exclusion. The verticality and telluric nature of Pavese's fourfold informs his understanding of humans' belonging, but also their estrangement in relation to places. At the beginning of this section, I reported statements on the limited right for a poet to narrate a landscape, which Pavese addresses to himself. We should read those statements in parallel with the examples abounding in Pavese's poetry and fiction, where he makes references to the sky to stress one's status as a foreigner. I will name just a few: In the poem "Notturno" in *Lavorare stanca*, coming from abroad means also being disconnected with the sky: "Sei come una nube / intravista tra i rami. Ti ride negli occhi / la stranezza di un cielo che non è il tuo. / […]

Ma vivi altrove. / Il tuo tenero sangue si è fatto altrove."[92] In the novel *La luna e i falò*—which I will discuss more in detail later—Anguilla, Italian migrant in California, remarks: "Capii nel buio, in quell'odore di giardino e di pini, che quelle stelle non erano le mie."[93] In *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi* (1951), dedicated to American actress Constance Dowling, the poet describes the woman's foreignness writing: "Tu hai giocato bambina / sotto un cielo diverso, / ne hai negli occhi un silenzio, / una nube, che sgorga / come polla dal fondo."[94] Finally, in "Mediterranea" a poem that brings us back to *Lavorare stanca*, a Black man does not fit in the scene because the drinks he is having, and the clouds above him are not his own: "Fumava / anche il negro, un mattino, che insieme vedemmo / Fisso, in piedi, nell'angolo a bere quel vino / – fuori il mare aspettava. Ma il rosso del vino / e la nuvola vaga non erano suoi: / … L'idea di una terra lontana / gli faceva da sfondo. Ma lui non quadrava."[95] The racism of this scene should be understood within Pavese's general understanding of foreignness. The verb "quadrare," which refers to what is appropriate in a specific context, precisely reminds us of the fourfold structure of a square and of the straightness that its shape conveys. The sky, again, is used as a mirror of land's roots in the definition of an Heideggerian, telluric vision of existence.

Excluding other people—or even themselves—from cultivating a meaningful relationship with places on the basis of one's blood or birth (which race may or may not make visible) is the radical conclusion of Pavese's aesthetics. While this aspect of Pavese's poetry cannot but be significant for a renewed understanding of Pavese's political view, Cassano's geophilosophical notes help us understand it as inherently connected to Pavese's telluric aesthetics. We can

[92] Pavese, *Le poesie*, 82.

[93] Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, 1955, 17.

[94] Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, 1955, 17.

[95] Pavese, *Le poesie*, 50.

imagine Cassano making the same objection to Pavese he crafted for Heidegger, as he warns him against the dangers of telluric extremism: "Ma la cura contro un mare smisurato che distrugge ogni radice, contro una mobilità obbligatoria che obbliga l'uomo all'estraneità non può essere il feticismo della propria radice, l'etnocentrismo del proprio sacro, una religione tellurica ed escludente."[96]

1.7 Pavese's Provincial Lens: Domesticating the Ocean

Italo Calvino distinguishes two directions of research that Pavese pursues following his ambition to explore the "regional character" of his aesthetics: one spatial, and one temporal:

> La volontà di penetrare sempre più il proprio "carattere regionale," la propria "vera natura" – com'è detto nel saggio giovanile su Anderson –, lo portò per vie insospettate. La realtà regionale piemontese fu squarciata nel senso dello spazio e nel senso del tempo: nello spazio contrapponendola a un'altra geografia regionale e nazionale: quella del Middle West o della Nuova Inghilterra nel mosaico degli Stati; nel tempo risalendo – oltre la storia delle civiltà urbane – alla oscura antichità contadina, alle tribù e ai sacrifici umani.[97]

According to Calvino, Pavese explores the "true nature" of his regionalism through temporal research that looks at irrational systems of thought typical of past peasant societies. Indeed, Pavese mostly conducts this type of research as the co-director of the Einaudi series "Collana viola" with ethnographer Ernesto De Martino, which causes Pavese severe ostracism within the publishing house and Communist intellectual milieu.[98] Pavese and De Martino receive criticism because the collection includes the participation of intellectuals who had promoted Fascist or Nazi racist ideology including anthropologist Giulio Cogni and historian of religions Mircea Eliade. But De Martino distances himself from Pavese when the latter publicly defends the

[96] Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano*, 41.

[97] Pavese, *Letteratura americana e altri saggi*, xxx.

[98] Pavese and De Martino, *La collana viola*.

"valore conoscitivo" or epistemic worth that Pavese recognizes to myth both in historical and absolute terms. Pavese writes: "Ci sarà, invece, se mai, da temere che del mito, della magia, della 'partecipazione mistica' lo studioso 'scientifico' dimentichi il carattere più importante: l'assoluto valore conoscitivo ch'essi rappresentarono, la loro originalità storica, la loro perenne vitalità nella sfera dello spirito."[99] While Pavese's primitivism is certainly crucial in order to understand his theory of myth and overall aesthetics as emphasized by Pietro Angelini, my local/global approach brings me to emphasize the spatial turn of Pavese's regionalism, i.e., the second ramification identified by Calvino.[100]

Critics have used the label "regionalism" since the publication of Pavese's first novel *Paesi tuoi* to describe the typical settings of Pavese's work and his language, echoing Piedmontese dialect especially in its syntax.[101] Yet, Pavese refuses this label and instead explicitly adopts the term "provincial" to connect his Piedmontese work to his passion for American literature.[102] Pavese is fascinated by authors such as Anderson, Lewis, and Steinbeck and finds in them a lens through which to see the rise of industrial capitalism and to measure the effects it has on people. While recognizing the global dimension that capitalism is assuming, Pavese is interested in what causes friction against it. In his critical pieces on Lewis, for example, Pavese shows a sharp interest in the relationship between humans and space: how small villages of the inner land become the most prominent centers of industrial production; how craftsmen and peasants see their work changed through machines; how big cities welcome waves of economic migrants coming from the countryside.

---

[99] Ibid, 35, 39.

[100] Ibid, 25.

[101] Pavese, *Saggi letterari*, 264.

[102] Ibid, 9.

Pavese emphasizes the role that country-dwellers have in the building of this new society, how their cultural traits and moral values adapt to the new places and to the new working conditions. He focuses on "provincial" characters and tries to understand how they can cope with the new working and living conditions, how their cultural traits can survive in these transformed urban surroundings.[103]

If the city-countryside dichotomy is key in the American writers Pavese studies and translates, it is important to highlight the global dimension that Pavese's emphasis on the peripheries attains in his analysis.[104] By stating that "senza provinciali, una letteratura non ha nerbo" and presenting himself as a "specializzato in campagne e periferie americano-piemontesi," Pavese suggests how the geopolitical role of the countryside and peripheral areas are the very object of his interest, whereas the national identities of these places are reduced to their attributes.[105] In other words, it is secondary to know the countries where provincial, liminal characters come from; what has primary importance is that they participate to the same, capitalist

[103] Pavese praises Lewis' depiction of "meravigliosi provinciali che sembrano così buffi e sono invece tanto seri, il prodotto più profondo e definitivo di quella civiltà, i contadini volgari e severi, fracassoni e tormentati, delle grandi città provvisorie;" Pavese, *Saggi letterari*, 37. Similarly, in his own poetry and fiction, he develops the same concern by focusing on figures of Italian commuters, liminal figures divided between city and countryside, as we see in *Lavorare stanca* (1933) and *Paesi tuoi* (1938).

[104] Pavese laments the derisory results that Italian intellectuals have had through the Fascist *Strapaese* vs. *Stracittà* debate, comparing them to the nuanced, complex representation of society in Anderson. We know from Lajolo [that Pavese met his friends from D'Azeglio high school and called their group "*Strabarriera*," a parody of the *Strapaese* vs. *Stracittà* discussions, as "barriera" was in fact the term used for the outskirts of Turin, where "paese" and "città" meet. While the literary magazines such as *Strapaese* or *900* polarize countryside and city as two extreme opposites, Pavese insists on the strong connection, and in particular the mobility, between the two. Lajolo, *il vizio assurdo*, 79-80. Trosio, *Le riviste di Strapaese e Stracittà*. Longanesi, *L'Almanacco di Strapaese; ossia, Il centogusti per l'anno MCMXXIX*. Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere*, 25.

[105] "A tirare le somme, una cosa soprattutto risalta da questi romanzi di Lewis. I personaggi, e con essi l'autore, sono grandi provinciali. In ogni senso, grandi. Cominciano ingenui. Quelli delle praterie vanno a fare i provinciali a Nuova York e quelli di Nuova York vengono a farlo in Europa. E finiscono seri, ma – ciarlatani o grandi scienziati o industriali come sono – una sala affollata d'abiti da sera li terrà sempre in soggezione. Pure, di tali nature – con cui il Middle West, il paese Americano, si perpetua nell'arte – occorrevano alla letteratura nazionale… senza i suoi provinciali una letteratura non ha nerbo." Pavese, *Saggi letterari*. See also Comparini, *La poetica dei Dialoghi con Leucò*, 20.

process of social transformation. Insisting on the provincial, Pavese does not restrictively focus on only one region; instead he adopts a global perspective which is critical of the geopolitical order assumed through capitalism.

Pavese's provincial attitude can also be extended to his treatment of Melville's *Moby-Dick*, which is particularly significant to illustrate how Pavese's *ante-literam* anti-globalism can be presented as anti-oceanic, from a geophilosophical perspective. Considering the mythological dimension of *Moby-Dick* geopolitically—that is, as the symbolic site of the "oceanic," or the progress of global capitalism (in Cassano's and Schmitt's terms)—it is legitimate to argue that Pavese never embraces the oceanic spirit. This is even more significant when considering Pavese's work as a translator and critic of American literature. Not only in Pavese's general approach to American literature, but also in the specific case of his translation of *Moby-Dick*, the oceanic spirit of a generalized uprootedness is never fully expressed as such. The oceanic attributes of *Moby-Dick* are either domesticated or dismissed in Pavese, as he takes the side of the "provincial" even when grasping the global stakes of capitalism.

Gallot makes an important connection between Pavese's dislike for the sea and the sense of inauthenticity that marks Pavese's narratives of displacement. Yet she excludes Pavese's fascination for Melville from this consideration when she writes: "le dépaysement est marqué d'inauthenticité. Ce qui rend exceptionnelle l'œuvre de Melville, c'est qu'elle touche au mythe."[106] Rather than seeing *Moby-Dick* as an exception, as Gallot does, I notice continuity between Pavese's treatment of the Mediterranean sea, and his approach to *Moby-Dick*. Myth is not specific to *Moby-Dick* in Pavese's view as claimed by Gallot: Pavese approaches the

[106] Gallot, "Pavese. Paese e Paesaggio," 66. On myth and *Moby-Dick* see Bossche, *Nulla è veramente accaduto*, 84–95.

Mediterranean through a mythological lens as well, as proved in the appearance of Aphrodite in the poems of *La terra e la morte*, which I analyzed above. Moreover, the continuity between sea and ocean has a biographic foundation in Pavese, as it becomes clear by briefly recalling Pavese's failed attempts to travel both on the ocean, and at sea.

Moving to the United States was a dream of the young Pavese, inspired by his passion for American literature. Writing to his Midwestern friend Anthony Chiuminatto, he said he was ready to do anything to come to the US, even crossing the US-Mexico border illegally. What he did was to contact Giuseppe Prezzolini, Professor of Italian at Columbia University, hoping to enroll in the graduate program. He applied in 1930, though a misunderstanding with the graduate division made it impossible for him to receive funding. He tried a second time, in 1931, but he had to withdraw his application because he was called to undergo the mandatory fitness test for military service (he was eventually excused because he had asthma). Pavese's passion for American literature is also behind his 1932 attempt to embark on a cruise across the Mediterranean. The trip was in fact inspired by Melville's adventures on whalers. It had to be canceled, again, for accidental reasons.[107]

The connection between Pavese's awe for Melville and his attempt to compensate the failure of his Atlantic travels with a trip in the Mediterranean speaks of a broader continuity between the two elements (ocean and sea) in Pavese's view. This continuity is clear in Pavese's treatment of *Moby-Dick.* Pavese domesticates the oceanic dimension of Melville's novel through a provincial perspective, which happens to coincide with the Mediterranean, and which Pavese can only reach through myth.

[107] Pavese and Chiuminatto, *Correspondence*, 158. Pavese, *Lettere*, 158, 188, 211.

In *Land und Meer* (1942) Schmitt points at *Moby-Dick* as a turning point in global literature, marking a shift from the order of the sea to the order of the ocean.[108] Indeed, in *Moby-Dick* one can read the celebration of capitalist freedom and self-determination, expressed in geophilosophical terms through a deliberate choice of the openness of the ocean, with no land to offer confinement or resort: "in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God—so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! For worm-like, then, oh! Who would craven crawl to land! Terrors of the terrible!"[109] The oceanic dimension of *Moby-Dick* is also amplified by references to cosmopolitanism in the novel, which go from explicit commentaries by the narrator, to the etymological notes in multiple languages and bibliographic references opening the book.[110]

Almost contemporary to the publication of Schmitt's essay, Pavese gives a very different interpretation to the oceanic dimension of Melville's novel. In the preface published with Pavese's translation of 1941 (the second version, while a first version was already published in 1932) Pavese presents the multilayered complexity of Melville's work and its importance in the context of Anglo-Saxon literature. In doing so, he praises Melville's "vitality," but also anchors this vitality to a desire for tradition and groundedness on the part of the young nation of the United States: during the time of the composition of *Moby-Dick,* he argues, "in America o più precisamente nella Nuova Inghilterra, la *stabilità* nazionale raggiunta aguzzava il desiderio di una cultura propria, di una tradizione."[111] In a different essay, Pavese uses a typical

[108] Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, 26.

[109] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 91.

[110] See for example Ibid*,* 93: "I freely assert, that the cosmopolite philosopher cannot, for his life, point out one single peaceful influence, which within the last sixty years has operated more potentially upon the whole road world, taken in one aggregate, than the high and mighty business of whaling.

[111] Pavese in Melville, *Moby Dick o la Balena*, 12.

Mediterranean framework to praise Melville's style, his combination of mystery and rationality, calling him a "Greek":

> Un greco veramente è Melville. Voi leggete le evasioni europee della letteratura e vi sentite più letterato che mai, vi sentite piccino, cerebrale, effeminato: leggete Melville, che non si vergogna di cominciare *Moby Dick,* il poema della vita barbara, con otto pagine di citazioni, e di andare innanzi discutendo, citando ancora, facendo il letterato, e vi si allargano i polmoni, vi si magnifica il cervello, vi sentite più vivo e più uomo. E, come nei greci, la tragedia (*Moby Dick*) ha un bell'essere fosca, è tanta la serenità e la schiettezza del coro (Ismaele) che dal teatro si esce sempre soltanto esaltati nella propria capacità vitale.[112]

The virility of Melville's style comes from the combination of rationality and the wildness of primitive life, which Pavese associates to Greek culture, in particular to Greek tragedy. We know that Pavese was part of a larger cultural group and intellectual movement steering the reception of American culture in Italy during Fascism.[113] Indeed, Bontempelli adopts terms similar to Pavese's when he associates American writers to Homer in 1927, as Antonio Catalfamo reminds us: "Quello che ci attrae negli americani è il loro stato di verginità spirituale: sono degli 'omerici' e per questo una intelligente attenzione al loro modo di sentire ed esprimersi può esserci di grande giovamento per liberarci da quanto perdura in noi malvivo e come tale ci ingombra."[114]

While he was not alone in interpreting American authors in reference to Greek culture, Pavese's understanding of *Moby-Dick* is symptomatic of a provincial look on Melville's novel that, while introducing his novelty to the Italian audience for the first time, also shows a reductive vision of its "oceanic" spirit, in Cassano's and Schmitt's terms. Greek rationality, or

[112] Pavese, *Saggi letterari*, 75.

[113] Ferme, *Tradurre è tradire*.

[114] Catalfamo, *Cesare Pavese: il mito, la donna e le due Americhe*, 33.

national stability and tradition are, in other words, frameworks through which Pavese contains *Moby-Dick's* oceanic spirit.[115]

Symptoms of Pavese's anti-oceanic or provincial take of *Moby-Dick* are also apparent in his translation. Since Pavese's first version in 1932, about twenty translations appeared, and yet Pavese's version is still considered an unavoidable classic.[116] Pavese did not have direct experience of the sea, which is why, in 1931, he asked his friend Libero Novara—who instead had experience with mercantile navigation—to introduce him to the slang of maritime lifestyle, as we read in a letter.[117] In his letter to Novara, Pavese shows to be interested in reporting the slang of maritime lifestyle, more than its technicalities. David Lajolo also reports that Pavese spent significant time with the boatmen of the Po river.[118] According to Ottavio Fatica, author of a new translation of *Moby-Dick* that Einaudi published in 2015, another important source for Pavese is the 1891 Maritime and Military Dictionary by Guglielmotti.[119]

Fatica, as much as other translators, has commented on the inaccuracies of Pavese's translation while still praising Pavese's ambition and the result that he was able to obtain at 24 years old.[120] Some of the inaccuracies of Pavese's translation are particularly significant for my argument. The first chapter of *Moby-Dick*, titled "Loomings," is important to present the geographic setting of the book while also introducing the narrator, Ishmael. We know that

---

[115] McGlazer also calls into question Pavese's self-declared cosmopolitanism in his analysis of *Lavorare stanca*. McGlazer, "The Decay of Sighing."

[116] Taglietti and Fatica, "Non chiamatelo Ismaele." Salter, "'I Got a Crush on That Fellow.' Cesare Pavese, Herman Melville e il desiderio di un traduttore." For an overview of Pavese's activity as translator see Stella, *Cesare Pavese Traduttore*.

[117] Pavese, *Lettere*, 167.

[118] Lajolo, *Il vizio assurdo. Storia di Cesare Pavese*, 99–100, 160.

[119] Taglietti and Fatica, "Non chiamatelo Ismaele."

[120] Ibid, see also the introductions to the translations listed in footnote 122.

Pavese translated the first line as "Chiamatemi Ismaele," while the translation of personal names disappears in Fatica's version. In the first chapter, Ishamel talks about the spleen that pushes him to embark in maritime expeditions. Describing the inhabitants of Manhattan Island, Ishmael portrays humans' fascination for water, and in particular the ocean: an object of reveries, an escape from the obligations of the land:

> Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I met; and especially whenever my hyphos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off-then, I account it high time to get tot sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. ...There is now the insular city of the Manhattoes, belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs—commerce surrounds it with her surf. Right and left, the streets take you waterward.[121]

Comparing Pavese's translation with Fatica's and five of the most popular versions, one notices that Pavese's point of entry into the novel is a contrastive mythical relationship or "rapporto" between land and sea, where the two elements "terra" and "mare" are repeated to generalize different elements of discourse while other translations have been more respectful of the terminological variety of the original text.[122] Thus Pavese translates Melville's "I quietly take to the ship" with "mi metto a *mare*," whereas other translators use "m'imbarco" (D'Agostino, Fatica, Sergi, Minoli, Meneghelli) or "ricorro alla nave" (Ceni). Pavese also translates the original "methodically knocking people's hats off" as "gettare metodicamente per *terra* il cappello alla gente," whereas the other translators, with the only exception of D'Agostino, use

[121] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 16.

[122] The following examples are taken from: Pavese: Melville, *Moby Dick o la Balena*, 37–38. Fatica: Melville, *Moby-Dick (Einaudi)*, 34. Minoli: Melville, *Moby Dick o La Balena (Mondadori)*, 103. Ceni: Melville, *Moby Dick (Mondadori)*, 79. D'Agostino: Melville, *Moby Dick (Garzanti)*, 38. Meneghelli: Melville, *Moby Dick (Sergi)*, 40–41. Melville, 144.

different verbs where "terra" is not included: "sbatter giù il cappello dal capo alla gente" (Ceni); "andar per le vie col deliberato e metodico proposito di togliere il cappello di testa alla gente" (Sergi); "buttar giù metodicamente il cappello di testa ai passanti" (Minoli); "far saltare metodicamente il cappello dalla testa dei passanti" (Fatica); "scende deliberatamente in strada a far saltar via il cappello dalla testa della gente" (Meneghelli). Lastly, Pavese repeats "mare" to translate "Right and left, the streets take you waterward," whereas all the other translators opt for the Italian translation "(all'/verso l') acqua." The overall effect of Pavese's translation choices is to stress the opposition between land and sea as absolute terms or realms. This effect is even more amplified by other recurrences of the two terms in the chapter; for example, a few lines above, Pavese, as the other translators, uses the expression "a *terra*" for the English "on shore." The insistence on the land/sea opposition in Pavese signals a mythical "rapporto" between the two natural elements (as underlined by Furio Jesi and also Bernari) more than actually conveying a direct experience of maritime life, which the other translations attempt to report more accurately.

Pavese's take of *Moby-Dick* is useful to understand the difficulties that Pavese encountered in translating the oceanic experience of Melville's novel in the context of Fascist Italy, and in reference to autobiographical events that prevented him from having an actual experience abroad or at sea despite his will. What is more, Pavese's treatment of *Moby-Dick* is in line with the general geophilosophical framework of Pavese's works, a framework of rootedness and resistance to the destabilizing power of the aquatic or maritime. The mythical opposition of land and sea seems to echo the social transformation occurring in Piedmont and the US, whose global scale Pavese grasps well, while taking the side of the "provincial." A geophilosophical

lens allows us to shed light on such nuances in Pavese's aesthetics, which remain unexpressed if only looked at through the lens of regionalism or Americanism. [123]

1.8 Pavese's Anti-Oceanic Need to Return

Pavese's fiction and poetry are populated by economic migrants, commuters, and even transoceanic travelers and yet none of them could be compared to Captain Ahab. Focusing on the *need* to return, Pavese's characters oppose resistance to the capitalist coercion to set sail. In his theorization of the Mediterranean "misura," Cassano criticizes the uprootedness of Captain Ahab's travels but praises Ulysses as the ideal traveler. According to Cassano, Ulysses is someone who knows the importance of the return as much as the need not to stop travelling:

> … ciò che fa grande Ulisse, ciò che forse lo riconduce alla semplicità di Itaca… è la sua capacità di ospitare questa erranza e insieme il desiderio di tornare. Non si tratta di contrapporre il valore dell'Esodo a quello di patria. Chi è colui che ha molto viaggiato senza il ritorno, senza il racconto, senza la trasmissione della sua esperienza, senza l'altro polo, senza padri e senza figli? E che cosa è il racconto senza l'avventura, il rischio, il desiderio ogni giorno di riprendere il mare?[124]

In Pavese, narratives of travel, commuting, and migration reflect the same tension between travel and return that Cassano expresses. But while Cassano finds his "misura" in the idea that future travels will follow the return, Pavese's narratives insist on the return as a moment to assess the previous travels and question their worth. Cugino from "Mari del Sud," Anguilla from *La luna e*

[123] When Pavese argues against the label "regionalism" in an interview of June 1950, he also rejects the label of "Americanism" as equally reductive. He synthesizes his experience of translation of American novels with skepticism: "Alla fine di un periodo intenso di traduzioni – Anderson, Joyce, Dos Passos, Faulkner, Gertrude Stein – io sapevo esattamente quali erano i moduli e le movenze letterarie che non mi sono consentiti, che mi restano esterni, che mi lasciano freddo. *Come sempre quando ci si mescola e avvezza a gente molto esotica e impensata, mi ritrovavo alla fine più isolato, più scontroso, ma anche più furbo, nel vecchio senso piemontese del termine*." *Saggi letterari*, 264 (Italics mine).

[124] Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano*, 47. See also p. 49: "Ulisse… deve continuare a partire."

i falò, and Ulysses from *Dialoghi con Leucò* are examples that I will present in this section, explaining how their return is a form of resistance to the "oceanic," global stakes of capitalism.

"Mari del Sud" is the first poem of the collection *Lavorare stanca*, which was also part of the notebook *Ciau Masino*, published by Einaudi after Pavese's death, in 1968. Written in 1930, "Mari del Sud" conveys, according to Pavese himself, the most iconic figure of his poetic aesthetics:

> Se c'è figura nelle mie poesie, è la figura dello scappato di casa che ritorna con gioia al paesello, dove averne passate d'ogni colore e tutte pittoresche, pochissima voglia di lavorare, molto godendo di semplicissime cose, sempre largo e bonario e reciso nei suoi giudizi, incapace di soffrire a fondo, contento di seguir la natura e godere una donna, ma anche contento di sentirsi solo e disimpegnato, pronto ogni mattino a ricominciare: i *Mari del Sud* insomma.[125]

"Mari del Sud" is about the return of a migrant but also about a picaresque, taciturn and resolute model of virility that connects the narrator and his "Cugino," the protagonist of this long prose poem, whom Pavese refers to as Silvio in previous drafts of the poem. Silvio is quiet, as his ancestors taught him; he only speaks in his dialect, despite the many years spent traveling abroad. This character, so restless and yet so rooted, convinces the narrator of the need to return after many years of travelling: "La vita va vissuta / Lontano dal paese: si torna, come me, a quarant'anni, / e si trova tutto nuovo. Le Langhe non si perdono."[126]

In the poem, Pavese hints at the oceanic spirit of global capitalism through references to Silvio's twenty years of travel overseas—"vent'anni di idiomi e di oceani diversi."[127] Silvio still has dreams about the ocean and untamable whales, a clear reference to the oceanic spirit of *Moby-Dick*, which Pavese was translating when writing the poem:

---

[125] Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere*, 17. About the genealogy of the poem, see Calvino in Pavese, *Poesie edite e inedite*, 227.

[126] Pavese, *Le poesie,* 7.

[127] Ibid.

Solo un sogno
Gli è rimasto nel sangue: ha incrociato una volta
Da fuochista su un legno olandese da pesca, il Cetaceo
E ha veduto fuggire balene tra schiume di sangue
E inseguirle e innalzarsi le code e lottare alla lancia.[128]

The scene of whale hunting is given primary visibility in the poem, and yet at the same time easily dismissed. Silvio shares as little as possible about his travels, and minimizes what his adventures overseas have meant to him: "Mio cugino non parla dei viaggi compiuti. / Dice asciutto che è stato in quel luogo e in quell'altro / E pensa ai suoi motori."[129] Technology ("motori") is the only visible legacy of Silvio's travels, and the most visible outcome of the oceanic spirit. After his return, Silvio builds a garage with a gas pump and hopes to take advantage of the process of motorization in his hometown. He buys horses and waits for people to buy his cars. His business plan fails, the narrator says, for the peasants are apparently showing some kind of resistance:

Comprò un pianterreno
Nel paese e ci fece riuscire un garage di cemento
Con dinnanzi fiammante la pila per dar la benzina
E sul ponte ben grossa alla curva una targa-réclame.
Poi ci mise un meccanico dentro a ricevere i soldi
E lui girò tutte le Langhe fumando. …
… Vestito di bianco,
con le mani alla schiena ed il volto abbronzato,
al mattino batteva le fiere e con aria sorniona
contrattava i cavalli. Spiegò poi a me,
quando fallì il disegno, che il suo piano
era stato di togliere tutte le bestie alla valle
e obbligare la gente a comprargli i motori.
"Ma la bestia" diceva "più grossa di tutte,

[128] Pavese, *Le poesie*, 9. "*Cetaceo*" is capitalized as it refers to the name of a ship, as Calvino clarifies in Pavese, *Poesie edite e inedite,* 229. In this poem is one of the only two appearances of the word "ocean" in the entire corpus of Pavese's poems. The other one, in the poem "Due sigarette," (*Lavorare stanca*) is a reference to a sailor that a prostitute was in love with and now she wants to forget. Pavese, *Le poesie,* 17. Savoca and Sichera, *Concordanza delle poesie di Cesare Pavese*, 113.

[129] Pavese, *Le poesie*, 8.

sono stato io a pensarlo. Dovevo sapere
che qui buoi e persone son tutta una razza."[130]

When Silvio tries to see himself as a businessman and an advocate of modernity, the opposition between premodern ("buoi e persone") and modern societies (the "motori" above) is clear. While he triggers this opposition, however, Silvio cannot be set apart from the peasants to whom he is trying to sell his cars. A patriotic feeling of *campanilismo* links Silvio to Santo Stefano Belbo, and creates rivalry against the neighboring Canelli:

Mio cugino si ferma ad un tratto e si volge: "Quest'anno
Scrivo nel manifesto: 'Santo Stefano
È sempre stato il primo nelle feste
Della valle del Belbo" e che la dicano
Quei di Canelli". Poi riprende l'erta.[131]

Not only does belonging to the same village create a sense of community, but sharing the same ancestors is the foundation of the communion between Silvio and the narrator, who can therefore speak in the first person plural "Qualche nostro antenato dev'essere stato ben solo…"[132] Such sense of communion is opposed to the individualism that marks Silvio's experience as a migrant, which the character has stopped pursuing. The response to global capitalism we find in "*I mari del sud*" is therefore based on the individual-community dichotomy; the community has a potential in resisting the oceanic pressures of capitalism.

Pavese's best-known novel, *La luna e i falò*, further problematizes the idea of a community but does not renounce the importance of a return. Here one reads the story of a Piedmontese migrant, Anguilla, who returns to his farm (Gaminella) in the Langhe region after spending some time in California. In the novel, America does embody the spirit of the "oceanic."

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid, 9.

[132] Ibid, 7.

In fact, the "oceanic" overcomes national borders by connecting America and Italy: "L'America è già qui" says Anguilla's friend, Nuto. "Sono qui i milionari e i morti di fame."[133] Violence and economic inequality are the main traits of a dystopic America, which Anguilla finds is also reaching Italy. It is because America is a desolate land of "bastards," that their inhabitants are inevitably lead to explosions of violence. Pavese finds generalized uprootedness a cause for dismay and apprehension. The ceaseless mobility of the American lifestyle makes individuals constantly unhappy. There is no chance for a sense of community, and therefore no compassion. Women pay for the anger caused by capitalist excesses, as if killing women were the only chance for men to prove their identity.[134]

Anguilla's conclusion about his transoceanic travel is that "non valeva la pena."[135] This dystopic account of the Atlantic lifestyle resonates with Cassano's view on nomadic capitalism. He writes: "La festa dello sradicamento universale è la generalizzazione delle libertà e delle

[133] Pavese. *La luna e i falò*, 51.

[134] The refusal of "oceanic" America in the novel runs parallel with Pavese's interest in the peasant world. The focus on peasants' lives is clear from the title, which alludes to the phases of the moon cycle and the bonfires that regulate peasants' lives throughout the year. Anguilla gets involved into the dramatic life of Valino's family. He learns that Valino is exploited by a "*madama*" who purchased the property and started a contract of "*mezzadria*," a system of sharecropping which is not at all convenient for Valino. Anguilla tries to establish a dialogue with Valino; however, his rude behavior and bad mood soon repulses him towards his crippled son Cinto. Anguilla begins to identify himself with the boy and also to worry about his future. He decides to take care of him with Nuto at the end of the novel. Anguilla's concern for the last and youngest member of a peasant family shows his concern for the peasant society, whose chances of survival are low and yet represents the alternative to a world of uprootedness which also involves Anguilla, being himself a "bastard." On this subject, I should also recall the importance of the *Collana Viola* project for the publishing house Einaudi: a series of ethnographic and religious publications that Pavese co-directed with Ernesto De Martino in 1948-1950. In the *Collana viola* project, Pavese could express his interest for "mondi culturali autosufficienti, chiusi in sé," in Pavese's words. (Pavese, *Lettere*, 605), As Alberto Comparini recalls in his recent study of *Dialoghi con Leucò*, Pavese does embrace an evolutionary perspective which he mainly derives from the Anglo-American ethnological tradition, showing particular interest in rituals. Yet, the primitive world in Pavese is not dismissed as a form of prelogical phase of civilization. In this respect, Pavese is close to Vico's conception of primitive poetry and to the German social school (among others, Jung, Kerényi, Volhard, Jensen, Frobenius), which Pavese and De Martino published in the *Collana viola*. Comparini, *La poetica dei Dialoghi con Leucò*, ch.2. Pavese and De Martino, *La collana viola*.

[135] "Non valeva la pena aver traversato tanto mondo, per vedere della gente come me, che per giunta mi guardava di traverso… Adesso mi chiedevo se valeva la pena di traversare il mondo per vedere chiunque;" Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, 1955, 14. "Valeva la pena esser venuto?" Ibid, 17. Compare to "Paesaggio VI", *Le poesie*, 63: "Val
la pena tornare, magari diverso."

angosce, un mare senza più la terra, una scenografia sterile dello Spirito."[136] Cassano connects the excesses of extreme and rootless acceleration of the capitalist economy to a nomadism that has lost safety by abandoning the perspective of the return. We can see how Pavese unfolds the same dystopic view in *La luna e i falò*, stressing the insecurity, and absence of community values of a life without roots.

Critics have debated Anguilla's slippery personality, emphasized by his name "Eel." Vincenzo Binetti, for example, argues that Anguilla is a nomadic spirit who manages to avoid being trapped within the parameters of the hegemonic national narrative of the Resistance.[137] Like Spinazzola, Juliet Nusbaum points out that while Anguilla leaves for "an urge of a home," "he never truly captures it."[138] In fact, she remarks, Anguilla does not stop his travels after his return to the Gaminella. The violence that Anguilla finds at the Gaminella and the impossibility to grasp the "paese," and to finally live quietly in it, clearly suggest the impossibility of stopping the "oceanic" forces that are moving individuals and let them leave.

Yet, I argue, the impossibility of a perfect return does not minimize the fact that the book in its entirety is a novel on the *need* to return, despite individuals' drive to leave, and despite the events changing the sorts and aspect of places. While Anguilla himself is uprooted, he is always assertive about the need to return, and what the place of origin means to one's identity: Anguilla does not know where he was born exactly nor who his parents are, and yet he believes this is crucial for his sense of self: this will define "cos'ero, prima di nascere."[139] Anguilla thinks about marrying an American girl, Rosanne and yet he already knows he will go back to the Langhe—

[136] Cassano, 42.

[137] Binetti, "*L'elogio della fuga*."

[138] Nusbaum, "Un paese di bastardi," 138.

[139] "Qui non ci sono nato, è quasi certo; dove son nato non lo so; non c'è da queste parti una casa né un pezzo di terra né delle ossa ch'io possa dire 'Ecco cos'ero prima di nascere.'" Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, 9.

"Già allora sapevo che sarei ritornato."[140] Anguilla's agitation and frustration for not being able to grasp the identity of his village does not stop him from, again, posing the question: "che cos'è il mio paese?"[141] While he will not stay in the Gaminella, he nevertheless announces he will come back "per la festa un altro anno."[142]

Anguilla embodies at the same time the pervasiveness of the oceanic and the need to contrast this trend. His return is not at all as he expected it, not at all perfect; yet, he insists on the need to return as the only answer to the question of his own identity. Indeed, an interspecies comparison could be made between Anguilla's journey in the novel and the cyclical migration of European eels: born in the Atlantic, they cross the ocean to live in Europe, until the moment in

[140] "Rosanne me l'avrebbe anche fatto un figlio – se accettavo di andare sulla costa. Ma io mi tenni, non volli – con quella mamma e con me sarebbe stato un altro bastardo – un ragazzotto americano. Già allora sapevo che sarei tornato." Ibid, 115.

[141] "Un paese ci vuole, non fosse che per il gusto di andarsene via. Un paese vuol dire non essere soli, sapere che nella gente, nelle piante, nella terra c'è qualcosa di tuo, che anche quando non ci sei resta ad aspettarti. Ma non è facile starci tranquillo. Da un anno che lo tengo d'occhio e quando posso ci scappo da Genova, mi sfugge di mano. Queste cose si capiscono col tempo e l'esperienza. Possibile che a quarant'anni, e con tutto il mondo che ho visto, non sappia ancora che cos'è il mio paese?" Ibid, 12. Interestingly, Anguilla keeps looking up Nuto after his travels in America. Anguilla admires him for his experience of the world, despite the fact he has never left the valley: "Nuto che, in confronto con me, non si è mai allontanato dal Salto, dice che per farcela a vivere in questa valle non bisogna mai uscirne. Proprio lui che da giovanotto è arrivato a suonare il clarino in banda oltre Canelli, fino a Spigno, fino a Ovada, dalla parte dove si leva il sole. Ne parliamo ogni tanto, e lui ride." Ibid, 13; "Ecco, pensai, Nuto gli darebbe dell'ignorante, del tapino, gli chiederebbe se il mondo deve essere sempre come una volta. Nuto che aveva visto tanti paesi e sapeva le masserie di tutti qui intorno, Nuto non avrebbe mai chiesto se quella guerra era servita a qualcosa. Bisognava farla, era stato un destino cosi. Nuto l'ha molto quest' idea che una cosa che deve succedere interessa a tutti quanti, che il mondo è mal fatto e bisogna rifarlo." Ibid, 41.

[142] "– Allora te ne vai. Non ritorni per la vendemmia? [Nuto speaking] – Magari m'imbarco, – gli dissi, – ritorno per la festa un altr'anno." Ibid, 165. Looking at the short story "La langa," published in *Feria d'agosto*, I note that Pavese chooses not to expand on the theme of the non-return. *La luna e i falò*, which is inspired by "La langa," ends with Nuto telling the story of Santa's death (she is killed by anti-fascists.) On the contrary, "La langa" insists on the idea of travels: "Ripresi dunque a viaggiare, promettendo in paese che sarei tornato presto. Nei primi tempi lo credevo, tanto le colline e il dialetto mi stavano nitidi nel cervello. Non avevo bisogno di contrapporli con nostalgia ai miei ambienti consueti. Sapevo ch'erano là, che tutto ciò che di quella terra contava era chiuso nel mio corpo e nella mia coscienza. Ma ormai sono passati degli anni e ho tanto rimandato il mio ritorno che quasi non oso più prendere quel treno. In mia presenza i compaesani capirebbero che li ho giocati, che li ho lasciati discorrere delle virtù della mia terra soltanto per ritrovarla e portarmela via. Capirebbero adesso tutta l'ambizione del ragazzo che avevano dimenticato." (Pavese, *Tutti i racconti*, 14.)

which they take the oceanic route again to spawn precisely where they were born: a circular journey that celebrates the need to return.[143]

A similar anti-oceanic attitude can be retrieved in Pavese's treatment of Ulysses, whom Comparini defines "il personaggio più prossimo all'autore."[144] Pavese bans the oceanic attributes that the myth of Ulysses has acquired in many of its modern versions since Dante's in the *Divine Comedy*, by following the Homeric tradition celebrating Ulysses's *nostos*. Insisting on the soothing power of memories, and on Ulysses' affective bond with Ithaca, Pavese refuses a model of generalized uprootedness. Studying Italian rewritings of the Ulysses myth from the 20th century, Francesca Schironi notices they are heavily influenced by Dante's version of Ulysses, rather than or besides the original source by Homer.[145] While Ulysses in the *Odyssey* is mainly defined by his *nostos*, Dante's Ulysses endeavors a doomed last trip, which will cause his death and that of his crew. It is his curiosity or desire for "virtute et canoscenza" that leads Dante's Ulysses to cross the Pillars of Hercules, and therefore take the risks of the oceanic route.[146] Schironi mentions Pavese's treatment of Ulysses as one of the few exceptions where Dante's last oceanic trip is not placed at the center of the narrative. In particular, she refers to "*L'isola*" from *Dialoghi con Leucò*, "where Ulysses explains to Calypso his need to leave and travel without stop."[147] She connects Pavese's case with Giovanni Pascoli's poem "*Il ritorno.*" (1906) Here "Ulysses does come back to Ithaca but cannot recognize it because he has changed and become

[143] Righton et al., "The Anguilla Spp. Migration Problem."

[144] Comparini, *La poetica dei Dialoghi con Leucò*, 33.

[145] Schironi, "A Hero without Nostos."

[146] Ibid, note 6.

[147] Ibid, 374

old while the island has remained the same; he has no connection with it anymore, in other words, and his *nostos* is denied."[148]

While Schironi sees a connection between Pavese and Pascoli—because they both focus on "the desire to leave rather than on the *nostos*"— I argue instead that there is an important difference between the two texts.[149] Pascoli's Ulysses mainly focuses on his dismay for not living his return as he had imagined it.[150] Pavese's Ulysses, on the contrary, keeps insisting on the need to return, *despite* acknowledging that a perfect or real return is impossible:

> CAL – Da quando sei giunto hai portato un'altra isola in te.
>
> ODIS – Da troppo tempo la cerco. Tu non sai quel che sia avvistare una terra e socchiudere gli occhi ogni volta per illudersi. Io non posso accettare e tacere.
>
> CAL – Eppure, Odisseo, voi uomini dite che ritrovare quel che si è perduto è sempre un male. Il passato non torna. Nulla regge all'andare del tempo. Tu che hai visto l'Oceano, i mostri e l'Eliso, potrai ancora riconoscere le case, le tue case?
>
> ODIS – Tu stessa hai detto che porto l'isola in me.

---

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid.

[150] "OD.: Io era, io era mutato! / Tu, patria, sei come a quei giorni! / Io sì, mio soave passato, /ritorno; ma tu non ritorni..." Pascoli, *Poesie*, 349. Echoes of Pascoli's Ulysses can instead be heard in Pavese, *La luna e i falò,* 435: "Pareva un destino. Certe volte mi chiedevo perché, di tanta gente viva, non restassimo adesso che io e Nuto, proprio noi. La voglia che un tempo avevo avuto in corpo (un mattino, in un bar di San Diego, c'ero quasi ammattito) di sbucare per quello stradone, girare il cancello tra il pino e la volta dei cigli, ascoltare le voci, le risate, le galline, e dire 'Eccomi qui, sono tornato' davanti alle face sbalordite di tutti – dei servitor, delle donne, del cane, del vecchio –, e gli occhi biondi e gli occhi neri delle figlie mi avrebbero riconosciuto dal terrazzo – questa voglia non me la sarei cavata più. Ero tornato, ero sbucato, avevo fatto fortuna – dormivo all'Angelo e discorrevo col Cavaliere –, ma le facce, le voci e le maniche dovevano toccarmi e riconoscermi, non c'erano più. Da un pezzo non c'erano più. Quel che restava era come una piazza l'indomani della fiera, una vigna dopo la vendemmia, il tornar solo in trattoria quando qualcuno ti ha piantato. Nuto, l'unico che restava, era cambiato, era un uomo come me. Per dire tutto in una volta, ero un uomo anch'io, ero un altro – se anche avessi ritrovato la Mora come l'avevo conosciuta il primo inverno, e poi l'estate, poi di nuovo l'estate e inverno, giorno e notte, per tuti quegli anni, magari non avrei Saputo che farmene. Venivo da troppo lontano – non ero più di quella casa, non ero più come Cinto, il mondo mi aveva cambiato." Similarly, Claudia in Pavese, "*Tra donne sole*," 260: "Quello era tutto il mio passato, insopportabile eppure cosi diverso, cosi morto. M'ero detta tante volte in quegli anni – e poi più avanti, ripensandoci – che lo scopo della mia vita era proprio di riuscire, di diventare qualcuno, per tornare un giorno in quelle viuzze dov'ero stata bambina e godermi il calore, lo stupore, l'ammirazione di quei visi familiari, di quella piccola gente. E c'ero riuscita, tornavo; e le facce la piccola gente erano tutti scomparsi. […] Chi restava, come Gisella, non le importava più di noi, né di allora. Maurizio dice sempre che le cose si ottengono, ma quando non servono più."

> CALI – Oh mutata, perduta, un silenzio. L'eco di un mare tra gli scogli o un po' di fumo. Con te nessuno potrà condividerla. Le case sanno come il viso di un vecchio. Le tue parole avranno un senso altro dal loro. Sarai più solo che nel mare.
>
> ODIS – Saprò almeno che devo fermarmi.
>
> … Quello che cerco l'ho nel cuore, come te.[151]

The land Ulysses has in his heart is the reason why he cannot stop traveling but also the source of his impulse to return. Ulysses listens to what Calypso is saying: things will never be the same. Nevertheless, Ulysses is sure about the need to return to Ithaca.

There is another dialogue where Ulysses appears in *Dialoghi con Leucò*, which has a minor relevance in Schironi.[152] In "Le streghe" Ulysses is not the subject of the dialogue but rather the object of the conversation between Circe and Leucò. Leucò questions Circe about her encounter with Ulysses, and what it meant for her. Circe introduces Ulysses by stressing his will to go home: "'Dopotutto è Odisseo' pensai, 'uno che vuol tornare a casa.'"[153] Pavese states the importance of return, despite any circumstances that would go against it ("dopotutto"). Moreover, while the last oceanic trip is mentioned in the dialogue, Ulysses cries for knowing what he is heading towards: "Pianse più tardi, pianse il giorno che gli dissi il lungo viaggio che restava e la discesa nell'Averno e il buio pesto dell'Oceano."[154] With Circe, Ulysses tries to find the comfort of memories: he imagines Circe is Penelope, he thinks about the dog waiting for him. In "Le streghe," the power of memories is opposed to the coercion to set sail. To the pitch

[151] "L'isola" in Pavese, *Dialoghi con Leucò*, 103.

[152] "I will also not touch upon other texts that use Ulysses and the Odyssey in a way that bears no strong relation to the original text, such as Pavese's 'The Witches'…" Schironi, "A Hero whithout Nostos," 343 (footnote 8.)

[153] Pavese, *Dialoghi con Leucò*, 113.

[154] Pavese, *Dialoghi con Leuco*, 115. On the textual relationship between Pavese's *Dialoghi* and the *Odissey*, see Cavallini, "*Cesare Pavese e la ricerca di Omero perduto*," 110.

dark of the ocean, Ulysses opposes his desire to return: Ulysses is *by definition* one who wants to return home.

Pavese insists on the Homeric traits of Ulysses's myth, despite acknowledging elements of Dante's tradition (the last trip in the ocean). He stresses the power of memories to emphasize the importance of return to the land, rather than assuming the oceanic spirit of Ulysses' last travel, its inherent uprootedness. Pavese's narratives of mobility contrast with Captain Ahab's model of oceanic, restless nomadism stating the need to return—despite the disappointment the return might entail. Through the category of the return, Pavese uses his characters to dramatize both the pervasiveness of the oceanic, and his refusal of the oceanic logic.[155] The anti-oceanic ideological implications of Pavese's Ulysses are even more significant if read in light of Horkheimer and Adorno's interpretation of Ulysses as "homo oeconomicus," where Ulysses' adventures at sea figure as "depiction of the risks which lines the path to [capitalist] success."[156]

Conclusions

In this chapter, I analyzed Cesare Pavese's geopolitical aesthetics with the aim of renewing our understanding of the author in relation to the political ideology embedded in his aesthetics. I have suggested reading Cesare Pavese's aesthetics as a form of anti-globalism *ante-literam*, where anti-capitalist and anti-foreign elements coexist. This perspective has the advantage of

[155] Pavese applies the principle of necessary return even to his (and others') readings. See for example: "Caro Enrichens… Studi ed esca dal chiuso; il modo migliore per scoprire se stessi e il proprio paese è frequentare gente e terre esotiche. Non per modello ma come esperienza, le cito il mio caso: sono arrivato alla terra (qualunque essa sia) di *Paesi tuoi* e *Lavor. stanca*, passando attraverso violentissimi amori letterari per i Mari del Sud (l'Oceania ottocentesca e l'America ventesimo secolo). Mi sono letteralmente scoperto in quelle cose e persone remote. E del resto tutti abbiamo studiato a scuola che l'Alfieri scopri se e l'Italia girando il mondo. Lei non sa quale ricchezza profonda si ritrova nei classici nostri e greci quando li accosti tornando dal Novecento americano o tedesco o russo. Id per la famiglia e per la patria. Io amo S. Stefano alla follia, ma perché' vengo da molto lontano." Ad Enrichens, Santo Stef. *Lettere*, p. 658.

[156] Horkheimer, Adorno, and Schmid Noerr, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 48.

encompassing contradictory aspects of Pavese's ideology, which the "anti-Fascist" and "Fascist" categories and also the aesthetic labels "regionalism" or "Americanism" fail to pinpoint. Moreover, my reading suggests to look for traces of Pavese's political ideology in his aesthetics, rather than in his contradictory and often idle declarations on political parties or figures.

My approach to Pavese's work is defined by Franco Cassano's framework of the Mediterranean alternative and his understanding of Carl Schmitt and Martin Heidegger. From Carl Schmitt, Cassano mostly derives the geophilosophical distinction of the sea and the ocean, the ocean being the ultimate representation of Anglo-Saxon capitalism, and the globalization model it has promoted. As for Heidegger, Cassano insists on the telluric aspect of his thought and how it comes as a reaction to the extreme uprootedness of the oceanic. Moreover, Cassano stresses the verticality that Heidegger's celebration of rootedness implies. Ocean, land, and sea are the geophilosophical figures to which I attribute a geopolitical meaning following Cassano, and which I investigate in my analysis.

Using Cassano's geophilosophical terms, I contributed to the debate on land and sea which has interested critics such as Italo Calvino, Eleonora Cavallini, Valerio Capasa, and Wu Ming. I interpreted land and sea geopolitically, arguing that Pavese's aesthetics is eminently telluric, and that aspects of his telluric aesthetics can be found throughout his career as a writer. I provided examples from *Lavorare Stanca* and *Feria d'agosto* to argue that Pavese is always extraneous to the liquidity of the sea, even when he seems more at ease in a maritime landscape. This is particularly clear in the short story "Il mare," where the characters never perceive the sea and they rhetorically reinforce their bond to the land as their natural condition of existence. I also showed how Pavese's telluric inspiration continues in the late collection *La terra e la morte,*

where other critics would rather see the final achievement of a balance between the two elements.

I confirmed Muriel Gallot's impression that Pavese's dislike of the sea is to be associated with a potentially anti-foreign ideology, where peoples are separated by precise borders and landscape is a right assumed by blood or birth. However, through a compared analysis of land and sea I also showed how some aspects of Pavese's aesthetics echo the fourfold logic of Heidegger's theory of dwelling. In particular, a vertical understanding of existence connecting earth and sky seems to make sense of humans' belonging and estrangement to places in Pavese's view. This reading, as much as my analysis of Pavese's translation of Melville's *Moby-Dick*, confirms Furio Jesi's impression that myth in Pavese is a question of "rapporti" or proportions between elements.

I suggested that Schmitt's and Cassano's distinction of sea and ocean is also fruitful to understand Pavese's geopolitical aesthetics, and to present it as eminently anti-oceanic. Pavese has the opportunity to address the oceanic dimension of modernity directly when confronting *Moby-Dick* as a translator and critic, and yet his take on this novel, as well as on other American authors he translates such as Lewis, suggest that he does not engage with an apology of global capitalism. On the contrary, reading these American authors Pavese takes the side of provinces and shows interest in the forms of friction slowing down capitalist development. In Pavese's "provincialism" one sees the ambition to go beyond the limits of regionalism and to speak more broadly for areas of the world affected by global capitalism; Pavese's provincialism is also a containment of uprootedness that Pavese conveys in his aesthetics through a celebration of land, and the domestication of the ocean in *Moby-Dick.*

In a similar fashion, his numerous narratives of oceanic travels, which we find both in his fiction and poetry, go against the assumption that modern individuals should forget their roots and be ready to move freely on the entire planet. An analysis of three key characters: Cugino in "Mari del Sud," Anguilla in *La luna e i falò,* and Ulysses in *Dialoghi con Leucò* shows Pavese's commitment to opposing what Cassano calls the capitalist "coercion to set sail." Pavese narratively develops an imperative to return to one's roots and places of origin. Through my analysis, I have placed *Moby-Dick* at the center of Pavese's geopolitical aesthetics, whereas Muriel Gallot cannot see its consistence with Pavese's general attitude towards travelling and the sea, and rather talks about an "exception."

Pavese is clearly not a "Mediterranean" writer in Cassano's terms nor has my chapter tried to argue so. However, this chapter accepts Bernari's provocation to place Pavese within a Mediterranean or "Southerner" framework and proves it a fruitful direction of research. Cassano's geophilosophical framework offers a compelling tool of analysis by associating the natural elements of land, sea, and ocean to a philosophical tradition reacting or responding to capitalist globalization in different ways. This theoretical framework proves extremely successful when used to renew our reading of Pavese's poetry and fiction. Living at a time when international cooperation and migration were reduced to a minimum, Pavese developed an aesthetics based on the tensions between belonging and estrangement, desire to leave and need to return, search for freedom and celebration of roots. Pavese's aesthetics would have only been reflecting a mere regionalism if he did not find in emigration, global capitalism, and "oceanic" novels fundamental material for his narrative and poetic work. In this sense Pavese's literature can be seen as the story of a closure, an afterthought, a lost opportunity for a ship that has never set sail.

Bibliography

Arrighi, Giovanni. *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*. London; New York: Verso, 1994.

Babich, Babette. "Heidegger's Jews: Inclusion/Exclusion and Heidegger's Anti-Semitism." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 47, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 133–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/00071773.2016.1139927.

Baudino, Mario. "Pavese firmato PCI." *La stampa*, January 12, 2005. La stampa Digital Archive.

Belviso, Angela. *Amor fati: Pavese all'ombra di Nietzsche*. Torino: Nino Aragno Editore, 2015.

Bernari, Carlo. "Noterelle e schermaglie. Ma esiste davvero una letteratura meridionale?" *Belfagor* 38, no. 5 (1983): 585–91.

Binetti, Vincenzo. "L'elogio della fuga come resistenza politico-intellettuale ne *La luna e i falò* di Cesare Pavese." In *Leucò va in America: Cesare Pavese nel centenario della nascita*, edited by Mario B. Mignone. Stony Brook, N.Y.: Edisud Salerno, 2010.

Bossche, Bart van den. *Nulla è veramente accaduto: strategie discorsive del mito nell'opera di Cesare Pavese*. Leuven (Belgium); Firenze: Leuven University Press; F. Cesati Editore, 2001.

Bouchard, Norma. "Italy's Geophilosophies of the Mediterranean." *Annali d'Italianistica* 29 (2011): 343–62.

Capasa, Valerio. *"Lo scopritore di una terra incognita": Cesare Pavese poeta*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2008.

Cassano, Franco. *Il pensiero meridiano*. Roma-Bari: GLF Editori Laterza, 2005.

Cassano, Franco, and Danilo Zolo. *L'alternativa Mediterranea*. Campi Del Sapere. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2007.

Catalfamo, Antonio, ed. *Cesare Pavese: il mito, la donna e le due Americhe. Terza rassegna di saggi internazionali di critica pavesiana*. Quaderni del CEPAM. Santo Stefano Belbo: CE.PA.M, 2003.

Cavallini, Eleonora. "Cesare Pavese e la ricerca di Omero perduto (dai Dialoghi con Leucò alla traduzione dell'Iliade)." In *Omero mediatico: aspetti sulla ricezione omerica nella civiltà contemporanea*. Bologna: D.U. Press, 2010.

———. "Da Brancaleone a Forte dei Marmi: Pavese e il 'mare greco.'" In *Cesare Pavese: il mito classico e i miti moderni. Tredicesima rassegna di saggi internazionali di critica*

pavesiana, edited by Antonio Catalfamo. Quaderni del CEPAM. Catania: Edizioni CUECM, 2013.

Comparini, Alberto. *La poetica dei Dialoghi con Leucò di Cesare Pavese*. Milano: Mimesis, 2017.

Dainotto, Roberto M. "Pensiero verticale: negazione della mediterraneità e radicamento terrestre in Vincenzo Cuoco." *California Italian Studies* I, no. I (2010). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7jd2f55z.

Ferme, Valerio. *Tradurre è tradire: la traduzione come sovversione culturale sotto il Fascismo*. Ravenna: Longo, 2002.

Frieden, Jeffry. "Globalization: Past, Present, Future." The Andrew F. Smith Lecture in International Economics and Development, Maxwell School of Syracuse University. Accessed May 19, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vt7FabWEkY.

Gallot, Muriel. "Pavese. Paese e Paesaggio." *Chroniques Italiennes* 9, no. 19 (November 7, 2002): 63–76.

Ginzburg, Natalia. *Le piccole virtù*. Torino: Einaudi, 1963.

Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

Horkheimer, Max, Theodor W. Adorno, and Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Cultural Memory in the Present. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2002.

Jesi, Furio. *Il tempo della festa*. E-Book. Roma: Nottetempo, 2019.

Lajolo, Davide. *Il vizio assurdo. Storia di Cesare Pavese*. Milano: il Saggiatore, 1964.

Longanesi, Leo. *L'Almanacco di Strapaese; ossia, Il centogusti per l'anno MCMXXIX*. Bologna: L'Italiano editore, 1928.

Masoero, Mariarosa. *Una bellissima coppia discorde il carteggio tra Cesare Pavese e Bianca Garufi, 1945-1950*. Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 2011.

McGlazer, Ramsey. "The Decay of Sighing: Cesare Pavese's Lavorare Stanca." *Differences* 28, no. 1 (May 1, 2017): 94–123. https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-3821712.

Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. Translated by Pina Sergi. 2012th E-Book ed. Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2004.

———. *Moby Dick*. Translated by Alessandro Ceni. E-Book. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2007.

———. *Moby Dick*. Translated by Nemi D'Agostino. E-Book. Milano: Garzanti, 2011.

———. *Moby Dick o la Balena*. Translated by Cesare Pavese. E-Book. Milano: Adelphi, 1987.

———. *Moby Dick o La Balena*. Edited by Massimo Bacigalupo. Translated by Cesarina Minoli. E-Book. Milano: Mondadori, 2016.

———. *Moby-Dick*. Translated by Ottavo Fatica. E-Book. Torino: Einaudi, 2015.

———. *Moby-Dick*. Edited by Hershel Parker. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.

Mitchell, Andrew J. *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*. Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2015.

Mondo, Lorenzo. "Cesare Pavese: Il mestiere di poeta." *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana*, 2011, 257–67. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_CFIT.2011.37514.

———. "Pavese e il taccuino segreto." *La stampa*, August 8, 1990.

Negri, Antonio, and Michael Hardt. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Nusbaum, Juliet. "'Un paese di bastardi': Rootlessness, Myth and Identity in Cesare Pavese." PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 2009. (UMI cat no. 3373812).

Pappalardo La Rosa, Franco. *Cesare Pavese e il mito dell'adolescenza*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1996.

Pascoli, Giovanni. *Poesie*. Edited by Antonio Baldini. Milano: A. Mondadori, 1978.

Pavese, Cesare. *Dialoghi con Leucò*. Torino: Einaudi, 1955.

———. *Feria d'agosto*. Edited by Elio Gioanola. Torino: Einaudi, 2002.

———. *Il mestiere di vivere: (Diario 1935-1950)*. Torino: Einaudi, 1967.

———. *La luna e i falò*. Torino: Einaudi, 1955.

———. *La luna e i falò*. Torino: Einaudi, 2020.

———. *La spiaggia*. Torino: Einaudi, 1956.

———. *Lavorare stanca*. Edited by Mariarosa Masoero and Marziano Guglielminetti. Torino: Einaudi, 1998.

———. *Le poesie*. Edited by Mariarosa Masoero and Marziano Guglielminetti. Torino: Einaudi, 1998.

———. *Letteratura americana e altri saggi*. Torino: Einaudi, 1951.

———. *Lettere: 1926-1950*. Edited by Italo Calvino and Lorenzo Mondo. Torino: Einaudi, 1982.

———. *Poesie edite e inedite*. Edited by Italo Calvino. Torino: Einaudi, 1962.

———. *Prima che il gallo canti*. Edited by Antonio Pitamitz and Marco Forti. Milano: A. Mondadori, 1957.

———. *Saggi letterari*. Torino: Einaudi, 1968.

———. "Tra donne sole." In *La bella estate*. Milano: Club degli, editori, 1968.

———. *Tutti i racconti*. Edited by Mariarosa Masoero. Torino: Einaudi, 2002.

Pavese, Cesare, and Anthony L. Chiuminatto. *Cesare Pavese and Anthony Chiuminatto: Their Correspondence*. Edited by Mark Pietralunga. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Pavese, Cesare, and Ernesto De Martino. *La collana viola: lettere 1945-1950*. Edited by Pietro Angelini. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991.

Pavese, Cesare, and Bianca Garufi. *Fuoco grande*. 2. ed. Torino: Einaudi, 1959.

Prosio, Pier Massimo. "Lettura di 'Il Mare' di Cesare Pavese." *Italica* 69, no. 4 (1992): 466.

Riccobono, Rossella. "Cesare Pavese e il conflitto tra fuga e ritorno alla Madre-terra in *Il carcere* e *Paesi tuoi*." In *"Onde di questo mare": reconsidering Pavese*, edited by Doug Thompson. Market Harborough, UK.: Troubador, 2003.

Righton, D., K. Aarestrup, D. Jellyman, P. Sébert, G. van den Thillart, and K. Tsukamoto. "The Anguilla Spp. Migration Problem: 40 Million Years of Evolution and Two Millennia of Speculation." Journal of Fish Biology. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, July 1, 2012. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1095-8649.2012.03373.x.

Saffiotti, Francesca. *Geofilosofia del mare: tra oceano e Mediterraneo*. Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2007.

Salter, Sarah. "'I Got a Crush on That Fellow.' Cesare Pavese, Herman Melville e il desiderio di un traduttore." *Ácoma-Rivista Internazionale di Studi Nord-Americani*, no. 2. Glocal Melville (Spring 2012): 73–80.

Savoca, Giuseppe, and Antonio Sichera. *Concordanza delle poesie di Cesare Pavese: concordanza, liste di frequenza, indici*. Strumenti di lessicografia letteraria italiana 16. Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1997.

Schironi, Francesca. "A Hero without Nostos: Ulysses' Last Voyage in Twentieth-Century Italy." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition.*, no. 22 (2015): 341–379.

Schmitt, Carl. *Land and Sea: A World-Historical Meditation*. Translated by Samuel Garrett Zeitlin. New York: Telos Press Publishing Candor, 2015.

Stella, Maria. *Cesare Pavese traduttore*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1977.

Taglietti, Cristina, and Ottavo Fatica. "Non chiamatelo Ismaele." *Corriere della sera*, February 15, 2016, sec. la Lettura. https://www.corriere.it/la-lettura/libri/16_febbraio_15/moby-dick-traduttore-fatica-c49d57de-d3f7-11e5-ad4b-f58d2f08a6c7.shtml.

Tally, Robert T. *Melville, Mapping and Globalization: Literary Cartography in the American Baroque Writer*. London; New York: Continuum, 2009.

Trosio, Luciano. *Le riviste di Strapaese e Stracittà: Il selvaggio, L'italiano, 900*. Treviso: Canova, 1975.

Vattimo, Gianni. "Pavese: liberiamolo dal suo mito. non fu vero anti-fascista, ma perché scandalizzarsi?" *La stampa*, August 10, 1990. La stampa Digital Archive.

Wallerstein, Immanuel Maurice. *The Capitalist World-Economy: Essays*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Williamson, Alan. "Pavese's Late Love Poems." *The American Poetry Review* 26, no. 5 (1997): 40–45.

Zolo, Danilo. "Towards a Dialogue Between the Mediterranean Cultures." *Jura Gentium. Rivista di filosofia del diritto internazionale e della politica globale*, 2005. https://www.juragentium.org/topics/med/tunis/en/zolo.htm.

CHAPTER 2.

Pier Paolo Pasolini: A Trajectory of Supranational Universalism

Pier Paolo Pasolini has a strong legacy as an anti-capitalist, and anti-global intellectual who was among the first in Italy to pinpoint the detrimental effects of global capitalism on culture and society. He authored dystopic works on the "Fascist" power of consumerism, such as *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1975) and several public interventions of social critique by way of essays, later collected in *Scritti corsari* (1975) and *Lettere luterane* (1976). In these essays, Pasolini is vocal and provocative about the cultural changes occurring in Italy since the 1950s, about what he calls a "rivoluzione antropologica" deeply transforming Italian society.[1] Pasolini denounces the "genocide" of linguistic minorities at the hands of the cultural hegemony of the middle class through television. He criticizes the young for accepting conformist positions and behavior. He denounces the disappearance of fireflies from the countryside, replaced by multinational factories. He condemns the reification of many aspects of human life including the realm of the spiritual. He points out the corrupted beauty of Medieval cities, such as Orte, which have lost their original shape through modern housing construction.[2]

Pasolini notices that changes in people, places, and material culture have been occurring not only in Italy, but worldwide.[3] As he critiques consumerism and industrialization, he presents

[1] "Gli italiani non sono più quelli," *Corriere della Sera*, June 10, 1974, now in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 307–12.

[2] See "Il genocidio," *Rinascita*, September 27, 1974, now in Ibid 510-517; "Contro i capelli lunghi," *Corriere della Sera*, January 7, 1973, now in Ibid 272-277; "Il vuoto del potere in Italia," *Corriere della Sera*, February 1, 1975 now in Ibid 404-411; "Il folle slogan dei jeans Jesus," *Corriere della Sera*, now in Ibid 278-283; and the documentary Pasolini, "La forma della città."

[3] "Oggi – quasi di colpo, in una specie di avvento – distinzione e unificazione storica hanno ceduto il posto a una omologazione che realizza quasi miracolosamente il sogno interclassista del vecchio Potere. A cosa è dovuta tale omologazione? Evidentemente a un nuovo Potere. Scrivo "Potere" con la P maiuscola… solo perché sinceramente non so in cosa consista questo nuovo Potere e chi lo rappresenti. So semplicemente che c'è… a me, almeno, essa appare piuttosto come un tutto (industrializzazione totale), e, per di più, come tutto non italiano (transnazionale).

neo-capitalism as a form of corruption and a loss of local authenticity. For example, when filming the city of Sana'a in Yemen in 1970, Pasolini notices that among the people "è esploso un indiscriminato desiderio di modernità e di progresso, proprio nel senso che queste parole hanno per noi. Ma non possiamo nasconderci che questo desiderio è *entrato* nel Paese, non è *nato* nel Paese."[4] In Yemen, as in other countries of the "Third World" but also among the poorest social classes in Italy, the desire for material progress is not indigenous to local history, but rather an external force now transforming people, and not belonging to their real nature or needs. While the ruthless power of capitalist consumerism crosses borders, the life of people changes drastically as they approach the centers of capital:

> Milioni e milioni di contadini e anche di operai – al Sud e al Nord – che certamente da un'epoca molto più lunga che i duemila anni del cattolicesimo si conservano uguali a se stessi, sono stati distrutti. La loro 'qualità di vita' è radicalmente cambiata. Da una parte sono emigrati in massa in paesi borghesi, dall'altra sono stati raggiunti dalla civiltà borghese. La loro natura è stata abrogata per volontà dei produttori di merce.[5]

According to Pasolini, neo-capitalism not only crosses borders *between* nations but also between social classes *within* nations, which explains the cultural and social changes transforming workers and farmers, who now adjust to the living standards and behavioral codes of the consumerist middle class.

For Pasolini, cultural homologation is, therefore, the effect of the pervasive, transnational power of neo-capitalism. It results from the imposition of a single economic model. In an open letter to Italo Calvino, Pasolini further explains: "l'acculturazione del Centro consumistico ha

---

Conosco anche – perché le vedo e le vivo – alcune caratteristiche di questo nuovo Potere… soprattutto la sua smania, per così dire cosmica, di attuare fino in fondo lo "Sviluppo": produrre e consumare." In "Il Potere senza volto," *Corriere della sera*, June 24, 1974, now in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 313–14.

[4] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, 2107. Italics in the original.

[5] "Le Madonne oggi non piangono più," June 5, 1975. *Lettere luterane*, in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 593.

distrutto le varie culture del Terzo Mondo (parlo ancora su scala mondiale, e mi riferisco dunque appunto anche alle culture del Terzo Mondo, cui le culture contadine italiane sono profondamente analoghe): il modello culturale offerto agli italiani (e a tutti gli uomini del globo, del resto) è unico."[6] The universal sway of neo-capitalism is responsible for the cultural homologation and destruction of cultural diversity within the "Third World" and beyond. Neo-capitalism overcomes previous ideological cleavages such as Left and Right, for the ideal of "progress" is now shared across opposite sides of the political spectrum: "Davanti a questo neocapitalismo rivoluzionario, progressista e unificatore si prova un inaudito sentimento (senza precedenti) di unità del mondo."[7] Pasolini denounces a global system of production that has generated a sense of unanimous consensus and unity, a sense of homologation never experienced before.

In this chapter, I focus precisely on Pasolini's resistance to the "unità del mondo" imposed by neo-capitalism, ranging from the utopian ambition of universality that moves his early work to the disappointment he encounters in later years when he recognizes that neo-capitalism has reached a global consensus. I call the utopian ambition "supranational universalism," which I understand to be the aspiration to overcome local boundaries, and to speak for a broader, potentially universal community. I propose the phrase supranational universalism as a lens for understanding Pasolini's unique approach to the tension between local and global phenomena, highlighting different moments in the evolution of this supranational universalism throughout Pasolini's work. I argue that his supranational universalism amounts to an ongoing search for an analogical perspective through which he attempts to harmonize the

[6] "Lettera aperta a Italo Calvino: Pasolini: quello che rimpiango," *Paese Sera*, July 8, 1974, in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 322.

[7] Ibid*,* 861.

local and the global. The crisis of Pasolini's supranational universalism occurring at the end of his career coincides with the impossibility to maintain such a harmonious relationship.

Adopting the perspective of supranational universalism to highlight the "structures of feeling" informing Pasolini's approach to the local/global, this chapter contributes a discussion of the cognitive dissonance within Pasolini as exhibited by the tension between his competing geographic scopes, namely his localism on the one hand, and his ambition to overcome local barriers through a supranational, potentially global discourse on the other. The scholarship on Pasolini's relationship with the "Third World" has emphasized how Pasolini's anti-global critique is connected to his defense of local cultures, starting with his early interest in rural Friuli and continuing with his fascination in the *borgate* in Rome, and poor countries of Africa and Asia. For example, Giovanna Trento defines Pasolini's Pan-South or "Panmeridione" as "a fluid, non-geographical *topos* where 'traditional' values are used in non-traditional and subversive ways with the goal of resisting industrialization, mass media, and late-capitalist alienation."[8] But Trento herself cannot solve the puzzle of Pasolini's utopianism, simultaneously projected towards the local and the global:

> Si delinea… presso Pasolini una condizione contraddittoria e paradossale (propria di una buona parte del suo lavoro): da un lato egli dimostra grande interesse per il "locale," vale a dire per situazioni specifiche, marginali, che va a toccare con mano in prima persona, nelle quali va ad immergersi e con i cui attori mette in atto dei meccanismi di identificazione; d'altro canto però egli invoca quella che potremmo chiamare "globalizzazione precapitalistica." Pasolini fa infatti costantemente riferimento a quell'illimitato mondo contadino prenazionale e preindustriale che assicura ai suoi occhi una sorta di "omologazione precapitalistica," da contrapporre alla "omologazione neocapitalistica" (per dirla impiegando termini pasoliniani) da lui acutamente messa a fuoco e molto fortemente condannata.[9]

[8] Trento, "Pier Paolo Pasolini and Pan-Meridional Italianness," 59.

[9] Trento, *Pasolini e l'Africa*, 72.

Trento uses the terms "globalizzazione precapitalistica" in reference to the "unlimited" peasant world pre-existing industrialization that Pasolini puts at the center of his work. In so doing, she clearly echoes Pasolini's own words. When addressing his open letter to Calvino, Pasolini explains that he misses a "*universo* contadino," "…l'illimitato mondo contadino pre-nazionale e pre-industriale, sopravvissuto fino a solo pochi anni fa": a world Pasolini can only see survive in "Third World" countries, where it is nevertheless already threatened by a forthcoming industrialization.[10] Trento opposes this "globalizzazione pre-capitalistica" to the "omologazione" typical of neo-capitalism, which we already recognized as the main target of the anti-global Pasolini of *Scritti corsari* and *Lettere luterane*. But this confrontation of two opposite and qualitatively-different globalist views (a utopian/universal one, and an apocalyptic/global/historical one) looks "paradoxical" or "contradictory" (using Trento's words above), unless we make a clear distinction between the two.

I believe that adopting the perspective of supranational universalism allows us to gain terminological clarity and overcome the impasse pointed at by Trento. If we understand "globalizzazione" in the historical terms of capitalist globalization that has created a homologation of diverse cultures worldwide, then we can distinguish the target of Pasolini's anti-global critique from the standpoint of his supranational universalism. The supranational universalism that this chapter aims to study is an ideological ambition that, in Pasolini's view,

[10] "L'universo contadino (cui appartengono le culture sottoproletarie urbane, e, appunto fino a pochi anni fa, quelle delle minoranze operaie - ché erano vere e proprie minoranze, come in Russia nel '17) è un universo transnazionale: che addirittura non riconosce le nazioni. Esso è l'avanzo di una civiltà precedente (o di un cumulo di civiltà precedenti tutte molto analoghe fra loro), e la classe dominante (nazionalista) modellava tale avanzo secondo i propri interessi e i propri fini politici (per un lucano - penso a De Martino - la nazione a lui estranea, è stato prima il Regno Borbonico, poi l'Italia piemontese, poi l'Italia fascista, poi l'Italia attuale: senza soluzione di continuità). È questo illimitato mondo contadino pre-nazionale e pre-industriale, sopravvissuto fino a solo pochi anni fa, che io rimpiango (non per nulla dimoro il più a lungo possibile, nei paesi del Terzo Mondo, dove esso sopravvive ancora, benché il Terzo Mondo stia anch'esso entrando nell'orbita del cosiddetto Sviluppo)." Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 320-21.

does not imply a contradiction between the local and the global spheres, but rather finds a way to encompass the local within the global, harmonizing the two. As we shall see, Pasolini uses analogies as a rhetorical and epistemic tool to conceptualize this harmonization. His supranational universalism fades when he realizes that neo-capitalism has succeeded in forging a different kind of universalism, an "unità del mondo" based on economic and cultural homologation.

My use of the expression "supranational universalism" is to a certain extent comparable to Cesare Casarino's and Luca Caminati's reflections on Pasolini's "transnational universalism" and his participation in the "Bandung Humanism" of the 1960s.[11] Casarino and Caminati stress Pasolini's participation in the postcolonial international debate following the popularity of theorists of decolonization such as Franz Fanon. They highlight Pasolini's intellectual commitment to a Gramscian project across national borders. While I recognize the importance of this aspect of Pasolini's work, I see it as part of a larger and constant ambition, on Pasolini's part, to overcome the limits of the local and situate it into a larger, supranational perspective. While in my view "transnational universalism" implies a correlation of the global and the local—suggesting, for example, that a local class struggle is also, necessarily global—I choose to adopt the terms "supranational universalism" to better highlight the *hierarchy* between the local and the global in Pasolini's aesthetic view—one that eventually leads him to disadvantage the local while aspiring to an overarching anti-capitalist universalism.

This chapter is divided into six sections highlighting key moments of Pasolini's trajectory of supranational universalism. In the first section I present his early political engagement with the movement for autonomy in the Friuli region between 1945 and 1948, when Pasolini first

[11] See Casarino, "The Southern Answer." Caminati, "Filming Decolonization."

engages with a supranational political and aesthetic utopia, and with political activism *tout court*. My main contribution in this section is an analysis of the aesthetics that Pasolini provides for the Academiuta de Lengua Furlana that puts forth the utopia of a supranational (here, Europeanist) regionalism.

The chapter's second section draws on Pasolini's early conceptualization of symbolistic analogies in poetry, and shows how Pasolini eventually extends a comparable approach in his orientalist vision of the "Third World. " I use *orientalism* in Edward Said's acceptation, as a discourse aiming to stress ontological differences between a "we" (West) and a "them" (East or Orient) which actually imposes a form of intellectual power on a subaltern subject.[12] I analyze two examples of epistemic analogies that I believe inform Pasolini's universalism at this stage: "Un uomo di Bandung" (1961-1962), and the project *Appunti per un poema sul Terzo Mondo* (1968).

The third section further enlarges the geopolitical framework of this analysis by looking at Pasolini's engagement with supranational universalism at a global scale, especially in the films *La rabbia* (1962) and *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966). Both films, while explicitly tackling ideological issues, clarify Pasolini's aspiration to speak in global terms, which implies solving *local* problems of the "Third World" within a larger framework of aspiration to global peace.

The fourth and fifth sections introduce a reflection on Pasolini and the supranational universalism of the Church, an aspect of his work that has been overlooked in Marxist readings of Pasolini's universalism such as Casarino's. In particular, section four moves from an analysis of the poem "Profezia" (1962) to a reflection on Pasolini's relationship with Pope John XXIII, with an eye out for the appearances of Pope John XXIII in Pasolini's cinema and essays. Section

[12] Said, *Orientalism*.

five looks at Pasolini's relationship with John XXIII's successor, Pope Paul VI, investigating the "sympathy" that Pasolini claimed to have for this figure, on the specific grounds of universalism.

In the chapter's final section, I present the crisis of Pasolini's universalist utopia, which appears to me to be perfectly condensed in the script *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* (1966-1974). While I continue my reflection on Pasolini's reaction to the Vatican's universalism under Pope Paul VI, I focus on key moments in the script which highlight inner contradictions embedded in Pasolini's utopian view and which come to a head in the later years of his career.

2.1. The Utopia of a Supranational Regionalism: Pasolini's Friulian Aesthetics and Politics

Pasolini lived in the Friulian town Casarsa, his mother's birthplace, from 1942 to 1950. During these years of war and its aftermath, he spent extensive time with the local peasants, learning their dialect and observing their lifestyle. Pasolini wrote poetry in Friulian dialect during this time period, later collected in the volume *La meglio gioventù* (1954), dedicated to Italian critic Gianfranco Contini.[13] Between 1945 and 1948, Pasolini actively engaged in political discussions for Friuli's autonomy.

At a 2015 conference in Perugia dedicated to Pasolini and the law, former director of the Center for the Study of Pier Paolo Pasolini in Casarsa della Delizia, Angela Felice, spoke on Pasolini's experience within the political movement for the regional autonomy of Friuli, which she framed within the discourse of Pasolini's general and prolific interest in the "dialettica tutta italiana tra Centro e periferia, macro e micro-aree, città e campagna, una dialettica la cui vanificazione moderna mobilita in Pasolini accenti anche emotivi di disperazione."[14]

[13] Pasolini published his first collection of poems in Friulian, *Poesia a Casarsa*, in Bologna in July 1942, just before moving to Casarsa.

[14] Felice, "L'autonomismo friulano di Pasolini: un unicum tra teoria e prassi," 224.

Felice's contribution is an important source for historical context: she recalls that before and during Fascism Italy was more centralized than today and only divided into "Province" and "Comuni." A geopolitical reconfiguration of the Italian territory into regions was discussed after the war and the loss of Slovenia and Istria. A movement for the autonomy of Friuli was born in July 1945, thanks to the activism of Tiziano Tessitori, who announced the new cause in the daily magazine *Libertà* and founded an association in Udine. Tessitori entered the national "Assemblea Costituente" elected on June 2, 1946, yet the hostility of the Italian Communist Party and the local opposition of Pordenone—putting forth the proposition of an extended region of Veneto—weakened the movement. When Friuli was recognized as a region on October 18, 1946, many questions remained unanswered about the region's status, including the structure of its political and administrative autonomy. To address these issues, a local association was founded on January 19, 1947, the Movimento Popolare Friuliano (MPF), which Pasolini supported as an active member along with general secretary Gianfranco D'Aronco and other local representatives. Pasolini, who had founded a poetic circle in Friulian with his students—"Academiuta di lenga furlana" and the Friulian journal "Stroligut" in 1945—, publicly expressed his support for the association, particularly insisting on the linguistic aspects of Friulian identity. Yet, disappointed by the conservative evolution prevailing within such a heterogeneous movement, he quit the MPF in February 1948.[15]

Felice stresses key aspects of Pasolini's engagement with the MPF: 1) Most people recall Pasolini's political activism for his participation with the Italian Communist Party (PCI) starting from 1947, but the movement for Friulian autonomy is in fact the first political experience for Pasolini. According to Felice, more attention should be given to this founding moment of

[15] Ibid, 226-229.

Pasolini's intellectual career.[16] 2) Pasolini was himself a "straniero" when he arrived in Casarsa, which allowed him to maintain an impartial approach to the question of autonomy, without falling into the campanilismo or localism with which he reproached the other members of the movement.[17] 3) Because of this impartiality, Pasolini could develop a Europeanist, "supranational" or "superpolitical" view, which he explicitly expresses in the article "Il Friuli Autonomo" (June 1947):[18]

> Ma sì, noi non sappiamo disgiungere l'uno dall'altro i due problemi, quello del decentramento nazionale e quello dell'accentramento supernazionale. E sarà forse ardito ma non ingiustificabile pensare a questo proprio adesso che finiti i piccoli giri di valzer dell'Italia, cominciano forse i grandi giri di valzer dell'Europa.[19]

My reading of Pasolini's political engagement with the MPF focuses precisely on the "supranational" form of his politics as highlighted by Felice. But while Felice frames her contribution within the dichotomy of center and periphery, I will speak of a broader supranational utopia that motivates not only Pasolini's political activism, but also his aesthetics.

Parallel to a Europeanist understanding of Friulian political autonomy, Pasolini develops a *super-patriam* poetic ideal that unfolds the same supranational vision on an aesthetic level. Pasolini dedicated four major articles to the question of Friulian autonomy in the years 1946-1948, collected in the section "Il Friuli autonomo" of the posthumous volume *Un paese di temporali e di primule,* edited by Nico Naldini. These articles help us trace the trajectory of

---

[16] Ibid, 225.

[17] Ibid, 225.

[18] Ibid, 232-233.

[19] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 48-49. Pasolini's thoughts on Europe are not idiosyncratic but part of the contemporaneous debate. Here Pasolini is writing in 1947, ten years before the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community, and six years after Angelo Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, in their "Manifesto di Ventotene." (1941) drafted the ideal of a "free and united Europe" transcending national boundaries: "Il problema che in primo luogo va risolto e fallendo il quale qualsiasi altro progresso non è che apparenza, è la definitiva abolizione della divisione dell'Europa in Stati nazionali sovrani." In a similar fashion, in 1944 Alberto Savinio wrote about the "superamento del nazionalismo" and a "sguardo fiducioso alla sorte futura dell'Europa" (Savinio, *Sorte dell'Europa*, 7.)

Pasolini's endorsement of and exit from the MPF, and also understand key aspects of Pasolini's political view of regionalism. Pasolini considers glottology the main cultural foundation of Friulian autonomy, and particularly stresses the differences between Friulian and Venetian dialects. Moreover, Pasolini's utopian view on Friulian autonomy exists within an anti-conservative regionalism, a regionalism of the Left. According to Pasolini, while a conservative approach is limited to an irrational, sentimental concept of belonging, a Left-wing approach accepts a sentimental point of entry to the question of identity, only with the purpose of adding a critical, logical component, which will dialectically promote self-reflective culture and avoid fanaticism and intolerance. Pasolini's utopian view of the autonomy of Friuli is one that dialectically reconciles the rational and the irrational, creating balance between introversion and extroversion, localism and Europeanism.

To be sure, Pasolini's Europeanism comes from his faith in the *Northern* civilizations of Europe and the old values of Risorgimento.[20] Yet, for Pasolini the "sentimental" fervor of a popular uprising should not mean "provincialismo" but a "regionalismo di ampie vedute"; thus, even after quitting the movement, Pasolini still wonders…

> se sia poi così fatalmente impossibile che nel Friuli sorga un movimento regionalistico, di ampie vedute, e che esprimendo autenticamente il contenuto 'sentimentale' delle masse friulane, gli dia una forma logica e un fine indicato da reali necessità… un autonomismo che non si isolasse, da una parte, nella propria problematica avulsa dai problemi dei Friulani, dall'altra nei limiti di una regione interpretata provincialmente?[21]

[20] "Del resto la mentalità dei suoi abitanti sempre per restare in margine ai vantaggi troppo ovvi molto settentrionale cioè nel tempo stesso positiva e romantica molto adatta dunque a tramutarsi in civiltà. È in queste civiltà che progredisce che si distrugge lo spirito nazionalistico che si coltivano problemi superpolitici come il federalismo europeo." Pasolini*, Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 48.

[21] Ibid, 68.

Pasolini insists on asserting the possibility of a non-provincial, supranational regionalism beyond his participation in the MPF. His utopian and independent political vision for the autonomy of Friuli is strongly connected to his aesthetic vision. While Pasolini makes the connection between Friulian politics and aesthetics clear in his article "Il Friuli autonomo" from June 3, 1947, other coeval publications also allow us to speak of an early "supranational" aesthetics developed since Pasolini's first years of activity as a poet, linguist, and intellectual, before the inauguration of his works on the "Third World."

As Felice recalls, Pasolini arrives in Friuli as a "stranger" and crafts his own sense of belonging through language. Before 1942, Pasolini had only spent the summer in Casarsa, where his mother, Susanna Colussi, was born.[22] When Pasolini wrote his first verses in Friulian, he had "nessun rapporto che non fosse fantastico col Friuli e con qualsiasi altro luogo di questa terra."[23] He was rather inspired by his readings of Provençal poetry, and revered the Associazione Filologica in Udine as "un prodotto altamente civile, di tipo quasi centro-europeo."[24] The main contribution of the Società Filologica Friulana founded in 1919 was to put forth the identity of Friulian dialect as "lingua ladina" or romance language, whose development was clearly distinct from that of the Italian language.[25]

[22] Naldini, *Pier Paolo Pasolini: un paese di temporali e di primule*, 21.

[23] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 174.

[24] Ibid, 323.

[25] The Società Filologica of Udine is a crucial reference point for Pasolini's first steps in the defense of Friulian culture and autonomy. Inspired by glottologist Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1829-1906), Pasolini addresses the 1944 Friulian article "Dialet lenga e stil" to his "paisàns" or "paesani," explaining that: "il friulano fa parte dei dialetti *ladini,* parola che ha lo stesso valore di *latini*. La 'Ladinia' sarebbe una regione che comprende il Friuli, la Carnia, le Alpi fino ai Grigioni, e che ha derivato la sua parlata direttamente dal Latino, né più né meno del Francese, dell'Italiano ecc." "Dialet lenga e stil," Ibid, 61. Pasolini will later become critical of this institution, calling it outdated and inefficient (See for example Ibid, 333.)

The literary and linguistic nature of Pasolini's interest in Friuli speaks of the kind of community that he aims to establish through his supranational regionalism. Writing in Friulian, Pasolini joins a community of speakers which is not quite the community of Casarsa but rather the ideal community of poets freely expressing themselves in a wide range of variants of Romance languages: "Il Friuli si unisce, con la sua sterile storia, e il suo innocente, trepido desiderio di poesia, alla Provenza, alla Catalogna, ai Grigioni, alla Rumenia, e a tutte le altre Piccole Patrie di lingua romanza."[26] "Piccola Patria" is a common epithet for Friuli that became famous with Gabriele D'Annunzio and that Pasolini significantly uses in the plural form.[27] Calling for the unity of multiple linguistic and cultural minorities, Pasolini recognizes more than one "patria" and shows that each of them can develop independently as they continue to be inspired by a common Romance tradition. In Pasolini's view, their peripheral position towards the main romance literary traditions does not prevent them from identifying a common ground that transcends their specific identities and allow them to speak together. Pasolini connects the plurality of romance languages through an analogical supranational vision, stressing how much these minor languages and cultures have in common, despite their singularity.

Pasolini uses poetry to communicate his supranational utopian view of Friulian autonomy. It is through poetry that a language attains the status of "lingua," which we can see as the equivalent of "nation" in Pasolini's aesthetics. Although Pasolini confesses the importance of the first two years he spent in Casarsa to become more accustomed to the spoken Friulian dialect, a major principle of the Academiuta de Lengua Furlana—which Pasolini founded in 1945—is

[26] Ibid, 74. See also Pasolini: "… in questi due o tre anni sono andando pubblicando qua e là con una certa frequenza scritti di estetica dialettale e versi credendo candidamente di essere capito (cioè, che venissero capiti I miei problemi e miei riferimenti). Invece in Friuli ho avuto, ch'io sappia, un solo lettore: Don Marchetti. Tutti gli altri facevano delle sciocche riserve, inutili a me e a loro, campate in aria e spesso stranamente maligne." Ibid, 333.

[27] Felice, "L'autonomismo friulano di Pasolini: un unicum tra teoria e prassi," 227 footnote 9.

that "dialetto" does not have the same nobility of a "lingua."[28] The Academiuta's aesthetic agenda is firmly "anti-dialetto" while it promotes the use of Friulian as a language and aims to enhance a tradition of Friulian poetry. Pasolini presents this as the main reason why he supports Friulian autonomy: "Noi abbiamo l'inopportuno candore di confessare qual è il nostro interesse, che è poi il nostro primo argomento per spalleggiare la causa dell'autonomia. Non denaro, né ambizione, ma una poetica… una poetica della poesia dialettale come anche anti-dialetto cioè come lingua… Lingua ladina dunque, non dialetto alpino."[29]

In Pasolini's view, a language is a "lingua" when a literary tradition proves that it has served the full expression of an individual and has not been limited to the basic communicative needs of a spatially-limited community. A language can express its full potential as a "lingua" when it attaints the level of imagination, introspection, self-awareness, and analogical reflection of the real that is typical of poetry. Thus, while Pasolini recognizes the contribution of Friulian poet Pietro Zorutti (1792-1867), an author of poetry in dialect who was also appreciated by Carducci, he refuses the imitation of his work which had become a standard of reference for poetry in Friulian. Pasolini's supranational ambition is at odds with the highly recursive tone of the "poesia zoruttiana," which becomes a privileged target of Pasolini's critique during the years of the Academiuta, and a synonym for an outdated, folkloric, and sentimental poetry.[30]

Pasolini's "anti-provincial," supranational proposition is to look at the entire Provençal literary tradition of the 1300s and also at the modern poetic accomplishments in other romance

[28] On Pasolini's autobiographic account of his time spent in Casarsa see Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 324.

[29] Pasolini et al., *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 41-42.

[30] "Per noi 'zoruttiano' equivale a 'dialettale' e per dialettale non intendiamo unicamente la poesia scritta in un qualsiasi dialetto, ma in genere una poesia ritardataria e sentimentale." Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 163. See also "Tranquilla polemica su Zorutti," Ibid, 176-180. On the folkloric see also the last section of this chapter.

languages to find inspiration for a new poetry in Friulian. Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, but also Carles Cardò are representatives of a symbolistic tradition that Pasolini wants to emulate and promote through the Academiuta.[31] Moreover, it is the *autonomy* of art as pure poetry that situates aesthetics on a supranational (European) level, while still aiming at representing the poet's nation:

> Bisogna diffondere la nozione dell'autonomia dell'arte come risultato storico di un processo che si origina nella filosofia kantiana e, attraverso i laghisti inglesi, Poe, Baudelaire, produce in Francia la poesia pura, da noi la nota formula crociana; bisogna poi dimostrare quanto la poesia debba alla coscienza, non in un senso morale di questa parola, ma in un senso critico; bisogna, dopo queste premesse generali, ritornare all'Ascoli, ribadire la sua teoria della lingua ladina; bisogna indicare il Friulano come lingua virtuale, in cui è possibile ascoltare le sillabe come vergini, cioè piene della loro equivalenza al reale; bisogna innestare un tale Friulano nel più recente clima poetico europeo e italiano, proponendoci di inaugurare, finalmente, in Friuli, una poesia 'nazionale.'[32]

The lack of a strong literary tradition in Friulian is not a limitation for Pasolini but rather an opportunity for the new generation of poets: since symbolism is an exploration of the expressive potential of a language, especially in its unique ways to express the link between concepts and sounds, Friulian has the advantage of being an unexplored field for the poets of the Academiuta, whereas other romance languages have been "worn out" by their literary traditions. Pasolini insists on the analogical nature of his poetry which aims to recreate *correspondances* between language and the real: "ascoltare le sillabe come vergini, cioè piene della loro equivalenza al reale."

It is at the level of expression that the Friulian language can promote the local culture, giving voice to its "rustica e cristiana purezza."[33] But after all, poetry is a very personal use of the

---

[31] Pasolini*, Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 43; Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 163.

[32] Ibid, 178.

[33] Ibid, 75. Here is the entire passage: "La nostra vera tradizione, dunque, andremo a cercarla là dove la storia sconsolante del Friuli l'ha disseccata, cioè il Trecento. Quivi troveremo poco friulano, ma tutta una traduzione

language where the artist's style defines its value rather the shared experience of a local community:

> Quando un dialetto diventa lingua, ogni scrittore adopera quella lingua conforme le sue idee il suo carattere i suoi desideri. Insomma ogni scrittore scrive e compone in maniera diversa e ognuno ha il suo 'stile.' Quello stile è qualcosa di interiore, nascosto, privato, e soprattutto individuale. Uno stile non è né italiano, né tedesco né friulano, è di quel poeta e basta.[34]

In Pasolini's aesthetics, individuals who are part of a national or regional community because of their language can reach the highest level of expression through poetry, in a way that transcends the territorial and linguistic limits of their original groups. This means that the regional poet, while working with a minor language still aims at expressing poetry of universal value: "Lavoriamo anche noi con la nostra piccola lingua per una piccola eternità e almeno per pochi vorremmo vedere riconsegnati nel suono di certi nomi così poveramente particolari ('mari,' 'paìs', 'çamp'…) quelle immagini *universali* ed assolute, che dalle sue native condizioni, l'uomo attraverso quella sua storia irrisolta, non ha mai perduto di vista."[35]

The supranational value of Pasolini's early aesthetics in Friulian is therefore linked to a transcendence of territorial borders for the sake of a highest, universal principle which is pure poetry. This is, again, the substantial difference between "dialetto" and "lingua," which lies on the possibility to overcome territorial barriers and join a larger supranational community: "Finché ci saranno in un paese con una piccola città di provincia delle macchiette delle gare

---

romanza, donde doveva nascere quella friulana, e che invece è rimasta sterile. Infine, la tradizione che naturalmente dovremo proseguire si trova nell'odierna letteratura francese ed italiana, che pare giunta ad un punto di estrema consumazione di quelle lingue; mentre la nostra può ancora contare su tutta la sua rustica e cristiana purezza.

[34] Ibid, 67.

[35] Ibid, 76. Italics mine. See also 328-29: "La poesia dei félibri friulani, che detestano la provincia, il suo gusto, le sue ambiguità sentimentali, non fornirebbe la rappresentazione, secondo D'Aronco, che di un mondo generico, non comunque friulano. Ma se al contrario il paesaggio del nostro Friuli occidentale, non come dato folcloristico, si badi, ma come dato paesaggistico-amoroso, è quasi il motivo dominante della nostra poesia!... Non arrossiamo a confessare che il nostro eros di giovani felibri ha trovato in questi luoghi l'incanto fisso dell'infanzia e il mobilissimo splendore della giovinezza nostra e altrui."

sportive delle nozze delle maldicenze eccetera eccetera ci sarà contemporaneamente una poesia dialettale che per natura non potrà *oltrepassare un confine* impostole dal dialetto."[36] A poetry in "dialetto" sets clear boundaries to the poet, whereas a poetry in "lingua" does not.

Pasolini's utopia for a Friulian autonomy is therefore a vision for the expressive freedom of the individual which resonates within a larger, supranational community (the community of Romance languages and their literary traditions). The engagement with Friulian poetry and politics of Friulian autonomy is fundamental in Pasolini's career. It will set the tone for Pasolini's continuous attention for cultural and linguistic minorities and his supranational universalism, which will develop throughout the years from a regional level, to an international and global level. In 1974, one year before his death, Pasolini will still recall the "piccole Patrie" he had fought for as a young man, and see continuity between that early struggle, and his contemporary critique of neo-capitalism: "Nessun paese ha posseduto come il nostro una tale quantità di culture 'particolari e reali,' una tale quantità di 'piccole patrie,' una tale quantità di mondi dialettali: nessun paese, dico, in cui si sia poi avuto un così travolgente 'sviluppo.'[37]

2.2. Analogy and Supranational Universalism from Friuli to the "Third World"

The Friulian years of Pasolini's career are important to define the poetic sensibility that characterizes Pasolini's entire corpus of works, including his cinema. Pasolini himself points at the persistence of a "sentimento poetico" in his films, and in 1965 theorizes his "cinema of poetry" in contrast to a "cinema of prose."[38] In Pasolini's view, cinema of prose is compliant

[36] Ibid, 163, italics mine.

[37] Pasolini*, Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 346.

[38] "Tutti questi films li ho girati come 'poeta.' Non è qui il caso di fare un'analisi sull'equivalenza del 'sentimento poetico' suscitato da certe sequenze del mio cinema e di quello suscitato da certi passi dei miei volumi […]. Tuttavia

with the narrative conventions of the cinematic tradition, whereas cinema of poetry disregards or challenges the same conventions in order to free the artist's unique style.[39] Adopting the cinematic medium, Pasolini coherently evolves his meta-discursive reflection on poetic expression, where the "lingua" and "dialetto" that occupied him during the Friulian period are replaced by cinema as a language. In both cases, the poet's expression implies an element of arbitrariness or of the irrational, and the individual's appropriation of a linguistic code decontextualized by its most conventional social use (Friulan in the case of the Academiuta, and cinema of prose in the case of cinema of poetry). Analogy, as I explain in this section, is the most significant tool of expression for Pasolini's poetic gaze, and the structural foundation of his supranational universalism, in poetry as much as in cinema.

Reflecting upon Pasolini's poetic style, several scholars have underlined the role of analogy in Pasolini's aesthetics; among them Daniela Carmosino who presents analogy as the most important rhetorical device for Pasolini's poetic gaze from his early Friulian prose and poetry to the discovery of the world's peripheries or the "Third World."[40] Carmosino describes analogy as a rhetorical, but also aesthetic and epistemic, tool founding Pasolini's understanding of the known and the unknown, a tool for geographic, aesthetic, and psychological mapping that facilitates Pasolini's approach to peripheries.[41] Moreover, she points at an important discussion

credo non si possa negare che un certo modo di provare qualcosa si ripete identico di fronte ad alcuni miei versi e ad alcune mie inquadrature." Pasolini, *Poesie*, 5.

[39] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 1461–88. See in particular p. 1485: "La formazione di una 'lingua della poesia cinematografica' implica dunque la possibilità di fare, al contrario, degli pseudoracconti, scritti con la lingua della poesia: la possibilità insomma, di una prosa d'arte, di una serie di pagine liriche, la cui soggettività è assicurata dall'uso pretestuale della 'soggettiva libera indiretta': *e il cui vero protagonista è lo stile*." Italics mine.

[40] See also Armando Maggi: "A basic concept of Pasolini's poetics is analogy, which he sees as a paradoxical rhetorical device that includes both similarity and opposition… For Pasolini, opposition is also analogical in that it creates a connection between two entities by highlighting their stark contrasts." Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 21.

[41] "Il frequente ricorso all'analogia, infatti, negli anni si trasforma in un più lucido processo di organizzazione dei dati reali in categorie concettuali, diventando funzionale alla configurazione di scenari ben organizzati, in cui

of analogy in one of Pasolini's early essays on contemporary "pure" poetry (published in *La fiera letteraria*, on March 6, 1947):

> L'analogia è uno dei fatti più probatori sulla natura di ispirati dei poeti puri, in quanto, benché postulata e accettata dalla volontà, è dovuta a un meccanismo irreversibile della fantasia, e il poeta deve passare attraverso un momento di cecità per scoprire fuori dal mondo di cui è passabilmente cosciente, un rapporto tra due immagini o concetti che l'abitudine non concatena.[42]

Pasolini's early discussion of analogy falls into a reflection upon the inspiration of pure poetry and the tension between irrationality and consciousness in the process of poetry writing. He explains the mechanism of analogy as a "moment of blindness" that allows the poet to discover an unexpected connection between images or concepts. This understanding of analogy is central to Pasolini's poetic aesthetics during his Friulian years, and remains structurally unchanged as he approaches more ambitious supranational projects in the 1960s.

Pasolini moves to Rome in 1950 and becomes familiar with the language and customs of the *borgate.* In this chapter I will not delve into the films and novels where Pasolini shows his fascination for Rome's dialect and locality, from *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) to *Una vita violenta* (1959), from *Accattone* (1961) to *Mamma Roma* (1962). However, I want to point out how, in moving to Rome, Pasolini enlarges his geopolitical perspective. Pasolini's portrait of Roman sub-proletarians speaks of his interest for the outcasts, the subjects that the city rejects by pushing them to the outskirts of its peripheries. As he writes in the "Avvertenza" to the poem "Profezia" in 1965, Pasolini understands that the "Third World" is not remote from Italy but rather starts in the peripheries of Rome: "I Persiani… si ammassano alle frontiere. Ma milioni e

---

assieme, pur nella loro apparente diversità, pur nella loro distanza spaziale o onirica o pittorica, letteraria, cinematografica – possono esser compresi dallo sguardo di Pasolini in un unico quadro concettuale." Carmosino, "Conoscere per analogia. Pasolini e la categoria del periferico," 120.

[42] "L'ispirazione nei contemporanei," Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, 204.

milioni di essi sono già pacificamente immigrati, sono qui, al capolinea del 12, del 13, del 409, dei travetti della Stefer. Che bei Persiani!"[43] From Rome, Pasolini also engages in a long series of extra-European travels, mainly to Africa and Asia, where he finds the settings for many of his films, including *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1963–64), *Edipo re* (1967), *Appunti per un film sull'India* (1968), *Medea* (1969), *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* (1969), *Le mura di Sana'a* (1971), *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (1974), and *Il padre selvaggio* (not filmed but published posthumously in 1975).[44]

Pasolini's Third Worldism is, in my view, an evolution of his supranational universalism after the political and aesthetic engagement with Friuli. As Luca Caminati recalls, Pasolini ideologically participates in the transnational utopianism born within the Bandung Conference of 1955, an international convention joined by China, India, and other countries of Asia and Africa, which were non-aligned with the two factions of the Cold War, and also eminently anti-colonial.[45] Caminati theorizes a multilayered approach to "Third World" countries on the part of Pasolini, where Pasolini's participation in an international intellectual debate on decolonization coexists with an orientalism and with a classical Marxist view on the teleology of history: these elements all merge into what Carminati calls Pasolini's "orientalismo eretico."[46] Pointing to Pasolini's supranational universalism, I instead want to stress the role of analogy in his

[43] Pasolini, *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, 515. On Pasolini and the peripheries of Rome see Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City Pasolini's Rome*.

[44] In the "Cronologia" for the Meridiani Mondadori series, Nico Naldini recalls the following travels: India, Kenya and Zanzibar (1961, with Alberto Moravia and Elsa Morante); Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Greece (1962); Yemen, Kenya, Ghana, Guinea (1963); Israel, Jourdan (1963); New York (1966); Morocco (1966; 1967); India (1967); Uganda, Tanzania (1968-9); New York (1969); Dakar, Abidjan, Mali (1970); Argentina (1970); Egypt, Yemen, Persia, India, Eritrea, Hadramaut (1972); Iran, Yemen, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Horn of Africa, Hadramaut, Nepal (1973). In Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 1, XC-CXIV.

[45] Caminati, "Notes For A Revolution," 134.

[46] Ibid.

orientalism, which, I believe, structures Pasolini's universalist view rather than oddly coexisting with it. Pasolini's orientalism consists of essentializing "Third World" countries or poor subjects despite their diverse identity or historical and geographical specificity. This essentialization works as a supranational universalism, where Pasolini superimposes a subjective idea on individual, local, or national specificity.

The 1961-1962 poem "Un uomo di Bandung," recently translated to English by Robert S.C. Gordon, presents a striking example of analogy which I intend here as not strictly rhetorical but also epistemic, following Carmosino's suggestion. A "momento di cecità per scoprire… due immagini o concetti" (which is again Pasolini's definition of analogy recalled by Carmosino) appears in the poem through a juxtaposition of Davidson, a Kenyan boy that we will also encounter in the script *Il padre selvaggio* (1962), and Revi, an Indian boy who appears in *L'odore dell'India* (1961).[47] In the poem, the narrator inaugurates an escape towards Orient from Rome along the new Appia road. As soon as the road ends, the poet finds himself in the countryside still disfigured by ugly urban constructions. Suddenly, Revi appears in the scene from a distance as he runs on a pier with a "ragged friend." Pasolini compares Revi's good hearth, "the hearth of a lamb," against the friend's eyes, similar to those of a "wondrous beast." Pasolini comments on the scene advocating the natural kindness of the people of the "Third World," which he refers to as "i regni della fame." The narrator buys some fruit from Revi. Suddenly right after, a new vision replaces the old one, and Davidson from a Kikuyu tribe of Kenya appears:

> Davidson 'Ngibuini, è un kikuyu.
> Non lo lega a Revi che la linea dei Tropici:
> perché uno non sa dell'altro
> – se non nella coscienza di chi cerca –

[47] Pasolini and Gordon, "Bandung Man / L'uomo di Bandung."

i figli di Aversa, o del Kerala, o dell'Africa.
Lo lega a Revi la bontà…. La bontà
delle capanne del Kenia montagnoso,

Chissà dove perdute, a che acqua, a che sole.[48]

The juxtaposition of Revi and Davidson is an example of analogy as a moment of blindness for the poet followed by an unusual connection between images or concepts, following Pasolini's discussion of analogy from 1947, and which I see as the epistemic foundation of Pasolini's orientalist look on the two protagonists of the poems. In the poem, the blindness pointed to by Pasolini translates into an abrupt change of scenario with Davidson's name opening the new line after an unexpected interruption of the lines on Revi. Davidson's name is followed by his introduction ("è un kikuyu"). Right after, the narrator seems to justify his unexpected presence in the poem: Pasolini knows that, rationally speaking, there is nothing that links Davidson to Revi ("non lo lega a Revi che la linea dei Tropici"); yet, the connection between the two exists "nella coscienza di chi li cerca." This line is crucial not only because it perfectly echoes Pasolini's characterization of analogy from 1947 ("benché postulata e accettata dalla volontà, è dovuta a un meccanismo irreversibile della fantasia"), but also because it strongly reintroduces the subjectivity of the poet in the text, as the one who is responsible for this arbitrary association.[49] The same abrupt juxtaposition of images is synthesized in the lines: "[uno non sa dell'altro]… i figli di Aversa, o del Kerala, o dell'Africa." Slipping from one continent to the other through the preposition "o," these lines synthesize Pasolini's imaginative trip and the arbitrary associations of the poet.[50]

---

[48] Ibid, 282.

[49] Ibid, 280.

[50] I am referring to the imaginative trip that, in the poem, brings the narrator from Italy (Aversa, Campania) to India (Kerala) to Africa (Kenya). Trento evocatively speaks about a process of "osmosis" for which Pasolini's love for the peasant world reaches the peripheries of Rome, Naples, and African countries. Trento, *Pasolini e l'Africa*, 20.

As in the case of Friulian poetry, where Pasolini would put forth the poet's style and search for pure poetry to explain the analogies between Friulian poetry and other Romance minorities, here we see an analogy between peripheral subjectivities, connected through a generalized ideal of pure goodness: "Le bontà più angeliche, con le angeliche / ferocie, sono fioriture del sottomondo: tare entrambe, ma più oscura quello della bontà."[51] The essentialist "bontà" of the poor that Pasolini sees through his analogy reflects Pasolini's orientalist look on diverse subjects: "Conosco da tanto la fiducia con cui / un ragazzo povero parla allo sconosciuto / che si interessa a lui. È un amore intero / che lo prende, e gli arde negli occhi / che, incolori per umiltà, lo celano male…"[52] Later in the poem, Pasolini insists on the temporal gap dividing his world (which becomes "our" world in the poem, hinting at his Italian audience) and the "Third World" people of the "Preistoria," the pre-capitalistic time that the race for development will put at risk. Pasolini's orientalist look becomes even more evident as he reunites in the same category the "dannati" he sees looking forward to "catch up" with European development:

> Col corpo vivo di chi è nato nel tempo
> della produzione, percorrere all'indietro
> i secoli fino alla visione della Preistoria
> perduta nel fetore di pecora del mondo
> che mangia i suoi prodotti. Qui il futuro
> è il nostro presente: e la corsa di questi dannati, per poterci raggiungere,
> cade nei silenzi che mettono in dubbio
> l'idea della vita – nello stallatico
> bestiale, che assedia le capitali di baracche,
> il rosa dei continenti non ancora nati.)[53]

The long poem, which further dwells on the encounter with Davidson and also the role of Italian missionaries in Africa, ends with the metaphor of the "figliol prodigo" who repudiates his family

[51] Pasolini and Gordon, "Bandung Man / L'uomo di Bandung," 282.

[52] Ibid, 284.

[53] Ibid, 290-1.

only to return back when he is very much in need, and he is finally welcomed back. Pasolini seems to suggest that he will not return to his original community of bourgeois intellectuals; instead he chooses his ideal child in a four-year-old African boy, and promises to never return from the "periferia di Roma o del Mondo," or possibly to return only to leave again soon. One more time, Pasolini chooses to situate his ideal dwelling in the peripheries, although at this point his supranational gaze has overcome the boundaries of Europe and attained the larger scale of the "Third World."

More than any other film that Pasolini completed, the unfinished *Appunti per un poema sul Terzo Mondo* shows how analogy shapes Pasolini's essentialist of the "Third World" in cinema. *Appunti* is a project for a film that Pasolini drafted in 1968, which he describes as a film composed of five episodes, each dedicated to different areas of the "Third World": India, Africa, the Middle East, South America, and African-American ghettos. Pasolini describes the film as "molto composito, complesso e spurio" but he contrasts this complex structure with a clear revolutionary political ambition: "a semplificarlo provvederanno la nudità dei problemi trattati e la sua funzione di diretto intervento rivoluzionario."[54] Pasolini also synthetizes the topic of each episode: the film on India will deal with the questions of religion and hunger; the episode on Africa will focus on the contrast between the industrialized culture of European countries and the pre-industrial, ancient culture of the colonized African people; the episode on the Middle East will deal with nationalism and war; the episode on South America will portray the contrast between Marxist revolutions and Fidel Castro's patriotism; the fifth episode on African-American ghettos will focus on violence, social exclusion, and racism.

[54] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 2681.

Despite the openness and self-reflective nature of Pasolini's project underlined by Caminati, Pasolini hopes to impress continuity across each episode.[55] As they were parts of "un discorso unico" on the problems shared among the entire "Third World," the five episodes appear as different components of the same "poema":

> Questi episodi non saranno però – probabilmente – nettamente suddivisi: non ci sarà soluzione di continuità tra l'uno e l'altro, perché il discorso sarà unico… I temi fondamentali del terzo Mondo sono gli stessi per tutti i paesi che vi appartengono. Perciò tutti questi temi saranno presenti, implicitamente o esplicitamente, nei cinque episodi.[56]

Pasolini is not quite sure about how much these films will differ from one another ("probabilmente"), since each film will be developed independently or autonomously. Yet, he stresses that each film will focus on problems that all countries of the "Third World" have in common, echoing the opening of Appunti per un film sull'India in 1967, where Pasolini introduces his footage saying "Io sono qui per fare un film, un film su un film sull'India. I temi fondamentali di questo film sono i due temi fondamentali dell'intero Terzo Mondo, ossia i temi della religione e della fame." Moreover, Pasolini notes that "tutti questi temi sono già nella coscienza di molte minoranze (attraverso le testimonianze e le opera dei più diversi scrittori, da Sartre a Fanon, da Obi Egbuna a Carmichael, ecc. ecc.)." While this transnational cultural framework will constitute the "unità logica" of the film, Pasolini also introduces a "unità affettiva." The latter, Pasolini clarifies, "costituirà anche la ragione prima del film, il suo aspetto soggettivo e il suo stile. Tale 'sentimento' sarà un sentimento violentemente e magari anche velleitariamente rivoluzionario: così da fare del film stesso un'azione rivoluzionaria (non

[55] Caminati stresses the idea of "film da farsi." (Pasolini, *Per il cinema,* v. 2, 2681) in Caminati, "Notes For A Revolution," 136. Caminati, *Orientalismo eretico*, 60–76.

[56] Pasolini et al., *Per il cinema II*, 2679. Italics mine.

partitica, naturalmente, e assolutamente indipendente.)"[57] The "unità affettiva" of Appunti per un poema sul Terzo Mondo represents the core of Pasolini's supranational universalism not only because it explains the analogy connecting geographical and cultural settings that are different and autonomous. The "unità affettiva" of the film is also crucial to impose Pasolini's own, supranational vision of universalism; his poetic style and subjective point of view. It is important that Pasolini calls this subjective dimension "la ragione prima del film." Retrieving Pasolini's background in symbolistic poetry, we can read the analogy among different continents of the "Third World" as a sort of thematic correspondance. Pasolini aims to overcome the potential conflicts between the local and the global through a supranational analogical vision. In Pasolini, this vision implies sacrificing local specificity for the sake of an overarching essentialist idea. Pasolini's orientalism comes from the same analogical matrix, where analogy works to reinforce a supranational idea and the poetic subjectivity that generates it.[58]

[57] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 2680.

[58] Along the lines of Caminati's reflection on Pasolini's "heretic orientalism," Manuele Gragnolati argues that the African episode of the *Appunti* questions the ideas of analogy and synthesis of rational and irrational forces (what would instead be the legacy of Léopold Sédar Senghor's reconciliatory view on decolonization). To support his thesis, Gragnolati also reports Pasolini's explicit rejection of Hegelian dialectics and his desire to acknowledge unsolvable contradictions (see Gragnolati, "Analogy and Difference," 119). While a certain anti-Hegelianism can be seen as a change of perspective from the position of the young Pasolini—who would still hope to accomplish a synthesis of rational and irrational forces through Friulian autonomy—I want to stress how the supranational universalism I am analyzing for the *Appunti* works at the level of the entire collection of five episodes, almost as its metatextual principle. In other words, the tension that Gragnolati perceives within the African episode (which would correspond to the "local" level of each continent, in this project) does not necessarily imply, in my view, that Pasolini has abandoned his supranational, universalist vision. Conversely, while theorizing his Friulian aesthetics the young Pasolini would still present "crisi" (along "introversione") as the main topics of his poetry, clarifying that this would not make his poetry "incivile" (Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 41). Following my reasoning, the fact that Pasolini decided to work on different projects after 1968 might signal the crisis of Pasolini's utopian, supranational view more than the inner contradictions characterizing each episode, which I believe Pasolini had a clear interest to portray in their problematic nature.

2.3. Ideology and Global Peace

In Pasolini, a universalist perspective sets the tone for poetic works that, while grounded in local geographic realities, aspire to speak for a bigger whole which I have called "supranational." In the previous sections, I have highlighted the evolution of Pasolini's supranational universalism starting from the founding theorization of Pasolini's symbolistic aesthetics in support of a Europeanist regionalism for Friuli (first section), and moved to the development of a broader form of supranational universalism which explains Pasolini's orientalist look at the "Third World" (second section). In this section, I show how the evolution in Pasolini's supranational universalism also informs his works on war and global peace. The two films *La rabbia* and *Uccellacci e uccellini* are the focus of my analysis.

La rabbia (1963) consists of two parts where two very different intellectuals, Pasolini and Giovannino Guareschi, are separately asked to answer the question: "Perché la nostra vita è dominata dalla scontentezza, dall'angoscia, dalla paura della guerra, dalla guerra?" Pasolini's section of the film is a collage of news footage from the cinegiornale *Mondo libero*, portraying heterogeneous events occurring in the 1950s and early 1960s, including the counter-revolution in Hungary, the war between Egypt and Israel, the wars for independence in Tunisia, Tanganika, Togo, and Algeria, the civil war in Cuba, the coronation of Queen Elisabeth in the UK, the election of Eisenhower in the USA and of De Gaulle in France's Fifth Republic, the coronation of Pope John XXIII in the Vatican, and the death of Marylyn Monroe.[59]

Pasolini defines the film "un saggio ideologico e poetico," commenting on the images through editing, soundtrack, and a text in poetry and prose read, in an alternating fashion, by

[59] For the genealogy of the project—including its reconstruction by Giuseppe Bertolucci and Cineteca di Bologna in 2008—and also the hieratic and ritual character of the sequences in the film, see Chiesi, "Il 'corpo' tormentato de La rabbia."

Giorgio Bassani and Renato Guttuso.[60] Pasolini explains that anger in the film ("la rabbia" from the title) is the reaction of the poet who, at the aftermath of the war, sees the world proceeding towards a new form of "normality" that seals the status quo of social injustice worldwide: a world where colonialism, racism, hunger are unsolvable problems and yet become acceptable in a time of illusionary peace. The oppressors strengthen their international connections while the oppressed endure violence and manipulation: "Un'infinità di problemi che esistono e nessuno è capace di risolvere: e senza la cui risoluzione la pace, la pace vera, la pace del poeta, è irrealizzabile."[61]

The lack of global peace is, therefore, the main theme of the project and what motivates Pasolini's supranational universalism in this film. The editing of such heterogeneous footage is the technical device that Pasolini uses to establish *correspondances* among different countries and peoples sharing conditions of war, suffering, and death. When commenting on the footage of independence wars occurring in Africa and Latin America, Pasolini calls for the unity of people of color, supporting the cause of decolonization. But it is also an "allargamento della prospettiva"—to say it in Carla Benedetti's terms—that Pasolini offers to himself and to his fellow Italian audience.[62] This new global perspective finally includes the "problem" of color (through the wars for independence in ex-colonized countries), which Pasolini hopes to solve with a new global universalism: "Altre voci, altri sguardi, altri amori, altre danze: / tutto dovrà diventare famigliare e ingrandire la terra!"[63]

---

[60] Ibid, 16.

[61] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 1, 408.

[62] Benedetti, "La rabbia di Pasolini," 51.

[63] Pasolini and Guareschi, *La rabbia* min. 7:45. In the script: Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 1, 372.

Mahmoud Jaran commented on these lines noticing how racism is a new problem for Pasolini and yet the utopian ambition informing this film is to overcome racial discriminations once and for all: "Gente di colore, è nella speranza che l'uomo non ha colore. / Gente di colore, è nella gioia che l'unico colore è il colore dell'uomo."[64] Jaran structures his analysis as a comparative reading of Pasolini's and Franz Fanon's views on what he calls "transnational humanism." He particularly emphasizes the role of Algeria in the film, arguing that Algeria allows Pasolini to shift his discourse from the particular to the universal.[65]

I believe these shifts of focus are typical of Pasolini's supranational universalism and for this reason, I consider *La rabbia* less as "the most ideological film on the Third-World" (Jaran, 51) and more a film on the very possibility of universalism. At the beginning of the film, Renato Guttuso explains that Pasolini will respond to the film's main question "senza seguire alcun filo cronologico e forse neppure logico, esponendo soltanto le [sue] ragioni politiche e il [suo] sentimento poetico."[66] One of the effects of Pasolini's analogical editing in the film is to present the sensibility of a poet exposed to dramatic and historic events that affect him while occurring worldwide.[67] Similarly, Carla Benedetti noticed that Pasolini's comments on war in Hungary and Cuba invite the viewer to go beyond the limits of history and think about the deeper meaning that death has for humans, with no discrimination between those who lose and those who win. Thus, for example, the sequences on the Cuban revolution are less about political support of the

[64] Pasolini and Guareschi, *La rabbia*, min. 8:27. Ibid in the script.

[65] "L'Algeria, in questa prospettiva, non è solo un modello, bensì una fase intermedia che permette a Pasolini di spostarsi dall'universale (mondo diviso tra nord e sud) al particolare (Algeria) e da qui nuovamente all'universale." Jaran, "Pasolini, Fanon, e l'umanesimo transnazionale," 55.

[66] Pasolini and Guareschi, *La rabbia*, min. 1:35.

[67] On Pasolini being deeply struck by Marylin Monroe's death, see Annovi, "Marilyn's Ashes."

revolution, and more of a tragic statement on the horror of any war.[68] Benedetti stresses Pasolini's sense of pity that she associates with the formal features of the Greek tragedy; I see pity as the ultimate form of Pasolini's supranational universalism that in *La rabbia* reaches the level of a global reflection on humanity as a whole.

As I have shown in other cases where a supranational universalism informs Pasolini's "local" visions, here we have once again a supranational ideal that "absorbs" the potential conflict between the local and the global. In particular, Pasolini tries to reconcile the legitimate, local cause of the wars for independence with his universalist, pitiful vision. The final sequence of the film is crucial in this regard: the footage shows the first human journey beyond the stratosphere of Russian cosmonaut Jurij Alekseevič Gagarin, on April 12, 1961. The voiceover describes his flight as follows: "Volo a Occidente, e il mio volo / Assorbe nel mio cuore buono, Il male che domina nel mondo."[69] At the end of his trip, Gagarin has an important public meeting with Khrushchev. His report to the first Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union consists of three points, explained in verses. The first point is that the mission he has just accomplished will be the new mission of humankind, and especially the mission of politicians and poets. The second point is that flying makes humans equal. In outer space, humans are all brothers, whether middle class or workers, intellectuals or sub-proletarian, Russians or Americans. Gagarin [alias Pasolini] recognizes that it might be an illusion, and that the struggle of many desperate beings is real ("miliardi di miseri / abbarbicati alla terra / come disperati insetti"), but his flight has opened deeper wounds ("piaghe più profonde sulla crosta della terra"). The third point is that in the sky there should be only room for brotherhood and peace. The

[68] Benedetti, "La rabbia di Pasolini," 43–44.

[69] Pasolini and Guareschi, *La rabbia,* min. 47:24.

revolution needs a spiritual war, and not the war of the old, bloody streets of Earth: "Compagni e nemici, / Uomini politici e poeti! / La Rivoluzione vuole una sola Guerra, / Quella dentro gli spiriti / Che abbandonano al passato / Le vecchie, sanguinati strade della terra."[70] Embracing a global perspective, which the first journey in outer space has made historically possible, Pasolini aims at a universal ideal of peace that will eventually absorb or overcome local tensions. While he is aware of the difficulties of this preposition, a supranational universalism works in *La rabbia* as a structural principle and ultimate ideological perspective towards which Pasolini unfolds his poetic vision.

A few years later, *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966) also address global universalism and the need to reconcile it with "local" issues, which appear in the form of class conflict and within the ideological context of Marxism. When the film was first screened, Pasolini described *Uccellacci e uccellini* as an armless, delicate, and reserved film that looked like nothing he had done before.[71] Directing popular comedian Totò and the spontaneous Ninetto Davoli, Pasolini knew his film would confuse the audience's expectations.[72] Loosely following the structure of a picaresque fable, *Uccellacci e uccellini* mixes the themes of Marxism and religion, while also

---

[70] Some of these lines were cut in the film, but here I am commenting on the complete version of the script, which in Italian reads as follows: "Torno dal cosmo, compagni. / Il mio primo dovere è dirvi /che la missione da me compiuta / È la nuova missione degli uomini. / La mia umile esperienza di tecnico / riassume ora quella che sarà la vostra, / Quella dei vostri nemici, / Quella dei capi politici / E quella dei poeti. / Gli uomini sono uguagliati dal volo, / Affratellati dall'altezza. / E questo è il mio secondo dovere dirvi: / da lassù, compagno Krusciov, / Tutti mi erano fratelli, / Borghesi e operai, / Intellettuali e sottoproletari, / Russi e americani! / Lo so, compagno Krusciov, / Ch'era un'illusione degli occhi, / E che anzi più immense / E irrimediabile, / Era l'abisso tra noi / Che volavamo nel cosmo, / E I miliardi di miseri / Abbarbicati alla terra / Come disperati insetti. / Il nostro volo ha riaperto / Piaghe più profonde sulla crosta della terra: / E questo è il mio terzo dovere dirvi, / Compagni e nemici, / Capi politici e poeti. / Perciò bisogna che le strade del cielo / Siano strade di fraternità e di pace: / Dirvi questo è il mio ultimo e più grande dovere. / Perché, compagni e nemici, / Uomini politici e poeti! / La Rivoluzione vuole una suola Guerra, / Quella dentro gli spiriti / Che abbandonano al passato / Le vecchie, sanguinati strade della terra." Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 1, 403-404.

[71] "Lettera aperta," Appendice a *Uccellacci e uccellini*, Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 1, 830-831.

[72] Ibid.

depicting the desolate landscape of the peripheries of Rome, and the hardship of the people who inhabit it. A speaking crow who represents a surrogate of Pasolini in the film embodies the ideological crisis of Marxism after the death of Palmiro Togliatti in 1964. The crow shares his thoughts with Ninetto and Totò who treat him with respect, but eventually decide to eat him.

In the article "'ISTAMBUL KM. 4,253': attraverso il Mediterraneo di Pier Paolo Pasolini," Gian Maria Annovi develops an important analysis of *Uccellacci e uccellini's* script, in particular of the episode "L'uomo bianco" that Pasolini eventually decides to cut from the film. The conclusion of Annovi's analysis is that *Uccellacci e uccellini* was originally meant to focus strongly on the "Third World" and colonization, particularly with a representation of the relationship of the colonized with the colonizers as animals trapped in a zoo. Although "L'uomo bianco" was removed for commercial reasons, references to the "Third World" still remain evident in the film through absurd streets signs, signaling the distance in kilometers from remote places such as Istanbul and Cuba. Annovi inserts Istanbul into his discussion of a Mediterranean topography in Pasolini, while he reminds us that at that moment, Cuba was an important reference point for international Marxism, to which Pasolini had also paid homage in *La rabbia*. Annovi explains how the editing helps create a connection between sub-proletarians of the Roman periphery and the "Third World" through the theme of hunger.[73] In particular, the "Third World" is represented in the film by a circus crew including people from Africa and Southern Italy.[74]

My suggestion is to read the reference to the "Third World" in the film in light of the supranational universalism that, in Pasolini's view, should solve the crisis of (Italian) Marxism

[73] Bazzocchi has also emphasized the theme of hunger in Bazzocchi, *I burattini filosofi*, 57–82.

[74] Annovi, "'ISTAMBUL KM. 4,253': attraverso il Mediterraneo di Pier Paolo Pasolini," 2–6.

after the death of Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Palmiro Togliatti, in 1964.[75] When presenting the film as the investigation of an ideological crisis, Pasolini does not announce the end of Marxism but rather hints at a new global perspective that will refresh and reinvigorate Marxism for the younger generations:

> La crisi del marxismo della Resistenza e degli anni Cinquanta – poeticamente, quello anteriore alla morte di Togliatti – patita e vista da un marxista, dall'interno; niente affatto però disposto a credere che il marxismo sia finito (dice il Corvo: "Non piango sulla fine delle mie idee, ché certamente verrà qualcun altro a prendere la mia bandiera e a portarla avanti! Piango su di me…"). Non è finito, naturalmente, nella misura in cui sappia accettare molte nuove realtà (adombrate nel film: lo scandalo del Terzo Mondo, i Cinesi, e soprattutto, l'immensità della storia umana e la fine del mondo, con l'implicata religiosità, che sono l'altro tema del film).[76]

From Pasolini's point of view, the "Third World" appears as a "scandal," a key word in Pasolini's poetics and biography, which in this context describes the unexpected political pressure from global peripheries that forces Western intellectuals of the "First World" to enlarge their narrow/national perspectives.[77] In this way we can understand the marginal and yet key presence of the "Third World" in the film. The "Third World" appears in the form of street signs on the road walked incessantly by Totò and Ninetto, as a real possibility or an actual direction to take. The circus crew represents the unexpected "scandal" of the "Third World": they are

---

[75] "Per chi avesse dei dubbi, o si fosse distratto, ricordiamo che il Corvo è un intellettuale di sinistra – diciamo così – di prima della morte di Palmiro Togliatti…" Pasolini, *Uccellacci e uccellini* min. 46:50.

[76] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 1, 831.

[77] On the "scandal" of the "Third World" see Pasolini: "È ben presente a tutti, infatti, che questi sono gli anni in cui il mondo contadino di tutta la terra - il Terzo Mondo - si sta affacciando alla storia (con un piede nella preistoria): e lo *scandalo* è che dopo i sia pur grandiosi episodi della rivolta algerina e della rivolta cubana, il centro della lotta per la rivoluzione del Terzo Mondo è proprio l'America. Il problema negro, unito in modo così contorto e inestricabile a quello dei «bianchi poveri» (in numero enorme, superiore a quello che noi crediamo), è un problema del Terzo Mondo. E se ciò è *scandaloso* per la coscienza operaistica dei partiti comunisti europei lo è ancora di più per la coscienza capitalistica americana, che si crede oggettivamente sulla strada sgombra del progresso tecnico e dell'opulenza economica." "Guerra civile," Appendice a *Empirismo Eretico*, in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura* e *sull'arte*, 1433 (Italics mine). The biographic relevance of the "scandal" in Pasolini is of course linked to his contradictory relationship with Gramsci in *Le ceneri di Gramsci* ("Lo scandalo del contraddirmi, dell'essere / con te e contro te…" in Pasolini, Siti, and Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, v.1, 820.) and to the "scandal" of homosexuality in Ramuscello, Friuli for which he was expelled by the Italian Communist Party in November 1949 (see Belpoliti, *Pasolini in salsa piccante*, 19–27.)

detached from the rest of the society; Totò covers Ninetto's eyes when the young woman of the crew gives birth on the ground, and we learn that she will most likely abandon her child at a church; Totò is scammed by the crew who sells him cheap cosmetics instead of a callus cure. Despite its marginality, the "Third World" is not at odds with the universalist perspective assumed in the film; on the contrary, it is the very response to the film's essential question on the future of Marxism.

The "Third World" is the answer to the question on the crisis of Marxism that the film develops aiming at a universalist and global perspective. The film introduces this global perspective by presenting the two errant protagonists Totò and Ninetto as representative of a universal "storia umana" or "umanità." This global subjectivity is evoked in the first scene of the film where the two protagonists appear walking on the street in an extreme long shot, and an ironic text on the screen reports the supposed nutshell of an interview of Edgard Snow with Mao, who confesses that the future of the entire humanity is uncertain..[78] The two actors at this point appear as unrecognizable human silhouettes and therefore cannot but stand for the representatives of the humanity evoked through the quotation on the screen. The film credits also suggest this global, or even earthy perspective as the camera focuses on clouds shading the moon in a dark night.[79] Similarly, the singing voice introducing the credits explain: "Trovati *per le strade del mondo* tutti gli altri attori."[80] The geographic vagueness of Pasolini's topography alludes to a universal take on humanity and Pasolini's ambition to transcend spatial barriers through his supranational universalism.

---

[78] "Dove va l'umanità? Boh!" And below: "Succo di un'intervista di MAO a Mr. Edgard Snow." Pasolini, *Uccellacci e uccellini*, min. 2:11. Edgard Snow is author of *Red Star Over China* (1937), the first Western investigation of the Communist Party of China.

[79] Pasolini, *Uccellacci e uccellini*, min. 0:22.

[80] Pasolini, Uccellacci e uccellini, min. 0:38. Italics mine.

The questioning and ironic tone of Mao's quote finds a countermelody in the fable inserted within the film, in the form of a story that the crow narrates to Totò and Ninetto, and which transforms the same actors into Frate Ciccillo and Frate Ninetto, living in the 1200s. Frate Ciccillo and Frate Ninetto live in Assisi where Saint Francis assigns them the mission of evangelizing to two different species of birds, hawks and sparrows, which Saint Francis refers to as "classi." It takes great patience, creativity, and effort on the part of Frate Ciccillo and Frate Ninetto to accomplish their mission. When they finally think the evangelization has been accomplished, the hawks attack the sparrows again, as if their predatory nature was too strong for the two friars' preaching. Frate Ciccillo and Frate Ninetto report to Saint Francis, but the latter is not demoralized by the bad news. Confidently looking straight to the camera, Saint Francis urges the two friars to start their mission over again, and not to give up on their hope to change the world. Here are Saint Francis's words, which, according to Pasolini himself, quote Pope Paul VI's 1965 speech to the United Nations:

> Sappiamo che la giustizia è progressiva e sappiamo che man mano che progredisce la società si sveglia la coscienza della sua imperfetta composizione e vengono alla luce le disuguaglianze stridenti e imploranti che affliggono l'umanità. Non è forse questa avvertenza della disuguaglianza tra classe e classe, tra nazione e nazione, la più grande minaccia della pace? Andate e ricominciate tutto da capo![81]

In the words of Saint Francis, the conflict between hawks and sparrows evokes the social inequalities dividing different social classes and nations worldwide. But Saint Francis' message—which can be read in parallel to Mao's previous question in the film— is not to give

[81] Pasolini, *Uccellacci e uccellini*, min. 45:34. Pasolini claims that the quote derives directly from Paul VI's speech to the United Nations. See Pasolini in "La trama secondo l'autore," Pasolini et al., *Per il cinema I*, 833: "Le esortazioni che San Francesco rivolge, nel film, all'anziano frate racchiudono le medesime considerazioni sulla pace e la non-violenza che Papa Paolo VI ha annunciato all'assemblea delle Nazioni Unite." I have been unable to locate the exact source of Pasolini's quotation. The quote appears in a speech to the Council dated October 6, 1975. Here the pope says he quotes himself from a speech to the Council from the previous day. The meeting with the United Nations was instead on October 4, two days earlier. Paul VI, "Udienza generale, 6 ottobre1965 | Paolo VI."

up hope, and to keep working for global change. *Uccellacci e uccellini* adopts a new approach to the question of universalism, where Marxist ideology is to be scrutinized in its possibility to achieve a universal meaning. The faith embodied by Saint Francis is that the local conflicts of particular groups of people—being in the form of classes or nations— can be overcome in the name of global solidarity. It is significant that Pasolini intends Saint Francis to quote a diplomatic message from Pope Paul VI in a film on the crisis of Marxism. I delve into this topic in the next section, where I focus on Pasolini's relationship with the supranational universalism promoted by the Vatican through the papacies of John XXIII and Paul VI.

2.4. Pasolini and the Supranational Universalism of Pope John XXIII

Marxist readings of Pasolini's political engagement with the struggles of the "Third World" have stressed Pasolini's support of decolonization and his internationalism without delving much into the intertwining of Marxist and Christian elements that inform Pasolini's view. One example is Cesare Casarino's article "The Southern Answer: Pasolini, Universalism, Decolonization" (2010) and his reading of the poem "Profezia."[82] Casarino presents the 1962 poem "Profezia" as central to Pasolini's ideological view on universalism and decolonization. In "Profezia," Casarino writes, Pasolini disregards national and cultural specificities to imagine and articulate "the southern answer to the southern question: Southerners of the World—Unite!"[83] Casarino's main argument for why Pasolini should be considered part of the literatures of decolonization is not *despite* his Orientalism and Eurocentrism, but rather (and paradoxically) *because of it*. Reading Pasolini's poetry along the revolutionary tradition of Toussaint Louverture, Karl Marx,

[82] Casarino, "The Southern Answer," 673–96. "Profezia" in Pasolini, *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, 488–93.

[83] Casarino, "The Southern Answer," 696. See also Caminati, "Notes For A Revolution," 134.

and Leon Trotsky, Casarino claims that a "transnational universalism" informs Pasolini's works just as much as Guinean poet Sékou Touré's and Frantz Fanon's works. This transnational universalism, in Casarino's words, "recasts Gramsci's engagement with the southern question in global terms and hence points towards a universalism based on common potentials and common projects, rather than pointing towards the various essentialist and identitarian types of universalism."[84]

In the introduction I already explained how my take on Pasolini's universalism differs from Casarino's; in particular, I motivated my preference for the formula "supranational universalism" to give more prominence to the essentialist component of Pasolini's approach to the "Third World," and to explain how Pasolini's treatment of the "local" is always inserted in (if not sacrificed to) a larger, universalist vision. What I want to emphasize here is the primary importance of religious elements in "Profezia," which remain minimized if not overlooked in Casarino's article. A rich bibliography has stressed the importance of religion and the sacred in Pasolini's work.[85] While Pasolini himself often emphasizes the connection between Marxism and Christianism, it has not been clarified how the conjuncture of the two informs his universalism.[86] "Profezia" offers a fruitful starting point for this discussion.

"Profezia" appears in the first edition of the collection *Poesie in forma di rosa* (1964), later moved to the heterogeneous collection of short stories, scripts, and poetry *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, published by Garzanti in 1965. The poem, written during the last phase of the Algerian war, is dedicated to Jean-Paul Sartre and the story of Alì dagli occhi azzuri: Alì Z'yeux bleus, alias Mohamed Oudelhaan, militant of the Front de Libération Nationale killed in February 1958,

[84] Casarino, "The Southern Answer," 687–88.

[85] See Conti Calabrese, *Pasolini e il sacro*. Subini, *La necessità di morire*. Benini, *Pasolini: The Sacred Flesh*.

[86] "Marxismo e Cristianesimo," *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 786-824.

following the reconstruction by Gian Luca Picconi.[87] The prophecy that Pasolini develops in this poem is that of a revolutionary invasion of the North from what we would now call the Global South, where revolutionary crowds cross the Mediterranean from the shores of Africa, led by Alì dagli occhi azzurri, and joined by Italian Southerners. They head towards the main Western cities of Paris, Rome, London, and New York, where they bring destruction and wave Trotskyist flags.

The Gramscian component of the poem highlighted in Casarino's analysis lies in the confrontation of workers from Northern Italy and peasants from the South. Pasolini criticizes the progressive, accommodating attitude of the Northern workers' unions who struggle for their wages and yet do not understand the "wind" of change coming from the South, where farmers know the revolutionary spirit by instinct or rather by "grace." Casarino reads Pasolini's religious iconography as "vehicles for profoundly materialist historical insights," but I believe the religious elements in this poem are too prominent to not be seen as what they actually are.[88] First, "Profezia" was published within the section "Il libro delle croci" of the 1964 edition of *Poesie in forma di rosa*; like the other poems of the original section, it presents a series of calligrams in the form of a cross. The cross as a religious icon graphically shapes Pasolini's prophecy, therefore placing religion in the foreground of Pasolini's text. Second, the Southerners wandering with Trotskyist flags not only assemble in the name of Communism but also in the name of religion: sacraments and the Pope define the revolutionary group as it appears in the last lines of the poem:

> Poi col Papa e ogni sacramento
> andranno su come zingari
> verso nord-ovest

[87] Picconi, "Atena in Algeria tra profezia e regresso," 195.

[88] Casarino, "The Southern Answer," 693.

con le bandiere rosse
di Trotskij al vento…

In Pasolini's view, the crowd of Southerners invading the North is not only linked to a "Storia Antica" that equates different ethnic groups, but also to the observance of Christian practices and the reverence of the pope ("col papa e ogni sacramento").[89]

I believe the prominent presence of the pope in the conclusion of "Profezia" signals the influence of Christian universalism in Pasolini's utopian view. Gian Luca Picconi reminds us that the pope in "Prophecy" is most likely Pope John XXIII, whose papacy lasted between 1958-1963, overlapping with when Pasolini wrote this poem. Picconi also points at other references to John XXIII in the same collection.[90] The uplifting appearance of Pope John XXIII in Pasolini's poem could just be seen as a sign of Eurocentrism following Casarino's argument. However, "Profezia" is not the only time that Pope John XXIII appears in a positive lens in Pasolini's work. The film *La rabbia* I analyzed before dedicates a sequence to the death of Pope Pius XII—of whom Pasolini had a very negative opinion, as the poem "L'enigma di Pio XII" shows.[91] The footage of Pius XII's funeral is followed by the election of Pope John XXIII. Not only are Pasolini's comments on the election uplifting, but they also draw a direct connection between the pope and the unrepresented peoples of the "Third World" or "Mondo Antico":

> Ci saranno fumate bianche per Papa figli di contadini del Ghana o dell'Uganda, per Papa figli di braccianti indiani morti di peste nel Gange e per Papa figli di pescatori gialli morti di freddo nella Terra del Fuoco… il nuovo Papa nel suo dolce, misterioso sorriso di tartaruga, pare aver capito di dover esser il Pastore dei Miserabili; pescatori di pescecani, pastori di jene, cacciatori di avvoltoi, dei seminatori di ortiche, perché è loro il Mondo

[89] Pasolini, *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*, 491.

[90] Picconi, "Atena in Algeria tra profezia e regresso," 199.

[91] "L'enigma di Pio XII," *Trasumanar e organizzar*, in Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie,* v. 2, 17-25.

> Antico, e son essi che lo trascineranno Avanti nei secoli, con la storia della nostra grandezza.[92]

In *La rabbia* Pasolini presents Pope John XXIII as a humble figure who is willing to dedicate his papacy to the poorest people on Earth, those who still live in an ancient time, still remote from the time of modernity and industrial productivity that has already been transforming Italy. Pasolini speaks of Pope John XXIII's physical features in a humorous, benevolent way. His admiration for Pope John XXIII appears even more salient when he dedicates his film *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1963) to the "cara, lieta e familiare memoria di Giovanni XXIII." He will also praise the Pope's sense of humor, knowledge, and open-mindedness in the article "I 'motti' di Papa Giovanni," published in *Vie Nuove*, XIX on November 12, 1964.[93]

The importance of Pope John XXIII in Pasolini's vision of universalism for the "Third World," which I sketched above, signals the impact that Christian universalism has on Pasolini's work. In particular, I refer to the Vatican's attempt to present the Roman Catholic Church as a supranational, "universal" institution in the 1960s. Jacopo Cellini adopts such an historical perspective in his book *Universalism and Liberation: Italian Catholic Culture and the Idea of International Community, 1963-1978*, which presents the Catholic Church's efforts in overcoming their hostility towards modernity and finding a global voice during the central decades of the Cold War. In particular, Cellini argues that a shift towards a new idea of universalism occurs with the papacy of John XXIII, finds its momentum with the Second Vatican Council, and reaches a definitive political actualization with the arrival of Pope Paul VI: the first pope to officially recognize the authority of the United Nations in 1965.[94]

---

[92] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 383.

[93] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 120.

[94] Cellini, *Universalism and Liberation*, chap. 1.

Why was Pasolini so at ease with the figure of John XXIII and what role did he play, if any, in Pasolini's universalist view? John XXIII was the initiator of the Second Vatican Council and author of the speech *Pacem in Terris* (1963) where the Church opens an opportunity for dialogue with non-Catholics and states the importance of negotiation and peace among people on a global scale. In this encyclical the pope recognizes the importance of the United Nations as an organization working for the sake of peace and the recognition of individuals' universal rights. He also shows a welcoming attitude towards Communist countries since sins, he argues, should not be confused with sinners and each individual must be granted universal, inviolable, and inalienable rights.[95] With Pope John XXIII, anti-Communism, although still present within the Church, becomes a less-predominant mark of Catholic ideology, which now aims to speak beyond the global West-East and North-South cleavages.[96]

My hypothesis is that Pasolini was responsive to John XXIII's crucial role for the advancement of Catholic universalism and that in his view, Pope John's universalism matched his own utopic vision. In the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII addresses the problems of

[95] "Su qualche punto particolare della dichiarazione sono state sollevate obiezioni e fondate riserve. Non è dubbio però che il documento [Dichiarazione universale dei diritti dell'uomo, December 10, 1948] segni un passo importante nel cammino verso l'organizzazione giuridico-politica della comunità mondiale. In esso infatti viene riconosciuta, nella forma più solenne, la dignità di persona a tutti gli esseri umani; e viene di conseguenza proclamato come loro fondamentale diritto quello di muoversi liberamente nella ricerca del vero, nell'attuazione del bene morale e della giustizia; e il diritto a una vita dignitosa; e vengono pure proclamati altri diritti connessi con quelli accennati…. Auspichiamo pertanto che l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite — nelle strutture e nei mezzi — si adegui sempre più alla vastità e nobiltà dei suoi compiti; e che arrivi il giorno nel quale i singoli esseri umani trovino in essa una tutela efficace in ordine ai diritti che scaturiscono immediatamente dalla loro dignità di persone; e che perciò sono diritti universali, inviolabili, inalienabili. Tanto più che i singoli esseri umani, mentre partecipano sempre più attivamente alla vita pubblica delle proprie comunità politiche, mostrano un crescente interessamento alle vicende di tutti i popoli, e avvertono con maggiore consapevolezza di essere membra vive di una comunità mondiale." (§75); "Non si dovrà però mai confondere l'errore con l'errante, anche quando si tratta di errore o di conoscenza inadeguata della verità in campo morale religioso. L'errante è sempre ed anzitutto un essere umano e conserva, in ogni caso, la sua dignità di persona; e va sempre considerato e trattato come si conviene a tanta dignità." (§83) John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris (11 aprile 1963) | Giovanni XXIII."

[96] Cellini, *Universalism and Liberation*, 42–51.

the "Third World" while also connecting them to the alienation caused by capitalism. Thus for example, one of the paragraphs of the encyclical reads as follows:

> Come è noto, vi sono sulla terra paesi che abbondano di terreni coltivabili e scarseggiano di uomini; in altri paesi invece non vi è proporzione tra le ricchezze naturali e i capitali a disposizione. Ciò pure domanda che i popoli instaurino rapporti di mutua collaborazione, facilitando tra essi la circolazione di capitali, di beni, di uomini. Qui crediamo opportuno osservare che, ogniqualvolta è possibile, pare che debba essere il capitale a cercare il lavoro e non viceversa. In tal modo si offrono a molte persone possibilità concrete di crearsi un avvenire migliore senza essere costrette a trapiantarsi dal proprio ambiente in un altro; il che è quasi impossibile che si verifichi senza schianti dolorosi, e senza difficili periodi di riassestamento umano o di integrazione sociale.[97]

Pope John XXIII's message seems to accept the idea of a necessary development among nations leading towards an acceleration of globalization ("circolazione di capitali, di beni, di uomini"). But it also conveys a humanist attention to the alienation of workers, who are forced to migrate, to "trapiantarsi dal proprio ambiente in un altro" (literally translatable as: forced to *transplant* themselves from their natural environment to a new one). The metaphor of transplantation significantly anticipates the image of the "pianta trapiantata, dalle radici scoperte" (transplanted plant, with uncovered roots) of the poem "Sineciosi della diaspora" (1970) that Giovanna Trento analyzes as a sign of Pasolini's intuition of the diasporic condition of Africans and Jews, linked to his own biographic experience as a "diverso."[98] Moreover, Pope John XXIII's words in *Pacem in Terris* seem to implicitly respond to the official narrative on the development of the "Third World," which Arturo Escobar, among others, analyses as a cultural construct promoted by supranational institutions such as the United Nations after the war.[99] Thus, for example, it is useful to compare Pope John XXIII's quotation above with the famous 1951 speech by Harry Truman, which Escobar uses as a starting point for his analysis:

---

[97] John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris (11 aprile 1963) | Giovanni XXIII," §46, 47.

[98] Trento, *Pasolini e l'Africa*, 169–77.

[99] Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*.

> There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of caste, creed and race have to burst; and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of economic progress.[100]

Pope John XXIII speaks of "persone costrette a trapiantarsi," and suffering from "schianti dolorosi" rather than assuming that "large numbers of people… cannot keep up with progress" and therefore will have "expectations of a comfortable life frustrated," which is instead the perspective adopted by Truman. Through this briefly-sketched confrontation of the two speeches, we can see how Pope John XXIII's sensibility to the costs of development worldwide is very much in line with Pasolini's.

Other comments on Pope John XXIII's papacy and persona by Pasolini also support my analysis. In the 1964 essay "I 'motti' di Papa Giovanni" mentioned earlier, Pasolini writes: "I destinatari dei motti di Papa Giovanni, del suo humour, erano appunto, insieme, i contadini avanzati del Nord Italia e i tecnici del periodo del benessere: è davanti a questi spettatori ideali che Papa Giovanni ha dato al suo papato concretezza *universale*."[101] Pasolini praises Pope John XXIII for being able to fully live in his historical moment. He uses the adjective "universal" to describe the papacy of Pope John XXIII, and to praise the democratic approach that the pope reveals through his humor. In the proceedings of the 1964 conference with the Grimau Club in Brescia, later published with the title "Marxismo e Cristianesimo," Pasolini shares his optimism over the Second Vatican Council stating that within the council "c'è un gruppo di vescovi e cardinali che mi sembrano siano decisamente sulla strada di Giovanni XXIII, ed anzi vadano anche più avanti. Aggiungono, a quella che per Giovanni XXIII era una intuizione, un momento

[100] Ibid, 3.

[101] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 121. The italics are mine.

psicologico suo personale, meraviglioso, anche quella riflessione critica che in Giovanni XXIII naturalmente non poteva che non esserci." The Second Vatican Council inspires Pasolini with hope and he sees how the universal approach of Pope John XXIII is vividly present within the Catholic institution, considered in its ecumenical ambition and global scale. Finally, and most importantly, Pasolini praises a crucial aspect of Pope John's communicative skills that speaks directly of his universalism: his natural tendency for "non-discrimination." Pasolini comments on his decision to dedicate his *Vangelo secondo Matteo* to Pope John XXIII arguing that:

> Papa Giovanni XXIII non era capace psicologicamente di fare delle discriminazioni. Questo perché in lui si erano profondamente fusi e incrociati lo spirito Cristiano con lo spirito della democrazia. Uno che sia veramente Cristiano e sia veramente democratico non è capace di fare delle discriminazioni. Quindi quando si rivolgeva a dei comunisti si rivolgeva veramente a delle persone come lui; non riusciva a concepirli manicheisticamente come degli esseri diversi con cui non fosse possibile avere dei rapporti. E questo lo faceva con la massima naturalezza, appunto per aver vissuto profondamente la realtà del suo tempo.[102]

Non-discrimination is a crucial aspect of Pope John XXIII's papacy that has immediate effects on the geopolitical assets of the Cold War and that, in my view, inspires Pasolini's utopic universalism. Bringing these elements back to Casarino's reading of "Profezia," my point is that it is important to underline the Christian inspiration of Pasolini's universalism and also the essential role that the pope plays in Pasolini's view, as an ideological or political figure and a promoter of a (Christian) universalist prophecy for the Global South. This analysis also pushes us to pay more attention to the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and to the complex relationship that links Pasolini to John XXIII's successor, Pope Paul VI.

[102] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 796.

2.5. Pasolini and the Supranational Universalism of Pope Paul VI

In the 1964 conference "Marxismo e cristianesimo," Pasolini endorses Pope John XXIII's humoristic reference to Pope Paul VI as an "eminentissimo Amleto" and expresses a cautious opinion of the new pope: "sono, come tutti voi, in attesa."[103] Later, Pasolini develops a complex relationship with Pope Paul VI, one that implies self-identification, critique, and empathy. Pasolini compares the "simpatia" of Pope John XXIII and Paul VI in an interview with English journalist Peter Dragadze and published on *Gente* just after Pasolini's death:

> In realtà se io penso ciò che significa 'simpatia' (comunità di sentimenti) trovo che mi è piuttosto più simpatico Paolo VI, perché egli soffre quello che soffro io, e si comporta in quel modo complesso, difficile a capirsi, pieno di slanci e anche di contraddizioni, che è tipico di ogni intellettuale. Ciò che rende simpatico Paolo VI è la sua tormentata intelligenza: e il fatto che egli non abbia qualità esteriori di gradevolezza e appunto, di simpatia, fa quasi tenerezza.[104]

Pasolini recognizes a kindred soul in Paul VI for the complexity of his behavior, his tormented intellect, his leaps and contradictions. He explains his "sympathy" for Paul VI with the literal meaning of a sentimental community, the sharing of suffering that is the result of their intellectual beings. What I propose in this and the following section is to understand Pasolini's sympathy for Paul VI in reference to their shared ambition towards universalism, as a legacy they both derive from Pope John XXIII, and as a project that ultimately will imply contradictions, compromises, and "tormento intellettuale," to use Pasolini's own words.

Pasolini and Pope Paul VI share an interest in the "Third World" that they both project towards an ideal of global peace. Paul VI fully embraced the universalist approach inaugurated by John XXIII, embarking into innovative foreign policies for the Vatican.[105] Both before and

[103] Ibid, 798.

[104] Ibid, 869.

[105] Cellini, *Universalism and Liberation*, 55–56; 63.

after the outset of his papacy, Paul VI travels through much of the "Third World": Latin America (1960), Africa (1962), and later India and the Holy Land. According to Cellini, Paul VI opted for these apostolic voyages with the purpose of making his evangelism more effective and accessible to "all of mankind."[106] These travels clearly remind us of Pasolini's travels to India, Israel, and Palestine, where he hoped he would find the locations for his film *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1963).[107] Despite their different inspirations—evangelization for Paul VI, class struggle for Pasolini—this shared interest for "Third World" certainly facilitates Pasolini's self-identification with Paul VI, especially since Pasolini felt that only a few literary intellectuals had the same interest at that time.[108]

Paul VI is the first pope to directly engage in diplomatic dialogue with the United Nations (UN) in 1965, a political move that seemed unthinkable before the papacy of John XXIII. At that time, indeed, the Vatican would rather criticize and refuse recognition of this institution.[109] Accompanied by a "global" court of cardinals from France, Tanzania, Japan, Australia, and Armenia, Paul VI flew to San Francisco on October 4, 1965.[110] Making clear references to *Pacem in Terris*, Paul VI recognized the UN's supranational temporal powers. He

---

[106] Ibid., 56.

[107] Pasolini, *Sopralluoghi in Palestina*. Pasolini, *Per il cinema,* v. 1, 655-670; As it is well known, Pasolini ends up making his film in Southern Italy, as recalled in: Grasso, *Pasolini e il Sud*, 85–98. On Pasolini's dialogue with the Catholic Association Pro-Civitate Christiana during the production of the film, see Subini, "Il dialogo tra Pier Paolo Pasolini e la Pro Civitate Christiana."

[108] "Tutti i letterati italiani possono essere accusati di scarso interesse intellettuale per il Terzo Mondo: non io." Pasolini et al., *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 144. Elsa Morante and Alberto Moravia actually participated in some of Pasolini's travels to India and Africa, and Moravia was also particularly active in World Literature Projects such as the PEN International, "Association of World Writers," based in London. See Vanhove, "Conceptions of the World," 35–61. 35-61. On Third Worldism in Italy (with references to the papacy of Paul VI on p. 164-166), see Ottolini, "Dal soutien alla cooperazione."

[109] Cellini, *Universalism and Liberation*, 31–35.

[110] Ibid, 55-59.

also proclaimed a communality of intents stating that the two institutions equally pursue a universal mission:

> La vostra amicizia Ci ha invitati e Ci ammette ora a questa riunione: e come amici Noi qui a voi Ci presentiamo… Il Nostro messaggio vuol essere, in primo luogo, una ratifica morale e solenne di questa altissima Istituzione (1) … Voi esistete ed operate per unire le Nazioni, per collegare gli Stati; diciamo questa seconda formula: per mettere insieme gli uni con gli altri. Siete una Associazione. Siete un ponte fra i Popoli. Siete una rete di rapporti fra gli Stati. Staremmo per dire che la vostra caratteristica riflette in qualche modo nel campo temporale ciò che la Nostra Chiesa cattolica vuol essere nel campo spirituale: *unica ed universale*. (3)[111]

Paul VI's speech for the UN sealed a pact of friendship between two equally universal institutions. He endorsed the UN's political mission as negotiators among nations and promoters of global peace. Without claiming any temporal power, the Church presented themselves as ready to cooperate for the pursuit of the same goal. It is also important to notice how Paul VI praised the UN for admitting newborn countries who had recently achieved their independence from colonialism, and likewise praised their commitment to the progress and economic development of poor countries.[112]

Interestingly enough, Pasolini had already expressed his "friendship" with the UN in the script *Il Padre selvaggio* (1962), where Pasolini narrates the story of a European instructor in Kindy, Congo, at the time of a civil war.[113] In the script, which shows a problematic relationship

---

[111] Paul VI, "Visita alle Nazioni Unite: Discorso all'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite (4 ottobre 1965) | Paolo VI." Italics mine.

[112] "Noi sappiamo con quale crescente intensità ed efficacia l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, e gli organismi mondiali che ne dipendono, lavorino per fornire aiuto ai Governi, che ne abbiano bisogno, al fine di accelerare il loro progresso economico e sociale. Noi sappiamo con quale ardore voi vi impegniate a vincere l'analfabetismo e a diffondere la cultura nel mondo; a dare agli uomini una adeguata e moderna assistenza sanitaria, a mettere a servizio dell'uomo le meravigliose risorse della scienza, della tecnica, dell'organizzazione: tutto questo è magnifico, e merita l'encomio e l'appoggio di tutti, anche il Nostro. Vorremmo anche Noi dare l'esempio, sebbene l'esiguità dei Nostri mezzi ci impedisca di farne apprezzare la rilevanza pratica e quantitativa: Noi vogliamo dare alle Nostre istituzioni caritative un nuovo sviluppo in favore della fame e dei bisogni del mondo: è in questo modo, e non altrimenti, che si costruisce la pace." Ibid, (6).

[113] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v.1, 267-313.

with colonialism, highlighted by Pasquale Verdicchio, the teacher is connected to the UN soldiers from Europe who are operating in the country and attempts to pass this friendship to his pupils. [114] The plot is inspired by the 1961 assassination of UN soldiers from Italy in the Congo.[115] The script reaches a dramatic climax when local tribes, among which is the teacher's favorite student, kill and torture some of the UN soldiers. Insisting on the UN soldiers' friendship and the irrational, barbaric nature of the killing, the teacher assesses the student's guilt but also celebrates poetry as an opportunity to heal. Pasolini presents the UN as a supranational institution that is trustworthy, authoritative, and unfairly harmed during the unfolding of decolonization.

Pasolini's attention to Paul VI's universalism and his openness towards the UN is also evident in the 1966 film *Uccellacci e uccellini* where Pasolini quotes a speech that the pope addresses to this supranational institution.[116] In the third section, I introduced the significance of this reference in the film, dedicated to the crisis of Marxist ideology and framed within a universal perspective on global peace. Pasolini himself uses this film, and this quote in particular, to argue about the possible integration of Marxism and Christianity: "Ogni italiano è marxista così come ogni italiano è cattolico. Il prete intelligente analizza sempre la società in

[114] "The unfolding of the story within the screenplay narrates the passage from colonialism's inheritance to postcolonial condition, and the search for a language through which to express the transition. Pasolini's answers throughout the book may be less effective and adequate than the screenplay's function as a catalyst for them. Poetry and filmic images are what Pasolini proposes, which are not a problem within themselves. The problematic aspect of the teacher's remedy to colonialism is that it is not much more than a sort of neo-colonialism in the guise of progressive pedagogy. As well-intended as he may be, the teacher's language and attitude are blind to a sense of cultural determinism that hinders liberation and emphasizes colonial paradigms." Verdicchio in Pasolini, *The Savage Father*, 63.

[115] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v.1, 3053-4.

[116] See footnote 78 above. I copy the same quote here for convenience: "Sappiamo che la giustizia è progressiva e sappiamo che man mano che progredisce la società si sveglia la coscienza della sua imperfetta composizione e vengono alla luce le disuguaglianze stridenti e imploranti che affliggono l'umanità. Non è forse questa disuguaglianza tra classe e classe, tra nazione e nazione, la più grande minaccia della pace?"

termini marxisti. Lo fa persino il Papa. Una frase usata da Paolo VI che misi nel mio *Uccellacci e uccellini* fu creduta da tutti una frase di Marx."[117] The ambiguity between Marxism and Christianity that Pasolini reads within Paul VI's message to the UN is reinforced by the words used to introduce the quote, since Saint Francis refers to Paul VI as "un uomo dagli occhi azzurri." The reference to Paul VI's blue eyes are not only a hint at the actuality of Paul VI's message but also a striking coincidence with the blue eyes of Alì in "Profezia." This symbolic coincidence helps us read the universalism analyzed by Casarino in "Profezia" and the universalism preached during the papacies of John XXIII and Paul VI as working in parallel, if not in unison, in Pasolini's view.[118]

Striking similarities between Pasolini's and Paul VI's interpretation of contemporary society can be read in Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* of March 21, 1967.[119] Cellini calls this encyclical "one of the most progressive documents of the whole papacy," with "a tremendous impact on public opinion well beyond the boundaries of Catholicism."[120] In this encyclical, Paul VI presents social justice as the main issue that the Church, as a universal institution, needs to tackle. He recalls his informative travels and announces the foundation of a new program dedicated to social justice in "Third World" countries. Then, he starts analyzing the problems linked to social inequality worldwide, including the legacy of colonialism, nationalism, and racism: all topics that interested Pasolini immensely.

---

[117] "Pasolini su Pasolini: Conversazioni con Jon Halliday [1968-1971] in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1294.

[118] On Pasolini's obsession for blue eyes, with reference to the Greek goddess Athena, see Picconi, "Atena in Algeria tra profezia e regresso," 194.

[119] Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio (26 marzo 1967) | Paolo VI."

[120] Cellini, *Universalism and Liberation*, 71.

But it is when Paul VI describes the negative effects of capitalism that one hears the most striking similarities between Pasolini's and Paul VI's sensitivity to social change. Two points, in particular, seem particularly familiar to Pasolini's reader: 1) The acquired self-awareness of the poor social classes, particularly the peasants, who finally see their disadvantaged status: "La viva inquietudine, che si è impadronita delle classi povere nei paesi in fase di industrializzazione, raggiunge ora quelli che hanno una economia quasi esclusivamente agricola: i contadini *prendono coscienza*, anch'essi, della loro "miseria immeritata."[121] 2) The clash of traditional and modern styles of living, resulting in generational conflicts and the abandonment of the past: "Dentro l'ambito, spesso rigido, di tali strutture s'inquadrava la vita personale e familiare, che trovava in esse il suo indispensabile sostegno, e i vecchi vi rimangono attaccati, mentre i giovani tendono a liberarsene, come d'un ostacolo inutile, per volgersi evidentemente verso nuove forme di vita sociale."[122]

A point of convergence, but also of potential tension lies towards the end of the encyclical. Paul VI praises the value of charity, which he draws from the Apostle Paul.[123] In the encyclical, however, Paul VI also states that "sviluppo è il nuovo nome della pace."[124] Pasolini, on the contrary, makes "sviluppo" a keyword in his argument against capitalism and the compliance of the Church. Thus, in his plea against the Church in the 1970s, Pasolini accuses the

[121] *Ibid* §9, Italics mine. Speaking of the "anthropological revolution" changing Italian society in 1974, Pasolini will similarly explain that "I ragazzi del popolo sono tristi perché hanno preso coscienza della propria inferiorità sociale, visto che i loro valori e i loro modelli culturali sono stati distrutti." Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 332. Italics mine.

[122] Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio (26 marzo 1967) | Paolo VI." §10. This point anticipates not only Pasolini's strenuous defense of the past, but also his comments on the intergenerational conflicts caused by the new hedonistic lifestyle promoted by consumerism. On this topic see Chianese, *Mio padre si sta facendo un individuo problematico*, 217–33.

[123] Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio (26 marzo 1967) | Paolo VI." §76.

[124] Ibid.

latter of *lack* of charity and stresses the difference between "sviluppo" (which he understands as consumerism) and "progresso" (a general improvement of civil society, that Italy is still missing).[125]

Criticizing the Church, Pasolini nevertheless maintains his opinion of Paul VI and sees a split between Paul VI's sensitivity—which he believes is similar to his own—and his role as the guarantor of the Church. In so doing, Pasolini grasps the inner contradiction embedded in Paul VI's project of universalism, since speaking *for all* implies compromises and the impossibility to pick a side, even though it is clear that the Church's call would be to stand with the poor:

> Il Cattolicesimo oggi è occupato soprattutto a sopravvivere... la Chiesa Cattolica ha capito che per sopravvivere deve insieme: a) essere la Chiesa del Terzo Mondo, ossia tornare alle origini contadine e povere; b) essere la Chiesa del mondo industrializzato, capitalista o comunista, che ha esigenze religiose di tipo del tutto nuovo. Sono due necessità assolutamente contraddittorie.[126]

Indeed, the Church had to face the contradiction noticed by Pasolini when the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* became extremely popular in Latin America, and Liberation theologians started interpreting the pope's engagement in social justice as a green light for an active participation in the fight against authoritarian regimes in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Mexico, and Peru.[127] The culture of Liberation understood the problems of the "Third World" as being exclusive to the "Third World." As they did not count on the support of international organizations to solve local conditions of oppression, they advocated the need for local priests to pick the right side in civil wars. In fact, Paul VI did not keep his radical position for long, and later refused to declare explicit support for revolution, moving towards a more conservative approach in the 1970s.

---

[125] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 302; 514.

[126] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 864.

[127] Cellini, *Universalism and Liberation*, 76–84.

Pasolini does not seem particularly engaged in these discussions on Liberation theology and rather focuses his attacks on the Church on their compliance with "sviluppo" as consumerism. However, references to the revolutionary discourses agitating the Church at the time appear in an article entitled "Le critiche del Papa" and published in the column "Il caos" of *Il tempo* on September 20, 1968. In this article, Pasolini shows his awareness of the debate happening within the Church and discussing the Church's position towards Latin America.[128] Hence Pasolini develops a reflection on the possibility to have a schism within the Catholic Church and involving Pope Paul VI. Quoting Saint Paul, he explains that many regimes can promote faith and hope, as the Catholic Church does, and as Nazism did as well. However, only charity can guarantee the existence of real democracy. He continues: "Lo scisma verrebbe dunque a dividere la Chiesa cattolica in due tronconi: nel primo resterebbero solo la fede e la speranza, cioè le due informi e cieche forze del potere; nel secondo resterebbero la fede e la speranza con la carità… Paolo VI è il papa di questo scisma potenziale e rinviato: che rende fatalmente, chi lo vive, ambiguo."[129]

The ambiguity of Pope Paul VI living an historical moment where there is the potential for a revolution, and where he decides nevertheless to preserve his institution by passively accepting the power of capitalism, is at the core of Pasolini's idea for the script *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, which I analyze in the next and final section.

[128] Pasolini comments on an article reporting news of a letter drafted by Cardinal Giovanni Cicognani and inspired by Paul VI. Cicognani criticizes the "democrazia… solo formale" of Italy, alluding to the possibility of transforming the Italian constitution, and the urgent need for deep social transformation, as in Latin America. Moreover, Cicognani alludes to the Church's opposition against a tyrannical power. Pasolini is thrilled by Cicognani's letter, which he only reads indirectly through a source that, on the contrary, harshly criticizes it.

[129] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 1123.

2.6. *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* or the Crisis of Pasolini's Universalism

Pasolini drafted the screenplay *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* in the years 1966-1974, but it never became a film, for reasons that remain unexplained by the author.[130] The fascination for Saint Paul marks a long series of Pasolini's works including the film *Teorema* (1968), the poetic collection *Trasumanar e organizzar* (1971), the script in verses *Bestemmia* (1962-1967), and the unfinished novel *Petrolio* (1972-1975).[131] Pasolini is interested in the duplicity of Saint Paul: the recipient of a liberating, mystic experience, as well as the founder of a conformist, repressive Church. In Pasolini's view, Saint Paul is responsible for institutionalizing a revolution, namely the Christian Revolution, which was so powerful at its origins to defeat the law of the Roman Empire and challenge the social system of slavery.[132] Yet, transforming Jesus Christ's message into an organized religion came with the cost of re-introducing the rigidity of the Law through the inauguration of a new conformist and intransigent code of behavior.

Pasolini is neither the first nor the last non-theologian intellectual to be inspired by the figure of Saint Paul. According to Sonia Gentili, Pasolini could not but be aware of the prolific philosophical discussion on Saint Paul unfolding in the aftermath of World War II, and engaging authors as diverse as Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt.[133] This vivid discussion has continued through the present and has stimulated interventions by radical contemporary thinkers including

---

[130] Pasolini completes a summary of the project for the producers of Sanpaolofilm in 1966. The first version of the script is dated May 22-28, 1968. Pasolini makes corrections in 1974; the script is published for the first time after Pasolini's death, in 1977 (Einaudi). Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 3151-3153. For a reconstruction of the script's development see also Elizabeth Castelli's "Introduction: Translating Pasolini Translating Paul" in Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, xv–xviii.

[131] For a crossed reading of the last three of these works with the script *San Paolo* see Gentili, "La Legge di san Paolo e la storia del Novecento in Pasolini." On *Teorema* see Grandelis, "Teorema e San Paolo. Citazioni pasoliniane fra cinema e letteratura."

[132] "Marxismo e Cristianesimo," *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 820.

[133] In particular, Schmitt had theorized the connection between Saint Paul and Nazism. Gentili, "La Legge di san Paolo e la storia del Novecento in Pasolini," 561–62.

Jacob Taubes, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, and Giorgio Agamben.[134] Among all of these contributors, I would like to specifically recall Alain Badiou, not only because of his notes on Pasolini's script, but also for his interpretation of Saint Paul through the lens of universalism.

Alain Badiou writes that "no one has better illuminated the uninterrupted contemporaneousness of Paul's prose" than Pasolini.[135] For Badiou, the specificity of Pasolini's account of Saint Paul is the contrast between the ahistoricism of Saint Paul's message, which Pasolini reports unaltered from the *New Statement* (*Acts of the Apostles* and Paul's *Letters*), and the contemporary setting in which the story of Saint Paul is told: starting from the occupation of France by the Nazis, Pasolini presents Paul as a partisan going through different phases of evangelization and clandestine struggle until the years of American imperialism, with a sequence introducing Paul's assassination in New York.[136] Badiou comments on the friction between the historical time of the setting and the ahistorical time of Saint Paul's message in Pasolini. He writes that "the universal value of the core of Paul's thought, as well as of the timelessness of his prose, successfully undergoes this artistic trail, and Paul emerges strangely victorious."[137]

Badiou's interpretation of Pasolini's script is interesting to me because, as I have already noted in the context of Casarino's reading of "Profezia," it is one case where a Marxist reading of Pasolini's universalism underplays the role of Christian universalism, as promoted by Pope John XXIII and Paul VI. Being himself interested in Paul as a figure of political militancy,

[134] As much as Hegel, A. Compte, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger etc. before them. See Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 5.

[135] Ibid, 36.

[136] Pasolini speaks about the "violenza temporale" he enforces on Saint Paul's life for the purpose of showing the presence of Saint Paul in the contemporary world: "San Paolo è qui, oggi, tra noi." Pasolini, *Per il cinema,* v.2, 2023.

[137] Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 39.

Badiou acknowledges the great importance that the Christian reference played in Pasolini's work, but he treats it as a signifier for Pasolini's and his own Marxism when he states:

> Paul is one of the possible historical names of the tension between fidelity to the founding event of a new cycle of the True (*metaphorically*, the resurrection of Christ; *actually*, the communist revolution) and the rapid exhaustion, under the cross of the world, of the pure subjective energy (holiness, or totally disinterested militancy) that the concrete realization of this fidelity would demand.[138]

Badiou presents the resurrection of Christ as a "metaphor" that *stands for* the communist revolution, establishing a clear epistemic hierarchy between the theological and the political, similar to Casarino. In Badiou's reading of Pasolini's St. Paul, the religious message is only one of the possible circumstances where the truth overcomes the singularity of one individual to attain the level of the universal.

To be sure, in *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, Pasolini is addressing the frustrating cost of transforming *any* religious or political movement into an institution. Badiou's statement echoes Pasolini's own words in the script when 1) a character refers to Saint Paul as a dangerous "fondatore di *Chiese*," (with "Chiese" in the plural form); 2) Saint Paul himself says "Il nostro è un movimento organizzato… *Partito, Chiesa… chiamalo come vuoi*;" and 3) Luke, the main narrator of Paul's life in the *New Testament*, says: "Con *ogni istituzione* nascono le azioni diplomatiche e le parole eufemistiche. / Con *ogni istituzione* nasce un patto con la propria coscienza. / Con *ogni istituzione* nasce la paura del compagno."[139]

However, Pasolini clarifies that in the script "the story of two Pauls is narrated: the saint and the priest… I am all for the saint, while I am certainly not very tender toward the priest."[140]

---

[138] Ibid, vii, x.

[139] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 1996, 1974, 1919. Italics mine.

[140] "…ui si narra la storia di due Paoli, il santo e il prete… io sono tutto per il santo, mentre non sono certo molto tenero con il prete." Letter to Don Emilio Cordero, June 9, 1968 in Pasolini, *Lettere: 1955-1975*, 639.

Badiou, on the contrary, refuses to see Saint Paul as a saint or apostle, but only thinks of him as a militant.[141] As I argued in the case of "Profezia," I believe that Christian references are more than a rhetorical device in Pasolini's universalism. For one thing, Pasolini conceived *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* as a reflection on the universal need for Christian charity and as a commentary on Pope Paul VI's papacy.

Pasolini's anti-clericalism and the critique of Pope Paul VI's papacy become prominent in the script through the additions that Pasolini makes to the script in 1974.[142] These additions include changes in the plot, with the insertion of Satan and devils surrounding Luke, who, as the author of the *Acts of the Apostles,* is responsible for the establishment of the Church's official narrative.[143] Moreover, Pasolini adds references to interventions he had recently published in *Corriere della sera*, and where he explicitly criticizes Paul VI for not reacting against neo-capitalism.[144] Alessandra Grandelis commented on these articles stating that these self-quotations work in antithesis with the quotations that Pasolini inserts in the script from the *Acts of the Apostles* and Saint Paul's *Letters*: while Pasolini's self-quotations symbolize the historical time of the Church, the original passages from the *New Testament* stand for the mystical, sincere religious experience of the saint. The priest and the saint are equally represented in Pasolini's script. Not only the contemporary settings evoking Nazism and American capitalism, but also the articles in *Corriere della sera* ground the script in a historical contemporary framework, aiming to target and criticize the Church.

---

[141] Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 1.

[142] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v.2, 3152-3153.

[143] On the textual differences between the *Acts* by Luke and Paul's *Letters*, and Pasolini's free adaptation of both, see Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 48–51.

[144] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 2003.

One of the articles from *Corriere della sera* that Pasolini plans to insert in the script is "I dilemma del papa, oggi," published on September 22, 1974.[145] Here Pasolini comments on a discourse that Paul VI delivers in Castelgandolfo. Pasolini summarizes the pope's speech as an assessment of the history of the Church and its non-essential role in modern society. Pasolini stresses the similarities between the pope's thought and his own understanding of the crisis of the Church.[146] He argues that the pope's sincerity, which comes across strongly in this discourse, is at odds with the Church's agenda. The pope's encyclicals, Pasolini argues, have always been the fruit of a compromise between his anguish and the Vatican's diplomacy. But while Pasolini sees the pope stuck in his position and not really able to find a solution to the crisis of the Church, he sees in Paul VI's dilemma an opportunity for utopian revolution:

> Se molte e gravi sono state le colpe della Chiesa nella sua lunga storia di potere, la più grave di tutte sarebbe quella di accettare passivamente la propria liquidazione da parte di un potere che se la ride del Vangelo. In una prospettiva radicale, forse utopistica, o, è il caso di dirlo, millenaristica, è chiaro dunque ciò che la Chiesa dovrebbe fare per evitare una fine ingloriosa. Dovrebbe passare all'opposizione contro un potere che l'ha cosi cinicamente abbandonata, progettando, senza tante storie, di ridurla a puro folclore. Dovrebbe negare se stessa, per riconquistare i fedeli (o coloro che hanno un 'nuovo' bisogno di fede) che proprio per quello che essa è l'hanno abbandonata. Riprendendo una lotta che è peraltro nelle sue tradizioni (la lotta del Papato contro l'impero), ma non per la conquista del potere, la Chiesa potrebbe essere la guida, grandiose ma non autoritaria, di tutti coloro che rifiutano (e parla un marxista, proprio in quanto marxista) il nuovo potere consumistico che è completamente irreligioso; totalitario; violento; falsamente tollerante, anzi, più repressivo che mai; corruttore; degradante (mai più di oggi ha avuto senso l'affermazione di Marx per cui il capitale trasforma la dignità umana in merce di scambio). È questo rifiuto che potrebbe dunque

[145] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v.2, 350-355.

[146] "Dicendo che il recente discorsetto di Paolo VI è storico, intendo riferirmi all'intero corso della storia della Chiesa cattolica, cioè della storia umana (eurocentrica e culturocentrica, almeno). Paolo VI ha ammesso infatti esplicitamente che la Chiesa è stata superata dal mondo; che il ruolo della Chiesa è divenuto di colpo incerto e superfluo; che il Potere reale non ha più bisogno della Chiesa, e l'abbandona quindi a se stessa; che i problemi sociali vengono risolti all'interno di una società in cui la Chiesa non ha più prestigio; che non esiste più il problema dei 'poveri, cioè il problema principe della Chiesa ecc. ecc. Ho riassunto i concetti di Paolo VI con parole mie; cioè con parole che uso già da molto tempo per dire queste cose. Ma il senso del discorso di Paolo VI è proprio questo che ho qui riassunto: ed anche le parole non sono poi in conclusione molto diverse." Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 350-351.

> simboleggiare la Chiesa; ritornando alle origini, cioè all'opposizione e alla rivolta. O fare questo o accettare un potere che non la vuole più: ossia suicidarsi.[147]

Pasolini refers to a universalist utopia that the Church can potentially lead against the dehumanizing power of capitalism by retrieving its original revolutionary tradition. The Marxist critique of capitalism goes hand in hand with the universalism of Christianity, as there is nothing worse for Christianity than the disenchanted, pervasive, and nihilist power of capitalism.[148] We need to understand this article as the ideological core of the script, since Pasolini refers to it as an "Intervista in cui si parla del senso di fare il film su san Paolo."[149]

Badiou shares this utopian, anti-capitalist view of Pasolini's universalism in his Saint Paul, la fondation de l'universalisme (1998). His interpretation of Saint Paul's universalism is summarized in the following passage:

> What does Paul want? Probably to drag the Good News (the Gospels) out from the rigid enclosure within which its restriction to the Jewish community would confine it. But equally, never to let it be determined by the available generalities, be they statist… or ideological. Statist generally belongs to Roman legalism, and to Roman Citizenship in particular, to its conditions and the rights associated to it. Although himself a Roman citizen, and proud of it, Paul will never allow any legal categories to identify the Christian subject. Slaves, women, people of every profession and nationality will therefore be admitted without restriction or privilege. As for ideological generality, it is obviously represented by the philosophical and moral discourse of the Greeks. Paul will establish a resolute distance from his discourse, which is for him the counterpoise to the conservative vision of Jewish law. Ultimately, it is a case of mobilizing a universal singularity both against the prevailing abstractions (legal, then, economic now) and against communitarian or particularist protest.[150]

---

[147] Ibid, 353-354.

[148] See also Pasolini: "… vorrei dire tuttavia che il 'contrario' della religione non è il comunismo (che, benché abbia preso dalla tradizione borghese lo spirito laico e positivistico, è in fondo molto religioso); ma il 'contrario' della religione è il capitalismo (spietato, crudele, cinico, puramente materialistico, causa di sfruttamento dell'uomo sull'uomo, culla del culto del potere, covo orrendo del razzismo)." Ibid, 859.

[149] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 2003. Italics mine.

[150] Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 13–14.

In Badiou's view, Saint Paul founded universalism because he stated a truth that, coming from the experience of a singular subject (his mystic experience), was transferred to *anyone*, despite their particularities (differences in gender, race, economic or legal status, nationality). Saint Paul would not rely on the generalization offered by the Roman Law or ideology (he speaks of Saint Paul as an anti-philosopher, opposed to the modes of thinking of the Greeks). Saint Paul was able to harmonize different particularities within a new, universal category, defying the preexisting matrix of subjectivity (either philosophical or legal). The Christian subject, with Saint Paul, can be anyone, despite any previous categorization of their subjectivity.

It is interesting to notice how Badiou's utopia of universalism embodied in his reading of Saint Paul actually echoes Pasolini's supranational universalism which I have analyzed in the previous sections. In both cases, there is a quest for harmonization of the local and global, of the particular and the universal. However, my point is that Pasolini's utopia of universalism shows evident signs of a crisis in *Appunti per un film su San Paolo,* whereas Badiou still sees in Saint Paul a model to relaunch a universalist utopia in the present. In Pasolini's *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, the universality of Saint Paul's message is strictly confronted with the rigidity of the Church as an institution. The duplicity of Saint Paul, in line with Pope Paul VI, is the focus of Pasolini's script. In Pasolini's view, the duplicity of Saint Paul boosts his critique of the Vatican:

> … faccio un San Paolo doppio, cioè schizofrenico, nettamente dissociate in due: uno è il santo (evidentemente San Paolo ha avuto un'esperienza mistica – dalle lettere risulta chiaro – ed anche autentica), l'altro invece è il prete, ex-fariseo, che recupera le sue situazioni culturali precedenti e che sarà il fondatore della Chiesa. Come tale lo condanno; come mistico va bene, è un'esperienza mistica come altre, rispettabile, non la giudico, e invece lo condanno violentemente come fondatore della Chiesa, con tutti gli elementi negativi della Chiesa già pronti: sessuofobia, l'antifemminismo, l'organizzazione, le collette, il trionfalismo, il moralismo. Insomma, tutte le cose che hanno fatto il male della Chiesa sono già in lui.[151]

[151] Pasolini, "La perdita della realtà e il cinema inintegrabile," in De Giusti, *Pier Paolo Pasolini*, 156–57.

The duplicity of Saint Paul is what interests Pasolini and what defines the very structure of the script. This is how, to say the least, the ending of the script is also split in two: with a first part portraying Satan who celebrates the victory of the Church as an institution, and a second one focusing on the solitary and martyr-like death of Saint Paul.[152]

My suggestion for a new reading on *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* is to start from Pasolini's critique and sympathy for Pope Paul VI to reverse the self-identification relationship that, I believe, speaks of a crisis of Pasolini's own universalism. We can highlight key contradictory aspects of Pasolini's own universalism by projecting Pope Paul VI's ambiguity, intellectual ambition, and suffering on Pasolini himself, on the basis of Pasolini's claimed "comunità di sentimenti" with the Pope (see my fifth section). I claim that *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* summarizes at once the utopian inspiration of Pasolini's universalism, and the inherent contradictions that undermine his universalist ambition, contradictions that become particularly prominent at the end of his life. These contradictions not only concern the dichotomy of the local and the global, but also more broadly that of the particular versus the universal, and of the revolutionary versus the normative, to respond to Badiou's interpretation of Saint Paul's universalism. Many of these critical aspects are also visible in other works by Pasolini from the same period, which I will recall for a cross reading of Pasolini's works.

Appunti per un film su San Paolo is divided into episodes following a chronological structure spanning 36 A.D. to 67 A.D. The script starts with scenes from Paris (a substitute for Jerusalem) where some partisans attempt to escape Nazi persecution, among them Paul. Paul converts to Christianity as he heads to Barcelona (alias Damasco). He then starts a series of

[152] Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 97–106. As a martyr for social justice, Pasolini links Saint Paul to Martin Luther King Jr.: Pasolini, *Per il cinema,* v. 2, 2010.

travels to spread the news of Christ's resurrection, persecuted by the authority, and often mistreated by his audiences. Paul travels through Germany (alias Macedonia), gives lectures in Rome (alias Athens) and Genoa (Corinto). He makes disciples in Naples (some of them fraudulent) before he is arrested in Paris and finally transferred to New York, the new center of power (Rome). Paul is first released because of his Roman citizenship and later killed in his hotel. As mentioned earlier, Pasolini also adds to these sequences Satan and devils surrounding Luke, and a sketched self-quotation from articles that Pasolini wrote for *Corriere della sera*. Much could be said about this complex and multilayered work, but I will restrict my analysis to only three moments in the script, which I think are relevant for a discussion of the ambition and limits of Pasolini's universalism, in relation to Pope Paul VI's.

The first episode I analyze dates back to 49 A.D. and is set in an unknown city of Piedmont (Derbe or Listri in the *Acts of the Apostles*, 15:36–18:22). Pasolini describes the settings as the suburb of a medium industrial city. Paul speaks to the crowd quoting excerpts from the *Letter to the Thessalonians*, 4:4-12. He is preaching about God's commandment to avoid fornication. As he speaks, Pasolini focuses on Paul's audience, in particular a young man who is holding hands with a girl. Paul stares at the young man who looks back at him, simultaneously scared, upset, and thrilled. When Paul finishes his speech and gets closer to the man, he is still looking at him and only "mechanically" keeps holding the girl's hand. Paul asks the young man to follow him; the young man accepts, with no hesitation. The young man's name is Timotheus, son of a Greek man and a Jewish woman. At this point, Paul says to him, "…prima ti circonciderò – anche se ciò è in contraddizione con quanto sostengo – per riguardo agli ebrei di

questa città, che ti sanno di padre Greco."[153] The script follows: "Il ragazzo lo guarda, obbediente. In Paolo c'è la prepotenza del capo."[154]

Scholars have commented on this scene as evidence of Saint Paul's homosexuality and a clear autobiographic reference to Pasolini's.[155] Homosexuality is also hinted at in the scene that follows, where Paul is sleeping in a room with Timotheus and suffering from a secret disease, which haunts him throughout the script. I want to stress how not only homosexuality, but more specifically the power relationship between the two men can be read through an autobiographical lens, which highlights the limits of Pasolini's own universalism in relation to the normative and the revolutionary, or the possibility to subvert existent power hierarchies.

The sequence is particularly focused on "Saint Paul as a priest." Before starting his speech, Paul is seen coordinating the activity of his team, preparing flyers, checking the team's finances, basically running the paperwork sustaining the movement.[156] Similarly, Paul is described as "terribile e quasi livido" as he warns his audience against the temptations of Satan.[157] The conversation with Timotheus confirms his authoritarian behavior as the young man looks at him obediently, whereas Paul has the arrogance of the leader. In fact, to prove his power on Timotheus—or maybe also drawn by sexual desire—Paul decides to circumcise the young man, contradicting his own sermon on the uselessness of circumcision.

---

[153] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 1928.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 76–84. Pasolini talks about Paul's homosexuality in an unpublished article from February 1975, now in Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 390.

[156] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 1925.

[157] Ibid, 1927.

Armando Maggi calls attention to Paul's references to circumcision in the *Acts*, and his rejection of the need for circumcision in his *Letters*.[158] It is significant that Pasolini dramatizes the scene and stresses Paul's authoritarian behavior as he decides to circumcise Timotheus.[159] Pasolini's account of Paul's first meeting with Timotheus resonates with an episode from the production of *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (1974) analyzed by Shelleen Greene.[160] Pasolini narrates the episode during an interview with *Playboy* entitled "Le mie *Mille e una notte*."[161] Pasolini explains that as he was choosing the cast for his film *Il fiore delle mille e una notte*, he asked Fessazion Gherentiel—Hasan in the film—to inspect his nude body. When Pasolini could see enough to guess the size of Gherentiel's genitalia, he did a sign to stop Gherentiel from completing the undressing. The young boy, however, was "obediently and submissively" readying to do it. Greene sees this gesture as potentially colonizing in regard to Gherentiel's body, despite Pasolini acknowledging the brutality of his gesture. What I personally read in this scene is that the power imbalance between the two men generates a master-slave relationship that contradicts Pasolini's own beliefs, namely his explicit condemnation of colonization. This contradiction is akin to Paul's, as he decides to circumcise Timotheus despite not believing in the need of circumcision. The obedience of Gherentiel, similar to Timotheus, objectifies a sexual desire while also implying an ideological contradiction.

The master-slave scene evoked in the meeting of Paul and Timotheus in *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* resonates with Pasolini's autobiographic experience as a director in countries of the "Third World." Gherentiel's and Timotheus' docility brings us back to the "umiltà" and

---

[158] Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 78.

[159] The original passages from the *Acts*, 16:3 only reports that "On account of the Jews of that region, Paul had him circumcised for they all knew that his father was a Greek." Thigpen and Armstrong, *The New American Bible*.

[160] Greene, *Equivocal Subjects Between Italy and Africa*, 233–34.

[161] "Le mie *Mille e una notte*," *Playboy* Edizione Italiana (September 1973), 122.

"fiducia" of the poor boys talking to a stranger in "L'uomo di Bandung." In that poem from 1962-3, Pasolini already showed the power imbalance informing his relationship with the "Third World."[162] The inherent contradiction of Pasolini's universalism for the "Third World" becomes more tangible at the end of his career, when the search for exotic eroticism starts to prevail over social and political idealism, with films such as *Il fiore e le mille e una notte*.[163] The limits and inner contradictions of Pasolini's universalism for the "Third World" are condensed in *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, where Pasolini shows his awareness and condemnation of Paul's tyrannical power over Timotheus's trust and humility.

The second episode I analyze also dates back to 49 A.D. and follows Paul in his preaching.[164] Paul is in the house of Aquila, owner of a textile factory in Genova. In front of him is a crowd of intellectuals, readers of Croce or Marx. Because of their background, the intellectuals cannot agree with Paul's religion; yet, they listen to him with interest. Pasolini alternates excerpts of Paul's lecture with the intellectuals' commentary, saying that the latter "hanno facce simpatiche e intelligenti: e si tende a dar ragione a loro, quando poi commentano e criticano Paolo."[165] Paul quotes some of the most famous passages from the first letter to the Corinthians, where he gives instructions to his disciples on a series of practical matters. Many of them concern marriage and the appropriate sexual code for women and men. Paul warns his followers to avoid fornication and not to sleep with prostitutes; he recommends monogamy, and establishes that women will cover their heads when praying, whereas men must keep their head uncovered. He therefore imposes a clear hierarchy among God, men, and women, clarifying that

[162] Pasolini and Gordon, "Bandung Man / L'uomo di Bandung," 284.

[163] On the evolution of Pasolini's relationship with Africa see Trento, *Pasolini e l'Africa*, 49.

[164] Scenes 62 and 63, Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 1949-1957.

[165] Ibid, 1949.

"di ogni uomo il capo è Cristo, capo invece della donna è l'uomo, e capo di Cristo è Dio."[166] Stricter rules for women follow as he explains that women should not speak in public assemblies, and they should interrogate their husbands for any question.[167]

Paul's instructions are introduced by a general discussion on real knowledge, and whether real knowledge is rationally or irrationally accessible to human beings. As to warn their audience, Paul clarifies that "L'uomo razionale… non accetta le cose dello Spirito di Dio, perché per lui sono follia—e non può conoscerle, dato che vi opera una discriminazione tra esso e lo spirito: senza capire, invece, che ciò che è spirituale discrimina tutto, mentre non è discriminato da nessuno!"[168] Paul speaks of a divine Spirit that discriminates everything, while it is discriminated by no one. Badiou will particularly emphasize this idea of maintaining universality despite differentiation in his reading of Saint Paul. In particular, he argues that Paul makes symmetrical differentiations between men and women, not exclusively targeting women as necessarily inferior but rather specifying rules of behavior for both sexes.[169]

Conversely, Pasolini's account of the first letter to the Corinthians insists on the anti-feminism of Paul's directions. Not only does Pasolini choose to quote passages that unequivocally impose the obedience of women; the commentaries from the intellectuals in the audience also emphasize the arbitrariness, irrationality, and even regressive nature of Paul's sermon: "L'irrazionalismo è terrore, e il terrore detta queste regole stupide e atroci. La teologia e

---

[166] Ibid, 1956.

[167] "Come in tutte le Chiese degli eletti, le donne tacciano nelle assemblee, poche non è loro permesso di parlare: obbediscano, invece, come dice anche la Legge." Ibid, 1957.

Se desiderano apprendere qualcosa, interroghino a casa I propri mariti, poiché è sconveniente per una donna parlare nell'adunanza." Ibid, 1957.

[168] Ibid, 1952.

[169] Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 104-106.

la pratica si confondono, in un'assolutezza da essere umanamente insostenibile, così che poi nella vita quotidiana resta una gran vuoto, e questo gran vuoto è riempito dai riti e dalle norme."[170]

The duplicity of Pasolini's text, presenting on the one hand Paul's conformist rules for the Church, and on the other hand the critique of intellectuals who are close to Pasolini's own circle, is important in recalling another inner contradiction of Pasolini's universalism which concerns the subjectivity of women. As a public intellectual, Pasolini was vocal on sexual norms, and particularly so when Italy was discussing new laws to legalize divorce and abortion. Pasolini predicted that, in the public referendum of May 12-13, 1974, Italians would choose the right to divorce. He also took a clear stand against abortion in a series of articles published in *Corriere della Sera* in January-March 1975.[171] His controversial articles generated a vivid discussion with many other writers including Natalia Ginzburg, Alberto Moravia, Italo Calvino, and Umberto Eco. All of them, in different ways, criticized Pasolini's position, whereas he received the approval of prominent cardinals.[172] In his articles, Pasolini attempts to shift the discussion from abortion to sexual intercourse, by stressing the dangers of heteronormativity and also the classism that prevents the poorest population to know how to avoid an unplanned pregnancy.[173] He also clearly sustains the sacredness of life and argues that stopping the will for life of a fetus corresponds to a "crime," in legal terms.[174] Pasolini makes no reference to the point of view of

[170] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 1957.

[171] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 372-403.

[172] Ibid, 389.

[173] Ibid, 372-379, 382-383.

[174] Ibid, 387.

women and advocates a "virile e razionale capacità di comprensione" as necessary to understand his point of view.[175]

The script *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* highlights an inner contradiction in Pasolini's universalism in relation with women, not much linked to his idea of "progress," but rather to his critique of the anti-feminism of the Church.[176] Anti-feminism is one of the normative aspects of the Church's culture that Pasolini targets (see quote on p. 63) and underlines in his script; yet, the same anti-feminism appears in Pasolini's own declarations against abortion. Pasolini makes a clear reference to Saint Paul in his discussion on abortion, actually echoing a remark by Alberto Moravia, which Pasolini accepts and makes his own. Similarly, actress and friend of Pasolini, Laura Betti stresses the absence of women's subjectivity in Pasolini's argument. Pasolini accepts this critique as well, without necessarily changing his opinion:

> Il conformismo è sempre deplorevole, ma il conformismo di chi è dalla parte della ragione (cioè, per me, il 'conformismo di sinistra') è particolarmente doloroso. Naturalmente il mio articolo 'contro l'aborto' è incompleto e passionale, lo so. Una mia amica, Laura Betti, mi ha fatto notare che ci manca fisiologicamente la donna. Ha ragione. Alberto Moravia ha detto che il fondo dei miei argomenti è paolino: cioè in me, come in san Paolo, c'è l'inconscia pretesa della castità della donna. Ha ragione anche lui. Io ho posto l'accento più sul figlio che sulla madre, in quanto nel nostro caso, si tratta di una madre nemica. Non potevo non rimuoverla, e privilegiare il suo frutto.[177]

Participating in the public discussion of abortion in Italy in the 1970s, Pasolini acknowledges that his point of view recalls the normative and anti-feminist Saint Paul. The same Paul is portrayed by Pasolini as an authoritarian leader in the *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, where Paul is criticized by leftist, progressive intellectuals: exactly as was Pasolini.

---

[175] Ibid, 379.

[176] In the article "Sviluppo e progresso," Pasolini describes "progresso" as an ideal shared by factory workers, farmers, and leftist intellectuals, without any mention of an improvement of women's conditions. This position can be seen as in line with traditional Marxism, where gender remains untheorized, as explained by Silvia Federici in Federici, "Notes on Gender in Marx's Capital."

[177] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 389.

A sign of Pasolini's duplicity in relation with women, in line with Paul's, also appears in his poetry, in particular the poem "La domenica uliva."[178] The poem was first published in the collection *Poesie a Casarsa* (1942), and then revised for the publication of *La nuova gioventù* (1975). Dedicated to the period of Easter, namely Palm Sunday, the poem shows how Pasolini draws his comfort with Christian culture from his childhood, and namely from his exclusive relationship with his mother. The mother in the poem remembers that, as a woman, she is not supposed to talk over a man in the family. Nevertheless, she joins her voice to her son's to lament the end of a beloved old world. An old world where plurality was preserved despite the observance of the same religion and official code of behavior, an old world that globalization has permanently destroyed:

> MADRE (dal Cielo) Io non dico niente perché nel mio mondo la madre usa tacere quando parla del figlio uomo.
> Tu hai ragione: ma il tuo vaneggiare vale il mio tacere: dunque parliamo insieme.
> MADRE E FIGLIO: Non amare più niente per amare qualcosa che uno come noi non può più amare.
> Amare il Tempo santo del Focolare per avere da parte un capitale.
> Piangere di tutto, ridere di tutto, avere un cervello curioso di tutto.
> FIGLIO: Erano mille i Focolari e mille le forme dei vecchi Uomini.
> Solo Dio era Uno. Oggi Focolari Uomini e Dio sono una sola forma per tutti. E la Coscienza è in me un fuoco, MA SENZA LUCE.[179]

The mother in the poem speaks in unison with her son despite the social norms regulating women's behavior in the Christian culture symbolized by Easter. She is an exception due to the exclusive relationship with her son (relationship that excludes the father). But the son is also exceptional or rather "double," which signals a connection between Pasolini's poetic self-portrait

[178] Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, v. 2, 441-448.

[179] Ibid, 48.

and Saint Paul: "FIGLIO. "Nato per essere Uno, io sarò Doppio, muto e nudo ma Doppio, straniero a tutto ma Doppio."[180]

The autobiographic elements in "La domenica uliva" and Pasolini's articles on abortion present duplicity as a key feature for Pasolini, which I claim is connected to Pasolini's anti-clericalism and his critique of clerical anti-feminism. While Badiou sees in Saint Paul the possibility to overcome gender discrimination and therefore to establish a true universalism, Pasolini insists on the anti-feminism of Paul's message, which echoes the anti-feminist tone of his interventions on abortion and ambiguous aspects of his nostalgia for a Christian, pre-industrialized world. In *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, the duplicity of Paul gives voice to Pasolini's contradictions and also his internal struggle: he is not ready to dismiss the point of view of the "simpatici e intelligenti" intellectuals criticizing Paul—on the contrary, he himself suggests that "si tende a dar ragione a loro."[181]

The third and last analysis brings us back to the self-quotation that Pasolini inserts in the script in 1974. The insertion arrives at a very tense moment in the script, after Paul's quotations from the *Letter to the Romans.* Paul openly asks his followers in New York City's Greenwich Village to abide with the Law of the Empire: "Ognuno sia soggetto alle autorità superiori, poiché non c'è autorità che non venga da Dio, e quelle che esistono, sono disposte da Dio."[182] The liberal crowd in the Village reacts vehemently to the hierarchical model offered by Paul, wondering: "possibile… che egli venga a predicare una Chiesa clericale là dove, se si sente il bisogno di una Chiesa, questa non può essere che ecumenica: e che qualcosa essa deve

[180] Ibid, 445.

[181] Pasolini's dispute with Calvino has received most attention by critics, from Benedetti, *Pasolini contro Calvino* to Re, "Pasolini vs. Calvino, One More Time."

[182] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 1996.

insegnare, in linea di principio, non può essere che la resistenza all'autorità, a ogni genere di autorità?"[183] In opposition to the crowd's dismay, Satan and Luke celebrate the foundation of the Church, evoking the future crimes of the clerical institution: compromises with power, abuses, repression, ignorance, and dogmatism.[184]

At this point, a new scene opens, one year after the previous sermon (64 a. D). Pasolini's note reads: "Intervista in cui si parla del senso di fare il film su san Paolo. Tutti i delitti e le colpe della Chiesa come storia del potere non sono nulla confronto alle colpe in cui la Chiesa accetta passivamente un potere irreligioso che la sta liquidando e riducendo a folklore (cfr. Articoli "Corriere della Sera": da riportare per intero)."[185] At the beginning of this section, I already recalled that the article "I dilemmi di un Papa, oggi" develops a perplexed commentary on the papacy of Paul VI. The opportunity for Pasolini to start his critique comes from a photo portraying Pope Paul VI with a traditional Native American headgear during a meeting with a delegation of Sioux tribes.[186] Pasolini defines the picture "un quadretto folcloristico estremamente imbarazzante quanto più l'atmosfera appariva familiare e bonaria."[187] At the end of the same article, Pasolini contrasts the tragic sincerity of Pope Paul VI with the traumatic mask that he wears in the picture, contesting the playful mood of the picture.[188]

Keeping in mind the "comunità di sentimenti" that connects Pasolini to Paul VI, what motivates Pasolini's embarrassment over Paul VI's picture, which also speaks of Pasolini's

---

[183] Ibid, 1998-9.

[184] Ibid, 2000.

[185] Ibid, 2003.

[186] Franzoni, "Copricapi e corone."

[187] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società,* 350.

[188] At the end of the article, Pasolini summarizes Paul VI's dilemma as following: "il dilemma oggi è questo: o la Chiesa fa propria la traumatizzante maschera del Paolo VI folcloristico che "gioca" con la tragedia, o fa propria la tragica sincerità del Paolo VI che annuncia temerariamente la sua fine." Ibid, 355.

universalism? I believe the answer to this question lies in the category of the "folkloric" that Pasolini associates to the picture on account of the Native-American headgear.

First of all, I should briefly recall why the "folkloric" has a negative connotation for Pasolini despite and even possibly because of his interest in cultural minorities. In the first section of this study, I explained how Pasolini's ideal of poetry in Friulian in the late 1940s was critical of a localism that he considered limited and close-minded. Pasolini took a position against the folkloric very early in life, at the very moment he decided to defend the category of "diverso." In his essay "Sulla poesia dialettale," published on the journal *Poesia* in October 1947, Pasolini argues that writing poetry in Friulian is a way to evade the imperative of writing in the standard language, and to fulfill one's deep need of "diversity": "La lirica dialettale si giustificherebbe dunque, in sede torica, come un nuovo "genere' atto a ottenere una poesia 'diversa.'"[189] The same article starts with a critique of the much cheaper, "consciously folkloric" poetry characterized by "unbearable" or "falsely naïf" feelings praising one's hometown, and its cultural wisdom.[190] The "diverse" and the "folkloric" are two different categories for Pasolini, where only the first one implies a vital renewal of expression from within, whereas the second describes a mechanical repetition of self-celebratory formulas.

In a different article titled "Dialetto e poesia popolare" and published on *Mondo operaio* on April 14, 1951, Pasolini similarly argued that in order to create poetry that can actually serve the people, one must use dialect in a way that goes beyond the conventions restricting dialect to its "small world," and overcome the "color" and "isolation" that characterize it: "Crediamo che il dialetto possa contare sui suoi mezzi naturali per servire a una poesia popolare, solo quando il

[189] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, v. 1, 259.

[190] Ibid, 244-245.

poeta abbia superato tutte le convenzioni dialettali – in altri termini "il piccolo mondo" dove il dialetto è usato per dargli una coscienza linguistica che ne superi il colore e l'isolamento."[191] Again, the isolation and geographic limits of the folkloric seem inappropriate to Pasolini, as he needs to overcome cultural limitations to fully realize his supranational aesthetic project. In Pasolini's view, the folkloric is a limitation of the full expression of the local.

Knowing the negative connotation of the "folkloric" in Pasolini, it is clear why Pasolini fears that the Church will be reduced to the folkloric. We still must clarify, however, why Pasolini uses the adjective *folkloric* in reference to the Native-American headdress, and feels embarrassment for Paul VI. Applying Pasolini's definition of the folkloric to the Sioux headdress, I understand that this object is celebrated in the name of the "colore" and "isolamento" of Native-American culture. My hypothesis is also that the folkloric for Pasolini represents a condition of marginality but also of reification in relation to a hegemonic culture. As such, it is easily recognizable and exploitable as the representation of a *fixed* local culture, which has lost the chance to innovate its self-expression. Wearing the headdress, Paul VI is accepting the code of a hegemonic discourse that treats the *diversity* of Native-American culture as *folkloric*. The hegemonic discourse I am referring to is that of neo-capitalism which Pasolini believes the Church has been passively accepting. The insertion of the article "I dilemma del papa, oggi" right after the quotations from the *Letter to the Romans* in the script also facilitates the connection of Paul VI's "folkloric" papacy with a hegemonic Law (the Empire) amplified by the analogy between ancient Rome and New York.

Pasolini could have simply criticized Pope Paul VI for this gesture and reiterated his critique of clericalism. Instead, he claims to prove embarrassment, in a way that, again, suggests

[191] Ibid, 374-5.

empathy and self-identification. My impression is that Pasolini can sympathize with Pope Paul VI's faults for being himself involved in the construction of a hegemonic discourse in the name of universalism. Pasolini writes the article for *Corriere della sera* only a few months before his "Abiura della trilogia della vita," where he admits how his work on the sexual bodies of the "Third World," which he thought revolutionary, has been completely integrated into the hedonistic culture of consumerism. The abjuration ends with a very bitter note on the actual possibilities to avoid being part of the logics of neo-capitalism: "Devo ammettere che anche l'essersi accorti o l'aver drammatizzato non preserva affatto dall'adattamento o dall'accettazione. Dunque io mi sto adattando alla degradazione e sto accettando l'inaccettabile."[192]

Before reaching his peak of pessimism, Pasolini gives the greatest proof of his participation in a hegemonic universalist discourse (and praxis) with his engagement for the safe-guard of Sana'a, Yemen and the documentary *Le mura di Sana'a* (1973). Like Pope Paul VI who had appealed to the friendship of the supranational and "universalist" UN, Pasolini similarly makes his plea to a UN agency, UNESCO, to collaborate for the preservation of universal culture.[193] Pasolini films his short documentary in 1970, on a day off during the production of *Decameron*. The film includes a brief introduction to the history of Yemen and an analogy with the city of Orte, Italy, whose medieval historical center had already been disfigured by modern

[192] Pasolini, *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, 603.

[193] UNESCO is an institution born within the United Nations in 1945, as a specific agency dedicated to "educational and cultural reconstruction" in the aftermath of World War II. UNESCO was founded with the purpose of fostering education, culture, and science; to restore faith in humanity after the horror of the war, also aiming to overcome the economic and ideological tensions of the Cold War. Promoting a "progressive, reconciliatory, and universalist" approach to the history of humanity, UNESCO successfully coordinated a safeguarding campaign to protect the monuments of Nubia, Egypt (1959) and launched an international campaign to preserve Venice, Italy in 1966. In 1972, UNESCO stipulated the World Heritage Convention where they commit to safeguarding cultural heritage of "outstanding universal value," whose "deterioration or disappearance… constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world." Kalaycioglu, "Possibilities of Global Governance," 79–99.

housing constructions. The documentary ends with an anaphoric plea to UNESCO where Pasolini merges his and UNESCO's ideological views on universalism:

> Ci rivolgiamo all'UNESCO, perché aiuti lo Yemen ad avere coscienza della sua identità e del Paese prezioso che esso è.
> Ci rivolgiamo all'UNESCO, perché contribuisca a fermare una miseranda speculazione in un paese dove nessuno la denuncia.
> Ci rivolgiamo all'UNESCO, perché trovi la possibilità di dare a questa nuova Nazione la coscienza di essere un bene comune dell'umanità, e di dover proteggersi per restarlo.
> Ci rivolgiamo all'UNESCO, perché intervenga, finché è in tempo, a convincere un'ancora ingenua classe dirigente, che la sola ricchezza dello Yemen è la sua bellezza, e conservare tale bellezza significa oltre tutto possedere una risorsa economica che non costa nulla. E che lo Yemen è in tempo a non commettere gli errori commessi dagli altri paesi.
> Ci rivolgiamo all'UNESCO, in nome della vera, seppure ancora inespressa, volontà del popolo yemenita.
> In nome degli uomini semplici che la povertà ha mantenuto puri.
> In nome della grazia dei secoli oscuri.
> In nome della scandalosa forza rivoluzionaria del passato.[194]

Pasolini argues for the cultural universal value of Sana'a when he states that Yemen is a "bene comune dell'umanità," and that Yemen must protect its historical, but also economic value. But we also see that Pasolini speaks in the interest of the people of Yemen, anticipating or guessing their true will: "in nome della vera, seppure ancora inespressa, volontà del popolo yemenita." The analogy between Orte and Sana'a shown in the documentary, while serving Pasolini's argument, is secondary to the verticality of geopolitical interventions in Sana'a, which are responsible for the corruption of Sana'a, in Pasolini's view:

> Sono giunti per primi i cinesi, perché non dirlo – dall'alto –, a costruire strade… le strade costruite dai cinesi hanno portato innanzi tutto a Sana'a i primi beni di consumo della civiltà industriale: non importa se capitalista o socialista.[195]

> A Sana'a i russi hanno costruito un ospedale nuovo, bellissimo. Sono scesi dall'alto, e indubbiamente hanno fatto le cose con serietà, come si addice a chi è investito dal carisma. A Sana'a si muore di meno: ma qual è la vita che fa da alternative a tale

[194] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 2110.

[195] Ibid, 2108. Italics mine.

> sopravvivenza? Un 'tutto' perfetto, una struttura medievale intatta sono stati manomessi…[196]

But Pasolini himself speaks "dall'alto" insinuating that the nation of Yemen needs UNESCO's supranational intervention. Arguing with a local officer who is planning to destroy a medieval gate to improve viability, Pasolini inveighs: "Ma tu sei un pazzo, renditi conto di quello che fai, questo è un monumento bellissimo, del passato. Va bene che per te rappresenta il Medio Evo, gli emiri, ma in un'altra prospettiva, visto dall'Europa, oppure da te stesso tra dieci anni, vedrai questa porto sotto un aspetto completamente diverso, non puoi distruggerla…"[197] As he films his documentary, Pasolini thinks that the local perspective of Yemen's inhabitants—healing from the recent civil war, tricked by the promises of capitalism, etc.—must be replaced with a universal, or European one, which situates the value of Yemen's architecture in a global (cultural *and* economic) perspective. This is how Pasolini joins UNESCO in their effort to build a cultural universalism, intended here not as utopia but rather as a political construction. This is also how the sphere of the local and the global can no longer be reconciled, since the supranational involves an intervention "from above."[198]

As Pasolini himself participates in UNESCO's hegemonic, supranational project of universalism, we encounter the motif of embarrassment appearing in Pasolini's commentary on Pope Paul VI. Presenting his documentary on Sana'a, Pasolini hesitates to confess the verticality of his own intervention, or at least does so with a certain discomfort:

> Naturalmente io non dico, anche se magari lo penso, vergognandomi, che i persiani debbano seguitare a vivere in case vecchie, senza riscaldamento, senza una ventilazione

[196] Ibid, 3172. Italics mine.

[197] Conferenza stampa della lega italo-araba, Ibid, 2118.

[198] Kalaycioglu shows how the universalism promoted by UNESCO has been the result of political negotiations with a strong Western bias at the early stages of the World Heritage Program, and a semantic renegotiation of the "universal" taking place only in the years 2000s. Kalaycioglu, "Possibilities of Global Governance," chaps. 2, 3.

> moderna e tutte le relative comodità. Sarebbe assurdo. Però tra questo e distruggere completamente, ci sarà pure una via di mezzo.[199]
>
> Il problema non è solo dello Yemen, ma di molti paesi arabi. Certo il caso dello Yemen è assolutamente particolare perché in realtà tutto il paese, nel suo insieme, è da salvare. Come un museo? Sia pure.[200]

Transforming Sana'a in a museum, so as to preserve its "colore" and "isolamento," is the embarrassing wish at the core of Pasolini's programmatic view for Sana'a, which makes the boundaries between the categories of "folclorico" and "diverso" blurry, as in the case of Paul VI's picture. Pasolini's activism for Sana'a aims to preserve the local beauty for this medieval city while also sanctioning the need of a supranational intervention, replacing a vacant local sovereignty.[201] The crisis of Pasolini's universalism condensed in *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* therefore also concerns the difficult harmonization of the local and the global, which I have presented as the pillar of Pasolini's universalist utopia, in my first three sections.

The three key moments from *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* that I have analyzed in this section show the impossibility of Pasolini's utopia of supranational universalism, by emphasizing the friction between the local and the global, the particular and the universal, the revolutionary and the normative. *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* and the other works I have recalled through my cross reading testify to a time in Pasolini's life when his strong anti-globalism coincides with an awareness that his utopia will not suffice to create an alternative to neo-capitalist globalization. At the same time, many critical aspects of Pasolini's universalism

---

[199] Pasolini, *Per il cinema*, v. 2, 2117. Italics mine.

[200] Ibid, 3172. Italics mine.

[201] Pasolini's documentary will have a strong legacy, influencing the official nomination of Sana'a as a World Heritage site in 1984. Further initiatives for the preservation of the city, particularly supported by Italian experts, will also continue until the years 2000s. Ibid, 3174. See also Lamprakos, *Building a World Heritage City*, 51: "There is no record of the receipt of Pasolini's film by UNESCO, or the impact it had on decision-makers there. But it is often cited in Yemen, and by Italian consultants who worked on the project, as the initial spark that led to UNESCO's interest in Sanaa."

were latent in previous works or simply embedded in Pasolini's poetic experience of the world. Summarizing the "slanci e contraddizioni" of Pasolini's universalism, *Appunti per un film su San Paolo* can be read as a synthesis of Pasolini's universalism, showing at the same time its ambitions and controversy.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have presented a trajectory in Pasolini's supranational universalism highlighting key moments in his career where he expresses a utopian ambition for a universalism that overcomes the limits of the local while defending its "diverse" expression. His engagement on behalf of the autonomy of Friuli, aesthetic and political at once, is the preliminary and founding stage of this utopianism. Analogy is the rhetorical, but also epistemic technique that allows Pasolini to harmonize the local with a broader supranational vision, not only in Friuli but also when embarking on more ambitious projects on the "Third World," for which the Bandung conference offered an idealistic model of a "coming together." Pasolini's orientalist perspective on the "Third World" precisely comes from an analogical vision that imposes essentialized features upon local and individual specificity. Pasolini reaches a further step in his universalism when attempting to harmonize the specific problems of the "Third World" with a larger ambition of global peace. The ambition for global peace is what links Pasolini's supranational universalism to figures such as Pope John XXIII and Paul VI, who left a significant mark on the history of the Church through their ambition to promote the Vatican as a supranational, universalist institution; an ambition that also brought them to start a dialogue with the supranational, universalist institution of the UN. I have delved into the importance of universalism in Pasolini's relationship with the two popes, remarking how the influence of

Christian universalism on Pasolini has been overlooked by Marxist readings. It is by emphasizing Pasolini's empathetic connection with Pope Paul VI that I have also developed an analysis of *Appunti per un film su San Paolo*, showing how the limits and contradictions of Pasolini's universalism, some already evident in Pasolini's earlier work, become particularly stringent in the last phase of his career. Pasolini's development of an anti-globalization position at the end of his career coincides with a progressive crisis within his own utopian view for an alternative globalism. The choice to develop my analysis of Pasolini's *San Paolo* in relation to Alain Badiou has not come without reason. Showing the crisis of Pasolini's universalism in opposition to Badiou's interpretation, I have been able to stress controversial aspects of Pasolini's universalism for the contemporary reader, controversies that—as Caminati also suggests—should not discourage a reflection of Pasolini's work, but rather motivate it. The aspiration to embrace a universalism aimed at global peace and justice, which nevertheless does not sacrifice or generalize the experience of the individual subject, remains indeed one of the most needed challenges of our present history.

Bibliography

Annovi, Gian Maria. "'ISTAMBUL KM. 4,253': attraverso il Mediterraneo di Pier Paolo Pasolini." *California Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010).

———. "Marilyn's Ashes: Celebrity and Authorship in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *La rabbia*." *Modern Language Notes* 131, no. 1: 214–34.

Badiou, Alain. *Saint Paul : The Foundation of Universalism*. Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 2003.

Bazzocchi, Marco Antonio. *I burattini filosofi: Pasolini dalla letteratura al cinema*. Milan: Mondadori, 2007.

Belpoliti, Marco. *Pasolini in salsa piccante*. Parma: Ugo Guanda, 2010.

Benedetti, Carla. “La rabbia di Pasolini: come da un film sperimentale di montaggio può rinascere l’antica forma tragica.” *Arabeschi*, no. 6 (December 2015): 40–53.

———. *Pasolini contro Calvino: per una letteratura impura*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998.

Benini, Stefania. *Pasolini: The Sacred Flesh*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Caminati, Luca. “Filming Decolonization: Pasolini’s Geopolitical Afterlife.” In *Pier Paolo Pasolini, Framed and Unframed: A Thinker for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Luca Peretti and Karen T. Raizen, 63–78. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

———. “Notes for a Revolution: Pasolini’s Postcolonial Essay Films.” In *The Essay Film: Dialogue, Politics, Utopia*, edited by Elizabeth Papazian and Caroline Eades. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

———. *Orientalismo eretico: Pier Paolo Pasolini e il cinema del terzo mondo*. Milan: Mondadori, 2007.

Carmosino, Daniela. “Conoscere per analogia. Pasolini e la categoria del periferico.” In *Pasolini e le periferie del mondo*, 115–26. Pisa: ETS, 2015.

Casarino, Cesare. “The Southern Answer: Pasolini, Universalism, Decolonization.” *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 4 (2010).

Cellini, Jacopo. *Universalism and Liberation: Italian Catholic Culture and the Idea of International Community, 1963-1978*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017.

Chianese, Francesco. *“Mio padre si sta facendo un individuo problematico”: padri e figli nell’ultimo Pasolini (1966-75)*. Milan: Mimesis Edizioni, 2018.

Chiesi, Roberto. “Il ‘corpo’ tormentato de *La rabbia*: la genesi del progetto, la ‘normalizzazione’ del 1963, l’ipotesi di ricostruzione del 2008.” *Studi pasoliniani: rivista internazionale*, no. 3 (2009).

Conti Calabrese, Giuseppe. *Pasolini e il sacro*. Milan: Jaca Book, 1994.

De Giusti, Luciano. *Pier Paolo Pasolini: il cinema in forma di poesia*. Pordenone: Edizioni Cinemazero, 1979.

Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Federici, Silvia. “Notes on Gender in Marx’s Capital.” *Continental Thought & Theory* 1, no. 4 (October 2017): 19–37.

Felice, Angela. “L’autonomismo friulano di Pasolini: un unicum tra teoria e prassi.” In *Rileggendo Pasolini: Il diritto dopo la scomparsa delle lucciole: atti di convegno, Perugia, 15-18 Luglio 2015*, 223–33. Rome: Aracne, 2016.

Franzoni, Claudio. “Copricapi e corone.” *Doppiozero*. September 18, 2013. Last Accessed October 15, 2020. https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/anteprime/copricapi-e-corone.

Gentili, Sonia. “La Legge di san Paolo e la storia del Novecento in Pasolini.” *Lettere italiane* 60, no. 4 (2008): 543.

Gragnolati, Manuele. “Analogy and Difference: Multistable Figures in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Appunti per un’Orestiade africana*.” In *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini’s Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Traditions*, 119–33. Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2012.

Grandelis, Alessandra. “Teorema e San Paolo. Citazioni pasoliniane fra cinema e letteratura.” *Lettere Rubate / Purloined Letters*, no. 5 (June 2012).

Grasso, Mirko. *Pasolini e il Sud: poesia, cinema, società*. Modugno: Edizioni dal Sud, 2004.

Greene, Shelleen. *Equivocal Subjects Between Italy and Africa—Constructions of Racial and National Identity in the Italian Cinema*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2012.

Jaran, Mahmoud. “Pasolini, Fanon, e l’umanesimo transnazionale.” *Studi pasoliniani*, no. 7 (2013).

John XXIII, Pope. “Pacem in Terris (11 Aprile 1963) | Giovanni XXIII.” Accessed May 8, 2020. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

Kalaycioglu, Elif. “Possibilities of Global Governance: World Heritage and the Politics of Universal Value and Expertise.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2019.

Lamprakos, Michele. *Building a World Heritage City: Sanaa, Yemen*. Heritage, Culture and Identity. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015.

Maggi, Armando. *The Resurrection of the Body : Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Naldini, Nico. *Pier Paolo Pasolini: un paese di temporali e di primule*. Parma: Ugo Guanda, 2001.

Ottolini, Tullio. “Dal soutien alla cooperazione. Il terzomondismo in Italia fra il Centro di Documentazione Frantz Fanon e il Movimento Liberazione e Sviluppo.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bologna, 2018. http://amsdottorato.unibo.it/8333/1/Tesi%20caricata%20AMS%2Babstract.pdf.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Alì dagli occhi azzurri*. Milan: Garzanti, 1965.

———. "La forma della città." *RAI*. Accessed April 6, 2020. http://www.teche.rai.it/2015/01/pasolini-e-la-forma-della-citta-1974/.

———. *Lettere: 1955-1975*. Torino: Einaudi, 1988.

———. *Per il cinema*. Edited by Walter Siti and Franco Zabagli. Pier Paolo Pasolini: tutte le opere. Milan: Mondadori, 2001.

———. *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*. Edited by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude. Pier Paolo Pasolini: tutte le opere. Milan: Mondadori, 1999.

———. *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*. Edited by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude. Pier Paolo Pasolini: tutte le opere. Milan: Mondadori, 1999.

———. *Saint Paul: A Screenplay*. Translated by Elizabeth A. Castelli. London: Verso, 2014.

———. *Sopralluoghi in Palestina*. DVD. [Roma]: Ripley's home video, 2005.

———. *The Savage Father*. Translated by Pasquale Verdicchio. Toronto: Guernica, 1999.

———. *Uccellacci e uccellini*. DVD. Rome: Medusa Home Entertainment, 2013.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo, and Robert S.C. Gordon. "Bandung Man / L'uomo di Bandung." In *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini's Multistable Subjectivities, Traditions, Geographies*, translated by Robert S.C. Gordon, 279–301. Berlin: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2012.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo, and Giovanni Guareschi. *La rabbia*. Campi Bisenzio: Raro Video, 1963.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo, Walter Siti, and Pier Paolo Pasolini. *Tutte le poesie*. Pier Paolo Pasolini: tutte le opere. Milan: A. Mondadori, 2003.

Paul VI, Pope. "Populorum Progressio (March 26, 1967) | Paolo VI." Accessed May 8, 2020. http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

———. "Udienza generale, 6 ottobre 1965 | Paolo VI." Accessed May 8, 2020. http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/audiences/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_aud_19651006.html.

———. "Visita alle Nazioni Unite: Discorso all'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite (4 ottobre 1965) | Paolo VI." Accessed May 8, 2020. https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_united-nations.html.

Picconi, Gian Luca. “Atena in Algeria tra profezia e regresso. Profezia di Pier Paolo Pasolini.” *La Rivista*, no. 4 (2015).

Re, Lucia. “Pasolini vs. Calvino, One More Time: The Debate on the Role of Intellectuals and Postmodernism in Italy Today.” *Modern Language Notes* 129, no. 1 (2014): 99–117. https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2014.0002.

Rhodes, John David. *Stupendous, Miserable City Pasolini’s Rome*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Said, W. Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books Editions, 1978.

Savinio, Alberto. *Sorte dell’Europa*. E-Book. Milano: Adelphi, 1977.

Spinelli, Arturo, and Ernesto Rossi. “Manifesto di Ventotene,” 1941. https://www.cvce.eu/obj/il_manifesto_di_ventotene_1941-it-316aa96c-e7ff-4b9e-b43a-958e96afbecc.html.

Subini, Tomaso. “Il dialogo tra Pier Paolo Pasolini e la Pro Civitate Christiana sulla sceneggiatura de *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.” In *Attraverso lo schermo. Cinema e cultura cattolica in Italia*, edited by Ruggero Eugeni and Dario E. Viganò. Rome: Fondazione Ente dello Spettacolo, 2006.

———. *La necessità di morire: il cinema di Pier Paolo Pasolini e il sacro*. Rome: Ente dello spettacolo, 2007. http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/casalini07/08081751.pdf.

Thigpen, Paul, and Dave Armstrong. *The New American Bible*. Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2011.

Trento, Giovanna. *Pasolini e l’Africa, l’Africa di Pasolini: panmeridionalismo e rappresentazioni dell’Africa postcoloniale*. Milan: Mimesis, 2010.

———. “Pier Paolo Pasolini and Pan-Meridional Italianness.” In *The Scandal of Self-Contradiction: Pasolini’s Multistable Subjectivities, Geographies, Traditions*, 59–83. Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2012.

Vanhove, Pieter. “‘Conceptions of the World’: Universalities in Literature and Art After Bandung.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2017. https://doi.org/10.7916/D8668RGC.

CHAPTER 3.

Gianni Celati's Post-Touristic Gaze: Local Reconfigurations of Exoticism and Adventure

Gianni Celati is a figure of postmodern displacement. Born in Sondrio in 1937, he grew up in Ferrara and taught as a Professor of English at the University of Bologna. He spent periods of time in Germany, the US, and France, before finally settling in the UK. Travel is both a mode of existence and an aesthetic practice for Celati. Most of his works come from actual experiences of travel (in Europe, but also in Africa); yet, in Celati, the natural inclination towards displacement and uprootedness coexists with a deep concern for the "destino dei luoghi," the fate of places, which he finds neglected amidst generalized mobility and the functionalist logic of late capitalism.[1]

This chapter aims to analyze the "structures of feeling" embedded in the tensions between mobility and locality in Celati. In particular, I argue that a distinguishing aspect of Celati's aesthetics is his "post-touristic" perspective on the spatial conditions of existence during late capitalism or postmodernity. Scholars such as Laura Rorato have underlined the importance of tourism in Celati's work by highlighting the classificatory and anthropological look that Celati dedicates to tourists in *Avventure in Africa* (1998).[2] Analyzing Celati's *Quattro novelle sulle apparenze* (1987), Thomas Harrison emphasizes the trope of tourists in Celati's aesthetics, comparing them to pilgrims but with "secular intent, reveling in the worlds' strange and incomprehensible phenomena, marveling at its withheld and unfamiliar meanings."[3] According to Harrison, Celati deploys tourists as "guides" to highlight a disorienting, everyday ontological

[1] Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 112. Nunzia Palmieri, "Cronologia," in Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, LXXV-CXXI.

[2] Rorato, "'Casi esemplari di turismo africano': la figura del turista in Avventure in Africa di Gianni Celati."

[3] Harrison, "A Tale of Two Giannis: Writing as Rememoration," 283.

condition; in tourism intellectual "speechlessness and displacement find their *modus vivendi*, as well as their redemption."[4]

In this chapter I will develop some of the insights on touristic marveling and estrangement proposed by Harrison, while also suggesting a new "post-touristic" perspective drawing on the social theory on tourism and highlighting the postcolonial, phenomenological, and ecological stakes in Celati's aesthetic approach to the tensions between local and global forces. Dean MacCannell suggests that tourism is the most "practical proof of a convergence of the global and the local."[5] Post-tourism—as theorized by John Urry and Jonas Larsen—defines the transformation of tourism during postmodernity, which involves the "de-differentiation between the everyday and tourist gazing," and also the awareness, on the part of the tourist, that "tourism is a series of games with multiple texts and no single, authentic touristic experience."[6] Celati develops a post-touristic perspective where he travels and marvels at the outside world, inevitably experiencing estrangement, which he assumes to be a fairly a universal condition. Moreover, Celati's post-touristic look comes from an awareness of his status as a tourist playing with the "exotic" as a constructed mode of aesthetic representation. Thus, Celati places "adventure" at the center of his aesthetic research and makes a strong attempt to reconfigure exoticism *vis-à-vis* the specificity of the postmodern condition, including cultural homologation worldwide and the loss of bonds with a territory.

Since the late 1970s (and despite the difference in tone between the "first" and "second" leg of his career) Celati builds upon his awareness that a generalized tourist condition potentially

---

[4] Ibid.

[5] MacCannell, *The Tourist*, xix.

[6] Urry and Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze*, 114–15. The idea of "post-tourism" is first developed by Maxine Feifer in *Going Places: The Ways of the Tourist from Imperial Rome to the Present Day* (1985).

follows from the "deterritorialization" typical of postmodernity. Celati recognizes that pervasive estrangement defines individuals' relationships with places in contemporary, late twentieth-century Western societies. In particular, for Celati, deterritorialization is a consequence of industrialization, with drastic changes in the landscape preventing individuals from claiming much sense of belonging. Moreover, a generalized condition of mobility following the interconnectedness of capitalism contributes to exacerbates the condition of disorientation, producing a sense of "being lost."

In section 3.1, I show how Celati approaches deterritorialization as he studies colonial exoticism and contributes to the collective essay *Letteratura esotismo colonialismo* (1978). I draw on the coeval work of Edward Said to define the scope of the project and I stress both Celati's Foucauldian approach and his Eurocentric outlook on exoticism. The latter, in particular, anticipates his further aesthetic work on exoticism from the point of view of the traveler or the subject of exotic representation, rather than the point of view of its objects (as in the case of Said). Following Andrea Cortellessa's intuition that this work, *Letteratura esotismo colonialismo*, anticipates the main motifs of Celati's later writings, I identify key anticipatory signals of Celati's post-touristic aesthetics in this volume. These elements include Celati's interest in mobility, his understanding of exoticism as a *cause* of mobility (and not its consequence), and the manipulation of the desire for mobility which constitutes the essential psychological mechanism of the tourist industry.

Section 3.2 situates the work of Celati and Italian photographer Luigi Ghirri in the context of the "end of exoticism," which I present as a trope in European culture, with particular reference to influential French figures such as Victor Segalen, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Marc Augé, Georges Perec who work at the intersection of literature and anthropology. While Celati and

Ghirri present the photo album *Viaggio in Italia* as an "anti-exotic" project, I argue that the dismissal of exoticism on their part is not complete. As shown by a brief comparison between the work of Celati/Ghirri, and Georges Perec, Celati and Ghirri maintain a strong attachment to voyage and adventure. In particular, through their visual and narrative aesthetics of vagueness—evident as much in Ghirri's *Il profilo delle nuvole* (1989) as in Celati's *Narratori delle pianure* (1985)—they activate *formal* methods of representation of the exotic while portraying features of the local.

In section 3.3, I focus on Celati's treatment of adventure in order to highlight further his distinctive position within the "end of exoticism" tradition. Drawing upon his essay "L'avventura non deve finire" from 1982-1983, I explain how Celati promotes the idea that "adventure must not end" even while facing the cultural effects of late capitalism, including cultural homologation, loss of an attachment to territories, generalized mobility, and an excessive trust in a scientific, rational, and utilitarian logic. I propose to read Celati's choice of the *novella* form as a way to resolve an ambivalence between his urge to evoke a sense of the local and his wish to preserve adventure as an encounter with diversity. I recall how Celati applies the formal model of the novella in his writing, in particular in *Narratori delle pianure*, by way of a panoramic approach to characters and their environment, intending to provide readers with a sense of relief from the "adventures" of their own everyday life.

In section 3.4, I draw a comparison between Celati and French poet Victor Segalen (1878-1919) claiming that Segalen is an overlooked source for Celati. Segalen's work helps shed light on Celati's aesthetics of the "outside," and on his conception of the self as an exotic subject. Segalen and Celati similarly begin their reflection on exoticism with an analysis of the colonial exotic tradition. Segalen develops a personal aesthetics of the exotic as a celebration of the

"outside," focusing on the subject's perception of Otherness in its cultural, but also phenomenological forms. Celati's aesthetics of the "aperto" and his "scrittura in esposizione" in *Verso la foce* (1989) are comparable to Segalen's theoretical reflections. Moreover, at the end of his career Segalen concludes that he can see his own self as exotic; and in Celati, too, exoticism is first of all a condition of the subject, i.e., a condition of ontological and epistemic estrangement, as *Verso la foce* shows with particular clarity.

Section 3.5 presents a series of examples where Celati exposes his understanding of locality not in terms of belonging to a specific place, but rather as a set of mindful practices to connect with the "here or now," in contrast to the spatial abstraction of late capitalism. I call this aspect of Celati's work an aesthetics of "deixis," borrowing a term from linguistics. The texts I include in my analysis are: 1) the short story "L'isola in mezzo all'Atlantico" from the collection *Narratori delle pianure* (1985), where Celati narrates the story of an accidental murder by a policeman as an effect of his distraction, and of how the same policeman attempts to "heal" by engaging in exercises of mindful perception of his surroundings; 2) the short story "Condizioni di luce sulla via Emilia" from the collection *Quattro novella sulle apparenze* (1987), where I connect the emphasis on the "here and now" to the ontological significance that Celati recognizes in the question of "dwelling" (which I mean here in an Heideggerian sense); 3) the novel *Fata Morgana* (2005), where Celati develops a theoretical elaboration of the "here and now," situated in the context of a pseudo-ethnographic novel. In *Fata Morgana* one sees, one more time, how Celati's understanding of the local is in fact a phenomenological and philosophical concept disconnected from any specific geographic places.

In section 3.6, I deal with Celati's ironic and yet affectionate look at tourists in his travel notes *Avventure in Africa* (1998). I show how he embraces a series of denigrating tropes that in

European culture have been signaling an alleged difference between "real travelers" and "tourists" since the late 19th century. These tropes include, in particular, the use of animal metaphors and the idea of tourists as "idiots," a concept that anthropologist Jean-Didier Urbain explains well in his essay *L'Idiot du voyage: histoires de tourists* (1991). The idea of the tourist as an idiot is particularly recurrent in Celati, which significantly emphasizes the tourist's sense of estrangement since the "idiot" is etymologically the one who is out of place in society.

Finally, in section 3.7, I discuss the roles of maps and mapping in Celati's post-touristic aesthetics. Drawing on Celati's theoretical reflections on exoticism, adventure, Otherness, vagueness, and anti-historicism, I show how Celati's post-touristic aesthetics eludes an investigation of the hidden causes of the present as much as it eludes a "cognitive mapping" (using Fredric Jameson's terms) of the exotic self. The project *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd* (2011) is revealing for showing not only how, in his reconfiguration of exoticism, Celati has not completely broken the ties with the European colonial imaginary, but also how the diversity of empirical experiences of space, implying historically-grounded conditions of inequality, does not find easy representation in Celati.

3.1. Towards a Post-Touristic Aesthetics: Deterritorialization and Exoticism

Celati's early interest in questions of deterritorialization, exoticism, and adventure sets the ground for the development of his post-touristic aesthetics. As a Professor of English Literature at the University of Bologna in the late 1970s, Gianni Celati took part in discussions on colonial literature and exoticism. In particular, conversations with French literature scholars Anita Licari, Sandra Festi, Roberta Maccagnani, and Lina Zecchi resulted in the collective volume *Letteratura esotismo colonialismo* (1978), including their essays on André Gide, Pierre Loti, and Victor

Segalen. The volume, published by Cappelli in Bologna, is introduced by Celati's essay "Situazioni esotiche sul territorio." While defending the independence and non-representative nature of his introduction to the volume, Celati represents his co-authors in a 1977 letter to the Einaudi Publishing House, specifically addressing Italo Calvino. In this letter, Celati protests against the publishing house's decision not to publish the volume.[7]

Letteratura esotismo colonialismo presents a wide range of reflections on imperialism and literature that, to some extent, anticipate the discussion around Edward Said's *Orientalism* (also published in 1978) and *Culture and Empire* (1993). In particular, like Said, the authors of the volume follow the imprint of Michel Foucault by approaching literature as cultural discourse and claiming its participation in the political hegemony of imperialism. As Gianni Celati writes in his letter:

> La politica letteraria francese è politica dell'espansione d'una lingua egemonica. E la "grande letteratura" francese, come la "grande letteratura" inglese sono "grandi" per questo fatto, per la loro Potenza come veicoli dell'espansione egemonica e imperialistiche delle lingue francese e inglese, non per fatti ultraterreni, per "valori stilistici" intrinseci. Queste tesi potranno non piacere a chi sostiene che i grandi monumenti non vanno deturpati, ma nessuno può venirmi a dire che non sono spiegate e articolate.[8]

Despite the Foucauldian approach to literature as discourse characterizing the volume, Celati's interpretation of exoticism in his introductory essay presents major differences when compared to Edward Said's discussion of orientalism (my analysis is based on the assumption that the two terms overlap to a certain extent).

The first major difference between Celati's and Said's approaches brings us back to Said's critique of Foucault in *Orientalism*: while being largely influenced by the French theorist,

[7] Celati, "Lettera a Guido Davico, Paolo Fossati e Italo Calvino."

[8] Ibid, 217.

Said stresses that he recognizes "the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism," an aspect that is lacking in Foucault's theory.[9] As much as Foucault does not recognize the role of individual voices in the definition of a hegemonic discourse, Celati similarly avoids, and actually openly refuses, to stress the responsibility of individual exotic writers or travelers: "esotismo e curiosità etnografica sono il rovescio dell'imperialismo, il risvolto e l'abbellimento culturale della conquista. Ma i processi di mobilità attivati dall'imperialismo e registrati, descritti, divulgati e interrogati dalla letteratura esotica—così come sono stati seguiti, attivati, e problematizzati dalla letteratura etnografica… è inutile criticarli."[10]

In Celati's view, the European state is the manipulator of individual desire through exoticism, both in Europe and in European colonies. For Celati, the state is the ultimate agent of the processes of deterritorialization, reterritorialization, and mobility imposed upon individuals who either contribute to imperialism with their texts or travels, or are subjected to it in the highest degree as colonized subjects. Celati presents colonialism as a "territorial machine" ("macchina territoriale"), which establishes the category of the "Other" to subjugate both colonies and cultural minorities living within Europe, such as the Alsatians and the Basques.[11] Subjugation begins by depriving individuals of their connection to their territory—what Celati, using a Deleuzian term, calls a process of "deterritorialization."[12] The same territories are appropriated by the state through exoticism (re-territorialization), which, according to Celati, is a

[9] Said, *Orientalism*, 23.

[10] Celati et al., *Letteratura, esotismo, colonialismo*, 9.

[11] Ibid., 10, 20.

[12] Ibid, 16-17.

lure that the state enforces upon Western individuals: "L'esotismo da effetto della mobilità (i resoconti di viaggi) si trasforma in fantasia e diventa causa di mobilità (desiderio di vedere il mondo)."[13] In Celati's view, the state is responsible for the mobility of Western subjects as much as for the immobility of the colonized;[14] because of state power, both have lost their original territorial bond.

The second major difference between Said and Celati, connected to the first, is founded upon the latter's Eurocentrism, and also defines the specificity of Celati's aesthetic view. Unlike the other authors of the volume, Celati is not particularly interested in analyzing the stereotyped representations of the "Other," which he assumes to be part of the "popular imaginary"—the same "popular imaginary" will instead be the object of Said's groundbreaking critique. Celati's interest in mobility speaks of an intention to incorporate a new take on exoticism into his own aesthetics. He distinguishes between the "real" desire for adventure behind exoticism and the political expropriation that the state operates through the individual subject. Through exoticism, the state ignites the desire for the "admirable to be seen," so that even the idea of evasion, novelty, and radical difference of diverse places and subjects is absorbed within the state:

> L'esoticismo è una corrente di desiderio vero che porta all'espropriazione dell'alterità culturale; è piena consapevolezza della portata eversiva del desiderio, del suo valore sovversivo rispetto all'ordine Borghese: solo che è un desiderio già preso nelle maglie d'una legalità, un desiderio protetto, o come direbbero Deleuze e Guattari "desiderio burocratico", l'eros della burocrazia espresso da Kafka.[15]

Celati identifies an individual desire behind exoticism and sets it apart from the expropriation that exoticism implies in political and territorial terms. Moreover, he also identifies the object of

[13] Ibid, 13.

[14] Ibid, 17.

[15] Celati, "Lettera a Guido Davico, Paolo Fossati e Italo Calvino," 220.

this desire, and follows their transformation from "singolarità empiriche del mondo" into "meraviglie del mondo," as an epistemic manipulation of exoticism:

> La grande Letteratura di stato è un modo di forzare il silenzio del mondo, il suo silenzio di senso, la sua mancanza di senso: il silenzio delle pietre, delle foreste, dei fiumi, delle emozioni, degli ululati, dei selvaggi o dei vecchi contadini che non capiscono le vostre domande, dei sudditi dello Stato che non capiscono cosa sia lo Stato. Il suo principio è far parlare tutto, dare un senso a tutto. L'esotismo – questo confronto col linguaggio referenziale dei territori – è sempre il ricordo d'un silenzio, riportato a vivacità enunciativa del senso, a meraviglia del mondo.[16]

"Pietre," "foreste," "fiumi," "emozioni," "ululati," "selvaggi," and "vecchi contadini" are examples of the countless forms that the "Other" assumes in relation to the rational parameters of European discourse.

The previous passage is particularly relevant for an understanding of Celati's post-touristic aesthetics. As Andrea Cortellessa notices, the passage anticipates Celati's later poetics of "spettacolo del mondo," his ecological sensitivity, and attention to appearances (what I will later call an "aesthetics of the outside"). Moreover, the passage is an important hint at Celati's early interest in mobility and deterritorialization in terms that reflect the essential mechanism of tourism, i.e. the economic exploitation and management of individuals' desire for the "exotic." At this point it is useful to recall Lucia Claudia Fiorella's definition of exoticism as "un atteggiamento estetico di valorizzazione dell'estraneo in quanto tale, a prescindere cioè da una sua cognizione effettiva. L'Altro lontano non va infatti conosciuto, pena la perdita della sua fascinosa inaccessibilità, ma *ri*conosciuto, ossia giudicato conforme a una codificazione preesistente e gratificante dell'alterità."[17]

[16] Ibid, 24.

[17] Fiorella, "Il topos del viaggio deludente," 2.

Reproducing the mechanism of exoticism, tourism is based on the consumption of goods and services that are not necessary to one's survival, and yet, as Urry and Larsen recall, "generate pleasurable experiences which are *different from* those typically encountered in everyday life."[18] In tourism, as much as in exoticism, the "out of the ordinary" is recognized as such and easily recognizable, coming from a socially constructed, organized and systematized identification of the attractions "to be seen." The "tourist gaze" is a socially constructed "way of seeing" (using the words of art historian John Berger).[19] As Urry and Larsen also explain, in post-modernity the democratization of travelling for pleasure is connected to the endless availability of the tourist gaze in the media.[20] Not only does this endless circulation of tourist gazes make the exoticism of the tourist experience unlikely "authentic," but it also puts the very possibility of exoticism into question, as my next section will show.

Celati's contribution in *Letteratura esotismo colonialismo* presents a Foucauldian critique of European imperialism and structures of power, but also a Eurocentric and generalizing view on the mobility of the "modern subject," as a brief comparison with the coeval work of Edward Said shows. I will delve into the consequences of this specific trait of Celati's aesthetics later in the chapter (section 7). For now, I want to stress how mobility, deterritorialization, and exoticism are essential questions that shape Celati's view on the local and the global, and define his post-touristic aesthetics.

[18] Urry and Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze*, 1.

[19] John Berger collaborates with Celati in the documentary *Visioni di case che crollano*.

[20] Urry and Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze*, 113–15.

3.2. The End of Exoticism

The socially constructed tourist gaze is at the center of Italian photographer Luigi Ghirri's research, which Celati adds to by collaborating in the collective photo album *Viaggio in Italia* (1984), starting from 1981.[21] In *Viaggio in Italia,* Ghirri and his fellow photographers challenge the traditional codes of representation which have fixated on an imagined Italy as a postcard-like landscape full of ruins and monuments. Such stereotyped representations can be considered a form of exoticism, allowing tourists to recognize the Italian landscape as something other and nevertheless familiar: what is better than a picture of the Colosseum to represent Italy to foreigners (as much as to Italians themselves)?! In the essay introducing the volume, Arturo Carlo Quintavalle recalls how the Grand Tour and also Fascism contributed to the proliferation of stereotyped images of Italy, particularly through a visual insistence on ruins of the Roman Empire, and how this has also affected the construction of a national identity.[22]

As much as Celati turned his gaze from the stereotypes of colonial exoticism in *Letteratura esotismo colonialismo*, in *Viaggio in Italia* Ghirri purposely ignores the stereotyped pictures of Italy, imposing, in his view, strong limitations on our ways of looking at the Italian landscape. According to Ghirri, in searching for what makes the Italian landscape recognizable, we miss the opportunity to look at things in their pure novelty. Moreover, stereotyped images fail to represent what a landscape truly is for most inhabitants who experience it in many different ways on a daily basis, including the effects of industrialization on the landscape, and the pervasiveness of consumerism in any aspect of social life. As Ghirri explains in an interview to

[21] On Celati's collaboration with Luigi Ghirri see Celati, *Conversazioni del vento volatore*, 63–69; Celati, "Viaggio in Italia con 20 fotografi, 20 anni dopo" in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 262–73; and Spunta, "'Il profilo delle nuvole': Luigi Ghirri's Photography and the 'New' Italian Landscape."

[22] Ghirri, *Viaggio in Italia*, 7–14.

Marco Belpoliti: "L'Italia minore è in realtà quella maggiore, … non è che questo che appare è il paesaggio della maggioranza silenziosa, è invece lo sterminato paesaggio che l'iconografia tradizionale, lo stereotipo turistico, il settimanale o mensile più o meno patinato hanno rimosso o nascosto."[23]

Viaggio in Italia is showcased as an "anti-exotic" project that offers an alternative to stereotyped representations of Italy. The photographs of *Viaggio in Italia* fail to identify the Italian landscape as a recognizable landmark. On the contrary, the photographs and Celati's textual contribution "Verso la foce" suggest the anonymity of places, their non-exceptional use on an everyday basis. Ghirri and Celati's fondness for non-iconic spaces echoes Zavattini's theory of "*qualsiasità,*" giving expression to the anonymous outdoor settings of Neorealist films.[24] As it is clarified on the inside and back cover accompanying the album, the goal of the collection is to see how "una generazione di fotografi, *lasciato da parte il mito dei viaggi esotici*, del reportage sensazionale, dell'analisi formalistica, e della creatività presunta e forzata, ha invece rivolto lo sguardo sulla realtà e sul paesaggio che ci sta intorno."[25] Celati himself describes Ghirri's project in *Viaggio in Italia* as a challenge to the idea that photography is a "*bottino esotico o estetico*, o bottino dell'immediatezza percettiva."[26]

Presenting *Viaggio in Italia* as a challenge to exoticism, Ghirri *et al.* implicitly point to the trope of "the end of exoticism," of which French literature and social sciences present many influential examples. In the 1990s, French anthropologist Marc Augé announces the end of exoticism as a time for anthropology to shift their paradigm of research from the study of

[23] Belpoliti, "Conversazione con Luigi Ghirri: fotografare l'Italia."

[24] On Zavattini's "*qualsiasità*" and Celati's aesthetics see Spunta, "Gianni Celati's Towards the River's Mouth," 85.

[25] Ghirri, *Viaggio in Italia*. Italics mine.

[26] Celati, "Viaggio in Italia con 20 fotografi, 20 anni dopo" in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 262. Italics mine.

"exotic" or remote civilizations to the local, metropolitan Paris: "La mort de l'exotisme est la caractéristique essentielle de notre époque."[27] The "end of exoticism" is also the statement implied by French experimental author Georges Perec, who takes an anti-exotic position in 1973 and uses neologisms—the "infra-ordinaire," the "endotic"—to name the groundbreaking focus on the local and the everyday in his works.[28] Other famous occurrences of this trope date earlier, including Claude Lévi-Strauss' reflections in his 1955 *Tristes tropiques*: "L'humanité s'installe dans la monoculture; elle s'apprête à produire la civilisation en masse, comme la betterave. Son ordinaire ne comportera plus que ce plat… Tel je me reconnais, voyageur, archéologue de l'espace, *cherchant vainement à reconstituer l'exotisme à l'aide de parcelles et des débris*."[29] Going even further back in time, the French poet Victor Segalen, whom I will discuss more at length later, also foresees the end of exoticism in the early 1900s: "Le Divers décroît. Là est le grand danger Terrestre."[30] The series of statements I have recalled speak of different times in the history of globalization, demonstrating the end of exoticism as the effect of the accelerations of travel, colonialism, and the spread of capitalism worldwide. These statements point to the gradual transformation of cultures and territories, the disappearance of diversity and the spreading of cultural homogenization. While for Segalen the end of exoticism is only a visible threat, Levi-Strauss sees only "debris of exoticism" left; Perec anticipates anthropology in announcing that the exotic will no longer be considered a valuable object of aesthetic research.

---

[27] Augé, *Le sens des autres*, 10.

[28] "Les journaux parlent de tout, sauf du journalier. Les journaux m'ennuient, ils ne m'apprennent rien. [...] Ce qui se passe vraiment, ce que nous vivons, le reste, tout le reste, où est-il ? Ce qui se passe chaque jour et qui revient chaque jour, le banal, le quotidien, l'évident, le commun, l'ordinaire, le bruit de fond, l'habituel, comment en rendre compte, comment l'interroger, comment le décrire ? [...] Peut-être s'agit-il de fonder enfin notre propre anthropologie: celle qui parlera de nous, qui ira chercher en nous ce que nous avons si longtemps pillé chez les autres. Non plus l'exotique, mais l'endotique." Perec, *L'infra-ordinaire*.

[29] Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*, 37, 42. Cortellessa quotes this and other passages in the Italian translation.

[30] Segalen, *Œuvres complètes*, 775.

I propose to read Celati's (and Ghirri's) work along with the tradition of the end of exoticism, while also stressing the specificity of their aesthetic response. I submit that Celati (and Ghirri) respond to the end of exoticism by proposing a new, "exotic" look on the local. The uniqueness of Celati and Ghirri's aesthetic choices appear evident when contrasted with the choices undertaken by Georges Perec, for which I propose a brief, and clearly non exhaustive comparison.[31] Although the research of Perec, and Ghirri and Celati overlap to a certain extent (as an aesthetic representation of the everyday and the local), the "*qualsiasità*" and "vagueness" of Ghirri's photographs—which Celati himself incorporates into his writing—make Celati's and Ghirri's work significantly different from Perec's scrutinization of the endotic or the local. Moreover, while Perec insists on perception and memory, putting self at the center of his research on space, Ghirri and Celati aim to push their research outside self, privileging voyage and formally addressing the "adventure" of the everyday.

Perec, and Ghirri and Celati similarly direct their research towards the "end of exoticism." While Perec coins the term "endotic" to indicate his focus on the familiar and the local, Ghirri and Celati recognize that the difference between the exotic and the familiar has vanished:

> In questa situazione un po' da fantascienza, dove le rimanenze continuano ad avere un senso anche se non hanno più un uso, tutto è davvero sospeso come nelle fiabe. E non si sente più neanche quella vecchia differenza tra l'esotico e il familiare. Non c'è più nessun grande viaggio che sia più emozionante d'una passeggiata per vedere i colori del mondo. Forse adesso cominciamo a riconoscerlo questo teatrino a larghissimo proscenio, chiuso

[31] Although it exceeds the focus of this dissertation, an extended comparative study of Celati and Perec in relation to space and the everyday would be a fruitful and understudied direction of research. Maria Teresa De Palma hints at the same direction as she contributes a comparison of Celati's and Piero Falchetta's translations of *La Disparition* in De Palma, "Spazi, sperimentazioni, scribi." I similarly propose a comparison of Celati's and Falchetta's translations of *La Disparition* in my Master's thesis *Georges Perec,* La Disparition*: problemi e strategie di traduzione* (University of Bologna, 2010/2011) collected at the Georges Perec Archive in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, where I also include a third translation of the same text by Italian translator Bruno Chiaranti.

> soltanto dalla tenda del cielo, questo magazzino delle forme d'arte e d'illusione che è un paesaggio italiano.[32]

Once they acknowledge the undifferentiation of the familiar and the exotic, Celati and Ghirri do not simply drop the category of the exotic, nor oppose it to the realm of the "endotic" or local/familiar, as in Perec. On the contrary, they attempt to revitalize the formal (visual or narrative) mode of the exotic, prioritizing voyages, and their impressions of suspension ("tutto è davvero sospeso come nelle fiabe"). In this sense, the exotic and the local are not mutually exclusive binary oppositions as in Perec; Ghirri and Celati attempt a reconfiguration of the exotic through the local, or rather a sort of "exoticization" of the local.

The experience of voyage, more than a reflection on space itself, is key in Ghirri and Celati's aesthetic research. It is significant that Perec chooses to undertake his practices of observation exclusively in places that are familiar to him and with which he recognizes a certain emotional attachment—as if participation and memory could set the ideal perimeter of his rational exploration.[33] Memory is also fundamental in Perec's explorations of space in its different, ascending scales (from "la page" to "l'espace") accomplished with *Espèces d'espaces* (1974).[34] By contrast, Ghirri presents *Viaggio in Italia* as an "*avventura* del pensiero e dello sguardo," stressing the importance of voyage in the project.[35]

---

[32] Ghirri and Celati, *Il profilo delle nuvole*, 15 settembre.

[33] Sheringham, 277: "He [Perec] needed the bearings… that familiar itineraries or memories would have provided. If he was to see, and describe what he was seeing, the place had to be, or become, part of his 'own' map of Paris."

[34] See for example the beginning of the chapter "La chambre": "Je garde une mémoire exceptionnelle, je la crois même assez prodigieuse, de tous les lieux où j'ai dormi, à l'exception de ceux de ma première enfance…" Perec, *Espèces d'espaces*, 43.

[35] "L'intenzione è ricomporre l'immagine di un luogo, e antropologico e geografico, il viaggio è cosi ricerca e possibilità di attivare una conoscenza che non è una fredda categoria di una scienza, ma *avventura* del pensiero e dello sguardo." Ghirri, *Viaggio in Italia*. Italics mine. For the importance of travelling in Celati's aesthetics see also Celati, "Idee per un almanacco del viaggiatore" in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 70. Here I am using "space" and "place" interchangeably.

Moreover, Ghirri and Celati's preference for the "*qualsiasità*" of places excludes a privileged standpoint of the subject, either based on ownership or memory. Celati states this clearly in the short story "Dagli aeroporti" from the collection *Narratori delle pianure*. The narrator, who feels himself at home "soprattutto negli aeroporti" engages in an imaginative dialogue with the familiar objects "greeting" him every morning—"soprattutto le piastrelle del pavimento in cucina"—and laments their way of slavishly confirming the idea he has of himself: "È inutile che vi presentiate scondinzolando ogni mattina come oggetti familiari, perché le nostre strade sono ben diverse."[36] Instead, it is when outside, in the open air, that the narrator feels euphoric about his own existence, part of the "anywhere": "gli sembrava che esser là su quell'argine fosse come essere *dovunque*: la trama ininterrotta di cui anche lui faceva parte era sempre con lui, semplicemente nel suo corpo e nel suo pensiero."[37]

As Ghirri and Celati maintain the curiosity of observing places that are not their own, they attempt to join a collective "way of seeing" things that stress the encounters of subjects and objects/places rather than speaking of self and memory through space. Ghirri calls these encounters "*affezioni*": affective relationships between the subject and the object of observation, celebrating experience as much as seeing.[38] As Celati explains in relation to Ghirri: "La ricerca di Ghirri consiste soprattutto in questo tentativo di aderire al modo di visione previsto dalla cosa fotografata, rinunciando il più possibile ad un suo proprio punto di vista… È un album delle cose che si possono vedere, indicate nel modo in cui chiedono d'essere viste."[39] Claiming that Ghirri's photographs recognize that objects ask to be looked at in a certain way, Celati refers to the "ways

[36] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 791.

[37] Ibid, 790-792. Italics mine.

[38] On Ghirri, Celati, and "spazi d'affezione" see Spunta, "'Il profilo delle nuvole': Luigi Ghirri's Photography and the 'New' Italian Landscape," 125, 130.

[39] Ghirri and Celati, *Il profilo delle nuvole*, 4 settembre.

of seeing" that individuals join and contribute to, as they approach places for the first time, or as they unconsciously approach their surroundings in their everyday habits.

Perec uses meticulous observation as a way to raise awareness of one's perception of places and the everyday.[40] For example, in *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* (1975) he spends three days observing Place Saint-Sulpice, in Paris's 6th *arrondissement* and registering the minimal events and variations of weather, light, and temperature happening around him.[41] In the unfinished project called *Les Lieux,* Perec collects several descriptions of places in Paris at different times of the year and for many years, seals them in envelopes, and then compares the series to see what changes occurred both in the places and in his way of observing them.[42] Close to the diligence of Calvino's *Palomar*, Perec counts on a structured, scientific methodology to unveil the unknown of perception and the experience of places.

Key to Ghirri and Celati's aesthetics is instead the "suspension" or *vaghezza* of representations. Celati and Ghirri aim to retain the uncertain and "suspended" atmosphere of the exotic, while at the same time proposing a project that embraces the "end of exoticism" as a historical fact. This is particularly evident in the second photo project in which Celati collaborates with Ghirri, *Il profilo delle nuvole* (1989). Here Celati highlights that one of the aesthetic purposes of the album is to "presentare tutte le apparenze del mondo come fenomeni sospesi, e dunque non più come 'fatti' da documentare. Sono gli artifici della vaghezza: questo antico termine dell'arte italiana, per dire qualcosa che somiglia ai fenomeni delle nuvole, del

[40] On *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* and other works by Perec see Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, 248–91.

[41] Ibid, 261-27.

[42] The material of *Les lieux* is unpublished and collected at the Georges Perec Archive. See also Sheringham, 258-26.

cielo e degli orizzonti."[43] Celati recognizes vagueness as a distinctive feature of Italian art, which Ghirri succeeds in incorporating in his photographs of non-exceptional places.

Celati and Ghirri share the same inclination towards vagueness while they work with different mediums, photography and writing. Marina Spunta underlines the vagueness of Luigi Ghirri's photographs, suggesting that the key to Ghirri's photography is in "a continuous oscillation—between the close-up and vision from afar, between a sense of nostalgia for a lost naturalness and an ironic vision of contemporary space as void, between inhabiting and displacement."[44] In a similar fashion, Francesca Gatta underlines the "sfondo nebbioso" or "dimensione favolosa" of Celati's narratives in *Narratori delle pianure* (1985).[45] The vagueness of Celati's language is at the same time geographic and temporal. For example, Celati talks about an anonymous "capitale" rather than mentioning the name of a specific city; things happen "un giorno" or "una volta"; deictic expressions are used once and then not clarified later on; opaque expressions of time such as "un tempo," "da molto tempo" prevail.[46]

The vagueness of Celati's narratives is even more significant when one considers their strong attachment to locality. In *Narratori delle pianure,* a map of the Po Valley introduces the geographic settings of the short stories. Constant references to small and medium towns of the Po Valley also contribute in making the locality of the collection extremely clear. In the volume, Celati combines stories that have an autobiographical foundation—such as the recounting of the

[43] On vagueness see Ghirri and Celati, *Il profilo delle nuvole*. "Presentare tutte le apparenze del mondo come fenomeni sospesi, e dunque non più come 'fatti' da documentare. Sono gli artifici della vaghezza: questo antico termine dell'arte italiana, per dire qualcosa che somiglia ai fenomeni delle nuvole, del cielo e degli orizzonti. (3 ottobre)"

[44] Spunta, "'Il profilo delle nuvole': Luigi Ghirri's Photography and the 'New' Italian Landscape."

[45] Gatta, "Le condizioni del narrare. Il cinema naturale di Gianni Celati" in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 419–21.

[46] Gatta makes similar observations in ibid.

narrator's mother crossing the Po Valley in a cart in the early 1900s—with stories that Celati heard from others while wandering in the "osterie" of the Po Valley.[47] The geographic settings of the story, however, do not prevent Celati from blurring the spatial and temporal coordinates of his narrative. The stories of *Narratori delle pianure* echo the indefiniteness of oral storytelling. Indeed, Celati often introduces his stories with sentences such as "Ho sentito raccontare la storia di…"; "Un amico tedesco mi ha raccontato la storia di…;" "Racconterò la storia d'una ragazza... che ho conosciuto a…"[48] Celati's stories seem to float on the territory of the Po Valley—like voices in the air that Celati catches and reports on the page—more than aspiring to fixate a *genius loci* or essentialized identity of a place.

An additional hint to Celati's taste for vagueness can be found in the most local and realistic work of Celati's, *Verso la foce* (1989). This work has been particularly praised for its representation of the ecological crisis of the Po Valley, showcasing the effects of industrial production and consequent pollution affecting the region.[49] As Celati describes the "darkness" ("tetraggine") of Pontelagoscuro—one of the oldest industrial sites in Italy—he makes an apparently marginal comment on the organ panels by Cosmé Tura (1469), collected at the Cathedral Museum in Ferrara.[50] He expresses nostalgia for Tura's way of blurring the background, using fog to indicate distance.[51] In fact, this comment speaks of the vagueness of the exotic for which Celati feels nostalgia. The "exotic" dimension of this vagueness is further suggested by a reference to Chinese painting: "nella parte destra alle spalle della Vergine, ci sono quei vapori di distanza che mi fanno pensare alla pittura cinese. Avevo nostalgia di questo modo

[47] See Celati's letter to Massimo Rizzante in Rizzante, *Il geografo e il viaggiatore*, 128.

[48] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 737, 839, 742.

[49] See for example Seger, *Landscapes in Between*, Ch. 4. Iovino, "Restoring the Imagination of Place."

[50] Ibid, 1046-1047.

[51] See http://www.artecultura.fe.it/1774/le-ante-d-organo-di-cosm-tura, last accessed October 25, 2020.

di trattare la lontananza, di guardare lo spazio che si spalanca sul fondo dove tutto svanisce: non sguardo all'infinito, ma sguardo su ciò che svanisce."[52]

Vagueness is an important component of Celati's, as much as Ghirri's, approach to space. The "sguardo su ciò che svanisce" that Celati indicates in Cosmé Tura's shutters indicates distance and points at the limits of visual perception, accepting the role of these same limits in shaping human understanding of space. This significantly contrasts with Perec's insistence on the power of visual perception to register as many variations and elements as possible of the space surrounding the self. In a similar fashion, Ghirri and Celati do not rely on memory in their research on space. Their sense of "familiarity" with objects goes beyond the limits of the self; they recognize familiarity as an attribute of objects themselves, with which the subject can engage in the form of an "affezione." Thus, Ghirri and Celati implicitly claim that the familiar/local do not necessarily annihilate the formal possibility of the "exotic." The exotic is part of the local, if only one accepts engagement with the local as an "adventure of the mind and gaze."

3.3. "Adventure Must Not End": Celati's Choice of the Novella

In Celati, not only is vagueness associated with oral storytelling, but also, more specifically, to the genre of adventure and the Italian tradition of the novella. It has already been clarified how much the genre of adventure has been crucial in inspiring Celati. Adventure is a "presa di campo" for Celati according to Arianna Marelli, who analyzes Celati's novels from the 1970s, particularly *Lunario del Paradiso,* through this lens.[53] Rebecca West discusses the etymology of

[52] Ibid.

[53] Marelli, "Le avventure del *Lunario*," 6.

the term, referring to an exposure to risks, and to what has yet to come.[54] Both Marelli and West insist on the many occurrences of the term "avventure" in Celati's works, from *Avventure di Guizzardi* (1972) to *Avventure in Africa* (1998). Marelli also recalls the variety of Celati's inspirations taken from adventure writing—from Marc Twain to Jack London, from Joseph Conrad to Ariosto.[55]

Indeed, it is when referring to Joseph Conrad that Celati identifies his aesthetic approach to vagueness and exoticism. In the essay "L'avventura non deve finire" (1982-1983), Celati argues: "Dicendo 'avventura' si pensa di solito a luoghi esotici, posti lontani nel tempo e nello spazio. Ma guardate Conrad, come usa queste localizzazioni: sempre come se fossimo dispersi in un'era inconoscibile, in luoghi inconoscibili. Sempre e soltanto in epoche e viaggi astratti."[56] According to Celati, adventure in Conrad is such not because of "exotic" settings, but rather because of the vagueness of the spatial settings. Moreover, for Celati, adventure has a clear anti-historical modality, as he explains later in the essay: "Mi sembra che la narrazione d'avventura sia per forza una sospensione dei dati storici, geografici, anagrafici… La speranza o l'attesa rivolta all'Altro nasce in un paesaggio morto, in un orizzonte che ha polverizzato la storia e i suoi dati."[57] For Celati, not only spatial indetermination, but also anti-historicity can therefore be synonyms of "vagueness." These are precisely the essential formal features of literary "adventure."

Celati's theorization of the "end of adventure" significantly echoes the trope of the "end of exoticism." In particular, Celati connects the end of adventure to the detrimental effects of

[54] West, *Gianni Celati*, 222.

[55] Marelli, "Le avventure del *Lunario*," 5-8.

[56] Celati, "L'avventura non deve finire," 88.

[57] Ibid, 88.

globalization, including, more specifically, the "deterritorialization" or loss of a bond with the land because of generalized mobility and spatial abstraction. In his essay "L'avventura non deve finire," Celati describes the changes in individuals' relationship to land as "irrimediabile."[58] Significantly, Celati uses this adjective to describe both colonialism (while commenting on Conrad) and cultural homologation during late capitalism.[59] In particular, Celati comments on the cultural homologation that he has seen firsthand in the United States, where he lived in the early 1970s and that he again visited less than ten years later: "L'irrimediabile era avvenuto dovunque. Pensavo che l'avventura non deve finire, però non sapevo più come farcela per tenerla in vita."[60]

The end of adventure is linked, in Celati's view, to a form of deterritorialization caused by science and consumerism. Celati focuses his attention on the economic displacement caused by capitalism: "non lo sradicamento di chi deve abbandonare le proprie terre per cause di forza maggiore, ma lo sradicamento dei nuovi ricchi o delle classi che cambiano quartiere perché aspirano a esser riconosciuti come nuovi ricchi."[61] Celati connects the loss of a connection to place with an excessive faith in science and abstraction: "Sempre più in nome di un uomo che crede di sapere tutto, distaccato dal suo ambiente, con l'idea di poter orientare il fuori in base a qualche trovata del suo sapere. Mai come adesso, forse, siamo stati preda di noi stessi, e in preda ai pasticcio del nostro sapere."[62] Deterritorialization is, in Celati's view, generalized: "mai come adesso stiamo stati lontani da questa patria di animali genericamente umani."[63]

---

[58] Ibid.

[59] In Celati's view, Conrad uses a "tono emotivo pacato, di chi t'insegna l'esperienza di navigare in zone dove è avvenuto qualcosa di irrimediabile," Ibid, 88.

[60] Ibid, 90.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Celati, *Conversazioni del vento volatore*, 23.

[63] Celati, "L'avventura non deve finire," 98.

While Celati announces the "end of adventure" occurring with the cultural standardization caused by capitalism in the United States and elsewhere, he is also looking for a way to recuperate or revitalize adventure in contemporary storytelling, because "l'avventura non deve finire" (adventure must not end), as the title of his own essay suggests. As much as in Carlo Ginzburg's explorations of microhistory, Celati sees adventures that are still worth telling within the most obvious and unsensational aspects of the everyday life for the average person or the "Ognuno."[64] In particular, he recognizes the collective sense of dismay affecting individuals in Western societies as the cypher of a "universo ambientale," a mode of existence that individuals experience in isolation and yet in unison: "Il sentimento vero e forte che potrei raccontare meglio è quello di essere perduto. Non io in particolare, come individuo. È piuttosto uno stato di cose, che mi pare di leggere dovunque."[65]

Celati's quandary is how to recuperate adventure despite acknowledging the hiatus between experience and language in the postindustrial world. On the one hand, Celati recognizes that experience and language are not comparable or translatable one into the other —which is Celati's interpretation of the late Wittgenstein.[66] On the other hand, however, Celati's hold on adventure lies precisely in the connection between experience and storytelling, which Walter Benjamin points to as one of the most important losses in the technocracy of modern society.[67] Celati solves his dilemma by resorting to the tradition of the Italian *novella*, which he sees as a mode of storytelling speaking of a time of pre-globalization when locality and also diversity or the exotic are still preserved.

---

[64] Ibid, 91-93.

[65] Ibid, 98.

[66] Ibid, 92. See also Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, LI–LII.

[67] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 83. For Benjamin's influence on Celati see Spunta, "'A Magical Balance of Opposites': Reading Luigi Ghirri's Photography through Walter Benjamin."

Celati retrieves the novella as a genre anchored to the local that, nevertheless, conveys and speaks of an openness to the world. The novella is a literary genre that flourished in Italy from the 13th century. In particular, *Il Novellino* (from 1280-1300) is the collection of novellas that Celati seems most passionate about, even more than Boccaccio's *Decameron*.[68] In Celati, the novella is grounded in locality, as it implies a "compagnia d'ascolto," an audience physically present at the time and place where a certain story is told: "la novella … si dichiara sempre come racconto d'un racconto, udito dal narratore che lo ripete per noi."[69] Walter Benjamin had already noticed how the novella still holds a connection with oral storytelling (and therefore, experience). He stressed how the novel, by contrast, operates within the realm of the book and is rather completely detached from orality.[70] In a similar fashion, Celati returns to the Italian literary tradition of the novella, where he sees a display of experience or rather of the world, a world that is still perceived as a "tessuto di meraviglie":

> La varietà di questi zibaldoni [di novelle] dipendeva da una vasta circolazione di motivi narrabili, legata alle rotte dei pellegrini e dei mercanti. Per questi tramiti debbono essere giunti molti esempi di narrativa araba, indiana, provenzale e francese, che hanno trasformato i modi del racconto nostrani. Le prime due novelle del *Decamerone* parlano di mercanti fiorentini a Parigi, un buon terzo delle altre sono ambientate in luoghi d'Europa e del Mediterraneo, come vicende o emblemi o fantasie di terre lontane. In tutte si vede l'afflusso di materiali eterogenei, passati da una tradizione all'altra. Ed è ciò che rendeva le raccolte novellistiche degli empori di mercanzie pregiate, dove ogni storia ha la natura del frammento disperso, come le reliquie dei santi o i gioielli portati in Europa dagli antichi viaggiatori. E' una narrativa di motivi intrecciati dove ognuno vale in se come memoria di accadimenti nel vasto mondo; e parla d'un mondo ancora inteso come un tessuto di meraviglie, alla maniera di Marco Polo e dei viaggiatori arabi.[71]

[68] Celati, *Studi d'affezione*, 12–13.

[69] Ibid, 21, 19.

[70] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 87.

[71] Celati, *Studi d'affezione*, 11–12.

In Celati's account, the novella is a heterogeneous genre that mixes Arabic, Indian, French, and Provençal motifs with Italian ones. Different traditions influence each other and each of its different elements is representative of a way of inhabiting the world. The novella speaks of a time where the travels of pilgrims and merchants, such as Marco Polo, are not a threat to the variety of the world ("meraviglie del mondo").

Celati's return to the formal mode of the novella is an aesthetic choice fueled by his concern for territories in terms of both diversity of the world and locality. As such, the novella appears as the utopian third alternative to the two options foreseen by Lévi-Strauss, unable to choose between the contemporary disappearance of diversity on the one hand, and the unawareness of the world's richness which he associates with the past on the other: "je suis prisonnier d'une alternative: tantôt voyageur ancien, confronté à un prodigieux spectacle dont tout ou presque lui échappait – pire encore inspirait raillerie et dégout; tantôt voyageur modern, courant après les vestiges d'une réalité disparue."[72] Celati finds in the novella a way to escape extreme visions of locality/anti-globalism, while still expressing the need to return to a form of groundedness against the deterritorialization caused by late capitalism.

Published in 1985, *Narratori delle pianure* presents a good example of how Celati uses the novella to preserve adventure in contemporary storytelling by returning to the narrative mode of the novella.[73] In a letter to Massimo Rizzante, Celati explains the connection to the novella: he recalls how, in 1983-1984, he spent years in the "osterie" of the countryside of Emilia Romagna to observe how stories are told in everyday life. Stories told in public spaces descend from the tradition of the novella, Celati argues, for they do not dwell in psychology or look for a deep

[72] Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*, 43.

[73] In Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 733–866.

hidden meaning. Rather, they present things that happen "on the surface," where landscape, objects, encounters, people, places, and the weather are the things that matter.[74] In this sense *Narratori delle pianure* presents a "rovesciamento dall'interno sull'esterno," using Italo Calvino's words, which Calvino recognizes as the truest spirit of the 1980s.[75]

In *Narratori delle pianure*, there is no deep insight into the characters' psychology, rather life stories are told adopting what Celati himself calls a "panoramic" approach: a distant focus that tells the reader what the characters do or rather what happens to them, over a quite extensive period of time.[76] The lack of psychological background emphasizes the different *trajectories* of migrants, commuters, or simply children exploring their surroundings without clear directions and yet representing lives worth living. Celati exposes the arbitrariness and unpredictability of the characters' mobility and decisions. For example, a Japanese fashion designer moves from the East Coast to the West Coast in the US, and then to Milan, supported by the opinion of an astrologer who claims to see her "predestinations."[77] A group of children living at the outskirts of Milan decide to follow passengers on public transportation out of boredom, only to conclude that their peregrinations do not spare them from boredom after all, and maybe this is what living life as an adult is all about.[78] The uncle of a narrator, who is living in France and working in the construction business, realizes the power of a foreign language only when his son learns French

[74] "Tra il 1983 e il 1984 ho passato mesi nelle osterie di campagna per vedere come sono raccontate le storie quotidiane, che sono le eredi della novella. Tradizionalmente la novella è un racconto breve, basato su fatti di cui si è sentito parlare, senza psicologia dei personaggi, dove le storie sono raccontate come si fa in famiglia, o tra amici, in poche parole, senza significati profondi. Italo Calvino mi ha detto 'sono racconti di superficie'. Voleva dire che non approfondivo gli argomenti trattati. Li lasciavo in superficie, come si faceva con le novella. La cosa più importante era il paesaggio quotidiano, le cose, gli incontri, le persone, i luoghi, il clima di ogni giorno." Rizzante, *Il geografo e il viaggiatore*, 128. See also Celati, "Il racconto di superficie."

[75] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, XLIV.

[76] Ibid, 293, notes 9 and 10.

[77] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 742-6.

[78] Ibid, 747-51.

at school. On the contrary, migrating from a small town in the Po Valley to a small town in the South of France had not taught him a new language nor made him change much of his original lifestyle. The man is so surprised and moved that he starts crying.[79]

The characters of the *Narratori delle pianure* present ways of "farcela," which, according to Celati, is the deepest function of adventure tales: they show characters who cope with life when an unexpected turn of events happens to them, or when the things they are searching for in life simply do not materialize.[80] For Celati, adventure is the sensation of finding oneself "rooted in the becoming" and reacting to one's environment.[81] The experience of dismay and displacement characterizing most stories tells the reader about the feeling of postmodern deterritorialization identified by Celati. Yet, at the same time Celati reestablishes a "finzione a cui credere," a sort of illusion bringing hope and "sollievo," through the vagueness of his writing style, and the sensation of sharing experience that the storytelling modes of adventure and the novella evoke.[82]

3.4. Gianni Celati and Victor Segalen: Aesthetics of the Outside, and the Exotic Self

Celati's post-touristic aesthetics implies an epistemic reconfiguration of the exotic in the representation of the local and the everyday. To further support this thesis, in this section I propose a brief comparative analysis of Celati's work and Victor Segalen's, one of the major

[79] Ibid, 825-835.

[80] Celati, "L'avventura non deve finire," 91. An exceptional case among the stories of people who "make it" ("farcela") in a way or another, is the tragic ending of "Una sera prima della fine del mondo," where the main protagonist, a woman who is obsessed with climate change and makes a series of deceptive encounters, ends up taking her own life. This tragic ending is a significant exception considering Celati's concern for the environment which becomes clearer in *Verso la foce*. Ibid, 846-850.

[81] Celati, "L'avventura non deve finire," 91.

[82] Ibid.

authors that Lina Zecchi and Anita Licari analyze in *Letteratura esotismo colonialismo*, and an overlooked source of Celati's aesthetics.

A French doctor, poet, and archeologist, Victor Segalen (1878-1919) received the attention of critics including Edouard Glissant, James Clifford, Tzvetan Todorov, Abdelkebir Khatibi, and Harry Harootunian for his pioneering reflections on diversity.[83] The prose and poetry of *Peintures* (1916), *Stèles (*1914), and *Equipée* (written in 1914-15, published in 1926) speak of Segalen's travels to China and present his study of Chinese culture along with a reflection on the self, the Other, and travelling. While *Les Immémoriaux* (1907) attempts to narrate colonialism by assuming the point of view of the colonized (the Maori tribes in Haiti) it is in the fragmentary essay *Notes sur l'exotisme* (1904-1918, first published in 1955) that we find the long-term rationale behind Segalen's projects: what he calls an "aesthetics of Diversity."

Both Segalen and Celati reflect upon the colonial tradition of exoticism—Pierre Loti is a major reference—and end up developing an aesthetics that would express individual desire for the outside. While doing so, they also decontextualize exoticism from the tradition of colonial exoticism.[84] While Segalen recognizes the "exoticism" of the colonial literary tradition, he disregards these works as a mere projection of the European Self on the Other. In a similar fashion, as I recalled above, Celati distinguishes between a "corrente di desiderio vero" from the "espropriazione dell'alterità culturale" imposed on individuals through exoticism.

Segalen and Celati similarly develop an aesthetics that celebrates the "Other" or the "outside." In his "aesthetics of diversity," Segalen insists on the etymology of the term exoticism

[83] Glissant, *L'intention poétique*, 95–102. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 152–63. Todorov, *Nous et les autres*, Ch. 4. Khatibi, *Figures de l'étranger dans la littérature française*, 17–56.

[84] On the legacy of colonial exoticism in Celati, see section 7 of this chapter. As for Segalen, see Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 162-3.

from the Greek "exo" = outside.[85] He opens up the semantic range of exoticism by including anything that is different and external to self. Exoticism for Segalen is "l'ensemble de nos faits de conscience actuels, quotidiens, tout ce qui n'est pas notre 'tonalité mentale' coutumière."[86] And also: "la sensation d'Exotisme… n'est autre que la notion du différent; la perception du Divers; la connaissance que quelque chose n'est pas soi-même."[87] In Segalen, exoticism is a synonym of the everyday experience of the world. Segalen opens exoticism to a wide range of possible meanings including not only the discovery of new places, but also the projection of self into times other than the present (being confronted with the past, or possibly with the future), the discovery of a different sex, and the discovery of nature which is one's first experience of the exotic as a child.[88] Thus, for example, in *Equipée,* the experience of the exotic coincides with a detailed description of the sensations caused by cold and rocks during a bath Segalen takes in a river of Southern China.[89] Segalen pays particular attention to the body and how it reacts to its surroundings.

The influence that Segalen might have had on Celati has been overlooked by critics. Celati acknowledges being inspired by Segalen in the endnotes of his essay "Il bazar archeologico," explaining that Segalen has influenced him as for the "sollecitazioni a riflettere sugli oggetti fuori contesto, lo choc dell'altro, l'estraneità."[90] Indeed, Celati seems to echo Victor Segalen's idealization of Otherness in the essay "L'avventura non deve finire" (1982-1983) where he distinguishes between "desires" (which are concrete and localized, and therefore can be

[85] Segalen, *Œuvres complètes*, 748.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid, 749.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid, 286-7.

[90] Celati, *Finzioni occidentali*, 226.

intercepted by consumerism) vs. a Spinozian will or "potenza": the energy or urge that makes the subject move towards the absolute "Other."[91] According to Celati, children, fairytale heroes, and individuals in a state of despair all share an unconscious drive or enthusiasm towards otherness: "Allora si affaccia al tuo orizzonte l'Altro, come il principio delle tue attese e della tua ricerca. E devi compiere un percorso obbligato, non per catturare qualcosa di preciso, semplicemente per avvicinare l'Altro."[92] Speaking of "l'Altro" in absolute terms Celati generalizes the object of one's desire for the outside, which is not only associated to specific subjects, but rather becomes a synonym for contingency in life. Moreover, both Celati and Segalen pay attention to the body and connect their interest in the outside with a celebration of joy, what Celati describes as a mixed range of feelings urging the subject to connect with the exterior world, a "tipo d'esuberanza che può mescolarsi al dolore, alla disperazione, alla cupezza, anche al pensiero della morte," "un modo essenziale dell'andare fuori di sé, verso l'esteriorità di tutto ciò che non siamo, le cose, i sassi, gli alberi, le bestie, gli spiriti dell'aria e il buio che è dentro il nostro corpo."[93]

Celati's celebration of the outside finds particular expression in the "observational tales" of *Verso la foce* (1989). The book is a collection of notes, divided in four sections, that Celati writes wandering in the Po Valley, mostly walking by foot, taking rides, or public transportation. Celati opens the book with a quote by Horderlin celebrating the openness of the outside:

---

[91] Celati, "L'avventura non deve finire," 87.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Celati, *Conversazioni del vento volatore*, 106. Celati also talks about the joy of being part of God's creation for St Augustin ("integrazione nello spazio, che non vuol dire integrazione sociale") in Celati, "Collezione di spazi," Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 236. He defines Ghirri's photographies "foto di straordinaria allegria" in the documentary Celati, *Il mondo di Luigi Ghirri*. See also Segalen, *Œuvres complètes*, 103–4: "la vie n'est pas souffrance. La vie est joie, le désir est joie, la sensation est bonne à sentir. Et ce sera l'éternel conflit."

"l'aperto giorno brilla all'uomo di immagini."[94] Moreover, in *Verso la foce* Celati applies his poetics of writing 'in esposizione" (exposed to the landscape that he is describing).[95] For Celati, writing outside rather than in the tranquility of a room means a direct confrontation with the real, which comes with "ostacolo, difficoltà, incertezza, fatica."[96] Celati notices that writing on the street, in an isolated "bar" (coffee house) of the countryside or on public transportation, the writer has to face a variety of contingent factors, "tutti sintomi d'uno scontro con qualcosa di 'reale' - cioè il mondo esterno come una forma sempre disfatta, mai riducibile alla tranquilla comprensione del dato informativo, del risaputo e dell'attualità giornalistica."[97] Celati emphasizes the centrality of the body in one's experience of the outside in the ending paragraph of *Verso la foce*, where he reminds himself (and the reader): "Se adesso cominciasse a piovere ti bagneresti, se questa notte farà freddo la tua gola ne soffrirà, se torni indietro a piedi nel buio dovrai farti coraggio, se continui a vagare sarai sempre più sfatto."[98]

Both Celati and Segalen stress the subjective dimension of one's perception of the outside, by presenting it in terms of "real" and "imaginary." In the travel notes *Équipée* (1915-1916) that Celati reads at the end of the 1970s, Segalen uses an architectural metaphor to describe his own interpretation of exoticism as an architrave that he saw during one of his archeological expeditions in China. On the architrave is a coin or medal—a circular figure with a square in it—standing in the middle; on the two opposite sides lay two beasts, one of them

[94] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 985.

[95] Celati, "Primo Piano. Avventure in Africa" (Interview, Radio Svizzera Italiana) in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 40. I read *Verso la foce* in Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 985-1098. On the intertextuality with photography in *Verso la foce* see Spunta, "Gianni Celati's Towards the River's Mouth."

[96] Celati, "Andar verso la foce" in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 297.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1098.

looking like a dragon, the other with less definable features. Both intimidating and fierce, the two beasts compete for the medal, whose meaning stays unknown. The dragon, vibrant and eccentric, and yet discrete, represents the imaginary; the other beast, which is confident, firm, and sexualized, represents the real.[99] Segalen's symbolism is clearly extraneous to Celati's aesthetics, and yet the same duplicity of real and imaginary is at work when Celati observes and narrates the "outside." As Celati explains in an interview: "Non esiste un vedere oggettivo. In tutto quello che percepiamo, una buona metà (se si potesse computare) è fatta di proiezioni immaginative o emotive che siano."[100] He reiterates this concept in *Verso la foce*: "anche l'immaginazione fa parte del paesaggio: lei ci mette in stato d'amore per qualcosa là fuori, ma più spesso è lei che ci mette in difesa con troppe paure; senza di lei non potremmo fare un solo passo, ma poi è lei che ci porta sempre non si sa dove."[101] As much as Segalen leaves the object of contention between real and imaginary unknown, Celati aims to register how one influences the other and the changes occurring within the combination of the two, without aiming at a rationalist grasp of what the experience of the outside is. In Celati, real and imaginary contribute to the "indifferenziato dell'esperienza e del sentire, l'indifferenziato che è fuori di noi" since "indifferenziato" (undifferentiated) is what Celati calls the combination of feelings and experience that makes our existence and knowledge of the outside.[102]

---

[99] "Deux bêtes opposées, museau à museau, mais se disputant une pièce de monnaie d'une règne illisible. La bête de gauche est un dragon frémissant, non pas contourné en spires chinoises décadentes, mais vibrant dans ses ailes courtes et toutes ses écailles jusqu'aux griffes : c'est l'Imaginaire dans son style discret. – La bête de droite est un long titre souple et cambre, musclé et tendu, bien membré dans sa sexualité puissante: le Réel, toujours sûr de lui." Segalen, *Œuvres Complètes*, 319.

[100] Interview with Marco Sironi in the 2008 edition of Sironi and Belpoliti, *Gianni Celati*, available on http://www.rigabooks.it/ (last accessed September 12, 2020).

[101] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1066.

[102] Celati, "L'avventura non deve finire," 93. The quote by Horderlin that opens the book is also a celebration of the openness of the outside: "l'aperto giorno brilla all'uomo di immagini," in Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 985.

Lastly, an aspect of Victor Segalen's aesthetics that resonates with Celati's is the experience of the exotic as a condition of the self. The two authors feel a condition of estrangement in meaningfully different ways: the exoticism of self represents the exceptionality of the artist in Segalen. It translates to estrangement, alienation, and non-belonging, associated with the deterritorialization of the postmodern condition in Celati. James Clifford stresses how Segalen's research on exoticism ends with a return to subjectivity, particularly so in the travel notes *Équipée,* the last published work by Segalen.[103] As Segalen reports the experience of his archeological trip in the South of China in terms of both real and imaginary, he narrates an imaginary encounter with the authentic Other, who is in fact a vision of his younger self, aged 16-20.[104] Segalen's vision of self as the real exotic aims at impressing the exceptionality of his biographic and artistic endeavors, corresponding with an elitist vision of travelling but also of the real purpose of art, to be distinguished from colonial exoticism and other forms of travel writing.[105]

While discovering self as the real "Other" marks the last stage of Segalen's aesthetic research on exoticism, the assumption of the self as exotic (in the sense of stranger, or tourist) prompts several of Celati's works. In *Verso la foce*, Celati introduces the locality of the Po Valley with a brief paragraph titled "Notizia," which Monica Seger also highlights pointing to the "physical and social complexity" of the Po Valley:

> Viaggiando nelle campagne della valle padana è difficile non sentirsi stranieri. Più dell'inquinamento del Po, degli alberi malati, delle puzze industriali, dello stato d'abbandono in cui volge tutto quanto non ha a che fare con il profitto, e infine d'una edilizia fatta per domiciliati intercambiabili, senza patria né destinazione – più di tutto

[103] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 161.

[104] Segalen, *Œuvres complètes*, 313.

[105] Segalen creates the neologism "exotes" for the connoisseurs of real exoticism, "des voyageurs-nés," whereas tourists, whom he calls "pseudo-exotes" along with colonialists, miss the point of appreciating "Diversity." Ibid, 750, 764.

> questo, ciò che sorprende è questo nuovo genere di campagne dove si respira un'aria di solitudine urbana.[106]

The motif of deterritorialization returns in this passage where the "solitudine urbana" (urban solitude or isolation) is pervasive as the air. The inhabitants of the valley lack a "patria," homeland, as much as a destination. The sense of deterritorialization is not only linked to the inhabitants' mobility (the adjective "intercambiabili" suggests their turnover) but also to the ecological damages preventing the inhabitants from recognizing the land as hospitable: the pollution of the Po river, the illness of trees, the smells of factories, the abandonment of anything that cannot be translated into immediate profit.

In *Verso la foce*, Celati reiterates the sense of estrangement introduced in the "Notizia" throughout the book, both as an individual and as a collective condition. On an individual level, Celati reports feeling "un estraneo, un turista" when talking to the local population.[107] Looking at Ferrara, the area where both Celati's parents come from, and where he also spent a few years as a child, the narrator realizes that he has no family left, and concludes: "più niente da salvare, famiglia nella tomba e amen. non avrai più luogo d'appartenenza."[108] Language does not help restore a sense of belonging. The narrator recognizes that he is familiar with the accent of the local population because of his mother, who used to live in this region before the swamp reclamation and the industrial development promoted during Fascism.[109] Yet he ends the tale apologizing (to the readers, and possibly the local population) for having thought that he knew the area well: "Ogni volta è una sorpresa, scopri di non saper niente di preciso sul mondo

[106] Seger, *Landscapes in Between*, 71, 79. Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 987.

[107] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1039.

[108] Ibid, 1045. On my biographical remarks see Palmieri, "Cronologia," Ibid, LXXV-LXXVIII.

[109] Ibid, 1054, 1061.

esterno. Allora viene anche la voglia di scusarsi con tutti: scusate la nostra presunzione, scusate i nostri discorsi, scusateci di aver creduto che voi siate un pugno di mosche su cui sputare le nostre sentenze."[110] This passage points at the complexity of the postmodern locality in Celati's representation, where having family connections, being "native" by itself does not grant a better knowledge of a place. The tale's conclusion is interesting since just a few pages before the narrator had mocked a Southern immigrant for "pretending" to be local by speaking the local dialect. In the same tale Celati also inserts the figure of an old man commenting on the arrival of Egyptian migrants.[111] Celati's apology seems to suggest that there is no such thing as pure local authenticity, which is also revealed by the business panels written in English that the narrator spots right after noticing how some men maintain old habits such as speaking in dialect or wearing a hat.[112] More importantly, it also suggests that the narrator assumes his own estrangement to the place, despite his family origins.

In *Verso la foce*, the collective dimension of estrangement in the Po Valley has both an ecological and epistemic foundation. Talking with the local population, Celati acknowledges the disappearance of traditional professions harmoniously connected to the river ("barcaioli, ghiaiaroli, segantini, uomini di bosco e uomini di fiume").[113] On the contrary, as a local inhabitant suggests, most people have now lost cultural knowledge of the river.[114] As a consequence, they look at the river "with diffidenza," as a threat.[115] The pollution coming from the industrial activity of the valley—from which the river is not spared, as if it were an "oggetto inanimato,"—aggravates the sense of the

[110] Ibid, 1067.

[111] Ibid, 1057.

[112] Ibid, 1065.

[113] Ibid, 1028.

[114] Ibid, 1042.

[115] Ibid.

inhabitants' unfamiliarity and distrust.[116] Epistemic estrangement is particularly evident when Celati reports his wanderings in the provinces of Parma and Piacenza right after the nuclear disaster of Chernobyl (April 26, 1986). Radiation coming from Chernobyl threatens the local population of the Po Valley despite the incident destroying the nuclear factory occurring thousands of kilometers away. Celati narrates the frustration of attempting to grasp an event only through information from the media, when there is no visible trace of this event in the reality experienced locally and every day. The media filter reality through "frasi fatte" (unmeaningful sentences) that make even the most sensational events, unique and tragic as they might be, repetitive and easy to forget.[117] Mistrusting the opinion of experts who offer certainties while everything stays uncertain, Celati tunes up to the ironic or cynical responses of the local population. The best example, also recalled by Monica Seger, is the sign "CHE GLI VENGA UN ACCIDENTE RADIOATTIVO A QUELLO CHE MI VIENE A RUBARE I FIORI" that homeowners use to warn the unknown thieves of their flowers.[118] Irony marks not only Celati's narrative but also the distance or detachment that the local population feel while dealing with an environmental disaster on a global scale, which nevertheless stays invisible and unknown.

Introducing the figure of Victor Segalen, and suggesting multiple ways in which his work resonates with or might have influenced Celati's, I have supported the thesis that Celati accomplishes a reconfiguration of exoticism in his post-touristic aesthetics. While in my previous section I explained how Celati (together with Ghirri) depicts the local through the formal codes of the exotic, recalling Segalen I have presented the exotic as a subjective experience, in the twofold meaning of experience of the outside through the body and the mind

[116] Ibid, 1041-1042.

[117] Ibid, 992, 993, 1022.

[118] Ibid, 1019. Seger, *Landscapes in Between*, 84.

(both real and imaginary), and experience of self-estrangement (where "exotic" is condition of self).

3.5. Practices of Locality in Spatial Abstraction

One of the distinguishing conditions of the tourist that Celati impresses on his aesthetics is an approach to locality that does not translate into narratives of belonging but rather designates a sensorial predisposition to external phenomena or the outside. Serenella Iovino notices how Celati's work functions as a "narrative reinhabitation," i.e., an "ethical-educational practice" aiming to reestablish a bond between imagination and place (namely, the Po Valley).[119] In a similar fashion, I want to present "practices" of locality that Celati conveys through his post-touristic aesthetics. However, rather than focusing on the imaginative bond with a specific geographic place, I will speak more broadly of Celati's resistance to the spatial abstraction of late capitalism. I contend that locality in Celati consists in a series of mindful practices aiming to enhance attention to one's surroundings, whose implications are ontological as much as ethical and ecological.

The most evident expression of a post-touristic understanding of locality in Celati is the centrality of photography. Marina Spunta emphasizes the importance of Celati's collaboration with Luigi Ghirri and explains that Celati approaches photography both as a theory and as a method to conceptualize exterior space.[120] Indeed, Celati adopts a photographic writing style by reducing the time frame between observation and writing which is the core of his writing "in esposizione" in *Verso la foce* and *Avventure in Africa*. Celati himself hints at this photographic

[119] Iovino, "Restoring the Imagination of Place," 130–32.

[120] Spunta, "Gianni Celati's Towards the River's Mouth."

method in *Avventure in Africa* where he writes "io… faccio [le foto] scrivendo."[121] Talking about Ghirri and *Viaggio in Italia*, Celati describes photography as the outcome of both rigorous observation and imaginative interpretation.[122] He recognizes the ontological implications of photography assuming that photography is "una misura dell'esperienza," "un modo di dare uno spessore immaginativo al teatro quotidiano dell'abitare."[123]

Photography in Celati is at the same time a cypher of the post-touristic experience of postmodernity and a critical response to the abstract spatialization of late capitalism. Susan Sontag notices that photography, applied to any aspect of social life, makes everyone a tourist, generating a sense of estrangement not only in relation to other people's lives but also in relation to one's own.[124] While showcasing estrangement, in Celati photography is also linked to a wide range of mindful practices aiming to attenuate the generalization of space, forcing the writer to focus on the "here and now" happening in front of the camera: as Roland Barthes writes, "every photograph is a certificate of presence."[125] Through his writing, Celati conveys the need for *attention* to locality as a reaction against spatial abstraction, and an alternative to the distraction that Celati recognizes as one of the most tangible effects of late capitalism applied to space. Celati's post-touristic aesthetics does not offer a solution to the generalized estrangement of postmodernity. However, as Harrison suggests in relation to Celati and post-Heideggerian theorizations of nihilism, Celati proposes "recommendations" on how to respond to such an alienating condition.[126] In the next pages, I discuss examples of narratives where Celati presents

[121] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1929.

[122] Celati, "Viaggio in Italia con 20 fotografi, 20 anni dopo" in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 264.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Sontag, *On Photography*, 44.

[125] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 87.

[126] Harrison, "A Tale of Two Giannis: Writing as Rememoration," 273.

locality as one's ability to connect with their surroundings through mindful practices. In particular, I will focus on the empowering representation of mindfulness in the short story "L'isola in mezzo all'Atlantico" from *Narratori delle pianure* (1985), the ecological and ontological reflections on dwelling in "Condizioni di luce sulla via Emilia" from *Quattro novelle sulle apparenze* (1987) and the philosophical elaboration of deixis or the "here and now" in *Fata Morgana* (2006).

3.5a. Attention to Locality as Empowerment in "L'isola in mezzo all'Atlantico"

The first story of *Narratori delle pianure,* titled "L'isola in mezzo all'Atlantico," gives an eloquent example of how Celati's narratives focus on mindful practices to restore one's attention to their surroundings.[127] The story also hints at the ethical dimension that Celati attributes to his reflection on mindful presence in the outside.

In "L'isola in mezzo all'Atlantico" an amateur radio operator from Gallarate (Varese) connects with Archie, a mysterious man who lives on an island in the Atlantic Ocean. With Archie, the man from Gallarate does not discuss technical information about their radios; rather the man listens to Archie's detailed descriptions of the island he inhabits. Archie's descriptions are so detailed that the man from Gallarate can see the island through his imagination. Archie also pays great attention to the weather, and how it changes his perception and experience of the island.

As time passes, Archie announces he will end his radio messages and never see the island again, without explaining why. After a moment of hesitation, the man from Gallarate, now with his girlfriend—we find out that they are both young students just graduating from high school—manages to localize the island from which Archie was speaking. The young couple fly to

[127] Celati, Belpoliti, and Palmieri, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 737–41.

Glasgow, Scotland and from there reach the island. They remember Archie's descriptions, which match the island exactly. When the couple is able to identify the location of Archie's house, they end up in a cottage where another couple, Archie and Susan, offer to host them. While it is a coincidence that the man in front of them is also called Archie, this person knows the story of the Archie for whom the couple is looking. The story goes as follows: Archie is a policeman who accidentally kills someone while serving in the police force. A colleague and friend of his witness the event. Archie is acknowledged to be guilty, but asks his friend to let him go free for five years. He would spend time with his wife before turning himself in to the authorities. The two friends agree on this plan, which is why Archie spends five years on the island connecting with the man from Gallarate. Later on the couple finds out that Archie's colleague is precisely the same Archie who is telling them the story. He has decided to quit his job as a police officer and retire after the incident. The couple leaves the island and not much is told about their reactions to Archie's story. However, the following winter, the couple receives a letter. Their host informs them that Archie was released without serving a sentence because his supervisors prevented him from telling the truth publicly. The police department decided to archive the murder as a simple incident at work; now the two friends, Archie and Archie, will live together and farm sheep. The young couple is invited to visit at any time, the letter concludes.

"L'isola in mezzo all'Atlantico" is not only a particularly meaningful piece addressing the theme of police misconduct; it is also an interesting way for Celati to present mindfulness and attention to one's surroundings as a form of power, which opposes the (abuse of) power that the policeman Archie—but mostly his superiors—show in the story.[128] The narrator reports that

[128] It is not uncommon to see the police portrayed in a negative light in Celati. Examples are in *Verso la foce* and *Avventure in Africa* (Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1103, 1098, 1205).

the murder "era stato un incidente, ma Archie si considerava colpevole di sciatteria nei propri gesti, per poca attenzione a ciò che gli stava attorno, per disprezzo di ciò che vedeva in quegli infami quartieri della periferia di Glasgow."[129] Despite the accidental cause of the murder, Archie recognizes his guilt due to his negligence, his lack of attention to what was around him, and finally for the contempt that he reserved to the "infamous" peripheries of Glasgow where he was on duty. The five years Archie spends on the island are redeeming for they provide him with the chance to re-educate himself, to learn how to look attentively at what happens around him: "Erano trascorsi cinque anni, durante i quali egli aveva imparato a osservare ciò che gli stava attorno per rendere attenti i propri gesti e pensieri."[130]

In "L'isola in mezzo all'Atlantico," Celati avoids explicit moral statements about what is right or wrong in the story of a murder. Instead, he explains the causes of it by presenting the murderer as someone who failed in fully expressing his potential. Indeed, empowerment comes from the ability to interact with one's surroundings, to make sense of one's life as much as others'. The murder therefore stands for the consequence of a deficiency on the part of the policeman rather than an exaggerated reaction to a legitimate situation of danger. Archie's story shows that renewing one's attention to the surrounding world is possible through a mindful practice, starting by noticing the basic changes in the nature of the island, in the weather.

3.5b. Locality and Dwelling in "Condizioni di luce sulla via Emilia"

Celati continues to develop the theme of locality as attention vs. distraction in "Condizioni di luce sulla via Emilia," the second story of the collection *Quattro novelle sulle apparenze*,

[129] Ibid, 740.

[130] Ibid.

published in 1987.[131] In this story Celati targets the fast pace of late capitalist society and shows how it deeply transforms light and visual perception along the Via Emilia, in the Po Valley. Through the figure of a landscape and industrial painter called Emanuele Menini, the story presents an elegiac search for locality spared from the distraction caused by the frantic lifestyle of consumerism. The story also attaches a clear ontological meaning to this interpretation of locality: Menini's final grasp of immobility in front of a residential building coincides with his own death, giving visual resonance to an Heideggerian understanding of dwelling as "Being-in-the-world."

"Condizioni di luce sulla via Emilia" portrays an extremely polluted Po Valley—not unrealistically—where natural light finds endless angles of refraction in traffic, advertising panels, industrial buildings, gas stations, retail shops, cars to sell and cars to scrap, bars, restaurants, colored and tall residential housing constructions.[132] A glaring, dazzling cloud ("una nube di barbagli e riverberi") traps the inhabitants of the valley.[133] The cloud can only be seen from a certain distance and altitude.[134] People moving within the cloud do not perceive it, except for Menini. When in the cloud one feels the compulsion to move quickly, following the flow of traffic.[135]

Through Menini, Celati suggests that the extreme acceleration of life on the via Emilia fits the pace of machines rather than the pace of natural life.[136] Animals hit by traffic are a warning for all living beings who move at a different speed or go in the opposite direction:

---

[131] Ibid, 899-920.

[132] Ibid, 900.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid, 900, 899.

[135] Ibid, 903.

[136] Ibid, 904.

"Sorvegliando l'incrocio Menini ha visto più incidenti del solito, più cani e gatti maciullati dal traffico, più gente che usciva di casa con mascherine sulla bocca, più donne che uscivano dal parrucchiere con un sacchetto di nylon in testa per proteggersi da quella nube micidiale."[137] The reference to animal deaths and the word "micidiale" (fatal, deadly) are significant since Menini himself laments a severe respiratory issue, which causes recurrent hospitalizations, and eventually leads to his death. Menini's is not a private issue as respiration is a collective matter that connects each individual to their neighbors. He himself declares that "Dentro questa nube noi siamo tutti legati uno all'altro dalla respirazione. Nessuno può respirare diversamente dagli altri e avere altri pensieri. E cosi siamo tutti come ubriachi che non sanno quello che fanno, ma che si tengono per mano."[138] Similarly purposeful are the references to asbestos ("amianto"), a toxic, cancer-inducing material heavily utilized in construction in Italy, and which was only declared illegal in 1992, after years of campaigning.[139]

Celati does not simply take a naturalistic stand against the excesses of capitalist society. Rather, he hints at a sustainable way of inhabiting places which accommodates both natural and artificial (human-made) elements. Menini attempts to grasp a vision of the local that can also provide him with a restored ontological meaning, beyond the distractions that consumerism and traffic impose on him and the other inhabitants. Menini takes advantage of the few moments of quiet in the early morning; he notices emotionally "touching" still shadows next to a small water canal; he also observes how snow succeeds in slowing down the city.[140] As a landscape painter, Menini naturally pays attention to variations of light. He notices that the early morning is the only

[137] Ibid, 913.

[138] Ibid, 903-904.

[139] Ibid, 911.

[140] Ibid, 910, 905.

time when it is still possible to see the contours of things without "tremore," the tremor or blur caused by refraction and gasses and all the movement on the highway.[141] Yet this little window of peaceful sight does not last long, as the hectic rhythm of the day starts soon. If Menini spots a sense of immobility in things, he has to recognize that they are "disgraziate" (out of grace), and laying in a state of abandon.[142] The immobility Menini is looking for is not much a matter of stillness vs. physical movement. Trees as much as streetlamps stay still to a certain extent; yet Menini describes them as "dispersi" (lost), "fuori luogo" (out of place).[143] To Menini, immobility particularly refers to things' shadows. When shadows are solid and still, it is a signal that the natural variation of light during the day is not disrupted or hidden by distracting refractions.[144] Immobility is therefore relative to a natural course of life (and death), whereas capitalism has superimposed an incoherent, disruptive logic neglecting the effects of waste production, refusing anything is used and old and creating a false necessity for the shiny and new.[145]

Menini's final grasp of a stable look at his surroundings comes with his death and an evocative representation of dwelling. Menini's searches end on a snowy day, when he dies in front of a residential building in the middle of an open field.[146] At the end of the story, the narrator searches for this building to see where Menini lost his life—Menini, apparently, observed the building for hours despite his illness and very frigid temperatures. What the narrator recalls of his visit is a construction surrounded by a fence, a TV antenna rising from the

[141] Ibid, 902.

[142] Ibid, 908. On Celati and grace see Benedetti, "Celati e le poetiche della grazia."

[143] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 906, 909.

[144] Ibid, 907.

[145] On the consumerist obsession with the new, see also Celati, *Visioni di case che crollano*.

[146] Ibid, 917.

roof, vases of flowers in the front, and cypresses on the side.[147] The narrator comments on the "mysterious" building and its "bella presenza in quel luogo cosi appartato" (beautiful presence, in such as a secluded place) which reminds him of the peaceful isolation of cemeteries.[148]

Menini's last vision condensates an Heideggerian understanding of existence as a form of human dwelling in harmony with the world. Heidegger challenges the abstraction of Cartesian spatiality by anchoring the question of ontology in the phenomenological context in which humans happen to find their conditions of existence, where existence is meant as "Being-in-the-world," as standing out (*ek-sistence*, from the German *Daisen*, or *Dais-en*, to be there).[149] Heidegger's understanding of Being, i.e. the ontological essence of all the individual beings taken as individual entities, includes not only context-dependent meanings but also an open predisposition towards the outside and the possibilities of Being for each, including the possibility of death.[150] The last scene of "Condizioni di luce sulla via Emilia"—stressing the connection between Menini's death and the residential building—summarizes a vision of dwelling where human mortality as much the ecological and social context in which humans happen to live are put forth.

Dwelling is not only a local concern but a global one for Celati. In "Condizioni di luce sulla via Emilia," Menini's considerations reflect the reality of the Po Valley but also of other cities in the Western world, such as Birmingham and Los Angeles.[151] One of Menini's friends, a businessman who is persuaded that anything can be obtained through money, thinks he has built

[147] Ibid, 920.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 78-90.

[150] Ibid, 296-304.

[151] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 914-5.

a "Californian" villa in the Po Valley, only to find out that the villa looks nothing like the original, and that the huge villa will not compensate for his solitude.[152] The same person attempts to create an "artificial paradise" to please his partner. The project, which consists of using engineering to purify air exclusively within the perimeter of his private property, is impossible to put into practice.[153] By deciding to inhabit a place without taking into account how their habits will impact the entire landscape, people miss the high stakes of "dwelling" in a place, an issue that in Celati, as much as in Heidegger, is fundamental and complex. As Celati writes in an article published on *Il Manifesto*, the post-modern condition cannot but be tied to a serious reconsideration of what dwelling not only locally, but also globally implies: "non [appartenere] a nessuna cultura ed a nessun paese, neppure a una lingua" [...] mi sembra un modo tra i più decisi, di rimettere in questione il nostro problema di abitare la terra, problema che comunque va rimesso in questione (e non dato per risolto)."[154]

In "Condizioni di luce sulla via Emilia" Celati develops a critical reflection on locality that, while being anchored in the industrialized Po Valley, presents dwelling as a global issue. The question of dwelling is not only spatial but intrinsically philosophical, as it depends on one's ability to situate existence within a larger cycle of life and death. Hence Celati's critique to consumerism which instead refuses to accept those same cycles perpetuating an endless

[152] Ibid, 919-920.

[153] Ibid, 919.

[154] Celati, "I confini dell'oasi." For the ecological implications of Celati's reflections on dwelling see also *Verso la foce*: "Aspettando ho giocato a flipper nel bar di fronte. Nel quadro illuminato del flipper c'è scritto: VOLTAN ABANDONS THE EARTH. Sotto si vedono Voltan e Wanda vestiti da guerrieri spaziali, mentre spiccano il volo verso un'astronave. Debbono abbandonare la terra divenuta inabitabile, e Wanda porge una mano a Voltan dicendo: 'Quick, Voltan, it is going to explode'. Nel fumetto che gli esce di bocca, Voltan risponde: 'Too bad, Wanda, it was a nice place where to live'. In basso c'è il profilo di NY con altre lingue di fuoco che escono dai grattacieli, si riconoscono in fondo l'Empire State Building e la Statua della Liberta. Perché Voltan possa salvarsi sull'astronave bisogna fare almeno uno special, e io non ci sono riuscito." In Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1097. Losing the game that would save human population from the destruction of the planet, Celati hints at the failure of addressing the causes the have been making the Earth a less habitable place.

obsession for the shiny and new. For Celati, the intrinsic understanding of human life (the self, the inside) is tightly connected to the understanding of the local surroundings (the outside); indeed, one informs the other: "Lui [Menini] nell'alba cercava di stare in compagnia dell'orizzonte, cercava un'immobilità di dentro, che però può trovarsi solo fuori, nello spazio che si apre e respira attorno ad una cosa fino all'orizzonte."[155] By connecting the inside and the outside and insisting on the beauty of Menini's last vision of harmonious dwelling and death, Celati suggests that one's belonging to a larger natural and human-made ecosystem cannot be ignored if our goal is to keep a place—a valley, a city, or the entire planet—inhabitable. Similarly, death should not be ignored, being an essential part of human existence.

3.5c. Deictic Locality in Fata Morgana

Fata Morgana is the last text I will analyze to show how Celati treats locality as attention to one's surrounding, in a way that is not bound to geographic specificity and nevertheless offers an alternative to spatial abstraction. In *Fata Morgana* one reads Celati's most elaborated reflections on the "here and now," or the philosophical foundations of what I call his aesthetics of "deixis," borrowing a term from linguistics. Significantly, in *Fata Morgana* Celati sets the elaboration of the "here and now" along with the motif of "fata morgana" or hallucinations, hinting at the "staged authenticity" of the postmodern condition which is at the core of Celati's post-touristic aesthetics.

Scholars have interpreted *Fata Morgana* by emphasizing its ambiguity *vis à vis* dystopia and utopia (West), the duplicity of its narrative tone at the same time melancholic and comic (Cortellessa), the imaginary connection with Africa, and the book's philosophical ambition

[155] Ibid, 915.

(Belpoliti, Cortellessa).[156] While *Fata Morgana* is published in 2005—therefore after the travel notes *Avventure in Africa* (1998)—it has not been emphasized enough that Celati wrote this book in 1986-1987, right after his masterpiece of locality, the reportage *Verso la foce* (1985).[157] During an interview, Celati himself stresses the contiguity between the two texts. He says: "*Verso la foce* è stato scritto… come un continuo esperimento di percezione del paesaggio,"[158] and then presents *Fata Morgana* as a "continuazione dell'esperimento sul vedere-immaginare, fantasticare sui territori e le popolazioni."[159] *Fata Morgana* and *Verso la foce* both present observational notes on "populations" living in a valley (either real or imaginary).[160]An interesting chiasmus connects the two works: In *Verso la foce*, Celati implicitly develops a narrative of the "here and now" through his observational tales, while he explicitly rejects the model of the sociological narratives of his communist friend Masotti: "Parlando in quella lingua di grosse parole che spiegano tutto, diventa difficile accorgersi ogni tanto d'essere qui."[161] In *Fata Morgana*, Celati explicitly develops the motif of the "here and now" in a narrative constructed as an ethnographic essay (therefore, as one of the social sciences that Celati refuses). Hence, the ironic effect of the book.

---

[156] West, *Gianni Celati*, 232. Cortellessa, "Molesta Parodia Etnografica." Cortellessa, "Africa," in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 412–13. Belpoliti in Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, LXV.

[157] Belpoliti does stress the date of *Fata Morgana*'s composition though, mentioning the 1986 and 1987 as "uno dei periodi più fertili e creativi dalla… attività di narratore [di Celati]." Ibid, LXIV.

[158] See Celati's interview with Marco Denti in the 2008 edition of Sironi and Belpoliti, *Gianni Celati*. Also available on http://www.rigabooks.it/, last accessed September 12, 2020.

[159] Ibid.

[160] When Celati talks about "fantasticare sui territori e le popolazioni," he purposely chooses the word "popolazioni" over "popoli," since, he says, "popoli" is reminiscent of the nationalist ideology used by modern states to impose the normalcy of a hegemonic group over internal minorities; "popoli" also projects the same idea of normalcy to the outside, by drawing a divisionary line between "us" and "them." On the contrary, in "popolazioni" Celati reads a much more fluid conceptualization of community whose character is "indistinto" (undifferentiated) and "mescolato" (mixed), and whose borderlines are always "contingenti e variabili" (contingent and variable). Gianni Celati, "In cerca di popolazioni," 2008 edition of Sironi and Belpoliti, *Gianni Celati*. Also available on http://www.rigabooks.it/ (last Accessed September 12, 2020).

[161] Ibid, 1077.

Writing *Fata Morgana,* Celati follows a literary tradition that combines ethnography and fantasy to describe imaginary populations. Celati acknowledges being inspired by authors such as Lucian of Samosata's *A True Story* (second century AD), Matteo Maria Boiardo's description of King Gradasso's army in *Orlando innamorato* (1495), François Rabelais' *Fourth Book of Pantagruel* (1552), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Henri Michaux's *Ailleurs* (1986).[162] Writing *Fata Morgana*, Celati also has in mind the genre of ethnography that he spent a long time reading as a young researcher in the UK.[163]

Fata Morgana simultaneously emulates and subverts the ethnographic genre, by parodying the neutral tone used to describe "primitive" populations.[164] The book is a collection of notebooks ordered both thematically and chronologically. It describes different aspects of the Gamuna's lifestyle, reporting information on their cosmology, their housing and social rules, their language, the legends narrating their arrival to the valley, the relationship between men and women, between children and the elderly, their funeral rituals. The ethnographic description is alternated with the stories of outsiders—the anthropologist Victor Astafali, the missionary nun Sorella Tran—whose notebooks the narrator uses as source of information about the Gamuna, but also about their personal lives. By emphasizing an alleged distance between the narrator and the Gamuna, *Fata Morgana* assumes ethnographic authority despite the fact that the Gamuna are not a real population, nor could their habitat easily be pinned on a map—we simply know they reside in the Gamuna Valley, at the outskirts of an unspecified desert.

---

[162] Ibid.

[163] See Celati's letter to Rebecca West in Celati, *Conversazioni del vento volatore*, 96. See also Cortellessa, "Africa," 412.

[164] See Celati in reference to Michaux: "Qui c'è una chiara imitazione della neutralità con cui lo stile etnografico presenta le popolazioni primitive. Ma siccome l'argomento è ridicolo, tutto diventa una parodia. Cioè che viene parodiato è precisamente il celebre 'sguardo da lontano' dello stile etnografico." Celati, *Narrative in fuga*, 214–15.

It is hard to establish whether or to what degree *Fata Morgana* is an allegorical portrayal of reality. Belpoliti writes that "i Gamuna siamo noi," meaning that the Gamuna actually represent Western post-industrial society as seen from the point of view of others.[165] I believe though that the Gamuna are a fluid concept that while absorbing many of Celati's critiques on Western society and thoughts on locality, cannot be described as an allegorical representation of any existing reality. I would rather describe *Fata Morgana* as a multilayered exploration of the possibilities to conceive of an imaginative population in the 1980s, based on what the literary and ethnographic tradition, as much as the reality of the Western post-industrial society have to offer to one's imagination.[166] I will give some examples: Celati describes the valley as at once isolated and targeted by visitors, who join the valley primarily for their polluting investments. The visitors, often violent to the Gamuna, leave the valley with great disappointment, since the Gamuna are known to be a very depressed population. The valley is described as full of garbage coming from a typical late capitalist society (radios, cars…), but the Gamuna do not even know how to use these objects. At best, they use cars to take naps.[167] It is hard to establish whether the Gamuna (or the visitors?) stand for an allegory of Western society. The most exact way to synthetize the experiment of *Fata Morgana* could be saying that Celati imagines a fantastic population *merging from* the ruins of Western society as he knows it. This would explain why the Gamuna have very specific ethnical and cultural traits while living in a material reality that reminds the reader of the waste, ugliness, and desolation of the most peripheral areas of the post-industrial West. If the Gamuna represent "us" as a Western society, they do so without rendering

[165] Belpoliti, "Non ridete dei Gamuna" in Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 349.

[166] Celati confirms this impression in the interview with Marco Denti published on the volume *Riga 28* cited in footnote 158.

[167] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1480-5.

a whole, coherent figure; rather, they reflect "us" as a broken mirror. What is more, these broken reflections are completely distorted by Celati's use of parody.

Despite the uncertainty of Celati's reflection of reality in the book, it is certain that *Fata Morgana* condenses key motifs of Celati's post-touristic aesthetics. The uncertainty of the geographic and historical settings of the book emphasizes the abstraction of theses motifs, suggesting to read *Fata Morgana* as the most theoretical book of Celati's. Celati's critique of postmodern society but also of what Harrison calls Celati's "ethical detachment" lies in Celati's conceptualization of "fata morgana," which gives the title to the book.[168] The expression "fata morgana" describes a natural phenomenon of hallucination occurring with specific conditions of light, and particularly common in the desert. In Celati, the phenomenon of fata morgana coincides with the "appearances" or staged authenticity governing the postmodern condition and whose understanding is central in Celati's "*post*-touristic" aesthetics. Defining post-tourism, Urry and Larsen theorize the endless availability of staged "tourist gazes" through the media in postmodern tourism.[169] Because of this visual proliferation, the *post*-tourist is aware of the constructed nature of authenticity offered to them through the tourist experience.[170] In a similar fashion, Celati puts forth the "awareness" of the staged authenticity of postmodern existence, which finds an eloquent theorical definition in *Fata Morgana*: "I Gamuna onorano le visioni di fata morgana come il maggior fenomeno della vita, e ritengono che i miraggi siano incanti in cui l'anima si perde lanciandosi fuori dal corpo. Dicono che ognuno corre dietro a certe illusioni e nessuno può farne a meno, perché tutto fa parte d'uno stesso incantesimo."[171] While the visions

[168] Harrison, "A Tale of Two Giannis: Writing as Rememoration," 278.

[169] Urry and Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze*, 113.

[170] Ibid, 114.

[171] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1054.

of *fata morgana* govern any aspect of their social life, pushing individuals towards different objects of their desire, pushing them towards the "outside," Celati points at their illusionary nature, as mere appearance.

Despite the hallucinatory nature of postmodern existence which Celati emphasizes, the elaboration of the "here and now" (called "ta" in the Gamuna language) coexists with the illusion of fate morgana and defines Celati's approach to locality, one more time, in contrast with spatial abstraction. Celati's philosophical elaboration of the "here and now" coincides with his description of the Gamuna language and the story of Sorella Tran: a Vietnamese nun who arrives among the Gamuna as a young woman, Sorella Tran is an outsider figure who manages to affirm her position among both the Gamuna people and the adventurers, by even resisting situations of violence. Sorella Tran speaks the Gamuna language better than French and English, despite the years she spent in London.[172] Her mastery of the Gamuna language is particularly important since it allows her to understand Gamuna's cosmography and sense of locality. Locality for the Gamuna—and I would say in general, for Celati—can be translated as "deixis." It is attention to one's surroundings that follows the passing of time rather than imposing a fixed form or identity. Indeed, the entire Gamuna language—as well as other aspects of the Gamuna culture—insists on the "here and now" that is the only truth to human existence. The name "Gamuna" itself means "siamo qui."[173] The Gamuna language changes with the times of the day and depending on the identity of the speaker.[174] Celati crafts the Gamuna language creating effects of humor but also pretending linguistic rigor.[175] The Gamuna language is tonal, generating a musical effect that

[172] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1498.

[173] Ibid, 1503.

[174] Ibid, 1536.

[175] Ibid, 1503. For the effects of humor see for example "*pisciola ke fanghi*" or "scarico di vescica gonfia" (unloading of a bloated bladder), the Gamuna expression used to describe the arrogance of those who do not listen to

tunes up speakers and listeners.[176] The most recurrent and meaningful sound is the "*ta*," which we see for example in "*be ta tat*" ("buon questo giorno," good this day).[177]

Celati seems to conceive of existence as a set of forces pushing individuals according to precise—and yet abstract—spatial directions. While fata morgana pushes the Gamuna towards the outside, a gravity force, the "ta," pushes the Gamuna towards the ground, reminding the Gamuna of the finitude of their existence, and of the comparative insignificance of the "hallucinations" driving humans:

I Gamuna dicono che l'incanto greve "ti attira verso il *ta*": parola che per loro indica il "questo" (*ta*) dove l'individuo è piantato. Il *ta* è insieme l'incanto del vivere e l'uomo piantato nella terra, con la polvere che lo avvolge, e la deriva dei suoi sogni, e il suo modo d'esistere nell'allucinazione del mondo. I Gamuna vedono questo incanto del vivere come un tremolio delle cose che si stanno sfaldando nell'afa delle stagioni calde, o tra i barbagli della polvere che invade l'aria marzolina. Oppure lo vedono nelle cose che sono destinate a sgretolarsi, disfarsi e crollare per l'attrazione di tutto verso il basso. Così con questi sfaldamenti si crea attorno alla città una bolla d'aria tremolante in cui tutto, dicono, diventa "stupido come un cencio" (*pertuma bin*), tutto greve e insignificante. Ed è questa atmosfera che dà la voglia di crollare a terra, per ritrovarsi nel proprio "questo" (*ta*) nel "questo, qui, ora" (*ta*, *muna*, *ti*) come quando si sprofonda nel sonno.

By assuming a perspective that is close to the ground, the Gamuna reject any epistemic ambition built on distance, objectivity, and measure. The Gamuna refuse maps as they impose a

---

others during a conversation, thinking to know better. "*Pisciola ke fanghi*" is also a typical trait of senile dementia among the Gamuna. Ibid, 1539.

[176] Ibid, 1535.

[177] Ibid.

vertical, bird's-eye-view attempting to fixate things rather than accepting their variable existence.[178] Rather than being chosen as an exclusive and encompassing viewpoint, one should always look at the sky from below, the Gamuna say. Thus humans can maintain a sense of an immobile time, while also accepting that everything around them is subject to change: "l'idea che qualcuno che non è nessuno voglia guardare le cose dall'alto, mettendosi al di sopra dell'azzurro, produce imbarazzo e costernazione. Perché fa sembrare l'altezza del cielo come una cosa tremenda, che dà le vertigini solo a pensarci, e non più come una pacifica immagine del tempo immobile."[179]

Sorella Tran is a key figure to highlight Celati's post-touristic aesthetics. Harrison remarks the importance of tourists in *Quattro novelle sulle apparenze* where the characters Baratto and the "praiseworthy man" join tourists after realizing the inauthenticity of language.[180] Similarly, tourists are not absent in *Fata Morgana*. At the very end of the book, the narrator evokes a picture of Sorella Tran as a young girl, posing as a tourist with her sister.[181] The story of Sorella Tran is important not only because, through her diaries, the narrator finds a way to elaborate the concept of the "here and now" or "ta;" she also represents a condition of estrangement, recognizes the staged and inauthentic appearances of the postmodern condition,

[178] Ibid, 1574.

[179] Ibid, 1573.

[180] Harrison, "A Tale of Two Giannis: Writing as Rememoration," 282–83. The characters of *Quattro novelle sulle apparenze* choose to engage in tourism after reflecting upon the unauthentic, staged representation of life that makes their everyday existence. The company of tourists is suitable for Baratto who suffers from aphasia as he realizes that living in a society means agreeing on a "messinscena." Baratto starts to heal from his aphasia and return to "normalcy" once he accepts that he does not possess thoughts of his own; rather, he receives his thoughts from others, participating in the conventional use of language. Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 870-898. The 'praiseworthy man' visualizes society as a mass of 'io' ('I') that appear all the same and yet do not share much with each other; everyone follows their daily routine as if they were dust or water, as if they were not the agents of their own movement and rhythm. As he sees people moving almost mechanically in their everyday life, the praiseworthy man grasps that they follow the same script ("copione previsto."). In Ibid, 956-984.

[181] Ibid, 1654.

and nevertheless dedicates herself to mindful practices inspired by the "ta," which opens the door for her to join the Gamuna community. At her arrival in the Gamuna Valley, Sorella Tran is exposed to the "ta" and the other principles of Gamuna cosmogony as she is first adopted by a Gamuna family and then becomes a care provider for the Gamuna suffering from their hallucinations of fata morgana. Before leaving the Gamuna Valley and retiring to Europe, Sorella Tran spends some time in isolation and practices exercises of mindfulness and meditation. She looks at the objects surrounding her and enhances her perception of their full presence: "Al risveglio vedo il tavolo fermo nel suo spazio. La sedia abbandonata vicino al letto, la tazza abbandonata sul tavolo. Ogni cosa nel suo spazio, come visione di un'oasi lontana… non c'è più quel fluire indistinto di cose come su uno schermo, ove non vediamo mai che ogni momento è immobile e tremolante nel suo miraggio."[182] Through mindful pratices inspired by the "ta," Sorella Tran participates in the Gamuna community despite her isolation and despite not identifying as a Gamuna herself. Sorella Tran's reflections on the vision of fata morgana not only expose the staged authenticity of a life lived on a screen, but also observes the ubiquity of these hallucinations, which is a consequence of capitalist spatial abstraction. She concludes that, despite her identity as a "foreigner," the "here and now" has allowed her the chance to re-establish a form of community:

> Non c'è più quel fluire indistinto di cose come su uno schermo, dove non vediamo mai che ogni momento è immobile e tremolante nel suo miraggio…Noi siamo piantati in un catino terrestre come le piante, e… affidati agli influssi variabili del suolo e dell'aria, senza poter sapere cosa ci sia oltre il bordo del catino. Cosa c'è oltre l'orizzonte? Altri luoghi, con altri miraggi, sempre diversi e sempre uguali; con altra gente che a volte ti considera una straniera. Ma appena ti installi nel loro catino terrestre, anche se sei straniera cominciano le abitudini, mille abitudini che tu vieni a condividere per il

[182] Ibid, 1583.

> semplice fatto che sei venuta qui. E con le abitudini del luogo che diventano anche tue, poco a poco tu cominci a sentire che l'orizzonte si sta chiudendo su di te…[183]

Sorella Tran joins the community of the Gamuna, at least temporarily, because of the "here and now" that sets a difference from the abstraction of places that otherwise follow the same rules of abstraction, and the same conditions of "fluire indistinto," as in an hallucination magnified by the media. Sorella Tran does not end up travelling after meeting the Gamuna; in fact, the last image of her is in a mental health clinic, signaling the impossibility of escaping the status of "outsider." Sorella Tran's insistence on the "here and now" which we read from her diaries is therefore even more significant, as a "recommendation" for an incurable diagnosis.

3.6. L'Idiot du Voyage: Celati as a Tourist in *Avventure in Africa*

Tourists are key figures in Celati's non-fiction as much as in his fiction. In the travel writing based on his journeys to Africa, Celati observes tourists through an anthropological lens and also embodies in himself the figure of the tourist. In *Avventure in Africa* (1998), Celati's post-touristic look finds expression in the ways Celati embraces the denigrating tropes traditionally associated with tourists in European travel writing, where the urge to distinguish the "real travelers" from common tourists associates the latter with animals, or idiots. Celati also emphasizes the constructed and illusionary nature of the "exotic" that informs the tourist experience.

One of the most common tropes of travel writing is to despise mass tourism while celebrating the virtues of real voyagers. In his essay *L'idiot du voyage* (2002), French anthropologist Jean-Didier Urbain traces the genealogy of this trope by recalling that its origins

[183] Ibid.

date back to the 19th century, coinciding with the first appearances of the word "tourist" in romance languages.[184] While in Italian it was common to use "villeggiatura" to refer to a period of stable retirement in the countryside, "tourism" implies the mobility of someone travelling for the only purpose of pleasure.[185] It also implies the exploitation of such mobility and pleasure by an industry that profits from the democratization of voyage.[186] Lévi-Strauss in his *Tristes Tropiques*, and Segalen's essay on exoticism are among the examples that Urbain recalls where the dichotomy of real voyageurs vs tourists is famously expressed.[187] Segalen, in particular, creates the neologism "exotes" for the connoisseurs of real exoticism, "des voyageurs-nés," whereas tourists, whom he calls "pseudo-exotes" along with colonialists, miss the point of appreciating "Diversity."[188] Segalen uses animal metaphors to refer to tourists ("troupeaux errants," roving herds), which might sound surprising since he only writes in the early 1900s, when mass tourism has yet to appear.[189] In fact, Urbain reminds us that dehumanization of tourists through the use of animal metaphors exists at least since 1850.[190] Urbain offers different hypotheses as to why tourists are the object of generalized contempt. One reason might be that tourism forces one to acknowledge the high degree of manipulation of others' and their own desire for voyage.[191] Thus, it is usually with shame and discomfort that one realizes that one is a

[184] Urbain, *L'idiot du voyage*, 29.

[185] Ibid, 31.

[186] Ibid, 42-43.

[187] Ibid, 50.

[188] Segalen, *Œuvres complètes*, 750, 764.

[189] Ibid, 755.

[190] Urbain, *L'idiot du voyage*, 38.

[191] Ibid, 42-43.

tourist. What is more, while travelling one blames tourists for trivializing an experience of the "new" that is supposed to be exceptional and original.[192]

Celati's position towards tourism stands out in relation to the framework drawn by Urbain for being critical of tourism as an industry but not critical of tourists as people, despite fully embracing the tropes identified by Urbain. In *Avventure in Africa* (1998), Celati articulates a pseudo-anthropological research on tourism and tourists as he travels with French filmmaker Jean Talon to Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania in 1997. As Rebecca West recalls, Celati joins a tradition of male Italian intellectuals travelling and writing about Africa, including Alberto Moravia and Pier Paolo Pasolini.[193] Charles Klopp remarks that in the nine notebooks of *Avventure in Africa* Celati adopts the same methodology of observation and photographic writing style developed with *Verso la foce*.[194] The narrator notices the same abandonment of territories suffocating in garbage, he is similarly interested in spotting the routines of tourists and the local population, sketching their "rhythm" on the page as if he were taking pictures.[195]

Celati's idea to focus on tourists matures when he and his fellow companion realize that there is no better "authentic" culture that could possibly be the object of anthropological observation. The extreme hybridity of cultural references that Celati recognizes around him demonstrates the interconnectedness and complexity of a "global village" where mobility of goods and people is the norm: Japanese motorcycles, American hairstyles, Italian fashion designers or soccer teams, and the encounter with local people who have lived in Europe, at least

[192] Ibid, 63-69.

[193] West, *Gianni Celati*, 249.

[194] Klopp, "Buster Keaton va in Africa," 184.

[195] Ibid, 184, 187. See also Celati in *Avventure in Africa*: "Il ritmo vale più dei concetti per acchiappare il mondo." Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1126.

temporarily.[196] Celati notices that this makes tourists the last resort of authenticity. Tourists represent a valuable object of observation since they have developed the characteristics of a real people, with their own system of thought and code of behavior: "I turisti sono sani, parlano quasi tutti l'inglese, sono un popolo in crescita vertiginosa. Inoltre hanno già elaborato un proprio sistema di credenze, una mitologia molto complessa, dei propri modi di vestirsi, mangiare, viaggiare. La cosa importante, dice Jean, è che sono ormai un vero popolo."[197]

As he gradually becomes more accepting of tourists, the narrator adopts the denigrating tropes identified by Urbain, both in reference to other tourists and to himself. Celati appropriates and expands on the animal metaphors:

> Noi turisti bianchi siamo come delle vacche da mungere per un senso di giustizia naturale, e tutto il gioco di mungitura del turista somiglia quello delle colonie di parassiti che si attaccano al corpo di qualche grande animale pieno di sangue. Ma ho anche l'idea che noi saremmo solo dei pallidi fantasmi, se questi ragazzini neri non ci tirassero per qualche attimo nell'animazione del loro mondo.[198]

The narrator follows up his ironic remarks on the function of tourism with the consideration that as a tourist, he has no alternative in mind to start an interaction with the local population. Moreover, the narrator embodies himself in the figure of the "idiota" with his genuine "contentezza" for travelling and discovering new places.[199] Celati realizes that his contentment brings him back to the joys of childhood, as if he were on a school trip. He imagines himself as seen from the point of view of the local population, realizing he might just appear as an "incantato citrullo."[200] But behind the idea of the "idiota" there is also an exacerbation of the

---

[196] On the "global village" see also Klopp, "Buster Keaton va in Africa," 188. The references in *Avventure in Africa* are from Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1135, 1185, 1212, 1246, 1252, 1262.

[197] Ibid, 1252-3.

[198] Ibid, 1115.

[199] Ibid, 1138, 1165.

[200] Ibid, 1131.

tourist's estrangement, if one considers the etymology of the term, as "colui che mena vita privata fuori della buona società e lungi dai pubblici uffici.")[201] Celati accepts the superficiality and idiocrasy most often associated to tourists. He embodies these traits as he confirms that tourists inspire a sense of belonging to him: "Ed ecco improvvisamente un amore fraterno per tutti i turisti, perché forse è l'unico popolo a cui si può appartenere ormai, in quanto viaggiatori o sbandati perpetui."[202]

As any tourist, the narrator also nurtures his passion for the "exotic" to fuel his imagination on Africa. Celati's post-touristic aesthetics also consists in exposing this important aspect of travelling. The narrator indicates his sources including anthropology readings and literature, as the quote from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* introducing the book shows. He is fascinated by the savannah and other unknown places that he thinks of as evocative, whereas his "visioni" disappear when he finds himself in front of the familiar (for example, as he visits the Centro Regionale di Medicina Tradizionale in Bandiagara, Mali, built by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation).[203] The exotic, while being a key component of the narrator's experience as a tourist, is also recognized as limited or misleading. Literary books and other "markers" of the places' touristic value—such as the anthropological research on the Dogon by Marcel Griaule—end up being the only source of information to understand a pre-existent "authentic" local culture, now almost vanished.[204] As much as Celati identifies the exotic as a "trigger" for mobility in the essay *Letteratura esotismo colonialismo* of the late 1970s, here too

[201] Francesco Bonomi Etymology Dictionary, 2004-2008, on line version: https://www.etimo.it/?term=idiota. Last accessed October 13, 2020.

[202] Ibid, 1253.

[203] Ibid, 1146.

[204] Ibid, 1162, 1168, 1178. MacCannell defines a "marker" of tourist attraction any form of text that informs the tourist of the value of a sight and connects his experience of the sight to the experience of many others, therefore creating the impression of a collective ritual. MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 41, 137.

Celati presents the exotic as the cause for voyages more than their consequence: "Il mondo è un grande equivoco, anzi dice Jean che è un malinteso. Per questo ci si insegue o ci si fugge, sempre spinti di qua e di là dal sentito dire sui posti, sulle mete, sui desideri, ma in sostanza correndo dietro soltanto a quello che non si è capito bene."[205]

Celati's post-touristic aesthetics does not solely attempt to ontologize the status of the tourist and to present it as a generalized mode of postmodern existence, as my previous section explains; Celati's non-fiction also puts forth an ironic and yet affectionate look at real tourists while *de facto* debunking the myth or presumed authenticity of the "real traveler." In *Avventure in Africa*, Celati designates tourists as object of his observation and honors them as a "people to whom belong" despite their estrangement, grotesque out-of-place appearances, and their illusionary quest for the exotic.

3.7. Mapping Celati's Exotic Self: *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd* (2011)

Critics have often commented on the similarities and differences between the works of Gianni Celati and his mentor and friend Italo Calvino; in particular, Massimo Rizzante presents a comparative reading of the two authors' approaches to spatiality and epistemics, which he summarizes in the formula: "Il geografo [Italo Calvino] e il viaggiatore [Gianni Celati]."[206] At the end of his career, Italo Calvino visualizes postmodernity as a labyrinth that literature can and must challenge by mapping it in the most detailed way.[207] By contrast, Celati often expresses critical views on maps. The map of Emilia Romagna opening *Narratori delle pianure* is certainly

[205] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1142.

[206] Rizzante, *Il geografo e il viaggiatore*.

[207] Calvino, "La sfida al labirinto," 96.

an important exception;[208] yet, that map is oddly incomplete, lacking any mark for the major city of Bologna in the middle of the Po Valley.[209] Celati assumes a critical position towards maps and the ambition of reducing territories to knowledge in reference to Conrad's *Hearth of Darkness*, as he also starts theorizing his aesthetics of vagueness. In *Fata Morgana*, the "ta" or perspective "rasoterra" (ground-level) is opposed to the false illusion that things can actually be visualized objectively or from above.[210] As an interesting anecdote, Rizzante recalls that, according to Celati, Calvino would get angry at him for driving around Europe without a map: "lui [Calvino] lo trovava inconcepibile," Celati reports.[211]

Celati's position towards mapping is particularly significant if one thinks not only of his meaningful, and often conflicting friendship with Calvino, but also of the theory of "cognitive mapping" proposed by Fredric Jameson in his interpretation of postmodernism. Jameson recognizes the feeling of being lost that Celati points to as one of the distinguishing traits of the postmodern condition. He describes postmodern alienation as an "alarmist disjunction… between the body and its built environment," associated with the inability of the individual to "map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individuals subjects."[212] Jameson presents postmodernity not as an aesthetics but rather as a historical condition, where transnational business, international division of labor, international banking and stocking exchanges, media interrelationships, computers and

---

[208] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 734-745.

[209] Cfr. Calvino: "Quello che oggi ci serve è la mappa del labirinto più particolareggiata possibile." Rizzante, *Il geografo e il viaggiatore*, 96.

[210] On Conrad: Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 44. 88. On *Fata Morgana* see Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1573. Celati describes his work as "un lungo andare avanti tenendo d'occhio il rasoterra" in the interview with Marco Denti published on the volume *Riga 28* cited in footnote 158.

[211] In Rizzante, *Il geografo e il viaggiatore*, 76.

[212] Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 44.

automation, gentrification on a global scale, all contribute to drastic changes in the mutation of built space, in a way that leaves the human subject in a state of perpetual disorientation.[213] While Jameson's interpretation of the postmodern space is not at all dissimilar to Celati's, Jameson turns to "mapping" in response to postmodern alienation as much as Calvino. Jameson, in particular, theorizes a practice of "cognitive mapping" as the "coordination of existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality."[214] By contrast, Celati's aesthetic solution is to aim at "un universo ambientale per mezzo del sentire" which is nevertheless "non legato a sciocchezze anagrafiche."[215] Moreover, Celati connects his aesthetics of vagueness to a "pregiudizio antistoricistico."[216] Celati aims to speak of a generalized experience of space but without clarifying the connection between this generalization and the specific empirical experience of self, or of other diverse subjects. This position on the part of Celati resonates with his early interpretation of deterritorialization and colonialism in the late 1970s, where he would not recognize a qualitative difference between Europeans participating in imperialist mobility and colonized subjects, on account of their alleged comparable subjugation to the state.[217]

Reading Celati's comments in light of Jameson, it becomes clear that Celati's post-touristic aesthetics eludes the possibility of cognitive mapping. This is true not only in reference to Celati's choice of historical and geographic "vagueness," which I have just elaborated, but also on account of Celati's estranged point of view as a tourist. In a contribution that appeared in the journal

[213] Ibid, XIX, 38-39.

[214] Ibid, 52.

[215] Celati, "L'avventura non deve finire," 98.

[216] Ibid, 89.

[217] See first section in this chapter.

Nuova corrente in 1996, Celati clarifies that his empathetic search for the "Other" does not coincide with the search for a moral assessment from the outside. Rather, his openness towards the outside comes with a full acceptance of life as it is, "la vita così com'è":

> C'è sempre un altro specifico che mi ispira a narrare, ma non è mai qualcuno che mi sta di fronte come un giudice, non è mai nessuno che devo convincere delle mie buone intenzioni… dal momento in cui porto l'altro dentro di me come una mobilità affettiva infinita, io rinuncio alle definizioni fisse, io rinuncio alla parola definitiva, smetto di negare la contingenza dei momenti mutevoli e senza garanzia, e mi affido precisamente allo scorrere incomprensibile della vita così com'è.[218]

Celati refuses fixed definitions of self as much as of others (what would bring him close to cognitive mapping, in my view) assuming mobility and change to be a primary aspect of existence. Moreover, Celati's choice of contingency brings him to accept life "as it is." Relying on the unpredictability and incomprehensibility of life, Celati does not attempt to define the hidden or pre-existing causes of the real. This cannot but be the position of the eternal tourist who is attracted towards the "outside," both aesthetically and emotionally, and yet counts on mobility and estrangement as the pre-conditions and limitations of his experience of the real. Assuming the exotic not only as a lure that motivates travelling but also as a condition of self (as in Segalen), Celati conveys ungroundedness and estrangement even when he seems to attempt a more informative look at the local, as my next pages on Celati's second project in Africa, *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd* (2006), suggest.

Passar la vita a Diol Kadd is a collection of notes written in the village Diol Kadd, Senegal, over the years 2003-2006 and also a documentary. During his stays in Diol Kadd, Celati is hosted by his Senegalese friend Mandiaye N'Diaye, whom Celati met in Italy. Mandiaye worked as an actor in the theatre company directed by Marco Martinelli, proposing

[218] "Le posizioni narrative rispetto all'altro," Belpoliti, Sironi, and Stefi, *Gianni Celati*, 217.

contemporary, intercultural adaptations of Italian *Commedia dell'arte* (see in particular the adaptation of Goldoni's *I ventidue infortuni di Arlecchino,* also translated into English).[219] Celati's idea to join Mandiaye in Senegal comes from the latter's idea of playing an adaptation of Aristophanes' comedy *Plutos*.[220] Through his reading of *Plutos*, Mandiaye presents a reflection on the values of poverty and wealth, which Mandiaye sees as representative of the contrast in the village between traditionalist farmers and modernists. Filming the rehearsal of Mandiaye's comedy is the original goal of the project; soon after though, the attention shifts to the village Diol Kadd itself: the notebooks are introduced by the line: "Quello che scriverò sono osservazioni sul modo di passar la vita in un piccolo villaggio africano."[221]

In the documentary *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd*, the appearance of a map is not only an unusual object of representation for Celati, but also stands for explicit and implicit symbolic meaning. A few minutes into the film, the camera shows Celati reading a map of Senegal in the attempt to localize Diol Kadd.[222] With him is Moussa Ka: the main actor in Mandiaye's comedy, and also a farmer, faith healer, and expert of the Koran. During his stay in Diol Kadd, Celati shares his room with Moussa Ka, learning that his ancestor was a close collaborator of Ahmadou Bamba, a Sufi saint and religious leader who played a crucial political role during the French colonization of Senegal. Several elements in the film and notebook stress the value of intercultural exchange and friendship, including an epilogue quoting Italian anthropologist Remo Guidieri and celebrating "la scintilla degli approcci": "l'inizio di un'amicizia, che segna una

[219] Picarazzi and Feinstein, *An African Harlequin in Milan: Marco Martinelli Performs Goldoni*.

[220] Celati, *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd: diari 2003-2006*, 19–21.

[221] Ibid, 11, 20.

[222] Celati, *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd*, min. 02:35.

durata nella nostra vita. Oppure quando s'impara a parlare una lingua straniera."[223] The sequence where Celati and Moussa Ka read the map is similarly constructed to stress their encounter, friendship, and collaboration; nevertheless, maps in Africa have too strong of a historical and cultural connotation—reminiscent of European colonialism, as in Conrad—for succeeding in symbolizing an equal conversation between the two men. The dialogue reveals this implicit symbolic meaning. As the camera focuses on Moussa Ka pointing his finger on the map, Celati's voice over informs the audience that Moussa Ka, while being literate in Wolof, is only now learning how to read a map. Celati, as he himself confesses, does not speak Wolof (therefore, contradicting the epilogue from Guidieri). Moreover, as Moussa Ka starts speaking in Wolof, his words are not translated for an Italian-speaking audience. The map therefore activates the semantics of colonial exoticism (which Celati himself studies in *Letteratura, esotismo, colonialismo*) creating a binary opposition between what is understandable and readable (the map) and what is not (the Wolof language and Moussa Ka, figuring here as an "exotic" character).[224]

Numerous elements in *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd* suggests an unexpected resonance with Pasolini's documentary *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* (1970). I write "unexpected" because of Celati's refusal, in *Avventure in Africa*, to address social issues affecting Africa in the same way as "lo scrittore di grande impegno sociale, che spiega l'Africa con infinito paternalismo a forza di concetti generali" (a definition that fits Pasolini well).[225] In fact, just as Pasolini uses an

---

[223] Celati, *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd: diari 2003-2006*, 145.

[224] See Celati in *Letteratura, esotismo, colonialismo*, 20: "Ecco dunque cosa deve fare un autore di libri esotici: parlare d'una realtà coloniale con la lingua di stato / vivere il bilinguismo come differenza tra lingua enunciativa e lingua referenziale / tra lingua della ragione e lingua dell'emozione / usare la lingua enunciativa (della ragione) in modo espressivo, ricco, così da poter catturare la ricchezza del referente (l'emozione) attraverso la ricchezza della sua enunciazione."

[225] Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1250.

adaptation of Aeschylus' *Orestes* to dramatize the unknown future of African countries' after decolonization, Celati seems to have found in Mandaye's adaptation of Aristophanes' comedy the dramatic form to give to his own question on the future of Africa, which he formulates as such in *Avventure in Africa*:

> Ma gli africani andranno verso l'occidente? Diventeranno scomposti, pedagogici, romantici, depressivi, maniaci del tutto sotto controllo? Crederanno nella privacy, nelle vacanze, nei progetti, nella testa proiettata verso l'avvenire e mai nel presente dov'è? Si vergogneranno della deperibilità dei corpi, del vecchiume, degli scarti, del rimediato, dell'aggiustato? Bandiranno il disordine naturale delle cose, il contatto non legalizzato dei corpi, le mescolanze del nuovo e del vecchio, del fresco e del putrido?[226]

For Pasolini, the communist Chinese model and the neo-capitalist American model are the two available options for a "typical" African nation coming out of decolonization; Celati is interested in the peripheral village of Diol Kadd for its resistance against both the consumerist lifestyle of the city and its desertification: "Diol Kadd è l'esempio più chiaro di un lungo tentativo d'adattarsi al deserto che avanza."[227] Moreover, in the quoted paragraph of *Avventure in Africa* Celati sketches a generalized view of Africa as the antithesis of the European display of excessive consumerism and wealth, where the display of "niente" ("nothing," presumably in the sense of poverty) contrasts European opulence but conversely opposes a much more meaningful existence to European nihilism.[228] Celati seems to echo Pasolini's peripheral aesthetics as he presents Diol Kadd as one of

---

[226] Ibid, 1263.

[227] Celati, *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd: diari 2003-2006*, 19. Pasolini talks about a "typical" African state in Pasolini, *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana*, min 1:29.

[228] "Andiamo in giro per Parigi e vediamo soltanto quest'altro documentario del nuovo totale, senza più niente di precario, di povero, di decaduto, rimediato, tarlato dal vento, scartato dal destino. È il documentario della simulazione globale, senza luogo senza scampo, che ci mostrano a titolo pubblicitario notte e giorno, dietro lo schermo di vetro che abbiamo in dotazione per vivere da queste parti. Ma poi si sa che quando uno è lasciato dietro un vetro, tende a sentire che gli manca qualcosa, anche se ha tutto e non gli manca niente, e questa mancanza di niente forse conta qualcosa, perché uno potrebbe anche accorgersi di non aver bisogno davvero di niente, tranne del niente che gli manca davvero, del niente che si può comprare, del niente che non corrisponde a niente, il niente del cielo e dell'universo, o il niente che hanno gli altri che non hanno niente." Celati, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1267.

the "riserve" that Celati defines as peripheral areas of a continent where "tutto arriva un po' attutito" and where people live "sotto il livello standard del progetto finanziario di vita universale."[229] Like Pasolini in his poetry, Celati associates the lifestyle of Diol Kadd with the childhood in the countryside he spent in Italy.[230] As Leonardo De Franceschi suggests, these are symptoms of a "pan-meridional" representation of Africa—which aestheticizes the Southern subject but do not take their voices and point of view much into account.[231] De Franceschi finds evidence of this in Celati's use of voice over and camera: for example, the camera follows women focused on their everyday chores and visibly bothered by being filmed, while Celati's voice-over speculates on their views and thoughts on time (claiming they do not have a European sense of time), without engaging them directly in a conversation.[232]

Passar la vita a Diol Kadd is not only a film but also a collection of notebooks and the two texts should be analyzed for their specific contributions to the whole project. De Franceschi's reading of the documentary *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd* is revealing for pointing at the "regime di focalizzazione ipersoggettivo, benché nomade e disperso" that characterizes the film.[233] De Franceschi speaks of a "nomadic and dispersed" focus by noticing that not only Celati, but also the two cameramen (Lamberto Borsetti and Paolo Muran) appear as the main "subjects" of the film.[234] I want to suggest that an additional amplification of this "subjective dispersion" arises from the travel notes to the documentary. As Mario Sesti points out, the documentary—through the filmography of Lamberto Borsetti and Paolo Muran—shows a more

[229] Celati, Belpoliti, and Palmieri, *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*, 1053, 1054.

[230] Celati, *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd: diari 2003-2006*, 93, 107, 141. See Ch. 2 of this dissertation on Pasolini.

[231] De Franceschi, "La sua Africa. Festival di Roma: Diol Kadd di Gianni Celati."

[232] Ibid.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid.

assertive take (and therefore, representation) of Diol Kadd than the notebooks do.[235] The travel notes are instead more revealing of Celati's self-reflection and of the uncertainty of Celati's viewpoint, as he stresses his difficulties in making sense of the unknown and/or culturally different. This includes, for example, interacting with the local population when tension during filming grows (Celati notices how Mandaye, on the contrary, is able to appease the crowd).[236] Celati also notes the awkwardness of uncomfortable situations especially in the presence of Senegalese women.[237]

In his encounters with Senegalese women, Celati recuperates the role of the idiotic tourist meant in its broadest sense, as an individual estranged from reality and not sure of how to interpret what happens in front of him. Mam'Asta is a young woman with whom Celati shares letters during his absence from Diol Kadd. But Mam'Asta is also the victim of an abusive family, in particular because of the authority of her father-in-law who threatens to divorce her from his son.[238] Celati is aware that Mam'Asta has an abortion and that she falls into depression.[239] Because of their friendship, Mam'Asta asks for Celati's help: she is thinking of leaving the country to go to Italy. Celati makes reference to the most recent immigration laws (most likely, the Bossi-Fini laws from 2002) and tells her he does not have the means to help.[240] The woman asks for help again, this time in the form of money that would allow her to leave Diol Kadd.[241] It is unclear why, at this point, Celati tells Mam'Asta that he will give her money but only through

[235] Mario Sesti's booklet in Celati, *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd*.

[236] Celati, *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd: diari 2003-2006*, 98.

[237] Ibid, 139-140.

[238] Ibid, 42.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Ibid, 43.

[241] Ibid, 76.

their friend Mandaye. Mam'Asta looks disturbed by Celati's reaction, and never asks for help again. Celati's position towards Mam'Asta is difficult to interpret. Overall, the narrator is sympathetic of Mam'Asta's struggle, and yet he does not take concrete action to help her. In the travel notes, Celati praises the women of the village more than the men, admiring their elegance, their sense of order, their rituals, and lighthearted spirit.[242] He seems though to have aestheticized Mam'Asta's struggles, as suggested by his references to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.[243] The story of Mam'Asta resonates with the story of Nianga, another young girl living in the village, recently married. The narrator is confused when he stops at Nianga's house to say goodbye and she expresses a melancholic affection, showing a picture of her that the film crew took the year before. The narrator says he imagines her harsh living conditions with an authoritative husband, but he comments concluding "non so come succedono queste cose. Non credo che tutti i capofamiglia siano autoritari, capaci d'imporre il divorzio se la sposa non fila dritta."[244] In the meantime, the picture looks "misera" (miserable) to him.[245] As he leaves Nianga's house, he trips on a step and mocks himself out loud for being too old. As he keeps walking, he thinks that she might have married because of her family, and she might also have been a victim of abuse. This thought is enough to make him trip again.[246] The narrator turns towards the role of the idiotic tourist when addressing the hidden causes of reality might generate a radical and upsetting reconsideration of self-identity, and bring him to recognize the diversity of empirical experiences due to "sciocchezze anagrafiche" such as gender or country of origin.

---

[242] Ibid, 16, 60, 61.

[243] Ibid, 59. Celati also writes about the relief he can see in Mam'Asta's face as she reads a poem (of unclear origin) giving voice to a young woman who complains about her unhappiness in marriage, in Ibid, 56-57.

[244] Ibid, 139-140.

[245] Ibid, 139.

[246] Ibid.

Celati's uncertainty as it is expressed in the travel notes of *Passare la vita a Diol Kadd* needs to be understood not only in terms of his "respectful gaze" (Rebecca West) but also in reference to his insistence on the "here and now" of these encounters and the refusal to dig into the deeper causes of the real, the behind-the scene.[247] Celati's position in regard to the Senegalese women of *Passare la vita a Diol Kadd* reaches an additional level of complexity with the paratext of the book, which is eloquent of Celati's approach. Celati uses an opening quote from the novel *Véhi Ciosane* (1966) by Senegalese writer and filmmaker Sembène Ousmane. The quote is a panoramic view of the savannah, presented as an exotic view for the foreigner: "Attraversando a piedi il niaye [the savannah], l'impressione di retrocedere o di non essere andati avanti s'impone allo sguardo dello straniero."[248] The quote establishes the "exotic" setting of the diaries as coherent with Celati's fascination for desolated landscapes. The context of the quote, however, oddly resonates with Mam'Asta's personal story of oppression. The author, Sembène Ousmane, was particularly critical of the Senegalese modern state (in line with Celati's critical view on decolonization expressed in *Letteratura, esotismo, colonialismo*); *Véhi Ciosane* reads as an act of accusation of patriarchy in African societies, with the narration of a sexual abuse and incest that stays unpunished because of the complicity of the entire community.[249] The quote from *Véhi Ciosane* seems relevant enough to amplify the importance of women's suffering as a result of the patriarchy in Senegal. At the same time though, the quote does not engage with this issue directly, turning towards a panoramic view of the savannah which reinforces an "exotic" look on Africa. I suggest Celati's use of this quote is revealing for showing the writer's

[247] West, *Gianni Celati*, 137.

[248] Ibid, 7.

[249] Ousmane, *Véhi-Ciosane, ou, Blanche-Genèse. Suivi du Mandat*. On this novel see Lifongo, "Sex, Power, and Community in Ousmane Sembène's Vèhi-Ciosane" and Gachanja, "Véhi Ciosane."

empathy towards the Senegalese women and, simultaneously, his refusal to engage with a disruptive social critique, which would target or attempt to change "la vita così com'è."

Celati's notebooks end, evocatively, with an appeasing dream in which he travels with his Senegalese friends on a train. The image of friends chatting on a train is not new in Celati. We see it for example in the documentary *Visioni di case che crollano*, where the film crew, including John Berger, discuss the editing of the film's project on the abandoned houses of the Po Valley. There, as much as in Celati's dream in *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd*, trains stress the mobility of people and the passing of time, the constant evolving of the passengers' objects of observation. Engaging in conversation and storytelling, train passengers make sense of a world that is constantly changing for them.[250] Celati's dream continues with Celati worrying that one of the Senegalese friends does not have enough money to eat. Celati looks for a way to offer some food without offending him, but the person who was causing him concern soon disappears from his view. The dream continues as a utopian vision of friendship where Celati and the other passengers live their lives as peers, following a similar destiny: "Nel sogno desideravo potessimo stare insieme su un treno che attraversava la Francia (forse), e stessimo lì senza sapere dove stavamo andando, raccontandoci le nostre storie."[251] Despite Celati's consistent attention to the phenomenic and the outside, capturing the inequality that pervades Celati's project in Diol Kadd—in terms of economic status, right to international mobility, gender—is not an easy object of representation. The unconscious realm of dreams comes in support, where Celati seems to have reached the thorny limit of his (post-)touristic representations.

[250] The documentary *Strada provinciale delle anime* also adopts a similar aesthetics presenting a large group of people travelling around the Po Valley on a bus.

[251] Ibid, 143.

Conclusions

Celati pairs the loss of a bond with territories ("deterritorialization") and the feeling of estrangement typical of postmodernity with the condition of the tourist, not only by prioritizing the representation of tourists in his fiction and non-fiction, but also by adopting the tourist as an ontological perspective. His interest in deterritorialization begins with a reflection on the colonial tradition of exoticism but he soon disjoints his research from the historical context of colonialism, aiming at a personal reconfiguration of the exotic. In his aesthetics, Celati prioritizes the "exotic" and "adventure" as equally essential categories of a touristic aesthetic experience. Developing an aesthetics of the "outside," and assuming estrangement as condition of self, Celati parallels the aesthetic research of French author Victor Segalen (1818-1919), an important and yet overlooked source of Celati in the 1970s.

Not only Segalen, but also other influential French intellectual figures including anthropologists Claude-Lévi Strauss and Marc Augé, and author Georges Perec, helped me situate Celati's work within the European tradition reflecting on the "end of exoticism." This recurrent trope identifies an important component of Celati's post-touristic aesthetic, pinpointing the process of cultural homologation on a global level and the hybridization of the local typical of postmodernity and globalization. Celati's return to the tradition of the Italian *novella* should be read as his creative solution to the end of exoticism, where a sense of local storytelling is preserved as much as the idea of adventure and encounter with the diversity of the world. Similarly, Celati's collaboration with Luigi Ghirri can also be seen as a way to combine the exotic and the "endotic" (in Georges Perec's terms): Celati and Ghirri's specific aesthetic approach consists in prioritizing voyage and using vagueness to maintain an "exotic" representation of the local.

Embodying in himself the figure of the tourist both literally and metaphorically, Celati looks at tourists with both irony and affection. In Celati's travel writing, irony is the most visible sign of Celati's awareness of his own role as a tourist, with the estrangement, or more literally, the "idiotic" look on the real that this role entails. In his fiction, assuming the tourist as a generalized condition of existence implies accepting its typical disorientation, but also celebrating the awe for the world that one experiences on an everyday basis. Hence, Celati's insistence on "deixis," or the "here and now," as a phenomenological attention to one's surroundings and a reminder of one's life and presence. Celati's deep concern for the question of "abitare" or dwelling similarly derives from an urge to visualize human and non-human existence in harmony with one's surroundings.

As he reacts against the spatial abstraction of late capitalism, Celati develops an aesthetics "rasoterra," or ground-level that speaks of a subjective experience of the environment rather than affirming the comprehensiveness of an overarching point of view. However, connected to Celati's choice of vagueness is also a generalization of subjective experience that does not put the diversity of specific identities and historical backgrounds into focus. Assuming the self to be constantly mobile and "exotic" (as in Segalen), Celati *de facto* refuses to map his empirical experience in relation to diverse subjects or to delve into the hidden causes of the present. This is particularly evident in Celati's last project in Africa, where the legacy of colonial exoticism comes to the fore along with the tourist's perplexed and estranged gaze.

Bibliography

Augé, Marc. *Le sens des autres: actualité de l'anthropologie*. Paris: Fayard, 1994.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

Belpoliti, Marco. “Conversazione con Luigi Ghirri: fotografare l’Italia.” *Doppiozero*, February 14, 2018. https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/conversazione-con-luigi-ghirri-fotografare-litalia.

Belpoliti, Marco and Marco Sironi, eds. *Gianni Celati*. Riga 28. Milano: Marcos y Marcos, 2008.

Belpoliti, Marco, Marco Sironi, and Anna Stefi, eds. *Gianni Celati*. Riga 40. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019.

Benedetti, Carla. “Celati e le poetiche della grazia.” *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana* 1 (1993): 27–53.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Schocken Books. New York, 2007.

Calvino, Italo. “La sfida al labirinto.” In *Una pietra sopra*. Einaudi, 1980.

Celati, Gianni. *Conversazioni del vento volatore*. Compagnia Extra 24. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2011.

———. *Finzioni occidentali: fabulazione, comicità e scrittura.* Torino: Einaudi, 1975.

———. “I confini dell’oasi.” *Il manifesto*, September 17, 1989.

———. *Il mondo di Luigi Ghirri*. DVD. Roma: Fandango libri, 2011.

———. “Il racconto di superficie.” In *Alì Babà: progetto di una rivista, 1968-1972*, edited by Mario Barenghi and Marco Belpoliti, 176–93. Milano: Marcos y Marcos, 1998.

———. “L’avventura non deve finire.” In *Alzando da terra il sole*, by Beppe. Cottafavi and Mondadori Cles, 87–99. Strade blu. Nonfiction. Milano: Mondadori, 2012.

———. “Lettera a Guido Davico, Paolo Fossati e Italo Calvino,” 1978. Corrispondenza con autori e collaboratori italiani, 47. Fondi Documentari Giulio Einaudi Editore, Torino.

———. *Narrative in fuga*. Edited by Jean Talon. Compagnia extra ; 86. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019.

———. *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd*. DVD. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2011.

———. *Passar la vita a Diol Kadd: diari 2003-2006*. I Narratori. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2011.

———. *Romanzi, cronache e racconti*. Edited by Marco Belpoliti and Nunzia Palmieri. I meridiani. Milano: Mondadori, 2016.

———. *Strada provinciale delle anime*. DVD. Roma: Fandango libri, 2011.

———. *Studi d'affezione per amici e altri*. Compagnia Extra. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016.

———. *Visioni di case che crollano*. DVD. Roma: Pierrot & la Rosa, 2003.

Celati, Gianni, Anita Licari, Roberta Maccagnani, Lina Zecchi, and Sandra Festi. *Letteratura, esotismo, colonialismo*. NUC studio 4. Bologna: Cappelli, 1978.

Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Cortellessa, Andrea. "Molesta Parodia Etnografica." *Alias - Il Manifesto*, March 12, 2005.

De Franceschi, Leonardo. "La sua Africa. Festival di Roma: Diol Kadd di Gianni Celati." *Cinemafrica: Africa e diaspore nel cinema*, November 2, 2010. http://www.cinemafrica.org/spip.php?article1070.

De Palma, Maria Teresa. "Spazi, sperimentazioni, scribi: Celati e il macrotesto perecchiano." In *Gianni Celati: traduzione, tradizione e riscrittura*, edited by Michele Ronchi Stefanati, 143–63. Rome: Aracne editrice, 2019.

Feifer. Maxine. *Going Places: The Ways of the Tourist from Imperial Rome to the Present Day*. New York: Macmillan, 1985.

Fiorella, Lucia Claudia. "Il topos del viaggio deludente: fine dell'esotismo?" *Between* 1 (2011). https://doi.org/10.13125/2039-6597/287.

Gachanja, Peter Mwaura. "'Véhi Ciosane': The Voice of Sembénian Parrhesiastes in the 1960s and After." *The French Review* 86, no. 4 (2013): 660–69.

Ghirri, Luigi. *Viaggio in Italia*. Alessandria: Il Quadrante, 1984.

Ghirri, Luigi, and Gianni Celati. *Il profilo delle nuvole*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1989.

Glissant, Édouard. *L'intention poétique*. Pierres vives. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969.

Harrison, Thomas. "A Tale of Two Giannis: Writing as Rememoration." *Annali d'Italianistica* 29 (2011): 269–88.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1962.

Iovino, Serenella. "Restoring the Imagination of Place: Narrative Reinhabitation and the Po Valley." In *Towards the River's Mouth = (Verso La Foce): A Critical Edition*, by Gianni Celati, 127–42. translated by Patrick Barron. Ecocritical Theory and Practice. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Khatibi, Abdelkebir. *Figures de l'étranger dans la littérature française*. Paris: Denoël, 1987.

Klopp, Charles. "Buster Keaton va in Africa." In *Africa Italia: due continenti si avvicinano*, by Sante Matteo and Stefano. Bellucci, 182–91. Archivi aperti 2. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Fara editore, 1999.

Lévi-Strauss, C. *Tristes tropiques*. Terre humaine. civilisations et sociétés. Paris: Plon, 1955.

Lifongo, Vetinde. "Sex, Power, and Community in Ousmane Sembène's Vèhi-Ciosane." *Matatu: Journal for African Culture & Society* 39, no. 1 (2011): 441–54.

MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. 2013 edition. Berkeley, California: University Of California, 2013.

Marelli, Arianna. "Le avventure del *Lunario*." *Elephant Castle*, no. 19 (December 2018).

Ousmane, Sembène. *Véhi-Ciosane, ou, Blanche-Genèse. Suivi du Mandat*. Présence Africaine, 1966.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana*. DVD. International Film Forum, 1970.

Perec, Georges. *Espèces d'espaces*. Espace critique. Paris: Editions Galilée, 1974.

———. *L'infra-ordinaire*. La Librairie du XXIe siècle. Paris: Seuil, 1989.

———. *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien*. Paris: C. Bourgois, 1975.

Picarazzi, Teresa L., and Wiley Feinstein. *An African Harlequin in Milan: Marco Martinelli Performs Goldoni*. West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera, 1997.

Rizzante, Massimo. *Il geografo e il viaggiatore: lettere, dialoghi, saggi e una nota azzurra sull'opera di Italo Calvino e di Gianni Celati*. Saggi e documenti 14. Milan: Effigie, 2017.

Rorato, Laura. "'Casi esemplari di turismo africano': la figura del turista in Avventure in Africa di Gianni Celati." *Italica* 84, no. 2–3 (2007): 262–73.

Said, W. Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books Editions, 1978.

Segalen, Victor. *Œuvres complètes*. Edited by Philippe. Postel. Textes de littérature moderne et contemporaine. Paris: Champion, 2011.

Seger, Monica. *Landscapes in between: Environmental Change in Modern Italian Literature and Film*. Toronto Italian Studies. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Sheringham, Michael. *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. 2005th ed. New York: RosettaBooks LLC, 1974.

Spunta, Marina. "'A Magical Balance of Opposites': Reading Luigi Ghirri's Photography through Walter Benjamin." *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies* 2, no. 2 (June 2014): 215–235.

———. "Gianni Celati's Towards the River's Mouth: The Experience of Place between Writing and Photography." In *Towards the River's Mouth = (Verso La Foce): A Critical Edition*, by Gianni Celati, 77–88. translated by Patrick Barron. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019.

———. "'Il profilo delle nuvole': Luigi Ghirri's Photography and the 'New' Italian Landscape." *Italian Studies* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2006).

Todorov, Tzvetan. *Nous et les autres: la réflexion française sur la diversité humaine*. Points ; 250. Essais. Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 2001.

Urbain, Jean-Didier. *L'idiot du voyage: histoires de touristes*. Paris: Plon, 1991.

Urry, John, and Jonas Larsen. *The Tourist Gaze*. Theory, Culture & Society. London: Sage Publications, 2002.

West, Rebecca J. *Gianni Celati: The Craft of Everyday Storytelling*. Toronto Italian Studies. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.