SPECTACULAR CAPITAL(IST) CITY:
WANDERINGS THROUGH ROME FROM 1870 TO THE ECONOMIC MIRACLE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Spectacular Capital(ist) City: Wanderings through Rome from 1870 to the Economic Miracle

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My dissertation "Spectacular Capital(ist) City: Wanderings through Rome from 1870 to the Economic Miracle" analyzes modern Italian cultural production that investigates the city's singular role in forging Italian national identity through monuments and urban plans and reflects on the effects that these modifications had in the daily lives of the capital's inhabitants. My work includes chapters on heterogeneous texts such as Altobelli's photo of the breach of Porta Pia and articles chronicling Rome's conquest and its urban transformations (De Amicis, Imbriani, Faldella, D'Annunzio), novels depicting the daily life in the capital (Serao's *La conquista di Roma*, D'Annunzio's *Il piacere* e *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, and Morante's *La Storia*) and politicians' speeches (Crispi, Mussolini), post-neorealist films (Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* and Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio*) and urban plans.

The texts under consideration reveal that the Italian state's at times frantic, superficial, and spectacular modifications to the capital's urban structure reveal the nation's frustration with its perceived "backwardness" or "belatedness" with regard to European modernity. Indeed, the process of national unification cannot be detangled from the desire of transforming Italy into a more productive, industrialized, capitalist country. In the texts analyzed, the authors isolate

different agents that transformed Rome's appearance: the State, which regulated internal migration, segregated the working poor in the city's outskirts, erected new monuments, and planned new bourgeois districts; land speculators who destroyed green areas and attracted thousands of underpaid workers; and, more in general, the explosion of capitalism. These texts demonstrate how social and cultural homogenization, the expulsion of the deviant, and the spectacularization of the society through architecture and media are at the base of capitalist nation formation.

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The Eternal Forging of the Capital

"A Roma si rischia l'emergenza sanitaria."[1] "Rifiuti, Roma rischia il collasso in 10 giorni."[2] "Un altro autobus ha preso fuoco a Roma, il quindicesimo del 2019."[3] "Roma: la libreria 'La Pecora elettrica' incendiata due volte: 'Dà fastidio alle bande di pusher.'"[4] "Rome's sad decline sums up Italy's problems."[5] "Rome in ruins: Some worry that the city is in danger of becoming a dump. Not a 'rubbish heap of history,' or a precious junkyard of antiquities, but an actual garbage dump."[6] In the last couple of years, the national and international news regarding Rome depict the Italian capital on the verge of what my friend and colleague Alberto Iozzia would define as an apocalyptic disaster. What happened to the city of *la dolce vita* that was able to attract swarms of tourists for its ancient Roman ruins, baroque architecture, hundreds of museums, and lavish shops of Via Condotti? Why does its actual state look so different from the iconic city that occupies the imagination of many Italians and international tourists? This division between the real Rome (and its numerous problems that never get resolved) and its symbolic reelaboration in popular culture is an eternal struggle characterizing the city since it became the capital in 1870 – and even before then. From fashionable Grand Tour destination to elegant new capital of the nation, from majestic hub of the Fascist regime to a lively, carefree, global metropolis as portrayed in internationally recognized films

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[1] "Rifiuti, l'ordine dei medici: A Roma si rischia l'emergenza sanitaria." *Roma Today* Oct. 2, 2019.
[2] Mauro Evangelisti, "Rifiuti, Roma rischia il collasso in 10 giorni. Sos di presidi e medici." *Il Messaggero* Oct. 3, 2019.
[3] "Un altro autobus ha preso fuoco a Roma, il quindicesimo del 2019." *Il Post* July 12, 2019.
[4] Maria Egizia Fiaschetti, Maria Rosaria Spadaccino. "Roma: la libreria 'La Pecora elettrica' incendiata due volte: 'Dà fastidio alle bande di pusher.'" *Corriere della Sera* Nov. 7, 2019
[5] Barbie Latza Nadeau, "Rome's sad decline sums up Italy's problems." *CNN World* March 5, 2018.
[6] Jason Horowitz, "Rome in ruins." *The New York Times* Dec. 24, 2018.

such as William Wyler's *Roman Holiday* (1953) and Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960), Rome has always dealt with massive flows of people (pilgrims, tourists, migrants) that contributed to the shaping of its profile. Beyond the city's alluring surface, thousands of people lived in its margins. We can find their traces in many artists' works across the centuries: Gioacchino Belli's poems depicted the living conditions of the Roman lower classes during the papal dominion; the presence of beggars was noted in diaries of intellectuals visiting the city for the Grand Tour; Neorealism testified to the destruction following WWII; while Pier Paolo Pasolini deeply investigated the city's periphery and denounced the living conditions of their inhabitants during the economic boom. In the modern era, Rome has always been the object of contrasting portraits; its center and its margins seemed and continue to look like two separate worlds.

My dissertation analyzes modern Italian cultural production that investigates the city's singular role in forging Italian national identity through monuments and urban plans and reflects on the effects that these modifications had in the daily lives of the capital's inhabitants. The texts under consideration reveal that the Italian state's at times frantic, superficial, and spectacular modifications to the capital's urban structure reveal the nation's frustration with its perceived "backwardness" or "belatedness" with regard to European modernity. Indeed, the process of national unification cannot be detangled from the desire of transforming Italy into a more productive, industrialized, capitalist country. In the texts analyzed, the authors isolate different agents that transformed Rome's appearance: the State, which regulated internal migration, segregated the working poor in the city's outskirts, erected new monuments, and planned new bourgeois districts; land speculators who destroyed green areas and attracted thousands of underpaid workers;

and, more in general, the explosion of capitalism. The texts under consideration demonstrate how social and cultural homogenization, the expulsion of the deviant, and the spectacularization of the society through architecture and media are at the base of capitalist nation formation. Since these works elucidate the subjective effects of urbanization and consumer capitalist economy in ways that are otherwise difficult to obtain through social scientific disciplines, my research therefore contributes not only to Italian Studies, but also to a broader discourse on global literature and film studies that intersects with urban studies, history, and sociology.

The motives to focus on the Italian capital are multiple: beyond recent interest in the city in films and TV series (Sorrentino, Rosi, Sollima, Placido), Rome is unique for its anomalous political and economic characteristics throughout the centuries in comparison to other Italian cities, which led to a particular conformation of the Roman society and of its urban fabric, as I illustrate in Chapter One. In addition to this, more than any other Italian cities, the capital played a fundamental role in presenting to the nation and to the other global powers an idea of a cohesive, productive, and wealthy country through its architecture and urban renovations. For all these reasons, intellectuals, politicians, writers, and film directors continually directed their attention toward Rome in order to depict and comment on the contemporary Italian society. To better understand cultural production regarding the Italian capital, I believe that it is necessary to collect the voices of authors that focused on the city's urban transformations, reflected on the health of the nation, and connected what was happening in Italy in crucial moments of Italy's history (immediately after the unification, Fascism, and post-WWII) to a more global discourse on politics, economy, and society.

Rome has always been at the center of sociological and anthropological studies investigating its urban transformations and marginal areas, such as the classic essays by Alfredo Niceforo and Scipio Sighele's *La mala vita a Roma* (1898), and Franco Ferrarotti's *Roma da capitale a periferia* (1970) and *Vite di baraccati* (1970). Many volumes analyze the political and economic forces shaping the Italian capital together with its social geography, such as Italo Insolera's *Roma moderna* (1962), Antonio Cederna's *Mirabilia urbis* (1965), Robert Fried's *Planning the Eternal City* (1973), and John Agnew's *Rome* (1995). Others investigate the influence of the myth of Rome in Italian cultural production from the Renaissance to modern literature, cinema, and popular culture (Peter Bondanella's *Eternal City,* 1987). For the 140th anniversary of the breach of Porta Pia, the special issue of *Annali di Italianistica* entitled "Capital City: Rome 1870–2010" offers a wide overview of literary and cinematic portraits of the capital and the role of architecture, tourism, and politics in the city's representations from 1870 to 2010. The heterogeneous material collected in this issue inspired the approach to my research. In my dissertation, I combine close textual analysis of literature and film with the study of archival documents (official government acts, political speeches, urban plans, and photographs), architecture, and a number of critical and theoretical works on the intersection between film theory and urban studies (Bruno, Rhodes); urban modernity and mass culture (Benjamin, Debord, Le Bon); biopolitics and space (Agamben, Foucault); and language, identity, and architecture (Chambers). Another recent volume entirely dedicated to Rome, Dom Holdoway and Filippo Trentin's *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape* (2013) collects analysis of postmodern representations of the capital in contemporary cultural production and aims at deconstructing the idea of the

capital as polarized between its center and its margins. While this reading is possible for the actual state of the city and its contemporary cultural representations – for example, we can find a postmodern, fragmented depictions of the capital in Gianfranco Rosi's *Sacro GRA* (2013) – the texts that I analyze reveal the mechanisms through which political and economic forces divided Rome and its inhabitants by isolating and segregating useless architecture and unproductive social classes and individuals.

Because of my attention to Rome's peripheries, David Forgacs's *Italy's Margins* (2014) – the chapter "Urban Peripheries" in particular – represents one of my models. In the aforementioned chapter, he illustrates how the the Italian capital's margins moved from central San Lorenzo in the late 1800s to Pietralata, Borgata Gordiani, and Acquedotto Felice post–WWII. In his sociological narrative, he weaves cultural representations and analysis of the mentioned areas, such as the depiction of San Lorenzo in Niceforo and Sighele's *La mala vita a Roma,* Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* (1906), and Maria Montessori's *La casa dei bambini dell'Istituto Romano dei Beni Stabili* (1907). However, this book offers neither literary nor film analysis that is necessary if we want to better understand the atmosphere and the tensions animating the period under consideration through a more subjective, personal point of view. For this reason, I consider John David Rhodes's *Stupendous Miserable City: Pasolini's Rome* (2007) to be my main model. In the book, Rhodes explores Rome's transformations through Pasolini's films; his analysis not only underlines the importance of the capital's urban space in the director's films but also helps in better understanding the shape, the life, and the difficulties of the city's peripheries. Another book with which I dialogue is Alessia Ricciardi's *After* La Dolce Vita (2012). In her book, she affirms that

> Italy has failed to live up the dream of a culture that responds to the life of the political collective as a whole, including such typically disempowered groups as the poor. What Italy has achieved instead of this Gramscian ideal is a society subjugated at every level to the benumbing power of the mass media. (9)

She also argues that Berlusconi succedeed in creating such a society because of the weakness of the left after the death of Togliatti, especially in the 1970s and the 1980s. While she states that these circumstances prepared the field for what Debord defines as the society of the spectacle, I argue that we can find traces of spectacularization of the capital's society and urban spaces even earlier in time, and at least since the breach of Porta Pia. These mechanisms aimed not only at unifying the nation but also at creating a false image of wealth and production.

In my dissertation, I combine Giorgio Agamben's approach to biopolitics in his analysis of the foundation of the *polis* (*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1995) and Guy Debord's examination of the society of the spectacle (*The Society of the Spectacle*, 1967) when examining how the authors under consideration unveil the inherent parallels within the the state's interventions in the urban structure of Rome and the advancement of capitalism. If biopolitics unveil that laws regulate every aspect of biological life, the theory at the base of the society of the spectacle affirms that every facet of existence is transformed into a spectacle; however, as I explain in my dissertation, this totalizing project presents some cracks. During the period known as *Roma Capitale* at the end of the 19th century, the Fascist Ventennio, and in the years after WWII, we witness only a partial achievement of two coercive systems on the capital: sociopolitical segregation and capitalist homogenization. While on one hand the governments and land speculators contributed to the segregation of the unwanted proletariat and subproletariat in the outskirts of the capital, on the other the

bourgeoisification connected to the advent of mass society led to a process of homogenization through the promise of social mobility and easy access to commodities. Capitalism is integral part in the process of nation building; as Henri Lefebvre states: "capital and capitalism […] 'influence' practice matters relating to space, from the construction of buildings to the distributoin of investments and the worldwide division of labor" (9–10). Being a city that had to be completely transformed in order to become the new capital, Rome combined all the ingredients for a capitalist explosion: real estate development, attraction of banks and capital, and the increment of the proletariat.

Beyond illustrating the annihilating character of the urban renovations and the imposition of a capitalist system in Rome, the literary and cinematic works taken into consideration reveal alternative escapes from these strangling jaws. As Iain Chambers states in *Culture After Humanism* (2001), because of the crisis in western thought after postcolonial theory, in modern and contemporary space:

> however overdetermined by the seemingly irresistible onrush of capital and corporate control – what these days increasingly stands in for institutional policies and politics – there exists a cultural and poetic excess which is irreducible to the calculating rationalism and logic on those intents on our overseeing our futures. This supplement interrupts and interrogates the political desire for conclusion, universal comprehension and a rationalist domestication of the world. This desire is dispersed in the space between buildings, in the gap between measured edicts, in the silence that geometry fails to encode, in the shadows that cloud transparency. (151)

Flânerie, a playful interaction with ruins and architecture, the attention given to disappearing green areas, and the creation of poetry and the adoption of a poetic point of view on the world represent various modalities through which the authors and the directors included in my research try to challenge and subvert an authoritative, homogenizing society by showing that the cracks in the system can become the site of an alternative dwelling in the world. In order to expose the aesthetic and political

mechanisms at the base of the authors' and directors' challenge to the status quo, I engage with the theories of Walter Benjamin (*Charles Baudelaire: a Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* 1969), Iain Chambers, Pier Paolo Pasolini ("Cinema of Poetry", 1965; "The Written Language of Reality", 1966), and Martin Heidegger ("Building Dwelling Thinking", 1951; "Poetically Man Dwells", 1951).

Chapter One, "*C'è la stoffa per una capitale d'Europa, altro che d'Italia*: Rome's Monuments and Bourgeois Façades in the Creation of National Identity" analyzes texts describing the appropriation and the symbolic transformation of ancient monuments immediately after the Breach of Porta Pia (De Amicis's *Impressioni di Roma*, 1870; Imbriani's *Passeggiate Romane*, 1871), celebrating or denouncing the changes affecting the architecture, the urban plan, and the inhabitants of Rome during the land speculation of the 1880s (Faldella's *Un Viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa*, 1880, and *Roma Borghese*, 1882 in the first case and Serao's *La Conquista di Roma,* 1885, in the second case). Moreover, this chapter sets the theoretical framework that I need to explain the interlaced mechanisms in play in the urban renovations of Rome from 1870 to the 1960s. Chambers's elaboration of the notions of borders, perspective, and enframing in the representation of space supports my analysis of the aesthetic representation of architecture and monuments in the texts and films taken into consideration. In addition, I use Debord's theory for his identification of urbanism as capitalism's main tool of isolation and annihilation of the urban masses: his theory unveils that the society of the spectacle is a form of totalitarianism that operates along with urban planning in the homogenization of individuals.

In Chapter Two, "*Come un rigurgito di cloache*: Bestial Proletarian Masses, Contagious Real Estate Speculation, and Poetic Spaces in Gabriele D'Annunzio's Rome," I illustrate how the common European fear of a proletarian uprising influenced the spatial distribution of the working class in Rome and analyze contemporary descriptions of the capital's new cityscape through diverse evidence – from literary texts to politicians' speeches. Gabriele D'Annunzio's Roman works are at the center of this chapter; these include the articles that he wrote for the journal *Le Cronache della Tribuna* (1884-1888), and the novels *Il Piacere* (1889) and *Le Vergini delle Rocce* (1895). In the first part of the chapter, I focus on the representation of the working poor of the capital. In the texts under consideration, the descriptions of the working poor imply their bestialization and reflect the conception of Rome's proletariat and subproletariat as the disturbing elements who needed to be eliminated from the capital's monumental façade in order to achieve the appearance of a wealthy, bourgeois city. In the second part of the chapter, I analyze an opposite process to the bestialization of the proletariat: the anthropomorphization of the vegetal world. In passages from *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, *Le Cronache della Tribuna*, and the collection *Elettra* (1903), D'Annunzio depicts Rome's green areas as the last stronghold of the past society before capitalism changed it. The author considers these poetic spaces – characterized by artistic creation, beauty, and idleness – as the hub of values necessary to defeat the decadence brought by capitalism.

In Chapter Three, "*Insomma tuta la Storia l'è una storia di fascismi*: Proletarian Neighborhoods and Borgate in Elsa Morante's *La Storia* (1974)," I investigate the failure of Rome as a unifying tool of the nation and analyze the role of the borgate in keeping "unfitting" elements far from the central symbolic urban fabric of the capital. Even if it

was published in 1974, Elsa Morante's novel bridges the Risorgimento to Fascism and post-WWII. Indeed, through her characters, the novel comments on Italian society since the country's national unification and inserts it in a global discourse on segregation of marginal figures and the role this had in the productivity and economic advancement of the world's most powerful nations. Specifically, I examine how Morante's novel depicts Rome's marginal neighborhoods as Agambenian camps while simultaneously expanding the concept of fascism to Risorgimento and postwar society by highlighting their similarities. Across these historic periods, Italy became a modern capitalist society that, similarly to Germany, URSS, and other global powers, used violence to homogenize masses and to eliminate otherness in order to create the image of a prosperous, unified nation.

In Chapter Four, "Cinematic Rome and the Disillusionment with the Economic Miracle," I analyze Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* and Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* – both released in 1962. My analysis of *Le Tentazioni* demonstrates how this minor, overlooked short film in the production of Fellini contains a strong criticism not only of Christian democratic censorship of art and sexuality but also of consumer capitalism in the Italian society of the economic boom. As I illustrate in the chapter, in the film, EUR represents the architectonic illusion of wealth and social mobility typical of 1960s Italy – similar to the "paradiso" mentioned by the king in Davide Segre's last vision that I analyze in the chapter preceding this one. The same desire for social mobility drives Pasolini's female protagonist of *Mamma Roma* (Anna Magnani). Therefore, even if the modalities and the techniques of the two directors are very different, both of them, in the same year, offered a strong critique on the perils of

and the disillusionment with the Italian economic boom. In doing this, both of them used Rome as a setting and selected two very distinct neighborhoods of the capital to be strong signifiers in the films: the modernist, bourgeois EUR (Fellini) and the proletarian borgata of Cecafumo (Pasolini).

The analyses of the works included here aim to unveil how political and economic forces deeply affect how we live and experience cities. My research addresses social, geographic, and economic marginalization in Italy through the lenses of various authors that investigate the agents shaping our cities and propose a poetic resistance to it. In covering a vast time period (1870 to 1975) my dissertation responds to the urge of isolating similar mechanisms that, across a century, forged Italian national identity, segregated marginal figures, and created aesthetic counteractions on the part of Italian intellectuals.

Chapter One

C'è la stoffa per una capitale d'Europa, altro che d'Italia:[7]

Rome's Monuments and Bourgeois Façades in the Creation of National Identity

Upon inclusion in the Italian nation, Rome was "a small, backward, and provincial town, with little industry or commerce, surrounded by vast stretches of rural misery and malaria" (Fried 19). Moreover, its social structure was still medieval due to the temporal power of the Church and a restricted number of powerful noble families that dominated over a small stratum of clerks, professionals, artisans, and merchants. A large part of the population was subproletariat that depended on the Church for survival. Despite these factors, which separated Rome from the rest of the European capitals, the city was chosen almost unanimously as the new capital in 1861 for its cultural heritage (Roman and Christian), geographical and political neutrality, and spectacular monumentality. However, it took nine years before Rome became part of the nation.

The majority of Northern politicians preferred Rome to other cities because of its socioeconomical problems and its political instability.[8] The city's social structure was still feudal; this meant that social and economic power was still tied to a few, noble families that were neither investing in more advanced technology in the few textile factories present in the area nor enhancing agricultural techniques that could surpass the practice of latifundium (Alberto Caracciolo 6-8). This restriction of power to a few noble

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[7] Edmondo De Amicis, *Impressioni di Roma. La Breccia di Porta Pia 20 Settembre 1870*, Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2010, p. 66.

[8] Starting from the 1840s, some Northern politicians, such as Vincenzo Gioberti and Giuseppe Mazzini, individuate in Rome the nucleus of the Italian nation. At the end of the 1850s, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour and the majority of the Piedmontese ruling class joined the chorus and, on March 27 1861, the Chamber and the Senate declared Rome the capital of the Italian nation. For a more detailed account of the various politicians' positions, see "Capitolo Uno: Verso la Capitale dell'Italia Unita" in Alberto Caracciolo's *Roma Capitale: dal Risorgimento alla crisi dello Stato liberale*. Roma: Edizioni Rinascita, 1956, pp. 3-35.

families also prevented the formation of a strong bourgeoisie that could have introduced industrial development in Rome together with a more stable democratic political and administrative system. Since the local bourgeoisie supported itself through speculation and duty tax collection, its existence was still too dependent on the favors of noble families. This meant that, differently from northern and central Italian cities, the Roman bourgeoisie never really emancipated itself economically and politically until the experience of the 1849 Roman Republic (Alberto Caracciolo 8–10). Northern Italian politicians saw this lack of political and administrative experience as an advantage to seizing power and installing a new democratic system without finding too much local resistance. Moreover, Rome's geographical position granted a mediation between the North and the South of the country; leaving Piedmont meant including the other Italian regions in the Risorgimento project of nation building. Rome, more than Florence, offered the illusion of proximity to Southern Italy (Alberto Caracciolo 17–24). All these motivations encouraged politicians to choose Rome as the blank page where they could inscribe words glorifying the Italian unification and publicizing the rise of a modern, bourgeois, capitalist nation. As Lefebvre states, hegemony does not leave space untouched (10–11).

Immediately after the breach of Porta Pia in 1870, which marks the annexation of Rome to the rest of the Italian nation, the city was at the center of a feverish discussion on how to develop its urban fabric.[9] Only ten days after the breach – on September 30, 1870 – the temporary gubernatorial council appointed a commission of eleven engineers and architects working under the direction of Pietro Camporesi with the goal of studying

[9] For a more detailed account see the chapter "I Primi Dibattiti per l'Avvenire della Città" in Alberto Caracciolo, pp. 52–81.

possible solutions for Rome's expansion and beautification (Fried 74–75). This haste in upgrading the new capital's face was certainly connected to the fact that the new capital was attracting thousands of people related to the government machine and to the development of the city. Not only politicians, but also journalists and clerks, as well as shopkeepers, construction workers, and other blue-collars workers were expected to move to Rome and needed proper housing accommodations.

As the authors considered in this chapter – Edmondo De Amicis, Vittorio Imbriani, Giovanni Faldella, and Matilde Serao – illustrate the city's ancient and new monuments, together with its modern urban additions, played a significant role in the construction of Italy's national identity. By comparing these authors' articles and novels with politicians' speeches and other contemporary intellectuals' considerations on *Roma capitale*, my work gives possible answers to questions such as: how could Rome's space be designed to shape Italians as national citizens and as fashionable consumers? What is the role of buildings, urban plans, and architectonic styles in the creation of spaces reflecting hegemonic power, shaping national identity, or pushing for a consumer capitalist society? Moreover, the combination of non-fictional texts (politicians' speeches and intellectuals' letters and articles) and fictional works (novels and serial stories appearing in newspapers) allows for a detailed investigation of the subjective effects of urbanization and consumer capitalist economy in ways that are otherwise difficult to obtain through social scientific disciplines. Indeed, this chapter also engages with these questions: in what ways did authors such as De Amicis, Imbriani, Faldella, and Serao perceive these kinds of urban changes affecting Rome in the late 19th century? How do their texts translate their characters' physical experiences in the city into words? How do

they use the city's monuments, architecture, and urban plans to comment on contemporary society? In my analysis, I point to analogies between language and urban plans because they convey meaning in a similar way – as Lefebvre states, "produced space can be decoded, can be read" (17). First of all, language attaches meaning to single words; likewise, a city relegates symbolic values to individual buildings, according to their use and architectonic style. Secondly, language can modify or amplify the meaning of single words by combining them into a sentence. The same applies to buildings; their symbolic values change or intensify depending on how the urban plan positions them. As words mutate depending on the words with which they interact, so do buildings. Moreover, as a sentence construction emphasizes one word over another, or influences the speaking/reading speed, so do urban plans similarly guide their visitors' gaze and walking/riding directions.

All these points are relevant in the texts analyzed in this chapter as all the authors taken into consideration dedicate particular attention to the meaning of singular monuments and buildings and the interaction with one another and people. In *Impressioni di Roma* (1870), De Amicis presents virtual walks among Rome's monuments to his readers; this strategy gives new patriotic meaning to the city and create a sense of national identity. By associating movement to specific shots of monuments and actions surrounding the narrator, these "walking narrations" anticipate cinema and this proto-cinematic language intensifies the readers' sentimental attachment to Rome's monuments. In this chapter, not only De Amicis's, but also Imbriani's, Faldella's, and Serao's charaters' flâneries, in more or less structured paths across Rome, unveil the political program behind the capital's new urban plans.

All the authors taken into consideration present a certain understanding of the role of Rome's architectonic language in the creation of a national discourse. While in his sketches De Amicis gives importance to collective gatherings interacting with landmarks, in *Passeggiate Romane* (1876)*,* Imbriani despises forced monumental paths that were used to educate the new Italians. Following Giorgio Agamben's reading of Aristotle's *Politics* in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, I argue that the foundation of a *polis*/state is equivalent to the appropriation and transformation of voice into a codified, official language. In a similar way, the urban fabric of Rome required a regulation through urban plans and monuments toward the crafting of a symbolic, unified national identity. Because in the initial years of *Roma capitale* this process was ongoing, in the texts by De Amicis, Imbriani, Faldella, and Serao, the characters struggle to find the symbolic meaning of those Roman monuments that are completely disconnected from the new bourgeois façade of the capital and question the urban planning and the strategic use of monuments in the creation of a national discourse.

Iain Chambers's analysis of architectural space and its role in the creation of a community in *Culture after Humanism: History, Culture, Subjectivity* also helps in clarifying the affinities between language and architecture. It also opens the possibility for an act of resistance inscribed in the city's architecture and/or urban planning, or poetic dwelling, a concept I will elaborate across this dissertation's subsequent chapters. Chambers uses the example of Naples as a city that rebelled against the Spanish hegemonic power when the population used local, decaying materials and excavated volcanic stones to create dwellings (120–130). Prohibiting the importation of external building materials was one way in which Spanish authorities controlled Naples's urban

development – that is, a political act of limiting the growth of the local population. Architecture, then, is one of the languages that hegemonic power employs to rule – to decide who/what belongs to the city and who/what does not. The Spanish could have chosen a more direct law using verbal language to suffocate the city's population, but instead they decided to exercise their power through an architectonic regulation because they believed it to be more effective. This regulation through stone is visible in Faldella's *Un Viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa* (1880 in volume) and *Roma Borghese* (1882 in volume) and Serao's *La Conquista di Roma* (1885), which show a precise division between the new, bourgeois Rome and the old, poor city. Faldella's articles reflect the contemporary enthusiastic atmosphere surrounding the capital's renovations and anticipate ideas that fully developed during fascism, while Serao's novel shows the failure of *Roma capitale*.

The construction of dwellings in caves in Naples that Chambers mentions is an example of what I mean by poetic dwelling.[10] The most recurrent version of this strategy in reality and in fiction is the act of walking. Chambers himself implies it when he states that "most of us do not walk the city, but ride it: in cars, subways and buses. Time is considered uniform and space homogeneous: the site of geometrical principles and a seemingly self-evident conceptual ground" (133). In the act of walking, Chambers individuates a liberating force from the hegemonic power that, in modern societies, is also embodied in public transportation and in roads that oblige citizens to follow established paths across the city. The texts under consideration show how these tools – roads, architectonic perspectives, monumental parks – pertaining to hegemonic power

[10] See the section on Pasolini in Chapter Four for a detailed description of poetic dwelling.

direct individuals towards politically relevant buildings and monuments that emphasize national identity. The texts also highlight how shops and modernized neighborhoods symbolize Rome's wealthy consumer capitalist side. Consequently, the individual who decides to walk and to create new trajectories in the city becomes an active subject, a rebel.[11] Definitely, Chambers's discourse relies on Walter Benjamin's flâneur and his detective-like qualities in exploring both the openly famous and the most hidden corners of metropolises and in examining the masses and their behavior. Indeed, individuals who do not question the spatial "geometrical principles" of hegemonic powers mutate into the masses that populate the texts of De Amicis, Imbriani, Faldella, and Serao, which the main characters depict in their encounters with Rome.

1. A Proto-Cinematic Chronicle of the Conquest: Edmondo De Amicis's *Impressioni di Roma* (1870)

1.1 Roman Ruins and Papal Traces

In addition to Rome's political and economic weakness, the city's monuments attracted the attention of Italian politicians. Guided by Cavour, these chose Rome as the new capital of the nation because of its visual, monumental reminders of the common roots of the freshly unified country: ancient Roman ruins and Christian churches. Therefore, in the first urban development plans for the new Italian capital, preservation and incorporation of these meaningful symbols into the urban fabric became crucial in the creation of Italian national identity. Yet, the city lacked secular monuments testifying to the advent of *Terza Roma*, which, in the mind of the advocates of the Risorgimento,

[11] I give more space to this point when analyzing Ettore in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* in Chapter Four.

should have surpassed all the past glories of ancient and papal Rome. For example, politician Francesco Crispi (1818-1901) emphasized many times the necessity of *Roma capitale* and its meaning for the nation. His most significant passage on the subject is probably contained in the speech "Trasformazioni ed evoluzioni politiche (Palermo, 13 novembre 1881)," where he states that

> tutti debbono riconoscere che Roma s'imponeva in noi per il suo doppio passato. Chiunque entra in quella grande città vi trova la sintesi di due grandi epopee, l'una più meravigliosa dell'altra. I monumenti che celebrano queste epopee, sono l'orgoglio del mondo: sono per gli Italiani un ricordo pungente dei loro doveri. […] Bisogna instaurare Roma ed innalzarvi anche noi i monumenti della civiltà, affinché i posteri possano dire che fummo grandi come i nostri padri. (496)

According to Crispi, monuments testify to Italy's glorious past, and they push contemporary Italians to act as gloriously as their ancestors did. In his discourse, monuments have the same importance of words in the creation of meaning. By possessing a historic significance, monuments can bear signification in the discourse on national identity; moreover, their presence in Rome's urban fabric is exemplary and instills a sense of belonging to the population. When I expand this metaphor of architecture as language, it is clear that in Crispi's speech there is an attention to the capital's architectonic "vocabulary" and to the need to refresh the city with new "terms" celebrating the achievements of the modern era. Indeed, during the first years of *Roma capitale*, the city underwent a heavy and hectic modification of its architectonic "syntax" and "semantics." As Terry Kirk states, "the topography of Rome became the ground for strategic political symbolism, with the country's representatives proudly establishing their governmental seat, erecting building for their administration, and monuments to celebrate their accomplishments" (224).

After the conquest of Rome, the first appropriation of Roman monuments by the Italian state was a celebratory choreography. The day after the Breach of Porta Pia, soldiers and officials staged the event again in order to capture it in photographs. The most famous shots are those by Gioacchino Altobelli (1814-1878), a renowned photographer of the time that specialized in Rome's cityscapes and testified to the transition from the papal domination to the Italian government.[12] The photograph exalts the moral stature of the *bersaglieri* by positioning them on the pile of dirt in front of Porta Pia instead of the actual breach, which was further down in the walls.[13] Through this move, Altobelli constructs Michelangelo's monumental gate dedicated to Pope Pius IV as the nation's enemy – the Papal State. He also exploits its Renaissance architectonic symmetry and its colossal dimension in order to contrast it with the soldiers. However, even if these appear sparse and small in comparison to the monument, photographing the scene from a lower level and in perspective with Porta Pia allowed Altobelli to align the *bersaglieri* on the dirt with the entrance of the gate, narrating how easy it was for them to penetrate Rome. This artificial reconstruction of one of the most important foundational events of Italian national history demonstrates how the city's architecture and monuments became part of an aesthetic and political project aimed at constructing a national discourse by mutating the meaning of Rome's monuments.[14]

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[12] Altobelli's picture is also at the base of Filoteo Alberini's cinematographic staging of the breach of Porta Pia in his film *La Presa di Roma: 20 Settembre 1870* (1905). For more details on the connection between early Italian cinema, public screenings and gatherings, revival of Risorgimento, and national identity, see Giovanni Lasi's *La Presa di Roma: 20 Settembre 1870 (Filoteo Alberini 1905), la nascita di una nazione*, Milan: Mimesis, 2015 and "*La Presa di Roma* and *Il Piccolo Garibaldino*: The Risorgimento and National Identity in Early Italian Cinema" in the *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* Vol. 18 No. 2 (2013), pp. 244-255, and Rhiannon Welch's "Chapter Four: Biopolitics and Colonial Drive" in *Vital Subjects: Race and Biopolitics in Italy, 1860-1920*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016, pp. 191-231.

[13] The photograph is stored at the Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento in Rome.

[14] This operation recalls actual modifications in Rome's architecture and occupations of symbolic buildings connected to the Papal State. For example, the new government occupied the military prisons in Castel

In his *Impressioni di Roma. La breccia di Porta Pia. 20 settembre 1870* (1870), writer and journalist Edmondo De Amicis (1846-1908) offers a fresh perspective on the role of Roman monuments in Italian nation-building. The author adopts similar photographic techniques when choosing the most effective point of view to frame relevant events of the conquest of the capital, and in doing this, he also anticipates the geometrical, organizing gaze of architects and urban planners on Rome in the elaboration of a cine-architectural language. De Amicis's approach to Rome's monuments is more than a visual disposition towards them; indeed, for him, choosing recognizable ancient Roman monuments to present to the population as symbols of a past glory is not just a simple bi-dimensional, postcard-like portrait.[15] Rather, they are proto-cinematic paths in the streets and squares of the new capital that transport De Amicis's readers directly in the action of the conquest.

De Amicis arrived in Rome in 1870 as a correspondent of *L'Italia Militare,* the journal of the Ministry of War. On September 9, De Amicis left Florence – where he had been working as a journalist and was well-established in the city's intellectual milieu – in order to reach the troops and the rest of the journalists that were gathering in Terni and Narni, a few kilometers from the designated capital. On September 20, De Amicis entered Rome with the army; he was a witness of the breach, of the reaction of the

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Sant'Angelo and the papal courthouse in Palazzo Montecitorio; it modified the Vatican's military constructions, such as the fortifications of Castel Sant'Angelo and the tower on the Capitoline (Kirk 226); and, when Vittorio Emanuele II moved to Rome on July 2, 1871, he established his residence in Palazzo del Quirinale, which had been serving as a papal residency until then.

[15] Gabriella Romani states in "Rome 1870: O mammina o la morte!" that De Amicis depicts Rome's monuments in a postcard-like fashion and, like many other patriotic politicians of the period, he emphasizes the monuments' legacy as the common, cultural past of the Italian nation (38). While Romani's article is fundamental in unveiling how De Amicis's narration aims at reconciling Rome's antiquity and modernity, her notion of bidimensional portraits of Rome's cityscape does not entirely fit the writer's strategies in inciting the feelings of the Italian population toward the new capital's monuments.

soldiers, and of the reception of the population. However, as Gabriella Romani points out, De Amicis wrote the majority of his articles – later collected in a book – before or after the event. Indeed, the writer dedicated much time to the preparation of his journey to Rome. Romani mentions that he was studying the topography and the history of the Roman countryside and pinewoods in a letter to his patron Emilia Peruzzi in the August of the same year.[16] The length and accuracy of his studies reflects the fact that he needed basic material to stage his description of the battle in his mind even before it happened – similar to a film director who stages scenes before shooting them. De Amicis's virtual reconstruction of Rome before and after the event is key in my essay. His articles stage a fictional Rome for Italians. Since many of them had never visited the city before, they did not know how rural it was and how small and poor it had become during the previous two centuries of decay and abandonment. It certainly did not fit in the grand utopia of national identity and prosperity that Italy was processing at the time. In his articles, De Amicis relies on a few well-known Roman monuments and, through their theatrical and spectacular presence in the choral renditions of the soldiers ("Note" 172-173), he emphasizes the patriotic sentiment connected to military troops (Risso 33-35). In addition, through his characterization of the monuments as indicators of a separation between the past and the modernity of the present ("Note" 173-174), he constructs a city that did not exist in reality.

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[16] I have drawn on Gabriella Romani's "Nota" to Edmondo De Amicis's *Impressioni di Roma. La breccia di Porta Pia. 20 settembre 1870*, Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2010, pp.163-174 for the discussion on the historical context.
For a detailed account of the letters between De Amicis and Peruzzi on the *questione romana,* see Gabriella Romani's "Roma 1870. O mammina o la morte! The Breach of Porta Pia according to Edmondo De Amicis" in *Annali di Italianistica* 28 (2010)*, Capital City: Rome 1870-2010,* pp. 31-48.

Before entering Rome, when De Amicis's narrator shares with the soldiers the thrill of the historic event that is about to happen, his attention focuses on Rome's monuments and their symbolic meaning. His approach is akin to the typical anticlerical spirit of many advocates of Italian unification and annexation of Rome to the nation:

> Per il nostro popolo Roma non è che la città capitale del mondo cattolico; le sue tradizioni son quelle della Chiesa; l'affetto che da lei muove non è che la reverenza religiosa […]. Ma che è per lui quella antica? La Roma delle mille battaglie e delle mille vittorie, libera, potente e sovrana? […] Tutta la meravigliosa tradizione antica che a noi, benché tanto lontani e tanto dissimili nepoti, accende ancora l'anima di entusiasmo e d'orgoglio, che cos'è ora per il popolo? Egli la ignora, egli non sa di Roma antica, le sue rovine sono coperte dal velo della religione; il governo del pontefice le lasciò così fredde e mute perché scaldate e interrogate parlerebbero di amor di patria, di gloria guerriera, di virtù cittadina. (17-18)

De Amicis's words underline how contemporary Italians recognized Rome only as the capital of Catholicism. For this reason, they could relate to its religious monuments, but they could not understand the meaning of its ancient Roman ruins because, throughout the centuries, the Church had neglected them and had not included them in its practice of Rome's space. In De Amicis's texts, buildings – like words – have nuances in their signification; architectural changes and urban plans – like syntax – can emphasize or cast their meaning. The narrator proposes that the new government should restore ancient Roman ruins and include them in the image of *Roma capitale* because they can teach the freshly unified Italians fundamental values for a new nation – such as patriotism, war glory, and civil virtues. From the perspective of this new politically organized community, ancient Roman monuments indicate what pertains to the nation – the mentioned patriotic values – against what does not belong to it – the secular power of the Church embodied in churches and papal monuments. Beyond presenting the typical anticlerical opposition of the time, De Amicis's words allude to the language inscribed in

monuments. Roman ruins are "mute" because they are not asked ("interrogate") – that is, they have been left outside official, practiced paths of the city or their nature had been distorted through the addition of religious elements in their original architecture. This previous papal appropriation of ancient Roman ruins resembles the process affecting the same monuments immediately after the breach. Similar to words, monuments can change their meaning if combined differently, if stripped of certain connotations, and if refreshed in a new context. In the quoted passage, if properly modified, ancient Roman ruins become the bearers of fundamental messages for the new nation; they build a new path in the city that privileges patriotic values and discard the secular power of the Church.

Power is implied in the spatial arrangements of buildings in the urban fabric. In *Homo Sacer,* Agamben quotes a meaningful passage from Aristotle's *Politics* that builds on the metaphor between language, power, and city. The Italian philosopher uses it to support his argumentation about the difference between *zoē* – meaning life as the simple fact of living – and *bios* – life politically organized or, in a wider sense, living proper to a group. The same passage also helps him explain how modern politics appropriates *zoē* in exercising its power while, at the same time, "bare life [*zoē*] has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men" (7). If fully developed, we can say that Agamben's reasoning leads to a discussion on the spatial organization of cities that stems from Aristotle and his concept of the polis as a politically organized community. The quoted passage by Aristotle states that

> Among living beings, only man has language. The voice is the sign of pain and pleasure, and this is why it belongs to other living beings [...]. But language is for manifesting the fitting and the unfitting and the just and the unjust. To have the sensation of the good and the bad and of the just and the unjust is what is proper to men as opposed to other living beings, and the community of these things makes dwelling and the city. (quoted in Agamben 7-8)

Aristotle affirms that language (similar to *bios*) pertains only to humans, while voice (similarly to *zoē*) belongs to all living beings. The association of voice to "pain" and "pleasure" is remarkable; both pain and pleasure are strictly connected to bodily sensations and clash with the rationalized execution of sounds and meaning in language. In "The Vocal Body," Adriana Cavarero challenges this classic, patriarchal, anthropocentric, and logocentric interpretation of the opposition between voice and language and proposes an alternative solution.[17] Her feminist interpretation both revitalizes the role of body and matter in the creation of sound and emphasizes the semantic quality of sound before being actual language – that is, before delivering words.[18] Cavarero's thought adds an additional layer to my interpretation of the connection between language, architecture, and nation building. This interpretation can be condensed in one sentence in the opening of Cavarero's article: "the first cry of the newborn is voice and breath: a sonorous, vital announcement of a singular bodily existence" (71). By borrowing Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg's metaphor of the freshly unified Italians as children in *The Pinocchio Effect*, in 1870, Rome (and Romans) was a newborn whose voice was channelled into language during the process of nation building.

In practice, if using Agamben words, this architectonic "language is for manifesting the fitting and the unfitting" – that is, "what is proper to men [Italians] as opposed to other living beings [those living under papal power], and the community of

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[17] See also Cavarero's *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005 and *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy, and the Question of Gender*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
[18] I will return on these issues in Chapter Two and Chapter Four.

these things makes dwelling and the city [and the nation]." This process allows the transformation of Romans and people living in Italy into Italians. It is not by chance that De Amicis's term "popolo" opposes the "noi" including the author and Risorgimento intellectuals. While the second group participate directly the forging of the nation with their speeches, actions on the territory, legislation, and texts (De Amicis included), "popolo" is a passive element in the nation who has partial access to knowledge: "per il nostro popolo Roma non è che la città capitale del mondo cattolico;" "egli […] ignora [la tradizione di Roma antica]." De Amicis's articles aim at informing Italians and, in this way, making them participate in the nation building process.

De Amicis's approach to Rome's monuments is more than a visual disposition towards them; indeed, for him, choosing recognizable ancient Roman monuments to present to the population as symbols of a past glory is not just a simple bidimensional postcard-like portrait. Rather, he includes the selected monuments into the capital's urban fabric because they became the destination of those who visited Rome and interacted with that space. In De Amicis's text, Rome's monuments are alive again after the liberation, when, by traversing monumental sites, Italian soldiers and the jubilant crowd give a new meaning to them and create both a geographical and cultural space for the readers:

> Queste grandi piazze, queste fontane enormi, questi giganteschi monumenti, queste rovine, queste memorie, questo terreno, questo nome di Roma, i bersaglieri, le bandiere tricolori, i prigionieri, il popolo, le grida, le musiche, quella secolare maestà, questa nuova gioia, questo ravvicinamento che ci fa la memoria di tempi, di casi, di trionfi antichissimi e vivi […] è una felicità che soverchia le forze del cuore. (50)

De Amicis's narrative strategy embodies what Giuliana Bruno defines as a haptic relationship with space, that is

> the reciprocal con*tact* between us and the environment [...]. But the haptic is also related to kinesthesis, the ability of our bodies to sense their own movement in space. [...] [So,] the haptic [is] an agent in the formation of space – both geographical and cultural [...]. Emphasizing the cultural role of the haptic, it develops a theory that connects sense to place. (*Atlas of Emotion* 6, original italics)

De Amicis's haptic relationship with space relies on a proto-cinematic language. The fast, syntactic succession in the sentence describing Rome's squares, fountains, and monuments and the interlacing of these with the protagonists of the breach (the flags, the *bersaglieri*, the joyous mass, the music, etc.) recreates movement and space. Indeed, the paratactic structure of the sentence recalls a tracking shot whose fluidity is interrupted by zooms on some buildings and monuments encountered. The escalation of the demonstrative adjectives "questo/e/i" with squares, fountains, monuments, and ruins directs the reader's attention toward buildings and views that the narrating eye comes across in his walk as if a camera is zooming on them. In his paratactic sentence, De Amicis associates the mentioned buildings and monuments to Rome's soil on which people are stepping ("questo terreno"), to Rome's name ("questo nome di Roma"), and to symbols of the conquest ("i bersaglieri, le bandiere tricolori, i prigionieri"). Besides giving a new patriotic meaning to Rome's space, De Amicis constructs these images as historic memories ("queste memorie") and it is at this point that his proto-cinematic language changes. Once the narrator grasps the importance of the event in which he is participating, his virtual camera frames the soil as if he needs to pause to elaborate the present ("questo terreno"). After this, the virtual camera is back on but it is out of focus now: no more demonstrative adjectives zooming on details, but rather articles that accelerate the gaze on the area ("i bersaglieri, le bandiere tricolori, i prigionieri, il popolo") and emphasize the acoustic perceptions ("le grida, le musiche"). It is as if the

virtual camera quickly moves from the soldiers to the flags, the prisoners, and the population, creating a confused depiction of the surroundings that is amplified by the shouting and the music that the author now underlines. It is in this explosion of images and sounds that De Amicis's narrator announces that these memories are created: "quella secolare maestà" of the ancient Roman ruins and Renaissance and Baroque monuments is now associated with "questa nuova gioia." For the narrator, papal dominion has been canceled already.

Through this protocinematic operation, De Amicis illustrates how ancient monuments became part of the patriotic discourse on Rome – what Bruno calls the cultural formation of space, which was the final goal of the symbolic appropriations of Rome's ancient monuments and of the erection of new ones during the first years of *Roma capitale*. As Bruno explains when analyzing Sergei Eisenstein's "Montage and Architecture," "as we walk among its [the Acropolis of Athens] buildings, it is our legs that construct meaning" (56). In fact, it is by emphasizing movement, which forges a new symbolic space for the nation, that De Amicis arouses a patriotic sentiment in his readers, as "motion [...] produces emotion and [...], correlatively, emotion contains a movement" (Bruno 6). Indeed, it is through his walking in Rome's streets that the narrator associates new meanings to monuments, creates personal historic memories, and succumbs to his feelings: "è una felicità che soverchia le forze del cuore."

In the rest of his articles, in order to reinforce the renewed link between Rome's monumental sites and national historic events, De Amicis tries to engage with different Roman monuments during his stay in the capital. Romani highlights how, similar to his contemporary anticlerical spokesmen, De Amicis focuses more on the Roman ruins rather

than churches and religious monuments and, in the cases of Saint Peter's, the author reinforces the artistic achievements of the Church rather than its spiritual importance (38-39). In all of the narrator's encounters with Rome's monuments, the one with the Coliseum best reveals how De Amicis attaches meaning to ancient stones. During the same night of the breach, the narrator has the urge to visit the Coliseum. He escapes from the triumphant crowd, but even if he is alone with the ancient monument – "Ormai sono in un luogo deserto, non sento più una voce" (52-53) – he cannot really build a connection with it because of its emptiness and lack of connection to current history: "Io balzo in piedi, guardo, travedo un'immensa macchia sul cielo, e tanto è l'impeto e la dolcezza con cui i ricordi e le immagini della memoranda giornata mi assalgono tutto in un punto, che non s'arresta il mio sguardo sui meravigliosi contorni, né ivi si può arrestare il pensiero" (53). In fact, even if De Amicis's narrator discovers that Rome – with its giant, monumental dimensions – transforms adults into amazed children, he cannot grasp the patriotism and national identity that the state embedded in the ancient Roman monuments in this first encounter with them.[19] Similar to the rest of Italians, at first, the narrator cannot relate to the capital's monuments and to their symbolic relevance for the state; his learning process mimics that of the Italian citizens freshly unified. The

[19] De Amicis recounts the soldiers' astonishment when walking amongst the colossal, Roman monuments: "la prima cosa che si fa appena entrati, è di dimandarsi se si sogna o se si è desti. Sembra una città ordinaria guardata a traverso d'una lente che ne ingigantisca i contorni. Si direbbe che le case, le piazze, le chiese, le fontane, le scale, le colonne, tutti i monumenti di Roma sono stati fatti da una razza di uomini fisicamente grande il doppio. Noi ci sentiamo piccoli, passando per queste piazze e per queste vie; ci pare d'esserci abbassati e ristretti d'un palmo, e tornati bambini" (59). Beyond a clear correspondence between physical and moral dimenions of the Roman ancient monuments, the transformation of adults into children allows a relationship between observer and space that is alternative from the official narration and appropriation of monumental sites and that those who conform to power and succumb to the masses cannot develop. For more details, see also Chapter Four. Moreover, the association between soldiers and children alludes to the transformation of Italian people (in this case, soldiers) into adult political subjects. For an accurate study of the process of education and nation building see the previously mentioned book *The Pinocchio Effect* by Stewart-Steinberg.

Coliseum appears as a giant, meaningless bulk for the narrator and, even if he tries, he cannot connect the feelings that he felt during the breach to it – "non s'arresta il mio sguardo sui meravigliosi contorni, né ivi si può arrestare il pensiero." His failure to attach historical meaning to the monument reveals that, as those who conform to power and to the masses (the "fitting"), the narrator is not able to elaborate personal, poetic memories, and he has to wait for the intervention of the official power to decode the semantics of the Coliseum in the national discourse on Rome. Indeed, a few days later, during a public gathering, he goes back to the Coliseum and he can finally hear what the site has to communicate. Now, because of its interaction with the masses and its engagement with historic events, the Coliseum becomes an active speaker in the new political discourse:

> Ecco cosa mi dice il Colosseo. Mi dice che dove gli uomini schiavi si sgozzavano per ricreare un tiranno, ora convengono i cittadini a salutare un re eletto ed amato; mi dice che dove perirono sotto le scuri o in mezzo alle fiamme gli apostoli della libertà e dell'eguaglianza, ora convengono gli uomini liberi ed eguali a esercitare i loro diritti e a compiere i loro doveri […]. Vi par che si possa dire che il Colosseo è muto? (117)

According to De Amicis, the Coliseum is not a space where present-day individuals come to 'misurare con chi fu grande" (116); rather, more than being a space, it is a heavily charged symbol for the new nation. It is no longer "fredd[o] e mut[o]" since it has been "interrogat[o] e scaldat[o]" by the popular gathering. Then, the Coliseum offers an occasion to compare ancient Roman society with the newborn Italian nation. In fact, the narrator's attention focuses on the victims of the past fighting for their freedom and ideals in the same way the protagonists of contemporary national history do. The past of the Coliseum allows the author to celebrate the Italian nation as an equal, democratic state that cares about its subjects' freedom and that opposes the Ancient Romans' and the Vatican's dominion on Rome's population. This is exactly what Lefebvre defines as

representational space, which is "directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, […] the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (39). Only after the hegemonic power's decodification of the Coliseum, the narrator is able to associate meanings and symbols to the ancient stones; this operation transforms the public into passive subjects who listen to the monument's voice, because "representational space is alive: it speaks" (Lefebvre 42).

Similar to Italian politicians' accusations of the time, De Amicis's book depicts the Church as a past colonizer that disfigured Rome's ancient ruins. Even if at first the narrator is puzzled by their ultimate meaning in present Italy, as in the mentioned example of the Coliseum, he certainly identifies them with symbols opposing papal power in Rome's urban fabric. Moreover, he acknowledges that, during the centuries, the papacy has modified what I define as the "semantics" and the "syntax" of ancient Roman ruins with architectural modifications and changes in the urban plan to strengthen its power:

> È una desolazione il vedere come tutto quel tratto di città che si stende dal Campidoglio al Colosseo, e ch'è pieno di meravigliosi monumenti e di auguste rovine, sia stato maltrattato dai Papi. Pare che abbiano voluto distruggerne o snaturarne ogni efficacia. Dappertutto hanno ficcato chiese […] e ce l'hanno ficcate per dispetto, si direbbe, facendosi largo col piccone, rovistando, tagliando, accorciando, stringendo. (64)

The area mentioned in the text is literally dotted with a variety of churches that contrasts the view on ancient Roman ruins and, more meaningfully, it transforms their "semantics". The Renaissance church of Santa Maria di Loreto (1507-1585) facing Trajan's Column and the ruins of the temple dedicated to Trajan – who was divinized by the Roman Senate – represents a direct attack on the symbolic values of the remnants of

the Roman empire. With the same intent, the Baroque church of Santi Luca e Martina (1634-1664) dominates over the Roman forum, just in front of the Arch of Septimius Severus. The Baroque church of Santa Maria della Consolazione (1583-1606) rises on the other side of the Roman forum, just at the bottom of the Rupes Tarpeia, which is the southern slope of Campidoglio from which Romans dropped traitors; positioning a church there can certainly be read as a declaration of antagonism towards the ancient Roman empire. The presence of the Church in the ancient Roman area was continually affirmed through other various churches: Basilica di San Nicola in Carcere (1599), Basilica di Sant'Anastasia al Palatino (1636), San Gregorio al Celio (1629-1633), San Sebastiano al Palatino (1624), and Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo.[20] These churches, through architectonic modifications during the Baroque period, visually contrast the surrounding Roman ruins and exalt the opposition between Christianity and the Roman empire – before Christianity was accepted in 311 with the Edict of Serdica. Meaningfully, the area of the Foro Romano was built during the period of the Roman persecutions of Christians and it contained monuments glorifying the emperors behind them, such as Trajan and Septimius Severus. It is easy, then, to read the presence of papal power through architectural interventions and modifications in the urban plan as a strategy to diminish the symbolic weight of ancient Roman ruins.

De Amicis does not recognize that his gaze – and that of the Italian government of the time – is similar to that of the Church on the ancient Roman ruins, and that it implies the same tools – the pickaxe and the trowels – in order to shape Rome closer to his

[20] In 1951 the basilica returned to its paleochristian façade but the 1715 interventions are still visible.

national vision.[21] Paradoxically, De Amicis's dream has nothing to do with national identity; rather, his ideal Rome aspires to be a European capital. For example, he states that

> In Roma non ci sono strade grandi e diritte […], non ci sono che strade corte e tortuose. Ma questo difetto è ampiamente compensato dalle piazze innumerevoli e bellissime. […] Da certi punti di certe piazze si vedono due o tre altre piazze vicine, tanto che buttando giù poche case, ne riuscirebbe un piano immenso e stupendo. Roma si presta facilmente a grandi trasformazioni. […] C'è la stoffa per una capitale d'Europa, altro che d'Italia. (64-66)

According to the narrator, in some cases, what is peculiar to Rome and to the origins of Italian identity – ancient ruins, old neighborhoods and its inhabitants – has to disappear in order to launch Rome as a European, modern capital. Its short and windy streets are perceived as a defect to eliminate if the city wants to be on the same level of European capitals. As we will see in the section on Faldella in this chapter, the inhabitants of these districts caused anxiety and discomfort to the eye of those who considered themselves already Italian in comparison to the native Romans. For example, immediately before the breach, in the first quoted passage, De Amicis's narrator differentiates himself and the Risorgimento politician ("noi") from the "popolo" who cannot grasp yet the symbolic meaning of Rome. In my reading of Rome's urban fabric, Agamben's "voice" indicates all the vernacular architecture and the ancient monuments that lost their original functions – official, codified meaning assigned by the political community (Agamben's "language") – in the urban space. With vernacular architecture I mean several types of dwelling that did not follow urban planning and that developped naturally in Rome

[21] It is interesting to note that the Risorgimento's desire to modernize Rome, the invocation of the pickaxe and trowels, and the focus on the area of the Fori Imperiali anticipate Benito Mussolini's vision of fascist Rome.

during the centuries, such as the transformation of the Theatre of Marcellus into apartments with its adjacent Piazza Montanara, irregular medieval *borghi*, shantytowns, improvised shelters in abandoned ancient Roman monuments, and shepherds' huts in the Agro Romano. Like Cavarero's newborn's voice, Rome's vernacular architecture was a "vital announcement of singular bodily existence" – that of the proletariat and the subproletariat whose existence was at risk in this process of nation building through architecture and urban plans.

The division between immediate bodily needs ("voice") identified with the proletariat's and the subproletariat's need for housing and rational elaboration of a patriotic message ("language") is at the base of the reconstruction of Rome as the Italian capital. On one side politicians and urban developers aimed at creating monuments and neighborhoods supporting a discourse on national identity in brick and stone ("language"). On the other, they activated a plan to remove and hide from the city center all the architectonic elements and its inhabitants ("voice") that were disturbing the delivery of this patriotic message. Agamben argues that Aristotle "situates the proper place of the *polis* in the transition from voice to language" (7) meaning that the polis, intended as a politically organized community, develops when the group creates rules to follow in the same way language does. Hence, laws create division between the good and the bad, the fitting and the unfitting, the just and the unjust in politics, and between correct, officially, grammatically correct sentences and dubious, vernacular ones. Aristotle affirms that this separation between fitting and unfitting constitutes dwelling and the city. The ultimate way of concretely realizing any political community is through

buildings and urban plans and, indeed, like language, architecture and urban planning codify meanings and dictate rules.

In this vision of a modern capital closer to other European metropolises, local particularities had to be eradicated in order to leave space for internationally recognized architectonic styles, buildings, and monuments. Politicians and urban planners worked at transforming Rome in this sense not only to make a modern, wealthy nation to the eyes of the world, but also to mold its inhabitants as Italians. At the time when De Amicis was writing these articles, this process was just a shared assumption; indeed, as Romani affirms, "la Roma moderna e capitale, tanto osannata dai patrioti democratici, De Amicis se la dovette inventare" ("Nota" 173). In order to do this, new, vacant space was needed.[22]

1.2 Perspective and Miniaturization

In addition to testifying to and recreating in their texts contemporary Italians' relationship with Roman monuments, De Amicis also offers pages to reflect on how the government used the capital's urban planning as a tool to control the growing masses and how this affected the city's inhabitants and visitors.[23] Through the symbolic sites distributed in the urban fabric of Rome, the new layout of the city pointed to an extreme rationalization of space (Agnew 233). As De Amicis was hoping for the image of the future Rome in the previously mentioned passage, medieval areas, squares, open public spaces, and streets were regularized in order to emphasize perspective and symmetry in

[22] Note the colonial implication of this desire for a blank slate to build a new society, which we will see in Chapter Four. For a detailed account of new constructions in Rome at the end of the nineteenth century, see Section Three in this chapter and Chapter Two.

[23] Chapter Two focuses more on the novelty of proletarian masses' presence in Rome through an overview of the government's interventions in the urban fabric and through Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere* and *Le Vergini delle Rocce*.

opposition to the organic distribution of medieval and renaissance quarters. The architectural style and the rigorous division in blocks adopted for Via Nazionale and the nearby area (*Roma alta)* became a model for subsequent expansions, so that the city could appear more homogenized. Moreover, starting in 1876, the construction of the embankments of the Tiber intended to stop the regular floodings and to clearly separate the life of the river –connected to archaic forms of fishing and transportation, to the idling of groups of children and youngs, to marshy and neglected neighborhoods – from that of a bourgeois, sanitized city.[24] Instead, the clearing and isolation of the Roman ruins between Piazza Venezia and the Coliseum aimed at electing these fragments as historical connectors between the past and present glory of the empire and the nation, respectively. Undoubtedly, "the idea was to produce a greater uniformity in pathways through the city that would emphasize the impact of the regime on the country as a whole" (Agnew 233).

As Romani reports in her "Nota" to *Impressioni di Roma*, De Amicis, along with many writers of his generation, believed that "sulla scia degli ideali tardo-romantici risorgimentali, [...] l'idea della nazione italiana si sarebbe diffusa più con la forza emotiva dei sentimenti che non con i sillogismi della logica e della ragione" (163). De Amicis's exaltation of sentiments is evident throughout his book and, as I have explained previously in this chapter, it is part of his strategy that aims at tying the freshly unified Italians to the newly elected capital through what Bruno defines as a haptic relationship with space. In this section, I focus more on De Amicis's attention to visual composition in his description of space and its role in conveying control over historic events. His

[24] Bàrberi Squarotti draws the attention to D'Annunzio's attachment to the vitality of rivers in *Gli Inferi e il Labirinto* (126). The embankment of the Tiber is at the center of Corrado Brando's concern for "l'opera di imbrigliamento e di costrizione al lavoro e alla produzione dell'ingegneria borghese" of the Tiber in *Più che l'amore* (1906).

description of the breach of Porta Pia is a perfect example of this. In the passage, the author clearly emphasizes perspective in the description of the breach and, in doing so, he portrays the historic event as something controlled and easy – achieving what Altobelli did with his official, staged picture:

> La strada che conduce a Porta Pia è fiancheggiata ai due lati dal muro di cinta dei poderi. […] La strada è dritta e la porta si vedeva benissimo a una grande lontananza; si vedevano i materassi legati al muro dai pontifici […], si vedevano le colonne della porta, le statue, i sacchi di terra ammonticchiati sulla barricata […]; tutto si vedeva distintamente. […] Il contegno di quegli artiglieri era ammirabile. Non si può immaginare con che tranquillità, con che disinvolta e inalterabile indifferenza facevano le lor manovre, a così breve distanza dal nemico. (40-41)

De Amicis's portrait emphasizes perspective through the delineation of the walls that force people – and their gaze – toward only one direction, the linearity of the road, and the description of a clear view on Porta Pia even from afar. For all these reasons, the narrator's account does not leave any space for doubts or hesitations – on the part of the soldiers who act, and on the readers, who revive this episode through the book. If the road that leads to the liberation is straight and the vision of the events is so clear, then, success is inevitable. Chambers's book is useful here in clarifying the role of perspective. Even if his discourse is relative to architecture, it can be applied also to De Amicis's stress on enframing:

> The relative stability of this frame, and enframing or representation, of the subject [...] permits the disavowal of a vanishing point or void that would ultimately displace and override subjectivity. [...] The language of transparency and ocular hegemony here coalesce in a subject-object relationship, in an accumulative understanding of meaning and truth, that perpetually reconfirms the subject [...]: from the I/eye towards the world appropriated as external object. (148)

Indeed, the walls running along the road leading to Porta Pia enframe the soldiers' – and the readers' – eyes towards the object that needs to be appropriated: the gate that gives

access to the long-coveted capital. In describing the breach as through the narrator's god-like gaze that surgically chooses the most effective point of view to enframe a meaningful event, De Amicis not only mimics the language of photography, but he also anticipates the geometrical, organizing gaze of architects and urban planners on Rome in the elaboration of a cine-architectural language.

However, once the narrator, along with the soldiers, enters the city, his vision changes: "Vedevamo tutto in confuso come dietro una nebbia. Parecchi zuavi prigionieri passavano in mezzo alle file dei nostri. Alcune case arse la mattina mandavano fumo. Gli ufficiali dei vari corpi ci dissero i nomi dei feriti. Il popolo romano ci correva intorno" (43). The lack of perspective and clear vision implies that the narrator is witnessing a civil war between brothers and that Italian soldiers are almost losing control over the actions of the crowd. For example, when the troops free the Campidoglio from the papal soldiers,

> La moltitudine getta un altissimo grido e si slancia con grande impeto su per la scala gigantesca; passa fra le due enormi statue di Castore e Polluce; circonda il cavallo di Marc'Aurelio; invade i corpi di guardia degli zuavi e rovescia, spezza e disperde tutto quanto vi trova di soldatesco. […] Una folla innumerevole si accalca intorno ai bersaglieri gridando e fischiando e tentando di rompere le file per precipitarsi sugli zuavi. In qualche momento l'irritazione del popolo giunge al colmo e a stento i nostri soldati riescono a frenarla. (45-47)

This passage precedes the one previously analyzed in Section One, where De Amicis attaches symbolic and affective meaning to Rome's monuments by using a protocinematic language. In the first part of the quotation presented here, the author uses a similar technique; the events are presented through something like a tracking shot – built by parataxis – of images that reconstruct the destructive, uncontrollable movement of the crowd rushing from the bottom of Campidoglio's staircases to the entrance to the

square guarded by the statues of Castore and Polluce until it reaches the statue of Marco Aurelio on the opposite side of the square and clashes with the papal soldiers. Here, De Amicis's protocinematic narrative technique underlines the crowd's unpredictable movement and untamable energy; the crowd assaults the urban space, destroys every residual of the papal power, and resists any form of containment of their violent enthusiasm that "sembra delirio" (49). Even if the author celebrates the liberation and exalts the joy of the Romans, his description implies a fear of the masses – a fear that he shares with the majority of the Italian politicians and intellectuals of the time, as I illustrate in the next chapter. In this passage, De Amicis builds an escalating tension of the events by listing the actions at an increasing pace. While at the beginning, the rhythm of its movement is still controlled ("la moltitudine getta un altissimo grido e si slancia […]; passa fra le due enormi statue […]; circonda il cavallo di Marco Aurelio; invade i corpi di guardia"), at the moment of the clash with soldiers, the situation becomes out of control. Hence, the verbs describing the actions follow one another: "rovescia, spezza e disperde tutto quanto trova di soldatesco" and "gridando e fischiando e tentando di rompere le file per precipitarsi sugli zuavi."

It is also important to notice how De Amicis shifts the denomination of the Romans from "popolo" to "moltitudine" and "folla." In his description, Romans can be considered "popolo" as long as they are able to redirect their excitement to greet the Italian troops ("il popolo romano ci correva intorno") or to contain their rage ("in qualche momento l'irritazione del popolo giunge al colmo"). Once they exceed in their passion, they regress to a neutral "moltitudine" and then a negative "folla." In philosophy, the classic definition of multitude traces back to Hobbes, who defines it as "a 'multitude' of

disperse, ruthless individuals with no rights and laws need to reduce their will to one, submitting themselves to a sovereign who will enforce order, therefore allowing them to be a 'people'" (Galimberti). Indeed, De Amicis uses "moltitudine" when the rally in the square is on the brink of disruption and, therefore, the participants appear ruthless and in need of a sovereign; with the loss of a rational behavior the participants are far from being Italian people. Because of the individuals' incapacity to maintain order, they need to abdicate their right to use power to preserve their lives in the hands of the sovereign (Galimberti); before this abdication, there exists only a perpetual war, a brutal "state of nature" (Galimberti). This analysis unveils how, immediately after the breach, Romans were under scrutiny in their transition to become Italian people; they needed to renounce their brutal "state of nature" and resign to the new sovereign from Piedmont. In addition to this reading, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's interpretation of "moltitudine" offers an important additional layer of meaning to the word used by De Amicis. For Negri and Hardt, contrarily to "people," "multitude" cannot be "flattened into sameness, unity [and] identity" (105). This interpretation of the word contrasts with the idea of national homogenization of Italians – of which the urban interventions in the capital are an exemplary tool – and leaves space for a form of resistance to sovereign power. The shift to "folla" in De Amicis's text suggests an additional negative connotation for the Romans present at the rally. Once their rebellion explodes violently ("rovescia, spezza e disperde tutto quello che trova di soldatesco"), the common, fast action of the crowd annihilates any residual individuality that is still present in "moltitudine" if read through Negri and Hardt's concept of the word – at the "same time many and one" (140). So, in De Amicis's text, Romans fluctuate from the negative pole (crowd) to a positive one (people)

passing by a neutral term that is charged with potential for a more inclusive democracy (multitude) and that De Amicis, together with the majority of politicians and intellectuals of the time, never really took into consideration. Because of its anxiety to shape Italians into citizens of the new nation and its fear of social disorders, the state preferred homogenization to preservation and inclusion of individual social and regional identities. Architecture, urban plans, and literature itself served as tools for disciplining Italian subjects by providing homogenized cityscapes, clear divisions of urban sectors, and defined renditions of historic events.

The episode of the visit of Saint Peter's represents a good example of De Amicis's understanding of the role of perspective and measures in architecture as tools of control over the masses and over the city as a whole. After an initial disappointment caused by a misunderstanding of the real, colossal size of the church, the narrator comprehends, with the help of his friend, that the only way to appreciate such a building is to relate it to human scale: "Guardo l'uomo, misuro coll'occhio tutta l'altezza della colonna, misuro la larghezza, poi l'uomo di nuovo, confronto, riguardo ed esclamo: - È immenso! […] Bisogna confrontare, caro mio. Come ti puoi accorgere che qualcosa è gigantesco dove tutto è gigantesco?" (69) This consideration of Saint Peter's demonstrates the tight connection between humans and buildings, which is basis of classic treatises on architecture such as Vitruvius's book three of *De Architectura*. As Robert Tavernor summarizes, Vitruvius "combined these [symmetrical proportions of the ideal body] with the pure geometry of square and circle to generate the image of geometrical and corporeal unity [...]. Embodied in Vitruvius's ideal body are three numbers, fundamental to architecture design [...] that ancient philosophers and

mathematicians had identified as signifiers of perfection" (79). Therefore, if the appreciation of such a majestic building as Saint Peter's passes through a comparison with the human body, the result is an emphasis on human achievement and power. This is evident when the protagonist and his companion arrive on the balcony on the roof of the church:

> Eccoci sul tetto della chiesa. È una piazza d'armi. Si vede da una parte un edifizio rotondo, alto quanto una chiesa ordinaria; non è altro che una delle cupolette minori che fanno da stato maggiore alla principale. […] Si corre al parapetto, si guarda nella piazza, è un formicaio. […] Cosa sembrano gli uomini? Mi ricordo la risposta del Guerrazzi: quello che sono, insetti. Intorno a quell'altarino di mezzo ce n'è uno sciame; sembrano una macchia nera che si muova. […] Si guarda giù sul tetto della chiesa dove si era poc'anzi: si vede una processione di formiche. La gente che passeggia per la piazza si discerne appena. […] Tutta la città si abbraccia con uno sguardo […], tutto si vede distintamente. Il giardino del Vaticano sembra un'aiuola. (74-77)

The narrator's first impression is that of the recreation of a micro-city within the architectural structure of Saint Peter's: the balcony with the dome becomes a square with a church. The first feelings that the readers perceive is the characters' enthusiasm for the magnificence and the size of the basilica – a sentiment that many tourists experience when visiting the church. Then, when the narrator turns his gaze towards the Roman panorama, the cityscape is perceived as a miniature, where everything is perfectly visible and discernible, except single individuals. In fact, as the other character, Guerrazzi, affirms, humans are insects.[25] This assertion alludes to the relationship between power –

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[25] De Amicis's recreation of a micro-city within Rome recalls Michelangelo Antonioni's final scene in *L'Eclisse* (1962) where the director comments on the human condition in the metropolis by filming bricks and ants as in a bird's-eye view shot that transforms them into housing complexes and into human crowds that inhabit and traverse urban space. Beyond the difference in the meaning of the scene (Antonioni aims at amplifying the sense of alienation and disquiet that drives the film), it is astonihing that De Amicis uses a similar strategy to demonstrate his characters' awe for one of Rome's most imposing monuments. Gianfranco Rosi also recreates a micro-society with consumerist insects in his *Sacro GRA* (2013) to clarify his approach to consumer capitalism and globalization. For more details on Rosi's film, see my article "At

in this case the Church, but it applies to any form of government – its subjects, and the role of buildings. The basilica is an example of how architecture results as a powerful tool in controlling the masses, which are perceived as anonymous and insignificant dots to follow in the streets and squares. It also symbolizes power and hierarchy through space and perspective. As Lefebvre states, this embodiment of hegemonic power in social space and architecture is "a tool of thought and of action […] a means of control, and hence of domination, of power" (26). People on the same building have the same dimension of the viewer; if the viewer shifts the gaze towards other balconies on lower levels, people look smaller but still human while the people in the real square in front of Saint Peter's look like a mass of insects. This description not only visualizes the vertical connection between power and its different subjects in the social ladder but also the various, unrelated microcosms within the city. The masses of the "formicaio" do not have any relation with the sovereign/viewer from the top of Saint Peter's who is not able to distinguish the particularity of each individual/subject. Because of this lack of understanding, the lower strata of the society – those more distant from the sovereign – are degraded to a state of animalization. Humans are nothing but insects. Only the sovereign has total control over the city, like the viewer on top of Saint Peter's who can see everything crystal clear and his eye can embrace it entirely, almost suffocating it.

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the Margins of Rome, at the Margins of the world: *The Hawks and the Sparrows* and *Sacro GRA* as Peripatetic Analyses of Capitalist Society" in the *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies*, 7:1 (2019), pp. 35–53.

2. The Tricks Behind New and Ancient Architecture: Vittorio Imbriani's *Passeggiate Romane* (1876)

2.1 Modern Patriotic Monuments

Vittorio Imbriani's (1840-1886) family and his youth were strictly connected to Risorgimento; his father Paolo Emilio Imbriani participated in the 1848 experience in Naples and was condemned to death by the Bourbons – hence the exile of the family to France and, later, Piedmont – while his maternal uncle was the Risorgimento poet and patriot Alessandro Poerio. In 1859, Imbriani himself enlisted in the troops for the second war of independence without ever participating in the battles and, in 1866, for the third war of independence, during which he joined the battle of Bezzecca that led to his capture and incarceration in Croatia. After his release, he went back to Naples where he became a central intellectual figure for his literary, critical, and political essays and his collaboration with numerous journals of the *destra risorgimentale* and *storica.* He supported this political coalition but, because he took extremely reactionary positions, he was always isolated. For example, he believed that Italian politicians should adopt more hard-line positions to keep together the recently unified nation. Cesare Borgia and Fabrizio Maramaldo were two model figures for him and he strongly believed in the death penalty, as it is clear in some of his works such as in the essays *Per la pena capitale* (1865) and *Pena capitale e duello* (1869), the ode *Inno al cànape d'un monarchico* (1881), and the narrative trilogy *Le tre maruzze*, *Mastr'Impicca*, and *La novella del vivicomburio* (1874-1875). His political ideas are also central to *Passeggiate Romane* and *Ghiribizzi Politici* (1876).

Imbriani visited Rome in 1871 and again in 1876. Both occasions led the Neapolitan intellectual to write fiery articles – initially titled *Passeggiate Romane* and published in the newspaper *La Sentinella* on December 2,7,17 1871 and on January 6,7 1872 – and then a sarcastic diary narrating his flâneries in the company of a group of wealthy women from Lombardy.[26] As scholar Giuseppe Iannaccone explains, Imbriani's antagonism towards Rome is not so unusual in the years between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. After mentioning Giovanni Papini's declared hatred for Rome's attachment to its useless antiquity, Iannacone quotes Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860) to testify how the myth of the Grand Tour was eclipsing during the second half of the 19th century, when the picturesque left space to depictions of the negative effects of modernity in Rome – as in the writings of Gabriele D'Annunzio, Émile Zola, James Joyce, and Augustus Hare (11-14). Though, what is peculiar to Imbriani's *Passeggiate Romane* is the author's reactions to the first monumental interventions in the capital after the breach and how he polemically engages with them. In his accounts, what is unique is his disdain for the masses and for the *Sinistra storica*'s populism, as well as his amused exaggeration of his position. These characteristics were well-known to his contemporary intellectuals and to his early mentor Francesco De Sanctis, who wrote in a letter "Il primo tuo moto è di paragonare il di fuori con te, facendo te stregua e misura dell'universo, invece di sforzarti ad uscire di te e comprendere il di fuori […] Questa tua abitudine ti porta a vedere tutto in nero, a giudicare con parzialità, con poca generosità, e talora senza giustizia" ("Lettera del 18 giugno 1859" 65). In the *Passeggiate Romane*, his research of an impossible ideal and his

[26] In 1981, Mario Praz collected together the articles with the still unpublished diary.

rejection of a compromise lead to a harsh judgement on contemporary Rome and nation. However, his articles also show a perfect understanding of the government's intentions behind the staging of monuments and statues in the urban fabric. It is also from this awareness that part of his pungent dissent originates.

Before moving to the analysis of Imbriani's texts, it is necessary to consider the context in which the author operates. When he wrote his articles, Rome had recently become the capital and public opinion was debating how to use the city's monumentality to reinforce national identity. Politicians encouraged the erection of symbolic monuments celebrating the civic spirit of the new Rome in order to counterbalance the prevalence of churches and Catholic emblems. As Kirk reports, after the fall of the *Destra storica* in 1876, "architectural critics panned the ministry buildings of the *Città alta* as miserly things that suggested dull bureaucracy rather than national spirit" (231).[27] Imbriani wrote his articles before some of the urban interventions I mention below, but we need to remember that, in addition to these debates on Rome's monuments, the first interventions in the capital are appropriations of key buildings: the new government occupied the military prisons in Castel Sant'Angelo and the papal courthouse in Palazzo Montecitorio; it modified the Vatican's military constructions, such as the fortifications of Castel Sant'Angelo and the tower on the Capitoline (Kirk 226); and, when Vittorio Emanuele II moved to Rome on July 2, 1871, he established his residence in Palazzo del Quirinale, which had been serving as a papal residency until then.

[27] *Città alta* includes the neigborhoods Esquilino and Castro Pretorio that were erected during the first years of *Roma capitale*. For more details, see Section Three of this chapter where I analyze these districts through Giovanni Faldella's and Matilde Serao's texts.

Later, the death of King Vittorio Emanuele II on January 1878 offered the occasion both for a ritual dismantlement of Christian symbols attached to the Pantheon and for the reinforcement of patriotism.[28] The staging of the funeral and the burial of the king inside the ancient Roman temple and Christian basilica were a strong statement on the birth of a new cult: the religion of the fatherland.[29] The appropriation of the Pantheon with the funeral of the king is what George Mosse defines as "sacred space" – as in the case of the Champs-de-Mars or the Tuileries during the Jacobin period – where the dominant power organizes festivals and events in order to "draw the people into active participation in the new order and to discipline them. [...] The chaotic crowd of the people became a disciplined mass movement during the Revolution, participating in the orchestrated drama of politics" (6-7). The same strategy applies to the gathering at the Coliseum in De Amicis's *Impressioni*. The crowd in the ancient Roman arena is more disciplined than the one occupying the streets immediately after the breach or attacking the papal soldiers in Campidoglio; by partecipating in an official celebration, individuals are assigned an established role that discipline them. The Pantheon is an example of architecture used as a tool to forge Italians; similar to Saint Peter's and its papal tombs, it became a civic mausoleum and turned into a secular destination for thousands of pilgrims

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[28] In 609 a. D., Pope Bonifacius IV consecrated the Pantheon as Christian church – S. Maria ad Martyres. In 1270, a first belltower is added to the structure and many modifications followed one another during the centuries. The most famous alterations occur in the early 17th century, during Urban VIII Barberini's papacy who replaced the medieval tower with the two baroque ones by Carlo Maderna – not by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, as the popular legend reports. The renamed "orecchie d'asino" (donkey's ears) were removed in 1883. For more details about the Pantheon's architectonic modifications in the 17th century and its role in the adjustments of Piazza della Rotonda under Alexander VII's papacy (together with the consequences of the population living and working in the area) see Tod Marder's "Alexander VII, Bernini, and the Urban Setting of the Pantheon in the Seventeenth Century" in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Sep., 1991), pp. 273-292.

[29] As George Mosse affirms in "Fascism and the French Revolution," the French Revolution "created a civil religion which modern nationalism made its own" (5). In the article, the author traces the birth of mass politics during the French Revolution and how it influenced modern nationalisms, paving the way for fascism and nazism.

honoring the new nation. Moreover, this site perfectly succeeded in combining ancient Roman ruins, Christian faith – it remained a church even if the belltowers were torn down in 1883 – and patriotic spirit – all values that Italian politicians believed necessary to forge Italian national identity.

There are many other examples of creation of social spaces aiming at shaping new citizens. Another strong appropriation of the area adjacent to the Roman forum was the erection of the monument to the same Vittorio Emanuele II on the Capitoline hill. As David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove note, the Vittoriano can be defined as a "memory theater" and it has been used as a scenographic stage for political celebration since its construction (28). More than any Roman monument, the Vittoriano embodies Mosse's definition of "sacred space." Its symbolic elaboration and its surrounding urban fabric's modifications begin during the late 1800s and reach their apex with Benito Mussolini's gatherings in Piazza Venezia – in front of the Vittoriano – during fascism. This reflects Mosse's argument about the continuity between 19th and early 20th century nationalisms and totalitarian forms of power, and the Vittoriano is just one of the examples that illustrates the persistence of scenographic use of Rome's space during Risorgimento, Fascism, and the post-WWII period. As for the other monuments erected during the breach of Porta Pia, the choice of the space that the Vittoriano should have occupied was crucial; in order to express its meaning, any monument should be positioned in a strategic space both to stand out from its surroundings and to interact meaningfully with them. After the failure of the first contest in 1880, where there was no restriction on the area for the mausoleum, Minister of the Interior Agostino Depretis decided that the Capitoline hill was the right site for the Vittoriano. In this way, it would have substituted the fortified,

papal tower; it would have faced Palazzo Venezia – another papal residence from 1467 to 1797; and it would have contrasted the ruins of the Roman forum with its polished, white surface. With Vittorio Emanuele II's equestrian statue against a huge, scenographic background, the monument became an important site to stage the civic liturgy of the nation.[30] Moreover, the Vittoriano shares the architectural style of other European buildings of the Beaux Arts period – such as John Nash's Buckingham Palace (1825-1830) in London and Charles Garnier's Opera House (1861-1875) in Paris – which are "bombastic, overblown expressions of bourgeois high culture through which the classical educated elite of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century European powers emblazoned their capital cities and announced their nation's status and pride" (Atkinson and Cosgrove 32). Paradoxically, the monument that glorifies one of the fathers of the nation and which contributes to the patriotic transformation of Rome's urban fabric belongs to an international style which, if on one hand establishes Italy as a European, bourgeois state – as De Amicis enthusiastically hopes for Rome in *Impressioni* – on the other, it erases any possibility of representing national particularities.

In addition to the theatrical-like setting of the Vittoriano, Rome received other interventions in its urban fabric that transformed it into a cine city to be traversed in a similar way to De Amicis's narrator in order to create new historical meanings and affection by walking in officially traced paths in the capital. For example, the city council and the government commissioned statues dedicated to Giuseppe Garibaldi (Emilio

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[30] For more details about the Vittoriano see Atkinson and Cosgrove' s "Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870-1945" in *Annals of the Association of the American Geographers,* Vol. 88, No.1 (Mar. 1998), pp. 28-49 and Laura Wittman's *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

Gallori, 1882-1895), Giordano Bruno (Ettore Ferrari, 1889), and Cavour (Stefano Galletti, 1895) in order to highlight the civil character of the *Terza Roma.* Be it on the Pincian hill (Garibaldi), in Campo dei Fiori (Bruno), or Piazza Cavour (Cavour), all these statues interact in a similar way with the Vatican; they direct their gaze toward it declaring the existence of the new, secular power. Moreover, their presence is connected to the celebration of the anniversary of Porta Pia (Garibaldi and Cavour) and to the symbolic opposition to the 1900 jubilee (Bruno). The combination of the Vittoriano and all these civic statues "obtained […] a different 'monumentalità di percorso' ('itinerary monumentality') that enabled the entire city to behold a radical alternative to the papal itineraries, an 'ideale percorso urbano' ('ideal urban route') along which the patriotic and national had taken the place of the theocratic and religious" (Lerner 148). All these civic monuments were instruments of education and imposition of the prevailing ideology on the population that willingly visited them or involuntarily strolled by them. In "The Impossible Capital," John Agnew reiterates this point: "the architects of monumentality endeavour to impose on the spatial form of the city a singular set of meanings, a perceptible order and sense of hierarchy among sites and connecting routes, that both commemorate and celebrate the common history and evolving brilliance of the nation" (Agnew 229). It is clear how this patriotic "monumentalità di percorso" relies on the relationship between architecture, space, and kinesthesis, which is able to produce a cultural space, as elaborated by Bruno in her analysis of Eisenstein's "Montage and Architecture." Rome's modern, national face is that of what Bruno calls a cine city, which is based on "the framing of space and the succession of sites organized as shots from different viewpoints" (56). The creation of Rome as a cine city during the

Risorgimento is interrelated at various levels with the role of the capital in the history of Italian cinema and its weight in the creation of a national identity.[31]

In his articles, Imbriani underlines the importance of these contemporary debates on Rome's monuments and reads that the goal of present and future interventions in the city's appearance is the manipulation of the public. For example, in "Il Pincio," Imbriani analyzes the park's relaxing atmosphere, and, yet, he highlights the pedagogic presence of the statues that are part of one of the "monumentalità di percorso" created by the 1849 republic in opposition to the papal symbols of the capital:

> Questa esposizione permanente di busti è una ridicolaggine stomachevole. Basta dire che si comincia da Stesicoro e Pitagora e si termina con Urbano Rattazzi e Gregorio Ugdulena… per ora. […] Certo sarebbe una bella idea quella di riunire nelle passeggiate pubbliche, ne' luoghi di ritrovo le immagini più o meno autentiche de' grandi uomini e virtuosi; ma perché questa esposizione abbia un effetto morale e civile […] bisogna badare bene alla scelta degli uomini, che si dichiaran grandi, esemplari, che si propongono alla venerazione ed all'ossequio della nazione. Se invece di eroi od in mezzo agli eroi mi mettete Stenterello, Pulcinella e Cassandrino; […] se fra i sapienti mi aggregate i servitori di piazza! (119)[32]

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[31] It is worth noting that national identity and cinema were developing almost at the same time and that earliest public screenings relied in large part on films about Risorgimento. Certainly, cine city recalls Cinecittà, which Mussolini founded in 1937 both to revive the Italian film industry and as a propaganda tool. The slogan "il cinema è l'arma più forte" that accompanied the inauguration of the studios reinforces the continuity between the Risorgimento and fascism where cinema – intended not as a medium but as a tool able to transform space into a vector of meaning – lays at the base of the creation of a national identity. The same can be said of neorealism; this cinematic movement utilizes Rome as one of the main characters in films with the aim of orchestrating the nation's emotions toward a social and urban reconstruction that would reinforce the Italian identity in the aftermath of WWII. I would like to thank Prof. Welch that pointed out the resonance between cine city, Cinecittà, and Neorealism during the review of this chapter. For studies examining the role of Rome in films, see Allison Cooper's "Performing Rome" in *The Italianist* Vol. 37, No. 2 (2017), pp. 263–267; Gabriel Solomon's *World Film Locations: Rome,* Chicago: Intellect Books and Chicago University Press, 2014; Dom Holdoway and Filippo Trentin's *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape,* London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013; and Richard Wrigley's *Cinematic Rome,* Leicester: Troubador, 2008.

[32] In the opening of *La Grande Bellezza* (2013), Paolo Sorrentino uses the Roman "monumentalità di percorso" of the Gianicolo to comment negatively on the present situation of marginal figures in the Italian society and to denounce the failure of the Risorgimental values as foundational for the nation. I am currently developing this idea in an article analyzing Sorrentino's use of 19th century monuments and Italian texts in *La Grande Bellezza*.

Imbriani connects the previous intervention of the brief experience of the Risorgimento republic in the famous *passeggiata del Pincio* to the contemporary debates on possible new monuments in the capital's urban fabric. The author derides the protagonists of the *Sinistra storica* (Rattazzi and Ugdulena) because, in comparison to universally recognized Greek intellectuals such as Stesicoro and Pitagora, they appear as laughable as Stenterello, Pulcinella, and Cassandrino. Beyond ridiculing these politicians, this allusion to characters of Commedia dell'Arte underlines the fact that people would recognize them because the mentioned Italian politicians were as popular as those masks; therefore, through the exposition of these statues, it was easy to catch strollers' attention for the pedagogical, narrative path of the Pincio. The choice of specific, local masks – Stenterello for Florence, Pulcinella for Naples, and Cassandrino for Rome – allowed an easy association of these characters to the nationally famous politicians for the still regionally fragmented readers. For Imbriani, the consequences of this unconditionally accepted idolatry of patriotic heroes is center-stage. In fact, he highlights that the masses are sensible to the exposition of icons and they can be easily manipulated by them: "E che potete sperare d'un popolo avvezzo ad idolatrie turpi, d'un popolo avvezzo a considerare come esemplari il Brofferio ed il Saliceti, il Rattazzi o l'Ugdulena? O il Masaniello? Voi ne corrompete il giudizio ed il criterio. Voi gli create (*sic*) ideali abietti, ed ogni sforzo per raggiungerli li depraverà" (120). In the characters Imbriani chooses to cite, it is clear his aversion towards Illuminists (Brofferio and Saliceti), Risorgimento politicians (Rattazzi and Ugdulena), and the leader of a popular revolt in Rome (Masaniello).

All these characters have in common a subversive force that the author associates with the chaos connected to the masses. Indeed, in his considerations, the narrator recalls common judgements on the masses in the era of modernity, such as Gustave Le Bon's in *The Crowd* (1895).[33] The French sociologist writes that the masses are affected by "extreme mental inferiority" (4) and their actions are "unconscious" (3) because the individuals' "conscious personality vanishes" (23); therefore, the individual "obeys all the suggestions of the operator who has deprived him of it [his conscious personality]" (31). Imbriani believes Italians to be mentally inferior and unconscious in their actions because they have been treated as an indistinct crowd rather than an agglomeration of individuals to be nurtured, and, as a consequence, their conscious personality vanished together with an independent, critical judgement on things. Indeed, Edoardo Scarfoglio expresses a similar point of view on the mediocrity of the masses a few years later, when working at the *Cronaca Bizantina* (1881). As Giuseppe Squarciapino reports in *Roma Bizantina*, Scarfoglio states that: "Siamo, anche in arte, sotto l'imperio della maggioranza vile che non sa nulla, che non intende nulla, che non desidera se non cose sciocche e volgari, vuole anch'essa i suoi istrioni, i suoi glorificatori, i solleticatori de' suoi istinti o cattivi o malsani o imbecilli" (192). All these declarations on the masses' malleability, ignorance, and need of guidance reflect many politicians' and intellectuals' fear of this new social category that became central during the modernization of the 19th century. As Iannaccone explains, Imbriani reflects the contemporary Italian and European crisis in front of a democratization and 'imbastardimento' of politics that affects society in general:

[33] By recalling that both Mussolini and Hitler knew Le Bon's book and considered it relevant (14), Mosse traces another important point that progresses from the 19th century nationalisms into fascism and nazism.

> Al posto del valore e della gerarchia si affermano un malinteso senso di uguaglianza e un appiattimento indiscriminato. I pochi spiriti eletti sono emarginati nella cultura e nella politica, mentre la plebe, volgare e inconsapevole, viene blandita da una cricca di demagoghi. Tale massificazione investe ogni spazio, anche quello un tempo affidato a ristrette cerchie di anime superiori. (21)

Certainly, Imbriani's position recalls Gabriele D'Annunzio's hectic urge of a *Superuomo* – one of the "pochi spiriti eletti" – that he stages in *Le Vergini delle Rocce* (1895), which I analyze in Chapter Two.[34]

Le Bon offers another clue on the relationship between the masses and space that is similar to Imbriani's perspective when he states that "a thousand individuals accidentally gathered in a public place without any determined object in no way constitute a crowd from the psychological point of view" (24).[35] In the mentioned passage, Imbriani unveils a similar mechanism in this "monumentalità di percorso;" politicians shape the Pincio as a public space that works as a perpetual tool to unify and, therefore, to forge psychological masses through the symbolic meaning of the statues. Because Imbriani's narrator thinks that this automatic, unconscious idolatrization is dangerous, he believes that mythological statues are preferable: "A conti fatti, ripensandoci meglio nelle passeggiate è pur meglio il mettere figure mitologiche, gruppi allegorici […], facendo d'una villa un corso di mitologia pratica è più utile non reca danno […]. Meglio puerilità innocue, come la fontana col Mosè esposto" (122-123). The narrator believes mythlogical statues to be more harmless because they do not refer to specific politicians or divinized historical characters; rather, they recall a more abstract,

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[34] For an accurate study on *stirpe* vs *razza*, see Welch's "Chapter Three: Mutilated Limbs" in the mentioned *Vital Subjects.*

[35] If we refer these words to De Amicis's description of the gathering at the Coliseum, it is clear how the celebration of the breach of Porta Pia is the ultimate unifier for the variegated individuals that, by participating in the event, feel they belong to the nation.

universal meaning. The "puerilità innocua" of baby Moses hints to the neutrality of the statue in a "monumentalità di percorso" because of its detachment from current and past historical events and, probably, because not everyone can recognize the character depicted in the statue. However, there is an implication that Imbriani does not consider; these imaginary, neutral figures are not that innocent because they can catalyze the strollers' imagination and support their solitary resistance to the status quo embodied by architecture, monuments, and urban plans. Moreover, let's not forget that Moses himself is a figure of resitance and liberation of the Jewish population. Chambers' argumentation sheds light on the failure of the domination of the "language" of the official, patriotic paths caused by presence of non-conforming human individuals/groups and inanimate objects in cities:

> To note the ubiquitous presence of the metaphor of language in architectural discourse could mean to take the metaphor seriously [...]. For the question arises whether the concept of language is deployed merely for the coded communication and rationalisation of space, rendering the world transparent and subservient to an architectural grammar, or whether the concept of language signals an altogether more ambiguous, poetic inscription of habitation. (134)

Indeed, Chambers exhorts readers to be active observers of cities and to search for acts of resistance; paying too much attention to the decodification of the hegemonic power's language inscribed in architecture can deprive humanity of the capacity to see that language – including the architectonic one – also has the possibility of creating poetry. I argue that if in verbal language, poetry allows the establishment of personal connections between words that defy grammar and syntactic rules, humanity can challenge hegemonic

power's rules inscribed in architectonic language by developing alternative practices of space.[36]

2.2 Perspective, Scenographies, and the Masses

While De Amicis does not elaborate on the controlling power of architecture over the masses, in *Passeggiate Romane*, Imbriani engages more critically with the effects of scenographic architecture on the population. Even if he criticizes ancient monuments existing before the breach more often than the new ones, Imbriani's short sketches summarize the appearance and the effects on the visitors of many of Rome's monuments. For example, in "Fontana di Trevi, Dec. 10 1876," Imbriani writes: "Io non posso patire la fontana di Trevi. L'ammiri il volgo. Non c'è una cosa ammodo. Ci si vede l'intenzione di fare una gran cosa, una cosa magnifica; e l'impotenza intellettuale, che giunge solo a farne una spettacolosa" (110). Here, Imbriani's exaggerating, amused polemic against the common taste of the masses is evident.[37] Iannaccone explains how this repulsion of common taste is a reaction to the democratization of politics and society at the end of the 19th century in Italy and Europe as well (21-22); indeed, Imbriani reacts to his fear of the annihilation of individuality (in this case, taste) that he sees in the masses and that Le Bon denounces too in *The Crowd*: "in the collective mind the intellectual aptitudes of the individuals, and in consequence their individuality, are weakened. The heterogeneous is swamped by the homogeneous" (29). Besides his repugnance to the 'volgo,' Imbriani highlights how the spectacularity of architecture appeals to the masses and negates them any sense of intellectual elaboration of the object's value. Imbriani recognizes that,

[36] I dedicate more space to this in Pasolini's section in Chapter Four.
[37] Remarkable are the pieces where Imbriani enjoys satirizing iconic Roman masterpieces as Bernini's Santa Teresa (110–114) and Michelangelo's Moses (104–108).

behind Nicola Salvi's and Giuseppe Pannini's fountain's appearance, there is a spark of something intellectually grandiose; yet this spectacular aspect hides the intellectual meaning of the fountain to the eyes of the masses, who are attracted by its fame and its eye-catching architecture and do not explore its meaning. His aversion to Rome's Baroque monuments was common in the period, but it also had personal traits.[38] Imbriani desired a unique, intimate relationship with monuments that crowded, well-known sites did not allow. Mariantonietta Picone Petrusa confirms this idea in her analysis of the author's relationship with monuments and art in general, and how these are connected to his language:

> il suo rifiuto della simmetria come cosa volgare concorda con il rifiuto della eccessiva rifinitura del quadro e ancora con l'associazione della 'macchia' al sentimento; tutti questi atteggiamenti di Imbriani, divenuti categoria di giudizio, rientrano pienamente in un gusto romantico che rifugge dallo scenografico, ma non esclude il 'pittoresco', solo che Imbriani non si accontenta di un pittoresco di superficie, ma cerca in un certo senso un 'pittoresco empatetico.' (116)

Imbriani searches for monuments and views that are not yet digested and homogenized by the masses's preferences, that do not fall in the category of the spectacular scenography nor of the superficial picturesque animated by sentiments of immediate impact – for example, like those provided by De Amicis's articles. He rather prefers less famous monuments, which are able to communicate through a haptic practice of space and allow a deeper, more personal interaction with individuals rather than masses.[39]

It is in "Piazza del Popolo, Dec. 11 1876" that Imbriani explains better his questioning of the scenographic use of architecture. Again, the realization of the

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[38] Later, during Fascism, Baroque architecture and art was also under scrutiny and labeled as "corrupted." For more details, see Chapter Three.
[39] I will go back to this topic in Chapter Four in Pasolini's section.

monument precedes the annexation of Rome to the Italian nation, but Imbriani's analysis of the interaction between architecture and the masses is useful to understand their dynamics at the dawn of the modern era in Rome. At the end of the 19th century, the population of the capital grew esponentially and, as a consequence, the razionalization of space became more necessary. First of all, he quotes from Annibale Marchese's *Eustachio* to introduce the two different impacts that Rome's architecture can have:

Picciola mente a sì gran cose e tante
Stupida resta e si confonde e si perde:
Ma il nobil vostro sì sublime ingegno
Da sì gran piena non sia vinto; e chiaro
Vedrà ciò, che di bel, ciò che di grande
Qui scerner puossi. (114-115)

By quoting Marchese, the author highlights how Rome's magnificent architecture can overwhelm the uneducated masses because they do not have the instruments or the knowledge to understand these monuments, which become an indistinct, extravagant labyrinth for them. In front of the uneducated masses, artistic sites lose their history and, therefore, their individual particularity; only those who have a sublime intellect can discern the uniqueness of each place or monument and comprehend its value. Moreover, Marchese's quotation also alludes to what Imbriani explains later: scenographic and symmetric architecture appeals to the masses because it is comforting; it directs its gaze, its direction, and its taste. Imbriani writes that Piazza del Popolo

> viene concordemente esaltata a cielo da tutti; ed io soglio insospettirmi della lode universale [...]. Chi la chiama magnifica, chi d'un effetto sorprendente, chi meravigliosa, chi ci assicura far essa pruova del *genio pittoresco* dell'architetto Valadier […] Genio pittoresco? Io direi, tutt'al più, scenografico, io. Di fatti la piazza, fredda, simmetrica a me sembra una quinta di teatro […] Gli architetti […] ne han fatta una cosaccia, che piace singolarmente a chiunque, privo del senso del bello, ha quel gusto volgare per la simmetria e per la correttezza che alcuni stimano amor del bello. (115)

Beyond Imbriani's evident aversion towards the uneducated crowd, his analysis of the appreciation of architecture reveals an embryonic understanding of the dynamics between crowds and aesthetics in mass society. The view of Piazza del Popolo is not picturesque – that is, a pleasant molding of nature through the use of art or architecture – but rather, cold and scenographic. Imbriani calls the square a theatrical wing, a device that hints at the artificiality of the space and embodies "the practical power of modern society [that] established itself in the spectacle" (Debord 18). The author is not interested in exploring what/who stages this scenography and the reasons behind it; rather, he pays more attention to the cultivation of aesthetic ignorance and lack of independent spirit that this kind of architecture feeds in the masses. In fact, "nessun bel particolare ti affascina e ti trattiene" (116). The presence of particular details would attract individual's personal attention and allow the elaboration of an autonomous caprice of the mind, an attachment of intimate feelings, and an intellectual elaboration of the work of art and/or space. Through its symmetry, architecture as that of Piazza del Popolo homogenizes the spectators' taste.

Imbriani returns to visual homogenization when the narrator talks about the new buildings erected in *Roma alta*, near Santa Maria Maggiore and the train station:

> Gli architetti han trovato un modo semplicissimo di render meno faticosa l'arte loro. Hanno inventato, che le diverse parti d'un edifizio debbono essere tutte simili fra loro. Ci saranno mille finestre; ma tutte le mille finestre son disegnate ed ornate ad un modo, sono grandi lo stesso. Trecento stanze e tutte avranno la stessa altezza. E sì che altro è la finestra del tinello ed altra quella del salotto e dello studio! Ma le facciate moderne nulla esprimono della destinazione de' diversi membri, a' quali anzi si cambia agevolmente destinazione. Lo esterno degli edifici non è l'espressione adeguata dello interno, anzi una maschera arbitraria. ("S. Maria Maggiore" 130)

Imbriani starts analyzing the architecture of the new buildings, which employs identical, schematic elements (windows, size of the rooms) and, therefore, it is very different from the medieval or Baroque buildings disseminated in the Roman urban fabric. It seems that Imbriani individuates what Lefebvre would later define as "abstract space" – that is a space that "tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities" (52). Imbriani's observations on Rome's new architecture – which embodies the project of Italy as a modern, newly unified nation similar to other European nations – also recalls Chambers's analysis of the role of architectural perspective, symmetry, and homogenization in the creation of a community:

> architecture not only has a metaphysics, it is metaphysics. For to plan, to rationalize space, embodies the promise of eschatology: the prophetic announcement of a future paradise, and the negation of alterity, of the other. For even to seek to inscribe alterity in the project, to respond to the presence of the other, is already to negate that other by reducing her or him to the same, to the protocols of the design. (133)

Visual, architectonic homogenization does not take into consideration the different intended uses of each room, which are all designed in the same way. From the assumption that the rooms, since they are identical, can be interchanged, the narrator claims that the intention behind these constructions is that their dwellers can be switched too, since there is no attachment to such an aseptic interior space. Moreover, he adds that the perfect, symmetrical façade is just a mask hiding a different content; that is, he alludes to the fact that the inhabitants of the new housing complexes of *Roma alta* do not conform to the projects of national unification and bourgeoisification of Italians. The petite bourgeoisie that moves to these buildings represents the alterity that still can be included in the nation by negating its difference and by reducing it to the only acceptable version of Italians: wealthy bourgeois. In reality, as as I demonstrate in the section on

Matilde Serao in this chapter, the inhabitants of Esquilino and Castro Pretorio remained poor and were drained by the daily struggle for survival. The new State failed to address the real challenges that modernization entailed for the population and, instead, it pushed for the homogenization of socially diverse Italians through the use of architecture. The negation of alterity was the basic condition for a future paradise – that is, a wealthy, productive nation. This idea remained a utopia even during fascism and the economic miracle, as I explain in Chapter Three and Four through the works of Elsa Morante, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Federico Fellini.

3. The Separation Between New Bourgeois Neighborhoods and Old Districts

3.1 Modernization and Northern Colonization: Giovanni Faldella's Articles (1874-1882)

Before analyzing Faldella's articles, it is necessary to set the general, public reception of the urban changes that were transforming Rome into a modern, bourgeois city at the time. For example, Imbriani just briefly alludes to the urban transformations that were contributing to Rome's metamorphosis; however, he grasps the novelty of the operation concurrently with an abstract imposition of capitalism in Italy. His intuitions literally translate what Guy Debord states in *The Society of the Spectacle* when analyzing capitalist societies: "Urbanism is the mode of appropriation of the natural and human environment by capitalism, which, true to its logical development toward absolute domination, can [...] refashion the totality of space into *its own peculiar décor*" (121, original italics). Via Nazionale and part of the Esquilino are good examples of what was aspired for the future of the capital. Before a horde of private contractors took over the expansion of the city, in the early 1870s, the private investor Francesco Saverio de Mérode shaped via Nuova – then named Via Nazionale – as a European boulevard with

"its straight and broad, and evenly graded tree-lined, and defined by rigorously boxy, large scale volumes" and with "pretentious stucco façades of its hotels and apartment houses, shops, and offices" (Kirk 227). Certainly, this European style clashed with the irregular, peculiar style of the existing districts of Rome. Art historian Herman Grimm (1828-1901), an expert on Raphael and Michelangelo who frequently visited the city, considered this part of Rome as the only true modern quarter of the city: "case ospitali, eleganti, di architettura variata, conveniente e a volte piacevole all'occhio, quali sol presentarcele ogni città moderna, che sebbene non costruita soltanto per fini estetici, tuttavia non vuole neanche offendere il gusto" (*La Distruzione di Roma* 19). This new urban outline gave the illusion of being in a prosperous metropolis such as Paris, Berlin, or even Turin (the "future paradise" previously mentioned), but a huge difference existed between them: Rome was not, and never became, a productive, industrial center. Other scenographic interventions in the urban texture were the construction of the buildings with porticoes surrounding Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II (Gaetano Koch, 1881-1886) and Piazza Esedra (Gaetano Koch, 1887-1898), the erection of the first *galleria,* Galleria Sciarra (Giulio De Angelis, 1883-1888), and the opening of the first department store in central Italy, Magazzini Bocconi, on the corner of Via del Corso (Giulio De Angelis, 1886-1887).[40] The introduction of arcades to house shops and the erection of an

[40] Under the porticoes of Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, homeless daily workers used to sleep immediately after the completion of the square. This "glitch" testifies to the failure of the project of Rome as a sanitized and bourgeois city and to the politicians' and urban planners' incapability to create affordable housing for the working class. For more details see Section One of Chapter Two here and Italo Insolera's *Roma Moderna: un secolo di storia urbanistica.* Torino: Einaudi, 1962. For more details on these buildings see Terry Kirk's *The Architecture of Modern Italy vol. I "The Challenge of Tradition: 1750-1900*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004; Andrea Valeriani's "Palazzo Bocconi (ex- la Rinascente)." *ArchiDIAP.* ArchiDIAP, 20 Mar. 2015; and Antonino Marcianò's "I fronti di Piazza Vittorio." *ArchiDIAP*. ArchiDIAP, 19 Oct. 2014.

innovative department store represented a strong attempt to fortify the image of Rome as a bourgeois city at the level of Milan, Turin, Paris, and Berlin.

To the eyes of the European countries too, it was evident that Italians were working on transforming Rome into a modern metropolis. In 1886, Grimm denounced in his fiery letter/essay titled *La Distruzione di Roma* the heavy urban modifications that were devastating the capital's fascinating, historic character. Ancient monuments, Renaissance villas and parks, and Baroque churches appeared in danger. Grimm's text is an important contemporary testimony on this point:

> Vidi che si era in procinto di distruggere moralmente Roma nel trasformarla a metropoli del regno. […] Rivolgersi ai romani stessi, lo ripeto, sarebbe inutile. Son convinti della necessità dei provvedimenti che si son presi; piuttosto che troppo, pensano che si faccia troppo poco. Di luce, d'aria e di vie di comunicazione ha bisogno la città. Occorre procurare alloggio al numero sempre crescente della popolazione. Bisogna far piazza pulita e farla presto. […] son venuti i tempi, che la fiorente capitale dell'Italia una trovi di nuovo la sua sede qui, e che si compia questa gran trasformazione, che i sospiri sentimentali degli storici non debbono impedire. […] Poiché l'ardente desiderio, che gl'Italiani nutrivano, di unirsi e di farsi una metropoli nel luogo più nobile del Regno, potesse essere soddisfatto, si debbono ora mettere in campo ragioni che lo impediscano? (10)

Like many European and Italian intellectuals of the period, Grimm was worried by the destruction that was menacing Roman monuments in order to create a modern metropolis. He affirms that talking to the population is useless because everyone is enthusiastically accepting the profound transformations of the pickaxe breaking down historic walls and making space for wider, more elegant boulevards and for new housing accomodations for the growing population. The transformation that De Amicis was hoping for in the *Impressioni* became a reality: five years later, new, long, wide boulevards worthy of a European capital were finally created.

Politician, writer, and journalist Giovanni Faldella (1846-1928) offers a completely different perspective on the new face of Rome in his articles, which first appeared in the newspaper *Il Fanfulla* and then were later collected in *Un viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa* (1880) and *Roma Borghese* (1882). The main reason for this different approach lies in the fact that his writings precede the apex of the *febbre edilizia* – Faldella wrote these articles between the mid-1870s and the early 1880s – and in a period during which Italians still perceived Rome and the Italian unification as the dawn of a novel, auspicious epoch for the nation.[41] Moreover, the Piedmontese author was a strong supporter of the Risorgimento, as his vast literary production testifies: *Il tempio del Risorgimento italiano* (1886), *Per la giustizia giusta. Discorsi parlamentari* (1889), *La giovinezza di Camillo Cavour* (1889), and *I fratelli Ruffini. Storia della Giovine Italia* (1897) – just to name a few. Therefore, from his point of view, *Roma capitale* fulfilled the Risorgimento dream of conquering the city at the geographical and symbolic core of the Italian peninsula and, for this reason, Rome should have been transformed into a more Northener city, no matter the cost. His dream is not devoid of a colonial gaze on a Southern city that had been neglected for centuries. In *Un viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa*, Faldella confers his idea to the fictional character Geromino – the mayor of a small town in Piedmont – while in *Roma Borghese* he presents his personal consideration on the city without any fictional filter.

Even if ancient Roman ruins were part of the shared Risorgimento imagery, Faldella strongly opposes archeology when this hampers the capital's modernization, as in *Un Viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa*, where his alter ego Geromino criticizes the

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[41] *Febbre edilizia* indicates the explosion of property and land speculation in the 1880s. For more details on the topic, see Chapter Two.

extreme idolization of ancient stones that no longer have a purpose or do not have any aesthetic value. The character's words strongly oppose Grimm's and many contemporary intellectuals' convinctions:

> Dunque, gli oggetti di una forma che se lo meriti, si incornicino, si incastonino e si mettano anche dentro una custodia, come si fa dai tedeschi, e non si lascino nella mota, come si fa dai nostri archeologi […]. Ma conservare un sasso, che non è bello, non è utile, non è esemplare, solo perché *si crede* più antico degli altri, o, tanto peggio, rovistare i selciati, disturbare il prossimo che vive, per cercare di queste pietre morte, mi pare la più grossa corbelleria che si possa stillare sotto la volta di una testa umana. (65)

Geromino considers these useless, ancient stones as dead material and as something disturbing the modern development that Rome should undergo in order to keep up with the major European metropoles. According to him, the majority of the ancient stones cannot be included in a national discourse because they no longer hold any semantic meaning supporting Italian identity, which, in his mind, is completely characterized by modernization. His point of view certainly privileges aspects of Rome's urban fabric that would confirm it as a bourgeois city; moreover, his vision of the capital allows the presence of ancient Roman ruins only if they are reelaborated in their surrounding space – that is, if their physical presence is pleasant to the eye and, therefore, it can be used in an aesthetic representation of Rome. Geromino's approach to ancient Roman monuments is similar to that of a scenographer who is ready to pick the right monuments to include in the staging of the Italian nation. The narrator is not even interested in the history of this city, as he does not believe in archeology and in the value of the ruins – this confirms Imbriani's depiction of the masses' ignorance of Rome's monuments. Indeed, Geromino considers them as dead material that needs to be eliminated from Rome's urban fabric; from his perspective, they are something "unfitting." In contrast, Geromino prefers to

exalt the debris that are the results of tunnels because they are "i sassi più nobili, più gloriosi e più poetici di tutti gli altri sassi, perché levando l'incomodo della loro presenza, lasciarono penetrare la luce, il commercio, il vapore e la fratellanza" (65).[42] According to the narrator, modernization and capitalism will not only promote Rome to the status of a European metropolis, but they will also create a sense of belonging with the more advanced Northern Italian "brothers."

The article "Colonie buzzurre" – later collected in *Roma Borghese* – better exemplifies Faldella's colonial gaze on Rome. Here, the author expresses his joy for the new, modern appearance of the new neighborhood Esquilino and the presence of his northern countrymen: "Fumando un sigaro nei nuovi quartieri di Roma alta, dove si prova quel senso gradito dell'aperto, soleggiato e modernissimo, che fa così bene quando si è stufi delle macerie, non è raro sentire dalle botteghe, sui marciapiedi e dalle finestre, pervenire accenti, discorsi nella più schietta lingua di Gianduja" (*Roma Borghese* 19). In his account, Faldella clearly juxtaposes Rome's modern face with its ancient buildings; the new, bourgeois neighborhood is seen as a restoring oasis from the view of Roman ruins and medieval constructions that he denominates 'macerie' (debris). In this way, the author alludes to a moral superiority and better lifestyle of the Piedmontese people that moved to Rome and that are shaping the capital's urban fabric towards a northern, capitalistic model. In fact, in Rome,

> Le nuove vie si spalancano e si allungano con giovialità meneghina, frescura ginevrina, dirizzura torinese e fasto parigino […]. I quartieri nuovi dell'alta Roma si accampano come una consolazione, un rimprovero e un insegnamento a certi quartieri

[42] Today, this contrast between modernity and the preservation of antiquity is still a relevant matter in Rome, as in the recent debates on the works for the line C of the subway. During the 1970s film directors such as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Federico Fellini included this issue in the TV documentary *La Forma della Città* (1974) and in the film *Roma* (1972), respectively.

> della bassa Roma confusi, addossati, lerci, affatto ciechi o appena leccati dal sole, ricchi di pulci. (*Roma Borghese* 20)

The new urban structure embodies positive characteristics that Faldella associates with northern Italy and Europe: joviality from Milan, coolness from Geneva, rectification from Turin, and pomposity from Paris. It is also clear that the Esquilino neighborhood works as a model for new developments of Rome and in contrast with the dark, medieval slums. As David Forgacs recalls, "The association of the slum with mud or with a swamp and of its inhabitants with disease-carrying organisms, maggots, or insects had become so common in social writing in this period [end of the 19th century] that it had come to constitute a shared way of seeing and depicting such places and people" (*Italy's Margins* 37).[43] So, more than denouncing the sanitary conditions of certain dwellings, Faldella relies on prejudices on the area and uses them to judge its inhabitants. Moreover, the symmetrical, clean architecture and the urban plan for the new neighborhoods embody a segregation of the population. As Chambers states, "The architectural gaze is also the anthropological gaze: constructing, classifying, and defining space for others" (148). Faldella's description of the separation of *Roma alta* and *bassa* clearly demonstrates how architecture played a fundamental role in the organization of the capital's population and in the definition of who was "fitting" (Northern, productive Italians that moved to the capital) and who was "unfitting" (native Romans that struggled to survive). While the description of the modern neighborhoods where the Northern population lived encourages positive feelings, a sense of wealth, and a healthy lifestyle through their

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[43] For more details about these metaphors, see also Forgacs's article "Imagined Bodies: Rhetorics of Social Investigation in Late Nineteenth Century France and Italy" in *Journal of the Institute of Romance Studies*, 1,1 (1992), pp. 375-394.

pompous architecture, their ordered urban plan, and their airy boulevards, the medieval neighborhoods where the Romans lived certainly gives an image of sickness and decay that the author despises as much as the dead stones of the Roman ruins.

This idea of separation is already present in Faldella's fictional articles after his first visit to Rome, where his impression of the capital confirms the idea of segregation between the "native" side of the city and the bourgeois, capitalist interventions. The narrator says:

> Mi sembrava che Roma dovesse essere lasciata agli Inglesi per la corsa dei Barberi, per la festa dei moccoletti, per la caccia alla volpe, per i quindici giorni di carnevale e per gli spettacoli della Settimana Santa; doveva essere lasciata ai pittori per i loro studi classici dei ruderi e per lo studio medievale di certe scale e botteghe […]. Mi sembrava che le vetrine sfolgoranti di Bellezza, di Bessi, di Iannetti, di Gilardini, di Marchesini, ecc., venuti dall'Italia Superiore o da Firenze, fossero un'appiccicatura per Roma. (*Un viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa* 69)

In this passage too, the narrator's gaze is the one of a colonizer, who perceives Rome as an underdeveloped, archaic city that attracts foreigners for its folkloristic events and for its abundant traces of the past. Here, Geromino embraces the exoticism present in the Grand Tour and he shares its artificial, aesthetic representation of Rome. Even though the city presented heavy signs of decay and was affected by social problems in the 18th and 19th century, it also appeared aesthetically reconstructed in the literature and the paintings of the Northern European intellectuals coming to the city for specific, ritual events; they transformed ruins and medieval corners into works of art. Similar to the intellectuals of the Grand Tour, Faldella's narrator is not able to reconcile Rome's real condition with the abstract concepts and the utopic ideals it embodies – ancient splendors and obscure

rituals for the Grand Tour and national identity for Faldella.[44] Because of a lack of deep understading of the city's history, society, economy, and politics, Rome became a simple stage set that could be changed according to the occasion. Faldella underlines the struggles accompanying the construction of the Italian capital as a modern, bourgeois metropolis; in his article, it appears as a city hopelessly sunk in antiquity that cannot be transformed into a European metropolis – even the shops seem forced into the urban fabric and clash with it.

The cause of this difficulty lies in the decadence of some city's streets that, according to Geromino, need to be eliminated. In fact, in his farewell to Rome, the protagonist reaches the Pincio and tries to praise the new capital, but his attention is always captured by elements that disturb Rome's possible magnificent, modern cityscape:

> Ricordai la luridezza del Ghetto di Via Fiumara, in cui si trova sempre una baruffa di megere scarduffiate […] – i laghi d'acqua e le pozzanghere delle vie, quando piove; imperocché Roma, la città della Cloaca Massima, ha tuttavia pochissimi acquedotti in attività di servizio, onde l'acqua si rovescia dalle gronde come un accappattoio sui passanti, o rigurgita fra i loro piedi come il vomito di un acquajo. […] Non dimenticai le mostre del bucato sui balconi delle vie principali. (*Un viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa* 82)

His description focuses on Rome's urban defects that prevent it from appearing as a modern, sanitized metropolis. Ancient Roman infrastuctures, which are considered masterpieces of engineering, have survived until the present but they were not sufficient

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[44] For a brief and detailed account on the relationship between the Grand Tour, the Church, and modernization, see Luca Bani's chapter "Roma: Dal potere temporale a capitale del Regno d'Italia" in *"Ditemi o pietre! Parlatemi eccelsi palagi." La rappresentazione di Roma nella lirica italiana tra Otto e Novecento: Carducci, D'Annunzio e Pascoli,* Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2011, pp. 23-73.

for the needs of a modern capital. According to the narrator, only the physical interventions of the Piedmontese can give a new splendor to the capital.

In "Una spaghettata," Faldella returns to the matter of *Roma alta* and to the merit of northern Italians, *Risorgimentali*, and soldiers that contributed to the amelioration and modernization of the capital and of the workers' living conditions:

> Lo vedete con i vostri occhi. In poco più di dieci anni quanto lavoro si è fatto nella liberata Roma! Prima del 1870 spuntava l'erba sul vellutato sudiciume del Corso; accanto ai sontuosi palazzi per le principesche ricchezze, si schiacciavano tortuosamente le catapecchie dei poveri. Ed ora sui sette colli, di fronte a Roma lercia, affumicata dal buio, intristita dal solo lucciolato delle madonne, ravvivata dalla sola fervidezza delle madornali pulci, si è accampata la nuova alta Roma, dalle vie spaziose, inondate di luce, olezzanti di nettezza, con il gasse sulle scale, con l'acqua potabile a domicilio fino al quinto piano, con tutti i comodi modesti della agiatezza lavoratrice. E di questa Roma borghese, sacra alla civiltà e alla igiene, sono orgoglioso di salutare in voi i romulei fondatori, in voi muratori, architetti e proprietari […] i sopravvenuti colla libertà e colla nazionalità a Roma vi diedero impulso al lavoro […]; posso bere a tutti i profeti, a tutti gli apostoli, a tutti i martiri caduti, a tutti i soldati vittoriosi per la grande idea. (*Roma Borghese* 173-174)

Even in these words, Faldella's narrator highlights the decadence of Rome before the arrival of Northern Italians – the main street was covered with trash and weeds – and he also points out how some of the medieval dwellings, where poor people lived, had to be torn down to exalt the magnificence of aristocratic Renaissance or Baroque palaces.[45] The narrator supports these urban changes that Rome undergoes in order to appear as a modern, bourgeois city decontaminated from poverty, decay, and sickness, which he associates with Rome's medieval buildings and urban plan. When it is not possible to totally eliminate these elements from the capital's cityscape, Faldella's narrator reinforces the physical separation that divides Rome's local population from the Northern

[45] These words anticipate Mussolini's plan to destroy Spina di Borgo and the medieval borgo near the Fori Imperiali. For more details see Chapter Three.

immigrants. From his description, *Roma alta* dominates the city not only for his geographical position but mainly for the images of light with which it is combined. Faldella renders the medieval Rome dirty, dark, and oppressive by mentioning the fuliginous walls, the candles positioned in the nooks dedicated to the Virgin that barely lit the streets, and the presence of gigantic fleas that appear to be the only inhabitants of such a cramped neighborhood. In opposition, the new districts appear open, airy, full of natural and artificial light – thanks to gas running in the apartments – and scented with soap perfume – also because water reaches up to the fifth floor.

Another indication of the narrator's colonizing approach to the Italian capital is his simplistic vision of Rome's social and economic problems. For him, transforming the city from a rural, poor reality to a capitalist, industrialized metropolis is just a matter of changing scenographies – as for the previously mentioned medieval districts. For example, the introduction of industrial production into the city would transform "l'agro romano pestifero ed ozioso in un terreno salubre e fecondo, cangierà parecchie locande in opifizi, e la consuetudine di vivere passivamente, affittando camere mobiliate ai forestieri, nella consuetudine di vivere attivamente, producendo qualche cosa" (*Un viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa* 88). In the text, industrialization works as a magical spell that immediately eliminates malaria from the marshes around the capital, fertilizes swampy lands, and mutates lethargic taverns into active mills with the general invigoration of the native population. After the intervention of Northern Italians, they will finally abandon the bad habit of merely surviving and become productive members of the community, like Northerners. Moreover, Geromino praises the modern, capitalist production model that Northern Italians are about to introduce in Rome for being able to

ameliorate the proletariat's conditions. First of all, in the present, "costa molto la mano d'opera, dove una volta costava poco o niente; costava quasi soltanto nelle nerbate sulle gambe o alle costole degli schiavi" (64). Then, the introduction of a fair salary allows workers to have a respectable and serene life:

> il bracciante tirando delle cassette di terra nella costruzione delle nostre strade ferrate, o portando la secchia di terra nelle fabbriche moderne, si busca il suo nobile e sacrosanto salario, con cui alla domenica può far cuocere il suo pollo […] e, mangiato il pollo, può piantarsi un garofano all'occhiello della giacchetta e uscire di casa allegro e trionfante perché egli è cosa sua e non d'altri, è pensiero di se stesso, di sua moglie e dei suoi figlioli. (*Un viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa* 64)

The narrator presents a situation of equity and success for the workers. While the heavy and extenuating work of filling and moving buckets of debris is limited to neutral verbs such a pull (tirare) and bring (portare), the narrator puts more evidence on the rewards of working such a job. The salary is enough for the workers to buy a whole chicken for the Sunday lunch, to dare for a frivolity such a fresh flower on the jacket for the Sunday stroll, and to be happy and satisfied that they manage to provide for his entire family. Unfortunately, this idyillic description is often far from the real struggle that occasional workers in Rome had to fight every day.[46]

Faldella reinforces his industrialist myth through Geromino's vision from the Pincio, where he imagines the dawn of a new epoch for the Italian nation, which is embodied in a colossal, metal statue that seems to anticipate imagery from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927):

> Ed io, allucinato da questi pensieri e memorie e speranze, mi sentii abbagliato negli occhi: non vidi più i fumajuoli, le fronti, i buchi delle case, delle torri e delle cupole; vidi davanti a me una massa di metallo corintio, che si muoveva tremolante, balenava vicina a liquefarsi; e vidi sorgere da essa la statua della nuova Roma, bella come la più

[46] For a detailed description of the situation of Rome's proletariat after 1870 see Chapter Two.

> bella signora che venga alla domenica in carrozza alla passeggiata del Pincio, alta come la gigantessa sognata e desiderata da Carlo Baudelaire, veneranda come una Vetruria, come una Madonna. (*Un viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa* 88-89)

Under the influence of his daydreaming and desire for modernization, Geromino experiences an imaginary transfiguration of the Roman cityscape; chimneys and decayed buildings are obscured by an iron statue of a woman representing the new Rome, which has both the traits of a bourgeois woman that frequents the Pincio, but at the same time, she holds a strong, superhuman power. Her force of attraction has similar effects to Baudelaire's sensual giantess and the Virgin Mary's purity. The connection between city, sensual woman, and machine originates in the 18th century and it becomes a recurrent topos of the 19th and early-20th century European literary and cinematic production, as Andreas Huyssen states in his introduction to the analysis of Lang's *Metropolis*: "Woman, nature, machine had become a mesh of significations all of which had one thing in common: otherness; by their very existence they raised fears and threatened male authority and control" (204). Since in Faldella's passage sensuality is not overwhelming – in comparison to Serao's text that I analyze in the next section – modern Rome appears for sure as "other" to its current state but still something tamable. Indeed, the female figure is first of all a Northern, bourgeois lady. Faldella envisions an economic miracle that would be able, as a novel Pygmalion, to completely transform Rome's face into a modernized metropolis. Indeed, metal architectonic structures – like Termini Station – will substitute decaying, brick building in this vision.[47] Indeed, as Remo Ceserani

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[47] For a brief account of the construction of Termini station, see pp. 123-125 of "Chapter Six: Axis and Empire" in Borden Painter's *Mussolini's Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.

recalls, "l'introduzione delle ferrovie nella vita economica e sociale dei paesi europei ebbe anche, e in particolare nei paesi che stavano vivendo un processo di unificazione politica e una costruzione di un'identità nazionale, una notevole valenza politica (e militare)" (19). However, this new, bourgeois, democratic face that the same Faldella says is "fresca incollata" (*Roma Borghese* 109) did not resolve the eternal issues affecting the Roman proletariat and subproletariat.

Faldella amplifies the supremacy of the Northern urban model through the comparison between the names of the streets in Esquilino – which recall the Risorgimento – and those of the old Rome – which summon saints, trades, or previous foreign rulers:

> I gruppi delle nuove vie intitolate alle battaglie e agli assedii più belli del risorgimento nazionale (Goito, Pastrengo, Palestro, San Martino, Gaeta) o nei nomi valorosi di Casa Savoia (Carlo Alberto, Vittorio Emanuele, Umberto, Amedeo) o in quegli insigni e benemeriti di Cavour, Farini, Mazzini, ecc., si contrappongono ai gruppi delle vecchie vie coi titoli imbruttiti di santi (San Stefano del Cacco, Santa Maria in… Cacaberis) o con quello dei più umili mestieri (sediari, canestrari, chiavari, coronari) o con quelli degli stranieri Avignonesi, Portoghesi, Greci, Aragonesi, Spagnuoli, ecc. (*Roma Borghese* 20)

Faldella highlights how even the toponomy is an act of celebration and modernization of the capital inside the Italian nation; this shows how transparent the relation is between buildings and words in the construction of a national discourse. The new streets commemorating the political success of Northern politicians and kings in the establishment of a unified nation will erase any trace of the past shame of the country (foreign occupation), of excessive religious devotion, and of obsolete jobs in the era of a modern, capitalist nation. Faldella's approach to Rome emblematizes what Forgacs defines with *arretratezza* (backwardness) for Southern Italy; this concept "implied a view

of the south [...] as stuck in the past, held back by the residues of a feudal economy and by a primitive and superstitious mentality, by comparison with the more dynamic capitalist economies of the north" (*Italy's Margins* 142). Indeed, according to Faldella, Piedmontese people are "tanti fatali Eneadi" (20) that contribute to the foundation of a new Rome not only with the Risorgimento but also with their daily contribution to the actual construction of the capital – a large percentage of architects, engineers, and workers emigrated from Turin to Florence and then Rome following the transfers of the Italian capital.

Faldella's mythicizing of *Roma capitale* continues in the description of the construction sites that is almost fairytale-like:

> Intanto sorgono a riempire i lati delle vie le muraglie delle nuove case in costruzione, rassomigliano ad enormi torroni di sassi cretosi strizzanti l'intonaco roseo, da cui sono reticolati; si veggono qua e là mucchi di pozzolana rossa, che si mescola colla calce, come il caffè con la panna montata; […] si lanciano e si acciuffano al volo mattoni biancastri con un ritmo di acrobatica meccanica; si scarrucolano massi, secchie, secchioni; si odono comandi in piemontese e in lombardo, ubbidienze in umbro, piceno, calabro o viceversa. *Fervet opus*: è un lavorio di pecchie virgiliane; è la descrizione della fabbricazione di Cartagine nel primo libro dell'Eneide. (*Roma Borghese* 20)

More than the construction of Carthage, Faldella's words creates a successful version of the tower of Babel, where the different regional Italian dialects alternate harmoniously, and a sort of *Bengodi*, where typical Italian products as *torrone* – which has a specific variation in almost every region – and the Turinese *bicerin* (coffee with cream and chocolate) symbolize the harmonious, brotherly cooperation that reinforces the fresh

unification and will lead to Italy's development.[48] For sure, the image that Faldella transmits of those Roman days is joyous, industrious, and multicultural.

Even in the aformentioned "Una spaghettata," the author combines food with an analysis of the newborn society. The occasion is the invitation to a lunch in a typical suburban *trattoria*, where the landlord, engineers, and workers equally share the meal to celebrate the completion of a building. The model is the Last Supper:

> L'oste per cocciutaggine aristocratica pretendeva allogare le tavole in due stanze separate, l'una per i signori ingegneri e l'altra per i muratori. Ma gli ingegneri furono vieppiù testardi nella loro evangelica democrazia ed ordinarono a Giovanni Filomarino di apparecchiare per tutti nella prima sala. […] Alle tavole laterali si sedettero apostolicamente i muratori. […] L'esofago riceveva stratificazioni di beatitudine, e una nuvola di godimento solenne, in cui si restauravano le forze della natura, avvolgeva tutte quelle teste, quelle casacche, quei tipi diversi, quelle origini diverse. Pareva una manducatoria rituale, divina, come il mistero del Sacramento dell'Eucarestia. (*Roma Borghese* 159-163)

By superimposing images from the Gospel, Faldella celebrates the newborn nation and contributes to the *religione della patria* that was developing in those years. The author attributes this utopic absence of class division both to the period of transition that the country was experiencing and also to a Northern influence on society. The local host prepares two separate rooms for the workers and their bosses, but it is the Northern engineers that insist on eating all together and, in this way, demonstrate to the local population what democracy means for them. Faldella reinforces this idea in a following

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[48] Food had been used as an important tool in the nation's unification; for example, in recent years, Pellegrino Artusi, Paolo Mantegazza, and Italian Futurism have been at the center of new studies connecting food and national identity. For more information, see Daniele De Feo's "Paolo Mantegazza as Didatic Gastronome: Food, Art, Science and the New Italian Nation" in *Humanities* Vol. 5 No. 26 (2016), pp. 1-14 and Carol Helstosky's "Recipe for the Nation: Reading Italian History through *la Scienza in cucina* and *la Cucina futurista*" in *Food and Foodways* Vol. 11 (2003): 113-140. For more general studies on food and Italian society see Emanuela Scarpellini's *Food and Foodways in Italy from 1860 to Present,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2016 and Alberto Cappatti's and Massimo Montanari's *Italian Cuisine: A Cultural History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

passage where he affirms again that all Northern Italians are productive – even those who are not strictly manual workers – and that no class division exists in the North because possessing the ability to perform different jobs is a peculiar Italian quality:

> Tra perché la nuova Italia si trova in un periodo di transizione, di formazione e di miscela, e perché la varietà artistica impronta perpetuamente il carattere italiano, il fatto sta ed è che niuna classe di lavoratori ha da noi divise o fattezze uniformi. Mi ricordo che nel Vercellese, quando urge il bisogno di mondare il riso, i proprietari e i fittaiuoli si portano all'apposito mercato dei *mondini* e lì fanno vere razzìe di lavoratori variopinti. (*Roma Borghese* 160)

Faldella considers Italians as an equal class of workers without a strong hierarchy; this variegation of the working class depends on the different abilities of individuals, which is part of the Italian character, and on the period of transition and formation that the nation was experiencing at the time. So, for Faldella, this versatile productivity is an essential quality of Italians, and the lack of productivity immediately discards individuals from being part of the new nation. It is also clear that this idyllic consideration on the working class is merely utopic and it clashes with reality and with some passages in the articles themeselves, where a Northern gaze imposes its values and uses on what is considered an underdeveloped area.

More than once Faldella expresses his desire of fusion of the different Italian regional identities in Rome. One example is a young couple – a Roman boy and a Piedmontese girl – that, in dancing together, produces a perfect blending of the two cultures and races: "si confondevano tradizioni, eredità fisiologiche secolari… la *fondua* faceva alleanza cogli spaghetti al sugo, i cieli lividi coi cieli sanguigni di porpora consulare, l'etica con l'estetica" (*Roma Borghese* 34). However, it is in the Roman urban fabric that the author wishes to see the perfect synthesis of Italian identities:

> E sognò ad occhi aperti una nuova grande Roma, in cui si rispecchino e si ripercuotano tutte le sparse bellezze e gagliardie italiane; l'attica Firenze, la benestante Milano, la fantastica Venezia, Napoli frequente, Genova superba, Bologna dotta, Palermo, Modena, Parma, ecc. e la soda Torino, con grandi viali che aprano diritto il cammino da San Pietro in Vaticano a San Giovanni in Laterano, dalla Stazione di Termini a Montecitorio, […] viali che purghino la stipa della poveraglia dalle empietà anti-igieniche, viali brulicanti di tranvai, che correndo, quasi volando a a fior di terra, diano a tutto quanto il piano stradale l'aspetto di un nastro svolto rapidamente. (*Roma Borghese* 36)

To Faldella's eyes, Rome has to appear as an abstract puzzle of the major Northern Italian cities' iconic architecture, which reflects only the positive qualities of their inhabitants.[49] The author suggests that such a forged capital, which juxtaposes heterogeneous architectonic styles, can be an effective tool in unifying Italians; however, this project underepresents cities of Southern Italy and also excludes the poor population of Rome. Indeed, this utopic, urban puzzle is stitched with large boulevards and tram tracks that, in addition to modernizing the capital, also function as a sanitizing tool because they require space and, therefore, they necessitate a dissection of the medieval, unhygienic districts. In this perfect combination between regional architecture and efficient modernity, poverty and misery need to be erased.

In fact, in "La morte di un giornalista," Faldella clearly separates the old, poor, unsanitized *Roma bassa* from the new, modern *Roma alta* in the portrait of his friend

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[49] This syncretism of regional identities and aesthetics would continue in the early twentieth century. In 1911, for the fiftieth anniversary of Italy's unification, Rome hosted the International Exhibition of Art, where Marcello Piacentini's 'Forum of the Regions' was the main attraction. While the central architectural body recalled St. Peter's, "the pavilions erected by the fourteen regions of the peninsula [...] presented fusions of elements from famous architectural works that constituted the 'classical' models of their cultures: the Umbrian pavilion was a free interpretation of Perugia's Palazzo del Popolo; Emilia-Romagna's, a mixture of the d'Este Castle of Ferrara, the Palazzo Bentivoglio of Bologna, and the Tempio Malatesta of Rimini" (Kirk 259). The lack of representation of the South comments on the position of *meridione* in the discourse on national identity.

Roberto Sacchetti, who has recently moved to the capital and is waiting for his family to join him. In the meanwhile, the journalist has rented

> una stanzuccia in via dei Pastini, nella vecchia Roma. Era una cameretta triangolare […]: aveva l'aridezza delle cose tarlate, la distaccatezza della tappezzeria marcia e la slogatezza delle quadrelle che si spostano sotto i piedi, e lo schifo delle cose luride e logore. […] Sacchetti […] aveva un fiuto finissimo, quindi non poteva sopportare gli odori, che sono la nota culminante della vecchia Roma. Perciò soffriva orribilmente in quella camera, e lagnavasi per giunta che di notte il sonno gli fosse maledettamente rotto dalla tosserella di un suo vicino, malato cronico d'etisia. (*Roma Borghese* 82–83)

These words evidently portray the decadence and the poverty of this part of the capital – decaying apartments, miasma and fetid air that probably cause illness in its inhabitants.[50] This description clearly clashes with the appearance of the new neighborhood of Castro Pretorio, where he rented an apartment for his family: "per l'arrivo della moglie, dei bambini e della mobilia, aveva appigionato un magnifico quartierino nella Roma alta, ariosa, pittoresca di paesaggio" (82). This part of Rome is the appropriate setting to conduct a serene, bourgeois life: "Ora a Roma, dove si sentiva tranquillo, voleva che la famiglia vi facesse modestamente una gaia vita, e si proponeva di allevare ne' suoi figli dei nuovi romani, conoscenti di letteratura moderna. Egli avrebbe condotto a braccetto ogni giorno la sua signora e l'avrebbe tratta con sé fino all'ufficio del telegrafo" (83).

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[50] In *La Conquista di Roma* (1885), Matilde Serao gives another good description of the decadence of *Roma vecchia*: "le tre vie consecutive, Fontanella di Borghese, Monte Brianzo, Tordinona, erano ingombre di veicoli e di pedoni, strettissime, contorte, con quelle nere botteghe di ferravecchi, di cartoleria, tutte sporche e polverose, con quei portoncini angusti, con quelli angiporti paurosi. A Castel Sant'Angelo si respirava; ma sul torbido e quasi immobile fiume giallastro, era una fittezza di casupole brune, di casamenti bigi, dalle mille piccole finestre, dalle chiazze di verde umido, sulle facciate, come se una schifosa lebbra li deturpasse, dalle fondamenta nerastre di ruggine, che l'acqua bassa lasciava scoperte: quel gomito di fiume verso Trastevere, era ignobile. In Borgo, la quiete profonda clericale cominciava, coi palazzi bigiognoli silenziosi, con le botteghe di oggetti sacri, statuette, immagini, oleografie, rosari crocifissi" (27). Even if the protagonist Sangiorgio notices the decadence of these ancient, ruined buildings, it is only in this neighborhood that he finds active people in contrast to the desert inside Parliament or near the most famous landmarks. Clearly, Serao's protagonist offers a different point of view caused both by the disenchantment with *Roma capitale* and the Southern origin of the character (and writer).

According to Faldella, only in this new setting can the newborn, bourgeois Romans live and prosper, while the old, sick Romans barely survive in the medieval slums.

3.2 A Southern, Frightened Look on Modern Rome: Matilde Serao's *La Conquista di Roma* (1885)

In 1881, Matilde Serao (1856-1927) moved from Naples to Rome to work as a journalist in one of the major Italian journals, *Capitan Fracassa*, where other influential intellectuals of the period, such as D'Annunzio, De Amicis, Scarfoglio, and Pascarella, were writing too. Even if she encountered difficulties as a woman journalist, she affirmed herself in the Roman publishing industry; she soon became the editor for *Capitan Fracassa* and she collaborated with other important journals such as the *Fanfulla della Domenica*, the *Domenica Letteraria*, and the trendy *Cronache Bizantine* (De Nunzio Schilardi 106). As Ann Caesar reports, her articles varied from Franco-Russian relationships to town planning, from book reviews to monarchy, from fashion and furnishings to social Darwinism (VII). Certainly, the heterogeneity of the issues covered allowed her to frequent different Roman milieux and to gather material that she would later reelaborate in her novel *La Conquista di Roma.* Indeed, in her book, Serao recollected her first impressions on the new Italian capital and her disorientation immediately after her arrival from Naples to describe her protagonist Francesco Sangiorgio's feelings during his stay in Rome (Caesar V).[51] Similar to Serao, Sangiorgio moves to the capital to advance his career – he has just been elected as a parliamentary deputy – with the hope of finding a better life away from his native, poor, rural town of the South. However, as for the writer, Rome disappoints Sangiorgio. Wanda De Nunzio

[51] For more details see her 1882 letters "Alla 'Conquista di Roma.' Lettere del 1882-1884" in *Nuova Antologia* 76.1602, 1938, pp. 380-395.

Schilardi points out how *La Conquista di Roma* is one of the first novels of the antiparliamentiary genre, which became popular in the late 19th century and converged the general discontent of the Italian population with the economic speculation that guides Italian politics, the dominion of banks over the majority of political decisions, and the many scandals involving politicians.[52] All these themes are present in Serao's novel and they affect and transform Sangiorgio and his service as a parliament member; however, what differentiates Serao's book from the other parliamentary novels is the attention given to the interactions between her protagonist and urban space together with an accurate and realistic description of the transformations that were affecting the capital. In my analysis, I focus on the first part of the novel, before the protagonist succumbs to the allures of modern life and political corruption; I highlight how Serao uses Rome's monuments, its different districts, and the its inhabitants to depict the protagonist's initial approach to the city and his adjustment in it.

Less than ten years after Faldella's articles, the panorama that Serao offers of *Roma alta* is very different from the one that the Piedmontese author praised. In the passage where Sangiorgio follows the procession commemorating the Risorgimento battles of 1848-1849 that happened at the *vascello*, he meets a Tuscan congressman, Tullio Giustini, who is totally disenchanted with the Italian politics and the construction of *Roma capitale*. His description of the recent neighborhoods for the Northern bourgeoisie (Esquilino, Castro Pretorio) contains Serao's autobiographical impressions on the city, but it also unveils the limitations of the construction of the new Rome. The new neighborhoods appear as a detached entity from the old, medieval districts:

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[52] For a more accurate explanation of the political and economic situation of Rome in the period see Chapter Two.

"Settantamila impiegati, famiglie, servi, cani e gattini: un attendamento di barbari disarmati e affamati, che se ne stanno accoccolati lassù e guardando Roma e odiandola, perché non la possono capire, e perché la trovano esorbitante, mentre le loro donne hanno i figli e cucinano, pallide, col seno smunto e colle mani rosse" (*La Conquista di Roma* 78-79). The bourgeoisie that according to Faldella would have prospered in Rome, in reality, struggled to survive in the capital. First of all, the quantity of people living in the area was exorbitant and she gives the idea of the massive proportion of immigrants from Northern and Central Italy that settled there. Alberto Caracciolo reports that, in the 1881 census, the immigrants from the ex-Kingdom of Sardinia represent the 41,4 per thousand of the total population while the immigrants from Tuscany the 45,1 per thousand (41). These high percentages demonstrate the deep transformation that was affecting Rome's population; the capital's inhabitants grew from 240,000 (1871) to 300,000 (1881) and in 1881 those who were born in the city were just 134,156 against the 166,311 born elsewhere (Caracciolo 42). Moreover, in her novel, Serao highlights how the population inhabiting Castro Pretorio and Esquilino was still living separately from the native population and the rest of the city because they could not understand it and they considered it too big. The fusion for which Faldella was wishing in some passages of his articles did not happened.

Serao's novel depicts the real situation that she observed when walking in Rome's street. In fact, as Caracciolo documents,

> come non giunse a definirsi in un sol giorno, [...] il compromesso tra Nord e Sud dopo l'unitá, così fu lunga ed ardua nella città stessa di Roma la fusione delle persone e dei costumi. Per tre o quattro anni il trasferimento della capitale sembrò ridursi a un fatto puramente esteriore che costringesse a convivere sullo stesso suolo, ma profondamente distanti, l'elemento forestiero e quello locale. Regnava l'attesa,

> l'incertezza, quasi che da una parte e dall'altra non si fosse completamente convinti del nuovo assetto. (43-44)

The sense of unbridgeable separation between native population and newcomers was still present ten years after the breach when Serao – and her protagonist – walked in Castro Pretorio and Esquilino for the first time. The main reasons for the locals' hostility –which Caracciolo traces back to the first years after the annexation – were the anticlerical spirit of Northerners, the imposition of new taxes that came with unification, the consequent increase of the prices of essential goods and housing, and the opening of sophisticated shops along the Corso that closed down local stores, at which native Romans could not afford to shop (44-45).[53] Gentrification came with unification. However, only a minority of Northerners and Tuscans could lead a bourgeois life, strolling happily in the elegant boulevards and buying goods in the sophisticated shops. Most of them lived in similar conditions to the poor locals; the description that Serao gives of the inhabitants of *Roma alta* can be interchangeable with that of the native Romans (or the Neapolitans she depicts in *Il Ventre di Napoli*): men are hopeless, illiterate, and hungry while their women's bodies show the traces of bearing children and doing manual work. Serao's novel matches with texts written by other witnesses of the post-breach period, as the journalist and politician Giacomo Dina that Caracciolo quotes: "I Romani cacciati di casa per dare i loro quartieri non sono meno disgraziati e meno malcontenti degli impiegati. Se li vedessi percorrere Roma in tutti i versi, stanchi, abbattuti, i più colle tasche leggere!" (46) Clearly, clerks and the *popolino* shared a similar life in the new capital.

[53] For a more detailed analysis of the real estate speculation of the period, see Chapter Two.

The novel also presents topoi of industrial metropolis in literature, even if Rome was not, and never became, an industrial city. In the aforementioned passage, still through Giustini's words, Serao insists on how the modernization of Rome and its transformation into a metropolis crushes not only the proletariat and the subproletariat but also the petite bourgeoisie because they are all necessary parts of a mechanism of the capital's existence. When Giustini and Sangiorgio reach the top of the Gianicolo, they stop to observe Rome from the top and the Tuscan congressman affirms that "Roma è così viva, mentre vi sembra immobile: essa è così grande, così complicata, così delicata nel suo *congegno*, così potente nelle sue *leve di acciaio*, che quando io mi piego a guardarla, di quassù, mi fa spavento, come una *macchina infernale*" (79, my italics). After imagining the possible activities and thoughts of the native Romans and newcomers, Giustini underlines how lively the city is with the population doing different things at the same time, but he also alludes to the dangers of mechanization that modernization entails, even in absence of industrialization. Serao's connotation of Rome as an infernal engine certainly recalls French Naturalism – especially Émile Zola's mine in *Germinal*, 1885 – but it also anticipates the industrial, Moloch-like machine that swallows workers in Lang's *Metropolis*.

In his first discourse at the Chamber, when Sangiorgio denounces the total oblivion of the State towards the misery of the South and the rural regions, he builds on Giustini's words when he states that "Le grandi città sono invaditrici, divoratrici, e hanno la necessità di vivere dell'esistenza altrui e sfruttano forze, e affogano lamenti, e dànno all'uomo che ci vive una tal febbre, che lo fa dimentico di qualunque altro interesse umano" (86). So, not only do metropolises devour their inhabitants' energy with their

imposition of a mechanic rhythm over a more natural one, but they also drain any form of empathy towards the others. In fact, the first thing that Sangiorgio notices as soon as he arrives at Termini station, and, later, in his walks in the Roman streets, is the indifference of the population. On the Gianicolo, Giustini emphasized the same concept: "Questa città non vi aspetta e non vi teme: non vi accoglie e non vi scaccia: non vi combatte e non si degna di accettare la battaglia. La sua forza, la sua potenza, la sua attitudine è in una virtù quasi divina: *l'indifferenza.* […] È la città dove tutti son venuti, dove tutto è accaduto: che gliene importa di voi, atomo impercettibile, che passate così presto?" (80). So, even if Rome was not an industrial city, it still had the qualities of a metropolis: crowds, indifference for individuals, fast rhythm, homogenization. These appeared even accentuated from the perspective of a Southerner like Sangiorgio, whose term of comparison was a small town secluded in the mountains of Basilicata where each inhabitant knew each other and had purpose inside the community.

From his arrival at the train station, Sangiorgio starts to grow disenchanted with the capital. Before arriving there, when he is still on the train, Sangiorgio dreams about the Italian capital. In his fantasies, Rome appears as a giant woman. His personification is different from the one in Faldella's article, where the capital assumes almost science fiction tones with the colossal iron statue symbolizing the triumph of capitalism and of the bourgeoisie. Instead, Serao depicts Rome as a charming, tempting woman who completely baffles the protagonist Sangiorgio:

> Il nome [Roma] era breve e soavissimo, come uno di quei flessuosi e incantevoli nomi di donna che sono un segreto di seduzione […]. Il senso che quello fosse un nome di una città, di un grande agglomerato di case e di popolo, gli sfuggiva: Roma gli era ignota. […] E non avendola vista, non poteva che rappresentarla astrattamente, […] come un'apparizione femminile ma ideale, come un'immensa figura, dai contorni indistinti. […] [La] vedeva, come una colossale ombra umana, tendergli le immense

> braccia materne, per chiuderselo al seno, in un abbraccio potente […]: gli pareva di udire, nella notte, la soavità irresistibile di una voce femminile che pronunziasse il suo nome, ogni tanto, dandogli un brivido di voluttà. […] Figura ieratica di sacerdotessa, di madre, di amante, Roma vuole espiazioni e sacrifici, vuole un cuore puro e una volontà di ferro. (15-17)

Sangiorgio's approach to Rome is very different from Faldella's Geromino, even if they both imagine Rome as a colossal, female figure. First of all, Faldella writes before the peak of the *febbre edilizia*, when the capital was still experiencing urban transformations in a regulated way. This allows the protagonist to have a controlled overview of the city. Moreover, his point of view is that of a colonizer. The author and the protagonist are Piedmontese and they underline the positive effects of the northern interventions in Rome; they believe that, thanks to the guidance of the northern population, the Italian capital would become a modern, industrial metropolis. On the contrary, Sangiorgio – like Serao from Naples in 1881 – moves to Rome from the South, specifically, from a rural and isolated village in Basilicata. On one hand, Sangiorgio is completely fascinated by Rome because of its novelty, as if seduced by a woman, and he is intimately tied to it like a mother, for its sense of national belonging. On the other hand, he is overwhelmed by the unknown that the capital represents. With these metaphors Serao goes beyond the topos of sensual woman, city, and machine previously analyzed in Faldella's text. The Freudian allusion to the oedipal complex to describe the protagonist's relationship to the capital alludes to the fact that the desire that drives Sangiorgio and Italians to Rome and the nation is something that cannot be satisfied. Indeed, they both are excluded from its conquest and, in this way, they never participate in the nation.

Another figure that merits attention in Serao's depiction of modernization is the train. The train that transports Sangiorgio anticipates his future unease in the Italian

capital and his lack of authority and control over the city. The freshly elected congressman perceives the train carriage he occupies as a trap as soon as he starts thinking about his future in Rome. In the wagon,

> gli parve d'essere solo, irremediabilmente, abbandonato, perduto, nella debolezza della solitudine. […] Si sentì smarrito e pauroso come un bimbo, in quella gabbia donde non poteva uscire, che la macchina portava via, quella macchina che egli era impotente a fermare nella sua corsa: era spaventato, come una miserabile creatura che veglia solitaria […]. Una soffocazione lo assalse alla gola. (14)

Sangiorgio's feelings inside the wagon foreshadow those activated by his encounter with the urban crowd at Termini Station. In the train, the protagonist feels lonely, abandoned, and weak, like a child who has no control over the events happening in his life; these moments pass too quickly, and they transport him into different situations that he cannot handle. Serao's depiction of the scene recalls Simone Brioni's analysis of Termini station as a heterotopia of crisis, that is "a place that outlines a 'state of stressful personal transition'" (444). Indeed, even if Brioni examines Rome's main train station in cultural production from the aftermath of WWII to 2000s, his identification of Termini "as an anamorphic image of Italy's process of modernization and its anxieties, and as a 'mirror' of the country's conflicted relationship with alterity" (444) is valid, probably even more, at the end of the 19th century, when Serao wrote her novel. When Sangiorgio walks in the station, he experiences the same sense of isolation that he felt in the microcosm of the train:

> egli scendendo, fu preso da un lieve tremito nelle gambe; la folla lo circondava, lo urtava, lo spingeva, senza badare a lui […]; le facce erano tutte stanche, assonnate, annoiate, in uno sbadiglio che stirava le bocche: la sola espressione era l'indifferenza, un'indifferenza non ostile, ma invincibile. Nessuno gli badava, al deputato Sangiorgio. (19-20)

Serao's description of the crowd exhalts people's tired, sleepy, and bored faces and exaggerates their facial traits. These peculiarities anticipate painters such as Edvard Munch's (1863-1944) and the German Expressionists – Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938) in primis – that explored human disquiet in modern cities. For example, the image of the indifferent Roman crowd scattered with people's apathetic faces pairs up with Munch's *Evening on Karl Johan Street* (1892) where the viewer's eye, similar to Sangiorgio at the train station, runs into a mass of blurred individuals, all clothed in dark coats, whose gloomy and ghastly faces haunt the viewer. In the case of *La Conquista di Roma*, because of his southern, provincial origins, Serao's protagonist appears completely lost in the Italian capital. The metaphor of the child alludes to the fact that Sangiorgio, like the Southerners and rural Italians, is not ready for the metropolis and its attached modernization and capitalization; they are transported into a novel socioeconomic reality that they cannot understand nor participate in, as they are just exploited.[54] Moreover, Sangiorgio experiences a total lack of community that characterizes his village and Italian small towns; in the city, everyone is a stranger to one another. For this reason, during the first week, this feeling of not belonging to Rome and its crowd continues. He is not able to leave his hotel and remains at the threshold of the door to observe the external world, from which he is completely detached: "le strade erano fangose, il cielo tutto bianco di nuvole: una gente smorta, chiusa nei soprabiti, coi calzoni arrovesciati sul collo del piede e col viso incerto di chi non si fida, girava per le vie" (21). Sangiorgio feels a barrier between him and Rome; not only are the streets

[54] Note again the connection between children and freshly unified Italians.

unwelcoming with rain, but people, too, wrapped in their coats, avoid any contact with each other, exactly as in Kirchner's numerous paintings of Berlin's streets.

Since Sangiorgio perceives himself excluded from the capital and the nation, he also feels disconnected from Rome's monuments which, during the process of nation building, worked as symbols of national identity. For example, Saint Peter's appears completely deserted: "un silenzio di luogo disabitato" (27) reigns and "nessun uomo comparve, e la piazza vuota, grandissima, cosparsa di acqua […] gli parve simile alla campagna romana, una vastità di campagna brulla" (28). Even inside, besides a small group of Germans, he cannot find any trace of human presence: "Non una sedia, non un banco, non un prete, non un sagrestano, spirito familiare che spegnesse le candele o rifornisse d'acqua benedetta le grosse pile vuote" (28). The basilica appears empty, useless, not relevant to the everyday practice of space; for these reasons, it does not communicate with the protagonist and it reminds him of the *Agro romano* – an unproductive space.

The Coliseum offers another example of the lack of connection between the protagonist and the landmark; this failure leads to the impossibility to participate in national identity. Like De Amicis's narrator in his first visit to the Coliseum, Sangiorgio cannot interact with this building: "andava attorno trattenendosi, quasi per obbligo, distraendosi, pensando ad altro, non interessandosi a quella massa enorme di pietra, glaciale e abbandonata" (28-29). This sense of detachment not only depends on the fact that he is alone there and, because of that, he cannot elaborate a codified meaning for the monument, but also because he feels obliged to associate a sense of national belonging to

a mass of cold and abandoned stone. The neglected state of the monument prevents him from assigning positive feelings to it. Indeed, Sangiorgio

> penetrò sotto l'arco di entrata, affondando nel terreno fangoso. Una pozza di acqua piovana, larga, con gli orli verdicci di vegetazione, era sulla soglia dell'anfiteatro Flavio […] la luce sporca di una giornata piovosa gli toglieva una parte della maestà, mostrandone il lato sudicio e tutto lo sgretolamento del tempo. La campagna attorno, fuori, era vastissima: una vegetazione ricca di campagna umida: ma non un canto d'uccello, non una voce di animale, non la voce di un uomo. (29-30)

Sangiorgio experiences how Saint Peter's and the Coliseum are not integral part of Rome's urban fabric. Because of its belonging to the Church, the basilica is totally detached from the bourgeois, new Rome; no one goes there and it appears as desolated as the Roman countryside that surrounds the capital and that still penetrates the city walls, as in the case of the area surrounding the Coliseum. By associating the urban bleakness that Sangiorgio encounters at Saint Peter's and at the Coliseum with the decay of the *agro romano*, Serao not only denounces the capital's incomplete project of national revitalization but she also testifies to the transformation that the city was experiencing in its passage from a rural, abandoned town to the Italian capital. Indeed, at the time, the area around the Vatican was still countryside with the exception of Spina di Borgo and the new neighborhood Prati di Castello, while the Roman forum and the Coliseum hovered between urban and rural. Moreover, Serao insists on the lack of human and animal presence in Saint Peter's and the Coliseum, which amplifies the protagonist's impossibility to connect with these places.

Together with other visits to ancient Roman ruins, the Coliseum episode shows Sangiorgio's incapacity to give meaning to these historic monuments that are considered foundational for the Italian nation and, at the same time, Serao uses them as metaphors to comment on the process of national unification. The sense of abandonment and the

absence of any form of life overwhelm and disorient Sangiorgio: "maravigliato di quella immensità di mura, cercava di orientarsi […] Arrivò nel centro, ma non capì che fossero quelle costruzioni del sottosuolo" (30). As disoriented as when he arrived in the city, still without any direction, the protagonist understands neither the structure of the amphitheater nor its historic and artistic importance for the new nation. Being a southerner, Sangiorgio is not only unable to grasp metropolitan life, but he is also incapable of reading the symbolic use of monuments on the part of the Italian government and the mechanisms of Italy's unification, which Serao symbolically identifies with the architectonic core of the Coliseum ("costruzioni del sottosuolo"). A following comment on the site reinforces this association between the monument and nation building. Because of his incapacity to relate to these ruins, "il Colosseo gli pareva una gran cosa immensa e inutile; una costruzione di gente orgogliosa e folle" (30). These words describing the protagonist's reaction to the Coliseum pair with his speech at the Chamber, where he denounces the miserable conditions of rural Italy and the pointlessness of having a unified nation if the government focuses just on its center and major cities and neglects its margins (86-88). For this reason, the Coliseum, which in many speeches and literature (including De Amicis) should have symbolized a glorious past that contemporary Italians should emulate and surpass in the new nation, represents the failure of the national utopic project. Similar to the amphitheater, the unification of Italy appears as a grandiose, useless enterprise led by crazy, proud people.

Serao's use of he *Terme di Caracalla* also contributes to Sangiorgio's sense of desolation in relation to the monument and, to a more symbolic level, to the Italian nation:

> In quell'ampiezza di ambiente, provava un malessere, aveva un freddo per le ossa, si sentiva piccolo, meschino, e tutto questo lo mortificava, lo umiliava, lo faceva soffrire […] e parevagli di portare in sé tutta la mestizia, tutta la solitudine, tutta la tetraggine di quelle rovine, piccole o grandi, grette o immani, tutta la vuotaggine, l'indifferentismo di quelle chiese inutili, di quei grandi santi di pietra, che sembravano figure ieratiche senza viscere, di quegli altari, glaciali, di marmi preziosi. (31-32)

Being part of the neglected South, Sangiorgio empathizes with the decaying ruins; abandoned, he experiences sadness and solitude that reach his bones with a sensation of cold and make him curl up in front of indiferrent churches, enourmous statues, and glacial altars – all symbols of power. Serao echoes this description of the protagonist amongst the Roman ruins with his arrival at the train station and his first walks in the main streets of the capital, where he felt lost and kept at a distance from its cold, detached inhabitants. However, his "infernal" journey through Rome's abandoned monuments causes a transformation in him. In fact, only after his direct contact with those sites that symbolized the nation in the collective imagery and that fail to represent it, the protagonist recognizes that the new image of Rome needs to be anchored to modernity:

> Chi se ne curava del passato? Egli apparteneva al presente, molto moderno, innamorato del suo tempo […], egli si sentiva rimpicciolito, perduto dalla pericolosa, snervante contemplazione del passato; un'oppressione profonda gli scendeva sul petto, sull'anima; certo aveva preso le febbri nell'acquitrino del Colosseo e delle Terme, nell'alito tepido e umido delle chiese. (32)

Suddenly, Sangiorgio changes his mind and embraces modernity. In fact, he feels better when he comes back to the modern side of Rome: "Ma a Piazza Sciarra i primi lumi a gas lo rianimarono. Un venditore di giornali strillava il *Fanfulla* e il *Bersagliere*. Gruppi di gente erano fermi sui marciapiedi. Una vivezza di vita cominciò a riscaldargli il cuore" (32). In this passage, national unification shifts from being based on Risorgimento ideals to modernization. Indeed, in order to be part of this modern, bourgeois, consumer

capitalist nation, Sangiorgio needs to abandon his attachment to abstract, Risorgimento conceptions of the nation – embodied in the supposed magnificence of ancient Roman ruins – and his attachment to the South for which he still strongly advocates in his first speech. Through Sangiorgio's return from Rome's ancient bowels, which symbolizes his renounciation to Italy's and his personal past, Serao represents the rebirth of the protagonist, who loses his identity in the second part of the novel. There, Sangiorgio forgets about the role that he assigned to himself as defendant of the South and Italian peasants and he totally sinks in the bourgeois pleasures that modernity offers and that Serao represents through the protagonist's desperate, hedonistic search for sensual and sexual pleasure that leads to his defeat.

In the next chapter, I shift the attention to the workers who contributed to the construction of the new Rome and, yet, were excluded from it. I examine in depth the real estate speculation that affected the Italian capital in the period and that caused an exponential growth of the proletariat and subproletariat in the city through the eyes of Gabriele D'Annunzio.

Chapter Two

Come un rigurgito di cloache:[55]

Bestial Proletarian Masses, Contagious Real Estate Speculation, and Poetic Spaces in Gabriele D'Annunzio's Rome

In addition to the symbolic elaboration of ancient churches and ruins that recalled the common Christian and Roman roots of the nation and, therefore, contributed to the figurative forging of Rome as Italy's capital, the capital needed to be architecturally remodeled to appear more modern and bourgeois. This operation attracted a large number of workers to Rome, who, as invisible mechanisms in this transformation, had to remain concealed. Indeed, according to the majority of Italian politicians and city authorities, "Rome should remain an administrative, religious, and cultural center and […] industrialization should be discouraged in order to avoid the formation […] of a restless and radical industrial proletariat" (Fried 21). In this chapter, I illustrate how this common European fear of a proletarian uprising influenced the spatial distribution of the working class in Rome and analyze contemporary descriptions of the capital's new cityscape through diverse evidence. Gabriele D'Annunzio's (1863-1938) Roman works are at the center of this chapter; these include the articles that he wrote for the journal *Le Cronache della Tribuna* (1884-1888)*, Il Piacere* (1889)*,* and *Le Vergini delle Rocce* (1895).[56] In recent years, D'Annunzio's novels have received much critical attention for their use of what Barbara Spackman calls a "rhetoric of sickness" to indicate otherness and their

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[55] Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Le Vergini delle Rocce,* 30.

[56] For a study on D'Annunzio's stays in Rome, especially his first, long experience from 1881 to 1891, see Angelo Piero Cappello's "Pagine da un diario romano. Roma (e il Lazio) nella 'automitografia' di D'Annunzio" in *Terre, Città e Paesi nella Vita e nell'Arte di Gabriele D'Annunzio: XX Convegno internazionale, Pescara, 6-7 dicembre 1996***,** Vol.1 "L'Abruzzo, Roma e l'Italia Meridionale," Pescara: Ediars, 1996, pp. 125-150.

adoption of an ideology exalting virility and reproduction (Spackman's *Decadent Genealogies*, 1989, and *Fascist Virilities,* 1996), for their rich intertextuality and the author's use of fiction in his political vision (Valesio's *The Dark Flame*, 1992), for their identification of modernization with a new barbarity to be defeated through art (Pireddu's *Antropologi alla corte della bellezza,* 2002), and for their attention to genetic descent and race in the context of post-unification cultural production and nation-building (Welch's *Vital Subjects,* 2016). With the exception of Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti's *Gli Inferi e il Labirinto. Da Pascoli a Montale* (1974) and the volumes *Terre, Città e Paesi nella Vita e nell'Arte di Gabriele D'Annunzio* from the XX Convegno Internazionale of the Centro Nazionale di Studi Dannunziani (1996-1997), only recently, has literary criticism paid more attention to the centrality of urban space in D'Annunzio's works, *Cronache* included.[57]

In this chapter, I create a dialogue between D'Annunzio's texts and their socio-cultural context by comparing the affinities in the word choice, style, and concepts with politicians' speeches, journal articles, passages from the aforementioned essays by Faldella (*Un Viaggio a Roma Senza Vedere il Papa*) and by art historian Herman Grimm on the destruction of Rome's ancient urban structure. Often, these idiosyncratic texts adopt a language that rely on medical terms of contagion. As Spackman explains when talking about the spread of scientific and biological models to describe society in the 19th century: "a 'new' opposition magnetically reorders the linguistic expression of scientific,

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[57] Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti's "La Roma di Claudio Cantelmo: D'Annunzio e l'Immagine della Nuova Capitale," in *Italianistica* XL.2.2011, pp. 141-151; Guido Baldi's "Nascita di una Metropoli: Roma nell'Opera di D'Annunzio" and Marja Härmänmaan's "La Giungla, la Prostituta, e il Tumore: L'Anatomia della Degenerazione della Città Moderna in D'Annunzio" in *La Città e l'Esperienza del Moderno* Vol. 2. Mario Barenghi, Giuseppe Langhella, and Gianni Turchetta eds. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2012, pp. 71-87 and pp. 159-169; and Luca Bani's *"Ditemi o pietre! Parlatemi eccelsi palagi. La rappresentazione di Roma nella lirica italiana tra Otto e Novecento: Carducci, D'Annunzio e Pascoli,"* Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2011.

literary, and political observations; a contagious rhetoric spreads from the body to the already-made topos of the body politic" (*Decadent Genealogies* 5). Metaphors of sickness were common in the cultural production of the time regarding nation-building; the tropes used in nonfiction texts are indistinguishable from literary ones. In this chapter I examine how space became a tool to confine the racialized bodies of the proletariat and sub-proletariat that threatened national identity and, for this reason, they were considered "contaminated."

In the first part of the chapter, I focus on the representation of the working poor of the capital. In the texts under consideration, their descriptions implied their bestialization, which reflected the conception of Rome's proletariat and subproletariat as the disturbing elements who needed to be eliminated from the capital's monumental façade in order to achieve the appearance of a wealthy, bourgeois city.[58] As Lucia Re states, "Dehumanization is […] an integral part of the racial paradigm of exclusion attached to most nationalist projects" ("Italians and the Invention of Race" 28). Therefore, fictional and non-fictional literature of the time contributed to a racialization of Rome's proletariat and subproletariat, while urban plans set in stone this division in the city's population. As demonstrated in Chapter One, architecture and urban planning are languages that hegemonic powers use to rule. Politicians and urban planners decided to locate proletarian housing in secluded areas outside of the city center (as in the case of Testaccio) with the aim of isolating the proletariat from the "fitting," from "what is proper to man" (Agamben 8) – that is, what was proper to the new Italian nation. Moreover, even symbols indicating the presence of the proletariat – such as factories and

[58] See also Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein's *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London: Verso, 1991.

smokestacks – became targets in this decisive battle over the capital's appearance; they had to be few and hidden from the bourgeois and monumental paths of the capital.[59] Since the public opinion of the time gave so much attention to the role of architecture and urban planning, my analysis privileges urban space. I offer new readings of D'Annunzio's texts by focusing on his use of buildings and public space to comment on the presence of the working poor and property speculation of the 1880s. The author considers both of them as infecting elements contaminating and destroying the society structure of the ancien régime that was crumbling with the advent of nation-states and capitalism. As Rhiannon Welch points out for *Il Trionfo della Morte* and the fin-de-siècle Italian novel in general, "the erosion of the aristocracy is often figured as both financial and biological" (140). Hence, capitalism and its effects appear as contaminating threats debilitating the aristocratic "race." Moreover, D'Annunzio's attention to land speculation is not simply used as an abstract figure for the general corruption of political and moral *mores*" as Re states in a note in "Gabriele D'Annunzio's novel *Le Vergini delle Rocce*" (261); rather, it is a phenomenon to which the author dedicates much space in his writings and leads to authentic portraits of the urban and social transformations affecting the capital.

In the second part of the chapter, I analyze an opposite process to the bestialization of the proletariat: the anthropomorphization of the vegetal world. In passages from *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, *Le Cronache della Tribuna*, and the collection

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[59] In addition to this process of urban segregation, real estate speculation and capitalist profit played a fundamental role in aggravating the already limited space for the Roman proletariat and sub-proletariat. Since it is not economically convenient to build proletarian housing, at the time, private speculators changed the designated use of buildings and forced the working poor to live in unhygienic conditions in overpopulated apartments disconnected from the city center, or in shacks in neglected areas.

Elettra (1903), D'Annunzio depicts Rome's green areas as the last stronghold of the past society before capitalism changed it. The author considers these poetic spaces – characterized by artistic creation, beauty, and idleness – as the hub of values necessary to defeat the decadence brought by capitalism.[60] This reading adds a new perspective to classic interpretations of Decadentism that define "Decadents [as] decadent not because they depict illness and decay but because they do not recognize the existence of health, of the social sphere that would reunite the alienated writer to the progressive forces of history" (Spackman, *Decadent Genealogies* 6).[61] Even if D'Annunzio's texts present a nostalgic hierarchical and class-based concept of society paired with a strong rhetoric of sickness and racialization, my reading highlights the author's recognition of the necessity of "healthy" spaces (green areas) to balance "the progressive forces of history" – capitalism, industrialization, and urban expansion. His texts present a strong desire for a more inclusive relationship with nature that should survive in modernity.[62] His position on the relationship between urban and green spaces anticipates material ecocritism and casts a light on the horizontal relationships between humanity and the vegetal world by showing their common agony in capitalist society.

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[60] In *Gli Inferi e il Labirinto. Da Pascoli a Montale*, Bàrberi Squarotti highlights how "la morte della Bellezza e dell'Arte all'interno di una società borghese dedita esclusivamente alla speculazione economica e al guadagno rappresenta uno dei motivi più insistenti dell'ideologia dannunziana" (81). See also Pireddu's chapter on D'Annunzio ("'Io ho quel che ho donato': nel circolo virtuoso del *kurios* dannunziano") in *Antropologi alla corte della bellezza*, where she analyses the writer's use of "arte come pratica simbolica che resiste all'orientamento utilitario e materialista della modernità occidentale" (376). She identifies *Il Piacere* as the work that better exemplifies the "presunta nobiltà delle comunità arcaiche e pre-capitalistiche fondate sulla pratica del dono incondizionato, proprio in quanto incarnazione di una bellezza che manifesta la decadenza come dissipazione di sensazioni effimere, e quindi punto d'incontro del disinteresse estetico e di un'etica non normativa e non utilitaria" (380).

[61] For a more detailed overview of classic interpretations of D'Annunzio and Decadentism, see Barbara Spackman's *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio,* Ithaca and London: Cornell Universit Press, 1989, especially the first chapter "The Island of Normalcy."

[62] Marja Härmänmaan underlines how a distorted relationship with nature is one of the main consequences of degeneration in the modern metropolis for D'Annunzio (160).

1. No city for proletariat and subproletariat

1.1 Bestiality

After the 1848 revolutions in Europe and the connected rise of socialism, governments, monarchs, the aristocracy, and the bourgeoisie shared an increasing fear of the proletarian masses and of the sub-proletarian presence in urban areas. Gabriele D'Annunzio crystallizes this common fear in several passages of *Il Piacere* and *Le Vergini delle Rocce.* In both novels, the working poor always interferes with the artificial reality created by the protagonists through poetry and art appreciation in order to face the radical transformations of the capital's urban and social structure. The presence of the proletariat and subproletariat is one of the consequences of the process of modernization that was affecting Rome at the time and, in the texts, they are often associated with sickness and contamination in a similar way to other effects of capitalism and thirst for profit in the city. The working poor, together with the new bourgeoisie, profiteers, the aristocrats selling their properties, the dust caused by demolitions and constructions, and the greed affecting the entire Roman society are part of the sick world from which D'Annunzio's protagonists need to take distance.

In *Il Piacere,* the appearance of the working poor always disturbs the protagonist, Andrea Sperelli, because it clashes with his artificial, sophisticated reconstruction of the reality surrounding him, which also alleviates his love sorrow for Elena Muti and Maria Ferres. Certainly, the amplification of the sensuous perception of external and internal spaces, objects, and atmospheres is a signature characteristic of European Decadentism, to which D'Annunzio belongs. As Giovanni Ragone explains for Joris-Karl Huysmans's

À Rébours (1884), the protagonist "Des Esseintes, [...], nell'epoca in cui i sogni dell'arte iniziano a essere fabbricati industrialmente, [incarna] un io-camaleonte, degenerato, sofferente, stoicamente ossessivo, deciso ad assaporare ogni esperienza nella sua casa-rifugio, separato dal mediocre brulichio metropolitano" (VIII). Even if Huysmans's character is more monstrous and neurotic than D'Annunzio's Sperelli, the protagonists share a similar resistance to modernization and industrialization, which enable the mechanic recreation of works of art and annihilate the sublime development of feelings and sensations connected to the artistic creation of beauty. The fear of losing this natural and yet transcendental demiurgic tool pushes the protagonists of decadent novels to create an internal, artificial paradise to contrast the external, bleak reality. The same can be said of Sperelli, who recovers from his severe wound caused by the duel with a love rival and his consequent melancholia in the exterior paradise of Villa Schifanoja in Francavilla, where he mystically fuses nature and art.[63]

Being an artificial paradise like art and poetry, love, too, must be protected from the banality, the homogenization, and the sufferance of modern daily life. For example, at the beginning of the novel, when Sperelli is waiting to meet Elena in his apartment two years after their last encounter, he revives his memories connected to the day of their separation in the Roman countryside outside of Porta Pia. The sadness of their farewell is amplified by entering an "osteria", whose interior immediately destroys the poetry that the author creates for the description of Andrea and Elena's tender bodily contact by the

[63] For a study on convalescence and artistic and philosophical creation in Decadentism, see Spackman's chapter titled "Scene of Convalescence" in *Decadent Genealogies*. For the importance of the landscape of Schifanoja, see Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti's "Terre, Città e Paesi" in *Terre, Città e Paesi nella Vita e nell'Arte di Gabriele D'Annunzio: XX Convegno internazionale, Pescara, 6-7 dicembre 1996***,** Vol.1 "L'Abruzzo, Roma e l'Italia Meridionale," Pescara: Ediars, 1996, pp. 7-26.

river Aniene (12). D'Annunzio shifts from a decadent, extremely evocative poetic style to a realist one, which presents the miserable conditions of the Roman poor. Bàrberi Squarotti reads this episode as a symbol of the dying love between Sperelli and Elena ("Terre, Città e Paesi" 15), but it also contains a dehumanization of the Roman poor that needs further investigation. When the two lovers enter the tavern,

> tre o quattro uomini febricitanti stavano intorno a un braciere quadrato, taciturni e giallastri. Un bovaro, di pel rosso, sonnecchiava in un angolo [...]. Due giovinastri, scarni e biechi, giocavano a carte, fissandosi negli intervalli con uno sguardo pieno d'ardor bestiale. E l'ostessa, una femmina pingue, teneva fra le braccia un bambino [...]. Pareva quasi che la vita fosse di già fuggita da quel piccolo corpo, lasciando una materia su cui ora le muffe vegetavano. (12-13)

In addition to their sickness, D'Annunzio characterizes the Roman poor with adjectives and nouns that emphasize their bestiality: the cowherd's "pel" certainly recalls the fur of his cows rather than human hair; "sguardo pieno d'ardor bestiale" underlines the two young men's instinctive rage and competition; and "femmina pingue" is more apt to describe a plump sow rather than a woman.[64] Moreover, the author reaches the apex of this human degradation and sufferance by transforming the dying child's body into mere decomposing material eaten by mold. This description perfectly fits in the "pre-Freudian theories of degeneration that, [at the time], enjoyed a brief, though influential, reign. As a set of rhetorical strategies with which to describe not only sick bodies and their thoughts but also social classes, political positions, genders, and even literary texts" (Spackman, *Decadent Genealogies* VIII). In this case, degeneration is connected to social class. By inserting the scene in between highly poetic passages, D'Annunzio transforms the entire

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[64] For studies on bestial analogies in D'Annunzio, see Spackman's chapter "The Shadow of Lombroso" in *Decadent Genealogies*, especially the section "Flora and Fauna of the *Virgin Terrain*" and Pietro Gibellini's "*Terra Vergine* e il verismo dannunziano" in *Logos e mythos: Studi su Gabriele D'Annunzio,* Florence: Olschki, 1985, pp. 155-181.

episode into a sort of nightmare, from which both Andrea and Elena wake up thanks to the protagonist's action of physically pulling out his lover from the tavern and from the abysms of such a disturbing vision.

That episode is not the only one where the boundaries between harsh reality and daydreaming blur. In present Rome, after Elena's return, Sperelli engages in several flâneries to alleviate his desperation caused by his feelings for the woman. It is the day after the ball at Palazzo Farnese that he meets a group of workers, whose presence and features intensify his sadness and alienation from reality. Indeed, before seeing them, the narrator sets the tone for a dim atmosphere: "era un tramonto paonazzo e cinereo, un po' lugubre, che a poco a poco si stendeva su Roma come un velario greve. Intorno alla fontana della piazza Barberini i fanali già ardevano, con fiammelle pallidissime, come ceri intorno a un feretro" (78). Sperelli's sadness influences his perception of the urban space. In fact, D'Annunzio uses many words that recall death to amplify Sperelli's mourning: the sunset is ashy, the dying daylight covers Rome's buildings as if it was a shroud, and the feeble streetlights illuminate the central fountain as if they were funeral candles. This atmosphere translates Sperelli's walking in Rome's city center into an infernal journey, where he meets a demonic chariot, whose presence makes him sadder ("la sua tristezza si aggravò" 79). Moreover, the narrator adds that Sperelli finds himself in an odd dispositon where he feels extremely vulnerable to external stimuli: "La sensibilità dei suoi nervi era così acuta che ogni minima sensazione a lui data dalle cose esteriori pareva una ferita profonda" (79). The word choice used in this and the following sentences implies sickness and an extreme vulnerability to the external world, which could cause deep wounds in him and leave him too exposed to tumultuous events; indeed,

"Egli aveva tutto il suo essere esposto agli urti della vita circostante" (79). Sperelli's condition seems that one of a delirious sick person: "Contro ogni alienazione della mente ed inerzia della volontà, i suoi sensi rimanevano vigili ed attivi; e di quella attività egli aveva una conscienza non esatta. I gruppi delle sensazioni gli attraversavano d'improvviso lo spirito, simili a grandi fantasmagorie in un'oscurità; e lo turbavano e sbigottivano" (79). Even if Sperelli is awake and active, he is not completely conscious; he is very sensible to external stimuli, which he perceives dilated. From the character's and narrator's point of view, this is a state of health that could facilitate an attack from the external world, especially from what both of them consider infected: the proletariat and the masses. It is in this context that the construction workers appear in the text.

Even if D'Annunzio's description of the proletariat is filtered through the lenses of Decadentism and his aesthetic elaboration, since the novel is set in 1886, it also testifies to the peak of the *febbre edilizia* in Rome and to common suppositions of the time on this social class and the phenomenon of property speculation itself. First of all, the word *febbre* recurrently appeared in newspapers and official speeches to define the renovation Rome underwent even before the explosion of property and land speculation in the 1880s – known as *febbre edilizia*. This expression envisions this phenomenon as a form of sickness: those who participated in speculation acted frantically and the desire for profit expanded as fast as a contagion. Therefore, the general, contemporary understanding of the phenomenon implicated an association between capitalism, speculation, and its participants (profiteers but also workers) with sickness. The same association appears in D'Annunzio's text. After the funereal description of Rome, the narrator introduces a group of laborers retiring from a day of work at a construction site:

> Venivano giù per la discesa carri tirati da due o tre cavalli messi in fila e torme d'operai tornanti dalle opere nuove. Alcuni, allacciati per le braccia, si dondolavano cantando a squarciagola una canzone impudica. […] Due o tre di quelle figure rossastre e bieche gli rimasero impresse. Notò che un carrettiere aveva una mano fasciata e le fasce macchiate di sangue. Anche, notò un altro carrettiere in ginocchio sul carro, che aveva la faccia livida, le occhiaie cave, la bocca contratta, come un uomo atossicato. Le parole della canzone si mescevano ai gridi gutturali, ai colpi delle fruste, al romore delle ruote, al tintinnio dei sonagli, alle ingiurie, alle bestemmie, alle aspre risa. (78–79)

D'Annunzio's depiction of the workers reflects the nation's anxiety related to the growth of the proletariat, which was practically absent in Rome before its post-unification urban renovation. This passage can be inscribed in a wider discourse on European Decadentism.[65] In fact, D'Annunzio's portrait of the workers embodies what Nicoletta Pireddu describes as a "violenza distruttiva di forze nuove ma incolte e selvagge, che [...] sembrano condannare la civiltà a un futuro in balia di un 'nuovo' primitivo, e sostituirsi alla massima sofisticazione della modernità occidentale" (84). Indeed, this tension between the peak of a sophisticated, glorious modernity barely achieved after the unification and the presence of new, rough, uneducated masses and that agitated the contemporary Italian society is center-stage in D'Annunzio's novels.[66]

In this passage, the author amplifies the bestiality of the proletariat through images: they ramble in a confused way ("torme"), their aspect is hostile ("bieche"), their bodies are consumed by their hard work (their skin is burned by the sun – "rossastre"), they are injured ("aveva una mano fasciata di sangue e le fasce macchiate di sangue"),

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[65] For a detailed study on the relation of D'Annunzio to other European decadent writers see Nicoletta Pireddu's *Antropologi alla corte della bellezza: Decadenza ed economia simbolica nell'Europa fin de siècle*. Verona: Fiorini, 2002.

[66] For studies on "barbarous" forces in D'Annunzio's works, see Lucia Re's "Italians and the Invention of Race: The Poetics and Politics of Difference in the Struggle over Libya, 1890-1913" in *California Italian Studies* Vol. 1 No. 1 2010 and Rhiannon Welch's chapter "Mutilated Limbs" in *Vital Subjects: Race and Biopolitics in Italy, 1860-1920*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016.

and their faces show signs of exhaustion and sickness ("aveva la faccia livida, le occhiaie cave, la bocca contratta, come un uomo atossicato"). The attention of D'Annunzio to the effects of labor on bodies is a constant in his works. For example, Bàrberi Squarotti highlights how, in the modern metropolis of *Maia*, "la reificazione dell'uomo nel lavoro industriale è stabilita dalla riduzione di esso ai segni che la particolare attività produttiva a cui è legato ha lasciato sul corpo" (*Gli Inferi e il Labirinto* 129).[67] Indeed, D'Annunzio reduces the workers in the quoted passage to visible and audible signs of modernization; they are not human individuals suffering for their working conditions but, rather, the proof of Rome's degenerative transformation into a contemporary metropolis. More specifically, when analyzing *Il Trionfo della Morte,* Pireddu notices that "la ripugnanza delle mani diviene iscrizione della degradazione fisica o morale di interi gruppi o classi sociali che Giorgio disprezza o addirittura aborrisce o da cui si sente turbato appunto per la loro zozzezza ed esosità dettata da bisogni concreti elementari" (403). In the quoted passage from *Il Piacere*, D'Annunzio pays attention to the entire body of workers because, contrarily to the artisans and bourgeois characters that Pireddu analyzes, their entire body is an instrument of labor. Moreover, the emphasis on the conditions of the workers' bodies is an aesthetic choice that allows D'Annunzio to recreate the shock of contemporary Romans and Italians for the increasing presence of the proletariat in the capital. In this sense, together with the author's attention to the physical signs of labor, sounds play a non-secondary role. It is through the fusion of sounds that D'Annunzio underlines the proletariat's bestiality. The workers' voices and the cart's noise are

[67] Moreover, Squarotti highlights how D'Annunzio sees the "ribellione [operaia] come suprema trasgressione all'ordine borghese" (ibidem) because it still holds the vitality that the bourgeoisie does not have in comparison to ancient aristocracy.

perceived as one thing, which barely has human traits: words mix with guttural screams, whip blows, the noise of the cart's wheels, horses' bells, and the men's blasphemies. More than shouting and dirty words, it is the indistinct mixture of human voices and the cart's various sounds that characterizes the workers as sub-human. If we compare these sounds to Aristotle's passage quoted in Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (7-8) mentioned in Chapter One, it is clear that workers do not use "language;" what readers can imagine to hear in D'Annunzio's pages is "voice," which is "the sign of pain and pleasure." As Aristotle points out, only humans have language, while voice belongs to *other* living beings. In the novel, this implies the otherness of the proletariat in contemporary Rome together with a racial verticalization of the society.

D'Annunzio's narrator shares his fear of the proletariat and the poor with contemporary politicians and intellectuals. Even if the presence of workers was not desirable in the capital, they were the "docile bodies" necessary for the development of Rome as a metropolis. Because they were reduced to *zoē* through unbearable working and living conditions, these "unfitting" lives must have been kept hidden from the spectacular surface of the capital. With "docile bodies" I refer to the well-known term coined by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish.* While the philosopher refers to the training of individuals activated through forms of discipline and punishment in the eighteenth century (mainly prisons), I expand this concept of manipulation to the harsh working conditions of the proletariat and their precise spatial separation from the rest of the population in the capital. These operations permitted to "have hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes" (138). Debilitating working conditions and apartheid worked as a dehumanizing

tool transforming workers into lifeless mechanisms operating the capital. Moreover, because of their living conditions, their physical aspect was very different from the portraits of Italian "vital subjects" that Post-Unification cultural production was promoting.[68] They were not healthy enough to be part of the nation and, first of all, of the capital.

Another author expressing his doubts on Rome's population as being properly Italian is Giovanni Faldella. Almost ten years before *Il Piacere*, in *Un viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa*, he portrayed the inhabitants of the *Agro Romano* (the malarious countryside surrouding Rome) in a similar way to D'Annunzio in the mentioned tavern episode. Before moving to this part of the text, it is necessary to analyze a short passage beforehand. As I illustrated in Chapter One, the narrator Geromino wishes to fertilize and colonize the land outside the Roman walls. The following passage relates to this desire:

> Alla Campagna Romana direi […]: *a rivederci con l'erpice!* La Campagna Romana è un mare di terra gonfia, e quei rigonfi paiono di cosa putrida. Non c'è consolazione di piante. Un artista potrà pascersi in quelle curve malinconiche e desolate. Io, sindaco campagnuolo, no, corpo delle teste dei miei cavoli! (27 original italics)

The mayor does not perceive the aesthetic appeal of the place to Grand Tour intellectuals, artists, and tourists; rather, he focuses on a practical transformation of this useless, poetic space into a cultivated area that would enhance the Roman economy, the development of the city, and the disappearance of the peasants barely surviving in the marshes.[69] Indeed,

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[68] Rhiannon Welch coins the term "vital subjects" in her homonymous book. See in particular the chapters "Colonial (Re)productivity" for an analysis of Leopoldo Franchetti's colonial biopolitics, and "Immunitary Technologies" for a study on Paolo Mantegazza's immunitary public health discourse.

[69] For more details on the situation of the peasants of the Agro Romano, see Richard Drake's "Sibilla Aleramo and the Peasants of the Agro Romano: A Writer's Dilemma" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 51, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1990), pp. 255-272. Here, the author also presents the results from the first reports on the peasants inhabiting the Roman countryside, such as Stefano Jacini's "Atti della Giunta per la Inchiesta Agraria e sulle Condizioni della Classe Agricola" (1881), Werner Sombart's *La Campagna Romana* (1891) and Angelo Celli's *Come Vive il Campagnolo nell'Agro Romano* (1900), among others.

the land itself is infected with malaria and the author emphasizes this by choosing words associating sickness directly to the land: "terra gonfia" and "cosa putrida." Similar to scientific studies of the time that later were proved incorrect, it is as if malaria spread directly from the ground without the mosquito as vehicle of transmission for the disease. There is a direct correlation between living environment and sick bodies; not only are native Romans infected with malaria but, in Faldella's pages they are also non-productive elements of the population. They are not "vital subject" contributing to the advancement and strengthening of the nation. Indeed, in addition to reclaiming these lands, Geromino also wishes to transform Roman working poor and unemployed into stable, active workers by simply converting taverns into mills, as he claims in the mentioned passage in Chapter One. That passage exemplifies not only the narrator's Northern gaze on a city whose progress had been neglected for centuries, but also how the social and spatial living conditions of Rome's inhabitants were at the base of exclusion from national identity.

This sense of superiority is also present in the passage that reminds of the animal-like clients of the tavern in *Il Piacere.* In Faldella, the description of the animals of the *Agro* alludes to the living situation of farmers of the area and to their resistance to technological modernization. In Italy, technological innovation concurred with national unification; therefore, there is a direct association between the two processes. In order to reinforce the association between progress and Northern Italians, the narrator observes the landscape when traveling by train, one of the main symbols of modernization of the time:[70]

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[70] For more information on the subject see Remo Ceserani's *Treni di carta. L'immaginario in ferrovia: l'irruzione del treno nella letteratura moderna.* Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002.

> La Campagna Romana è intersecata da steccati, dentro cui pascolano, meriggiano e pernottano, a cielo scoperto, mandre di cavalli vellosi, pecore sudicie, o di giovenchi silvestri. Qua e là si scorgono paletti ritti, con istracci nelle spaccature alle loro sommità: sono appunto segnali da pecore e capre. Come si appressa il convoglio, stormi di uccelli volano via a rifascio, i cavalli e le pecore trotterellano, mostrando ai viaggiatori le loro parti meno nobili. […] I bufali di rado scappano. Anche le capre fisano e orecchiano stupidamente. I bufali si impuntano in una posa selvaggia e artistica, piena di sospetto. Temono che il convoglio sia una cosa inventata a loro detrimento, e si apparecchiano a salutarlo con una cornata. Mi piacerebbe entrare nelle teste di quei bufali; che entrerei nella testa di molta gente che è nemica e sospettosa della civiltà. (27)

At first, Faldella describes the animals that inhabit the Agro and amplifies their bestial characteristics: abundant hair, filthiness, and sylvan appearance. Then, Faldella deconstructs the boundaries between animals and the human inhabitants of the *agro,* who resided in straw huts, barns, and other temporary shelters.[71] First, the author reinforces this ambivalence by defining the human signs of posts and rags as subhuman messages that modernity cannot decipher anymore – "sono appunto segnali da pecore e capre." Then, the narrator goes back to describing animals that behave as such: "stormi di uccelli volano via," "i cavalli e le pecore trotterellano," and "i bufali di rado scappano." However, these descriptions start alluding to human traits and behaviors and, as a consequence, the distance between animal and human lessens. For example, horses and sheep show their "parti meno nobili" when running away. Generally, "parti meno nobili" means bottom and genitalia and it is usually used in association with the human body; interestingly, the same expression used with meat indicates the cheaper cuts. By using this expression in its more human signification associated with farm animals, Faldella prepares the way for a climactic overlapping of the human and animal inhabitants of the

[71] For a description of the peasants' huts, see the aforementioned Drake article.

Roman countryside. After this, animals show behaviors usually associated with humans: "le capre fisano e orecchiano stupidamente" while "i bufali si impuntano in una posa selvaggia e artistica, piena di sospetto," "temono," and "si apparecchiano a salutarlo." When the train passes by, goats stare and listen to the tune of the train's wheels on the tracks without understanding too much while buffaloes take a wild and yet artistic pose, are suspicious of the train and they fear it, but they are ready to greet it with a ram. While the behaviors described are typical of animals in front of trains, Faldella's word choices allude to possible human actions in the same circumstances: staring; catching the rhythmic tune; posing in a conscious, artistic way; and greeting the train. It is at this point that Faldella makes a direct connection between animals and humans: the author claims that the stubborn attitude of oxen toward the train is similar to the natives' hostility toward the modernization of the area. By refusing to accept technological innovation, they oppose national unification.

Faldella further reinforces the bestial characteristics of the *ciociari* when he analyzes the differences between the proletariat of the North and that of the South. In Piedmont, the youngest

> partono […] dal paese […] e vanno a lavorare in Francia, in Isvizzera, in Alemagna, nelle miniere, nei trafori […] e mandano a casa dei *vaglia*, spesso in oro sonante. […] Gli artigiani che rimangono e quelli che ritornano al villaggio entrano nella Società operaia, che ha una bella bandiera, una cassa forte per gli ammalati, e una biblioteca popolare circolante. (58 original italics)

While in northern Italy artisans and workers contribute to the wealth, health, and instruction of their community through the institution of a common fund for health services and a public library, this social organization is completely absent in the Roman countryside, where farmers "nascono, vivono, mangiano, dormono, strameggiano al pari

delle bestie" (58). In Faldella's eyes, northern Italy was already a functioning, productive community; he could not say the same of Rome. Because the Roman working poor and peasants did not have the conditions to create and be part of an inclusive and supporting society, and, rather, they had to rely exclusively on daily survival, Faldella reduces them to subhuman individuals by emphasizing their *zoē*, their instincts shared with animals.[72] For him and many of his contemporary, they were not ready to be part of the Italian nation.

These inhabitants of the capital fit in Agamben's definition of *homines sacri*, "who belong [...] to God in the form of unsacrificeability and [are] included in the community in the form of being able to be killed. *Life that cannot be sacrificed and yet may be killed is sacred life*" (82). The texts that I examine in this chapter demonstrate how Rome's working poor belonged to the nation and were included in the new community because their possible death – caused by working in unsafe conditions, living in unhygienic dwellings, and lack of food – was considered neither homicide nor sacrifice. It was a new, "limit sphere of human action that [was] only ever maintained in a relation of exception" (83). Moreover, in this sphere, law is suspended and implicates

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[72] These consideration on southern Italians share characteristics with social scientists of the period such as Paolo Mantegazza, Cesare Lombroso, Giuseppe Sergi, Enrico Ferri, Alfredo Niceforo, Scipio Sighele, and Angelo Mosso, whose works, as Re explains, "contributed a great deal to racialize the Southern question as well as the woman question. […] There was effectively no border, no substantial difference between literary and scientific discourse, between fiction and poetry on one side and empirical reality and objective observation and description on the other. From the very start, the discourse of the human and social sciences and of positivist anthropology was saturated with fantasy; it absorbed and recycled literary images, literary devices, and fictional creations, making them its own" ("Italians and the Invention of Race" 18). In addition to Lucia Re's "Italians and the Invention of Race," for the most recent studies on the Southern Question, see David Forgacs's *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation Since 1861*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; Roberto Dainotto's *Europe (in Theory),* Duhram: Duke University Press, 2007; Nelson Moe's *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; John Dickie's *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900,* New York: Palgrave McMillan, 1999; and Jane Schneider's *Italy's 'Southern' Question: Orientalism in One Country*, Oxford: Berg, 1998.

bare life (83). The Italian philosopher also explains how authorities create *homines sacri*: "the fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as the threshold of articulation between nature and culture, *zoē* and *bios*" (181, original italics). Indeed, the texts included in the chapter testify to the general assumptions of the period about the proletariat by portraying it as a group that shares more characteristics with animals than with humanity. This is exactly what Michel Foucault defines as the bestialization of man; this is a fundamental concept that, according to Agamben, allows capitalism to flourish: "the development and the triumph of capitalism would not have been possible, from this perspective, without the disciplinary control achieved by the new bio-power, which through a series of appropriate technologies, so to speak created the 'docile bodies' that it needed" (3). By reducing humanity to mere bodily instincts that allowed only survival through low wages, unbearable working conditions, and physical segregation in unhygienic neighborhoods and rural areas, authorities created "docile bodies" that could work as invisible mechanisms in the new metropolis and contribute to its capitalist development. Moreover, they could also be disposable because they were not considered "fitting" for the society of the spectacle that Rome embodied in its construction as the Italian capital. Indeed, according to Agamben, the society of the spectacle condemns bare life, *zoē* (11). He states that "Western politics has not succeeded in constructing the link between *zoē* and *bios*, between voice and language, that would have healed the fracture" (11). Indeed, Rome (and Italy in general) have always excluded their component of nature and rural identity in their process of national unification. This process of exclusion is visible in the demolition of Rome's urban parks too often associated with the decadent, archeological

vision of the Grand Tour; the attempts to delete the presence in the capital of shepherds, homeless people, working poor, and, later, immigrants coming from rural southern Italy. More in general, there has always been the tendency to perceive the countryside as culturally and economically inferior to urban areas and, for this reason, not worthy enough to be part of Italy as a modern spectacular nation.

Another text analyzed in the previous chapter provides a further example of artificially constructed exclusion for Rome's workers. The 1886 letter-essay *La Distruzione di Roma* by art historian Grimm reports on the devastating urban transformations affecting the Italian capital during the *febbre edilizia*. The essay also testifies to the presence of what the considered "suspicious" men working in construction sites. Grimm's text expresses a concern similar to D'Annunzio in regard to the presence of the proletariat in Rome:

> File interminabili di carri, portando scarichi o materiale da costruzione, ingombrano le vie e le riempiono di strepito e sudiciume. Torme d'operai forestieri di infimo grado s'aggirano da per tutto, e fanno in certi punti quasi sparire la popolazione indigena. Un'incomoda agitazione ha preso il luogo dell'antica quiete (12–13)

As for D'Annunzio, the proletariat is perceived as an external force threatening the decorum, the authenticity, and the safety of Rome. The Italian translator of the letter, Giusti, identifies the increasing, degrading presence of the workers with their geographical origin: "adagio adagio l'influenza toscana andó declinando; e secondo che essa scemava e perdeva l'efficacia, ne subentrava un'altra, composta di diversi elementi, per la più parte meridionali, e assolutamente barbara" (7). The association between Southerners and barbarism does not differ from Faldella's northern, colonizing gaze on the Roman peasants and working poor. However, what I want to underline here is Grimm's fear of the new presence of the proletariat in Rome, who contributed not only to

the dramatic transformation of the capital's urban fabric, but also to the supposedly annihilation of the native population and to a social turbulence that substituted the city's ancient quietness. Certainly, Grimm's point of view does not take into consideration the real living conditions of Rome's poor during the papal dominion. Rather, it expresses his naïve association of quietness with the Renaissance and Baroque artistic grandeur of the capital. His gaze is still influenced by the Grand Tour and reconstructs a peaceful, artificial Rome as a picturesque painting portraying green spaces, ancient ruins, and isolated churches. Because Grimm's description of Rome's features refers to an era prior to 1870 and is affected by his gaze as an art historian, inhabitants are totally absent in his essay. His text shows that the lack of a complete development of the city inside the Roman walls in the past

> permise la costruzione di numerose ville chiuse dentro le mura ma fuori dall'abitato, le quali, unite alle vaste rovine ricoperte di verde, formavano una cinta interna della città, dando a questa quel carattere di tranquillità e di pace, che nessuno può dimenticare di quanti seppero gustarlo. [...] Poiché alcune delle maggiori chiese, come Santa Maria Maggiore, il Laterano e molte altre importanti, piuttosto che nella città vera e propria, erano situate intorno ad essa, sparse in quella singolare e immobile solitudine interna; e persino San Pietro con il Vaticano, [...] parevano annessi della città piuttosto che circondati dalle sue case. (11–12)

In his portrait, Grimm underlines more than once how the picturesque part of Rome (with the *ville,* the ancient Roman ruins, and the major churches) is outside the inhabited medieval neighborhoods, separated from the native Romans that he defends in the letter. In the contemporary description of the capital, the native Romans embody the art historian's artificial and aesthetically constructed longing for the capital's lost picturesque character. In doing this, he does not recognize the working poor's struggle to

survive under the past Church dominion and the present kingdom and reconstructs an image of Rome far from reality. Once again, *zoē* is excluded from the nation.

1.2 Intellectual Minds VS Labor Force

Of all of D'Annunzio's Roman works, it is in *Le Vergini delle Rocce* that the author reflects most directly on the city's moral and political future and denounces the failure of the Risorgimento politicians to guide Rome and the new nation.[73] Re claims that, in this novel,

> D'Annunzio claimed to be revolted by the vulgar, debasing turn of politics towards democratization and majority rule; socialism for him and for most literary men of the era represented the worst of politics and a betrayal of the Italic *stirpe* itself: it represented in fact nothing less than a descent towards barbarism and racial degeneration. ("Italians and the Invention of Race" 12)

How can the political process of democratization affect stock – a concept with biological connotations? Still according to Re, "For d'Annunzio in the 1890s, and even to some extent in the later decades, "razza" and "stirpe" are hardly fixed biological (or even social or cultural) categories, but rather shifting rhetorical constructs, to be deployed in different ways as circumstances and his own image-making process dictate" ("Italians and the Invention of Race" 15).[74] In this section, I highlight how D'Annunzio focuses on the description of the new actors of the Italian society (the proletariat) as one of the main factors weakening the Italian aristocratic *stirpe.* His accusations are based on the prevalence of profit and speculation as guiding forces in the construction of the capital rather than moral qualities. Because of the lack of a powerful, virtuous guidance for the new nation, in this novel, D'Annunzio reflects in depth on the role of the elected

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[73] See Giorgio Barberi Squarotti's "La Roma di Claudio Cantelmo: D'Annunzio e l'Immagine della Nuova Capitale" in *Italianistica* XL.2.2011, pp. 141-151.
[74] I will return on the theme of *stirpe* in section 2.2 in this chapter.

artist/intellectual in modern society, especially in relation to the triumph of the masses and, more specifically, to the rise of the proletariat in Rome.

First of all, the protagonist Claudio Cantelmo expresses the contemporary preoccupation with "a restless proletariat," who increased exponentially during the building speculation of the 1880s in the Italian capital. D'Annunzio's description of the workers in Rome recalls the aforementioned passage from *Il Piacere*: "Poi di giorno in giorno, su i tramonti, - […] le torme rissose degli operai si sparpagliavano per le osterie della Via Salaria e della via Nomentana" (*Le Vergini delle Rocce* 69). As in *Il Piacere,* D'Annunzio chooses again the word "torme" to describe the workers' presence in the capital. This word amplifies the sense of disorder connected to the proletariat that Italian politicians and intellectuals feared at the end of the 19th century. Laborers are described not only as a turbulent crowd but also as a scattering horde, whose presence is difficult to control and regulate in Rome's new, developing areas. Note that, when translating from Grimm's text, Giusti too uses "torme" to group the workers traversing Rome. It seems that, at the time, the words "operai" and "torme" were inseparable.

Cantelmo's fear in front of this undisciplined, new agent in Rome is tangible. For this reason, too, at the beginning of "Libro Primo," he states that a clear division between thinkers and common people is needed:

> Il mondo è la rappresentazione della sensibilità e del pensiero di pochi uomini superiori, i quali lo hanno creato e quindi ampliato e ornato nel corso del tempo e andranno sempre più ampliandolo e ornandolo nel futuro. Il mondo, quale oggi appare, è un dono magnifico largito dai pochi ai molti, dai liberi agli schiavi: da coloro che pensano e sentono a coloro che debbono lavorare. (*Le Vergini delle Rocce* 19)

In these words, Cantelmo's elitist point of view is evident; the world is the representation of the few, chosen minds that forge it and offer it to the masses of workers, who are

considered slaves and completely detached from the brilliant minds of the intellectual elite.[75] I agree with Pireddu when she states that Cantelmo conceives the world and the poetic creation as gifts of the "few" to the "many" (417); however, this affirmation needs further analysis in order to define the opposition between poetry (and art in general) and capitalism. When analyzing *Il Fuoco* and the *Carta del Carnaro,* Pireddu points out how the labor finalized to aesthetic creation has positive qualities in D'Annunzio, as in the example of the artisans blowing glass in Murano in *Il Fuoco* (425-426). Her analysis of the *Carta del Carnaro* confirms the idea that D'Annunzio perceives the "primato dell'estetica come esperienza collettiva e rituale separate da azioni finalizzate a una funzione pratica" (426). As I illustrate in the second part of this chapter, D'Annunzio sees the modernization of Rome as a destruction of beauty accumulated through centuries; the new constructions do not possess any trace of aesthetic quality, but rather serve practical purposes. Therefore, the proletariat cannot be considered artisans because they contributed to the transformation of the capital from a global example of open-air museum celebrated in Western literature to a modern, functional metropolis. They are not part of the "buona razza" of the glassblowers (423) but, rather, they belong to an inferior race. From this perspective, art and non-profit creation lead to a superior race while artless, mechanical creation aiming at profit defines an inferior race.

At this point, Re's article "Italians and the Invention of Race" is helpful, too. Re states that "It is through this essentially esthetic utopian vision [of the race] that [D'Annunzio] hopes to overcome both the dehumanizing, exploitative, and debasing logic of capitalism and the 'equalizing' materialism of socialism" (16). In this sense, the

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[75] Spackman identifies this specific passage as protofascist (*Fascist Virilities* 83), but Cantelmo's desire for a charismatic leader challenges the protofascist elements in the text.

author's poetic word becomes a political act. In his works, his protagonists flee from the negative consequences of modernization and seeks refuge in artificial, poetic transformations of reality. For example, in the mentioned passage from *Il Piacere* of the *osteria* outside Porta Pia, the harsh conditions of the Roman *popolino* appear as a distorted, visionary nightmare clearly opposing the aesthetic reconstruction of the countryside (the idyllic, pastoral love set outside Porta Pia), while the presence of the workers in the streets interrupts the elegiac rendition of Rome's city center echoing Sperelli's sadness. In both cases, D'Annunzio traces the abysm between his protagonist (one of the few superior men who can think and perceive) and those who have to work (proletariat in the streets and subproletariat at the tavern) with an abrupt change of linguistic style. While on one side, the author shows the brutal consequences of capitalism on the skin of the masses and takes distance from that, on the other he rejects their humanity and, through his poetic word, he amplifies their distance from aristocracy by highlighting their bestial traits. They cannot be part of the free men since capitalism and labor visibly transformed their bodies. This identification between physical appearance and moral defects relies on contemporary positivist investigations promoting darwinist readings of the society. Indeed, D'Annunzio's division of the society between elite and workers follows a genetic line ("pochi uomini superiori") preserved across time ("lo hanno creato e quindi ampliato e ornato nel corso del tempo e andranno sempre più ampliandolo e ornandolo nel futuro").[76] Re states that this oft quoted passage from *Le Vergini delle Rocce* "points to the intrinsic violence of all ideologies (the *inventions* of

[76] The idea of few superior men echoes a passage from Le Bon's *The Crowd*, published in the same year of the novel and influenced by positivism: "Civilizations as yet have only been created and directed by a small intellectual aristocracy, never by crowds" (18).

superior, or stronger men), which are passed off as truths embedded in language. (Both Nietzsche and Lacan see language as the means by which the Law is transmitted.) […] Claudio sees himself as one of the law-givers" ("Gabriele D'Annunzio's novel *Le Vergini delle Rocce*" 260). Again, language is at the center of the creation of society, be it through laws, poetic creation, or architecture and urban planning. The same can be said of the Risorgimento process of national unification: laws, literature, and architecture provided a narration for the new nation and its identity. The use of Rome's space played a fundamental role in this process of nation building and this was evident in contemporary literary production. The physical separation of the workers from an elitist, valorous ruling class, which Cantelmo feels is necessary, is not so different from the real segregation of the Roman proletariat in Testaccio or from Faldella's gaze dissecting the bourgeois *Roma alta* (where the Piedmontese immigrants, catalysts of the capital's rebirth, live) from the medieval, unsanitary neighborhoods that housed the poor, sick, and often unemployed native population.

Most importantly, Cantelmo's belief is not very distant from Italian politicians of the time, who were trying to forge an elegant, intellectual, modern capital while erasing the necessary presence of the proletariat from the official image of the city. For example, right-wing party politician Quintino Sella was one of the advocates for the exclusion of industry from Rome and his declarations in "Tornata del 27 giugno 1876" contain similar points to Cantelmo's statements:

> Io ho sempre desiderato che sia in Roma la parte direttiva, la parte *intellettuale*, ma non ho mai desiderato che vi siano grandi agglomerazioni di operai. In una soverchia agglomerazione di operai in Roma io vedrei un vero inconveniente, perché credo che qui sia il luogo dove si debbano trattare molte questioni che vogliono essere discusse *intellettualmente*, che richiedono l'opera di tutte le forze *intellettuali* del paese, ma non sarebbero opportuni gli impeti popolari di grandi masse di operai. Crederei

> pericolosa o almeno non conveniente un'organizzazione di questa natura. (59-60 italics mine)

Similar to D'Annunzio's protagonist, Sella believed that thinkers – in this case, politicians and intellectuals contributing not only to Italy's political unification but also to its symbolic affirmation as a modern nation – should be separated from the masses of workers. More than once the politician uses "intellectual" and its derivatives in opposition to the masses. The working class is seen as an obstacle to the development of thought and to the affirmation of Rome as a political, administrative center and also as an intellectual and scientific hub – during the first years after the Breccia, the State reformed the Università La Sapienza to make it more competitive. In 1881, politician Francesco Crispi, too, when talking about the initial issues concerning the newborn Italian nation, highlighted the importance of the capital as the mind of the nation: "La capitale è la mente della nazione" (495). Also, in 1875, the Agriculture and Industry Minister Gaspare Finali pointed out the damage that the presence of the proletariat could have brought to the symbolic image of Rome as the intellectual, artistic city that Italian politicians were trying to promote at a global level. Again, industry and proletariat clash against Rome's monumental beauty:

> Non è mica che io creda che Roma sia per trasformarsi in una grande città industriale, ché anzi neppure lo desidero. Io non desidero che qui sorgano quelle grandi officine, nelle quali dall'operaio non si richiede intelligenza ed arte, ma poco più di una forza meccanica. Non so poi neppure immaginare che si innalzino le camminiere delle officine accanto agli obelischi ed alle colonne di questa monumentale città; e che i vortici di fumo si avvolgano intorno alle sue cupole. (*Discorsi pronunciati in occasione della distribuzione dei premi agli alunni ed alunne dell'Ospizio di S. Michele, il 30 ottobre 1875, Roma* in Alberto Caracciolo 228)

Finali feared the transformation that industrialization could have brought in the city. On one hand, it would have degraded workers into a mere mechanical force, where no intelligence or artistic/artisanal skills were required; this opposition between art and mechanical reproduction recalls D'Annunzio's concern. Moreover, because the proletariat was considered just as a mechanical force, they could have been reduced to *zoē* and exploited in a way similar to animals that pull carriages, activate engines, or plow fields. As I have analyzed in the previous section, D'Annunzio elaborates this concept by visually and audibly fusing the workers, their cart, and the horses pulling it. On the other, industrialization would have destroyed Rome's cityscape with the presence of smokestacks. This position was still accepted as valid in the 1940s, as historian Antonio Monti still highlights the risk of "contamination" of the Roman landscape in his analysis of Risorgimento in *Storia della Politica d' Italia. Il Risorgimento (1861 -1914)* (1942): "la mancanza di industrie [risulta] provvidenziale e desiderabile in Roma perché le agglomerazioni operaie minaccerebbero la tranquillità, *contaminerebbero* la contemplazione del Foro Romano" (in Alberto Caracciolo 229, italics mine). Similar to the mentioned texts from the end of the 19th century, the presence of workers in the capital is seen as an external menace threatening the health of the nation. What we can infer from Finali's, Sella's, and Monti's words is that the Italian government believed the proletariat to be a peril for the social and political system not only because of the possible outbreak of disorder, but also for their presence's and for the factories' unattractive sight that could have weakened the political and social symbolic image of Rome's monuments and architecture. Having smokestacks in the capital's cityscape would have ruined the

synthetic construction of Rome as a bourgeois, elegant city representing the recently unified nation.

It is not only politicians who believed that Rome should have kept an artistic and historic façade and avoid proletarian traces in its urban fabric. This was also a concern for many international intellectuals of the time, such as Grimm. His description of the brick furnaces evokes a similar contrast between the effects of modernization and the ancient architecture in the Vatican, which, as in D'Annunzio's *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, represents the stronghold of Rome's ancient values and integrity:[77] "E dall'altro lato le fornaci coi loro fumajoli circondano in fitto semicerchio il palazzo e la chiesa. […] Il fumo porta le sue sudicie nuvole fin dentro i giardini pontificj" (16). Grimm's depiction of the furnaces resembles a military siege of the Vatican with the chimneys surrounding it and their smoke conquering the Vatican's gardens; his words definitively allude to a transformation threatening Rome's landscape.

In addition to these preoccupations, some intellectuals also had concerns about the effects that industrialization could have on buildings: homogenization. As seen in Section 2.2 of Chapter One, Imbriani grasped that the new housing of *Roma alta* is a homogenizing tool for the petite bourgeoisie that initially inhabited it. Unlike him, other intellectuals limited their judgement to an aesthetic criticism. For example, Giusti, the Italian translator of Grimm's text, criticized the new buildings in the capital for their physical aspects: "casone sperticate senza garbo né grazia [che] sarebbero appena tollerabili in una città commerciale del Nuovo Mondo […] in Roma fanno pietà, fanno nausea, fanno ira" (6). Clearly, the translator contrasts the Italian capital with

[77] See Section 2.1 in this chapter.

industrialized cities in the United States, which embodied progress and bore the consequences of ruthless capitalism, such as slums and unaesthetic architecture. When expressing this condemnation of the lack of ornamentation of some buildings, Giusti implicitly affirms that a proletarian architecture – and therefore its tenants – could not exist in Rome. Similarly, still in 1886, D'Annunzio affirms that "fra non molti anni, se una giusta e severa legge edilizia non mette un freno alla prepotenza e all'impudenza dei fabbricatori, la capitale del mondo rassomiglierà a una qualche brutta città americana edificata da una masnada di mercanti di cotone" ("La crociata per Luigi Galli" in *Le Cronache della Tribuna I* 752). The author condemns capitalism because he identifies it with arrogance ("prepotenza"), lack of measure (need to "mette[re] un freno"), insolence ("impudenza"), and dishonesty ("masnada"). All these characteristics coincide with those describing speculation in Rome and the proletariat in *Il Piacere* and *Le Vergini delle Rocce.* These affinities show that D'Annunzio condemns capitalism because it creates chaos in the society and erases all the virtues that, according to the aristocratic protagonists, allowed the establishment of a superior society led by the aristocracy and intellectuals. Moreover, even if D'Annunzio does not mention directly the practice of African American slavery in the United States, this concept is central in the passage because it recalls the "schiavi" in the aforementioned passage of *Le Vergini delle Rocce*: "Il mondo, quale oggi appare, è un dono magnifico largito dai pochi ai molti, dai liberi agli schiavi." Yet, even if in this passage the narrator opposes "liberi" to "schiavi," he talks about the ancien régime and with "liberi" he means "pochi uomini superiori" (the aristocracy) whose actions are free from monetary earnings, and not the "masnada di mercanti di cotone" that, like speculators in Rome, are numerous, arrogant, dishonest,

and do not care for beauty. Indeed, D'Annunzio considers these to be slaves and inferior to aristocracy because of their thirst for profit. In the article, D'Annunzio condemns the effects of capitalism in the planning of American cities and fears a similar destiny for Rome if the capitalist society prevails. About this passage, Guido Baldi explains that, for D'Annunzio, "l'America diviene l'emblema negativo di una mentalità contaminata dallo spirito capitalistico, generatore di bruttezza e squallore" (75). D'Annunzio attacks capitalism because its practice facilitates the creation of unattractive cities where beauty is never contemplated; in such cases, functionality and profit are the only drives. In these cities, "repetition has […] defeated uniqueness, […] products have vanquished works" (Lefebvre 75). There, the construction of new buildings and public space is an artificial product, not very different from the assembling of a commodity, while D'Annunzio desires urban spaces that are closer to works of art or nature. In order to have pleasant cities, alternative approaches should be contemplated. In the second part of this chapter, I introduce new readings of D'Annunzio's works going towards this direction; these are mainly based on his use of architecture and urban areas in his texts.

Before giving space to D'Annunzio's defense of green urban space, more attention to his analysis of the contemporary society is needed. As Cristina Lombardi-Diop claims, Cantelmo's political project in *Le Vergini delle Rocce* shares affinities with Fredric Jameson's definition of protofascism in *Fables of Aggression* for the presence of a "reaction formation to Marxism; a disintegration of the hegemonic ideologies of the bourgeois State; a critique of capitalism; a need for a populistic hegemony" (Lombardi-

Diop 126).[78] However, contrarily to that, Cantelmo's political project does not call for a mass party, "but rather, [for] the advent of a charismatic political figure, the new king of Rome" (126). Similarly to Spackman in *Fascist Virilities,* Lombardi-Diop indicates how this political project is closer to caesarism than protofascism because of its refusal of the power of the masses and its belief in the strength of the individual *superuomo.*[79] Thus, Cantelmo's convictions regarding the separation needed between the "pochi uomini superiori" and the "schiavi" correspond to a "caesarian project [that] aims at separating the elite from the social formations called to participate in parliamentary democracy" (Lombardi-Diop 129). So, being Claudio Cantelmo a "superior" entity, he must abandon Rome in order to avoid "contamination" by the crowd of commoners and, I add, by capitalist speculators and the proletariat.

In *Le Vergini delle* Rocce, this idea of clear separation between the intellectual forces (the individual *superuomo* in D'Annunzio) and the proletariat is emphasized through the use of Socrates as a model for Cantelmo. Because of his disengagement from the City's rules and his superior attitude toward them, "egli [Socrate] cittadino d'Atene, e sotto la tirannide plebea – separ[ò] per deliberato proposito la sua esistenza morale da quella della Città. Egli volle e seppe conservarsi a sé medesimo fino alla morte" (*VDR* 21). D'Annunzio traces a parallel between the plebeian tyranny that condemned Socrates to the politicians guiding Italy, who heavily rely on commoners for their consensus and,

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[78] These characteristics are also visible in the texture of the *Cronache della Tribuna*, where D'Annunzio comments on Roman society in between 1884-1888. I am currently working on an article exploring D'Annunzio's position on these issues in the *Cronache*.

[79] For more details, see Cristina Lombardi-Diop's "Caesarism, Fetishism, and the Doing of a Text: Gabriele D'Annunzio's Political Project in *Le Vergini delle Rocce*" in *Italian Culture* 1998 16:2, pp. 125-140. In addition to this article, see also Spackman's "D'Annunzio and the Anti-Democratic Fantasy" in *Fascist Virilities* pp. 77-113. In this chapter, she analyzes in details Jameson definition of protofascism and traces elements of it in *Le Vergini delle Rocce.*

therefore, are weak and contaminated.[80] According to D'Annunzio, his protagonist embodies the only possible solution to the chaos following the rise of new social actors, such as the bourgeoisie and the masses: the isolated hero, the *superuomo,* who is completely detached from the crowd and, yet, for this reason, he is powerful. Paolo Valesio defines this process of appropriation of historical figures in the delineation of D'Annunzio's protagonists as semiohistory, which "deals with humans as they construct themeselves as historical figures. They do this primarily by treating themselves as signs. This implies that one of the effects of the actions carried out by the historical characters is to constitute a long chain of quotations" (6). This literary operation has two implications. Superficially, in *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, D'Annunzio quotes Socrates, Napoleon, Christ, and alludes to Roman emperors as powerful guides in past, obscure historic periods to indicate figures that represent models for Cantelmo and for his contemporary politicians and royalties. On a more in-depth level, D'Annunzio is aware that reality cannot be changed (all his protagonists fail to establish a counteraction to the modern, contaminated world) and he seeks security among literary renditions of historic characters. Valesio analyzes this issue in D'Annunzio's works by tracing connections to other modernist authors.[81] While discussing the fear of contamination in D'Annunzio's *La città morta*, Valesio comments on a passage from Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir*, where the protagonist contemplates a portrait of Napoleon. According to Valesio, this scene

> shows an individual who is frantically trying to individualize himself, to become a hero, deriving courage by contemplating another individual, a famous one whose individuality has been institutionalized. […] it shows individualism as a poetic concern, a concern for linguistic intensification and shaping. The quotes describe acts

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[80] See Section 2.2 to see how D'Annunzio uses architecture to define political leaders.
[81] For an analysis of the presence of these figures in *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, see also Lucia Re's "Gabriele D'Annunzio's novel *Le Vergini delle Rocce*: 'Una Cosa Naturale Vista in un Grande Specchio.'" *Stanford Italian Review III* Vol. 2, 1983, pp.241-271.

> of reading – whether a book or a portrait – which in the second tableau culminate in that intensification of reading that is writing, specifically, writing as a loving act of inscription. (20-21)

Only the poetic word (and spaces) represents a shelter and an act of resistance in the face of the modern, capitalist world. Beyond his elitist point of view on the masses, through Cantelmo, D'Annunzio creates an alternative reality that heavily relies on fiction and narration in order to face his fear of the crowds, homogenization, industrialization, and commercialization.[82] Valesio states that this process relies on characters treating themselves as signs, using incessant quotations, and forging one's identity through poetic elaboration and linguistic research to underline their positions and actions. In the second section of this chapter, I show how D'Annunzio presents Rome's ancient buildings and green areas as spaces of resistance to the masses, homogenization, and capitalism through an amplification of poetic language.

1.3 Invisibility

Before moving to the next section of the chapter, it is necessary that we look more in detail at the contemporary perception of the proletariat and land speculation. Politicians' and intellectuals' preoccupations with the presence of the proletariat and subproletariat and the construction of small factories and unaesthetic housing that I

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[82] For example, in Rebursa, when talking to the prince father Capece-Montaga, Cantelmo summarizes the Risorgimento as the introduction of commercialism in politics: "in Roma, ho appreso questo: - Il naviglio dei Mille salpò da Quarto sol per ottenere che l'arte del baratto fosse protetta dallo Stato" (254). This sentiment of commercialization of power is very common after the first years of Italian unification as a consequence of the failure and the instability of governments. As early as 1876, Imbriani writes: "Ci volevan proprio le mie padrone, ci voleva l'obbligo di accompagnarle, per indurmi a rimettere il piede nel *baraccone* di Montecitorio. […] Quell'aula, che fu già agli occhi miei il più augusto luogo del mondo ed il più sacro, ora è divenuto un *mercato* vilissimo, nel quale da *barattieri* ignoranti si traffica dello Stato, dell'Italia e della Monarchia. […] Tutto è polluto e contaminato!" (93, my italics). Imbriani highlights his delusion by echoing the episode of the market in the temple in the Gospel in his description of the Chamber of the Deputies: the entrance of economic interests and thirst for profit in politics contaminate the sacredeness of the place and the ideals that it should have contained.

presented in this chapter materialized in the urban development of Rome. If on one side the revitalization of ancient monuments, the erection of new ones, and the construction of elegant buildings and ample boulevards contributed to a bourgeois face-lift of Rome, on the other, the Roman poor and the mass of workers were pushed away from the city center in order to accommodate a large number of not only politicians, ambassadors, and businessmen, but also a considerable amount of public employees and the petite bourgeoisie. As I discussed in Chapter One, a few years after the Breccia, public employees did not face a destiny different from that of the proletariat. The cause of the petite bourgeoisie's impoverishment lay in the high prices of apartments and the lack of public housing. In 1881, Senator and former Mayor of Rome (1878-1880) Emanuele Ruspoli stated in Parliament that "dopo il 1870 si sono versati altri 100.000 abitanti dove a stento se ne contenevano 200.000… La parte agiata della popolazione è andata ad abitare ove trovavasi la classe operaia, e la classe operaia è andata a cacciarsi là dove mai essere umano aveva abitato" (Caracciolo 46). Ruspoli is one such politician that denounced the housing issues that Rome was experiencing in the first years after becoming the Italian capital. The capital's new buildings were not enough for the number of immigrants moving to the city, and this caused the gentrification of working-class districts, whose inhabitants moved farther away in unused sectors of the city. Ruspoli's words also allude to the fact that an unresolved problem existed under the surface of an apparent bourgeois city: the housing of the unwanted (the proletariat and subproletariat), who should remain concealed. Before exploring the other major phenomenon that caused the lack of affordable housing – land speculation (see Section 2.1 in this chapter) – in this section, I investigate the context in which D'Annunzio wrote his Roman works

previously analyzed. Here, I present contemporary politicians' positions on this question and how their opinions affected the spatial distribution of the working class and unemployed of the capital.

A few months after the Breccia of Porta Pia, the housing problem became obvious to the first council. One of the first city council member for construction, Emidio Renazzi, asserted in 1874 that

> nei primordi della nostra redazione, così ardite, ridenti e giuste furono le speranze e le previsioni per l'avvenire di Roma, che parve che le mura urbane sarebbero stretta cerchia per contenere l'aumentata popolazione. E da ciò una *febbre* generale, un *parossismo* di attività e di energia nello studiare e scegliere i terreni più adatti per l'ampliamento della città. (Caracciolo 53, italics mine)

The hefty increase of the population in the first years of *Roma capitale* led to an optimistic prediction on the flourishing development of the city. The explosion of new architecture and future urban plans narrates what Chambers defines as a "prophetic announcement of a future paradise" (133). This caused a frantic negotiation of land and buildings on the part of clergy and the aristocracy, which generated an immediate rise in prices. Historians identify the phenomenon of *febbre edilizia* with the 1880s boom constructions, however, as early as 1874, Renazzi used medical terms such as "febbre" and "parossismo" to define the research of possible urban expansions and the trade of private properties immediately after the conquest of the city. This word choice highlights the extreme intensity of these activities and also connotes a lack of control over them; therefore, a negative association derived from that. The presence of the concept of capitalism as biological contamination in D'Annunzio's texts evolves from this contemporary cultural construction of the Rome's urban expansion.

This disorder in planning and this possibility of profit attracted bankers, merchants, and business men, especially from Northern Italy and the previous capital, Florence. This was something evident just nine days later the conquest of the city. When Rome became the capital, it also became immediately a capitalist city in the narration of some newspapers: "i capitalisti, i negozianti, tutti gli uomini intraprendenti arrivano a carovane. Una *febbre* di attività, di progresso, di miglioramento, sospinge romani e non romani. I giornali diluviano, i nuovi negozi si preparano, le società immobiliari si organizzano" (*La Libertà,* 29 Settembre 1870, in Alberto Caracciolo 53, italics mine). This article too used the word "febbre" to comment on the hectic transformations of the city just nine days after the breach of Porta Pia. More than concrete activities, however, what pushed Romans and non-Romans to pursue profit were the projections and fantasy of "progresso" and "miglioramento" that at the time were not visible yet and for many remained unattainable in the following years. In this article, the new capital appeared as a flourishing capitalist city with its shops, journals, banks, and developing real estate. In reality, the rapid transformations touching some limited areas of Rome before the 1880s (Corso Vittorio Emanuele II and Esquilino) appeared as an "appiccicatura" as Faldella defines them in the articles analyzed in Chapter One. Indeed, the capital's quick, smooth, and superficial transformations did not involve a studied plan to face the deep socioeconomic modifications that the city was experiencing. In all this, economic speculation was the driving force; banks moved to Rome even before the various ministries in order to take advantage of real estates. This development was more virtual than real. Rome remained an unproductive city also because of the lack of factories and consistent production: Testaccio and Ostiense never became the two industrial centers

that they were imagined to become in the urban development plans throughout the years. Even there, realtors refused to build housing for workers and converted these and the areas assigned to factories into elegant buildings for the upper and middle classes. Profit and visible luxury were more important than actual progress and the prospect of low-income housing.

If the government and the private contractors did not develop working-class neighborhoods and public housing, where did the unwanted, poor population live? First of all, it is necessary to define the different categories of the proletariat and subproletariat of the city. Architect and urban planner Italo Insolera divides these social strata into three groups: the poor who lived in the city center (mainly in *quartiere del Risorgimento*, close to Piazza Navona) before 1870; those who before 1870 worked occasionally in the city but did not have a house; and public employees connected to services (tramways, railway, street sweepers, etc.) that developed with *Roma capitale* (*Roma moderna* 79-81). For the first category, nothing changed with the advent of the capital: they continued to live in the same buildings but, instead of living off the charity of the clergy and the aristocracy, they started to look for modest jobs in bourgeois families or at public institutions that moved to the city center. Gradually, they were forced to move away from the city center because of the restoration of ancient buildings to accommodate new, bourgeois inhabitants.

The second category underwent a deeper transformation. Before 1870, a consistent number of peasants, mainly from Lazio and Abruzzo, used to search for occasional, daily work in the Agro Romano. At night, they did not have a home to come back to – because their families remained in their villages – so they shared empty barns

just outside the Roman walls. Sometimes, there were too many day laborers that these temporary accommodations were not enough and many of them spent the nights in the area close to Piazza Montanara (where they gathered to find jobs during the day), under the colonnades of Campidoglio, or under arches. In this period, homelessness was common in densely populated areas (such as Piazza Montanara and the surrounding medieval *borgo*) and even close to papal residences (such as the Campidoglio at the time) and aristocratic palaces. After 1870 and with the Roman urban expansion, these day laborers became the construction workers and the manual laborers of the new capital. Even if during the day they were visually present in the city's urban areas and they were considered the mechanisms that the city needed to grow, their existence outside of their job became less tolerated. No affordable housing was available for the increasing number of construction workers, so some of them started to build shacks along via del Mandrione, along the railway, at Nomentano bridge, or just outside Porta Portese, while others continued to sleep in the streets – under the elegant, freshly built colonnades of Piazza Vittorio or those along the Lungotevere close to Ponte Sisto, on the staircases of San Lorenzo, Santa Maria Maggiore, and other churches (*Roma moderna* 72-73). Their increasing presence in the streets was considered unseemly for the capital; in 1900, a law forbade sleeping outside and these laborers joined the camps of shacks (sometimes even built by the municipality) in the previous areas or in new ones, such as those outside Porta San Giovanni, Porta Maggiore, along viale della Regina, vicolo di Prati Strozzi, via Angelica, via Tunisi, and in front of the train station at San Pietro (*Roma moderna* 80).[83]

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[83] Note also that, since the 17th century, the presence of beggars in Rome was high and it was a well-known fact around Europe thanks to Grand Tour literature (*Italy's Margins* 26).

This law was connected to the atmosphere of social alarmism that affected Italy (and Europe) in between the 19th and 20th century. The positivist school criminalized socially disadvantaged individuals – such as beggars, prostitutes, alcoholics, and the physically and mentally disabled – and, therefore, this state of social alert led to harsh, exceptional laws. One example is the 1859 Legge di Pubblica Sicurezza 3720 that authorized the Prefetto to prohibit to *oziosi* and *vagabondi* to dwell in specific places (De Cristofaro 17). This law was incorporated in the Legge Pica, which the government promulgated in 1863 to repress the phenomenon of *brigantaggio* that was threatening the recently achieved national unification in the South and the rural areas of Central Italy, in conjunction with the rise of socialism and anarchic groups. This law was not limited to *briganti*, but it also included *oziosi* and v*agabondi*: "Il Governo avrà inoltre facoltà di assegnare per un tempo non maggiore di un anno un domicilio coatto agli oziosi, a' vagabondi, alle persone sospette, secondo la designazione del Codice penale" ("Regio Decreto 15 Agosto 1863, n. 1409"). The definition of *oziosi* and *vagabondi* was left to interpretation. For example, similar to the Statuto Albertino, the "Codice Penale Italiano Annotato per Vincenzo Cosentino" (1863) describes the *oziosi* as "sani e robusti, e non provveduti di sufficienti mezzi di sussistenza, vivono senza esercitare professione, arte o mestiere, o senza darsi a stabile lavoro" (298); the *vagabondi* differ from the *oziosi* for the fact that they do not have a known residence. These descriptions can definitely fit for the numerous construction workers who moved to the capital. Indeed, they had discontinuous, daily jobs and were healthy and robust enough to work; moreover, most of them did not have a specific residence in Rome. Socialist senator Adolfo Zerboglio highlighted how the laws attacking *oziosi* and *vagabondi* were protecting the status quo

reached by the rich and the bourgeoisie (Poesio in De Cristofaro 121). Similarly, Lorenzo Benadusi's "Il Domicilio Coatto Contro Oziosi, Vagabondi e Omosessuali" highlights how the *domicilio coatto* was a "soluzione estrema contro chi non si è piegato al modello di uomo proposto dallo Stato, ne viola le norme, e con la sua stessa esistenza mette in pericolo la società e i suoi valori" (191 in De Cristofaro). Benadusi points out that the repression against *oziosi* and *vagabondi* was not only due to the belief that idleness led to a criminal life but also to the idea that these people were not contributing to the economic development of the nation (194). Indeed, this attention to production is remarkable in one of Faldella's passages examined in Chapter One where the narrator foresees Roman taverns transforming into active mills and idle clients into vigorous workers thanks to the intervention of Northern Italians in the capital. Only by participating to the nation's economy, Romans could become Italians. In 1889, the penal code excluded *oziosi* and *vagabondi* from being criminals, but, if considered socially dangerous or if they had been previously charged with a crime, they could be sent to *domicilio coatto* (197).[84] So, instead of resolving the problem of housing for the working poor, the 1900 law wiped the presence of the unwanted homeless from the city center and its monuments. They were the "unfitting," the *homines sacri* that needed to be confined in "camps."[85]

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[84] For more details about the *domicilio coatto* and law and order in the 19th century, see Ernesto De Cristofaro's *Il Domicilio Coatto: Ordine Pubblico e Politiche di Sicurezza in Italia dall'Unità alla Repubblica*, Acireale-Roma: Bonanno Editore, 2015; Daniela Fozzi's *Tra Prevenzione e Repressione: Il Domicilio Coatto nell'Italia Liberale*, Roma: Carocci, 2010; John Davis's *Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988; and Paul Garfinkel's *Criminal Law in Liberal and Fascist Italy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

[85] Similar and yet more subtle, indirect laws against homeless are still at work in Italy, Europe, and the US. Common practices are the installations of anti-homeless spikes on the floor, extremely uncomfortable and segmented benches, barred corners, raised or fenced grate covers, and boulders under bridges. All these interventions in urban architecture ban homeless from central areas of major cities without ever recurring to written laws and, most importantly, without offering an alternative solution. Moreover, in the recent racist wave in Italy, the vice mayor of Trieste, Paolo Polidori, removed the blankets of a homeless person from a central street and threw them in the garbage. For more information, see these articles: "Trieste, vicesindaco leghista getta coperte di un clochard e se ne vanta su Facebook," *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. Jan. 5, 2019;

The fiction and non-fiction texts analyzed in this chapter confirm, in different ways, Agamben's conclusions on Western power consisting of biopolitics and demonstrate how Italy's nation building through Rome's symbolic use of space relied on similar strategies. Agamben claims that "the origin of political relation is the ban (the state of exception as zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion)" (181); identically, by banning the official presence of the working class and the unemployed in the city's fabric, Italian authorities facilitated the creation of indistinct urban areas and, in this way, excluded the proletariat and the subproletariat from participating in the bourgeois, national life that Rome embodied. Moreover, by this exclusion, they were included in the national discourse, but only as outcasts, which thus demonstrates that they did not belong to the Italian nation. The capital's urban modification and expansion in the process of Italy's nation building also recalls Agamben's third point: "Today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West" (181). The concept of the camp is essential for the symbolic nation building of Rome. While the city center underwent renovations that exalted the triumph of the country's unification and its bourgeois aspirations, camps (the proletarian and subproletarian areas in the capital's neglected outskirts) contained what was "unfitting" in the image of a wealthy, secure nation.[86] Although the construction of a unified, bourgeois image through architecture and monuments was relevant for the new capital, this nation building project could not be

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Elizabeth Wallace's "What's Behind the Uptick in Hostile Architecture?" *Architectural Digest*, Mar. 21, 2018; Alex Andreou's "Anti-homeless spikes: 'Sleeping rough opened my eyes to the city's barbed cruelty,'" *The Guardian*, Feb. 18, 2015; Batol Abdelhafez's "Hostile Architecture in New York City," *The Observer*, Apr. 4, 2018.

[86] Pier Paolo Pasolini and Elsa Morante identify Rome's periphery with camps; for more details, see Chapter Three.

considered complete without the construction of proletarian neighborhoods separated from the city center, and the creation of laws and regulations that forced the working poor and the unemployed to live in shanty towns at the borders of the city. By removing the proletariat and the subproletariat from the core of the new capital, Rome's unregulated periphery can be considered actual camps.[87]

Initially, however, there was a will to resolve the housing issue. During the first years of *Roma capitale*, there were a few attempts to build housing for the working class. In 1872, a consortium of private owners of Prati di Castello presented the project for this new neighborhood to the municipal council. The Mayor, Luigi Pianciani, was a strong advocate for the democratization of Rome and saw in this project an occasion to develop a proletarian neighborhood. Even if he opposed property speculation during his mandates (1872-1874 and 1881-1882), he could not stop the gentrification of the area, especially after Francesco Saverio De Mérode built an iron bridge (1878) to connect the area to the center. The 1883 development plan also allocated Castro Pretorio and Testaccio for modest and proletarian housing; the first one became an area for luxurious apartments and the other remained incomplete until the early 1900s.[88] Testaccio was the only project that authorities started with the aim of accommodating the growing proletariat; most likely, because the project relied on the isolation of the working class in a remote area outside of the city center and the new, bourgeois neighborhoods, no one interfered with

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[87] I continue this discourse in Chapter Three when analyzing in depth the continuation of urban segregation of the working poor during fascism through Elsa Morante's *La Storia*.
[88] For more details, see Alberto Caracciolo's *Roma Capitale: dal Risorgimento alla crisi dello Stato liberale*. Roma: Edizioni Rinascita, 1956 and Italo Insolera's *Roma moderna: un secolo di storia urbanistica.* Torino: Einaudi, 1962.

its realization. Immediately after the Breccia, politicians designated Testaccio as the development area for an industrial zone and proletarian housing

> lì [a Testaccio] lontane e separate dalla città, dalla parte opposta a quella dove tende l'espansione dei quartieri residenziali, sorgeranno le attrezzature necessarie alla vita di una metropoli e, subito accanto, le case per gli operai. In mezzo c'è tutta la zona archeologica, tutto l'Aventino a garantire le condizioni geografiche per questa specie di apartheid delle ciminiere fumose e del proletariato. (*Roma moderna* 74)

As Insolera notices, the designation of Testaccio as a proletarian and industrial area completely isolated from the new, elegant area of *Roma alta* was a form of apartheid to conceal the mechanisms of the metropolis.[89] It is interesting to note how ancient Roman ruins do not have any patriotic meaning in this context but, rather, functioned as dividers from the central, renovated area of the capital. Differently from the Fori Imperiali and Coliseum, the ruins on the Aventino hill were still marginal and neglected; therefore, instead of connecting Rome's different urban sectors with symbolic narrations of the past, they created a border.[90] In addition to proletarian housing, a slaughterhouse, warehouses, a central market, and a gasometer were built. In the eyes of urban planners and politicians, workers, cattle, sheep, and goods were "unfitting," "what is [not] proper [for] a man" to see in the modernized era and, because they could corrupt the city's constructed image of wealth and sophistication, they needed to be kept hidden from the bourgeois side of the city. Consequently, in this vision, the proletariat shared the same destiny of the animals in the slaughterhouse and of the objects in the warehouses; they were exploited until their death and amassed in small spaces.[91] The slow, irregular

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[89] I discuss the colonial implications of such an organization of space in Chapter Three.
[90] For an interpretation of marginal Roman ruins, see the section on Pasolini in Chapter Four.
[91] See Chapter Three for a detailed analysis of these points through Elsa Morante's *La Storia* and "Pro o Contro la Bomba Atomica."

realization of Testaccio confirms the ruling class's neglect towards the inhabitants' living conditions; in fact, even if the development of the neighborhood was included in the urban plans of 1873 and 1883, its realization was incomplete until 1907, when the Istituto Case Popolari intervened. In 1907, 8,000 people lived in the area with a concentration of a minimum of 2.4 people in one room – 4.8 in some cases (*Roma moderna* 76).[92] For thirty years, the inhabitants of Testaccio lived in an area completely detached from the city center and lacking any kind of public services. Insolera reports that only nine blocks out of thirty-six were completed, but, more strikingly, the majority of the streets were not paved; many apartments did not have gas, there was neither a school nor a clinic, there was no wash house, and the areas free from construction were covered with garbage (*Roma moderna* 75).[93]

With its isolation from both the countryside (and its lifestyle) and from the city, Testaccio (and, later, fascist and post-WWII *borgate*) and its inhabitants are what Debord would define in the 1960s as "pseudo-countryside" and "new, artificial peasantry" in the society of the spectacle:

> The forms of habitation and the spectacular control of today's 'planned environment' have created a new, artificial peasantry. The geographical dispersal and narrow-mindedness that always prevented the peasantry for undertaking independent action and becoming a creative historical force are equally characteristics of these modern

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[92] The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), and U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) consider household overcrowding more than one person per room and severe overcrowding more than 1.5 persons per room. For more info see the webpage of the California Department of Public Health regarding overcrowding: https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/housing-crowding

[93] Garbage became a fundamental presence in Neorealism, such as in Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di Biciclette* (1948) and *Miracolo a Milano* (1951), or in Michelangelo Antonioni's *N.U.* (1948). It still persists in post-neorealist films – such as in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Accattone* (1961), *Uccellacci e Uccellini* (1966), and *Che Cosa Sono le Nuvole* (1968); and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Deserto Rosso* (1964) – and in contemporary films such as Matteo Garrone's *Gomorra* (2008), and Alice Rohrwacher's *Corpo Celeste* (2011) and *Lazzaro Felice* (2018). For a detailed study on garbage in Italian cinema, see Adam Muri-Rosenthal's dissertation "Residual visions: Rubbish, Refuse and Marginalia in Italian Cinema from Neorealism to the Present" (2014), Harvard University.

> producers [...]. The traditional peasantry was the unshakeable basis of 'Oriental despotism,' and its very scatteredness *called forth* bureaucratic centralization; the new peasantry that has emerged as the product of the growth of modern state bureaucracy differs from the old in that *its apathy* has had to be *historically manufactured* and maintained. (125)

By transforming workers into "docile bodies" through isolation and inhumane working and living conditions, authorities manufactured and maintained the proletariat's weakness. Not only did they aim to limit the strength, organizing will, and desire of revolt among the proletarian masses, but, by treating them as debris and by positioning them near warehouses, factories, and slaughterhouses, they also admitted that they considered workers disposable objects in the process of modernization. Since it became the capital, Rome embodied prematurely what Debord defines as "society of the spectacle" in the late 1960s. If on one hand the city's architecture and urban transformations together with the official political rallies and events organized in the city's streets fabricated an image of a unified and wealthy nation, on the other the same society that aimed at homogenizing Romans and Italians and isolating people, especially the working class and poor. Before the unification, Roman peasantry and poor were "the unshakeable basis of 'Oriental despotism'" of Grand Tour representations and similar texts, such as Faldella's articles analyzed in Chapter One. Moreover, similar to the rest of peasantry and working poor in the peninsula, the Roman ones' "very scatteredness called forth bureaucratic [and national] centralization" and unification. Once this bureaucratic unification was realized, however, peasants and workers were artificially maintained isolated and, in the case of Rome, this is visible in the segregation of their designated district and in their living and working conditions that certainly created their apathy. So,

in the process of nation building, the narration of the unification was always combined to a narration and acts of exclusion.

At the end of the 19th century, because Testaccio was so underdeveloped and incomplete, it could hardly accommodate the thousands of construction workers – who, after the construction crisis, were partially forced to leave Rome (Insolera reports 29,000 people) – and the proletariat connected to the public services of the capital.[94] Insolera groups the railway workers, street sweepers, tramway workers, and all the other employees in public and private services connected to the development if the capital in the third category of "Roma della povera gente." Unlike the occasional construction workers that were fragmented by their various regional origins, this category of proletariat managed to form a coalition and create the first building cooperative; in this way, they erected the first proletarian housing. Similar to the majority of the urban developments in Rome, the area was not included in the official urban plan and, also for this reason, it lacked public services. The areas of interest were San Lorenzo and Santa Croce-Villa Wolkonsky, at the southern border of *Roma alta* and of Termini station. The choice of the area relied on the fact that these people worked in the proximity of that part of Rome: at the cargo terminal of the train station, the water tanks, the depository of the municipal cleansing service, the tramways warehouse, etc. Even if the architecture of these buildings is plain (five stories, ocher edifices with no stuccos, no balconies, and an internal courtyard), their existence is an act of resistance among the Roman proletariat, who decided not to conform to the will of the government that wanted it segregated in the more detached area of Testaccio. The lack of a regulated urban expansion allowed the

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[94] See Section Two in this chapter for information on the construction crisis in Rome at the end of the 19th century.

construction of these proletarian housing buildings in proximity of the new, bourgeois development of the capital. This is an example of what Chambers defines as a failure, a crack in the dominion of hegemonic power, which allows for resistance based on a vernacular form of architecture. This is a form of voice expressing basic needs, such as shelter but also the need to be part of a self-recognized community (the proletariat) and, more in general, of the nation, which the central area of the city embodied in the process of nation building. This voice opposed the official language of Rome's architecture and urban plan that would have rather isolated workers from the symbolic core of the capital.[95]

2. A Capitalist Capital

2.1 The Capitalist Infection and the Resistance of Ancient Buildings

In this section, I investigate more in depth the way D'Annunzio uses the capital's urban space to comment on land and property speculation affecting the city during the *febbre edilizia.* The primary role given to buildings in relation to an extensive use of metaphors of contamination conveys the defeat of the aristocracy in the era of mass society, democratization, and capitalism. In D'Annunzio's texts, the uncontrollable spread of thirst of profit acts as a sickness contaminating every layer of the society and leaves ancient buildings and Roman ville as the last survivors of the ancient regime.

Before analyzing D'Annunzio's texts, it is fundamental to frame the land and property speculation in the capital. Immediately after the Breccia of Porta Pia, in order to speculate on existing buildings and lands, the Roman clergy and aristocracy started to sell

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[95] Testaccio and other proletarian neighborhoods are at the center of Chapter Three, where I analyze Elsa Morante's *La Storia.*

their properties and, in this way, they attracted private investors first from Northern Italy, and, later, from Northern Europe. Rome appeared to be an extension of Piedmont not only because the majority of politicians and of the army of the new born capital were from Turin, but also because the financial groups investing in the city belonged to the ex Regno Sabaudo: Banca di Torino, Banca Italo-germanica, Banca italiana di costruzioni and Compagnia commerciale from Genoa, and the Lombard-Piedmontese Compagnia fondiaria italiana (Alberto Caracciolo 40-41). In a couple of years, Roman properties belonged to external financial and political powers that drastically changed the profile of Rome. Indeed, as examined in Chapter One, Faldella's articles echo this northern economic and political colonization of Rome.

The general idea of the capital's new face was that it should have visually represented not only the superiority of the new regime in opposition to the papal one, but also the capitalist nature of the newborn nation, which the country was struggling to reach while imitating the other European nation-states. For this reason, Rome should have appeared luxurious, modern, and, as we have seen, devoid of visible poverty and decay. Even if a bourgeois face-lift of the capital was the politicians' intention, a thirst for profit took over a rationalized planning of the city. In 1876, the prefect Giuseppe Gadda warned that, in the first five years of *Roma capitale*, speculators detected immediately "un grande miraggio di imprese di ogni natura… sfruttando il nome di Roma e la formazione di una capitale di un giovane regno" (*Relazioni sul primo quinquennio amministrativo della provincia di Roma*, in Alberto Caracciolo 52-53). Banks anticipated ministries in moving to Rome because they were attracted by the

immense trade of real estate in the months immediately following the Breccia.[96] As urbanist Piero della Seta claims, "lo sviluppo di Roma sarà fin dall'inizio condizionato e determinato dall'interesse privato. L'intervento finanziario dello Stato e l'azione del Comune vi avranno una funzione propulsiva, ma interamente subordinata alla speculazione privata" (in Alberto Caracciolo 59). In fact, private speculators not only determined the prices of the trades, but also the direction of the expansion, the character of the new buildings, and the organization of streets and squares. As the capital, more than embodying the heart of the nation, Rome became the expression of fierce, capitalist forces. This process of capitalization of the city embodies what Debord would later define "the dictatorial freedom of the Market" (9), which is possible in the society of the spectacle because it totally relies on the economy and strives toward modernization and unification. Indeed, in becoming the capital, Rome had to demonstrate to be a modern city that was also able to unify the Italian population. Because of these two aspirations (modernization and unification), the mechanisms that Debord detects in the society of the spectacle can be found in the new Italian capital at the end of the 1800s, including the predominance of a ruthless, free market that harmed the Roman proletariat and subproletariat because it did not allow for proper development of housing for them.

Initially, however, the housing situation seemed under control. Ten days after the Breccia, the first urban development plan was approved under the direction of Pietro Camporesi. The priorities of the plan were expansion and embellishment, with special attention to the new, elegant area of Esquilino, near the train station. Moreover, the plan excluded any development toward Prati di Castello and it designated an industrial area in

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[96] See Alberto Caracciolo 52-59 for more details.

Testaccio. However, this plan did not regulate development for long. After a few months, the disagreements on the direction of the expansion between the municipal engineers and the private developers were so strong that negotiations protracted for almost two years. When the second urban plan was approved in 1873, Rome had already expanded in an anarchic way. The new development plan did not guide private contractors, but rather it approved what they had already erected and asked the State to cover the expenses for the completion of streets and public services for which private developers did not pay.

Despite the economic involvement of the State, between 1877 and 1879, there was a first interruption of work in the city's construction sites; because the Società Monte Mario and Credito Romano – the banks that were in charge of some *villini* in the Roman periphery – were on the verge of bankruptcy, the construction sites in Esquilino and Castro Pretorio stalled and the majority of edifices and streets in Rome were left incomplete. The capital appeared then as a gigantic, unfinished construction site: the opposite of the idea of perfection and sublime that the ruling class had in mind. Beside the stagnation of the national economy, the real problems were the prices of these new buildings and the lack of affordable apartments for the incoming population – for the most part, the middle class and proletariat. This lack of attention to the real population seems to confirm Crispi's words when he declared that "le capitali non appartengono ai cittadini che vi abitano, ma a tutto lo Stato" (496) – and, according to the facts, to rich, ruthless speculators. A second State intervention in 1881 caused a frantic resumption of construction, which, this time, even involved storekeepers, artisans, and small farmers.[97] The *febbre edilizia* affected almost everyone: "l'usura e il confidente abbandono, i rincari

[97] The State provided for the construction of the new Palazzo di Giustizia, the new Policlinico, barracks, bridges; the completion of Via Nazionale; and the rehabilitation of the old Jewish ghetto.

favolosi e le sovvenzioni, concesse con generosità inaudita, andarono di pari passo; sembrava proprio che qui si distribuissero milioni a chi, non avendo un soldo, si sentiva il coraggio di divenire costruttore da un giorno all'altro" (Silvagni 74). At the time, it seemed that the prophesized future paradise of a wealthy, bourgeois nation was going to happen.

The effects of the 1881 crisis are visibile in Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, where Cantelmo distances himself from the masses and from those who endorse commercialism and land exploitation of such an artistic and historic city. If Finali and Monti denounced the incompatibility of proletariat and monuments, as seen in the previous section, Cantelmo condemns the vulgar combination of profiteers and Rome's ancient history implied in its architecture:

> Vivendo io in Roma, io ero testimonio delle più ignominiose violazioni e dei più osceni connubi che mai abbiano disonorato un luogo sacro. […] Come un rigurgito di cloache l'onda delle basse cupidigie invadeva le piazze e i trivii, sempre più putrida e più gonfia, senza mai che l'attraversasse la fiamma di un'ambizione perversa ma titanica, senza che mai vi scoppiasse almeno il lampo d'un bel delitto. (30-31)

In these words, Cantelmo opposes the current aristocracy, part of the clergy, and the newborn bourgeoisie to the heroic, ancient Romans. In the past fearlessness, ambition, and physical strength were guiding the actions of the inhabitants of Rome – sometimes even resulting in violence, which the narrator justifies for the noble intent of the scheme. In modern days, profit and greed are the only driving forces inside the city's walls. Cantelmo identifies Rome as a sacred place because of its past glory and political strength that opposes the present uncertain political situation and, most of all, the desire of easy profit, which Cantelmo despises as something rotten ("rigurgito di cloache," "l'onda delle basse cupidigie [...] putrida [...] [e] gonfia"). Usually the terms "putrida"

and "gonfia" were used to describe the marshes in the countryside surrounding Rome, as in Faldella's article mentioned in the first section of this chapter. Beyond this first similarity, both the Agro and the capital's streets during the *febbre edilizia* lack "la fiamma di un'ambizione." For the narrator, private speculation is not ambitious enough, rather it is a passive exploitation of ancient power and, for this reason, something putrid. Moreover, he characterizes this greed in a similar way to the construction workers previously analyzed in this novel and in *Il Piacere*: they both invade Rome's streets and squares as an overwhelming, extraneous force corrupting the city. Indeed, D'Annunzio's novels crystallize common fears connected to Italy's and Rome's modernization, such as the increasing presence of the proletariat in metropolitan areas and feverish capitalistic greed.

Living in Rome during the *febbre edilizia*, D'Annunzio's narrator identifies the rush affecting the trade of real estate properties as the main cause of Rome's decay and decide to characterize it as a contamination. In fact, as Cantelmo affirms:

> Era il tempo in cui più torbida ferveva l'operosità dei distruttori e dei costruttori del suolo di Roma. Insieme con nuvoli di polvere si propagava una specie di follia del lucro, come un turbine maligno, afferrando non soltanto gli uomini servili, i familiari della calce e del mattone, ma ben anche i più schivi eredi dei maiorascati papali, che avevano fin allora guardato con dispregio gli intrusi dalle finestre dei palazzi di travertino incrollabili sotto la crosta dei secoli. Le magnifiche stirpi […] si abbassavano a una a una, sdrucciolavano nella nuova melma, vi s'affondavano, scomparivano. (67)

In the text, like an epidemic, greed contaminates everyone as if carried by the dust from construction sites that is dispersed in the capital's air.[98] D'Annunzio's text also alludes to

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[98] Note how this image is similar to Grimm's description of the smoke from brick furnaces invading Saint Peter's and the Vatican gardens analyzed in Section 1.2 in this chapter. Both Grimm's and D'Annunzio's texts report shared concerns of the period regarding the transformations that Rome underwent during its modernization – introduction of small factories and urban expansion.

changes dismantling the Roman aristocracy after the annexation to the nation. For example, a law forbade the *maiorascato* and, as a consequence, the most powerful, Roman aristocratic families were forced to divide their inherited possessions amongst their descendants. With this law, it became difficult for them to maintain and sustain the expenses for their palaces, galleries, and ville and, as a consequence, most of them were more inclined to sell. From the commoners to the aristocratic families tied to ancient popes, everyone decided to sell ancient palaces and properties in the name of profit. Cantelmo blames aristocratic families that capitulate to real estate trades because, as they are driven by this capitalist greed, they lose their moral superiority, lower themselves to mediocrity, and succumb to the corrupt, homogenizing masses ("Le magnifiche stirpi […] si abbassavano a una a una, sdrucciolavano nella nuova melma, vi s'affondavano, scomparivano").

The word "stirpe" needs attention. In the chapter "Mutilated Limbs" of *Vital Subject*, Welch offers a detailed study of *stirpe* and *razza* in D'Annunzio. She gives a new interpretation of the author's use of the two terms and she highlights how, in *Il Piacere*, the poet connects *stirpe* to "a celebrated bloodline" while *razza* to "its final dissolution" (138). In the quoted passage from *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, D'Annunzio uses *stirpe* even if the narrator is describing the erosion of the gap between aristocratic families and the bourgeoisie. The use of *stirpe* in its celebratory meaning here highlights the fall of aristocracy from the top of the society to the mediocre level of the bourgeoisie; this fall also echoes the vertical abysm separating the windows of the aristocracy's ancient palaces from the "melma" of capitalism and land exploitation invading Rome's street. It is also significant that, in opposition to humans, buildings are the only entities

preserving their integrity ('palazzi di travertino incrollabili"). They are the silent, indestructible witnesses of the decadence afflicting the Romans – at least, until their physical destruction.

In order to avoid this contamination, in an imaginary dialogue with Leonardo da Vinci's painting of Alessandro Cantelmo, the protagonist's valorous ancestor encourages him to abandon Rome because the masses that dominate it threaten his integrity. The contamination of capitalism is transmitted to the masses and it can attack Cantelmo too if he stays in the capital:

> A giudicarne dalla qualità dei tuoi pensieri, tu sembri contaminato dalla folla o preso da una femmina. Per avere attraversato la folla che ti guardava, ecco, tu già ti senti diminuito dinnanzi a te medesimo. Non vedi tu gli uomini che la frequentano divenire infecondi come i muli? Lo sguardo della folla è peggio che un getto di fango; il suo alito è pestifero. Vattene lontano, mentre la cloaca si scarica […] Non t'indugiare; non ti lasciar contaminare dalla folla. (66)

Again, these words ("contaminato," "fango," "pestifero," and "cloaca") confirm Cantelmo's fear of the masses and their possible threat to the individual identity of the *superuomo*, whose destiny is to establish a new, more elevated ancestry.[99] In *Fascist*

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[99] As Anthony Woodward indicates, the volcanic cliffs near Trigento – where Cantelmo seeks shelter from the city – recall the mountains that "Zarathustra, like an ominously neo-pagan John the Baptist, descended prophet-wise […] to the cities of the plain and their degraded inhabitants as a precursor of the *Übermensch* to come […] Claudio too has Zarathustrian leanings to be the forerunner of a dominant future King of Rome, and something of Zarathustra's savage anticipatory solitude seems to find an echo in a passage describing the volcanic cliffs of the Corace which symbolize Claudio's aspirations" (18). Moreover, Woodward draws more connections between Cantelmo and Zarathustra by highlighting how Giorgio Aurispa's reflections on Nietzsche's hero in *Il Trionfo della Morte*, in reality, seem to portray the protagonist of *Le Vergini delle Rocce* for his condemnation of European decadence: "all the deceitful spiritual needs of the age, all the absurd degraded feminising of the old spirit of Europe, all the monstrous re-blossoming of Christian disease in decadent races" (20). Also, Aurispa's affirmation of certain values recalls Cantelmo: "he […] rejected all faith and particularly the faith in Moralism, proclaimed the rightness of inequality, […] the instincts of struggle and dominance, the overflowing powers of generation and fecundity, all the 'virtù' of the Dyonisian man, the conqueror, the destroyer, the creator" (20). For more details on the connections between D'Annunzio, Nietzsche, Gobineau, Dante's *Monarchia*, and Wagner's theatre, and for a definition of the *superuomo dannunziano*, see Anthony Woodward's "Aestheticism and Politics: Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Le Vergini delle Rocce,"* in *English Studies in Africa*. 42. 2 Jan 1 1999, pp. 13-30. See also Welch's chapter "Mutilated Limbs" in *Vital Subjects* where the author investigates

Virilities, Spackman analyzes the interchangeability of the crowd and woman: in Cantelmo's discourse both woman and the crowd have to remain passive subjects and leave the power to choose and lead to man and aristocrats (93). She identifies the infection in the city with the crowd's desire to choose its leader and to become an active element in politics. In addition to participation in politics, I argue that the mirage of economic redemption, especially for the middle class, was a relevant factor in the masses's desire for emancipation. The idea of becoming a consumer cannot be detangled from the wish to have an active role in the new state.

While I certainly agree with Spackman's reading of the phenomenon of democratization, I am more interested in tracing affinities between D'Annunzio's text and contemporary intellectuals and politicians, especially in regard to metaphors. For example, the mentioned passage also recalls Le Bon's analysis of the masses as a contagious entity:

> In a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest. [...] [An] individual [...], having entirely lost his conscious personality, [...] obeys all the suggestions of the operator who has deprived him of it [...]. [An] individual immerged for some length of time in a crowd in action soon finds himself [...] in a special state, which much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotised individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotiser. (30-31)

Published in the same year, the two texts share an equal fear of the masses' contamination and loss of individual will. Moreover, according to Le Bon, the masses cannot perform exceptional actions that require intelligence – something that D'Annunzio's characters are looking for:

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reproduction, ancestry, race, and blood in D'Annunzio's *Romanzi della Rosa* trilogy and his writings on Fiume.

> This very fact that crowds possess in common ordinary qualities explains why they can never accomplish acts demanding a high degree of intelligence. [...] The truth is, they can only bring to bear in common on the work in hand those mediocre qualities which are the birthright of every average individual. In crowds it is stupidity [...] that is accumulated (29).

The lack of intelligence, free will, and artistic genius is also a recurring theme in D'Annunzio, as seen in this chapter, as well as in his contemporary intellectuals' and politicians' texts. All of them feared that the increasing presence of the proletariat and subproletariat in Rome could have weaken the image of Italy as the hub of European culture. Privileging mechanic force over artistic competence, the capital could lose its iconic identity; the aristocracy is the last chance for art to survive in the city. Similar to Le Bon, Cantelmo's ancestor perceives the crowds as degrading ("già ti senti diminuito di fronte a te medesimo") and debilitating ("infecondi come i muli"). Le Bon individuates in the crowds' gaze the means of contamination, as if it were a collective exercise of hypnotism that no one can resist. This concept is present also in D'Annunzio's *Le Vergini delle Rocce* and, for this reason, because Cantelmo could succumb to the Romans' greed and feverish trade of real estate properties, he must leave the capital, maintain his individual, aristocratic, moral strength, and procreate a *superuomo* who would able to contrast the masses.[100]

Not much attention has been given on how D'Annunzio portrays the conflicts that the ancien régime was facing in the new mass society through the use of architecture in the text. For example, the Roman cityscape embodies the struggle between the papal power and the new, temporal one that are fighting for supremacy over Rome:

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[100] For a study on reproduction in *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, see Spackman's chapter "D'Annunzio and the Anti-Democratic Fantasy" in *Fascist Virilities*, pp. 77-113.

> La cupola solitaria nella sua lontananza transtiberina, abitata da un'anima senile ma ferma nella consapevolezza de' suoi scopi, era pur sempre il massimo segno, contrapposta a un'altra dimora inutilmente eccelsa dove un Re di stirpe guerriera dava esempio mirabile di pazienza adempiendo l'officio umile e stucchevole assegnatoli per decreto fatto dalla plebe. (31)

In the skyline, St. Peter's appears completely detached from the area close to Termini Station that was under development and that symbolically represents the birth of the capital, the unified nation, the affirmation of bourgeois reformations, and the triumph of a capitalist economy based on land exploitation and banks. The physical separation of the basilica from the vulgar turmoils agitating the east bank of the Tiber allows the preservation of the Pope's and the magnificent building's integrity. On the contrary, the grandeur of the regal residence Quirinale clashes with the lessening of the king's authority in order to serve commoners. Contrarily to the Pope, the King sacrificed "his personal interest to the collective interest," he lost "his conscious personality" and, for this reason, serves the masses. The gap between the magnificent Roman landscape and the masses, as well as the king's incapacity to face the crowds, appear again in D'Annunzio's description of the population's celebration after the conquest of the city in 1870:

> Una sera di settembre, su quell'acropoli quirina custodita dai Tindaridi gemelli, mentre una folla compatta commemorava con urla bestiali una conquista di cui non conosceva l'immensità spaventosa (Roma era terribile come un cratere, sotto una muta conflagrazione di nubi), io pensai: 'Qual sogno potrebbero esaltare nel gran cuore di un Re questi incendii del cielo latino.' (31)

While the crowds appear as a compact, bestial presence that cannot understand the importance of the event for the nation, the protagonist is the only one to be inspired by

the essence of the ancient ruins and Rome's cityscape that testify to a powerful empire.[101] Cantelmo criticizes the king for not exercising his complete power – as a king worth of *eredità latina* would do – and for bowing to the will of the masses. Indeed, Spackman states, in D'Annunzio's text, "the king is no longer truly a king, is absent even when he is present, because his relation to his subjects is defetishized, made visible as an office, a position in the social network to which he may be hired or fired" (*Fascist Virilities* 87). Spackman suggests that Cantelmo's idea of an heir able to seize power is a way "to restore the power of the king, to refetishize social relations" (87) with his subjects.

In *Le Vergini delle Rocce*, architecture also works as an indicator of the state "molti" in relation to their past. For example, D'Annunzio uses correlations between buildings and inhabitants in the passages describing Cantelmo's stay at Trigento, at his aristocratic friends' palace, with the aim of connecting the fall of the aristocracy with the advent of Italian unification, the affirmation of mass society, and the entry of the working class into politics. As the protagonist's friend Oddo explains, "una delle nostre pene è questo spazio; che ci dà una specie di smarrimento continuo e quasi un senso di diminuzione umiliante… Troppo ampio e troppo vacuo era infatti l'edificio" (122). As king Umberto I renounced his independent power, this aristocratic family – the Capece Montaga – retired in the countryside after the defeat in the siege of Gaeta (1860), which led to the conquest of the Regno delle Due Sicilie and resulted in the unification of Italy. As for the Italian king in the Quirinale, the antique, magnificent palace demeans its inhabitants by showing how the past glory, which the ample rooms symbolize, does not

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[101] In De Amicis's description of the same event, readers can perceive a similar fear of the crowds. For more details see Section 2.1 of Chapter One.

exist anymore in their present life. In these pages, D'Annunzio is not simply describing the Italian situation, but referring also to the European panorama, where monarchies and the aristocracy weakened after the birth of bourgeois nation-states: "Spingete lo sguardo oltre i paesi latini. All'ombra di troni posticci vedrete falsi monarchi compiere con esattezza le loro funzioni publiche in aspetto di automi o attendere a coltivar le loro manie puerili e i loro vizii mediocri" (249). Kings become void, stereotypical masks entertaining the masses because they become part of the masses, or, as Spackman states, kings' power has been defetishized. Indeed, kings show the symptoms of what Cantelmo and Le Bon define as contamination: they act as automaton and they present weaknesses such as infantile mania and mediocre vices. Le Bon individuates the same characteristics in those affected by the masses: "he is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will" (32). Moreover, Le Bon affirms that

> it will be remarked that among the special characteristics of crowds there are several – such as impulsiviness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments [...] – which are almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution – in women, savages, and children" (35-36).

Beyond this identification of the masses with feminine and infantile figures, it is important to point out that for D'Annunzio's narrator, if the aristocracy do not oppose the masses, Rome's art will be lost:[102]

> voi vedete che da per tutto le antiche regalità legittime declinano e che la Folla sta per inghiottirle nei suoi *gorghi melmosi*. Veramente esse non meritano altra sorte! E non la regalità soltanto, ma tutte le cose grandi e nobili e belle […] sono sul punto di scomparire nell'immensa *putredin*e che fluttua e si solleva. (251, italics mine)

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[102] For an analysis of the masses as a feminine entity, see Spackman's chapter "The Scene of Convalescence" in *Decadent Genealogies*, especially pp. 47–58.

Again, the image of the contaminating mud returns and threatens to devour not only kings, but also noble, beautiful things that prospered under the ancien régime.

It is at the end of the book that Cantelmo realizes that only after the chaos, which follows the complete dismemberment of the status quo, will the masses search for a heroic guide, their *superuomo* (*Le Vergini delle Rocce* 252). I agree with Spackman in saying that this is just a fantasy: modernization, capitalism, and the advent of the masses defetishized the social relation between kings and their subjects; they shifted the intrinsic value of and reverence from the king to the plebes (*Fascist Virilities* 86-92). As Woodward explains, "like so many radical temperaments at the end of the 19th century, D'Annunzio was seeking a new socio-political formula which would mobilise the drifting anomie of modern mass-civilisation and compact its enormous potential under strong charismatic leadership" (26). In fact, the protagonist is worried about not only the loss of the royalty's and aristocracy's power and magnificence, but also the disappearance of "tutte le cose grandi e nobili e belle" that mass civilization and capitalism tend to destroy and homogenize. For this reason, Cantelmo expresses his disenchantment with the choice of Rome as the capital of Italy, because he witnessed how the introduction of modern society in the *Città Eterna* led to the destruction of its unique, historical essence visible in the colossal ruins, magnificent churches, and lavish palaces: "in quella Terza Roma che doveva rappresentare 'l'Amore indomato del sangue latino alla terra latina' e raggiare dalle sue sommità la luce oltremirabile di un ideale novissimo. Sono stato testimonio delle più ignominiose violazioni e dei più osceni connubii che mai abbiano disonorato un luogo sacro" (253). As Woodward clarifies,

> sentiments of that type […] were symptoms of a neurosis afflicting quite diverse segments of the Italian culture and society in the late 19th century: frustrated

> Mazzinian idealists, belated Garibaldian hero-worshippers, nostalgic conservatives, atrabilious aesthetes. All, by intent or nilly-willy, stoked the flames of growing nationalist imperialism. (13)

The sense of failure and disillusionment just a few years after unification led to an intensification of a nationalist imperialism that, in Rome, beyond the reviving of the myth of *Latinità,* could be achieved only superficially by projecting an image of wealth in the urban fabric. Therefore, the ruling class preferred to build and allow more residences for the affluent bourgeoisie rather than solving the housing problem of the proletariat and subproletariat, to adopt the international Beaux Arts style in architecture, and to construct arcades and porticos in order to appear on par with other powerful, bourgeois, European capitals.

D'Annunzio's condemnation of the physical transformations of the capital is an attack on the introduction of a capitalist economy into the Italian capital. He is not the only author of the time denouncing capitalism: banks together with harbors and factories are topoi of the degeneration of metropolises in Decadent authors (Härmänmaan 161).[103] Since no factories were present in the territory and the political intelligentsia did not plan to develop industries in the area, the only way that capitalism could naturally flourish in Rome was through the construction industry because of the stress on urbanization and monumentality. Therefore, this kind of development was less active and productive than an actual industrial revolution; rather, the one in Rome appeared passive and directed to narrate the triumph of the hegemonic power through new districts and monuments. In fact, in *La Repubblica*, journalist and geopolitics professor Lucio Caracciolo defines this

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[103] See also Reinhard H. Thum's *The City. Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verhaeren*, New York, Washington DC/Baltimore, San Francisco, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Vienna, and Paris, Peter Lang, 1994, p. 248 and p. 257.

historical moment in Rome as a distorted industrial revolution by also quoting the words of a late 19th century journalist, Edoardo Arbib:

> Tutta la città scopre improvvisamente il fascino dell' edilizia. Roma conosce la sua breve, distorta "rivoluzione industriale". Imperversa la "bancomanìa", ma il credito è fin troppo facile: "In ogni stadio della lavorazione s' andava a cambiali; oltre il terreno, con esse erano pagati i materiali da costruzione. Questa massa di carta che si rinnovava di tre mesi in tre mesi affluiva tutta, come le acque immonde della cloaca al fiume, alle banche, le quali credevano di guadagnare, e si scavavano invece la fossa", scrive Edoardo Arbib nel 1895.

It is curious to see the use of a similar metaphor ("cloaca") in the description of this degrading phenomenon in D'Annunzio's novel and in Arbib's article (a contemporary journalist and politician) in the same year. However, the repulsion that Cantelmo feels toward those responsible for the spread of cupidity (bankers, politicians, and profiteers) is deeper than Arbib's, and it is more condemning toward the aristocratic families that should have protected their magnificent palaces from this corrupting rapacity. Cantelmo's comparison to the "cloaca" erases any sense of humanity from the catalysts of the *febbre edilizia*; it reduces the culprits to the sentiment of greed that overflows unstoppably as waste from sewers and penetrates Rome's ancient roads and squares, eventually dragging the aristocracy through that slime. Instead, Arbib limits himself to comparing the "cambiali" to the filthy sewer water converging with the river. The mass of paper of the "cambiali" is at the base of this passive profit affecting Rome's economics; Cantelmo blames the Roman aristocracy of surrendering to easy earnings while renouncing to their independence that, in the past, allowed for the creation of beauty.

It is not by chance that the image of the "cloaca" returns in the description of the *Città Terribili* in D'Annunzio's *Maia* XVI (1903). These are the apotheosis of the modern metropolis and clash with Ancient Greece, which was at the center of the

narrator's imaginary journey in search of a heroic sense of life in the first part of the poem.[104] In the new capitalist society nothing of the heroic, ancient world survived. For this reason, the view of the metropolis brings the narrator back to reality:

prime piogge d'autunno
croscinati su l'immondizia
polverosa che nera
fermenta sotto le suola
fendute onde si mostra
il miserevole piede
umano come tòrta
radice di dolore
divelta; rigùrgito crasso di cloache nell'ombra
della divina Sera,
tumulto della strada ingombra
ove tutte le fami
e le seti irrompono a gara
d'avidità belluina
(vv. 5715-5729)

In this poem, D'Annunzio describes an unknown filthy metropolis whose sidewalks are covered with dusty garbage that sticks to the soles of one's shoes and, by fermenting, it seems to attack the owner's soul.[105] Then, the poet's attention returns to the streets, to the darkest alleys where not only material garbage sits, but also people craving for different desires and bodily necessities. This poem pushes to its extremes D'Annunzio's reflections on urban modernization and capitalism by directly connecting the streets' degradation with human disquiet and suffering in the description of modern, capitalist metropolises, which the poet defines as *cittá terribili*. The agents of this painful

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[104] For a detailed analysis of *Maia*, especially for the decandence and the mercification of beauty and art, see Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti's "Il poeta nella città' in *Gli Inferi e il Labirinto,* pp. 105-138.
[105] Baldi affirms that, in this description of an unknown metropolis, Rome is still recognizable, "assunta emblematicamente a rappresentare la metropoli moderna in assoluto" (83). He also points out how, in *Le città terribili*, D'Annunzio introduces positive and exalting aspects of capitalism and industrialization because they are akin to his concept to superomismo (83-84).

contamination are, again, garbage and dust – the two downside of capitalist production.[106] The "rigurgito crasso di cloache" refers to these two but also to the crowd occupying the streets ("tumulto della strada ingombra") in search to quench their endless "fami" and "seti" that consumer capitalism causes in them. The result is that human figures are completely erased in D'Annunzio's portrait of the metropolis, even if there are masses of people in the streets. The poet transforms them into fleeting cravings that are as indistinct as the waste of a sewage.[107] Indeed, the poet defines them as "scoria umana" (vv. 5748-5479): not only capitalism transform workers into waste, but it also annihilates their individuality – the singular form for "scoria" does not allow for a recognition of singular members.[108] The only residue of human form is the foot that gets violated from the garbage and the sludge in the streets (capitalism) and that suffers for it. Interestingly, at this point, the foot transforms into an agonizing tree root that recalls the images of anthropomorphic plants in some passages on the demolitions of old districts and parks in Rome that I analyze in the next section. Like humans, trees and plants suffer in the metropolis and, in recognizing their similar destiny, D'Annunzio's texts propose an approach close to material ecocriticism that Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman help

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[106] As Serenella Iovino states, 'garbage [...] is a powerful metaphor for the contemporary society because it seems the only goal of the production/consumerism process' (*Ecologia Letteraria* 28). For more info see Serenella Iovino's *Ecologia Letteraria. Una Strategia di Sopravvivenza,* Milan: Edizioni Ambiente, 2006. Härmänmaan points out the relevance of garbage in *Le Città Terribili* (161). For a study on urban degeneration in *Maia,* see also Giorgio Barberi Squarotti's *Gli Inferi e il Labirinto. Da Pascoli a Montale,* Bologna: Cappelli, 1974, pp. 106-119 and Emanuela Scicchitano's "Descensus Averno: Il Viaggio Dannunziano nelle Città Terribili" in *La Città e l'Esperienza del Moderno* Vol. 2. Mario Barenghi, Giuseppe Langhella, and Gianni Turchetta eds. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2012, pp. 179-188.
[107] Baldi describes the urban inhabitants of *Maia* as "umanità abietta e larvale" (82).
[108] Bàrberi Squarotti identifies the modernity of D'Annunzio when he identifies workers with objects (*Gli Inferi e il Labirinto* 124). I continue this discourse on the dehumanization of workers in Chapter Three when I analyze Elsa Morante's *La Storia.*

defining in the article "Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity".[109] Indeed, they state that

> In the context of material ecocriticism, the humanization of things, places, natural elements, nonhuman animals, is not necessarily the sign of an anthropocentric and hierarchical vision but can be a narrative expedient intended to stress the agentic power of matter and the horizontality of its elements. If conceived in this critical perspective, anthropomorphizing representations can reveal similarities and symmetries between the human and the nonhuman. (82)

By using this strategy, D'Annunzio gives importance to plants in modern society. The texts that I include in this research offer a new perspective on D'Annunzio's work if analyzed in this way. Iovino and Oppermann also affirm that "the reconsideration of materiality is associated with the twentieth-century developments in natural sciences and with the radical changes that have affected our environments in the last decades" (75). In elaborating this kind of approach privileging the vegetal world, D'Annunzio anticipates this twentieth century sensibility in his attempt at contrasting the contemporary destruction of Rome's green oasis and at fixing their existence in poetry before their complete disappearance. These forever lost spaces testify to a poetic, elitarian approach to the world that capitalism and mass society were dismantling at the time.[110]

2.2 <u>The destruction of poetic spaces</u>

Many of the articles that D'Annunzio wrote for *Le Cronache della Tribuna* testify to the changes that Rome underwent in the first years after becoming a capital. Most of

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[109] D'Annunzio has been already included in ecocritical studies. For example, *La Pioggia nel Pineto* and *Ditirambo III* are part of the *Italian Environmental Literature: An Anthology* edited by Patrick Barron and Anna Re, New York: Italica Press, 2003.

[110] On material narrativity, see also Serenella Iovino's "The Living Diffractions of Matter and Text: Narrative Agency, Strategic Anthropomorphism, and how Interpretation Works" in *Anglia* 133.1 (2015) pp. 69–86; Serpil Opperman's "From Ecological Postmodernism to Material Ecocriticism: Creative Materiality and Narrative Agency" in Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (eds.) *Material Ecocriticism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014, pp. 21–36; and Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things,* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

the times, the main subject of his articles are social events and detailed descriptions of relevant attendants and their outfits. However, from time to time, the author interrupts these chronicles with brief glimpses on the urban transformations of the capital. These sketches are fundamental not to only to unveil D'Annunzio's writing process – many of these writings merge into his Roman novels – but also to investigate the author's position on Rome's metamorphosis.[111] These passages also dedicate much attention to the loss of the city's green spaces that, together with ancient buildings, represented a way of living and an understanding of art and beauty that modernization risked to destroy. Indeed, Bàrberi Squarotti affirms that in D'Annunzio "la morte della Bellezza è, insieme morte dell'arte e morte della libera, incontaminata, pura natura (*Gli Inferi e il Labirinto* 82). Contrarily to what Härmänmaan states (164), I argue that D'Annunzio's criticism in *Le Cronache* is not merely based on aesthetic principles, but it rather denounces the loss of equilibrium between nature, humans, and architecture, which all together affected the daily life of Rome's inhabitants.

D'Annunzio elaborates connections between buildings and inhabitants in the article "Piccolo Corriere" dated May 18, 1885 in *Le Cronache della Tribuna*. This article helps in better understanding the author's symbolic use of architecture in denouncing the modernization affecting Rome in the early 1880s. At first, the article appears as a simple accusation of the *febbre edilizia* and its immediate effects on the cityscape: "Roma diventa la città delle demolizioni. La gran polvere delle ruine si leva da tutti i punti dell'Urbe e si va disperdendo a questi dolci soli maggesi. […] Le pietre, i mattoni e i calcinacci si accumulano e formano barriere lungo i marciapiedi" (*Le Cronache della*

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[111] Pancrazi summarizes that "nelle cronache romane […] ritrovi tanti motivi e pagine del *Piacere*, e spunti del musicale intermezzo alla *Chimera*, e immagini delle *Elegie*" (61).

Tribuna I 153). First of all, D'Annunzio's attention is towards how one can experience the city; walking becomes harder since there are obstacles blocking sidewalks. Moreover, the presence of dust is a recurrent image in the contemporary descriptions of the capital's urban transformation. For example, it appears in the previously mentioned passage from *Le Vergini delle Rocce* where it is associated with what the narrator considers a contaminating greed, and it also has negative connotations in the quoted passage by Grimm where it seems to siege the Vatican and declare war to the ancien régime. In *Le Cronache*, D'Annunzio alternates moments of description to more or less subtle criticism to the contemporary society. The quoted incipit of this article is pretty neutral, but, then, it follows a harsh condemnation of the petite bourgeoisie through the description of their dismantled apartments – "ruine" here are destroyed building that needed to be replaced – and their behavior in front of that.

Before concentrating on the destroyed apartments, the narrator focuses on what he considers the most important consequence of Rome's urban renovations: the loss of poetic spaces. Indeed, he directs the readers' attention to a higher point, far from "i demolitori […] all'opera, vestiti di camiciotti bianchi e armati di picconi;" "[le] vetrine polverose" and the expropriated shopkeepers; and stones, bricks, and dirt left on sidewalks (153). Far from this desolate view,

> In alto, a un terzo piano, un piccolo balcone di pietra sorretto da mensole scolpite, un piccolo balcone poetico di dove qualche fanciulla clorotica avrà contemplato il plenilunio o le stelle pudiche, sta per cadere. Le mensole tremano nel muro, verdastre per la pioggia e per il musco e corrose, come in una gengiva di vecchia i denti cariati. (153)

The narrator focuses on this half-dismantled building in a working-class area – a few lines before, he talks about little shops have been closed and abandoned – because it

offers him inspiration for poetic re-elaborations. Here, D'Annunzio juxtaposes two modalities of creation: the active production of capitalism (construction workers) and the idle, artistic creativity of the poet. In the quoted passage, the narrator indulges in the architectonic details of the balcony ("mensole scolpite") and imagines the past life of this space when a chlorotic girl was contemplating the moon and the stars from there. This change of perspective dilates time towards a hypothetical past and leaves behind the present desolation of Rome's urban transformation. Indeed, at this point, the narrator focuses even more on the details of the balcony and transforms them through his imagination into something animated: the unstable shelves mutate into the decayed teeth of an old woman. Härmänmaan points out how, with this image, D'Annunzio denounces the unsanitary conditions of the building through the use of medical language (165-166); however, beyond that, this image has a positive connotation. The stones are alive ("tremano") and bear life ("verdastre per la pioggia e il musco.")

The narrator continues to anthropomorphize this alternative space, especially when describing the plants living in another balcony close to the previous one:

> In alto, al quarto piano, un altro balcone tutto coperto di piante rampicanti vien saccheggiato senza misericordia. Le belle piante lunghissime e flessibili ondeggiano, scompigliate, come capigliature verdi, tra il polverìo che sale. Alcuni rami pendono spezzati, reggendosi alla pianta madre per mezzo d'una sola fibra sottile. Tutta la massa vegetale ha in sé qualche cosa di doloroso, come per una violazione e per uno strazio. (153-154)

It is important to underline D'Annunzio's attention to these plants. The destruction of green areas in Rome was an issue of the time and Imbriani too expressed his concern on the subject in *Passeggiate Romane.* Here, D'Annunzio uses "saccheggiare" (to sack) to highlight the preciousness of such a green oasis on the roofs of the city. The rest of the passage transforms the vines into hair in order to emphasize the pain of the plants

themselves; a pain that becomes sharper when the eye stops on broken branches barely hanging from the "pianta madre." The implication of motherhood here amplifies pain; hence, the list of "doloroso," "violazione," and "strazio." With the presence of anthropomorphized plants, D'Annunzio's article anticipates one of the common strategies found in texts later categorized as ecological postmodernism, whose "intention [is] 're-enchant' reality, claiming that all material entities, even atoms and subatomic particles have some degree of sentient experience and that all living things have agency of their own" (Iovino and Oppermann, "Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity" 78). By transforming plants and inanimated stone into human figures, D'Annunzio gives more importance to them. In this way, he shifts the readers' attention to what the public opinion considered minimal and irrelevant destructions that were needed to modernize Rome but that, in reality, deeply affected the capital's urban structure and the interactions between buildings, green spaces, and inhabitants.[112]

Once the importance of green spaces and plants' life is established, the narrator emphasizes the positive effects that plants have in people's lives:

> E pensare quante buone merende su quel balcone e quante buone cene nelle notti d'estate, quando le piante fiorivano e odoravano! Passando nella via ed alzando li occhi, si vedevano allora dei visi femminili tra il verde, o si vedeva qualche cappellino

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[112] For example, this description highly contrasts with that of a tree-less modern metropolis in *Laus Vitae* XIV: "Ben vi so, torridi giorni,/ meriggi funerei,/ incontri spaventosi/ di cerei volti disfatti,/ via chiusa di forni,/ tacita piazza combusta,/ sordo asfalto, lastre roventi/ su cui l'ombra angusta dell'uomo è come bestia" (vv. 5566-5574). In his analysis, Bàrberi Squarotti reads this image of unbearable summer as a symbol of human oppression in the modern metropolis: "l'estate […] è qui il tempo in cui l'oppressione (simbolica) di mura, asfalto, lastre roventi si traduce più direttamente nell'uccisione dell'anima, ovvero nella trasformazione dell'uomo in schiavo, abietto, vile, inerte, completamente alienato da sé e dalla propria dignità nel sistema di cui la città è l'emblema (*Gli Inferi e il Labirinto* 119). In this detailed interpretation, Bàrberi Squarotti adds that the disappearance of trees in modern metropolis "non è più possible né è proposta nessuna soluzione alternativa rispetto all'angoscia e alla follia e ai morbi della città moderna, cioè non le può più essere contrapposta la campagna (la natura), in quanto la città l'ha ormai definitivamente esclusa da sé, dal proprio paesaggio di lastre, mura e asfalto" (ibidem).

> appeso a un ramo e qualche scialle di colore vivo e anche talora una bambola rosea. (154)

Plants contribute to a lifestyle that privileges senses: they produce fragrant flowers whose scent combined with delicious food in the imagined past. Indeed, at this point, the narrator privileges taste and smell, and, only after, he returns to sight ("alzando li occhi"). However, even in this portrait, human figures are marginal to plants – women's faces are barely visible in between the green – and human presence is suggested through objects – hats, shawls, and dolls. These picturesque portraits reinforce Valesio's idea of D'Annunzio's need to retire into an artificial, poetic dimension in order to oppose his fear of modernization. Indeed, the narrator of *Le Cronache* behaves in a similar way to Baudelaire's poet/ragpicker. As the French poet explains in a prose quoted by Benjamin:

> Everything that the big city threw away, everything it lost, everything it despised, everything it crushed underfoot, he catalogues and collects. […] He sorts things out and makes a wise choice; he collects like a miser guarding a treasure, the refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry" (79).

Similarly, Bàrberi Squarotti argues that "l'artista si estrapola dal lucro e dalla foia economica del mondo borghese, straniandosi nella raccolta enciclopedica di tutta la bellezza possible e proponibile, sia (soprattutto) quella dell'arte, sia anche quella della natura o del sogno o dei moti e delle ragioni dell'anima" (*Gli Inferi e il Labirinto* 87). In this passage of the decaying balconies, D'Annunzio's narrator immortalizes the lost vital traces of a past life and makes a treasure of them because, at the time, they were being destroyed to leave space to modernization and urban renovation.

Once the sight returns to be the privileged sense in the description, abruptly, the narrator returns to reality. It is the sight of the apartments' interiors made visible after the partial demolition of buildings that deeply disturbs the narrator and unveils his hatred for

the petite bourgeoisie. The dissection of the rooms exposes what he considers a squalid life: "Dappertutto si scorgono le tracce untuose e laboriose della vita domestica; dappertutto, alla cruda luce solare, si scorge quel che v'è di sudiciume e di gretteria e di meschinità nella vita casalinga dei piccoli borghesi" (154). The first effect of the dismantling of the building is to show to the society the hidden life of the petite bourgeoisie. Apparently respectable, in reality, they hide their dirt, extreme labor, narrow-mindedness, and shabbiness inside their homes. It seems that what irritates the narrator is the fact that the interiors of their apartments do not allow for a poetic re-elaboration of the lives of its inhabitants – differently from the balconies. In associating miserable interiors with moral inferiority, the narrator shifts from an aulic, dreamy style connected to the description of the balconies to a realistic one based on a Lombrosian reading of domestic space:

> A molte case sono già state demolite le facciate. Le stanze rimangono quindi scoperte, e con le loro tappezzerie di carta somigliano a scenari d'un teatrucolo di provincia. Su le pareti i mobili hanno lasciato i segni. Facilmente si riconosce il posto del letto matrimoniale, e il posto della specchiera, e quello dell'armadio, e quello del canterano, e quello dei quadri. […] Una gran linea nera di fuliggine segna il camino atterrato (154).

What strikes in this description is not only the unveiling of the petite bourgeoisie daily intimacy, but also its predictability. The wallpaper recalls a small, provincial theatre; this comparison introduces a dimension of artificiality, of designated roles, and actions to be repeated at every spectacle. Moreover, similar to the human inhabitants who left traces of their miserable life in the apartments ("le tracce untuose e laboriose della vita domestica"), even furniture is predictable through the marks left behind. This repetitive behavior strongly contrasts with the "fiamma di un'ambizione perversa ma titanica" that Cantelmo desperately searches in contemporary Rome in order to survive to the masses.

For this reason, the creation of poetry and art can be considered as forms of resistance to the predictability and homogenization of the mass society, to which the petite bourgeoisie belongs.

By focusing on the monotony of the petite bourgeoisie, the narrator alludes to the reason why this social class is deplorable and why it differs from the aristocracy (at least the one of the past). Another passage from the same article focuses on the relationship between the petite bourgeoisie and public space:

> I piccoli borghesi romaneschi guardano dal mezzo della via le demolizioni, ingoiando con molta pazienza la polvere bianca. Tutti stanno con naso all'aria e con il collo teso e con li occhi spalancati e con in tutta la persona una espressione grottesca di stupidità; e tutti nell'attitudine e nella melensaggine somigliano a quei venti o trenta beati che quotidianamente si mettono innanzi alla chiesa di Sant'Ignazio ad aspettare che il colpo del cannone di mezzogiorno faccia discendere dalla cima dell'asta il globo indicatore. (154)

The narrator characterizes the petite bourgeoisie as powerless and deprived of any will; they breathe patiently the white dust resulting from the constructions as if it was part of a ritual trial or ceremony. They observe their surroundings without really comprehending what is happening, and they wait for an imminent transformation coming punctually and from above, like the globe descending every day at noon from the façade of Saint Ignatius church.[113] Here the narrator associates modernization with a superior entity that, similar to religious faith, creates expectations of (social) amelioration and ascent through the mechanical rituals that occupy daily life. The spectators in front of the church symbolically represent the Romans who were becoming passive spectators in the society

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[113] "Legata alla chiesa di S. Ignazio è la bellissima tradizione romana dell'Ottocento: la caduta della 'palla' dal cornicione della chiesa. Alle ore 11:56 veniva innalzata, sul timpano della chiesa, un'asta di pino lunga 6 metri lungo la quale una gran palla di vimini dipinta di nero veniva fatta scendere alle 12:00 in punto: la discesa era il segnale per il colpo di cannone sparato da Castel S'Angelo (in seguito trasferito a Monte Mario ed infine al Gianicolo)" ("Sant'Ignazio," Roma Segreta).

of the spectacle into which Rome was transforming: "the spectator's alienation from and submission to the contemplated object (which is the outcome of his unthinking activity) works like this: the more he contemplates, the less he lives" (Debord 23). D'Annunzio readily recognizes the symptoms of what Debord would define later the society of the spectacle; modernization and capitalism were bringing to the capital the illusion of social mobility. More specifically, the act of contemplating their surroundings leads the petite bourgeoisie to believe of being part of the capital's transformations and improvement even if they are not actively participating. The more they contemplate, the less they participate to the new modernized life, even if they believe the contrary.[114] In D'Annunzio's works, the passivity of the petite bourgeoisie represents one of the main perils of modern society for aristocracy and, more importantly, for the survival of a nation that values artistic creation as part of its identity.

For example, this is visible in architecture. In the article, the narrator compares ancient architecture to the contemporary, despicable one. One of the first consequences of modernization is homogenization an, as Debord claims, "the same architecture appears everywhere as soon as industrialization begins" (123). New buildings replace the old, dissected apartments mentioned in the previously quoted passages. The narrator ironically exclaims:

> Ma dalle rovine sorgerà e risplenderà la nuova Roma, la Roma nitida, spaziosa e salutare, la Roma costruita dalli architetti giovani che lasceranno da parte le eleganze spontanee del Bramante e s'inspireranno utilmente al palazzo del Ministero delle finanze, al gran mostro della moderna architettura, alla caserma degl'impiegati. Oh nobilissima oziosa amplitudine dei palagi patrizii! (154-155)

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[114] I analyze more in depth this concept in Chapter Four when discussing the advertising screen in Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio.*

D'Annunzio's position on Rome's new architecture is similar to Imbriani's.[115] His word choice underlines the opposition between elegant, "spontaneous" Baroque architecture and presents buildings that value usefulness and sanitation over artistic accomplishment, beauty, and independent thinking. Note how the term "spontaneo" characterizes Baroque architecture as something naturally sprouting in Rome; this connotation highlights the artificiality and the extraneousness of the new architecture. These new buildings appear all identical, uniform and, for this reason, their rooms work as claustrophobic, homogenizing tools for the employees working there. The author amplifies this sense of oppression by using the military term "caserma" and by opposing the large size of aristocratic palaces to these new buildings.

After this, he indulges in poetic descriptions of the restoration of the frescoes and the interiors of Palazzo Corsini; the attention given to details seems to be lost in the contemporary era. Here, the pace of the writing changes into an idle and futile prose that echoes the atmosphere of this ancient palace, which clashes with the usefulness of the new buildings that neglect beauty and harmony:

> Il professore, ch'è un uomo di media statura, con baffi grigi, con lineamenti che non ricordano per nulla quelli angelici di Rafael Urbino né quelli sensuali di Giulio Romano, stave in alto su le impalcature e teneva il capo coperto d'un semplice giornale, precisamente dalla *Rassegna* (oh, infelice professore!), foggiato a berretto alquanto michelangiolesco. Quasi incurante del grave pondo torrachiano, il buon accademico toccava vivacemente l'imperial manto bizantino d'una Giurisprudenza e canterellava. (155)

Beyond an amused portrait of the restorer, the sentence construction is meaningful. By playing with the rhythm of the narration, D'Annunzio highlights the differences between Baroque architecture (the passage is characterized by long and convoluted

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[115] See Chapter One, Section 2.2.

sentences) and modern, rational architecture (the aforementioned passage is defined by short, simple sentences) that distinguishes Rome's new urban additions at the end of the nineteenth century. As Bàrberi Squarotti states, in D'Annunzio, the style "impedisce che nella scrittura stessa possa inserirsi o apparire qualche modo o aspetto della volgarità e dell'economicità borghese" (*Gli Inferi e il Labirinto. Da Pascoli a Montale* 93). In these passages, it is clear how D'Annunzio uses architecture and diverse poetic/narrative styles to express his worries concerning Rome's modernization and to oppose bourgeois architecture and art. The author identifies creativity and action with productive idleness ("oziosa amplitudine dei palazzi patrigii") in contrast with the passivity and dry usefulness of capitalist production and bureaucracy ("caserma degl'impiegati"). In the new capitalist system, beauty and poetry are suppressed, while the poet tries to reproduce and preserve ancient art through his linguistic creation.[116]

The destruction of the Roman *ville* is another example of the annihilation of beauty and poetry in contemporary Rome. It took a few months for the profiteers guiding the development of the capital to demolish the ancient, idyllic beauty of some of these elegant, aristocratic green oases on the Roman hills.[117] In 1883, the new development plan encouraged the speculators to expand toward new areas; properties in Esquilino and Castro Pretorio were completely sold, so they directed their attention to lands not

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[116] See Spackman's analysis of the role of poets in modern mass society in "D'Annunzio and the Antidemocratic Fantasy" in *Fascist Virilities*. Her interpretation of *Le Vergini delle Rocce* reads the crowd as Gorgons, who deprive men of speech; Spackman extends this parallel to comment on the role of poets in modern society as envisioned by D'Annunzio as well as to point out the author's fear of the destruction of beauty (107).

[117] For example, after the agreement between Rodolfo Ludovisi, the township of Rome, and Società Generale Immobiliare – which should have covered the expenses for streets, sewers, etc. –the demolition of Villa Ludovisi started (March 1885). The felling of the trees that D'Annunzio mentions in *Le Vergini delle Rocce* dates back to June 12, 1885. For more information, see the Archivio digitale Boncompagni-Ludovisi.

included in the plan – and therefore cheaper – such as the *ville* inside the walls and vineyards outside the walls.[118] These ramifications of the city were also favored by laws that guaranteed the abolition of taxes on building materials outside the plan and by the 1883 decree on Agro Romano that erased taxes on the land for ten years for those who decided to build there. Consequently, ten new suburban districts started to emerge outside Porta Pia, Salaria, Pinciana, Portese, San Giovanni, Flaminia, Trionfale, and others, while inside the walls – even if the edifices in Castro Pretorio and Esquilino were not completed – the *ville* became the target of speculators. In 1886 Villa Boncompagni-Lodovisi was completely destroyed, Villa Albani was partially dismantled to give space to new residential areas, and Villa Borghese was threatened in the same way (Alberto Caracciolo 161). If private investors and banks can be accused of being the major culprits for the negative financial and urban consequences of the *febbre edilizia*, national and local politicians, too, were significant contributors to the disaster. Many newspapers of the period denounced the corrupt dynamics between banks and members of the municipal council. Alberto Caracciolo reports an insightful fragment from a pamphlet written by the journalist Bartocci Fontana (1885):

> Ormai le elezioni a Roma, avendo per base coalizioni capitalistiche, non possono fare a meno di portar a galla persone più o meno legate con istituti di credito. […] Vediamo sulle case, sulle vie, sulle terre, sugli appalti tutti municipali… una colluvie di gente che si prepara il piatto nelle elezioni e si mangia dopo la pietanza cotta. Così l'assessore per le finanze è segretario della Banca Nazionale (sede di Roma) e consigliere di reggenza della Banca Romana; l'on. assessore per il Piano regolatore è nella Tiberina e in due o tre consigli di sconto; l'assessore supplente on. Simonetti è

[118] Immediately after the annexation of Rome to the Italian nation, there was the belief that the city would have maintained a green belt on the hills. In 1876, Imbriani still hoped for such a solution: "Io poi credo, che sia condizione di salubrità per una città l'essere circondata da boschi ben mantenuti, i quali possono servire contemporaneamente da pubblici passeggi. Vorrei quindi che intorno a Roma si formasse un immenso anello di verdura, composto da tanti parchi, tutti aperti al pubblico" ("Il Pincio" 123).

> nel consiglio di Reggenza della Banca nazionale e in altri banchi; l'assessore per l'edilizia è consigliere di sconto della Banca nazionale, è nel Consiglio di reggenza della Banca romana; fra quelli che restano due terzi sono uomini che adempiono a funzioni bancarie. (162)

During the *febbre edilizia*, Rome was in the hands of capitalists that prepared and legalized property and land speculation through their positions in the municipal council. After a few months, only private investors backed by powerful banks could really participate in the trades and started building new edifices; the only way to gain from these speculations was to construct enormous tenements, whose prices were too high for the actual population. The result is that Rome started to appear as a city covered with dull, slab buildings and no public, green areas.

In *Le Cronache della Tribuna,* D'Annunzio returns to the destruction of the Roman *ville* several times. One example is "Il ballo dei bambini" where, before describing the party, the author sketches the transformation around the noble palace:

> La casa di San Faustino, in mezzo a tutta la nuovissima barbarie architettonica dei quartieri alti, ha un'apparenza singolarissima con quel suo barocco stile cardinalizio […] L'edificio, in altri tempi, sorgeva nel centro della gran villa Massimo che occupava tutta l'area dove oggi è la stazione e si estendeva nella prima zona dell'Esquilino fino a San Giovanni in Laterano. […] La vastissima villa risuonava di musiche e fiammeggiava di faci, come una selva bacchica, intorno. Ed ora una vil massa di mattoni e di calce deturpa i luoghi; rimane eretto quest'unico palazzo, affondato nel verde. (*Le Feste Romane* 127)

This excerpt demonstrates the rapid incorporation of the green areas crowning the Roman hills into the urban fabric. The mentioned park covered an extended area: from the train station to San Giovanni in Laterano. D'Annunzio defines the Esquilino neighborhood as a "barbarie architettonica" and he despises for its homogeneous architecture that contrasts with the peculiar character of Baroque buildings, as seen also in the previously mentioned article "Il Piccolo Corriere." Moreover, the author starts to develop a poetics that opposes

the idyllic and poetic past (the park is remembered as a bacchic forest) to the disfigurement of the present-day construction sites, which D'Annunzio refines later in *Le Vergini delle Rocce.* Ancient buildings remain silent witnesses to a forever lost, poetic space.

Another passage that D'Annunzio re-elaborates for *Le Vergini delle Rocce* is in "Programma di corse della Società del Lazio", which contains a description of Villa Ludovisi. Here the author further exalts the poetic qualities of the park through a more aulic style and his word choice, which contrast with the short, simple sentences that describe the destruction of the park in the second part of the passage:

> L'anno scorso per arrivare alla Porta Salaria, passavamo lungo le mura di Villa Ludovisia incoronate di verdura novella. Dalle mura macchiate di musco e dai roseti soverchianti e dalle punte acute dei cipressi discendeva una dolce poesia conventuale […] e dalla chiusa selva usciva un cantico d'uccelli pieno di variazioni dotte. Ora invece passeremo tra le rovine e tra il polverio. I giganteschi alberi giaceranno sul terreno, con tutto il gran viluppo delle radici nere e umide esposto al sole. I roseti saranno rasi. (*Le Feste Romane* 185)

In this passage, D'Annunzio also anticipates some of the tropes that appear in the novel: the loss of the sense of poetry that once characterized the secluded place, and the presence of natural elements (birds, roses, and cypresses), which the writer transforms into renowned symbols of poetry in the novel. The passage contains also some recurrent images that D'Annunzio uses to describe the urban transformations affecting Rome and metropolis in general. In his texts, "rovine" is often used to indicate destroyed buildings that testify to a lost past; they are not Roman ruins, but the medieval buildings torn down (as in the mentioned "Piccolo Corriere" dated May 18, 1885) and the aristocratic parks and palaces destroyed to leave space to *Roma alta*. The dust always indicates the presence of destruction. Another recurrent image is the one of suffering roots that

D'Annunzio uses again, in a more general context, in the mentioned *Le città terribili.* Even if these articles are written in simple prose, they still constitute an important testament to the changes affecting Rome at the end of the 19th century and to D'Annunzio's writing process.

It is in the first part of *Le Vergini delle Rocce* that D'Annunzio fully develops a writing that tries to digest the abhorrent destruction of Rome's iconic places by transforming these actions and their consequences into symbolic tropes connected to poetry.[119] In the novel, Cantelmo suffers for the destruction of the Eternal City's idyllic landscape. While majestic, ancient buildings (such as St. Peter's and some aristocratic palaces) survive this wave of "contagion," the Roman *ville* succumb under trowels and bricks and, with them, the poetic spirit animating these spaces dies. In order to describe this brutal change affecting the Roman landscape, D'Annunzio characterizes these green spaces through a rich presence of poetic symbols that risk extinction in the modern capital:

> I lauri e i roseti della Villa Sciarra, per così lungo ordine di notti lodati dagli usignoli, cadevano recisi o rimanevano umiliati fra i cancelli dei piccoli giardini contigui alle villette dei droghieri. I giganteschi cipressi ludovisii […] quelli medesimi i quali un giorno avevano sparsa la solennità del loro antico mistero sul capo olimpico del Goethe, giacevano atterrati […] e allineati l'uno accanto all'altro, con tutte le radici scoperte che fumigavano verso il cielo impallidito, con tutte le negre radici scoperte che parevano tenere ancor prigione entro l'enorme intrico il fantasma di una vita oltrapossente. (67-68)

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[119] The destruction of the Roman ville is also present in *Il Piacere*, where, as Fabio Pierangeli points out, it anticipates the end of the love between Elena and Sperelli (155). For the role of Rome's urban spaces in *Il Piacere*, see the entire article: Pierangeli, Fabio. "Dallo sguardo di Elena al tradimento di Maria: una parabola di Roma in D'Annunzio." *Terre, Città e Paesi nella Vita e nell'Arte di Gabriele D'Annunzio: XX Convegno internazionale, Pescara, 6-7 dicembre 1996***,** Vol.1 "L'Abruzzo, Roma e l'Italia Meridionale," Pescara: Ediars, 1996, pp. 151-164.

Clearly, laurels, roses, cypresses, and nightingales symbolize poetry through their reference to Petrarch and poet laureates ("lauri"), the sensual and divine love emblem in medieval poems ("roseti"), the classic motif of elegy ("cipressi"), and the archetypal embodiment of the poet himself ("usignoli"). According to Woodward, the ample use of symbols and myths in the novel depends on D'Annunzio's desire to defeat "the general 'embourgeoisement' of modern life [that] tended to atrophy deeper levels of feeling, which could only be redeemed by myth and symbol" (19). Therefore, here, D'Annunzio denounces the loss of beauty and poetry in Rome caused by modernization and hopes to redeem his readers from their fascination with the capital's modernization by redirecting their attention to classic tropes of poetry.

Moreover, in the quoted passage, through the active voice of the verbs and the choice of the semantic field, D'Annunzio manages not only to give life to these dying symbols of poetry, but also to anthropomorphize them. In this way, "matter [becomes] agentic, and capable of producing its own meanings, every material configuration, from bodies to their contexts of living, is "telling," and therefore can be the object of a critical analysis aimed at discovering its stories, its material and discursive interplays" (Iovino and Opperman, "Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity" 79). Emblematic images transform trees into soldiers. While some of them lie dead on the ground (in Italian, "cadere" also means to die during the war and "reciso" can refer to a dissembling cut both in plants and in humans), others are humiliated behind bars or lined up next to each other as in a military funeral. While the entire nation still pays tribute to the men that allowed for the unification of Italy and the conquest of Rome, D'Annunzio mourns the victims of this contagious modernization, where "il piccone, la cazzuola e la

mala fede erano le armi" (69). However, D'Annunzio goes beyond their anthropomorphization and brings to life their stories: in the past, they actively inspired Goethe ("avevano sparsa la solennità del loro antico mistero sul capo olimpico del Goethe") and, in the present, they still possess the same mysterious, supernatural force ("parevano tenere ancor prigione entro l'enorme intrico il fantasma di una vita oltrapossente"). As already seen in this chapter, Iovino and Oppermann states that anthropomorphism stresses the horizontality of animate and inanimate elements and can reveal similarities between the human and the nonhuman (Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity 82). Indeed, D'Annunzio recognizes how the interaction between humans, green public spaces, and buildings is the exclusive trait that made Rome unique in the world. The trees in Villa Sciarra are the last survivors of a world that privileged beauty, creativity, and a dialogue between humans and nature. Even as dead trunks abandoned in the park, trees are atill telling their story because "every living being tells us evolutionary stories of co-existence, co-dependence, extinctions and survivals" (Iovino, "The Living Diffractions of Matter and Text: Narrative Agency, Strategic Anthropomorphism, and how Interpretation Works" 71).

As a result of these urban transformations, the Roman, poetic landscape changes completely. Instead of fragrant plants and singing birds, "biancheggiavano pozze di calce, rosseggiavano cumuli di mattoni, stridevano ruote di carri carichi di pietre, si alternavano le chiamate dei mastri e i gridi rauchi dei carrettieri" (68).[120] By anticipating techniques and images of some futurist paintings (such as Umberto Boccioni's *La Città che sale,* 1910), D'Annunzio delineates the modern, Roman panorama through rapid, colorful

[120] Note the discrepancy with Faldella's fairytale-like depiction of construction sites analyzed in Section 3.1 in Chapter One.

brush strokes (white for lime, red for bricks) and short, accumulative sentences that evoke the rapidity with which the city is rising as well as the different layers of constructions that superimpose over one another similar to paint on the canvas: "E da una settimana all'altra, con una rapidità quasi chimerica, sorgevano su le fondamenta riempite di macerie le gabbie enormi e vacue, crivellate di buchi rettangolari, sormontati da cornicioni posticci, incrostate di stucchi obbrobriosi" (69). While in his painting Boccioni exalts the fervor of the metropolis, D'Annunzio highlights how the introduction of capitalistic dynamics in Rome threatens to completely destroy the past of this city, which is emblematized in the romantic, idyllic landscape of the *ville* that will be lost forever:

> Sembrava che soffiasse su Roma un vento di barbarie e minacciasse di strapparle quella raggiante corona di ville gentilizie a cui nulla è paragonabile nel mondo delle memorie e della poesia […] Nel contrasto incessante degli affari, nella furia feroce degli appetiti e delle passioni, nell'esercizio disordinato ed esclusivo delle attività utili, ogni senso di decoro era smarrito, ogni rispetto del Passato era deposto. (68-69)

Similar to some Italian politicians, D'Annunzio feels that modernization is incompatible with the monumental appearance of Rome and with the classic values of beauty and poetry. Like the mentioned passage from "Il Piccolo Corriere," where the writer contrasts elegant Baroque palaces to the new homogenized, practical buildings of *Roma alta*, D'Annunzio asserts here an analogous thought on what is happening in Rome: the modernization of the capital leads to real estate speculation, greed, and the explosion of capitalism. The annexation of Rome to the rest of the nation not only transformed its cityscape but it also profoundly affected its society; profit and usefulness replaced beauty and poetry in the collective imagination connected to the city. It is a new epoch of "barbarie." Indeed, as Woodward claims,

> D'Annunzio was among the most prominent in the late 19th century in Italy to demonstrate in theory and in practice a hostility to the 'positivist' bourgeois look in modern times, as inimical in beauty and the spirit. Such a hostility was then widespread in the whole of European culture; it has been conveniently encapsulated as Symbolism, Aestheticism, or – less happily – Decadence. (19)

Perhaps the best image that captures both D'Annunzio's sociopolitical criticism and his decadent style is the description of capitalism and greed embodied in the new architecture that damages Rome as "una specie di tumore biancastro [che] sporgeva dal fianco della vecchia Urbe e ne assorbiva la vita" (69). Here, the recurrent metaphor of sickness reaches its apex. The Italian capital appears hopelessly agonizing; the new buildings raised on the side of the old center suck the city's vital lymph – that is, its iconic image but also its inhabitants' interaction with one another and public space. The new urban plans deeply modified the city's organization, its daily life, and its iconic, idyllic image.

According to D'Annunzio, only the past constitutes a safe harbor for the aesthete and few sensible, elected souls. In *La notte di Caprera* (in the collection *Elettra*, 1903), which follows the style of the medieval chanson de geste, D'Annunzio recreates the battle between the 1849 Roman Republic defenders and the French troops at Villa Corsina ("L'astro sanguigno" and "L'ultimo assalto"), which resulted in the destruction of the park.[121] Unlike the author's reaction to the wreckage connected to the *febbre edilizia,* in this case, D'Annunzio is neither concerned with the loss of this place nor with the sight of cadavers and the soldiers' blood among the plants, the statues, and the urns of the park.[122] Images of death fuse with the natural and artificial elements of the park:

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[121] In Serao's *La Conquista di Roma*, Sangiorgio participates in an official celebration commemorating these Risorgimento battles. For more details, see Section 3.2 in Chapter One.

[122] For a detailed study on blood in Risorgimento literature, see Alberto Banti's *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita*, Turin: Einaudi, 2000. See also Welch's chapter "Mutilated Limbs" in the mentioned *Vital Subject* for an analysis of D'Annunzio's use of blood as well as

accumulati i cadaveri a piè
degli agrifogli, dei balaustri, delle
statue, delle urne; fatto il pendio riviera
del sangue, cupo, bulicame di membra
lacere; […]
i legionari ansanti, arsi di sete
e d'ira, armati di tronconi e di schegge,
neri di fumo e di polvere, belli
e spaventosi parvero come quelli
che superato avean l'uman potere
con la scagliata anima […]
e respiravano dai lor profondi petti
piegati l'ansia d'un miracolo ardente. (85)

Here, the author does not denounce a loss of beauty but, rather, he exalts the past glory of the *garibaldini*: a glory that does not exist anymore after the unification of Italy. In fact, the poet highlights how the beauty of the place and of the ruins inspired the soldiers:

Crèmera, luoghi già d'ozii di piaceri
di melodie e magnificenze
fuggitive, orti custoditi da cieche
statue ed arrisi da fontane serene,
trasfigurati subito in rossi inferni
vertiginosi, chi dirà la bellezza
che in voi s'alzò dalla ruina e stette
su l'Urbe come terribile astro a sera? (84)

Since the *garibaldini* were heroic individuals who committed valorous actions, they were also sensible, elevated souls that could absorb magnificence and power from poetic spaces seeped in historic value and channel them into their actions. In opposition, in the time period described in *Le Vergini delle Rocce,* any trace of heroism has disappeared from Rome and, therefore, plants, statues, and fountains remain as the last, unheard keepers of the beauty and the dignity of the past. Because of this, D'Annunzio anthropomorphizes them into dead soldiers left on a battle field.

Lucia Re's "Italians and the Invention of Race: The Poetics and Politics of Difference in the Struggle over Libya, 1890-1913" in *California Italian Studies* Vol. 1 No. 1 2010.

The failure of the Italian politicians and the anticipation of a new hero, a *superuomo*, recur in several compositions in *Elettra* (1903); however, I claim that *Canti della ricordanza e dell'aspettazione* is a crucial component of D'Annunzio's appropriation of architecture and urban spaces to both comment on the Italian political situation and elaborate a poetics that is able to create an alternative reality to oppose the present. In the poem, stones and grass are the only presence in the city together with the "you," to whom the poetic voice advises to wait for the new hero, to remember the past glory, and to interpret the signs embedded in the urban texture:

È piena di fato la muta ruina.
All'ombra dei marmi la via cittadina
si tace pensando che l'ora è vicina.
Ricordati e aspetta.
La polvere è un turbo di germini folti.
Il rosso mattone qual sangue che sgorghi
fiammeggia novello per case e per torri.
Ricordati e aspetta.
Fra l'erba che cresce davanti ai palagi
terribili, spogli dell'armi e degli agi,
s'ascondono forse divini presagi.
Ricordati e aspetta.
È figlia del silenzio la più bella sorte.
Verrà dal silenzio, vincendo la morte,
l'Eroe necessario. Tu veglia alle porte,
ricordati e aspetta." (171)

Like Cantelmo's plan in *La Vergine delle Rocce,* the new hero should come from silent and deserted spaces (Trigento, in that case), which D'Annunzio individuates in the ancient, secluded, and semi-abandoned Italian cities depicted in "Le città del silenzio" in the same collection. The author opposes minor, rural Italian cities to the nation's metropolises because they are still untouched by capitalism and industrialization and, because of the continuity of their cultural and architectonic particularities, they still embody the strenghts at the base of Italian identity: creativity, industriousness, and

political independence that survived in these previous medieval and Renaissance city-states. The opposition between urban and rural Italy continues to be explored in the twentieth century cultural representations of the nation, especially in Pier Paolo Pasolini's works, and in contemporary poetry, such as in Franco Arminio's collections examining southern internal Italy. This tells us that capitalism is still shaping the nation's cities and towns and, that hopefully, there is still something to treasure.

Chapter Three

Insomma tuta *la Storia* l'è *una storia di fascismi*:

Proletarian Neighborhoods and Borgate in Elsa Morante's *La Storia* (1974)

As I have illustrated in Chapter One and Chapter Two, during the initial years of Roma Capitale, politicians used monuments and urban planning to instill a sense of national identity in the population, as well as to eliminate the presence of the "unfitting" from the capital's city center. During this reinforcement of national consciousness and surgical removal of the working poor from the symbolic political center of the capital, Rome became the stage for the compromise between the northern ruling class and southern land owners.[123] This agreement became the foundation of the new liberal state that allowed for a relative political equilibrium and the hegemony of the bourgeois society. Alberto Caracciolo excellently summarizes this process:

> Il gigantesco processo di avvicinamento e di intesa fra gli strati superiori della società fin allora profondamente divisi, che si attua in Roma, è tanto più interessante in quanto non riguarda solo le classi e le forze in gioco localmente. Esso al contrario partecipa ad un fenomeno che si svolge analogamente in tutto il paese e quasi lo simboleggia. È il fenomeno della sistemazione dell'assetto statale nel segno dell'egemonia dei gruppi capitalistici settentrionali accordatisi con la borghesia terriera meridionale e, qualche anno più tardi, della formazione di un fronte comune di tutte le forze conservatrici, dai cattolici ai radicali, contro i pericoli di sovvertimento della società borghese. [...] Roma diventa un poco il centro della conciliazione fra interessi contrastanti, il luogo e quasi il simbolo dei compromessi e degli accordi in seno alle classi superiori. Essa si inserisce nello Stato liberale come elemento indispensabile dell'equilibrio di esso. (50–51)

In his words, it is clear how Rome became the symbol of national unification. While the agreements between capitalists and land owners were tangible at a local level, it is in the

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[123] My choice of medical terms alludes to Barbara Spackman's analysis of the fascist rhetoric concerning the nation's body in *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

capital that northern industrialists and southerner land owners reached compromises in parliament in order to rule and defend the bourgeois society from subversion. For several decades after the unification, this pact remained at the center of Italy's fragile political equilibrium.

This defense and promotion of the bourgeoisie led to a homogenization of the society. The majority of the Italian politicians supported this kind of development; even if they opposed it, they certainly recognized the accomplishment of this project, as the members of the Communist Party did. For example, Alberto Caracciolo reports a passage from Palmiro Togliatti's article "Il problema del Fascismo" (in *Stato Operaio*, September 8, 1923), which alludes to the process of homogenization that Rome had symbolically embodied since its conquest in 1870: "Il compito di questa città è quello di rendere *assimilabili*, per la compagine dello Stato, tutti gli elementi i quali, sorti dalla vita delle province con inevitabili caratteri di asprezza e con troppa accentuata personalità, avevano bisogno di *subire* un processo di *livellamento*" (in Alberto Caracciolo 50; my emphasis). Togliatti's words highlight the passivity with which Rome's citizens – and the Italian population – conformed to the new status quo. Togliatti makes clear how, to achieve national unification, regional particularities and minorities needed to disappear and give way to values that were able to homogenize Italians and to place the nation amongst the most powerful European states. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, the values in play during this national leveling were not limited to fatherland, secularism, and Christianity. They also included capitalism, consumerism, and bourgeoisification. Through architecture, monuments, and urban planning, Rome made Italian citizens

assimilable; it digested their regional differences and their strong individualities and regurgitated a final, homogenized product.

This perfect image of assimilation and standardization in the capital, however, had its limits. Indeed, during the years between the end of the 1800s and the early–1900s, disruptive cases of opposition and resistance to the bourgeois society occurred, such as assaults on shops to steal food in March 1888, the rise of anarchic clubs in various neighborhoods, the ascent of the Socialist Party, and the reinforcement of the *movimento operaio*. These were all attempts to ask for lower taxes, school system improvements, expansion of services and infrastructures to neighborhoods, and the development of public housing.[124] This underlying turmoil led to the victory of the *Blocco Popolare* with Ernesto Nathan elected as mayor in 1907 – with a limited support from the socialist party over a span of six years. In these years, the town council notably increased the school system in Rome and in the surrounding countryside of the Agro Romano that was infected with malaria. Writer Sibilla Aleramo (1876–1960) was one of the voluntary teachers who worked in these schools.[125] Nathan's block was defeated by political forces supporting a more liberal and speculative approach to real estate development and urban planning.[126] Later on, during WWI and the 1920s, the Socialist Party was reinvigorated. For example, socialist and communist workers occupied the Roman factories in September and October 1920 (Alberto Caracciolo 247). However, Rome never truly

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[124] See Chapter VIII and IX in Alberto Caracciolo for more details.
[125] For more details see Richard Drake's "Sibilla Aleramo and the Peasants of the Agro Romano: A Writer's Dilemma" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 51, No. 2 (Apr.–Jun., 1990), pp. 255–272.
[126] In 1907, the municipality improved and enforced a 1904 tax on building lands. The intellectuals and the commercial middle class supported this law as well as the socialist proletariat. However, in reality, few land owners paid this tax and raised a strong protest. Over the years, the monopoly of the banks and the societies strictly connected to them increased; in between 1933 and 1942, just a few monetary institutions controlled the Roman real estate development (Alberto Caracciolo 259–268).

became the heart of the nation, and it remained the site of failed attempts at mediating the regional and social diversity of its population and of the nation in general (Alberto Caracciolo 276–277).

In this chapter, I investigate the failure of Rome as a unifying tool of the nation and analyze the role of the borgate in keeping "unfitting" elements far from the central symbolic urban fabric of the capital. Even if it was published in 1974, Elsa Morante's (1912–1985) *La Storia* bridges the Risorgimento to Fascism and post-WWII. Indeed, through her characters, the novel comments on Italian society since the country's national unification and inserts it in a global discourse on segregation of marginal figures and the role this had in the productivity and economic advancement of the world's most powerful nations.[127] I examine how Morante's novel depicts Rome's marginal districts as Agambenian camps while simultaneously expanding the concept of fascism to Risorgimento and postwar society by highlighting their similarities. Across these historic periods, Italy became an ostensibly modern capitalist society that, similarly to Germany, URSS, and other global powers, used violence to homogenize masses and to eliminate otherness in order to create the image of a prosperous, unified nation. As Lefebvre also affirms, "nationhood implies the existence of a *market* […] [and] *violence* […]. It implies, in other words, a political power controlling and exploiting the resources of the market or the growth of the productive forces in order to maintain and further its rule" (112). In what follows, I investigate how in *La Storia,* Morante reflects on the modialities

[127] Stefania Lucamante claims that "*La Storia* organizes the topic of social exclusion by means of power" (*Forging Shoah Memories* 154).

through which the Italian state, and political and economic powers in general, use space to create and isolate bare life.[128]

In the novel, Morante often portrays otherness with animal traits. As Maria Cavallo Giménez states, this is a "political metaphor […] in line with the theorist John Simons's redefinition of history in posthumanist terms" (431). She continues that, according to him, history is a struggle between human and non-humans; the latter term refers to marginal figures (431). In Chapter Two, I showed examples of bestialization of the proletariat and subproletariat reflecting this political metaphor (D'Annunzio, Faldella); while in these texts this stylistic operation reflects the point of view of ruling forces (aristocracy and northern bourgeoisie in D'Annunzio and Faldella, respectively), in Morante's novel, the narrator empathizes with the marginal figures of the story. Hence, in their subordination, their bestialization is not charged with negative qualities, but it alludes to a different sensibility that can lead to a poetic approach to life, as I illustrate in the chapter. So, while on one side their bestialization signals their existence as bare life in Italian society, on the other, through her novel, Morante tries to rehabilitated the outcasts of the nation.

1. Morante's *Homines Sacri*

La Storia follows the peregrinations of Ida and her family during WWII and its immediate aftermath within the poorest areas of Rome: San Lorenzo, Testaccio, Viale Ostiense, Porta Portese, Via Portuense, Pietralata, and the Jewish ghetto. Her novel offers

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[128] For Morante's critical writings on power, violence, and human freedom, see Claudia Karagoz's "Timely Anachronism: Elsa Morante, Adriana Cavarero, and Roberto Esposito on Power, Violence, and Subjectivity" in *Elsa Morante's Politics of Writing: Rethinking Subjectivity, History, and the Power of Art* edited by Stefania Lucamante, Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015, pp. 257–268. In "Elsa Morante and the Biopolitical Turn" (2014), Giuseppina Mecchia thoroughly investigates the similarities between Morante's works and Foucault's and Agamben's philosophy, though she focuses mainly on the representation of bare life in Morante's characters.

subjective points of view on the situation of various marginal, neglected figures of Italian society during the final years of the Fascist regime and a short period after.[129] Moreover, her narration is strictly connected to a precise recreation of Rome's urban fabric and its social daily life, as Lavinia Azzone points out in the article "La Topografia di Roma nella *Storia* di Elsa Morante" (2005). In my examination, Ida and Davide are key figures.[130]

Like many inhabitants of Rome, Ida has southern origins; she was born in Calabria, and she moved to the capital after getting married, like many Italians from the South and from rural areas.[131] In the flashback narrating the lives of Ida's parents, Calabria is clearly described as a region untouched by modernization and definitely not very different from the poor districts and shantytowns into which many immigrants from the South moved after arriving in Rome.[132] In the narrator's words, "L'avvento dell'era atomica, che segnò l'inizio del secolo, certo non si faceva sentire in quelle regioni [del sud]; e nemmeno lo sviluppo industriale delle Grandi Potenze" (28). These words certainly recall much literature on the Southern question – first and foremost, Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli* (1945) – where Rome is often perceived as a remote city representing a foreign, inimical state with socio-economic progress as something unattainable and distant.

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[129] Stefania Lucamante claims that "[i]n its encyclopedism, *La Storia* fills ample pocket of Italian postwar history with untold *racconti* left out by Neorealism" (*Forging Shoah Memories* 160). While on side Neorealism focused on depicting the difficulties of Italians in rising again after WWII, on the other, it neglected the stories of Italian Jews. She highlights how until 1974, a discussion on the Shoah was totally absent in Italian public opinion of the time.

[130] For a detailed study on Davide Segre, see Enrica Puggioni's *Davide Segre, un eroe al confine della modernità*, Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2006.

[131] Lucamante states that "within Ida, Morante merges two distinct typologies of post-Unification Italian society: a somewhat acculturated teacher from the North and a Southerner anarchist" (*Forging Shoah Memories* 155).

[132] Because both Ida and her husband worked regularly, they managed to rent a small apartment in San Lorenzo. According to Lucamante, "Ida's parents embody the Italians who changed their social status through Fascism and moved to Rome to form the rising petite bourgeoisie that would crowd new neighborhoods like Garbatella and Montesacro" (*Forging Shoah Memories* 155).

In addition to being an immigrant from Southern Italy, Ida is also Jewish on her mother's side. In fascist Italy, especially after the racial laws of 1938, she is an "unfitting" person. At the news of these laws, Ida tries to rationalize the concept of *ariano*, but the only conclusion she reaches is that "i non-ariani, per l'Autorità erano i plebei dei plebei! [...] E se già i plebei nell'ordine sociale erano una rogna, i plebei dei plebei dovevano essere una lebbra!" (57). Her reasoning reflects the biopolitical metaphors behind the racial laws. During Fascism, the nation was seen as a sick body to be cured; in the specific case of Rome, the poorest districts and the proletarian neighborhood embodied the infected areas to be removed while the borgate collected contaminated individuals who could possibly still be cured. Indeed, when talking about the proletariat, the subproletariat, and the Jews, Morante chooses medical language that reflects the different degrees of sickness of these categories in fascist society. The Arian lower class represents mange. This is a common sickness that usually affects socially disadvantaged people living in overpopulated areas and in poor hygienic surroundings; it is contagious but it is also easily curable. On the contrary, the leprosy associated with Jews is highly contagious; it leaves permanent marks, and until 1981, there was no remedy. Therefore, for Ida, being Jewish means to be at the bottom of the social ladder, behind the Arian proletariat and subproletariat; there is no possibility of redemption for her.

Morante's use of medical terms recalls Mussolini's (1883–1945) speeches. For example, in the "Discorso dell'Ascensione" (May 26, 1927), he calls himself a master hygienist who does not neglect the symptoms of the nation – "io sono il clinico che non trascura i sintomi" (378) – and isolates the infected elements of the society: "Si levano

questi individui [quelli mandati al confino] dalla circolazione come un medico toglie dalla circolazione un infetto" (367). While fascism fostered harsh measures to isolate and annihilate non-conforming individuals such as political opponents, homosexuals, mafiosi, and others considered dangerous to the society, the liberal governments preceding the regime had adopted similar practices against the lower strata of the society. The cause of this analogy relies on the fact that, in both cases, political leaders were trying to enforce unity in the nation. Indeed, as Barbara Spackman explains:

> If the fantasy of the whole body provides a foundation for a notion of the state as a unified 'body' that can be diseased, infected, but also cured and purified, the fantasy of the unified state in turn provides a foundation for the notion of the integrity of the human body, a body that, like the state, comes to have 'borders' that must be 'policed.' (*Fascist Virilities* 147)

Since 1870, Rome was the symbolic body of the nation. It was considered a sick body infected with poverty and decay, but it could still be cured through urban renovations and with the dissection of the infested parts. Once these surgical removals were done, Italy could be perceived as a unified state whose borders contained the discarded elements – population and architecture. Fascist policies enforcing the isolation and the annihilation of the "unfitting" population sealed in hostile sentiments that have been traversed Rome since 1870, as I have explored in Chapter Two.

In her centrifugal movements, Ida meets other families and persons considered outcasts by society because of their Southern origin, rural identity, faith, and political beliefs: the family of *i Mille* (half-Roman and half-Neapolitan), the Jews of the Roman ghetto, the old communist Giuseppe Secondo, and the Marrocco family from Ciociaria. War was just another uncontrollable event that added difficulties to their already miserable lives. Indeed, in the initial pages of the novel, where Morante adopts the style

of *annale storico* summarizing the historic facts leading to WWI and WWII, the narrator marks 1922 as the birth of the URSS as the "speranza per tutti i 'dannati della terra' che dalla guerra – vinta o persa – non hanno ottenuto che un aggravamento dei loro mali" (8). War exacerbated the liminal existence of the poor and the outcasts; it reduced it to mere instincts and survival. Cesare Garboli underlines how the catalyst of *La Storia* "è la più bassa delle condizioni suscettibili di essere romanzate, la più terra-terra, la più animale: la fame, il bisogno di sopravvivenza. È il solo filo conduttore, insieme alla ricerca di una tana" ("Introduzione" *La Storia* XIII). The war aggravated the already problematic living conditions of the lower strata of Italian society and contributed to transforming them into "docile bodies" who survived only through their animal instincts. Their stories had never been and never will be part of the official narration of the nation, but Morante's novel gives them one.[133] Indeed, in his introduction to the novel, Garboli defines it as "il romanzo delle vittime, delle cavie che non sanno il perché della loro morte" ("Introduzione" *La Storia* VIII). This brief definition highlights how the main protagonists – and the majority of the other characters with whom Ida and her family interact – embody what Agamben describes as *homines sacri*: "life that may be killed but not sacrified" (83). These people were more than victims; the term "guinea pigs" better expresses the idea of life intended as waste to be discarded after the use or after the failure of an experiment – a sociopolitical one, in the case of *La Storia*. Beyond the devastation of the war, the protagonists of Morante's novel represent what the modern

[133] Because of this goal, Lucia Re identifies Morante's novel as feminist. For more details, see Lucia Re's "Utopian Longing and the Constraints of Racial and Sexual Difference in Elsa Morante's *La Storia*" in *Italica* Vol. 70, No. 3, (Autumn 1993), pp. 361–375. On how Morante transforms marginal voices into central ones, see Elana Comisso's "Recuperating the Distance from the Margins to the Centre: Elsa Morante's *La Storia*, the Stories that Build History" in *Romance Review* Vol. 9 (1999), pp. 19–32.

Italian nation could not digest and kept marginalizing: the proletariat, the subproletariat, the Jews, and the Southerners.

The character of Davide Segre allows me to discuss another fundamental point of this research. Towards the end of the book, he traces the sociopolitical affinities between the Italian Risorgimento, Fascism, and the aftermath of WWII. He is a young Jewish bourgeois who was arrested and tortured by the SS for being an anarchist. He joins the shelter in Pietralata after the bombings and befriends Nino and Useppe; Ida's younger son is fascinated by him, especially his poetry, and visits him after they both leave Pietralata.[134] As Garboli notices, "la Morante gli [a Davide Segre] ha regalato tutta se stessa, tutte le sue idee, tutto il suo amore, tutto il suo masochismo. [...] Davide Segre dovrebbe essere la coscienza intellettuale e problematica del romanzo" ("Introduzione" *La Storia* XVII–XVIII).[135] Indeed, through Davide's words, Morante expresses the

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[134] For analyses of the role of poetry and Useppe's language in *La Storia,* see the already mentioned Lucia Re's "Utopian Longing and the Constraints of Racial and Sexual Difference in Elsa Morante's *La Storia*;" Elisa Maria Martinez Garrido's "La Felicità e la Musica ne *La Storia* di Elsa Morante" in *Forum Italicum* Vol. 48 (2014), pp. 47–66; Monica Zanardo's "Le Poesie di Davide Segre: Un'Appendice Inedita a *La Storia*" in *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana* Vol. 20 (2013), pp. 49–71; Paola Azzolini's "Attraversando la Poesia di Elsa Morante" in *Studi Novecenteschi* Vol. 34, No. 74 (2007), pp. 429–439; Maria Giménez Cavallo's "Elsa Morante's *La storia*: A Posthumanist, Feminist, Anarchist Response to Power" in *Annali di Italianistica: Speaking truth to power: from medieval to modern Italy* Vol. 34 (2016) pp. 425-447; Sharon Wood's "Excursus as Narrative Technique in *La storia"* in Stefania Lucamante's ed. *Elsa Morante's Politics of Writing: Rethinking, Subjectivity, History, and the Power of Art,* Madison, NJ: Farleigh-Dickinson University Press, 2014, pp. 75–86; Susanna Scarparo's *Across Genres, Generations, and Borders: Italian Women Writing Lives;* Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 2004; Cristina Della Coletta's chapter on *La Storia* in *Plotting the Past: Metamorphoses of Historical Narrative in Modern Italian Fiction,* West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1996; and the final pages of Giuseppina Mecchia's "Elsa Morante and the Biopolitical Turn: Becoming-Woman, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible" in *Thinking Italian Animals: Human and Posthuman in Modern Italian Literature and Film*, edited by Deborah Amberson and Elena Past ed. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 129–144.. For an analysis of Davide as a poet, see the section "L'Occidente: alienazione, pensiero, poesia" (pp. 35–45) and "Follia e alienazione in Davide" (pp. 45– 57) in the first chapter of Enrica Puggioni's *Davide Segre, un eroe al confine della modernità*, Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2006.

[135] Concetta D'Angeli highlights how Davide is the representation of Simone Weil for his biography and his philosophical traits in "La Presenza di Simone Weil ne *La Storia*" in *Per Elsa Morante* by Giorgio Agamben et al. Milano: Linea d'Ombra, 1993; in "La Pietà di Omero: Elsa Morante e Simone Weil Davanti alla Storia" in *Leggere Elsa Morante:* Aracoeli, La Storia *e* Il Mondo Salvato dai Ragazzini. Roma: Carocci, 2003; and in "Visioni di Sterminio in *La Storia* di Elsa Morante" in *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana* Vol. 21 (2014) *Número especial: Contro la barbarie. Elsa Morante e la scrittura*, pp.

fundamental concept of the novel: human relations can be fascist and the modern, capitalist, bourgeois society is an expression of it as well as the recent Nazi and Fascist regimes.[136] These totalitarian governments are just the culmination of a phenomenon that has been existing for decades, if not centuries. Davide Segre's explanation of this concept deserves full quotation:

> 1) La parola fascismo è di conio recente, ma corrisponde a un sistema sociale di decrepitudine preistorica, assolutamente rudimentale, e anzi meno evoluto di quello in uso fra gli antropoidi […] – 2) Simile sistema si fonda infatti sulla sopraffazione degli indifesi (popoli o classi o individui) da parte di chi tiene i mezzi per esercitare la violenza. […] – 3) In realtà fino dalle origini primitive, universalmente, e lungo il corso della storia umana, non sussiste altro sistema fuori di questo. Recentemente, si è dato il nome di *fascismo* o *nazismo* a certe sue eruzioni estreme d'ignominia, demenza e imbecillità, proprie della degenerazione borghese […] insomma *tuta* la Storia *l'è* una storia di fascismi più o meno larvati [come anche] nell'Italia del Risorgimento […] i liberi e gli schiavi … i ricchi e i poveri … i compratori e i venduti … i superiori e gli inferiori … i capi e i gregari … […] Però con l'epoca industriale, certe maschere non reggono, [nella lingua del sistema] l'umanità viene nominata MASSA, che vuol dir materia inerte […] questa povera materia de servissio e de fatica, se rende una pasta de sterminio e disintegrassione … *Campi di sterminio*… il nuovo nome della terra l'hanno già trovato… *Industria dello sterminio*, questo è il vero nome odierno del sistema! (565–566)

Morante anticipates Agamben's argument in unveiling the analogies between fascism and capitalist society.[137] In both forms of power, the weakest part of society needs to be reduced to inert mass through violence and segregation in order to achieve the maximum

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91-100. However, Davide's intolerance for power and hierarchies is typical of Morante, as D'Angeli underlines in "La Pietà di Omero" (83) and "Visioni di Sterminio" (92).

[136] In "Visioni di Sterminio," D'Angeli adds that, even if Davide denounces the sick mechanisms of power, he is still contaminated by it. Following Weil's reasoning on the *pesanteur*, Morante characterizes Davide as a violated person by the atrocities he experienced (being persecuted and imprisoned as a Jew and anarchist) (95-96).

[137] As Mecchia reminds us, Morante and Agamben were friends; together with Pier Paolo Pasolini, Sandro Penna, Natalia and Gabriele Baldini, and Cesare Garboli, they spent much time together in the 1960s. In their works, all of them investigate the issue of what Agamben would later defines as bare life (134). Moreover, I claim that this passage in *La Storia* also recalls Pier Paolo Pasolini's article "24 Giugno 1974. Il Vero Fascismo e Quindi il Vero Antifascismo," where the author identifies consumerism as the perfect form of fascism. I analyze the article in the section dedicated to Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* in Chapter Four.

rate of production. The quoted passage dialogues with the 1941 chronicle in the book, where the narrator reports that the main German factories had a role in the nazi Final Solution for the Jews: "Installazioni e impianti per le *liquidazioni* di massa dei deportati sono già in funzione in vari lager, e al loro allestimento tecnico cooperano alcune fra le più importanti ditte industriali" (78). Clearly, Jews were treated like lifeless waste to be industrially disposed in order to guarantee a pure society. This social engineering was a mass, industrial process that not only dehumanized Jews but it also showed how biopolitics cannot exist without capitalism and viceversa.

Moreover, the concept of the camp embodied the model of action, not only in the holocaust – which destroyed Davide's family and deeply influenced Ida's life – but also in the isolation of unwanted citizens in the reconfiguration of modern capitalistic metropolises, including Rome and its role in the project of nation-building. Morante briefly explores this idea in the 1962 essay "Pro o Contro la Bomba Atomica" when talking about the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti and his resistance to nazi destruction.[138] She writes that "[i] lager, [sono] come dire il modello ideale e supremo della città nel sistema della disintegrazione" (109). Certainly, this claim recalls Pasolini's article on the Roman peripheries as concentration camps: "24 Giugno 1974. Il Vero Fascismo e Quindi il Vero Antifascismo." There, Pasolini explains how the government relegated unwanted citizens to the capital margins and deprived them of their rights as citizens. This is a practice that has roots in the past of the nation, and it is not by chance that in *La Storia*, Davide refers to the Italian Risorgimento. The process of national unification intensified

[138] In the text, Morante also explains how being a poet means creating vitality, and in this way, opposing the disintegration of modern society – this is a concept that she had already investigated in "Sul Romanzo" (1959). I will return to these ideas of vitality/poetry versus death/capitalist society in the section on Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* in Chapter Four.

Italy's division between North and South, and between rural, neglected areas and urban, industrial centers. Specifically, the concurrent advent of mass society together with the growth of industrialization in northern Italy led to a strong gap between those who had access to production – in north-western Italy and in major cities in central Italy – and those considered "materia de servissio e de fatica" (proletariat), who could be used as long as their bodies could sustain the labor exertion, and then once used, they could be left to die together with the subproletariat and those who could not contribute to production and to the nation's growth. Indeed, Morante refers to these same concepts in the very first page of the novel. For the *annali* of the years 1906–1913, the narrator focuses on the "poteri capitalistici" and "imperialismo" that perpetuate the eternal struggle between those who detained power and the "servitù" (7). Moreover, she continues with the delineation of the proximity of capitalism, politics, and the organization of society in modern times:

> Al centro di tutti i movimenti sociali e politici stanno le grandi industrie, promosse, ormai da tempo, col loro enorme e crescente sviluppo, ai sistemi delle *industrie di massa* (che riducono l'operaio 'a un semplice accessorio della macchina'). Per le loro funzioni e i loro consumi, le industrie hanno bisogno di masse e viceversa. E siccome il lavoro dell'industria è sempre al servizio di Poteri e Potenze, fra i suoi prodotti il primo posto, necessariamente, spetta alle armi [...] le quali, in base all'economia dei consumi di massa, trovano il loro sbocco nella guerra di massa. (7)

The narrator explains how big industries lie at the center of social and political movements. Factories discipline the masses physically and ideologically by transforming them into a passive gear in the mechanical process of production; moreover, in order to work, this system needs the support of mass consumers – the same workers. The narrator also identifies weapons at the first place of industrial production because industries are at

the service of political powers that only through war can expand their hegemony.[139] For example, Ida's father, an anarchic teacher, refers to a similar concept when he says, "Un insegnante, se era onesto, a quei poveri piccirilli della scuola avrebbe dovuto predicare l'anarchia, il rifiuto globale della società costituita, che li cresceva per farne carne da sfruttamento o da cannone" (25).[140] Also, for the same reason, Davide Segre worked in a factory as a teenager to "sentirsi *prossimo* di quella parte dell'umanità che, nella società industriale odierna, nasce già soggetta per destino al potere e alla violenza organizzata: ossia, della classe operaia!" (411).

However, oppression is not only based on social layers; it also creates and uses racial and religious differences to operate, too. Davide continues his argumentation on oppression as the basis of power: oppression "si tiene sempre incollato al patrimonio, di proprietà privata o statale che sia ... E per definizione è razzista ... E per definizione deve *produrse e consumarse e riprodurse* attraverso le oppressioni e le aggressioni e le invasioni e le guerre varie" (568). Davide's words reconstruct the system of operation of every capitalist nation-state that aims to gain and preserve wealth and power – something that goes beyond Fascist and Nazi states. Every capitalist nation has three goals: production, consumption, and reproduction. This means that every individual, every citizen, must participate in the growth of the nation by producing, consuming, and reproducing; those who do not conform to this model must be discarded and oppressed – hence, the racist quality of this kind of society. Indeed, Davide continues:

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[139] Giménez Cavallo points out that Morante's "designation of *Poteri* (the *Powerful*) as *capitalistici* (*capitalistic*) is not a reference to free market capitalism, but on the contrary, the depiction of a situation in which industry and capital are at the service of State power" (442).

[140] Note the dehumanization implied in the term "carne," which Morante uses also when talking about Jews.

> Razze, classi, cittadinanze, sono balle: spettacoli d'illusionismo montati dal Potere. È il Potere che ha bisogno della Colonna Infame: 'quello è ebreo, è negro, è operaio, è schiavo ... è diverso ... quello è il Nemico!' tuti trucchi, per coprire il vero nemico, che è lui, il Potere! È lui la *pestilensia* che stravolge il mondo nel delirio ... Si nasce ebrei per caso, e negri, e bianchi per caso [...] ma non si nasce creature umane per caso! (569)

Davide affirms that race, social class, and national identity are just tools used to maintain hegemony and power. Attacking, isolating, and weakening possible enemies gives the illusion of a strong, healthy nation, and because of this chimera of production, capitalist societies are based on the form of sovereign power that decides who to make live and who to make die, as Agamben explains in *Homo Sacer.* It is through the lens of the role of space in the segregation of the "unfitting" of the Roman society that I analyze Morante's *La Storia.*

2. Camps of Modern, Capitalist Societies

La Storia opens in an afternoon in January 1941with a German soldier, Gunther, wandering in San Lorenzo in Rome. Immediately, the narrator characterizes the district as proletarian and anti-fascist: "Nessuno dei passanti, poi, guardava il soldato, perché i Tedeschi, pure se camerata degli Italiani nella corrente guerra mondiale, non erano popolari in certe periferie proletarie" (15).[141] Even if these words identify him as an enemy, the narrator feels compassion for him; he is a teenager, he has a desperate look, and he is a nobody recruited in the industrial machine of the war (15). He is not very dissimilar from the protagonists of the novel; indeed, Ida's apartment interior reminds Gunther of his own in Dachau:

> L'interno consisteva in tutto di due camere, cesso e cucina; e presentava, oltre al disordine, la doppia desolazione della povertà e del genere piccolo-borghese. Ma sul

[141] Later, in the same chapter, the narrator also briefly narrates the *rappresaglie* during the *marcia su Roma* in October 30, 1922, where thirteen inhabitants of San Lorenzo died (38).

> giovane soldato l'effetto subitaneo di quell'ambiente fu di rimpianto selvaggio e di malinconia, per causa di certe minime affinità con la sua casa materna in Baviera. (64)

The domestic space of Ida's apartment immediately bridges the daily experiences of the Italian and German working classes; moreover, like the main characters of the novel, the soldier "sospettava che la guerra fosse un'algebra sconclusionata, combinata dagli Stati Maggiori, ma che a lui non lo riguardava per niente" (17).

It is through Gunther's eyes that readers have their first overview of San Lorenzo. Oram highlights this passage as a moment of disenchantment for the German soldier, who discovers "a series of constructions devoid of the marvel he anticipated and characterized not by glory and a palpable sense of the past, but by the poverty of the present. He brings to his analysis of Italy […] the expectation of a photographic realization of what he has only fleetingly experienced in a classroom" (415). In global representations of the capital, the city still holds its Grand Tour appeal and Morante shows how this iconic image is very different from real Rome. I argue that the author's narrative choice enables the narrator to construct the neighborhood as a symbolic space of exclusion in Rome – the same as in any other city. The Roman working class is not the only one to be passively subjected to the historic events that shape human life and leave traces in the urban fabric through monuments and ancient buildings. In San Lorenzo, Gunther thinks that

> i casamenti vecchi e malridotti del quartiere di San Lorenzo rappresent[ino] senz'altro le antiche architetture monumentali della Città Eterna! E all'intravvedere, oltre la muraglia che chiude l'enorme cimitero del Verano, le brutte fabbriche tombali dell'interno, si figurò che fossero magari i vecchi sepolcri storici dei cesari e dei papi. Non per questo, tuttavia, si fermò a contemplarli. A quest'ora per lui Campidogli e Colossei erano mucchi d'immondezza. La Storia era una maledizione. (18)

The German soldier believes the already decaying buildings of San Lorenzo erected less than fifty years before to be the Roman ruins and the ancient buildings famous all over Europe – the same monuments he barely heard about during the preparatory classes before leaving for the war. However, even if these buildings could deserve attention, he does not stop to contemplate them because to him, monuments testifying to a country's glorious history are nothing more than meaningless junk. Ironically, the narrator's word choice and her superimposition of real monuments and decaying buildings create a significant comment on the district's inhabitants, too. While on the first level, the narrator implies that real monuments such as the Campidoglio and the Coliseum are meaningless for Gunther because they represent historic facts from which he and the lower strata of the society are excluded, on a second level, she affirms that the alleged monuments (Verano's tombs and the decaying buildings of San Lorenzo) are junk, as well as its inhabitants. While governments all over the world spend money to build magnificent monuments to remember important historic events for generations – meaning that they have to be built to last eternally – these governments also erected decaying housing complexes for the population. For states, the virtual reconstruction of history through monuments is more important than the actual living conditions of the lower classes.

Even if absorbed by the city in expansion, San Lorenzo never integrated with the other central, richer neighborhoods. Indeed, the narrator reminds the reader that, for Ida, these neighborhoods "si mostravano da sempre situati in una lontananza straniera e irraggiungibile, non meno di Persepoli o Chicago" (333). To Ida, economic wealth appears as remote and exotic as the ancient Persian city or one of the major centers of activity in Northern America in the 1930s. The history of San Lorenzo begins in the

1880s as an unregulated urban area destined to all the proletariat; the first construction date back to 1877 when the Banca Tiberina and some private contractors bought lots between the Labican Wall and the Verano Cemetery (*Italy's Margins* 21). Usually, migrants from the South moved there because they could not afford a decent apartment in the city center.[142] The area grew without an official urban plan through the erection of temporary accommodations and it remained separated from the center because of the lack of transportation. This marginality is also present in the novel; for example, after recovering from a love delusion, Nino decides to go out and says: "Mó se va dentro Roma!" This exclamation unveils the fact that San Lorenzo was considered detached from the rest of the capital, even if spatially, it was still close to the city center. The reason why the area attracted such a large population despite the absence of services and infrastructures was because of its low cost due to the proximity to the Verano cemetery: "Ripercorrendo la storia della zona, si evince un tratto quasi paradossale, la presenza del Verano fu tra le cause principali della nascita dell'abitato e contribuì in modo determinante alla caratterizzazione del ceto degli abitanti" (Azzone 207). In the eyes of the state, the proletariat inhabiting San Lorenzo were equal to the dead bodies in the cemetery, and for this reason, it did not intervene until the 1910s with the massive project of Istituto Case Popolari. This project intensified the housing system, but it did not offer functioning infrastructure; Forgacs reports that only after 1920 was the underground sewage system completed together with the pavement of the streets (*Italy's Margins*

[142] During the first years, the district housed "the families of unskilled construction workers who had migrated from rural Lazio and Abruzzo, attracted by the building fever." Later, other workers joined the district for its proximity to the workplace: "workers from the good yards [...] behind the new railway station as well as tram drivers and refuse collectors and, down at the cemetery end, various people who earned their living from the death industries" (*Italy's Margins* 22–23).

23).[143] For all these reasons, as Morante shows in the novel, San Lorenzo – along with Testaccio, with which shares a similar history – never integrated into the urban fabric of Rome, even if the city physically incorporated the two neighborhoods in its expansion.[144]

San Lorenzo and Testaccio are not the only poor districts in the novel. As Azzone highlights, Morante's depiction of the settings of her novel shows how the post-unification proletarian neighborhoods of San Lorenzo and Testaccio do not differ much from the segregated Jewish ghetto and the post-war borgate regarding their isolation from the city center.[145] In her peregrinations, after the 1938 racial laws, Ida starts frequenting the Jewish ghetto as if pushed by her instinct and a sense of affinity with its inhabitants.[146] There, she feels safe to talk about current events and the situation of Jews in Italy (58). With Ida's first visit, the narrator gives a brief historical account of the Roman ghetto: its segregation and gates in use until 1870, the walls that were destroyed in 1888, the frequent floods of the Tiber that deeply affected the living conditions in the

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[143] During the early 1900s, San Lorenzo was at the center of social investigations on the part of journalists, sociologists, and urban reformers. In *Italy's Margins,* Forgacs quotes excerpts from writings of notable figures of the time, such as Alfredo Niceforo, Scipio Sighele, Sibilla Aleramo, and Maria Montessori, testifying to the social distress of the area often associated with crime (24). Moreover, as Forgacs reports: "A newspaper article of 1901 described it as 'the district with the greatest destitution in Rome.' An article of 1904 in *Nuova Antologia* maintained that the design of its apartment buildings betrayed the grossest ignorance of the 'elementary rules for habitable dwellings.' [...] San Lorenzo, in fact, was one of the areas of Rome worst affected by the typhus epidemic of 1904 and it would be the one with most cases of tubercolosis in 1918-1919. [...] There was also a high incidence in San Lorenzo of bronchitis, pneumonia and trachoma and as late as the 1930s it still had among the highest rates of child mortality in Rome. Despite the fact that by then the partial *risanamento* had been carried out and conditions were relatively better" (20).

[144] Even if the narrator says that "Il Testaccio non era un quartiere di periferia come San Lorenzo. Benché abitato anch'esso, in prevalenza dal ceto operaio e popolare, solo poche strade lo separavano dai quartieri borghesi" (310), still, it was separated from the bourgeois neighborhoods.

[145] In *Italy's Margins,* Forgacs highlights how, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Rome's city center still contained some poor district while the city's expanded east with new poor *quartieri*: the Jewish ghetto, parts of Trastevere, Ripetta, near Aracoeli, near the Coliseum, and Spina di Borgo (28).

[146] Lucamante points out how "with the notable exception of Giacomo Debenedetti's *16 ottobre 1943* […], this particular Roman neighborhood appears fully described in Italian literature only with *La Storia*" (*Forging Shoah Memories* 155). Moreover, in the past, critics never dedicated too much attention to this setting in the novel (155).

district before the construction of the retaining walls on the river from 1876–1926, and the growth of its population after the restoration of the area in 1888. Even though in 1938 the ghetto was no longer physically segregated from the city, the narrator observes that its inhabitants feel detached from the current events concerning the Jews: "in certe famiglie del quartiere, si aveva appena notizia di quei decreti, come di questioni riguardanti i pochi ebrei signori, che abitavano sparsi nei quartieri borghesi della città" (59). Beyond reflecting a sense of skepticism that something as cruel as the nazi extermination could happen in Italy as well as the hope that Mussolini and the pope would show benevolence towards the Italian Jews, these words also indicate that the Jews living in the ghetto felt a total disconnection from history and from the laws regulating the state. First of all, they perceive an unbridgeable gap between them – who barely survived as street vendors and ragpickers before the racial laws prohibited these activities, too – and the wealthy, bourgeois Jews living elsewhere in Rome. Second, because they were excluded from society, they believed that the racial laws were enforced only for the assimilated Jews. Therefore, we can say that the Ghetto was physically absorbed into Rome's urban fabric, but it still worked as a camp by containing "unfitting' elements of society. Even if the its gates and walls did not exist anymore, poor Jews were still considered outcasts, *homines sacri.*[147]

This sense of exclusion based on Jewish identity affects Ida, too. In her experience of the war, her perception of social segregation appears more violently in one

[147] For a study on racial discrimination of Jews and Ida's Jewish identity, see Katja Liimatta's "Ida's Jewish Quest in Elsa Morante's *La Storia*" in *Italian Culture* Vol. 18 No. 1 (2000) pp. 103–123.

of her first visionary dreams after discovering that the rape she had experienced left her pregnant.[148] In the dream,

> sta incarcerata in una sorta di canile, e da dietro la sua finestrola a sbarre vede passare delle giovani alte, vestite di molti colori come certe balie signorili, le quali portano in braccio dei puttini bellissimi che ridono. Le giovani la conoscono, peró si voltano dall'altra parte per non guardarla; e anche i puttini, non era a lei che ridevano. (86)

The dream spatially stages her sense of seclusion; she is restrained in a cell, unable to participate in what seems to be a display of a happy, carefree, bourgeois life. The fact that the narrator defines the cell as a sort of kennel implies that Ida feels dehumanized in her condition, which depends on her position in the social ladder, her pregnancy outside of marriage, her epilepsy seizures that came back after the rape, and the fact of her being Jewish.[149] In her mind, her body displays all these imperfections that fascist society was not tolerating. After one of her seizures, she thinks that she should go to a pharmacy and asks for some medication, "ma poi rinunciò, sospettosa che il farmacista potesse indovinare, peggio ancora che la sua antica malattia nascosta, pure le circostanze di questa ricaduta tardiva" (82). This passage unveils how much Ida fears an external examination of her body because it bears traces of what was considered impure; her sickness, her scandalous pregnancy, and her Jewish heritage intertwine here and in many other passages narrating Ida's real and mental labyrinthine peregrinations. In her mind,

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[148] Ida's sense of inferiority recalls her mother's. For more details, see the mentioned article by Liimatta and Christian Moretti's "Crises, Suffering, and Breakdowns: Re-Shaping Identity in Elsa Morante's *La Storia*" in *Italica* Vol. 9, No. 3 (2013), pp. 422–432.

[149] In more than one instance, Ida is compared to a dog. For example, after giving birth to Giuseppe, "rimase, dal parto, così smunta, da sembrare una cagna randagia che s'è sgravata in un angolo di strada" (95). The narrator's words underline, again, Ida's sense of inferiority aggravated by the daily difficulties during the war. Also, with the short supply of food, she becomes more driven by her instinct of survival for herself and her sons: "Queste sue giornate di cacciatrice, riducendola a uno stato di lotta primitiva, la distraevano da tutte le ansie diurnie" (127). The war transformed her existence into bare life driven by animal instincts. For a study on rape the novel, see Lydia M. Oram's "Rape, Rapture, and Revision: Visionary Imagery and Historical Reconstruction in Elsa Morante's *La Storia*" in *Forum Italicum* 37.2 (2003) pp. 409–435.

these three conditions prevent her from living as happily and carefree as the young, colorful ladies in her nightmare. Her dream continues. Then, she is a child again, walking with her father until he suddenly disappears; she starts having menstruations while walking in the mountains until she stops playing with a goat that is giving birth. Close to them, "già pronto, c'è un *furiere* delle macellerie elettriche" (86). In this passage, it is difficult not to recall Umberto Saba's "capra dal viso semita" of *La capra* (1912).[150] In her delirious dream, Ida strongly identifies herself with a persecuted Jewish mother, whose son will end up in an extermination camp. The transformation of the camp into a slaughterhouse recalls the industrial nature of the nazi Final Solution for the Jews that Morante explains in the 1941 chronicle (78) and reinforces the bestialization of the Jews in the nazi and fascist society.

There is another passage where the narrator explores Italy's *homines sacri* through another one of Ida's deliriums. The evening of the bombing, after having lost her apartment, she follows a group of displaced families on their way to Pietralata. Ida is so deranged that she cannot discern the geographical space around her:

> Si domandava incerta se la casa di Via dei Volsci a San Lorenzo, dove aveva abitato per più di vent' anni, non fosse invece la casa di Cosenza, demolita dal terremoto medesimo che aveva distrutto, insieme, Messina e Reggio. E se questo stradone fosse San Lorenzo, oppure il Ghetto. Doveva esserci un'infezione nel quartiere, per questo lo demolivano a colpi di piccone. (176)

Her thoughts first unveil that she considers the war as an uncontrollable, natural phenomenon like an earthquake. Secondly, the overlap of San Lorenzo, Calabria, Sicily, and the ghetto combine to form not only her identity – her home, her family, her husband, her Jewish heritage – but also the destiny of the neglected and segregated parts of the

[150] As Azzolini reports, Umberto Saba is one of Morante's favorite poets (434).

Italian population: the proletariat, the Southerners, and the Jews who are the most affected by war and natural disasters. Indeed, poor Romans and the Jews were constantly affected by the Tiber's frequent floods before the construction of the river banks. Moreover, during the war, as the narrator reports, "[L]e famiglie possidenti si erano trasferite in campagna; e i rimasti (la grande folla) incontrandosi in istrada, sui tram, negli uffici, si guardavano in faccia fra loro, anche fra sconosciuti, tutti con la stessa domanda assurda nelle pupille" (161). The working class was forced to remain under the attacks of the Allied forces, especially in big cities. For the facts concerning the 1908 earthquake that affected Sicily and Calabria, the state was blamed for its late assistance – most of the help came from Russian and other international military forces present in the area – and for the heavy taxation on the population after the disaster.[151] Lastly, through the allusion to the fascist *sventramenti* of Rome's city center through the metaphors of infection and pickaxe, the narrator adds another category of *homines sacri*: the native, subproletarian population that Mussolini eradicated from the city center – Campidoglio, near Teatro di Marcello, Fori Imperiali, San Giovanni, Porta Metronia, and Viale Castrense – and moved to the capital's margins in borgate such as Pietralata, which was built in between

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[151] For more details on the 1908 earthquake, see John Dickie's *Una Catastrofe Patriottica. 1908: il terremoto di Messina,* Roma: Laterza, 2008; Francesco Mercadante's and Salvatore Pugliatti's *Il Terremoto di Messina: Corrispondenze, Testimonianze e Polemiche Giornalistiche*, Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole Edizioni, 2009; Giorgio Boatti's *La Terra Trema. Messina 28 Dicembre 1908. I Trenta Secondi che Cambiarono l'Italia, non gli Italiani,* Milano: Mondadori, 2004; and Giacomo Longo's *Un Duplice Flagello. Il Terremoto del 28 Dicembre 1908 a Messina e il Governo Italiano,* Messina: Edas, 2010. Even today, Italy has faced similar issues after the recent earthquakes in Irpinia, Abruzzo, Marche, Umbria, and Emilia Romagna for the heavy taxation on the population less than one year after the earthquake, for the slow reconstruction of the area (when existing), and for a general sense of abandonment after the precarious resolution of the initial crisis. Comedian and director Sabina Guzzanti portrayed the immediate aftermath of L'Aquila earthquake in 2009, unveiling the militarization of the area, the political mechanisms in the management of the state of emergency, and the use of spectacularization of the reconstruction in the documentary *Draquila: L'Italia che Trema* (2010). Moreover, the lack of a long-term assistance to the population affected mostly the working class and the rural population relying on agriculture for their livelihood. Even in the US, the areas most affected by natural disasters are always inhabited by the lower classes of society, and help from the government is always late and inadequate.

1935 and 1940. This is where Ida and other families moved after the bombing in search of a shelter.[152]

Pietralata is another example of a modern ghetto: "una sorta di villaggio di esclusi, ossia di famiglie povere cacciate via d'autorità dalle loro vecchie residenze nel centro cittadino" (Morante 179). As Azzone summarizes, Pietralata was "una zona di ghettizzazione sistematica, in cui l'amministrazione fascista aveva tentato di rinchiudere gli indesiderati rendendo loro quasi impossibile la sopravvivenza e i rapporti con la città" (210) through the lack of services, infrastructure, and the consistent distance from the city center. The effects of this isolation are visible in Ida's peregrination in search of food and in her exemption from work service as well as in the missing presence of the police. The narrator recounts that, even more during the war, the borgata "si considerava quasi una zona franca e fuori legge; e in genere i fascisti e i nazisti non osavano troppo di farcisi vedere, per quanto il suo panorama fosse dominato da un forte militare, torreggiante, in vetta a un monte" (179). Through its marginality and its existence outside of the law, it is evident that the fascist borgate embody Agamben's state of exception, where the law is suspended and "implicates bare life within it. […] The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life – that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed – is the life that has been captured in this sphere" (83). Citizens of the borgate existed outside of the law and the regulated, modernized urban fabric of the city. They had no rights and their connections to the city inhabited by the "fitting" citizens were totally sabotaged. This

[152] Forgacs reports that, "when many of the buildings in San Lorenzo were bombed in the first Allied air raid in 19 July 1943, a proportion of the surviving residents were rehoused in new areas further out, such as Pietralata, San Basilio, Quarticciolo, Borgata Prenestina and Borgata Gordiani, and some ended up in *baracche*" (*Italy's Margins* 30).

meant that the state let them live in inhuman conditions at the borders of the capital, and their survival was irrelevant to the nation. The state decided who was worth living – the new, richer inhabitants of the city center – and who could die without being sacrificed – the inhabitants of the borgate.

Morante's characters move from one modern camp to another – from San Lorenzo to Pietralata and then to Testaccio – without ever realizing their invisibility to the state and their perpetual exposure to death, not only because of the war, but also mainly because of their existence as *homines sacri*. The author underlines this condemnation to death with the similitude of the gibbet when describing Pietralata: "Fuori dalle casupole, ci si vedevano certi casotti di cemento, adibiti a latrina o a lavatoio, e degli stenditoi simili a forche" (179). Morante reconstructs with accuracy the houses in Pietralata; since none of them had running water inside and were not connected to a sewage system, families shared external bathrooms and wash houses. As one might expect, the hygienic situation was not ideal. However, even if the building occupied by Ida and the other displaced families has a bathroom and a water tank, their living conditions are even worse than those of the people living in the borgata. First of all, the building they occupy is on the margin of Pietralata: "il ricovero dove lei dimorava si trovava, difatti, a circa un chilometro di distanza dall'abitato, di là da un deserto di prati irregolari, tutti a scarpate e avvallamenti, che gliene nascondevano la vista" (179). The extreme remoteness from the city center of Rome obliges Ida to look for food in the already distant borgata. Her movements are confined in this marginal area, which "rimaneva una regione esotica dove lei capitava solo per acquisti al mercato, o in altre simili occasioni, attraversandola sempre col batticuore, come un coniglio" (179). Clearly,

Ida is still shocked after the bombing and the unfamiliarity of the place does not help her. Moreover, her situation is aggravated by the fact that schools are still closed after the bombing and food becomes harder to find, which means providing it for her and Useppe becomes her only daily occupation (192). Therefore, her survival depends solely on her instincts; war and confinement in the borgata turned her into a "docile body."

Secondly, in the shelter that is similar to a den, Ida also loses the security and the comfort of her own apartment since she has to share her space with Giuseppe Secondo, I Mille, and other various, temporary guests.[153] Even if Ida divides her living space with some curtains, she does not feel at ease; the numerous members of I Mille embarrass her. This large family is presented with bestial traits in the narrator's descriptions. This strategy amplifies the family's instinct of survival, which is connected to their precarious existence in Naples even before the war. I Mille represent the southern part of the nation that governments, since the Risorgimento, never managed to transform into "fitting" Italian citizens, and therefore were left behind in the process of nation-building. The narrator calls them a *tribù* (181) – a tribe – and the arrangement where they sleep *cuccia* (193) – a dog's bed.[154] What characterizes them most is their sexual promiscuity, which strongly contrasts with Ida's shame of her sexuality and her bodily needs. Carulina's body brings the fruit of this promiscuity: "circa un anno avanti, a Napoli, durante i pernottamenti nelle grotte per evitare le incursioni, questa Carulina, allora in età di quattordici anni meno un mese, era rimasta incinta, non si sapeva con chi" (182). The

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[153] For a study of the poliphony of the character inside the shelter in Pietralata, see the section "I luoghi di Davide. Lo spazio pubblico e privato. Fabbrica, città, stanza" in the second chapter of Enrica Puggioni's *Davide Segre, un eroe al confine della modernità*, Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2006, pp. 59–93.
[154] Even if Ida feels superior to *I mille,* her frequent description as a dog states that, to the eyes of the state, she is not different from them.

narrator explains that for Carulina, "nata in una tribù, si capisce che, del sesso, niente era rimasto segreto ai suoi occhi, fino dalla sua prima infanzia" (185). Nothing really has changed for I Mille during the war; even before that, they lived in overpopulated rooms in Naples's *bassi* – probably not very different from those described in Matilde Serao's *Il Ventre di Napoli* (1884) or the one inhabited by Adelina and Carmine in Vittorio De Sica's *Ieri, Oggi e Domani* (1963).

In the novel, there are two other spaces that need further investigation for their role as camps: the detention camp where Davide was imprisoned and the factory where he briefly worked. The mysterious young man, a Jewish anarchic, survived a detention camp in the northeast of Italy and managed to escape while travelling on a train, likely towards another camp. Pressured by Nino to talk and reveal his identity in the shelter in Pietralata, Davide unveils his experience in one of the *anticamere della morte*. He survived for seventy-two hours in a tiny cell, in isolation, and without any assistance:

> L'interno, di circa metri 1,90 per 1,10 e altezza 1,30 era giusto di misura sufficiente per il tavolaccio, e un uomo non ci si poteva tenere in piedi. Nel soffitto era sistemata una lampada di forse trecento candele, la quale restava accesa giorno e notte e bucava pure gli occhi chiusi [...]. E l'unica apertura verso l'esterno, circa a mezza altezza dall'uscio sbarrato, era uno spioncino o uno sfiatatoio, di diametro poco più che una canna di moschetto. Ci si attaccava sempre con le labbra, carponi sul tavolaccio, a quel foro, per succhiare quel filo d'aria. [...] Ci si veniva rinchiusi, per solito, dopo l'interrogatorio, e in attesa di nuova destinazione. Specie la notte, ne sortivano delle voci, le quali, spesso, non erano più voci ragionanti, ma piuttosto urla incoscienti della materia. (221–222)

Davide's account of his experience at the detention camp shows the dehumanization of prisoners through the use of space. Every prisoner is isolated into a room that crushes the individual with its limited space and the impossibility to stand; this forces the person to feel dominated and without escape. Moreover, a strong light tortures the prisoner both night and day; again, this physically weakens the individual and destroys one's sense of

being in control of one's own body and the space surrounding it. In addition to this seclusion and torment, the lack of openings big enough to allow ventilation limits the prisoner's ability of breathing, which deprives the person of vital functions. Indeed, through these strategies, individuals cannot reason anymore; their voices are transformed into unconscious screams and their bodies into living matter. In short, they are reduced to bare life.

The narrator bridges the experience of Davide Segre with another one in his past, when he was working in a factory. By creating parallels between the two, the narrator states that the "unfitting" for the Fascist regime – anarchists, Jews, political opponents, and so on – and the proletariat share a similar destiny: total dehumanization and exploitation until death. In the already mentioned "Pro o Contro la Bomba Atomica," Morante identifies the death camps as the final product of the bourgeois society:

> La nostra bomba è il fiore, ossia la espressione naturale della nostra società contemporanea, così come i dialoghi di Platone lo sono della città greca; il Colosseo dei Romani Imperiali; [...] e i campi di sterminio della cultura piccolo-borghese burocratica già infetta da una rabbia di suicidio atomico. (99)

Morante traces how the success of the capitalist, bourgeois society relies on the destruction of what is considered different, hostile, and nonconforming to the status quo. For this reason, Morante manages to coherently connect experiences seemingly so different from one another – from the Jews to the workers – that are the consequences of a state based on bourgeois hegemony. Through "[l'] ingiustizia e demenza organizzate, [i] miti degradanti, [la] noia convulse e feroce" (100), the modern, capitalist society promises a fake paradise that I discuss at the end of this chapter. Returning to the text's analysis, even if it is gigantic, the space of the factory recalls that of the detention cell

previously analyzed. In the factory, the space becomes claustrophobic because of the vast presence of the machines:

> Un capannone dal tetto di lamiera, vasto quanto una piazza e ingombro, per tre quarti del suo volume in basso e in alto, di mostruosi meccanismi in movimento. [...] La luce del giorno, in quell'enorme spazio dalle rare aperture, entrava scarsa e torbida; e l'illuminazione elettrica, in certi punti, era così accecante che trafiggeva, come negli interrogatori di terzo grado. Delle poche e strette finestre – tutte situate in alto, poco al di sotto della tettoia – quelle chiuse avevano i vetri coperti da una crosta nerastra. (312–313).

Similar to the detention cell, the factory has strong, artificial lights and almost no openings for natural light and ventilation.[155] Moreover, the condition of the workers in the factory recalls the passage already analyzed, where the narrator identifies the death camps with "macellerie elettriche" and the Jews as meat. In the factory,

> [Le] macchine, [...] coi propri corpi eccessivi, sequestravano e quasi ingoiavano i loro piccoli corpi, [...] [che] si riducevano a frammenti di una *materia* a buon mercato, che si distingueva dal ferrame del macchinario solo per la sua povera fragilità e capacità di soffrire. [...] La loro legge quotidiana era la *necessità estrema della sopravvivenza*. E loro portavano nel mondo il loro *corpo come un marchio* di questa legge incondizionata, che *nega spazio perfino agli istinti animali del piacere, e tanto più alle domande umane*. (413; my emphasis)

Like the Jews and the prisoners of the detention camps, workers are considered living matter that can be killed in order to guarantee a productive, healthy nation. Their bodies mark their existence in the same way that Jews wore the star of David and bare the tattooed number; their identity as "unfitting" is made visible to the "fitting." Their existence is nothing more than bare life: survival, with no space for pleasure or independent reasoning, like the Jews and the other prisoners of camps.[156] In the pages of

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[155] Puggioni notices the same resemblance between the factory and the detention cell (76).

[156] In "Visioni di Sterminio," D'Angeli concludes with a similar point: "il ghetto, i carri bestiame dei vitelli e degli ebrei sono tutti luoghi in cui l'individualità è cancellata e l'umanità, resa anonima, costretta a condividere la condizione animale" (100). However, in the article, she does not offer an analysis of this comparison and she does not extended the metaphor to other victims of history.

novel, the narrator gives many examples of people sharing this same destiny: from the Russians under Stalin[157] to the war factory workers around the world;[158] from the prisoners of the Reich[159] to the Jews and other minorities in the detention camps.[160] In all of these examples, factories and camps are connected in the utopic creation of pure and productive states.[161] There is a thin line dividing workers and prisoners, and often, this division implodes: Russian workers were deported if they were not productive enough; workers in factories fabricating weapons were imprisoned to machines; prisoners captured by the Germans were either deported or exploited in factories; and the Nazis planned to annihilate inferior races through forced work or inactivity.

Morante conveys this concept affecting the macro-story in Ida's micro-story. After one of I Mille reports that the Roman Jews have been deported, delirious Ida thinks of going to the ghetto to seek shelter.[162] Similar to the Virgin Mary, guided by a comet, she expects a "stalla materna, calda di respiri animali e di grandi occhi non giudicanti, solo pietosi" (238).[163] Ida feels safe there, even if the ghetto's social community is dead: "svuotato interamente di tutta la carne giudia, non c'era restato altro che lo scheletro" (237). Liimatta analyzes this same passage as proof that stereotyping leads to the

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[157] "Ogni minima mancanza degli operai (costretti a un lavoro massacrante e praticamente legati alla macchina) viene punita con la deportazione" (391).
[158] "A questa [la Seconda Guerra Mondiale], provvederà l'attività indefessa e senza turni di riposo delle industrie belliche, le quali, applicando alla macchina milioni di organismi umani, già forniscono nuovi prodotti" (11).
[159] "I reparti italiani vengono massacrati dai Tedeschi oppure deportati in Germania per i lavori forzati nell'industria della guerra" (142).
[160] "Conferenza del Wansee per la pianificazione razziale (decimazione delle razze inferiori a mezzo di lavoro forzato e inanizione, separazioni dei sessi, *trattamento speciale* ecc.)" (115).
[161] For the convergence of prison and factory, see Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini's *Carcere e Fabbrica: Alle Origini del Sistema Penitenziario*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018. For the transformation of prisoners into productive workers during fascism, see Burdett's "Journeys to *other* spaces of fascist Italy," especially pp. 13–16.
[162] Liimatta how the ghetto represents the concept of familism in the Jewish tradition (115). Certainly, Ida looks for a maternal, protective space when reaching the ghetto.
[163] Lucia Re defines the Jewish ghetto in *La storia* as "a kind of maternal womb" (364).

annihilation of all differences and transforms individuals into an anonymous mass, the Other (117). She also highlights how Morante's "la carne giudia" has dehumanizing, animalistic traits but she does not offer a more in-depth analysis of this. I argue that, with this short sentence, Morante synthesizes the entire project of annihilation of the Jews. First comes their dehumanization; their transformation into simple flesh – living matter. Then comes their deportation, which leaves behind carcasses of the Jews and their former ghettos. The idea of Jews as meat continues in Ida's nightmarish wanderings from the ghetto to the Tiburtina train station. While following the Jewish woman she knew in the ghetto from a distance, Ida arrives at the Tiburtina train station. There, she makes a dreadful discovery: some wagons are full of Jews ready to be deported. The narrator's words emphasize, again, the bestialization of the Jewish population. First of all, the Jews are crammed in cattle wagons in the freight yard; for this reason, Ida initially believes that the noises she hears are coming from animals (243). Here, as D'Angeli also points out ("Le Visioni di Sterminio" 99), by creating a parallel with the former episode of Nino and Useppe at the same train station where the two-year-old child feels compassion for a calf on a cattle wagon, Morante reinforces the connection between the Jews and the animals sent to death.[164] Even the look of the soldiers is similar to those of the truck drivers, which confirms the analogy: "il loro aspetto era normale, inalterato come quello dei soliti camionisti del Comune che caricavano a questo transito dello Scalo i loro trasporti di carne" (247). In Fascist Italy, these are no sacrifices; there are just ordinary operations necessary to the functioning of the society. While the calf's meat provides a

[164] The narrator also defines Santina as "animale da macello" (423) not just for her ending – killed by her pimp – but also for her miserable life as prostitute. Like Davide in the factory and the deportation camp, and like the Jews in the death camps, she separated her mind from her material body in order to survive to her living conditions.

highly energetic meal for the population of a nation that aims to become a healthy body, the Jews are discarded as rotten meat that could sicken the body of the nation. Since the Jews are considered simple matter – meat – to be transported from one place to another, the entire operation at the Tiburtina station happens quite unnoticed. Outside of the station, life continues as nothing happened; at the bus stop, Ida plunges again into a lively crowd.

In the deserted train station, Ida is the only witness of the atrocity that represents the absurd culmination of the project of purification in society:

> L'invisibile vocio si andava avvicinando e cresceva, anche se, in qualche modo, suonava inaccessibile quasi venisse da un luogo isolato e contaminato. Richiamava insieme certi clamori degli asili, dei lazzeretti e dei reclusori: però tutti rimescolati alla rinfusa, come frantumi buttati dentro la stessa macchina. (243)

In this passage, the narrator bridges the destiny of the Jews with those of the "unfitting" in the nation. Because they were considered contagious, they needed to be isolated in a remote area, isolated from the healthy population. During these years, the machine of the Fascist state fragmented the existence of thousands of people "unfitting" for the project of nation-building; the deportation of the Jews was the culmination of this process. Non-conforming people – such as homosexuals, the homeless, alcoholics, degenerate mothers, dissolute women, and political opponents – were often confined in mental institutions, prisons, and hospitals in order to guarantee the health of the nation during fascism and even before the rise of Mussolini.[165] The similarity that Morante traces between prisons,

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[165] For more details on the topic, see Gabriella Romano's *The Pathologisation of Homosexuality in Fascist Italy: The Case of 'G,'* London: Palgrave Pivot, 2019; Annacarla Valeriano's *Ammalò di Testa: Storie dal Manicomio di Teramo (1880–1931),* Roma: Donzelli, 2014 and *Malacarne: Donne e Manicomio nell'Italia Fascista*, Roma: Donzelli, 2018; Matteo Petracci's *I matti del duce. Manicomi e repressione politica nell'Italia fascista*, Roma: Donzelli, 2014; and Vinzia Fiorino's *Matti, Indemoniati e Vagabondi: Dinamiche di Internamento Manicomiale tra Otto e Novecento*, Marsilio: Venezia, 2002.

camps, factories, and mental hospitals echoes Michel Foucault's claim in *Discipline and Punish* (1975): "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons? (228).

3. Borgate as Camps

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to analyze more in depth why the capital's borgate can be framed as Agambenian camps. Years before Agamben, both Morante and Pasolini associated what can be considered ordinary mechanisms of society – such as the creation of Rome's periphery – to camps and Nazi methodologies of extermination of unwanted elements in the society. Because both authors traced similarities between Risorgimento and Fascism in dealing with the capital's marginal spaces, and also because Morante underlines the responsibility of the fascist regime in segregating undesirable population in the capital, it is fundamental to examine the fascist urban modifications of the capital.

As I have illustrated, the creation of Rome as the symbolic representation of Italy involved mechanisms that aimed at dissecting part of the population and some vernacular, decaying architecture from the city center because they were considered contaminating for the nation. The fascist dismantling of Spina di Borgo near the Vatican and the borgo near Piazza Venezia, which Morante mentions in her novel, achieved ideas that politicians were already contemplating after the breach of Porta Pia – the dislocation of poor people from Rome's city center, who ended up in the capital's borgate or shantytowns.

Similar to its liberal predecessors, fascist ideology utilized Rome's monuments and urban plans in a superficial way in its project of revitalization of national identity and

political power in the European panorama. These modifications in Rome's architecture is reflected in Benito Mussolini's syncretic speeches. Alberto Caracciolo defines them as an unusual mix of Risorgimental values and defense of the Church:

> Talvolta nei discorsi alati di Mussolini par di udire una accanto all'altra proposizione di Pio IX e di Crispi, di Ernesto Nathan e di Papa Leone, giustapposte alla rinfusa. Roma imperiale, Roma cristiana, Roma garibaldina: è un gran fluire di parole e di concenzioni diverse, tutte buone finché concorrono a creare un mito esaltante che soffochi il razionale giudizio dei fatti. (278)

While Mussolini interweaved references to the Rome of the ancient Roman Empire, Christianity, and Risorgimento in his speeches to create a new myth for the capital, the dux played with existing monuments of the same epochs in his proposed urban plans to affirm his idea of the nation. This intent is visible in the fascist regime's main stage, Piazza Venezia, where the Roman Forum (imperial Rome), the Basilica di Santa Maria in Ara Coeli, the Church of Santa Maria di Loreto (Christian Rome), and the Vittoriano (Rome of the Risorgimento) converge in the square in front of the balcony of Palazzo Venezia. The same can be said of the other massive fascist interventions in the Vatican that implied the destruction of a *borgo* and the relocation of its inhabitants in the margins of the city, as in the case of via dei Fori Imperiali. Via della Conciliazione put in dialogue Saint Peter's (Christian Rome) with the Mole Adriana/Castel Sant'Angelo (imperial Rome) and the bridge dedicated to king Vittorio Emanuele II, which leads to the Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (Rome of the Risorgimento). The main street of the city center was built in 1886 and cut a straight line across the old *rioni* of the capital up to Piazza Venezia. The map of fascist Rome visually reconstructed Mussolini's association of ideas in his speeches: selected streets brought together different past successful epochs of the capital that the dux believed to be foundational for the nation. It is not by chance that Ida

and the other characters in the novel never interact with these public spaces: they do not belong to the nation they embody.

Even if extensive, these interventions in Rome's urban plan were ultimately and perhaps paradoxically superficial, and nothing was done to resolve the deep social and economic problems that were affecting the city. Indeed, during the fascist regime, the capital saw important demographic growth, to which no productive or industrial development followed. As in the years following the breach of Porta Pia, employment in the city was connected to bureaucracy, public services, and small artisanal and commercial activities. As for the housing problems affecting Rome since 1870, Mussolini did not do much, even if he underlined this issue as a necessary problem to be resolved in his speech "Per la cittadinanza di Roma" (April 21, 1924). As Morante underlines in her novel, there is a continuity between the liberal and the fascist disregard for proletarian housing. Mussolini declared his speech on the day of his Roman honorary citizenship; after the proclamation, he praised Rome's strength across the centuries, from its rural origin to the Risorgimento. Some of his most captivating points in the speech rely on the Roman ruins and echo politicians and writers of the Risorgimento that I have analyzed in Chapter One. When Mussolini visited Rome for the first time as a young man, he wandered "fra le *viventi* reliquie del Foro e lungo la via Appia e presso i grandi templi, sovente mi accadde di meditare sul mistero [...] della continuità di Roma" (234; my emphasis). Mussolini's accent on the "living" ruins that testify to the continuity of Rome's power is not so different from Crispi's or De Amicis's use of them in the speech "Trasformazioni ed evoluzioni politiche" and *Impressioni di Roma*, respectively. Also notable is the passage where Mussolini describes the aftermath of the barbaric invasions:

"Crolla l'impero, i barbari valicano le Alpi, passano e ripassano lungo la penisola devastandola, Roma diventa un villaggio di appena diciasettemila anime che si aggrappano disperatamente ai ruderi, che tengono vivo il nome, poiché il nome di Roma è immortale" (235). Here, Mussolini invokes the Roman ruins as saviors of the Roman population because they kept alive the memory of the empire. In reality, Roman ruins were often used as quarries for new buildings, shelters for peasants, or totally abandoned in fields that became pastures. To the peasants' and the poor population's eyes the Roman ruins lost their original functions – their official, codified meaning assigned by the political community – in the urban space. For this reason, the Roman population was able to transform them into vernacular architecture by dismantling them to construct new buildings, by inhabiting them, or by leaving them crumbling in the fields and using them as direction signs in the open countryside. As I have explained in Chapter One, I define this vernacular architecture as "voice" in contrast to "language" – the latter of which signifies the official, symbolic meanings that the political community assigned to monuments and buildings. Therefore, Mussolini's reappropriation of Roman ruins contributed to the symbolic construction of Rome as the base of a universal empire able to unify Italians together with "la tragedia di Cristo," "Dante e la rinascenza," and the use of "Roma o morte!" (235). Clearly, Mussolini's rhetoric recalls official speeches of Risorgimento.

In order to establish the new, fascist "language" in Rome's urban fabric, Mussolini removed some of the "unfitting" elements of vernacular architecture: spontaneous buildings in the city center and its inhabitants – as Morante also recalls in the passage where she associates Rome's *borghi* to the Jewish ghetto, southern Italy, and

the *borgate.* In the previously mentioned speech, Mussolini recognizes that the capital has serious issues regarding housing and infrastructure:

> I problemi di Roma, la Roma di questo ventesimo secolo, mi piace dividerli in due categorie: i problemi della necessità e i problemi della grandezza. Non si possono affrontare questi ultimi, se i primi non siano stati risoluti. I problemi della necessità sgorgano dallo sviluppo di Roma e si racchiudono in questo binomio: case e comunicazioni. (235)

Mussolini affirms that before improving Rome's appearance to show its national and international relevance, it is absolutely necessary to resolve the primary issues affecting the capital, such as housing and infrastructure. Notably, Mussolini uses the word "sgorgano" (gush) in order to underline the untamable and inevitable nature of the capital's urban development, which human intervention opposes with difficulty. While there is an allusion to an impossible solution, Mussolini does not talk about potential remedies for these problems; but rather, he shifts his interlocutors' attention to a program for revitalizing Rome's grandeur:

> Bisogna liberare dalle deturpazioni mediocri tutta la Roma antica, ma accanto all'antica e alla medievale, bisogna creare la monumentale Roma del ventesimo secolo. Roma non può, non deve essere soltanto una città moderna, nel senso banale della parola; deve essere una città degna della sua gloria, e questa gloria deve rinnovare incessantemente per tramandarla, come retaggio dell'età fascista, alle generazioni che verranno. (235)

Mussolini's attention is directed towards a superficial renovation of the Roman ruins and some medieval buildings together with the construction of new monuments that testify to the magnificence of fascism. His program was not that different from the one proposed by the majority of Risorgimento politicians. These similarities also occurred with the fascists' opposition to industrial developments in Rome in favor of support to small factories and artisanal laboratories "per non oscurare la purezza del nostro cielo," as

Cesare Serono says in *Roma e il suo avvenire economico* (1933) (Alberto Caracciolo 280).

In 1929, two master plans were discussed for the new organization of the capital under the fascist regime. The plan presented by Gustavo Giovannoni and other well-established architects was close to Benito Mussolini's idea of the fascist new Rome: no boulevards in the city center, conservation and restoration of historic buildings, and destruction of baroque districts replaced by a Roman cardo and decumanus (Alberto Caracciolo 31). In 1925, on the occasion of the installation of the first governor of the city, Filippo Cremonesi, Mussolini delivered a speech that both emphasized Cremonesi's accomplishments as commissioner in the capital over the span of three years and declared the future projects that would transform Rome into a "vasta, ordinata, potente" city admired by the entire world ("La Nuova Roma" 47).[166] Because he revered the model of Augustus's empire, Mussolini planned for a rehabilitation of the Roman monuments:

> Farete largo all'Augusteo, al teatro Marcello, al Campidoglio, al Pantheon. Tutto ciò che vi crebbe attorno nei secoli della *decadenza*, deve scomparire. Entro cinque anni, da Piazza Colonna, per un grande varco, deve essere visibile la mole del Pantheon. Voi libererete anche dalle costruzioni *parassitarie* e profane i templi maestosi della Roma Cristiana. I monumenti millenari della nostra storia devono giganteggiare nella necessaria solitudine. (48; my emphasis)

According to Mussolini, "I problemi della necessità sono stati completamente affrontati e in buona parte risolti" (47); for this reason, he could think about the "problemi della grandezza." This challenge involved drastic modifications in the city center's urban fabric with notable demolitions of medieval dwellings and Renaissance and baroque buildings that Mussolini defined as products of "secoli della decadenza," "costruzioni

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[166] In October 1925, Mussolini abolished democratic self-government for the capital. The governor was directly appointed by the national government in order to centralize power (*Planning the Eternal City* 29-30).

parassitarie e profane" (48), and in later speeches, as "sudicio pittoresco," as Fried reports (32).[167] By using diminishing words for the constructions erected around ancient Roman monuments and Christian churches, Mussolini chose which monuments to employ as words in the forging of a rhetorical, national discourse based on Rome's urban fabric. This operation entailed discarding what was considered "unfitting" because of moral decadence, parasitic essence, profanity, and filth. Meaning that from Mussolini's point of view, the medieval, Renaissance, and baroque buildings that grew quite spontaneously around Roman ruins and churches needed to be eliminated because they diminished and contaminated the magnificence of the Roman, Christian empire embodied in the Roman ruins and churches. In Mussolini's vision, "unfitting" buildings represented historic and artistic periods that contrasted with the values expressed in ancient Roman monuments in addition to the fascist ideas of the nation's (re)production and health. Many of these "unfitting" buildings were built on the sites of ancient monuments – the Teatro di Marcello near the Jewish ghetto, for example – or built with stones and bricks taken from Roman ruins. These buildings were often decaying and unhygienic because no one took care of them during the centuries. Destroying a large part of Rome's city center also meant the elimination of the presence of Roman natives – in large part, poor artisans and subproletarian individuals, as Morante reports.

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[167] In "Journeys to the *other* spaces of Fascist Italy," Charles Burdett explains in detail the 1934–1938 renovation of Augustus's tomb in Rome. Because of the success of the renovation, it was even suggested that the tomb "should serve as a temple to the values of Italian Fascism" (11). Moreover, Burdett also analyzes Ugo Ojetti's article regarding his visit to the tomb and to the necropolis of Ostia (11–12); for more details, see Charles Burdett, "Journeys to the *other* spaces of Fascist Italy," *Modern Italy* Vol. 5 No. 1 (2000), pp. 7–23.

Even though Giovannoni's proposed plan was close to Mussolini's idea of the new, fascist Rome, the 1931 official plan was based on Marcello Piacentini's project, which still was quite close to Mussolini's idea of Rome. His plan included

> new boulevards; the isolation of Roman monuments; [...] massive street-cutting in the old city; [...] a subway system; [...] relocation of the major railway station to the east; [...] district-by-district expansion through detailed implementation plans; [...] provide for a variety of housing needs, including low-cost housing; [...] ensure adequate provision of facilities in the new districts; [...] [and] improve the quantity and quality of parks and recreation facilities. (Fried 33–34)

The 1931 plan (in place until 1959) was not respected for two reasons: the power of private landowners was too strong to oppose, and the lack of funds halted the renovation of the city center but for Via dei Fori Imperiali and Piazza Venezia. Like in the past, nothing was done to ameliorate the living conditions of Rome's inhabitants. The result was that the city center remained intact, including the majority of unhygienic slum dwellings. No green areas were built despite the increasing rise of the population, and the unregulated urban zoning led to an intensification of high-rise buildings in order to favor private speculation. Regulation was too slow to individuate new building lots, and the prices for apartments were too high for the thousands of immigrants that were moving to Rome, especially during the national agricultural crisis between 1923 and 1927. Most of these spontaneous villages (*villaggi abissini*) along the perimeter of the official urban plan were built at night to elude the police patrols that were guarding the areas.[168] However, many of them were also started by big operators that built without permission and promised buyers quick approvals for the apartment complexes (*Planning the Eternal City* 37). Two hundred thousand people lived in illegal settlements, shantytowns, or in the

[168] This is a phenomenon that continued in the aftermath of WWII and that Vittorio De Sica portrayed in his *Il Tetto* (1956).

official *borgate* built by the Fascist regime – twelve of them were built in between 1924 and 1940.

It is not difficult to imagine the dire condition of those living in the shantytowns: no water, no electricity, no sewage system, no paved streets, and no public services. This was also true for the official borgate, such as Pietralata. In her novel, in depicting the difficulties of the *borgatari*, Morante alludes to the social engineering implied in the fascist organization of the city. The 1930 City Welfare Department report to the governor of Rome that Fried quotes in his book is relevant to my analysis because it highlights the punitive quality of the borgate and the shantytowns:

> All this mass of homeless and badly housed people, plus the farm workers and unemployed must be relocated. The farmworkers, unskilled laborers and unemployed, on the one hand, and the families with irregular composition and poor moral precedents, on the other, might well be transferred to the city properties located in the open countryside, not visible from the highways, where they would be allowed to build houses with the materials from the demolished buildings. Through such a measure it would be possible to build real, rural borgate, with between a thousand and fifteen hundred people each under vigilance of a station of the Royal Carabinieri and the Militia. (*Planning the Eternal City* 38)

This report unveils the true nature of the project's expulsion of "unfitting" populations from the city center. The homeless, poor, peasants, and unemployed were forced to move and also were defined with the ambiguous categories of "irregular family" or "poor moral precedents." David Forgacs points out how Franco Ferrarotti, in *Vite di Baraccati* (1974), quotes the same passage by Fried to support the idea that the municipal authorities used the dispersion of Rome's lower classes from the city center as a way to weaken the potential of organized working-class protests (*Italy's Margins* 32). These people were treated like waste to be dumped at the margins of the capital, where they could not be seen even from the highways. There, they could build houses with junk and the debris

from the city center's demolitions while continuing to be part of the unproductive side of the nation. In the eyes of the fascist regime, the people removed from the city center equated to the rubble resulting from the fascist urban renovations; they represented the decay, the parasites, and the filth of the past society that needed to be eradicated from the fascist society and kept at a distance from the heart of the nation that Rome embodied – and, for this reason, they needed to be controlled by the police. Even Pietralata, which is one of the setting of Morante's novel, was built by a military station.

Indeed, the fascist borgate and the legal and illegal shantytowns that grew at the margins of Rome perpetuated the previous liberal democratic approach to the capital's housing problems. The moderate intervention of the state could not resolve the issue with only a few, official borgate. As a result, they solidified the existing shantytowns – that the government had helped to raise since the end of the nineteenth century – and encouraged the settlement of additional illegal housing in the neglected, marginal areas. There, the poor, homeless, and socially disadvantaged inhabitants that were evicted from the city center through laws and regulations – such as the 1900 law that banished people from sleeping outside, which was mentioned in Chapter Two – found their new homes together with an increasing number of immigrants from nearby rural areas and southern Italy. These categories of the Italian population fit in what Spackman defines as the disease that can infect the body of the nation and that, for this reason, needed to be isolated to the margins of the nation and be policed. Indeed, the Royal Carabinieri and the militia were controlling these marginal areas in Rome. The presence of the police and the fact that the people forced to move in the Fascist borgate were depicted as dangerous for society – but with no exact or proved criminal behavior – classified the borgate as camps and Italy's

nation-building as a state of exception. Therefore, the fascist borgate can be defined as Agamben's camps. The Italian philosopher explains:

> The camp [is] not […] a historical fact and an anomaly belonging to the past […] but in some ways [is] the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space in which we are still living. […] The camps are thus born not out of ordinary law (even less, as one might have supposed, from a transformation and development of criminal law) but out of a state of exception and martial law. [...] It has been noted that the juridical basis for internment [Nazi lager] was not common law but *Schutzhaft* (literally protective custody), a juridical institution of Prussian origin that the Nazi jurors sometimes classified as a preventive police measure insofar as it allowed individuals to be "taken into custody" independently of any criminal behavior, solely to avoid danger to the security of the state. (166–167)

The fascist borgate and Agamben's definition of camps have many points in common: the creation of a state of exception to enforce special laws; the isolation of "sick" bodies that can infect the society; the military control on the borders of the areas housing the "infected;" and the annihilation of these individuals through dehumanizing laws and living conditions. All these elements are present in Morante's descriptions of the Jewish ghetto, the proletarian districts, and the borgate.

Morante accuses western, modern society – Italy in the first place – of being fascist, even before the actual fascist and nazi regimes. Indeed, there is a continuity between pre-Fascist liberal governments and Fascism for the instauration of a state of exception. As Roberto Martucci recalls, the declaration of a state of emergency was a common practice in the western nation-states during the nineteenth century (407); however, as Floriana Colao states, the laws adopted in Italy were far more pervasive and arbitrary than in other Western countries (29). In August 1862, at the apex of the struggle against *brigantaggio*, the Italian government declared the first *stato d'assedio* (state of emergency), and many followed in the successive fifty years (De Cristofaro 13). During these *stato di assedio,* the normal rights guaranteed by the *statuto* (the laws governing the

state) were suspended.[169] The practice of *domicilio coatto* originated in 1863 from this atmosphere of emergency for the state and has played a crucial role in the treatment of the "unfitting." During the fascist regime, it became the base for the *confino di polizia* not only for political opponents but also for homosexuals, prostitutes, and other individuals accused of being morally deviant, including *oziosi* and *vagabondi*, as discussed in Chapter Two. The development of previous laws from the Italian liberal government, such as the *domicilio coatto*, to reinforce the state of exception during the Fascist regime, is similar to the process Agamben refers to for his argumentation. The philosopher traces the origin of the *Shutzhaft* in an 1851 Prussian law that was used in occasional states of emergency for the nation, which the Nazi regime appropriated to create a perpetual state of emergency to legitimize the creation of camps. Through this operation,

> as the state of exception is 'willed,' it inaugurates a new juridico-political paradigm in which the norm becomes indistinguishable from the exception. [...] Because the camps constitute a state of exception [...] – in which not only is law completely suspended but fact and law are completely confused – is everything in the camps truly possible. (170)

Similarly, the fascist borgate were the result of a state of exception that became normalized in the nation and criminalized social disadvantage: "fact and law are completely confused." In practice, the isolation of marginalized citizens in the borgate worked as a concurrent tool to *confino*. Indeed, as Michael Ebner reports:

> In the early years, between 1926 and 1934, the branch that handled 'common' criminal suspects – 'habitual' criminals, alcoholics, *mafiosi*, pimps, drug dealers and addicts, and vagabonds – grew remarkably. With the introduction of the police code in November 1926, the Fascist police immediately exercised its expanded powers in

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[169] Martucci gives a list of these states of emergency in "La Regola è l'Eccezione: La Legge Pica nel suo Contesto" in *Nuova Rivista Storica* Vol. XCVII, No. II, 2013, pp. 405-444. For more details about the *domicilio coatto* and *confino*, in addition to the previously mentioned De Cristofaro, Fozzi, Davis, and Garfinkel in Chapter Two, see Ilaria Poerio's *A Scuola di Dissenso: Storie di Resistenza al Confino di Polizia (1926–1943),* Roma: Carocci, 2016, and Silverio Corvisieri's *La Villeggiatura di Mussolini: Il Confino da Bocchini. Berlusconi*, Milano: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2004.

> order to restore 'law and order' and 'clean up the streets' rather than merely suppress anti-Fascism. (109)

Both the borgate and the *confino* worked as dumpsters for the "unfitting" to the eyes of the Fascist regime – and of the liberal state, previously.[170] To these disposal systems, they also added homeless shelters. During Fascism, the number of homeless shelters increased in order to collect people evicted from the *sventramenti* and immigrants from the South. Many of these shelters closed because of security and health conditions; so, their existence did not help in resolving the housing situation (Villani 53). For example, Villani reports that "nel dicembre '28 venne aperto un centro di mendicità in zona Portuense, ampliato nel giugno '29 fino alla capacità di 350 posti, presto riempiti dalla Questura che, con un vero e proprio 'rastrellamento degli accattoni', tolse 'dalla circolazione numerosi mendicanti'" (53). Indeed, as Ebner summarizes, "the dictator's involvement in the work of political repression was not necessarily just to eliminate a few hated groups or behaviors but also to use state force to reclaim (bonificare) or transform the [Italian] 'race'" (14) that he believed to be *rammollita* (spineless) and sheep-like.[171] In order to successfully create Italians, the state first needed to isolate the 'disturbing' elements of the society and then proceed to homogenize citizens through repressive and violent reforms limiting personal freedom and control over one's own body. For example, after escaping an attempted assassination in Bologna on October 31 1926, Mussolini and the Council of Ministers approved on November 5 a series of exceptional decrees that

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[170] It would be interesting to see how many people from the borgate were sent to *confino* and if the borgate worked as preventive containers before sending suspects to *confino*, also because the costs for *confino* were high and a mass action would be considered negative for domestic and foreign propaganda as Ebner reports (111).

[171] For more information, see also Emilio Gentile's "'Un gruppo di rammolliti: Come Mussolini giudicava gli Italiani e in che modo pensava di di trasformarli" in *Il Sole 24 Ore*, October 31 2014, p. 4.

limited Italians' lives: "The broadly defined jurisdiction of the police state meant that virtually no place was off-limits. Political expression, economic activity, employment, travel, sexuality, reproduction, religious practices, organized leisure, and other areas of national life could be aggressively controlled by the police and other state agencies" (Ebner 49). Only in this way, Mussolini believed he succeeded where the previous liberal state failed in fostering national cohesion.

The tendency to punish and isolate marginal figures in *confino* intensified, beginning in 1935 when Mussolini's regime became more authoritarian: "the Fascist apparatus of political repression began targeting a wide array of marginal social groups, including religious minorities, alcoholics, ex-criminals, homosexuals, prostitutes, and, quite ordinary, often poor, Italians" while the percentage of detained anti-Fascists diminished (Ebner 132–133). Ebner's analysis confirms that the regime's aim was – after the initial annihilation of political opponents – to eradicate individuals not conforming to the moral values promoted by fascism and not contributing to the development of a modern, capitalist state; for example, failed economic activities were cause for *confino* (Ebner 176, fig. 9). Mussolini also considered abortion, homosexuality, and alcoholism as consequences of modernization:

> The central assumption of mainland exile held that Italy's rural southern provinces did not breed subversion (anti-Fascism) and 'socially dangerous' behaviors (e.g. abortion, homosexuality, and alcoholism). Mussolini lauded the southern provinces for the high birthrate and the fact that their population had 'not yet been infected by the many malignant trends of contemporary civilization. (Ebner 133)

Again, as at the end of the nineteenth century, Italian leaders aspired to create a modern, economically and politically strong nation; and, yet, they failed to deal with the negative consequences of modernization and industrialization, such as poverty, social

marginalization, alcoholism, and prostitution. They stigmatized and criminalized them instead. Even if the fascist modalities of resolution for these social issues were harsher and more cruel, we can trace a similar attitude of repulsion, isolation, and annihilation towards Italian marginal figures in the liberal governments preceding the fascist *ventennio* as discussed in Chapter Two. For example, the whole idea of associating crime, disease, and dubious morality with marginal areas of Rome characterizes the Lombrosian social inquiry directed by Alfredo Niceforo and Scipio Sighele regarding the district of San Lorenzo in *La Mala Vita a Roma* (1898).[172]

I would like to return to the presence of the police and the militia at the borders of the borgate, as in the example of Pietralata. As Ferruccio Trabalzi notices, "it is not surprising that many of the borgate [...] were situated close to military forts or police barracks" (137).[173] Their presence activated in practice what Mussolini planned with the 1926 exceptional decrees. Mussolini writes that the new Fascist police code offered

> the Public Security authorities new and more perfect weapons for performing the task ... of controlling disruptive and malevolent elements and repressing any activity contrary to the physical and moral integrity and peaceful development of the national society," [that is] prevent[ing] the germs of corruption from spoiling and annihilating vital energies. (in Ebner 50)

This confirms that the borgate were an instrument of social control that isolated individuals considered dangerous for the body of the nation – note the continuing biological metaphor of "germs" and vital energies." However, even if the police patroled

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[172] For a brief analysis of the mentioned issues, see the chapter "Urban Peripheries" in Forgacs's *Italy's Margins*.

[173] Despite the borgate's negative qualities, Trabalzi's article also underlines the positive aspects of borgate usually neglected by literature. For example, he points out how the buildings in Primavalle had southern exposure and this provided light and heath even during winter (138). The architect in charge, Giorgio Guidi, had in mind goals such as green space, adequate insulation, "buildings as framers of spaces, of streets that terminate at significant public buildings [...] of visually pleasing variety in mass, orientation, and elevation" in order to break visual monotony (140).

the margins of the borgate, law was suspended inside of them because "the camp is a piece of land outside the normal juridical order" (Agamben 169–170).[174] For this reason, the militia rarely entered into the borgate, as the narrator in Pier Paolo Pasolini's (1922–1975) *Ragazzi di Vita* (1955) reports. Set immediately after the end of WWII, the novel follows the lives of a group of street urchins living and moving across the various borgate surrounding Rome. The protagonist, Riccetto, grew up in the fascist borgata of Donna Olimpia – built in 1930-1932 – and, later, moves to Tiburtino – a proletarian neighborhood started in 1926. When Riccetto returns to his childhood borgata a few years after the end of the war, he notices a novelty: the presence of two policemen patroling the area.[175] This means that Donna Olimpia was not a borgata anymore and, after the war, it became part of the city.

The presence of the militia at the borders of the borgate also recalls colonial internment camps. By associating segregated neigborhoods to camps, Morante echoes Agamben. The philosopher mentions that, probably, the first internments camps to appear in history are the Spanish ones in Cuba in 1896 and the English ones in southern Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. In both cases, these camps were tools to control

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[174] This is a common characteristic of American ghettos, too. For example, when commenting on St. Clair Drake's and Horace R. Cayton's *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945), Mitchell Duneier states that "to live in the ghetto was to be without police protection, so absent were the police from from everyday life. The authors used the word 'toleration' to describe the attitude of the law enforcement toward a number of illegal community institutions [...]. White society seemed to take a 'live and let live' attitude to whatever went on in the black communities" (73). Drake's and Cayton's book is a milestone of American sociology in regard to ghettos. They are the first sociologists to use the word ghetto to describe African American communities in the north of the United States and to highlight that the continuation of the segregation of African Americans after the end of slavery is due more to the concept of racial purity rather than control over the population.

[175] "Andò a farsi un giretto per Donna Olimpia, nel centro, coi marciapiedi scrostati e il giornalaio chiuso, con solo qualche persona che rincasava in silenzio tutta assonnata e, davanti all'ingresso delle Case Nòve, una novità: due poliziotti, verdi di noia e infreddoliti, che montavano di guardia, ora standosene fermo, ora passeggiando su e giù, come due ombre nell'ombra dei caseggiati, con le fondine delle pistole alla cintura" (232).

natives' riots that aimed at ending the colonial dominion on the area. Even if in the case of Rome there were no battles for national independence, similar colonial mechanisms were guiding the forging of the new Italian capital's urban plans during the Risorgimento, Fascism, and the postwar Christian-Democratic government. Mia Fuller's ideas concerning the foundation of the new town in Addis Ababa can be applied to the fascist *sventramenti*, the *borgate*, and the post-war new neighborhoods. She states that "planners therefore proceeded to design and write as if they were in fact constructing entirely new cities, ones in which the city center would be both new and strictly Italian. In the case of Addis Ababa, this would require displacing inhabitants and housing them in *quartieri indigeni* ('native quarters') on the edge of the town" (403). Even if the engineers were not applying a blank-slate project to the city center of Rome, the dislocation of the original population of central areas during Fascism – as in Spina di Borgo near San Pietro, or the *borgo* between the Coliseum and the Vittoriano – and their seclusion together with the immigrants coming from the nearby countryside and from southern Italy reveal that the aim of the Roman urban planning was to reinforce the purity of Rome's city center – and, symbolically, of Italians. It is important to notice at this point that the same members of the National Institute of Planners (INU) were working simultaneously at Rome's public projects, the fascist New Towns, and the African colonies (*Planning the Eternal City* 164). This demonstrates not only the affinities in the aesthetics of these new districts but also in the project of social engineering activated in them. Moreover, in *Italy's Margins*, Forgacs underlines the parallel between the foundation of Addis Ababa and the *risanamenti* affecting Italian cities at the end of the nineteenth century when he comments on the propaganda film *La fondazione della nuova Addis Abeba* (1939),

> which shows, amongst other things, the building of the new Merkato district to the west of the city. Shots of the indigenous con-shaped wattle and daub houses [...] being burned with flamthrowers and razed by bulldozers, are accompanied by a commentary that suggests that this is a beneficient act of purification, and echoes the 'moral hygiene' justification of slum clearance and *risanamento* in Italian cities a generation earlier" (80).

The idea of purification was at the center of Rome's urban renewal as well as of the fascist New Towns.[176] Unfortunately, the use of flamthrowers and bulldozers reclaiming national territories by theatrically destroying informal villages and shantytowns at the border of metropolises or areas of intensive agriculture – without ever proposing an effective solution for homelessness – is still an acclaimed practice in twenty-first century Italy.

In the past, like today, it was the fear of social unrest rather than pity that led to action. As Trabalzi recounts, the fascist *borgate rapidissime* accomodated part of the native Romans of the *sventramenti* and the rural immigrants from southern Italy that previously lived in the shantytowns at the border of the capital and ended up homeless once the government demolished their shacks (136). The guiding ideas for the borgate were "to avoid settlements typically seen as lower-classes within the walls" and "to prevent the lower classes from coming into sufficient contact with one another to perceive themselves as a class and thereby risk the formation of political groups" (136).

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[176] For accurate studies on the Fascist New Towns see Diane Ghirardo' *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989; Helga Stave Tvinnereim's *Agro Pontino: Urbanism and Regional Development in Lazio under Benito Mussolini*, Oslo: Solum Forlag, 2007; Federico Caprotti's *Mussolini's Cities: Internal Colonialism in Italy, 1930-1939,* Youngstown: Cambria Press, 2007; Lucia Nuti's and Roberta Martinelli's *Le Città di Strapaese: La Politica di "Fondazione" nel Ventennio, Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 1981*; Raffaele Giannantonio's "Fascism/Urbanism: Town, New-Town, Non-Town" in *Architecture as Propaganda in Twentieth-Century Totalitarian Regimes*. Ed. Håkan Hökerberg. Firenze: Edizioni Polistampa, 2018, pp. 105-130; Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg's "Grounds for Reclamation: Fascism and Postfascism in the Pontine Marshes" in *A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2016, pp. 94-142; and Federico Caprotti's "Destructive Creation: Fascist Urban Planning, Architecture, and New Towns in the Pontine Marshes" in *Journal of Historical Geography* 33 (2007), pp. 651-679.

The first point confirms the idea of Rome's city center as a stage set for the hegemonic power that needed to be devoid of construction destined to poor people; this fascist practice perpetuated the ideals of the previous liberal democratic governments. Moreover, it stated that poor and unemployed people were not truly Italians, as Fuller says for Addis Ababa, "the city center would be both new and strictly Italian." Not by chance, this unofficial settlements housing the people removed from the *sventramenti* were called *villaggi abissini.* Interestingly, in *La Storia,* Morante compares the settlements by Davide's last dwelling on the Portuense to African villages: "E l'angusto aggruppamento di baracche, presso la casa di Davide, pareva un villaggio d'Africa spopolato" (618). The second guiding point reinforced the social segregation that started at the end of the nineteenth century and intensified during Fascism. Indeed, Trabalzi continues: "in the planning of the borgate, the government tended to place them both far from the historic center and far from each other, isolating them in easily controlled ghettos (many of the citizens transferred to the borgate were anarchists, communists, and others deemed dangerous by the regime)" (137). Absolutely, the destruction of social and political communities was one of the goals of the fascist regime. For example, Ebner offers a short recount of the fascist destruction of San Lorenzo's social fabric – the other main setting in Morante's novel – in order to destroy its historic, well-known socialist and communist working class's resistance: "Following the October assassination attempt against Mussolini, police in Rome's San Lorenzo neighborhood arrested known Communists, anarchist, and other subversives. After the exceptional decrees [of 1926], San Lorenzo's leading anti-Fascists disappeared into prison, *confino*, or exile" (80). Certainly, the creation of borgate expanded this project of social seclusion.

From this viewpoint, southern immigrants also created problems of purity for the ideal nation – indeed, Morante does not neglect the representation of these population in her novel through Ida, her husband, and I Mille. During the 1930s, Rome's population increased drastically both from natural increase and immigration; this phenomenon interested not only the capital but also the major northern and industrial cities such as Milan, Turin, Genoa, Bologna, and Florence (*Planning the Eternal City* 79–80). As an urbanist and one of the founders of the fascist INU (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica), Alberto Calza Bini, clearly expresses the regime's opposition to southern migration to Rome in 1928:

> Occorrerà anche mantenersi sulla vigile difesa perché nessuna vana speranza sia nutrita, perché nessun nuovo immigrato, per nessuna ragione, possa aspirare ad avere alloggi e facilitazioni dagli enti pubblici; perché si prenda anzi occasione da eventuali *morosità croniche e inguaribili* o da evidenti infrazioni disciplinari per fare uscire, non soltanto dalle case dell'Istituto ma dalla stessa città, le famiglie non romane, che più utilmente per loro e per la Nazione potranno ritornare nei loro paesi d'origine. (Villani 54; my emphasis)

Calza Bini's words summarize the machination behind the negation of public housing and assistance to families from the south; possible debts and late payments as well as disciplinary infractions became the justifications for evicting people and abadoning them to their destiny – most times, leading them to the shantytowns. Notable is the use of "morosità" as a sort of chronic and incurable sickness that characterized the southern immigrants that, for this reason, needed to go back to their native villages. These words bring to our attention how the south was still considered a marginal area to confine unproductive, "unfitting," uncurable individuals of the nation – notice the destination of the *confinati*, too – while Rome's urban margins were a territory of reclamation for infected Italians that still could be cured.

This mass migration from the South towards urban areas worried the Fascist regime so much that, in 1931 and in 1939, a series of anti-urbanization laws were promulgated in order to control the flow of people. In practice, migration to cities was allowed only through legal permits and authorizations. Fried explains:

> These laws restored a lop-sided version of serfdom to Italy, forbidding rural workers to leave the land for cities or towns which were either provincial capitals [...] unless already assured of steady employment. Those who left the mountains and villages without government permission, however, were not allowed to register and secure residence permits in the city and were consequently unable to rent housing or obtain relief. Nor were they able to work legally because they were not allowed, without official permission, to register at the unemployment office. Farm workers who left the land 'without justifiable reason' were prohibited from registering for another job even at the unemployment bureau of their own town. ("Urbanization and Italian Politics" 509)

The implications of these laws were devastating. Beyond tying the rural population to the land where they were working as if it were modern serfdom, those who decided to leave their native villages not only could legally reside nowhere else, but they could also could not rent apartments, have access to public assistance and services, or register at the unemployment office. In Rome, these laws contributed massively to the creation of illegal settlements at the margins of the city until the 1960s, when the Constitutional Court declared these laws invalid in 1961. However, the effects of these laws persisted until the 1970s, when the last shacks were razed to the ground. Indeed, in the decade after the abrogation of the fascist laws, the hundreds of thousands of Romans living in the shantytwons and in the illegal buildings were not able to register their residence in the capital. As Fried explains,

> For a long time the city fought abrogation of the anti-urbanization laws, which served as a mean of discouraging migration and of refusing assistance to those who came anyway. The city also feared that legalizing the status of hundreds of thousands of *romani abusivi* or 'illegal Romans' would create a large new mass of Communist voters. (*Planning the Eternal City* 81-82)

The result was that the unwanted Romans continued to live in a state of exception inside the nation. Outside of the law, with no basic rights, they were not Italian citizens.

Morante is not the only intellectual denouncing the discrimination and the segregation of southern immigrants in Rome. One of Pasolini's articles from his personal column on *Vie Nuove* denounces loud and clear the inherent project of internal segregation that was affected Rome in 1960.[177] One of the readers of the column asks Pasolini what he thinks about the anti-urbanization laws that deny residency to the Romans living in the borgate. The reader is particularly worried about the instability of their jobs, their impossibility of access to public services and assistance, and the impossibility for them to vote ("Dialoghi con i Lettori" 901–902). Pasolini points out that the problem is the lack of jobs in Rome (903), but this is aggravated by the fact that the government, the ruling class, and the bourgeoisie do nothing to resolve the issue. They limit themselves to treat it as one of the problems to be resolved (902), like the post-Risorgimento politicians and Mussolini. Pasolini highlights that denying residency to these people means also criticizing their life choices, and this is typical of fascist and paternalistic governments (903). He goes on with a far more direct accusation:

> Non concedendo la residenza, le 'autorità' romane ammettono semplicemente e impudentemente questo: a Roma non c'è modo di lavorare. Come del resto non c'è modo di lavorare nei miserandi paesi del Sud da cui la maggior parte dei non-residenti provengono. E allora? Certo, un campo di concentramento è sempre la soluzione migliore... E infatti le borgate, volute dai fascisti e consacrate dai democristiani, sono dei veri e propri campi di concentramento. (903–904)

[177] Luigi Longo founded the journal in 1946. It was connected to the Communist Party of Italy, but soon, in addition to politics, it also started to cover lighter material such as sport, current events, and entertainment in order to compete with other journals. From June 4, 1960 to September 30, 1965 Pasolini directed a column of dialogues with his readers.

Pasolini affirms that these discriminating laws lead to the creation of concentration camps in the margins of Rome: the borgate. There, the subproletariat, the poor, and the occasional workers could be isolated with restricted mobility – bus and tram routes were absent as well as proper roads – and left in decaying buildings or in shacks with no access to running water, electricity, and public services. By deniying their residency, the state deprived these citizens from the right to vote – people could vote only in their native towns, and those in the borgate did not have the money to go back. They were denied access to public services such as schools, hospitals, public assistance, and the possibility to find jobs in the unemployment offices. In practice, these people were nonexistent.

This conditions recall, to a certain extent, the situation of the Jews in the Nazi regime: "if the person entering the camp was a Jew, he had already been deprived of his rights as a citizen by the Nuremberg laws [*sic*] and was subsequently completely denationalized at the time of the Final Solution" (170–171). In Italy, the 1938 racial laws enforced the Nuremberg Laws for the Jews in the country, but it was not the only law depriving citizens from their rights and deniying them national belonging. The laws that Pasolini mentions are a more subtle and yet effective regulation discriminating against and attacking another part of the population – the occasional workers and the subproletariat, mainly from southern Italy – who could not be part of the nation because they were unproductive, poor, and "other" apart from the idea of Italy as a productive, wealthy, bourgeois nation.

4. The Deception of the Utopic City

According to Morante, the elimination of what is considered unproductive, weak otherness is an integral operation to the creation of a utopic society. Only by segregating "unfitting" elements, hegemonic powers can prosper. The last vision of Davide before dying of overdose summarizes Morante's approach in the novel to Rome's borgate, and proletarian neighborhoods more in general. Puggioni reads this passage as Davide's last refusal of the actual world and the virtual crumbling of his room's walls as a metaphor for the "crepe delle strutture trascendentali del suo stare nel mondo" (pp. 52-53). While this interpretation is certainly noteworthy in explaining the character's crisis, instead I claim that, in this passage, we can read the failure of the construction of Rome as the capital embodying a virtuous, unified nation. This last vision unveils how, behind the illusion of unification and progress, the forging of the Italian capital hid mechanisms of homogenization, seclusion, and exploitation in a similar way to the factories, prisons, and camps that punctuate the novel.

Davide's vision starts with colorful geometric, unidimensional figures such as triangles, squares, and rhombi. Then, when Davide turns the light on, his room appears distorted: "il pavimento era una sostanza molliccia e agitata, e le pareti si gonfiavano, coprendosi di croste e di tumori, oppure si spaccavano in crepe" (608). On one side, this description presents the effects of drugs on Davide. On the other, it also shows the reality of the housing conditions of many Romans. Davide's room is in the basement of some marginal building along Via Portuense, close to one of the many shantytowns of the period. The interior of his dwelling is not very dissimilar from that of the vision. Often, the basements of the fascist buildings were flooded during storms because of the lack of a sewage system; as a consequence, the floors, most of which were not tiled, transformed

into a soft, muddy substance – just as in the vision. Because of high humidity inside the apartments and the low quality of construction materials, walls swelled, became covered with damp spots, and cracked.

Davide's vision continues with him walking towards

> una città meravigliosa, imparata sui libri di storia, di geografia e d'arte. Nel sogno, questa città ha un nome imprecisato, e parrebbe rappresentargli un emblema: una sorta di sintesi sociale e ugualitaria del lavoro, della fratellanza, della poesia ... Lui già ne conosce l'immagine, contemplata sui testi. (608)

Even if the narrator characterizes this city as anonymous, its symbolic nature hints to Rome. The new capital should have unified the Italian population with its political and monumental resonance, as it had been celebrated in political speeches and in literature. This utopic image of Rome was well known to every Italian since elementary school through books of history, geography, art history, and literature – which Gunther likely read too during his military preparation. This image of Rome, however, is very different from reality; or at least, it is just a partial representation of the capital. Indeed, Davide's vision reveals the truth:

> Ma, cammina e cammina, in luogo di quelle famose architetture non trova altro che degli enormi e sordidi casamenti ammassati fino all'orizzonte, non ancora terminati di costruire eppure già segnati da crepe a zig zag [...] Fra questa accozzaglia, le strade sono un reticolo ingombro di rottami e di pietre [...]. Orientarsi gli è difficile, anche per il denso fumo nerastro che fuoriesce dai vagoni e dai casamenti [...]. È chiaro che i casamenti della città sono tutti adibiti a officine, e a bordello. Difatti, se ne vedono, dalla via, gli interni illuminati da proiettori; ma lo spettacolo è monotono, dovunque lo stesso. Da una parte ci sono lunghe file di uomini in uniformi biancastre, incatenate gli uni agli altri, e intenti a saldare in catene, con le mani insanguinate, dei grossi anelli di ferro; e dall'altra, delle donne mezze nude, che fanno mosse oscene, e, tutte, hanno le gambe sporche di sangue. (608–609)

Puggioni analyzes this passage as completely related to Davide's personal story; she claims that "La città immaginaria dell'adolescenza di Davide si trasforma in un ammasso tortuoso e aggrovigliato di strade, officine e bordelli, accogliendo in sé tutti gli orrori

della sua vita da adulto" (91). On the contrary, I argue that we can read this passage in relation to its allusion to Rome. The landscape described is the one of the borgate with their enormous, homogenous buildings that appeared to be in disrepair even before being completed, and isolated in their deserted grid of streets covered with junk, construction materials, and dirt from the excavations.

The second part of the passage still hints at the Roman borgate with the references to prostitution and manual labor as the main occupations of their inhabitants. Yet, this description bridges the local situation of the Italian capital with the general developments of capitalist metropolises. As Azzone states, "La scelta dei luoghi da parte dell'autrice palesa la volontà di rendere il racconto caso esemplare, archetipo per la storia dell'umanità" (205). Indeed, this passage echoes the last historic chronicle of the novel – "19**" – where the narrator talks about the development of Western nations and the Italian economic miracle. The black smoke is the "*cancro industriale* che avvelena l'aria, l'acqua e gli organismi" (655); the chained men are "gli uomini condannati alle catene nell'interno delle [...] fabbriche" (655); and the projectors inside the apartments broadcasting the same, monotonous show are the televisions used for "la diffusione e la propaganda di una 'cultura' deteriore, servile e degradante, che corrompe il giudizio e la creatività umana, occlude ogni reale motivazione dell'esistenza" (655). Thus, Davide's vision not only anticipates Italy's economic boom, but it also foresees the Berlusconi era with the extreme sexualization of women in TV shows. In truth, Morante is very critical of the economic miracle. For example, as Garboli explains in his introduction to *Pro o Contro la Bomba Atomica e Altri Scritti,* in the essay giving the title to the collection (1965), Morante shows her disaffection for "l'irrealtà della vita contemporanea, oscurata

dallo spettro (dalla tentazione) del suicidio atomico e dalla riduzione di ogni forma d'esistenza alle tetre cerimonie dello Sviluppo e del Consumo" (XVII). Also, Morante often criticizes media. In the essay "Sul Romanzo" (1959) in the same collection, when reporting on the role of the intellectual in the 1960s, Morante expresses her fears in regard to the use of media in modern society: "ogni giorno, poi, attraverso i loro giornaletti, la loro radio e la loro televisione, [i benpensanti addetti ai governi] propinano alla gente l'oppio dell'imbecillità. Non esiste stupefacente più efficace di questo, per corrompere e degradare un popolo" (71). Morante denounces modern politicians for promoting low-quality art and entertainment – she names media "industrie del sonno" – in order to maintain the status quo, and especially, to control the lower classes (72). She also criticizes the contamination of consumerism in historic urban spaces, such as the Piazza del Duomo in Milan, while praising Piazza Navona for remaining authentic in "Navona Mia" (1962). Cars appear out of place there -– "Perfino le sciocche automobili borghesi, ci si muovono al passo, quasi consapevoli della loro assurdità temporale" (80). Moreover, the quality of artisanal food definitely beats the industrial brand Motta, whose shop sign disturbs the gothic architecture of Piazza del Duomo.[178] However, traces of cultural homogenization are present also in Piazza Navona: "Preferisco sorvolare, invece, sulla leggendaria fiera dei giocattoli, ormai disonorata dalla presenza, anche qui, dei disgustosi pupazzi televisivi che ormai infestano tutta l'Italia, e coi quali oggi l'industria nazionale esercita la vera corruzione dei minorenni" (83). Even if she feels that Piazza

[178] "In quanto poi, all'industria dolciaria, c'è mai capitato, Lei, Signor Milanese, a Piazza Navona la famosa notte della Befana? Non solo ci si possono trovare pizze e panettoni a centinaia (a proposito, pare che la Befana stessa abbia confidato a qualcuno di preferire i panettoni di fabbricazione indigena, più navoneschi – vale a dire più saporiti – e farciti più generosamente di pistacchio e di zibibbo) ma ci si trova anche il torrone espresso, e lo zucchero filato a mano, in presenza del cliente" (83).

Navona can still digest the expansion of consumerism, at the same time, she admits that "almeno un milione di romani sarebbero pronti a darti [Piazza Navona] via in cambio di una Seicento, o di un juke-box" (86).[179] Inevitably, consumerism will transform Piazza Navona, too; the stray dogs and cats will disappear together with the children playing outside to leave space for international tourists.

Returning to Davide's vision in *La Storia*, Morante writes another sentence that can be connected both to the construction of Rome as a utopic city for the nation and the promises of the consumeristic society. In the vision, the king clarifies to Davide why rulers degraded work and why they chose ugliness: "la bellezza era un trucco, per far[vi] credere al paradiso, quando si sa che tutti [voi siete] condannati fin dalla nascita" (609). In the same way, Rome's architecture, through the period examined in these chapters, might be read as a "trick" to make Italians buy into their national identity, while at the same time during those years, different governments tried to segregate the "unfitting" and homogenize the rest of the population. Later, with the economic miracle and the explosion of consumerism in Italy, the illusion of productivity, wealth, and social advancement attempted to annihilate any perception of diversity inside the nation, as I argue in the next chapter.

Chapter Four:

[179] This anxiety of modernization recalls Grimm's text analyzed in Chapter One.

Cinematic Rome and the Disillusionment with the Economic Miracle

In this chapter, I analyze Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* and Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* – both released in 1962. The initial collaboration between the two directors for *Le Notti di Cabiria* (1957) and *La Dolce Vita* (1960) and their mutual support until Fellini's refusal to produce *Accattone* (1961) are widely known.[180] For decades, starting from this episode, critics and journalists created stories on the supposed rivalries between the two directors mostly based on Fellini's lack of political commitment and Pasolini's caustic criticism of Italian society. However, as Roberto Chiesi affirms, that are many examples showing that Pasolini was not a *controfelliniano* ("Pasolini VS Fellini?"). For example, when he wrote *La Ricotta,* he thought the director later impersonated by Orson Welles to be a caricature of himself; only later he changed his mind and decided to add the name of Fellini because the terms of "leggerezza" and "disincanto" were closer to the other director's works than his own. Pasolini also wrote texts defending Fellini's films such as "Nota su *Le Notti*" and "*La Dolce Vita*. Per me si tratta di un film cattolico." Furthermore, recently, Andrea Minuz's *Political Fellini: Journey to the End of Italy* (2015) contributed to a new approach to Fellini, defying the traditional portrait of the director as a dreamy artist totally detached from Italian society and its issues.

My analysis of *Le Tentazioni* demonstrates how this minor, overlooked short film in the production of Fellini contains a strong criticism not only of Christian democratic

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[180] For an accurate study of the relationship between Fellini and Pasolini, see the recent volume by Federico Pacchioni *Inspiring Fellini. Literary Collaborations Behind the Scenes.*Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014.

censorship of art and sexuality but also of consumer capitalism in the Italian society of the economic boom. As I illustrate in the chapter, in the film, the EUR represents the architectonic illusion of wealth and social mobility typical of 1960s Italy – similar to the "paradiso" mentioned by the king in Davide Segre's last vision analyzed in the previous chapter. The same desire for social advancement drives Pasolini's female protagonist of *Mamma Roma* (Anna Magnani). Therefore, even if the modalities and the techniques of the two directors are very different, both of them, in the same year, offered a strong critique on the perils of and the disillusionment with the Italian economic boom. In doing this, both of them used Rome as a setting and selected two very distinct neighborhoods of the capital to be strong signifiers in the films: the modernist, bourgeois EUR (Fellini) and the proletarian borgata of Cecafumo (Pasolini).

1. Urbanisation and the Destruction of Poetic Dwelling in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* (1962)[181]

This section reads Martin Heidegger's lectures on dwelling – "Building Dwelling Thinking" and "Poetically Man Dwells" – alongside Pier Paolo Pasolini's depiction of the Roman periphery in *Mamma Roma.* I suggest an affinity between the two intellectuals, as they both perceive an abrupt change in the interaction between man and landscape after World War II: the poetic/archaic approach to the world is disappearing, while the conformity of modern housing projects in Europe constitutes the final result of the death of such a way of living and being. As John David Rhodes affirms in *Stupendous, Miserable City* (2007), in his early films Pasolini moulds the Roman

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[181] A previous version of this section on Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* appeared as an article in *Senses of Cinema*, 77. December 2015 with the title *"(Mamma) Roma* between Archaic and Modern Italy: Urbanisation and the Destruction of Poetic Dwelling."

cityscape into a metaphor of constriction, rejection, and sacrifice. In order to better describe the trajectory of Ettore – and Italy – from a rural to an urban reality, I argue that it is necessary to refer to Pasolini's 1943 poem "L'usignolo" in the collection *L'usignolo della Chiesa Cattolica* that depicts Casarsa, the village in Friuli where Pasolini's mother was born. In illustrating the continuity between Pasolini's portrayal of peasants relating to their living environment in his Friulian poems and his cinematic treatment of the film's protagonist Ettore (Ettore Garofalo) in the suburbs of Rome, this section explores the transformation in the personification of the landscape from the benign and harmonious companion of Casarsa to the menacing and cruel murderer of the capital evoked by Rhodes. Given his connection with nature and ancient ruins, Ettore belongs to the pre-capitalist world depicted in Pasolini's early poems of Casarsa. His doomed story also recalls the destiny of numerous immigrants who moved from the rural areas of the Agro Romano and from southern Italy to Rome, where housing development devoured them without ever digesting their presence. I build also on Pasolini's "cinema of poetry" and on recent influential works on spatiality in the director's films by Rhodes and Noa Steimatsky (*Italian Locations*, 1996) in order to explore how Ettore is both a "child of nature," who is able to dialogue poetically with the landscape, and, consequentially, a victim of consumer capitalism represented as a Christological figure. Chambers' *Culture after Humanism* is also fundamental to my analysis of the relationship between population and urban design in the modern metropolis.

1.1 The Archaic in Casarsa

First of all, I would like to establish what I mean by an archaic/poetic approach of the individual to the landscape. The poem "L'usignolo" provides us an apt illustration. Pasolini's stay in his mother's village during and immediately after WWII constitutes his first contact with a rural world very different from his native city, Bologna. In Casarsa, religiousness still beats the rhythm of everyday life through the tolls of the bell tower, as the dialogic poem exemplifies:

ALBA: La mia luce...
VECCHIA: Alba fumosa! Bianca, per le scale, io scendo al suono dell'Ave.
ALBA: Vecchio come il tuo viso il vento muore nella piazzetta. Nel gran silenzio ti si sente faticare; e crepitare il tuo fuoco.
VECCHIA: Forse, da lontano, tra queste povere case non battono le campane?
ALBA: Oh sì, ma tu per poco potrai ancora pregare all'ave lontana, e sfinirti a soffiare sulla caligine, e spezzare i ramoscelli contro il ginocchio tremante... (47)

Pasolini's concept of archaic, however, cannot be limited to the attunement of everyday life to faith and liturgy and to the survival of the sacred in the contemporary era, as the entire collection worships mainly those lives that are still able to maintain a respectful dialogue with nature and the rest of humanity. In this poetic fragment, Pasolini intermingles and dissolves the boundaries between humanity, nature, and inanimate objects, giving the same importance to each element in the evocation of routine in the village. It is in this harmonic balance between animate and inanimate objects – humans included – that the poet situates the final meaning of the "archaic." In the Friulian village, the personified dawn ("alba") is as concrete as the old woman with whom it interacts, but, at the same time, the human figure vanishes, as do the eternal wind blowing through the square and the sound of the bells inhabiting the alleys. The reader perceives the presence of the old woman, as well as the other "characters" in the poem, through the sound – "ti si sente faticare" (people can hear you gasping), "crepitare il tuo fuoco" (your

fire crackling), “pregare” (praying), “soffiare” (blowing), “spezzare i ramoscelli” (breaking the twigs) – which amplifies her physical dissolution into and her melting with space. Because she is an eternal presence in the village, the old woman represents an archetype of the peasant: even if she is close to her death, her face survives in the wind, in the sounds she produces, and in the repetitive actions she inherited from her ancestors and which other women will replicate in the future. These lines exemplify Pasolini’s intent throughout the collection to investigate reality in order to find the residue of the sacred and the archaic not only in human beings, but mainly in their interaction with the surrounding landscape.

1.2 Cinema of Poetry and Poetry of Cinema

A close analysis of Pasolini’s poems through the lens of his film theory indicates that his texts about poetic cinema stem from his early poetry. Even though, in his 1966 text “The Written Language of Reality,” the director separates written/oral language from cinematic language, the equal attention given to human figures, objects, and actions as signifiers in his work is identical in both his poetry and cinema. In the essay, the director affirms that while the oral/written language is “*parallel* to the reality that it expresses” (206) and it never interacts with the concreteness of reality, the cinematic language:

> is a line [...] that fishes in the Significando, [...] incorporating it in itself through its immanence in the mechanical audiovisual reproduction. [...] It fishes its smallest units [...]: the objects, the forms, the acts of reality which we have called 'kinemes'. After having fished them, it keeps them in itself, encapsulating them in the units of first articulation, the monemes – that is, the shots. (206)

If we consider again the lines from “L’usignolo” in light of Pasolini's theory of cinematic language, the single elements presented in the poem compose embryonic kinemes. In

fact, in the same essay, the director alludes to the fact that poetry is closer to cinema than narrative:

> It seems to me that the first language of men is their actions. [...] Even the moment of greatest detachment of language from such human action – that is, the purely expressive aspect of language, poetry – is in turn nothing more than another form of action: if in the instant in which the reader listens to it or reads it, in other words, perceives it, he frees it again from linguistic conventions and re-creates it as the dynamic of feelings, of affections, of passions, of ideas, he reduces it to an audiovisual entity. (204)

Paradoxically, poetry enacts a mechanism of signification similar to that of cinema because of its exoneration from the linguistic conventions of narrative language. Just as the director guides the viewers through the movements of the camera – framings, types of shots, zooms – the poet leads the reader through a succession of words liberated from the constraints of grammar, and generating "an audiovisual entity". Pasolini's substitution of the word "cinema" with "audiovisual technique" alludes to the demolition of any barrier between poetry and cinema.

A previous essay, "The Cinema of Poetry" from 1965, helps in better understanding the intersection of poetic and cinematic languages. According to Pasolini, because of the lack of a fixed dictionary for cinematic signs, the filmmaker must first choose the im-signs from the chaos of the world (linguistic invention) and, then, he can add to the im-sign his own "individual expressive quality" (aesthetic invention) (169–170). In Pasolini's words, "Those archetypes [humans, actions, and objects chosen as im-signs] thus lay a direct base of 'subjectivity' for the im-signs, which consequently belong in the highest degree to the world of poetry. Thus the tendency of film language should be expressively subjective and lyrical" (173). Therefore, the archaic – that is, the residue of a world where nature, humanity, and its artefacts coexist harmoniously – constitutes

the keystone of both his poetic and cinematic language, and it will remain one of the central pillars of his entire intellectual life. Pasolini's main concern consists in saving the archaic world and its linguistic system, because, as he affirms in "The Written Language of Reality:"

> We cannot escape the violence exercised on us by a society which, in assuming technique as its philosophy, tends to always become more rigidly pragmatic, to identify words with things and actions, to recognize 'the languages of the infrastructures' as 'languages par excellence', etc. In other words, we cannot ignore the phenomenon of a kind of downgrading of the word, tied to the deterioration of the humanistic languages of the elites, which have been until now, the guiding languages. (198)

In Pasolini's attempt to preserve the archaic from the devouring force of the economic miracle, language represents a crucial concern for the author, as he opposes poetry (be it pure or cinematic) to the harsh and impoverished word of capitalization. His archaic and poetic approach to reality parallels my reading of the opposition between between"voice" and "language" in the quoted passage from *Homo Sacer*, where Agamben examines Aristotle's *Politics.* "Voice" is everything that is not yet codified by official "language," and Pasolini's gaze on reality reveals that the world still contains models and values surviving the homogenization of modernity.

1.3 Dwelling *versus* Building

The situation Pasolini refers to in the mentioned "Dialoghi con i lettori" in Chapter Three – where he compares the borgate to concentration camps – does not differ much from Heidegger's reflections on the problem of housing in the lecture "Building Dwelling Thinking", delivered in 1951 at the Darmstadt Symposium. Briefly, Heidegger traces the common etymological origin of the words *bin* (I am) and *bauen* < *buan* ("to build" in modern German, but, originally, "to dwell") in order to demonstrate how the process of building housing projects is strictly connected to a particular way of being on

earth: "The way in which you *are* and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling" (147). In his analysis, Heidegger states that not all the buildings are dwellings, and he expresses doubt about the new housing projects erected all over Europe between the bombings of World War II and the economic upturn: "today's houses may even be well planned, easy to keep, attractively cheap, open to air, light, and sun, but – do the houses in themselves hold any guarantee that *dwelling* occurs in them?" (146) What concerns Heidegger – and Pasolini as well – is a respect for the relationship between humanity, earth, sky, and divinities. As the philosopher explains in the definition of dwelling: "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*" (149). Evidently, the economic boom after World War II promotes the exploitation of land and the frantic movement of the population towards big cities; both these elements break the equilibrium between humanity and land existing in pre-capitalistic societies, as is exemplified by a farmhouse in the Black Forest (for Heidegger) or a rural village in Friuli (for Pasolini). *Mamma Roma* testifies, through Ettore's death, how the INA-Casa, and in general the new housing complexes in the Roman periphery, are not *dwellings* but simple buildings because they do not spare lives and break the sacred archaic harmony between humanity and nature.[182]

Heidegger's lecture "Poetically Man Dwells" (1951) proves useful in further connecting poetry, dwelling, and the archaic in Pasolini's film. Briefly, the philosopher claims that the first two terms cannot be separated from one another, as "poetry first

[182] The INA-Casa was a state project in collaboration with Istituto Nazionale Assicurazioni (National Institution for Insurance) which aimed to build housing complexes all over the national territory immediately after WWII to help the countless homeless families after the bombings of the Allies

causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is really what lets us dwell. But through what do we attain to a dwelling place? Through building. Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building" (215). Here, in pushing the comparison between poetry and architecture, Heidegger arrives at a conclusion similar to that of the Italian director. Both search for an equilibrium between the earth and humanity in modernity, that is, a poetic view of the world which allows the individual to express oneself freely and affirm one's personality, yet without disrupting the balance between the forces of the world (earth, humanity, sky, divine). In Heidegger's words, "the responding in which man authentically listens to the appeal of language is that which speaks in the element of poetry. The more poetic a poet is – the freer [...] his saying - the greater is the purity with which he submits what he says" (216). In the opening of the lecture, Heidegger clearly states that his concern is mainly with housing issues, therefore when he says language, he also means architecture as language. In fact, what he is claiming here is the lack of originality – that is, a poetic approach to building (be it in language or in architecture) – which has devoured any trace of purity and originality. What Heidegger, and, similarly, Pasolini, fears is the disappearance of a poetic point of view of the world, one which recognizes and respects the balance between the earth, the sky, humanity, and the divine, in a similar fashion to pre-capitalistic societies. According to Heidegger:

> Man does not dwell in that he merely establishes his stay on the earth beneath the sky, by raising growing things and simultaneously raising buildings. Man is capable of such building only if he already builds in the sense of the poetic taking of measure. Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure for architecture, the structure of dwelling. (227)

In these words, it is clear how the same anxiety animates both Heidegger and Pasolini: modern uniformity – be it linguistic or architectural – destroys the particularity and the

poetry of dwelling in this world. In fact, the philosopher's claim that "it might be that our unpoetic dwelling, its incapacity to take measure, derives from a curious excess of frantic measuring and calculating" (228) is similar to the ideas conveyed by Pasolini in "The Written Language of Reality," where he highlights that modern society modifies our language because of its accent on technique and pragmatism (198). For both authors, degraded language means an unpoetic approach to life and, as a consequence, failing housing complexes.

1.4 Unpoetic Buildings and Oppression of Human Life

In *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini introduces a discourse on the archaic in the relationship between the main characters – Mamma Roma and her son Ettore – and the urban landscape with which they interact. In many of these scenes, the camera dissolves any sense of human predominance over buildings and nature; rather, it reinforces the idea that urban walls dominate the characters' lives, they mould human destinies, and sometimes, as in Ettore's case, they thrust them towards death. In a few words, modern housing projects destroy a possible archaic approach to existence. I would like to recall a quotation from Chambers that I used in Chapter One when analysing Imbriani's suspicious comments on the first, new bourgeois buildings in the central Esquilino. Chambers states: "architecture not only has metaphysics, it is metaphysics. For to plan, to rationalise space, embodies the promise of eschatology: the prophetic announcement of a future paradise, and the negation of alterity, of the other." (133) These words are universal for the urban transformation affecting Rome since 1870: on one side, planners and politicians rationalized the capital's city center as a promise of a future paradise (national unification, wealth), while on the other, they eliminated the presence of

elements that could disrupt the homogeneity of this urban stage. Chambers's words can also summarise and comment on *Mamma Roma*, as Pasolini's intent is to demonstrate how the new urban development of the Roman periphery deeply affects its inhabitants' lives and world view: while apparently the borgate offer the illusion of advancing up the social ladder, in reality they confine the rejected and displaced population from the city center and illegal settlements – often immigrants from the southern Italy, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

In *Mamma Roma*, the concept of "unpoetic dwelling" is visible in Pasolini's treatment of the buildings. They are autonomous entities which interact with and often oppress the flesh and blood characters. The housing complexes are definitely responsible for the destiny of the *borgatari*, as they are the ultimate incarnation of a political and social project – that is, capitalistic uniformity. In the film, the protagonists move from an apartment in Palazzo dei Cervi in Casal Bertone to the INA-Casa project in Tuscolano II. Pasolini builds the approach of Mamma Roma and Ettore to the edifices in the same way: a backward-dolly filming the two protagonists approaching their new apartment is juxtaposed with a forward-dolly shooting the buildings. Even though the director uses the same technique in the two scenes, the result is different: in the first case the edifice still maintains a sort of magnificence, while, in the second one, the INA-Casa seems an incomplete monster of concrete swallowing mother and son.

The entrance of the Palazzo dei Cervi is triumphant: the camera approaches the working-class building showing all its bulk and then it traverses the arch that leads to the internal courtyard [fig. 1–2]. Rhodes affirms that "the total effect of the building is one of sham grandiosity – an empty exercise in urban set design" (112). I agree with Rhodes'

highlighting of the strong contrast between the material (a working-class building) and the way of portraying it (as a Renaissance ideal city view); and yet, this contamination between low and high material is meaningful. Pasolini affirms that working-class life there still maintains its dignity, and that the architecture of the *palazzo* (built in 1929) still respects the equilibrium between humanity and nature. The balanced proportions and the internal garden with the fountain are symptoms of poetic dwelling. However, Mamma Roma does not recognise this value in her old apartment and she struggles to get a new one in Palazzo Muratori in Cecafumo – built in between 1952 and 1955.

The shot introducing the new apartment mimics the one in Casal Bertone: backward dolly to film Mamma Roma and Ettore approaching and forward dolly for the the building. This time, however, the effect is different, as there is no triumph in the portrayal of the *palazzo* [fig. 3]. The architectural style is plain, anonymous in the same way as the life of the people living there, who are contaminated by capitalism – note the American music, dance, clothes, and the roller-skates of the young boys outside the building – and Mamma Roma is one of these victims. Years later, Pasolini explains the character of consumerism, which he has been criticizing throughout his entire career:

> Conosco anche – perché le vedo e le vivo - alcune caratteristiche di questo nuovo Potere ancora senza volto [...], la sua determinazione (coronata da successo) di trasformare contadini e sottoproletari in piccoli borghesi, e soprattutto la sua smania, per così dire cosmica, di attuare fino in fondo lo "Sviluppo": produrre e consumare. [...] nessun uomo ha mai dovuto essere tanto normale e conformista come il consumatore. [...] Dunque questo nuovo Potere [...] è in realtà - se proprio vogliamo conservare la vecchia terminologia - una forma "totale" di fascismo. Ma questo Potere ha anche "omologato" culturalmente l'Italia: si tratta dunque di una omologazione repressiva, pur se ottenuta attraverso l'imposizione dell'edonismo e della *joie de vivre.* (314)

The anonymity of the surface of the Palazzo Muratori symbolizes the uniformity of the new capitalistic society which tends to oppress people's particularity to transform them

into consumers. According to Pasolini, the repressive force of this operation recalls Fascism and the borgate under the Ventennio; therefore, the INA-casa housing projects embody another Fascism, another violent repression and indoctrination of the population. The building is also notably bigger than Palazzo dei Cervi; Lefebvre explains how the constant expansion of scale of buildings "serves to compensate for the pathetically small size of each set of living-quarters; it posits, presupposes, and imposes homogeneity in the subdivision of space; and ultimately it takes on the aspect of pure logic – and hence of tautology: space contains space […] – and boxes fit into boxes" (98). By moving to a bigger, more modern building, Pasolini's protagonists plunge into a society that sees them as empty, homogenous containers to be filled with commodities, in a similar way to their new, empty box-apartments. While Mamma Roma definitely fits into this description, Ettore is a box that does not fit.

Apparently, the entrance of the two protagonists in the yard of Palazzo Muratori imitates the previous approach to Palazzo dei Cervi, but, curiously, the camera here does not face the internal garden. Instead, it directs the gaze towards the external landscape of the surrounding Cecafumo [fig. 4]. The montage of this sequence is disjointed and does not follow the point of view of the characters; rather, the camera appears as a superior entity anticipating Ettore's destiny: the central pillar of the arch leading to the Palazzo Muratori symbolises the cross of martyrdom of all the subproletariat deceived by the dream of becoming petty-bourgeois, an effect primarily achieved through the savage urban development visible behind the arch-cross. Capitalism contaminated Mamma Roma: a popular *cha cha cha* accompanies their entrance in Palazzo dei Cervi, hinting at the fact that capitalism lures her and pushes her in search of a new environment where the

upper class live. Obviously, Palazzo Muratori hosts the subproletariat, but it offers the illusion of living in the center of Rome, as the establishing shot of the *quartiere* shows [fig. 5]. Through this recurrent shot, Pasolini wants to highlight that Cecafumo imitates the city center, with its new dome - Basilica Don Bosco - mimicking San Pietro. In the closing scene of the film, Pasolini juxtaposes a desperate Mamma Roma facing the window of her apartment with the reverse shot of the skyline of Cecafumo, which in reality is not visible from her position, because Palazzo Muratori stands among the same group of buildings shown in the reverse shot. What Mamma Roma confronts is the enemy, the savage urbanization - symptom of the new capitalism - which crushed her son.

Pasolini hints at the doomed destiny of Ettore through a series of echoes of images and words recalling the cemetery. For example, Mamma Roma complains about the view from the apartment in Casal Bertone, as the only thing they can see is the Cimitero Verano. Even if at first one might agree with her that such a view might be unpleasant, in reality that monumental cemetery is an open-air museum with all its sculptures and historical tombs. Therefore, Mamma Roma is indifferent again to the particularity of the place, of its poetic quality, and she prefers to flee to Cecafumo, which symbolically represents a cemetery. Pasolini constructs the new *quartiere* as a *campo santo* through an identical juxtaposition between the internal – characters watching outside the window – and the external space in both the apartments. The difference in the two scenes lies in the fact that, while in Palazzo dei Cervi Mamma Roma and Ettore observe the actual view from their apartment, in Palazzo Muratori, the shot framing the outside does not correspond to the landscape visible from the building, but rather, the

neighbourhood where they are living. Here, Pasolini sacrifices reality in order to build a symbolic connection: the exact shot of the view from the window signifies that Cecafumo is the correspondent of the Verano. Mamma Roma does not recognize that if in Casal Bertone she could see the cemetery, in Cecafumo she lives in a sepulcher. The population living there is as secluded and invisible from the urban life as a corpse in a graveyard.

Another example is when Mamma Roma abandons her life on the street and separates herself from the characters enlivening the nightlife of the periphery and she engages in a long monologue narrating her past. The viewers discover that she was married to an architect who planned the quartiere Pietrarancio for Mussolini, a long row of tombs – "catafalchi." Even though Mamma Roma understands that the urban development under Fascism consigned the subproletariat to oblivion, she does not realize that the frantic realization of housing complexes in the 1950s and 1960s does not differ from those of the 1930s. Symbolically, she is dead for the state, but more than her, Ettore is the real victim.

1.5 Ettore as a New Christ[183]

In the film, Pasolini follows Ettore's decline from a former status of child of nature to a victim of capitalism. The young boy grew up in Guidonia, a small village in the outskirts of Rome (at the time), whose economy was mainly based on agriculture. There, he did not have the chance to study or to learn a trade, rather he lived naïvely in the countryside amongst his peers, where he managed to understand the language of nature, as he shows to Bruna in the fields of the Parco dell'Acquedotto. Mamma Roma is disappointed with her son's lack of initiative and she thinks that it would be better to

[183] While Stefania Benini's *Pasolini: The Sacred Flesh* (2015) is fundamental in understading Pasolini's sense of the sacred, she does not analyzes Ettore christological figure.

bring him to Rome, otherwise he will become a *burino*, which can be explained as an uneducated person coming from the countryside. Like many immigrants from the nearby rural area and southern Italy, he never integrates into the city's life and he continually fails to adapt to its mechanisms, until his death.

Pasolini disseminates the film with hints to his martyrdom, starting from the concrete pillar at the entrance of Palazzo Muratori, which evokes a cross. The director reinforces this association through a montage of the inside of the church – where mother and son walk arm in arm in the aisle towards the cross close to the exit – with the area in front of the Palazzo Muratori. In this way, he traces a virtual path between the altar in the church framed in perspective and the street leading to the new apartment shot with the same camera angle, so as to announce that the new Christ, a new innocent victim, lives in the borgate [fig. 6].[184]

Earlier in the film, Pasolini shows Ettore's residues of an archaic and poetic point of view on the world through his interaction with the ruins of the Roman aqueduct. Ettore plays with the ruins, he completes them, he builds a story within them, and, in this way, he gives life to these bricks, which show anthropomorphic features [fig. 7–8].[185] The atmosphere is similar to Pasolini's first poems, where nature, divinity, and humanity coexist in harmony, and where, as "L'usignolo" testifies, any hierarchy between these elements is cancelled out. This scene can also be read through a passage from Chambers,

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[184] I am indebted to Prof. Rhiannon Welch who originally pointed out the montage building the virtual path from the church to Palazzo Muratori in our graduate seminar. While Stefania Benini's *Pasolini: The Sacred Flesh* (2015) is fundamental in understading Pasolini's sense of the sacred, she does not analyzes Ettore christological figure.

[185] I am indebted to Prof. Rhiannon Welch who originally pointed out the anthropomorphic qualities of the ruins in our graduate seminar and pushed me to give meaning to this anthropomorphization.

when, optimistically, he glimpses a residue of the poetic in his sociocultural analysis of the modern city:

> Cities, urban life, architecture, like our everyday social, gendered, ethnic, national, and local selves, however much they may be constructed by pedagogical and disciplinary decree, are ultimately dependent upon a performative manner or style of being, upon historical articulation and an ethics iterated in our becoming. The truth of being lies there, in our listening and responding to that language. In that space, however overdetermined by the seemingly irresistible onrush of capital and corporate control – what these days increasingly stands in for institutional policies and politics – there exists a cultural and poetic excess which is irreducible to the calculating rationalism and logic on those intents on our overseeing our futures. This supplement interrupts and interrogates the political desire for conclusion, universal comprehension and a rationalist domestication of the world. This desire is dispersed in the space between buildings, in the gap between measured edicts, in the silence that geometry fails to encode, in the shadows that cloud transparency. (151)

With Heidegger in mind, Chambers points out how being on earth means responding personally to history and ethics embedded in the architecture and urban plans of cities. Even if the society and cities are becoming increasingly controlled and uniform because of capitalism, Chambers affirms that a residue of poetry still exists. With his playful interaction with the ruins, Ettore embodies the type of humanity which occupies the space between buildings – the Parco degli Acquedotti untouched by official urban development. Ettore is able to make "the silence that geometry fails to encode" speak. His dialogue with the ruins pushes the viewers to interrogate these crumbling walls, to search for a meaning which is lost in the official present and is left open to interpretation. Certainly, the faces in stones in the Roman walls recall all the lives that sought refuge in illegal settlements under the arches of the walls even before 1870 and that, in 1962, were still existing in the nearby Acquedotto Felice.[186] Moreover, this scene leads to another one which summarises and questions the frantic urban development on the periphery of

[186] The shacks along Acquedotto Felice were razed to the ground in the early 1970s.

Rome: while speaking with Bruna, the landscape illogically and menacingly changes behind Ettore's back at each reverse shot [fig. 9–10].[187] Through this operation, Pasolini again renders the buildings as autonomous entities symbolising capitalistic power, which threatens the lives of those people still belonging to an archaic world: the immigrants from the rural nearby areas and southern Italy.

Another scene in the Parco degli Acquedotti clearly summarises Ettore's martyrdom in the modern world. At the beginning of the sequence, a medium shot frames the boy leaning on a ruin after his friends left him to go to the hospital to steal money from some patients. After that, a long-shot shows Ettore against a huge fragment of an arch of the aqueduct while a tall building stands behind his back [fig. 11]. The image reconstructs a modern flagellation of Christ through Ettore's bent arms, his body leaning on an architectural element, and the urban landscape behind his back exactly as in many Renaissance paintings, which Pasolini studied at the University of Bologna under the supervision of the art historian Roberto Longhi. Even though in the film Ettore-Christ is not surrounded by soldiers inflicting blows on him, the pose is similar to the conventional representation of the flagellated Christ. Moreover, Pasolini's attention lingers on the urban landscape and the reproduction of a similar perspective to the Renaissance paintings. Pasolini's Christ – a figure that only the poetic and archaic Ettore could embody – is still anchored to the ancient ruins, while the modern menacing buildings represent the invisible forces of capitalism flagellating the social body of the subproletariat. Pasolini reinforces the association between Christ and Ettore at the moment of Mamma Roma's recognition that the subproletariat is doomed. Through the

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[187] I am indebted to Prof. Rhiannon Welch who originally pointed out this montage in our graduate seminar and pushed me to look for meaning.

montage, which associates the image of Ettore with the shot of his mother – with her eyes cast up to the sky – asking to the "King of Kings" who is responsible for the lower classes' misery and criminality. This combination definitively consecrates Ettore as Christ.

1.6 Death and Confinement as Solutions for the Body of the Subproletariat

The only ending possible for a character such as Ettore is death. His body, like that of the subproletariat, cannot be digested by Rome, and capitalism in general. Since 1870, the lower classes of Rome have been displaced from the centre to housing complexes lacking any comfort – often without running water, bathrooms or heating systems, and built with poor quality material – and left confined in these areas without occupation or assistance. The Roman subproletariat was completely abandoned by the government; this situation was still a relevant problem in the 1960s. In *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini replicates the social problems affecting the *borgatari* and he assigns them a sacral connotation through the construction of Ettore as a Christ. Rhodes briefly alludes to a parallel with Mantegna's "Dead Christ," but I believe that further observations are needed here. After the sequence of the flagellation, which prepares for the protagonist's *via crucis*, an actual scene of crucifixion occurs, but in *Mamma Roma* the cross is a horizontal one, meaning that social advancement for this class is impossible [fig. 12]. Ettore's limbs tied to the table in prison symbolise the immobilisation of the subproletariat's body on the outskirts of Rome. Once again, Chambers' analysis of the dynamics of the modern metropolis is helpful in explaining Pasolini's construction of Ettore as a metaphor for the subproletariat and for Christ:

> In its modern, occidental formation, architecture is cousin to anthropology, anatomy, and the art of the abject, or "body snatching". Such Foucauldian associations, tied to

> the panoptic possibilities of disciplining, not to speak of "drawing and quartering" the body of the city, the body of the citizens, seeks to reduce all the potential movement and rupture to the classificatory frame and dissecting table of a still life, that is, death. (147)

Ettore's body is immobilised, left to its own destiny even if sick, and his flesh is stained with excrement exactly as the *borgatari* are confined in peripheries without any sanitary assistance and living in housing complexes lacking bathrooms and any other comforts. This social body is humiliated, dissected and separated from the rest of society. It is reduced to its physical functions; therefore, it is reverted to bare life. However, the subproletariat embodied in Ettore and Mamma Roma still treasures a dream: resurrection from this condition through the purchase of an apartment. As we know, in *Mamma Roma* and throughout his later works, Pasolini dedicated substantial effort to illustrating how this dream was – as it remains today – nothing but an illusion.

2. *"Il vero fascismo:* Consumerism as National Identity in Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* (1962)

In this section, I analyze how Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio* displays EUR as a fictional paradise embodying the economic success of Italy in the 1960s, and yet at the same time, shows the risks and the limits of the economic miracle. Because of this ambivalence, Fellini's use of EUR seems to oscillate between the Foucauldian heterotopia of compensation and the heterotopia of illusion. To the Christian-Democratic bourgeoisie represented by Antonio Mazzuolo (Peppino De Filippo), the new neighborhood – embodying Italy during the economic miracle – is "a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled" ("Of Other Spaces" 29). In my reading,

Foucault's "ours" represents Italy before the economic miracle and those neglected areas of the nation and society that are not reached by economic advancement and social progress in the 1960s. This kind of heterotopia opposing an imperfect society is one of compensation. However, EUR and the space in front of Anita's billboard in particular are spaces "of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" ("Of Other Spaces" 29). This is a heterotopia of illusion. In order to prove these points, it is crucial to examine the relationships between the EUR's history, its architecture, and the director's use of advertisements in this historic space. This section connects Foucault's "Of Other Spaces," Chambers' considerations on modern Western architecture, Pasolini's article "24 giugno 1974. Il vero fascismo e quindi il vero antifascismo," and Debord's description of the "society of the spectacle" to an analysis of the film's shots. In turn, this section demonstrates how the reconstruction of Italian national identity in the aftermath of WWII overlapped with the economic boom and the advent of a consumer capitalist society in the creation of homogenized, disciplined individuals.

3.1 EUR, Architecture, and Fellini

Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio is a short episode of the omnibus *Boccaccio '70*, which collects Mario Monicelli's *Renzo e Luciana*, Luchino Visconti's *Il lavoro*, and Vittorio De Sica's *La riffa* in addition to Fellini's film. As Millicent Marcus states in "Boccaccio and the Seventh Art," it is Fellini himself who firmly wanted and guided the project because of the strong censorship suffocating Italian cinema and culture in general in that period, and specifically his *La Dolce Vita* (269). Indeed, Tullio Kezich reports that, "for him, the project's aim is to declare that freedom of expression belongs to

cinema, in much the same way that it belongs to great literature. Even the title, *Boccaccio '70*, comes out of this aim; it's a polemical statement against 'the popular morality' that is trying to quash free expression through the right-wing media, censorship, and the courts" (229). So, it is clear that this omnibus – like any *commedia all'italiana* – is politically charged.[188]

Fellini's choice of EUR as a setting for *Le Tentazioni* has strong weight in the creation of meaning in the film. Beyond the director's fascination with it, which he explains in an interview on Anna Zanoli's TV show *Io e...* (1972), EUR still retains a strong fascist identity in its architecture and urban plan, and because of this, it helps in creating a parallel between Italy's fascist past and the 1960's oppressive Christian-Democratic government. As Fellini states in the mentioned interview, EUR is "una specie di sogno folle, interrotto e poi tramutato in un'altra cosa." Indeed, EUR was born as E42. That is the Universal Exposition of Rome that Mussolini organized to both celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the *Marcia su Roma* and showcase the regime's achievements and magnificence. Architect Marcello Piacentini guided the works, which started in 1939 and ended in 1942, but he left the project incomplete. Only in the 1950s, the municipality resumed the construction and finished the infrastructure and the monumental, administrative, and residential buildings. Only at the end of the 1950s, the first inhabitants moved to EUR. As Fellini says in the interview, the neighborhood mutated its identity from Mussolini's grandiosity to a sophisticated bourgeois residential area; it changed from a fascist utopia to a bourgeois one. Burdett traces an important continuity

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[188] For a recent study on the embedded political criticism of Fellini's films, see Andrea Minuz's *Political Fellini: Journey to the End of Italy,* New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2015. He dedicates to the EUR and *Le Tentazioni* a page (pp. 90-91).

between fascist New Towns and EUR; they were both "a model of what that world had the potential to become" (19). He also delineates how EUR – unofficially the *Roma nuova* – embodies Foucault's heterotopia characteristic of the mirror transitioning from reality (Rome's city center) to the utopic space (EUR): "the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana reworked the structure of the Colosseum, the length of EUR from gateway to gateway coincided precisely with the distance from Piazza Venezia to Piazza del Popolo" (19). To the eyes of the regime, EUR was a better, modernized version of Rome.[189] The abstract, illusory character of this neighborhood's architecture and urban plan did not change in the 1960s and remains even today.

The two main styles of architecture in EUR are Simplified Neoclassicism and Rationalist architecture, which respectively characterize the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana and the Palazzo dei Congressi that face one another in the oneiric section of the film. The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana represents the essence of Simplified Neoclassicism with its gigantic dimensions that exasperate the modular repetition of arches. The stylization and the extreme simplification of classic architectural elements bridge the past, the present, and the future of Rome; indeed, Emilio Gentile states that "l'Eur doveva essere questa nuova Roma collegata alla vecchia Roma dalla Via Imperiale, che partiva dal centro di Roma" ("EUR e il futuro della Storia"). A similar conception of atemporality characterizes Rationalist architecture – to which the Palazzo dei Congressi belongs. When talking about the most important Italian Rationalist architect, Giuseppe Terragni, architect and designer Ignazio Gardella explains that Rationalist architecture has

> il carattere della classicità, intesa non come riferimento mimetico a un determinato periodo storico, rinascimentale o altro, ma una classicità in senso atemporale, come la volontà di cercare un ordine, una misura, una modulazione che rendano le forme

[189] This mirrors Mamma Roma's illusion when moving from Palazzo dei Cervi to Palazzo Muratori.

> architettoniche chiaramente percepibili alla luce del sole e coerenti tra loro, cioè parti di una stessa unità. (8)

Therefore, beyond their differences, both architectonic styles aspire to timeless, classical forms embodying the eternal and ideal values of perfection, symmetry, order, and coherence. Before analyzing how Fellini uses these qualities materialized in stone and concrete, I want to highlight important characteristics that this kind of architecture brings to mind – its emptiness and its aseptic aspect. In the interview "Fellini e... L'EUR," the director describes the atmosphere of the neighborhood in this way:

> Ecco, l'EUR mi piace anche perché ha questo aspetto un pochino da stabilimento cinematografico, da studio: cioè spazi vuoti dove tu puoi mettere i tuoi giocattoli, i tuoi dadi, i tuoi cubi. Questa sensazione di disponibilità che ha il quartiere mi è congeniale: mi trovo bene proprio perché è senza storia.

Paradoxically, EUR has a strong fascist identity, and yet due to its temporary abandonment and its architectonic styles, it seems that it does not belong to any historical period. As a consequence, it can be adapted to any artistic reconstruction and social vision. I argue that in the case of *Le Tentazioni*, EUR's architecture represents the Italian oppressive society of the economic miracle and the Christian-Democratic government. EUR's architecture was the "trick" to make Italians believe in the paradisiacal society of the economic miracle, while, in reality, this same architecture brought the seed of oppression.

Alberto Zambenedetti's article on the significance of the architecture of EUR in various films delineates the major parallels between the Fascist regime and other forms of oppression. According to him, "the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana and its immediate surroundings have been utilized time and again by an array of filmmakers as the visual metonymy for a conservative, homologizing, alienating, or even outright oppressive

juggernaut that may or may not be directly associated with Italian Fascism" (199). This reading of EUR architecture confirms Fellini's words on the neighborhood's versatility due to its atemporality as well as highlights how this architecture suggests a sense of oppression. Zambenedetti's description of the Palazzo della Civiltà as a "building [that] had to reflect the strength, the moral rigor, righteousness, vision of the totalitarian project, but also, by default, its lack of diversity, imagination and personal creativity" (201) completely fits Fellini's use of the building in *Le Tentazioni*. Here, the Palazzo becomes "a muted signifier for the rigid moral order that the Christian Democrats wanted to impose on Italian society" (201). Zambenedetti briefly mentions the aspiration of an ideal city in EUR (204) but he does not fully explore this theme or the role of cinema, the advertisement billboard, and neon signs that recur in the film and that are fundamental symbols of the process of homogenization of Italian society in the 1960s.

Beyond its evident orthogonal structure and futuristic architecture, EUR represents a utopic social project because its development as a residential area at the end of the 1950s housed the Roman upper bourgeoisie in a new, neutral setting. Fried notes that, in the mid-1950s, EUR

> had grown from a deserted collection of grotesque, half-completed buildings and monuments, inhabited by refugees and goatherds, into a *model community*, linked by subway (as of 1955) to the Termini railway station. Ministries and city offices, including the planning offices, had acquired and built on EUR sites, and private developers were building there one of the most attractive new residential neighborhoods in the city. (46; my emphasis)

In Rome, the bourgeoisie did not exist until it became the Italian capital in 1870. Only after that, the middle class from northern and central Italy moved to the city to work as public employees and profit from the real estate market. Even if Rome and its inhabitants underwent a tough process of modernization at the end of the nineteenth century in order

to abandon the city's rural, provincial, and decadent traits it had at the time, it is during the economic miracle that the Italian bourgeoisie increased in number and became the social and economic aspiration of much of the proletariat. Going back to the 1960s EUR, even Fellini, in the mentioned interview, underscores that "la gente che ci abita ti dà l'impressione di avere una psicologia così: asettica, nuova, sconosciuta" ("Fellini e... l'EUR"). In the director's words, EUR and its upper bourgeois inhabitants are new to the Italian scene, and for this reason, not totally comprehensible.

Mia Fuller's "Wherever You Go" helps in understanding how EUR can be considered a utopic colony. Fuller reflects on the definition of a colony and she quotes Anthony D. King, who in his theorization of urban colonial development, states that the colonial city is characterized by the segregation of its ethnic, social, and cultural component groups (407). She also adds quotations from Nezar AlSayyad who highlights how colonial cities are an expression of dominance in their spatial organization, which shows both the relationship between the dominator and the dominated and the political agenda behind it (407). Fuller advances these theories by adding two other important points regarding colonial cities: first, how they impose the new (Italian) identity as a strong, imperial power, and then, how this new identity is represented through new buildings (407–408). Fuller concludes that EUR was a colony inside the nation because of its blank-slate precondition (408) that allowed the total imposition of a new political, social, and cultural vision of Italy (411). Her main contribution is to identify EUR as a "post-dialectical colonial city, one that operated in a universe where difference had already been overcome [...] In EUR there was no longer any mediator [between differences], any fear of contamination" (413). When Fellini approached EUR in the

early-1960s and decided to shoot *Le Tentazioni* there, he recognized that this project of a colonial city was still alive in the neighborhood and that it supported the vision of Italy as a rich, consumeristic society – even if internal struggles still existed – where the proletariat and the subproletariat did not appear. Indeed, the refugees of WWII and goatherds who were still living there had been removed. EUR embodied a "model community" as Fried points out – that is, Foucault's heterotopia: an "effectively enacted utopia" ("Of Other Spaces" 24). EUR followed the second principle of heterotopia. The philosopher affirms that "a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion" ("Of Other Spaces" 26). From a monumental area celebrating fascism, EUR became a residential and bureaucratic center promoting the values of Christian-Democratic Italy in the era of the economic miracle.

3.2 Opening Shots: Homogenization and Entrapment Under the Apparent *Joie de Vivre*

In the opening shots of *Le Tentazioni*, Fellini's statements of EUR as a set and as an ahistorical area take form in the film. After the initial choreographed scene with priests, nuns, and little girls, Fellini stages two real sets: a fashion shoot set at the base of the stairs leading to the Basilica dei Santi Pietro e Paolo and a set for a peplum film. These are followed by two other scenes: people enjoying summertime at the artificial lake and couples flirting in the slope of the park just behind the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. Beyond their joyful and relaxed atmosphere and their simple structure, all these initial scenes encapsulate deeper meanings that need to be disentangled. The stratification of time and events in different places of EUR creates a superimposition of spaces; this is Foucault's fourth principle of heterotopia: "The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" ("Of

Other Spaces" 27). Through these opening shots revealing past events of EUR, Fellini transforms the neighborhood into a virtual battlefield of contrasting values animating Italy in the 1960s.

The first scene introduces the relationship between Italy's political power – the Christian-Democratic government – and Italians. If EUR was considered to be a utopic, ahistorical, post-dialectical colonial "city," I argue that it represents Italy in general in the film. Here, the administrative buildings on the horizon embody the government and the symmetrical composition of the shot amplifies their rigidity (Fig. 13). Even if the scene presents a contrast between the stillness of architecture, the visual composition of the shot, and the movement of the people present in it (Zambenedetti 202), I believe that this scene is less positive than it seems. Even if Zambenedetti highlights how the seminarians bend forward and direct their eyes to the floor in order to negate their own gaze, his words suggest that the movements vitalizing the shot oppose the surrounding oppressive architecture. Instead, I believe that these movements are but an extension of the rigidity of that architecture and of its symbolic, political power. The focus on the little girls who appear as the most ecstatic and animated presence in the scene is fundamental to uncovering this aspect. After a more detailed observation, the little girls seem entrapped for different reasons: their bodies are contained between the row of the seminarians and the railing without a possibility to escape; their movements are limited to small jumps in the same spot; and their gaze is forced in one direction, toward the administrative buildings and the boulevard. Fellini reinforces this idea of a fixed gaze by framing the shot through the two poles in the foreground; in this way, he also influences the viewer's

gaze direction and perspective. The visual composition of the scene appears as a *tableau vivant* of Chambers's description of modern Western architecture's political project:

> Modern Western architecture has participated directly in the propagation of a visual hegemony that not only negates other, nonrepresentational, forms of knowledge, but also in its triumphant rationalisation of the unilateral point of view and abstract perspective achieves the oblivion of what its discourse is designed to explain and house: differentiated bodies and lives. The architectural eye focuses on the techniques and the technology of enframing that renders space and ground a retributive reality by reconfiguring it in the identity of the framer, of the subject. The seemingly objective gaze is returned and transformed into the internal, subjective point of view. (147–148)

Fellini's enframing technique is similar to the one used by De Amicis in *Impressioni di Roma*. In the passage analyzed in Chapter One, the narrator's visual composition of Rome's cityscape from outside the walls accentuates the perspective of the road leading to Porta Pia; in this way, by presenting a clear, symmetric view on the target – Porta Pia – De Amicis depicts the breach as an inevitable success for the Italian troops. In his articles on the conquest of Rome, especially in those written before the narrator met some of the capital's population, not much space is left for doubts about national unification. He presents a "unilateral point of view" to the eyes of his readers; this is a powerful tool for inspiring national identity in the population. In his film, Fellini undermines Italy's nation-building by showing its hidden mechanisms that are deeply connected to consumerism – even more so during the economic miracle. In this one-sided vision of Italy, producing and consuming is the only way to become part of the nation. In the mentioned scene, Fellini's enframing technique synthesizes this process of assimilation of the population who has a role in the consumeristic society. What is left outside of the frame are the "differentiated bodies and lives" of rural and urban poor Italians that are still anchored to "other, nonrepresentational forms of knowledge." The little girls represent the "new"

Italians of the economic miracle; their apparent lightheartedness and freedom are typical of the period. Beyond this superficial depiction, they are part of a rigid and oppressive society that homogenizes them and transforms them into docile consumers who think in the same way and never question political power. Indeed, the little girls wear uniforms and their individual faces are not visible. They never leave their spot and continue to jump mechanically. Their disciplined behavior recalls fascist parades and reformatory schools and prisons; indeed, this description is not very dissimilar from that of the girls in the fascist reform school in Airola and of the women imprisoned in Santa Verdiana in Florence whom journalists Emilio Cecchi and Ugo Ojetti visited respectively in 1934 and 1938 (Burdett 15). Moreover, the rigidity of the surrounding buildings, which Fellini reinforces through the visual composition of the shot, shows how architecture not only symbolizes political and economic power but also controls and classifies the population. EUR residential buildings house "fitting" Italian citizens, with whom the viewers identify, while it excludes the "unfitting" proletariat and subproletariat. For this reason, my attention is devoted to how Fellini uses architecture and public spaces to deconstruct this illusory participation in the nation.

The following scenes present various scenarios that display Italy's apparent wealth, elegance, and openness during the economic miracle: the fashion shoot set in front of the Basilica dei Santi Pietro e Paolo; the set of a peplum film; people having fun at the artificial lake; and couples flirting in a park. In reality, each scene contains a specific critique by Fellini on contemporary society as well as allusions to fascism. As for the little girls' scene, for the fashion shoot scene, Zambenedetti highlights the contrast between the austere, geometric lines of the church representing Antonio Mazzuolo's

Catholicism and prudishness with the models' vitality and colorful clothes (202). Again, I believe that Fellini is rather showing continuity between the architectonic shapes and the human figures present in the scene in order to develop the idea of modern, Christian-Democratic Italy as an oppressive society. Even if wearing colorful clothes, the models are as stiff and immobile as the statues on top of the staircase. Moreover, the close-up of the model with the blue hat echoes the structure of the church's round, bluish dome and the two round windows that recall eyes (Fig. 14).[190] In this scene in front of the church, the director limits himself to present models, the fashion world, and consumerism as new forms of deities and worship. The downside of consumerism is that it objectifies people, as the parallel between the models, the statues, and the church demonstrates. The presence of priests descending the stairs does not interfere with this new religion: the Italian Christian Democratic society promotes consumer capitalism.

The peplum scene is a direct attack by Fellini on the cinematographic genre that was very popular in Italy in between the end of the 1950s and the mid-1960s that often used the EUR as a set. The actor impersonating Hercules cannot hold the weight of the actress, while a limping assistant pushes an old director in a wheel chair around the set. The result is comic, and at the same time, it denotes an air of exhaustion. Because the directors of peplum films chose to have the shoot sets in EUR rather than in the real Fori

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[190] The geometric volumes of the dome recalling a human figure bring to mind Fortunato Depero's paintings and advertisements. Fellini himself declares in the interview "Fellini e... l'EUR" that "l'EUR ti restituisce questa leggerezza, come di abitare in una dimensione di un quadro: quindi ha una carica, un'atmosfera liberatoria, in quanto in un quadro non esistono rapporti, se non quelli con la solitudine o soltanto con le cose." Even if in the same interview Felllini mentions Giorgio De Chirico to describe the EUR's atmosphere, he also says that EUR "sembra futuribile;" so, this description can fit the futurist Depero's drawings, too. It is possible that Fellini uses this allusion to Depero to both criticize the current Italian, consumeristic society and to aesthetically play with the parallels between human figures and architecture recreating De Chirico and Depero's paintings in his film. For a more detailed analysis of Fellini's relationship with modernist paintings in his films, see pp. 33–37 in Alessia Ricciardi's *After* La Dolce Vita*: A Cultural Prehistory of Berlusconi's Italy.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Imperiali, it is inevitable not to think of EUR's fascist past – the new Rome – and of history repeating itself. I argue that, Fellini used this same analogy when shooting in EUR. As Italian peplum films were in favor at the beginning of the twentieth century and during Fascism before they made a comeback at the end of the 1950s, in the same way, fascist modalities of power and control over the population did not disappear with the end of Mussolini's regime. They survived in the 1960s democratic government. Interestingly, Cosetta Gaudenzi notices that

> many Italian scholars and statesmen of the 1930s underlined the link between fascist politics and the ideology promoted by Hollywood. For instance, Luigi Freddi, the General Director of Cinematography in the Ministry of Popular Culture, claimed that American films were most compatible with the needs of the national market and with fascist ideology. (167)

Fascist Italy embraced Hollywood's lightheartedness, youth, joy, and optimism (Hay 71). These values were still fundamental components in the Italian society of the economic miracle, and Fellini ridicules them in the opening of the film. With the presence of the peplum film, the director also comments on the taste of Italian cinema-goers. Because they favored entertainment over meaning, they preferred American film and mediocre productions emulating high-budget Hollywood epic films of the time instead of original films like his *La Dolce Vita* (1960).[191]

The scene shot at the artificial lake suggests that EUR can be a vacation spot (Fig. 15). Fascism comes back to mind; one of Mussolini's first urban interventions in

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[191] Another allusion to American cinema is during one of Antonio's frequent overviews on the billboard site. From his balcony, he observes young people, families, and children gathering around Anita; in one occasion, cars are lined up facing the billboard as if attending a film screening in a drive-in. Actually, in 1957 the first drive-in in Europe opened in Castel Fusano, a few chilometers down the coast from Rome, and it was very popular in the 1960s. Moreover, Fellini's parody of Hollywood cinema is also present in *La Dolce Vita* through the casting of Anita Ekberg and Lex Barker (Tarzan), as Marguerite Waller explains in "Whose *Dolce Vita* is This Anyway? The Language of Fellini's Cinema" in *Federico Fellini: Contemporary Perspectives*. Ed. Frank Burke and Marguerite R. Waller. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2002, pp. 107–120.

Rome is the construction of Via Imperiale – later, via Cristoforo Colombo – that again connected the capital's city center to the sea. Mussolini's aim was to restore the commercial and military power of the Roman Empire as well as introduce the new trend of *villeggiatura* at the seaside town of Ostia. By populating the artificial lake of EUR with people bathing in its water, sunbathing in paddle boats, and waterskiing, Fellini reconstructs a carefree, vacationing atmosphere that both the Fascist regime and the Christian-Democratic government promoted.

The last of these initial short sketches presents deeper meanings, too (Fig. 16). On the first level, the scene depicting lovers at Parco del Ninfeo symbolizes the sexual liberation that Italy was slowly experiencing in the 1960s. Mazzuolo harshly – and without success – fights against it, as in the nocturnal scene where the protagonist chases and accuses of immorality young couples having sex in cars along a dark street. Beyond this first symbol of sexual liberation, Fellini hides a subtler allusion to the bleak historic past of EUR. The male lover lying in the foreground looks dead at first due to his immobility and pose; indeed, the slopes around the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana were the setting of one of the first battles between the partisans and the Germans fleeing Rome – who had occupied this building and the Basilica dei Santi Pietro e Paolo – after the armistice of September 8, 1943. By inserting this allusion to the battle leading to the liberation of Rome from the Nazis in a context where lightheartedness and joy dominate, Fellini hints to the fact that during the economic miracle, the Italian population seems to forget its past and cannot see beyond the nation's apparent and superficial sense of wealth, liberation, and entertainment.

Fellini's criticism in all these initial scenes briefly depicting the Italian society of the 1960s anticipate the already mentioned article titled "24 Giugno 1974. Il Vero Fascismo e Quindi il Vero Antifascismo" by Pier Paolo Pasolini on Italian society after the economic miracle. In *Le Tentazioni*, Fellini engages with the effects of consumerism during the economic miracle: the faceless little girls wearing uniforms represent the young, democratic, postwar Italian population who became homogenized through fashion and cinema – mainly American films – and who is characterized by the same *joie de vivre* that Pasolini notices and discusses in his article. They represent Italy's conforming consumers, while EUR appears to be dominated by the new "forma 'totale' di fascismo," consumerism. Moreover, beyond the allusion of censorship in the cinema as Marcus (in "Boccaccio and the Seventh Art") and Zambenedetti point out, Anita as well as her billboard she is featured on comment on the role that advertisements and consumerism have in 1960s Italy.

3.3 Anita and the New Italy of the Economic Miracle

It is undeniable that a prominent meaning of Anita in the film is the sexual freedom that Antonio and the Italian government try to oppose. As Marcus notices, "the billboard image [...] incites Antonio to generate his own phantasmagoric film, a projection of thwarted libidinal energy that finds its outlet in the disastrous imagined encounter of the episode's second half" ("Boccaccio and the Seventh Art" 271). Even if Antonio and the government pursue an obstinate censoring campaign against sexual drive and immoral images in magazines, films, and advertisements, erotic impulses cannot be defeated; repression brings them back to the surface in exaggerated and even violent terms, as in Antonio's dream sequence. Many critics identify Anita's sensuality with a

liberating force and will to escape from the oppression of the Christian-Democratic government, which is embodied in EUR architecture: "Fellini's *mise en scene* sets up a striking contrast between the stark, rectilinear architecture of Fascist modernism and the lush, curvaceous form of Anitona [...] as if to challenge and defy the unnaturalness, sterility, and ultimate failure of the rigidly controlled ordered to which the Fascists aspired, and their modern day avatars still cling" (Marcus, "Boccaccio and the Seventh Art" 271). In a similar way, Zambenedetti associates Anita's "soft, supple, provocative body" to the "vitality of artistic inspiration which can manifest itself as a surge of sexual appetite" in contrast to the surrounding architecture that represents the Christian-Democratic government (204). However, I argue that Fellini's symbolic use of Anita's body goes beyond representing a liberating force through her joyful and playful behavior. Anita embodies the dangers contained in the consumeristic society into which Italy was transforming during the economic miracle – starting from the sexual drive to possessing the object advertised. Fellini constructs this identity for Anita through three strategies that also recall some of the late-1800s texts analyzed in Chapter One that explored the introduction of consumerism and modernization in Rome. Anita is reminiscent of the giant, seductive, and, yet dangerous women symbolizing the modern capital in Faldella's *Un Viaggio a Roma Senza Vedere il Papa* and Serao's *La Conquista di Roma*. Moreover, her outfit and accessories recalled those of the aristocratic women portrayed as new deities by D'Annunzio in *Le Cronache della Tribuna*. Fellini personalizes these late nineteenth century tropes by overlapping them with advertising neon signs. Anita is not just the embodiment of modern, bourgeois Rome as in Faldella and Serao; she is neither

one of the sophisticated aristocratic women that D'Annunzio worshipped nor just a divinized actress. She is the embodiment of the economic miracle.

Anita enters the scene by interrupting the rigid, social order of the Boy Scouts' award ceremony. As in the opening scene with the little girls, there is a connection between the symmetrical architecture, the orderly disposition of the characters in the space, their martial movements, and their uniforms, with which Fellini continues to symbolically represent the Christian–Democratic government's oppression and homogenization of Italian society. The scouts' uniforms and martial movements together with the ceremony recall fascist celebrations involving young Italians that the same Fellini criticizes in his later *Amarcord* (1973).[192] Indeed, the intersection of rigid architecture and civic events recalls fascist strategies in creating mass consent and hegemony.[193] At the award ceremony, Antonio is giving a speech to warn the Boy Scouts against the lure and the perils of erotic impulses; it is at this moment that Anita – more exactly, parts of her body – enters into the scene, interrupting Antonio and the ceremony. The fragmentation of Anita's body and the camera's scopophiliac fixation on her fleshy details, like her feet, her legs, and her breast, during the composition of the billboard expand the objectification of women that Fellini introduces in the previously analyzed fashion shooting set scene.[194] The erotic desire that accompanies Anita's introduction into the scene explodes behind Antonio's back. While he keeps complaining about the

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[192] For an analysis of Fellini's critique of the cultural homogenization sought by Fascism in *Amarcord*, see Cosetta Gaudenzi's "Memory, Dialect, Politics: Linguistic Strategies in Fellini's *Amarcord*" in *Federico Fellini: Contemporary Perspectives*. Ed. Frank Burke and Marguerite R. Waller. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 155-168.
[193] On this theme, see Diane Yvonne Ghirardo's "Città Fascista: Surveillance and Spectacle," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 31 No. 2 Special Issue: The Aesthetics of Fascism (Apr. 1996), pp. 347–372.
[194] For more details on scopophilia and objectification of women in cinema, see Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings.* Eds Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 833–844.

presence of such a scandalous billboard in a place where families take strolls, a worker floods the image of Anita's breast with water ejected by a phallic hose (fig. 17).

This erotic desire connecting male viewers to the advertisement – and, implicitly, the product advertised – anticipates one of the major themes in one of Fellini's later films, *Ginger and Fred* (1985). In *Ginger and Fred,* Fellini criticizes the change of Italian television in the 1980s caused by Silvio Berlusconi's private channels that offered more freedom in the duration of advertisements and in the presence of sexuality on screen (Marcus, "Fellini's *Ginger and Fred*" 174). In *Le Tentazioni*, Fellini unveils the mental mechanisms that advertisements activate in viewers. As Marcus explains in "Fellini's *Ginger and Fred*,"

> Fellini targets advertising strategies that use sex to sell their products [...]. [...] In Girardian terms, what we as subjects really want is to have or to become the model of desire, so that our attraction to the ostensible object is really an alibi, a deflected and displaced version of the transgressive version of the transgressive wish [...] to identify with the sex bomb on screen or to possess her. (174–175)

It is because of this attraction to Anita that the billboard manages to gather a crowd; men desire her curvy body while women wishes to be like her. The milk advertised goes unnoticed; Anita's body becomes center stage. While attraction is dictated by scopophilia, Mulvey also identifies a "narcissistic aspect" in viewing media (836). By applying Lacan's childhood mirror phase in her reading of cinema, she affirms that films "allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego" (836). In the same way, in the advertisement, Anita offers to viewers a "mirror image […] more complete, more perfect than he [and she] experiences with his [and her] own body" (836). Just as Anita's fragmented image is reconstructed in the billboard, Italy's regional and local identities are glued together through consumer capitalism. Moreover, the diva, like

the economic miracle, promotes an image of wealth, luxury, and prosperity that exceeds the reality of Italy's economy. In this sense, Anita is a more complete (unified) and more perfect (wealthy) mirror image of Italy.

It is not by chance that the deafening noises of excavators and trucks together with the workers' shouts compose the soundtrack of Anita's entrance into the scene. When Antonio starts his warning speech about different kinds of danger in front of the Boy Scouts, a loud excavator traverses the screen behind his back. It is at this moment that Fellini starts to assemble different symbols to connote Anita's meaning; she belongs to modernization; a deep one that is able to reach the roots of the society. Moreover, when Antonio highlights the demonic force of this still undefined danger, the rumble of a truck engine forces Antonio to shout his words. Therefore, Anita's presentation cannot be disentangled from these mechanical noises connoting modernization and mechanization, including land speculation in Rome and in Italy's main cities. Immediately after this scene, the area gets crowded with different people. Beyond Antonio and the Boy Scouts, workers speaking different Italian dialects, priests, curious people of all ages, and a band of African American musicians reach the space in front of Anita's billboard. What is noteworthy here is the variegation of the population fascinated by the billboard: from children to adults, white people to African American people, Turinese to Neapolitan workers, and the proletariat to the bourgeoisie and the clergy. In front of Anita, all the social and cultural differences are erased through a festive and lighthearted atmosphere. As Ricciardi points out when analyzing 1980s Italy, consumerism is a distorted version of Antonio Gramsci's *nazional-popolare* (*After* La Dolce Vita 8); I argue that the same can be said in 1960s Italy. The billboard can also signify the art of cinema – note the director

giving instructions on how to position the billboard through a megaphone – and Anita can embody a liberating force opposing the oppression of the Christian-Democratic government as both Marcus ("Boccaccio and the Seventh Art") and Zambenedetti claim, but there is an additional layer of meaning that has not been analyzed yet. The mechanical noises and the machines that accompany Anita's ad recall the economic miracle of the 1960s, which in the imagination of Italians during that time, would erase any social and cultural difference in the population and create a carefree, happy society, just as it happens in front of the billboard. This optimistic sentiment is similar to the one Faldella expresses in his articles analyzed in Chapter One.

The idea of modernization as a giant woman is a late-1800s trope that Fellini appropriates and personalizes. Fellini's Anita recalls the giant goddess that Faldella depicts in *Un Viaggio a Roma senza vedere il Papa*. Even if the director does not share with the writer the desire to see Rome profoundly changed by a modernization that could be able to annihilate decadence, poverty, and filthiness of the capital and transformed into a European, bourgeois metropolis (rather, the director parodies it), the characteristics of the giant women and the fascination they instill in viewers are similar. In both cases, the woman is associated with symbols of industry in general and of urban development in Rome specifically. The iron in Faldella's text recalls one of the main catalysts of the second industrial revolution. By mentioning it, the author wishes for a similar industrialization for the Italian capital thanks to the "colonization" by northern Italians. Moreover, the iron also hints to modern architectonic structures – like the Termini train station – that could be a substitute for the decaying brick and stone buildings in Rome's cityscape. By using excavators, trucks, and workers to connote Anita as the embodiment

of modernization, Fellini summons one of the main specific causes of Italy's – and Rome's – economic development in the 1960s: real estate and land speculation.

Fellini's Anita also seems to derive from Serao's giant female personification of Rome in *La Conquista di Roma*. The reason behind Sangiorgio's fear of the giant woman depends on his inability to cope with the metropolis, which is similar to Antonio's horror in facing modernization. Moreover, what is also striking is the giant woman's behavior towards the protagonist. Quoting Serao's text is key here:

> E non avendola vista, non poteva che rappresentarla astrattamente, […] come un'apparizione femminile ma ideale, come un'immensa figura, dai contorni indistinti. […] [La] vedeva, come una colossale ombra umana, tendergli le immense braccia materne, per chiuderselo al seno, in un abbraccio potente […]: gli pareva di udire, nella notte, la soavità irresistibile di una voce femminile che pronunziasse il suo nome, ogni tanto, dandogli un brivido di voluttà. […] Figura ieratica di sacerdotessa, di madre, di amante. (15–17)

Serao's words easily can be used to describe the oneiric scene of *Le Tentazioni*. In both cases, the giant woman lures the protagonist, as a mother and as a lover, by calling his name at night, by stretching her arms toward him, and by holding him against her breast. In a similar way to Sangiorgio, Antonio is both attracted to and terrified by the modernization that the woman embodies.

As in the late nineteenth-century texts, the image of divinity, such as Holy Mary in Faldella and the priestess in Serao, is present in *Le Tentazioni*, too. In the film, Anita's billboard is at the center of a religious intoxication that Walter Benjamin identifies with commodities in his analysis of Baudelaire's poems (55–56). Anita's clothes and the association with milk in the image is a modern elaboration of the *Madonna galaktotrophousa* – Virgin Mary breastfeeding baby Jesus. Anita's dark, crystal-studded dress recalls Virgin Mary's shiny stars embroidered in her cape, especially in Byzantine

iconography, that symbolize Mary's transcendental nature. Indeed, some of the people gathered in front of the billboard salute Anita with white handkerchiefs as devotees of the Virgin Mary usually do. Moreover, her powder box evokes a reliquary box with its gilded metal rays (Fig. 18). Fellini is not the first one to appropriate religious figures to characterize notable figures. In *Le Cronache della Tribuna*, D'Annunzio describes noblewomen attending Roman parties as deities in order to elevate them over the grey, democratic, anonymity of the bourgeoisie. Even if Fellini uses religious connotations to criticize the excessive devotion to consumerism, the strategies used are the same. Both Anita and D'Annunzio's aristocratic women wear clothes that recreate the sky through the celestial fabrics starred with shiny embroidery. For example, When the duchess of Sermoneta enters into the room, "un fulgore di *deità* illuminò e riscaldò l'aria di improvviso" (*Le feste romane* 14; italics mine); moreover, like Anita, her appearance recalls the Virgin Mary: "la serenissima duchessa, magnificata da un abito worthiano di raso *celestiale* e di velo dello stesso colore, *constellato* d'argento" (*Le feste romane* 14; italics mine). The duchess of Sermoneta is not the only one with epithets reminiscent of the firmament: "Entrava la contessa Francesetti […] con un corsage di velluto ornato su'l giro delle spalle di piccolo *constellazioni* di madreperla iridescente […] appariva la signora De Angelis, in toilette corta […] con intorno al *lunato* arco delle spalle ciuffi di marabù. […] Passava la signora Parise, rosea e fresca, in una toilette di raso *ciel*" (*Le feste romane* 14–15; italics mine). It seems that the only way to relate to these celestial, ethereal women is devotion – "la duchessa di Sermoneta parlava placidamente in una cerchia di devoti" (*Le feste romane* 15) – like it happens for Anita in the billboard.

All these descriptions that appropriate divine representations, holy symbols, and religious iconography are part of the phenomenon of *divismo* that exploded at the end of the 1800s in the Western world – Italy included.[195] In the Italian panorama of the late-1800s, the *divi* could be royal members, aristocrats, and politicians, as in the texts of D'Annunzio and Serao. The devotion to Anita's billboard also recalls civic religion during Risorgimento and Fascism.[196] In the case of *Le Tentazioni*, cinematic *divismo* is well established thanks to Hollywood and Cinecittà. Indeed, Fellini chooses to cast Anita Ekberg as herself (Anita); in this way, his reference to *La Dolce Vita* is quite obvious. First of all, this allows the director to answer to the critics and censors that blasted the 1960 film by staging an absurd and exaggerated battle between Antonio (the censor) and the *diva* Anita. However, on a second, deeper level, the process of the divinization of Anita continues from *La Dolce Vita* to *Le Tentazioni,* and with that, Fellini's analysis of the consequences of modernization.[197] In *La Dolce Vita* the director portrays the disintegration of the traditional family through Steiner (Alain Cuny) and Marcello's (Marcello Mastroianni) relationship with his girlfriend Emma (Yvonne Furneaux). Another aspect of modernization in the film is the extreme mechanisms of the media that

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[195] For an accurate study of the theme, see Vinzia Fiorino's, Gian Luca Fruci's, and Alessio Petrizzo's edited volume *Il lungo Ottocento e le sue immagini: Politica, media e spettacolo,* Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2013. For a brief introduction to early cinematic *divismo* in Italy see the section "*Divismo* and the Italian Star System" of "Chapter One: The Silent Era" in Peter Bondanella's *A History of Italian Cinema*, New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

[196] For more details on civic religion during Fascism, see Charles Burdett's "Journeys to the *other* spaces of Fascist Italy" in *Modern Italy* Vol. 5 No. 1 (2000), pp. 7–23; Emilio Gentile's *Il Culto del Littorio,* Roma and Bari: Laterza, 1993; Roger Griffin's *The Nature of Fascism*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, Marco Innocenti's *I gerarchi del fascismo*, Milano: Mursia, 1997; and Simonetta Falasca Zamponi's *Fascist Spectacle*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. For accurate studies on civic religion during Risorgimento, see Massimo Baioni's *La "religione della patria:" musei e istituti del culto risorgimentale (1884–1918)*, Quinto di Treviso: Pagus, 1994, and Michele Graziosetto's *Francesco Crispi: La religione della patria nella stagione del Trasformismo,* Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011.

[197] For a study on Fellini's mythologization of modern urban life and media hysteria, see Alessia Ricciardi's "The Spleen of Rome: Modernism in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*" in *Modernism/Modernity* Vol. 7 No. 2 (2000) pp. 201–219.

lead to sensationalism – as in the case of the children sighting the Virgin Mary in the Roman periphery – and *divismo* – as in the case of Sylvia (Anita Ekberg). All these elements in modern society leads to a sense of isolation even in the presence of others because of superficial, meaningless relationships. *Le Tentazioni* inherits from *La Dolce Vita* the same critical attitude and continues the piercing analysis of its contemporary society.

Divismo has a strong connection to a utopic society in the film. In *La Dolce* Vita, Fellini portrayed Sylvia as a diva by constructing parallels between her and religious images. Her first appearance at the airport mimics the opening scene of the helicopter transporting the statue of Jesus; in the same way, Sylvia arrives in Rome by plane and both her cape and her posture when exiting the plane recall those of the statue. Moreover, during her visit at St. Peter's Basilica, she wears a dress that imitates clerical vestments. It is in this occasion that she becomes a guide for Marcello, rushing up the staircase and leading him to the top of St. Peter's dome. This quest culminates at night in Rome's city center where Sylvia invites Marcello to follow her into the Trevi Fountain, in which she performs his baptism.[198] In *Le Tentazioni,* Anita is already established as a recognizable diva when she enters into the scene; as soon as her face is visible in the section of the billboard, a Boy Scout starts to shout "Evviva Anita Ekberg!" in an excited, repeated mantra. In the billboard, Anita is an iconic diva absorbed in the world of advertisements; even if her appearance recalls the Virgin Mary, her magnetism has no other purpose than

[198] For a study on the mix of sacred and profane in *La Dolce Vita,* see Andrew McKenna's "Fellini's Crowd and the Remains of Religion" in *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* Vol. 12-13 (2005–2006) pp. 159–182. For a recent study on Fellini's sacred and profane, see Alessandro Carrera's *Fellini's Eternal Rome: Paganism and Christianity in the Films of Federico Fellini*, London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Carrera offers a brief analysis of *Le Tentazioni* (pp. 116–120), but he focuses on classical mythology rather than christian affinities in the depiction of Anita and the film in general.

selling milk. The absence of baby Jesus means that Anita's "holy" milk is meant only for consumers, who by buying it, can aspire to be elevated into paradise: Italy's modern, wealthy side. Ironically, Fellini destroys any residual imagery of the sacred through the advertisement jingle. Besides refashioning Virgin Mary's milk into an ordinary commodity that anyone can buy, Fellini transforms the choir of angels that often appears in the background of paintings portraying *Maria in trono.* Here, he turns them into speakers uninterruptedly repeating the jingle inviting people to buy milk. It is not fortuitous that the name of the sound technician urged to plug in the electricity is De Angeli (of angels).

Fellini transcends the motionless advertising billboard when he gives life to Anita in the oneiric scene. Indeed, Marco Bertozzi has already pointed out how "il cartellone [sia] oggetto di un surreale metamorfismo, divenendo a poco a poco, film nel film, vero e proprio spettacolo cinematografico, in un gioco a incastri sul tema del cinema nel cinema, anzi, più specificatamente, della moltiplicazione dello spazio schermico-uditivo" (113). In *Le Tentazioni,* Anita leaves the billboard/screen, and she still behaves like Sylvia in *La Dolce Vita*. For example, Anita echoes Sylvia with similar sentences ("Vieni dottore" instead of "Marcello, come here"), and with her feline purring recalls the kitten that Sylvia finds by the Trevi Fountain. As Sylvia guides Marcello along Rome's monuments, Anita leads Antonio – and the inhabitants of the neighborhood together with the spectators – into a world bombarded by advertisements.[199] This futuristic space is the result of that dilatation of the billboard. Fellini completes this metacinematic operation thanks to a tracking shot that virtually conducts the spectators to this new world heavily

[199] The catchy phrase "bevete più latte" in the advertising billboard invites everyone to drink more milk; however, it is when Anita becomes alive that she directly invites people to wake up and follow her.

characterized by advertising signs. When saying "se entra in città questo mostro, in una notte sola si perdono due milioni di anime," Antonio identifies Anita with consumer capitalism: a relatively new phenomenon threatening Italian society. Moreover, this line also confirms EUR as a heterotopia. The separation of this utopic and yet real neighborhood from the rest of Rome is a fundamental characteristic of "places of this kind [that] are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" (25). Fellini underlines Antonio's line by dedicating the shot to two skyscrapers that symbolize Western modernity and wealth, in particular the American model.[200] On her walk in EUR's Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro, which connects the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana to the Palazzo dei Congressi, Anita traverses a space that Fellini decorates with various advertising signs that deserve a detailed analysis.

In the oneiric scene, the EUR of Antonio's everyday life shows all its potential. In the day scenes, Fellini plays with the location's architecture to hint at homogenization and oppression during the economic miracle and the Christian-Democratic government. In the dream, the director unveils the main driving force of the nation since its birth: the mirage of production and consumerism. Indeed, the tracking shot follows the point of view of Anita – embodying consumerism – in her quest along Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro. It is not fortuitous that the vanishing point coincides with the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. In the Christian-Democratic vision, only by embracing capitalist production and consumerism is Italy meant to reach civilization. It does not matter that

[200] According to Lefebvre, "the arrogant verticality of skyscrapers, and especially of public and state buildings, introduces a phallic or more precisely a phalocratic element into the visual realm; the purpose of this display, of this need to impress, is to convey an impression of authority to each spectator" (98). If we consider that these skyscrapers appear in EUR, where state and public buildings are predominant, we can affirm that Fellini underlines how the presence of the state overlaps with capitalism in his staging of hegemonic powers.

this entails homogenization and oppression, as the surrounding buildings in the set symbolize.

The first elements that Anita crosses and that Fellini presents through the tracking shot are a gas station and a national bank. Even if they appear on the screen for a few seconds, both of them hold significant meaning: they both have a fundamental role in the Italian economic miracle of the 1960s. The Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) has its roots in the early decades of the Italian nation; founded in 1913 as Istituto Nazionale per il Credito alla Cooperazione (National Institute for Credit to Cooperation) during Giolitti's fourth government, it was intended to help Italy transform from a rural to a more industrialized country by supporting cooperatives of workers. Indeed, as Valerio Castronovo reports, the Minister of Finance Luigi Luzzatti presented the project as a necessity in the process of Italy's democratization: "Lo Stato deve concedere alle organizzazioni dei lavoratori le stesse agevolazioni creditizie che concede alla borghesia: di fronte alle banche per le classi agiate, devono esserci quelle per le classi disagiate, il diritto è identico a quello del capitale." The bank's birth was strictly connected to the nation's desire – and anxiety – to become a strong economic power in the Western world. During Fascism, in 1927, the institute became Banca Nazionale del Lavoro. Being a national bank, it financed the major operations of the Italian empire: the colonial wars, autarchy, and the support to Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Beyond its contribution to Italian politics, the bank financed the construction of Cinecittà and E42 – that is EUR. Moreover, in the tracking shot, Fellini associates the BNL with oil production by positioning a gas station right before the bank. It is impossible not to think about the fundamental role that the bank had in the postwar period when Italy became one of the

top five powerful countries in the world ("Banca Nazionale del Lavoro", Treccani). During the 1960s, the bank supported relevant factories that were leading the economic miracle. Beyond the cinema industry and the FIAT (Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino – Italian Factory of Cars in Turin), the BNL financed Enrico Mattei's ENI (*Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi* – National Institution for Oil). So, the choice to position the BNL in the scene is deliberate, and Fellini wants the spectators to reflect on the role of the bank in Italy's political and economic project.

When Antonio reaches Anita in Viale della Civiltà del Lavoro, the chase takes place under the porticoes, which show many advertising signs. Some more than others refer more directly to consumerism, and one advertises the newspaper *Il Tempo*. In the 1960s, *Il Tempo* was the most read newspaper in Rome. By giving space to both fascist and anti-fascist intellectuals in the postwar period, it contributed to a constructive dialogue between the two groups (Archidiacono 143). Indeed, it is under this neon sign that Anita tries to reconcile with Antonio. By reaching a normal height, Anita/capitalism does not seem to be something unattainable for Italy – like the previously framed skyscrapers reminding of American metropolises. In fact, the neon signs reading "bar" and "Stock" – to which Fellini adds "Motta" and "Campari" in the same scene – represent the success of specific Italian brands connected to one of the typical, Italian commercial activities: the bar.[201] All of these brands are formed around the time of the birth of the Italian nation or its early years: Campari, 1860; Stock, 1884; Motta, 1919. All

[201] The "Stock" neon sign, together with the "Martini" one, appear in the walls of the Terme di Caracalla in *La Dolce Vita*, where an elite party takes place after Sylvia – in clerical clothes – imposed herself as a new divinity. Certainly, by using the same neon signs in *Le Tentazioni*, Fellini wants to create a parallel between the two scenes: the Terme di Caracalla used as a modern bar anticipates the substititution of cultural values (embodied in the Roman ruins) with consumerism that the director fully develops in *Le Tentazioni*.

of them reach their national and international success during the economic miracle. Then, the label "Made in Italy" not only can compete with American models – represented by the neon sign "birreria del west" and skyscrapers – but it also builds national identity, too.

Under the porticoes, a metacinematic scene takes place. Here, Antonio urges the spectators to not look at Anita's stripping in front of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. By stripping naked, Anita reveals her true identity. Every shot in this scene contains at least one neon sign; Antonio – like the spectators – cannot get rid of the products or of Anita's sensual allure; that is, as Marcus explains in "Fellini's *Ginger and Fred,*" the desire to buy and consume. As Ricciardi claims when analyzing the 1986 film, social space in Italy is saturated with advertisement (*After* La Dolce Vita 59). In *Le Tentazioni,* Fellini points out a similar omnipresence of commercial posters and signs. As Antonio exhorts the spectators to leave the theater, his warnings to not look and to protect the children can also refer to the television program *Carosello* that invaded Italian homes from 1955 to 1977 with its short, sketchy comedies that advertised different products and attracted children. At the end of the film, Antonio's inability to leave the billboard means that consumerism, through Anita's sensuality, conquered him. Before entering the ambulance, he whispers "Anita" and the commercial jingle "bevete più latte" accompanies his trip to the mental hospital.

3.4 The Triumph of Consumerism in Italy

Antonio's final defeat and madness confirm that consumerism, symbolized by Anita's seductive allure, conquered Italy during the economic miracle. Even throughout the film, Fellini alludes to this victory by making the billboard the new focal point of

social life in the neighborhood. Antonio constantly monitors the crowd night and day, and this is as variegated as the masses gathered in front of the billboard when it was assembled. During the day, the area is mostly frequented by families having picnics, young people arriving with campers or lining up their cars as in a drive-in, children playing ring-around-the-rosy. At night, prostitutes position themselves under the billboard. Consumerism reaches, or at least attracts, every layer of society independent of their age, gender, and social or geographical origin. Another relevant point is that consumer capitalism manages to modify people's everyday routines. This aspect represents the fourth principle of heterotopias: the "absolute break with […] traditional time" ("Of Other Spaces 27). Indeed, when Antonio dictates his observations to an assistant that types them down, he affirms that "dalla finestra vedo il turbamento impossessarsi dei passanti davanti al tabellone che si fermano come presi da improvviso malore, interrompendo la loro sana, ristoratrice passeggiata, il ritmo della loro attività quotidiana." Antonio's exaggerated narration of the effects of the billboard also alludes to changes in the Italians' customs, like daily strolling, which now is continually interrupted by advertising billboards and shop windows displaying highly desired commodities that create anxiety and cravings in the population. What is also important is the fact that Antonio acknowledges a change in the rhythm of Italians life with the advent of consumer capitalism, because as Pasolini says in the previously mentioned article, producing and consuming becomes the central focus of their existence, which is characterized by an apparent *joie de vivre* that Foucault defines as a celebration of the "most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect" of time ("Of Other Spaces" 28). Fellini disseminates his film with this lightheartedness, starting from the opening scenes. At

EUR, that is in the perfected bourgeois, consumer capitalist society, everyone is happy and carefree – even prostitutes. Moreover, Fellini also inserts allusions to festivals and fairgrounds, which according to Foucault, are perfect examples of heterotopias that break traditional time by proposing a totally temporal existence while being located in "marvelous empty sites on the outskirts of cities" ("Of Other Spaces" 28).

It is also important to analyze the relationship between the people gathered in front of the billboard in order to understand that the rhythm of everyday life changes with the advent of consumerism and how people relate to one another. Anita and her billboard function as a spectacle attracting viewers; this means that the consumeristic society based on appearances and superficiality is a society of the spectacle as intended by Debord. Indeed, according to him, "the spectacle has its roots in the fertile field of the economy, and it is the produce of that field which must in the end to dominate the spectacular market" (37). Therefore, Fellini's presentation of Anita's billboard as a cinematic screen has a dual purpose. On a more basic level, it advances the director's complaints about censorship in Italy. On a deeper level, it allows Fellini to parody consumeristic society. If we observe how people interact in front of the billboard, we can see how Debord's description of the spectacle as the model form of modern society exactly fits Fellini's staging of the crowds in front of Anita:

> The spectacle appears at once as society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is that sector where all attention, all consciousness, converges. Being isolated – and for that reason – this sector is the locus of illusion and false consciousness […] The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images. (12)

The gathering scenes in front of the billboard are a metaphor for what was happening in Italy during the economic miracle. In order to unify a still fragmented nation – socially

and geographically – consumerism was used as a tool in this operation. As the variegated extras in Fellini's films, Italians feel unified through their participation in the economy; that is, by being part of the spectacle in front of the billboard that, as Debord explains, has to be isolated in order to function. Indeed, the billboard stands in a *terrain vague* in an underdeveloped EUR, and it almost anticipates the peripheral location of many malls that will sprout around the borders of the capital and around the main Italian cities at the end of the 1990s.[202] The billboard attracts all the attention from the inhabitants of the neighborhood and beyond, as Antonio himself affirms, and it activates illusion and false consciousness. The American cultural and economic models recur many times during the film, from the drive-in to the "birreria del west" and the skyscrapers. This reflects the lack of a strong Italian model opposed to the American one, as Ernesto Galli della Loggia explains in *L'Identità italiana* (141, 155). Moreover, because the billboard is the focus of the attention, the relationship among the population changes. People's interactions are always mediated by the billboard, Anita, and the product advertised – that is, by consumerism.

The coronation of consumer capitalism as an Italian national value occurs in the middle of the film. Again, Antonio observes the area in front of the billboard and dictates his thoughts to his assistant: "In pochi giorni, dico, l'orrendo cartellone, la mostruosa Circe, come ai tempi del Vitello d'oro, ha raccolto intorno a sé tutta la corruzione del mondo cittadino." His words underline the billboard's magnetic power on the population together with the people's devotion towards it, and symbolically, consumerism. Indeed,

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[202] For a study of Rome's *terrain vague* in post-neorealist cinema see Manuela Mariani's and Patrick Barron's "Cinematic Space in Rome's Disabitato: Between Metropolis and Terrain Vague in the Films of Fellini, Antonioni, and Pasolini" in *Modernism/Modernity* Vol. 18 No. 2 April 2011, pp. 309–333.

while Antonio speaks, a country festival similar to those connected to saints' celebrations materializes in front of the billboard. With this scene, Fellini affirms that during the economic miracle, consumerism becomes part of Italian traditions. It drastically changes them by attracting the population as a new social focal point (interactions among people are mediated by media and commodities) and modifying traditional values (divas and commodities are revered like divinities.) Fellini stages what Debord elaborates a few years later. According to the Marxist theorist,

> the spectacle is the material reconstruction of the religious illusion. […] those cloud-enshrouded entities have now been brought down to earth. It is thus the most earthbound aspects of life that have become the most impenetrable and rarefied. The absolute denial of life, in the shape of a fallacious paradise, is no longer projected to heavens, but finds its place instead within material life itself. The spectacle is hence a technological version of the exiling of human powers in a 'world beyond' – and the perfection of separation *within* human beings. (17–18)

The diva Anita is both terrestrial and divine; she bridges earthly materiality to divinity. It is through her billboard that its viewers – and, symbolically Italians – believe to reach the paradise – that is, wealth. The Italian economic miracle is a "religious" illusion that projects paradise within material life: in commodities themselves. Though, it is an illusion, it does not mean that all Italians can afford commodities. Indeed, the heterotopic space in front of the billboard seems accessible to everyone, but it entails exclusion anyway. This is the fifth principle of heterotopia: "Everyone can enter into the heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion – we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded" ("Of Other Spaces" 28–29). In *Le Tentazioni*, even if prostitutes, southern Italians, the proletariat, and African Americans are free to stand in front of the billboard and dream about wealth, they are not able to buy the commodity advertised, nor can they live in the rich, bourgeois area where the billboard is positioned.

The illusion of participating in the economic miracle alters the perception of reality of the proletariat and the marginal figures of the society. Economic development appears no longer as something happening somewhere else in northern European countries or Northern America; it happens in Italy, too. However, as Debord points out, consumer capitalism has a cost: the loss of the "most earthbound aspects of life" that become "impenetrable and rarefied." These include the relationship of individuals with their peers, the environment surrounding them, nature, and objects. As I have illustrated in the previous chapter through Pasolini's works, consumer capitalism causes human subjects to lose their connection with the archaic, rural values that are based on a horizontal, inclusive relationship rather than a vertical, isolating relationship with a commodity that hence separates one human being from another.

Moreover, as it typically happens in religious country festivals, the *bersaglieri* participate, too, and instead of playing their anthem, they execute the advertising jingle. Fellini has already used an allusion to the Italian troop in *La Dolce Vita*. In that case, the band playing at the party at the Terme di Caracalla transforms a cha-cha-cha into the *fanfara dei bersaglieri* while Sylvia and her friend dance. It is when Frankie carries her shoulder-high that the famous, recognizable refrain is played; there, Fellini's attention is more on the divinization of media stars. The fact that Fellini stages the Royal Italian Army in *Le Tentazioni* is not fortuitous. The *bersaglieri* were founded in 1836 to serve in the army of the Kingdom of Sardinia; they were one of the protagonists in Italian unification during the Risorgimento. They are also the ones who managed to conquer Rome in 1870 through the breach of Porta Pia. By having the *bersaglieri* playing the jingle, Fellini states that nationalism has been substituted with consumerism, which was

able to unify – at least, superficially – the Italian population. Antonio can do nothing to oppose this victorious force. Even in the oneiric scene when he is worried about Anita entering into the city, the spectators know that his quest is useless. Anita – and consumerism – bursts into Italian society with the same energy the *bersaglieri* had when penetrating the Roman walls.

Anita's billboard functions in a similar way to the cinematic screen projecting Filoteo Alberini's *La Presa di Roma: 20 Settembre 1870* on September 20, 1905, just outside Porta Pia on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the conquest of Rome.[203] Both of them contribute to the formation of the Italian national identity. If in *La Presa di Roma* the government finances, supports, and highly publicizes the event because it considered it an effective tool in educating the masses, in *Le Tentazioni,* Fellini hints to the fact that his contemporary government fails in creating a valid identity for Italians and that consumerism fills that void.[204] Indeed, the director creates similar mechanisms to the 1905 screening event around Anita's billboard. First of all, both are open-air entertainment that attracts thousands of visitors regardless of their age, social

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[203] For an accurate study of the film, its production, and the singular figure of Filoteo Alberini, see Giovanni Lasi's *La Presa di Roma: 20 Settembre 1870 (Filoteo Alberini 1905), la nascita di una nazione*, Milan: Mimesis, 2015 and Michele Canosa's edited volume *1905: La presa di Roma. Alle origini del cinema italiano,* Bologna and Genova: Cineteca di Bologna and Le Mani, 2006.

[204] In *After* La Dolce Vita, Ricciardi delineates the causes of Silvio Berlusconi's ascent and the realization of a pure capitalist society of the spectacle. She claims that, since after the death of Pasolini in 1975, few left-wing intellectuals substantially opposed consumer capitalism, and rather, the majority of them embraced its ideals. She argues that "the result was to deprive the Italian society of critical insights and vocabulary necessary to resist the forces of mass mediation and commodification" (5). Because of this intellectual void, it is easy for consumer capitalism to prevail in the Italian society in the 1980s; I argue that even in the 1960s consumerism fill the same cultural void. Ricciardi also delineates similarities between the 1980s nation and Giacomo Leopardi's Italy for their lack of a "tight society" and the domination of "superficial distractions of strolling, spectacles, and churches in the country's life" (7). For more details on the correspondences between Leopardi, Gramsci, and Calvino, see "Chapter Two: Lightness" in Ricciardi, especially pp. 94–108.

background, and gender. Meaning that patriotism, in Alberini's film, and consumerism, in Fellini's one, have conquered Italians. Secondly, they both use religious iconography. While the 1905 film shows the divinization of patriots and politicians typical of the period, *Le Tentazioni* displays the extent of the development of *divismo* for celebrities since its early appearance in the late-1800s. However, in both cases, the aim is to offer models for the crowd to adore and to follow.

In conclusion, Anita is the emblem of modern Italy; she embodies a nation that has sexual and intellectual freedom and prospers during the economic growth. But in reality, Anita, as this modernized vision of Italy, is as intangible as a projected image on a screen. Fellini's interpretation of contemporary Italy is not that different from Pasolini's; both directors highglight how progress, social advancement, and wealth are difficult to reach during the economic boom.

Conclusions:

A Look at Contemporary Rome and Southern Italy

> Pasolini: Prima di essere mangiato da Totò e Ninetto il corvo dice: "I maestri sono fatti per essere mangiati in salsa piccante. Devono essere mangiati e superati, ma se il loro insegnamento ha un valore ci resterà dentro. Un atto di cannibalismo. Come vuole la dottrina Cattolica."
>
> Toffolo: Dove va Sig. Pasolini? Mi lascia solo dopo tutto quello che mi ha detto? Sig. Pasolini, mi aspetti!!!
>
> (Toffolo 118 – fig. 19)

In my work I have analyzed the representation of Rome in Italian cultural production from 1870 to the years of the economic boom. During this period, the city became the symbolic theater staging Italy's transformations: from a rural and neglected town belonging to the State of the Church to an elegant, European capital of a freshly unified nation at the end of the 19th century; from a disorganized city attracting thousands of immigrants from the surrounding countryside and southern Italy to one striving for the creation of a new Roman empire during Fascism; from a bombed city to the capital of a nation that survived WWII and became one of the major economic forces in the world in the 1960s. In all of these epochs, Rome contributed to what Benedict Anderson defines as an "imagined community;" the state used the city's monuments to weave narratives on the nation reflecting liberal and fascist ideals with which Italian subjects needed to identify. Urban plans and regulations played a fundamental role in the spatial organization of these narratives: they not only selected specific monuments and buildings to be the spokesmen of the nation, but they also controlled the presence of the population in the central, monumental areas. Similar mechanisms aiming at removing working poor and immigrants from the city center remained a prerogative of the capital's urban

renovations from 1870 to the 1960s – and their presence still continues to raise preoccupations today.

The same, eternal issues still haunt writers and film directors who question the capital in relation to Italy's national identity. While some monuments are still at the center of designated monumental/touristic paths, others are crumbling. The disjunction between the city center and its margins that visibly represents the existing social gaps in the population is still widening. But who does inhabit these spaces now? What is the relationship between these spaces and those who live there? Who is just a fleeting presence in these spaces? What does all this say about the current state of the nation? How do artists represent Rome today? In the works of contemporary writers and film directors, we can trace more or less overtly quotations from past cultural production when examining the capital's monuments, urban space, and their social practice. In respect to any other Italian city, Rome cannot be detangled from its iconic representations in literature and, most of all, cinema. I started to investigate these connections in my article "At the Margins of Rome, at the Margins of the world: *The Hawks and the Sparrows* and *Sacro GRA* as Peripatetic Analyses of Capitalist Society" (2019). Gianfranco Rosi's *Sacro GRA* (2013) explores the GRA highway surrounding Rome as a satellite (as Fellini said) in order to challenge the idea of the non-place usually associated with it. The idea of shooting an entire film driving on the GRA highway summons the eight-minute scene in Fellini's *Roma* (1972) that celebrates the asphalt ring surrounding the city, which was completed in 1970. Moreover, the allusion to a strip of neutral asphalt leading somewhere, together with the meaningless wandering of the characters, undeniably recalls Pasolini's *Uccellacci e Uccellini* (1966). By exploring Rome's peripheries, both

Rosi's and Pasolini's films give voice to their inhabitants. The thematic and stylistic assonances between the two reside in the fact that both directors inscribe the Roman periphery in a wider context of global debates on the consequences of consumerism and postcolonialism on the organization of marginal urban spaces, population and otherness.

Another important inheritor of Pasolini's legacy is Ascanio Celestini, a Roman dramaturge, actor, novelist, activist, and film director. As Curzio Maltese states in "La sposa di Ascanio Celestini nella Periferia di Pasolini," Celestini gathers Pasolini's ashes, starting from his debut with the monologue *Cicoria. In fondo al mondo, Pasolini* (1998). His Pasolinian inheritance is obvious in his inquiry of the alienated characters living precariously in the contemporary Roman peripheries. The novel *Lotta di Classe* (2009) investigates a large category of today's unstable workers – those working in call centers. The film *Viva la sposa* (2015) contrasts the American capitalist society embodied in the blonde, American bride crossing Rome in her white gown with the lives of the proletarian neighborhood of Quadraro. In addition to recalling Pasolini's frequent allusions to the United States and their economic model through music, advertising, and characters, the bride also recalls Fellini's use of Anita in *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio.* The theater monologue *Laika* (2015) stages the return of Christ in the capital's peripheries – a Christ who is ignored as much as Pasolini's Christological figures of Accattone and Ettore. *L'armata dei senzatetto* (2018) collects short stories animating Giovanni Albanesi's statues created from junk and refurbished materials that allude to the lives of homeless people living in the margins of our society. The citation inside the book cover exemplifies the connection:

> Quest'armata di senzatetto non è gradita. È proprio gente inutile per una comunità moderna e produttiva che vuole migliorarsi e se non fosse per la tolleranza che è

> indispensabile in una società civile quella accozzaglia starebbe già tutta in qualche discarica o peggio ancora nell'altoforno a sciogliersi per l'alta temperatura. Presto sarebbe recuperata per fondere oggetti utili per davvero come chiavi, serrature, sbarre per le finestre di galere e abitazioni private. In questa patetica armata non ce n'è uno che si salva. Mosche impazzite, dicono i cittadini.

Pasolini too often used metaphors of junk connected to his characters in his films and their role in a society based on producing and consuming: the empty glass bottles in *Accattone*; the association between garbage, cadavers, and the sub-proletariat in *Uccellacci e Uccellini*; and the waste dump in the final scene of *Che Cosa Sono le Nuvole*.

By dedicating long scenes to Rome's monuments, Sorrentino's *La Grande Bellezza* (2013) brought again the attention to the capital's public spaces. Undoubtedly, as critics have already pointed out, the film strongly refers to Fellini; however, not much space has been given yet to D'Annunzio's influence (*Le Vergini delle Rocce, Notturno, Le Cronache della Tribuna)* in the film and to the similarities between the director's approach to monuments and architecture and other 19th century Italian texts. Moreover, throughout the movie, the director interlaces minuscule hints – homeless people in the opening scene, immigrants perfectly integrated in the Roman society, for example – that go unnoticed because of the predominance of Baroque architecture and cinematic style. Such a montage of scenes mirrors the most common approach to Rome: monumentality versus neglected areas and their inhabitants. Sorrentino entrusts Jep as the key figure for a transformation of the way we look at metropolises. In the final monologue, the protagonist recognizes that he needs an alternative approach to reality – a more childish one, as the mystic, foreigners, and children reveal to him on various occasions – to restore his authentic writing and to begin to live again.

We cannot omit postcolonial production in a contemporary discourse on Rome. Multiculturalism is a strong component of the capital's identity, and the distribution of global migrants in the city's urban fabric retraces the past movements of internal immigrants from southern Italy: from the central areas of Piazza Vittorio and Esquilino to more marginal areas such as Pigneto, Torpignattara, Casal Bertone, and the various borgate. Phaim Bhuiyan's *Bangla* (2019) narrates how gentrification changed Piazza Vittorio into a more touristic place because of the presence of a multicultural community that Amara Lakhous depicted in the novel *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a Piazza Vittorio* (2006). The film also shows how Torpignattara is currently the site of a battle between hipsters who recently moved into the neighborhood because of low rent, old people who have been living there since the 1960s, and Bengali families who have been residing there since the 1980s. Mohsen Melliti wrote one of the first novels depicting the conditions of immigrants in the capital by reconstructing the occupation of the ex-pastificio Pantanella in the novel *Pantanella: Canto Lungo la Strada* (1992). The book is fundamental for two reasons: while on one hand it testifies to how the occupied building turns into an Agambenian "state of exception" inside the capital – as it happened in the past for the Roman borgate and the unauthorized shacks in the outskirts hosting immigrants from the South of Italy – on the other the narrator relies on poetry as an escape from reality, in a similar way to Pasolini's Ettore and Morante's Useppe and Davide. Igiaba Scego's *Roma negata: Percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (2014) is a strong voice in the contemporary panorama of the capital's representations. Her flâneries touch neglected monuments in Rome's urban fabric that hide strong relations with Italy's much forgotten colonial past.

Another direction that this research could take is toward the investigation of contemporary portraits of southern Italy, especially in relation to the creation of cultural festivals aiming at reviving central internal regions that are outside the circuits of mass tourism, experienced destructive earthquakes in the past, and underwent a consistent flux of emigration of their native population. Franco Arminio's poem collections, such as *Terracarne* (2011) and *Geografia commossa dell'Italia interna* (2013), seem to inherit Pasolini's legacy. As the Friulan intellectual gradually embraced the southern part of the peninsula (and of the world) because he believed it to be the last fortress of the archaic and the sacred, Arminio still individuates in the remote areas of Basilicata, Molise, Campania, Puglia, and Calabria the residual elements of archaic Italy. Arminio deals with the problem of *cementificazione,* which was dear to Pasolini not only in his Roman works, but also in *Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo* (1964). His collections narrate his wanderings through small villages (sometimes ghost towns) in Irpinia, Molise, Basilicata, Calabria, and Puglia in order to catch a glimpse of originality and authenticity that could inaugurate a new alternative way of living and dwelling able to oppose consumerism – in which he also includes the consumerism of landscape. A passage from "Fontanelle del respiro" exemplifies this: "Si va nei luoghi più sperduti e affranti e sempre si trova qualcosa, ci si riempie perché il mondo ha più senso dove è più vuoto, il mondo è sopportabile solo nelle sue fissure, negli spazi trascurati, nei luoghi dove il rullo del consumare e del produrre ha trovato qualche sasso che non si lascia sbriciolare." (*Terracarne* 12). Arminio's attention to neglected rural spaces and to specific, anonymous stones recall Pasolini's monologue in the TV documentary *La forma della città* (1974):

> Questa strada per cui camminiamo con questo selciato sconnesso e antico non è niente, non è quasi niente, è un'umile cosa, non si può nemmeno confrontare con certe opere d'arte, d'autore, stupende della tradizione italiana. E pure, io penso, che questa stradina da niente, così umile, sia da difendere con lo stesso accanimento, con la stessa buona volontà, […] con lo stesso rigore con cui si difende un'opera d'arte di un grande autore. Esattamente come si deve difendere il patrimonio della poesia popolare, anonima, come la poesia d'autore, come la poesia di Petrarca o di Dante, eccetera eccetera. E così, il punto dove porta questa strada, quell'antica porta della città di Orte, anche questa non è quasi nulla, vedi, sono delle mura semplici di bastioni dal colore così grigio che in realtà […] nessuno si batterebbe con rigore, con rabbia, per difendere questa cosa. Ed io ho scelto, invece, proprio di difendere questo. Quando dico che ho scelto come oggetto per questa trasmissione la forma di una città, la struttura di una città, il profilo di una città, voglio proprio dire questo, voglio difendere qualcosa […] che non è codificato, che nessuno difende, che è opera, diciamo così, del popolo, di un'intera storia, dell'intera storia del popolo di una città, di un'infinità di uomini senza nome che però hanno lavorato all'interno di un'epoca che poi ha prodotto i frutti più estremi, più assoluti, nelle opere d'arte d'autore. Ed è questo che non è sentito perchè chiunque, con chiunque tu parli, evidentemente è d'accordo con te nel dover difendere un'opera d'arte di un autore, un monumento, una chiesa, la passata della chiesa, un campanile, un ponte, un rudere il cui valore storico ormai è assodato, ma nessuno si rende conto che invece quello che va difeso è proprio questo anonimo, questo passato anonimo, questo passato senza nome, questo passato popolare.

What Arminio does with his poetry carries on what Pasolini wished to do with his oeuvre: collecting and preserving the traces of a disappearing past that is at the base of Italian identity: its rural past, the culture connected to it, and the type of community it shaped in the society. Small, ancient towns are not codified architectonic language; they are the result of centennial layers of vernacular architecture, which strongly contrast with rigid urban plans regulating cities. For this reason, both Pasolini and Arminio see a correspondence between the configuration of villages and poetry: they do not follow official codifications but they are respectful of the laws regulating nature, and because of this, they are able to create a society based on the equilibrium between human and non-human subjects.

More than in the 1960s, today, the consequences of capital consumerism and globalization are draining the numbers of small-town inhabitants of internal Italy; since 2011, the goal of the festival "La luna e i calanchi" held in Aliano (MT) – the town were Carlo Levi was sent to *confino* – is to attract the nearby population and people from the rest of Italy and to create a connection between them and the territory. As Arminio said in an interview,

> Aliano è un paese del Sud italiano**,** ma il suo paesaggio ha un sapore di terre lontane. Sono luoghi in cui si sente un'intensità che fa pensare al sacro. La forza della festa viene proprio dal suo fiorire nel paesaggio, non è una cosa costruita altrove e poggiata nel paese. Quest'anno, a parte le esibizioni canore e poetiche e i ragionamenti sull'Italia interna, ci sarà molto spazio per performance, singole e di gruppo, che partono dalle specificità del luogo. ("La Luna e i calanchi, ad Aliano la festa della paesologia di Franco Arminio")

Aliano and the surrounding mountains are at the center of different kinds of performances; they are not just a background, but instead an integral part of the creation of meaning in a similar way to Pasolini's films.

Vinicio Capossela's Sponz Fest has been at the center of the revival of Irpinia since 2012. Similar to "La Luna e i calanchi," the aim of the festival is to build relations among people and also with the territory:

> spendere tempo significa partecipare, e costruire relazioni, con i luoghi e con le persone. Ed è esattamente questo che vuole offrire lo Sponz Fest, che io non amo chiamare festival proprio perché è una cosa diversa – Uno scambio che non sia confezionato o precotto: perché uno più o meno passivamente assiste a quello spettacolo o incontro, ma si propone dall'inizio come un'accoglienza da costruire insieme. ("Vinicio Capossela: Il mio Sponz Fest in Irpinia per ribellarci alla bestialità")

His videoclip for his last song summarizes the concept of "accoglienza da ricostruire insieme." The song titled, "Il povero Cristo," embraces all the past and contemporary

victims of war. The videoclip, directed by Daniele Ciprì, is a short film set in Riace, Calabria, which has been at the center of media attention in the last year for the attacks directed toward the mayor Mimmo Lucano, whose politics is an example of integration of immigrants and the local population. The actors in the videoclip represent an homage to past and present cinema investigating marginal figures: if on one side Enrique Irazoqui impersonating Christ is a direct reference to Pasolini's *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, on the other the presence of Marcello Fonte recalls his character in Matteo Garrone's *Dogman* (2018), set in one of the most forgotten corners of Italy: Villaggio Coppola in Castel Volturno. The entire album *Ballate per uomini e bestie* echoes a sentiment that much of contemporary Italian cinema and literature hold at the center of their investigation of Italian society that strives to include a more global perspective on issues – and in this group I add Alice Rohrwacher's *Lazzaro Felice* (2018), which groups together past and contemporary forms of slavery in Italy and the world. All these works can be defined in the same way Capossela defined his latest songs:

ballate per uomini e bestie,
nate in tempo di rinnovate pestilenze.
Ballate nate per obliare la peste,
finiscono per farne materia del canto,
che è un modo di fortificare anticorpi…
("Ballate per uomini e bestie – Fuori ora!")

Appendix: Figures

Fig. 1: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma:* the entrance to Palazzo dei Cervi.

Fig. 2: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: Palazzo dei Cervi's internal courtyard.

Fig. 3: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: Palazzo Muratori in Casal Bertone

Fig. 4: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: the view on Cecafumo from Palazzo Muratori

Fig. 5: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: view of Cecafumo and Chiesa Don Bosco.

Fig. 6: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: symmetrical perspective of the church in line with the concrete pillar/cross of Palazzo Muratori.

Fig. 7: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: anthropomorphic Roman walls.

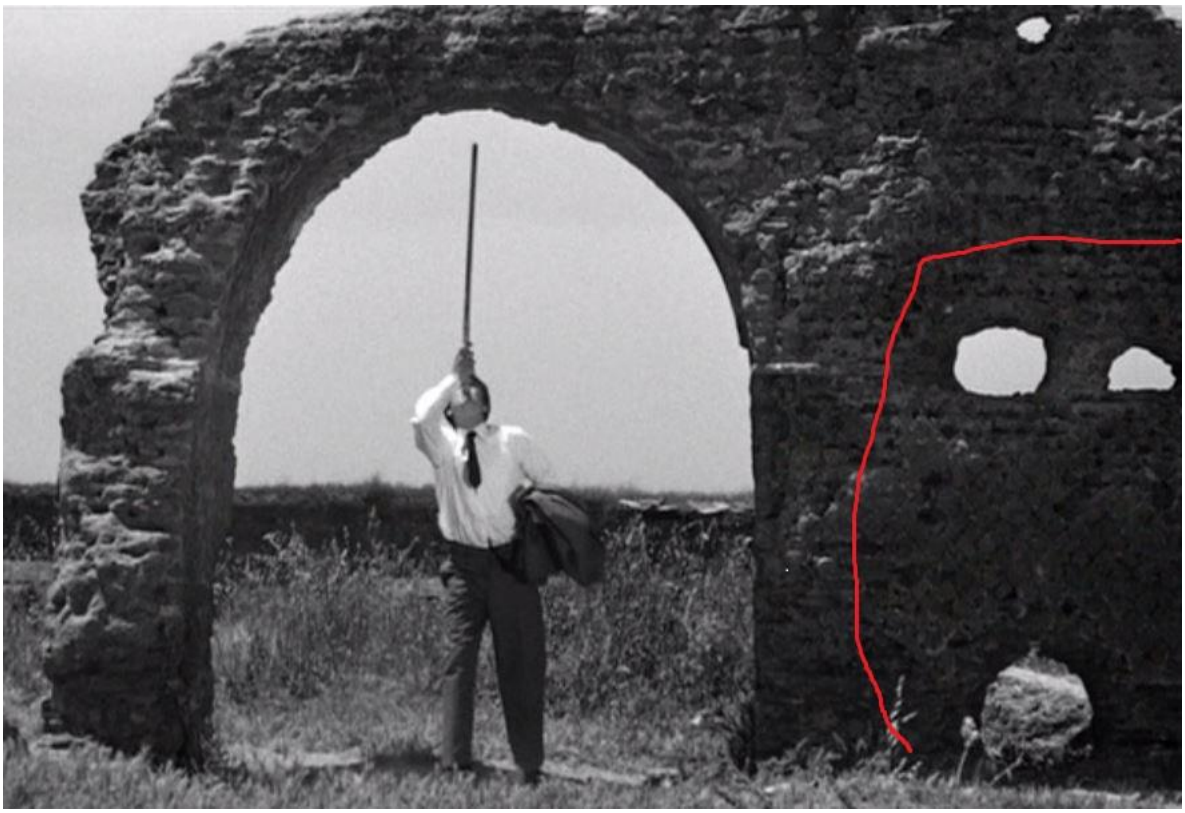

Fig. 8: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: anthropomorphic Roman walls.

Fig. 9: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: montage of growing urban development

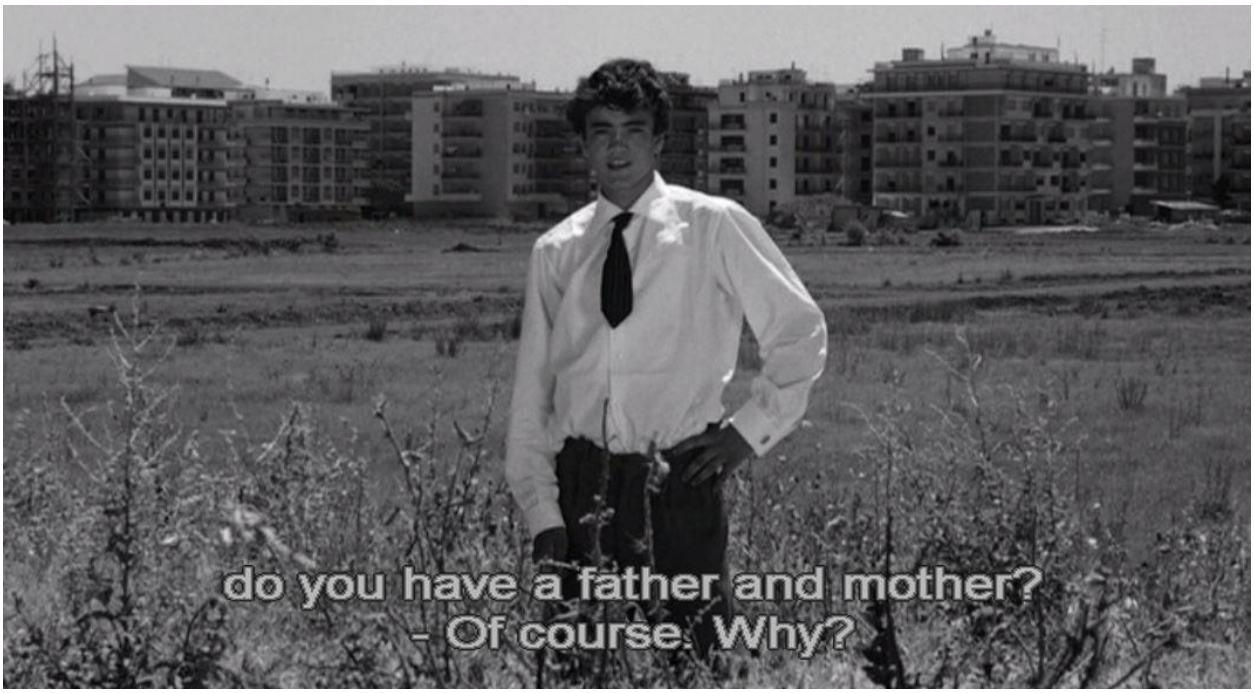

Fig. 10: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: montage of growing urban development

Fig. 11: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: the flagellation of Ettore-Christ.

Fig. 12: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*: the horizontal crucifixion of Ettore-Christ.

Fig. 13: Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio*: symmetric choreography of priests, nuns, and girls in the opening shots.

Fig. 14: Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio*: fashion shooting set by the basilica Santi Pietro e Paolo.

Fig. 15: Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio*: EUR lake as vacation spot.

Fig. 16: Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio*: lovers at Parco del Ninfeo.

Fig. 17: Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio*: the phallic hose.

Fig. 18: Federico Fellini's *Le Tentazioni del Dottor Antonio*: Anita and her powder/reliquary box.

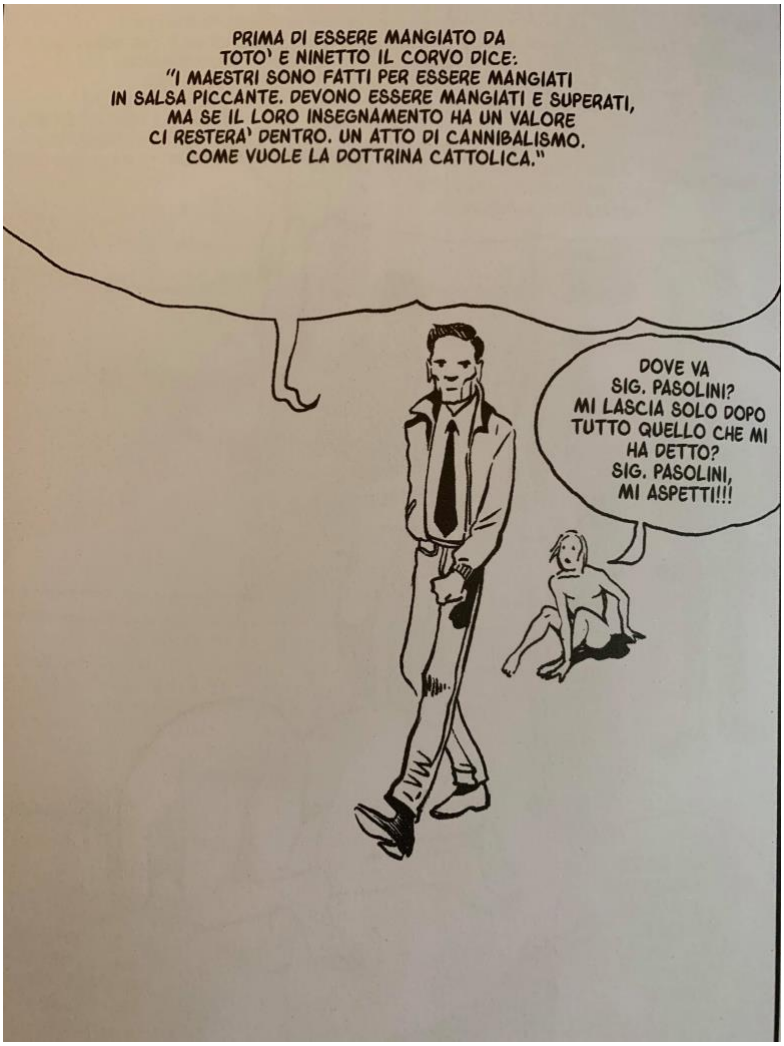

Fig. 19: Davide Toffolo's *Pasolini* (2015)

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