

## SILVIA ROSS AND GIULIO GIOVANNONI<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction: Urban Space and the Body

Cities consist of much more than the built environment and the physical space they occupy: they are experienced by and through the Body. As humans, we inhabit, traverse and construct our urban space, shaping the city, as it, in turn, shapes us. This issue of *Annali d'italianistica* explores the many ways in which the city is perceived by the Body and how urban space influences the corporeality of those who pass through or abide within it. As part of the “Cross-disciplinary Approaches to Urban Space” network, this volume investigates the ways in which (primarily) Italian cultural production engages with the Body and urban issues. The volume’s varied contributions stem from a range of disciplinary areas, including not only literature (poetry, prose and theatre), but also cinema, photography, art history, urban planning and architecture. The majority of the articles concern the Italian context; however, given the interdisciplinary nature of the topic itself, we have included a select number of contributions regarding other, related areas, for the purposes of enriching the intertextual dialogue among the essays via a diversity of perspectives. In fact, in devising this issue, one of our primary goals was to advance the debate on urban space and the Body within the Italian context, as well as from different disciplinary perspectives, taking into account their mutual influence.

<sup>1</sup> We wish to express our gratitude to the Dipartimento di Architettura of the Università degli Studi di Firenze; to the Department of Italian, the Centre for the Advanced Study of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, as well as the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences of University College Cork. All of them have provided support for this project, especially in its initial stages when an international, interdisciplinary conference by the same name as this volume was organized at University College Cork in June 2017. We would also like to thank all the contributors to the volume for their essays and their willingness to engage with the editorial process. We are enormously indebted to Dino Cervigni, the editorial team of *Annali*, and the reviewers for all their hard work and, most of all, their confidence in this special issue on a topic which, we are convinced, is becoming increasingly important in our current age. This article is the result of combined research activity undertaken by the two authors. The final written version of the second section can be attributed to Giulio Giovanni, that of the third and fourth sections to Silvia Ross; all other sections have been written jointly.

We also maintain that some of the most stimulating scholarship on questions of the Body and Space is informed by theoretical perspectives, as well as by theoretically informed case studies. Our approach is evidenced by the contributions to this issue inasmuch as they are underpinned — to a greater or lesser extent — by relevant critical theories. Another goal of this themed issue is to enhance critical awareness about the complex and problematic — political, social, economic, cultural, etc. — effects of architecture and urban design on the Body, by drawing on architecture and architectural theory, but also on the representation of the city in literature, film, art and photography. It is through representation that we are able, as recipients of a discourse, to see through the eyes of others, to feel through their skin, to hear the sounds they hear. Thus, representation allows us to imagine and undergo the bodily-sensorial experience of life in the city of other genders/sexualities, of diverse demographic groups and individuals. One need only think, for instance, of the increasing number of scientific studies on the capacity of fiction to foster the quality of empathy in readers in order to appreciate how literary, filmic, or visual representations of the urban sphere can serve as an aid to understanding how the human subject experiences it. Thus, the contribution of the Humanities is key to our capacity to comprehend the bodily-spatial dynamic, in story-worlds as well as in actuality.

Many of the essays in this issue thus provide a window onto the dynamics of corporeal engagement with urban surroundings. For this reason, several of them address the topic of mobility and, specifically, walking in the city, or they are centred on questions of perception. Gender and sexuality, too, are significant factors in how the Body interacts with the built environment; in fact, a notable portion of the contributions also engages with this aspect. Socio-economic and cultural diversity, too, constitute a lens through which one perceives and is perceived, judged, and (mis)treated in urban space, dynamics which come to the fore in a number of contributions.

### **Urban Theory, Space and Bodies**

Urban theory studies, to a large extent, the relationship between bodies and space. In Italy, and more generally in the Western world, the architect and urban planner have often been represented as “doctors” whose aim was to cure the evils of society through spatial planning and architectural design. These representations assumed the metaphor of the city as an organism, that is, as a complex

body itself.<sup>2</sup> The main planning models developed at the beginning of the twentieth century by the great “masters” of architecture and urbanism — mainly Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Ebenezer Howard — involved a different use of space by bodies. The question of the actual or alleged ability to influence human behavior — and thus to influence the relationship between bodies and space — through spatial planning is indeed one of the most intriguing and problematic issues of urban planning and urban sociology. Planning has all too often aspired to be a form of social engineering (i.e., of transformation of society through the design of space) the effects and objectives of which have been questioned, or viewed extremely negatively, by large segments of the population. The history of twentieth-century architecture is, to a large extent, the story of the real or sometimes only supposed failures of Le Corbusier’s modernist utopia, conceived as a kind of “medicine” for curing the urban crisis of the early Twentieth Century and which has been revealed, in many cases, to be a failure. This story is essentially a story of bodies in space and of real or presumed relationships between physical design and the behavior of bodies.<sup>3</sup> The somewhat ironic aspect of this story is that it has criticised the social engineering of modernism, only to replace it with an alternative form of social engineering. Instead, it is the “healing” power of the architect and of the urban planner that must be questioned. Once a space is handed over to history, it is like an open work: lived, interpreted and imagined in potentially infinite ways.<sup>4</sup> Although a relationship between the configuration of space and human behavior certainly exists, it is far from easy to comprehend. There exist too many factors which influence human behavior in space — psychological, media, cultural, historical, to name but a few — to assume that the design of space can “cure” the evils of society.

Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) is undoubtedly one of the philosophers who most influenced the spatial shift in philosophy and the social sciences. Operating on the assumption that social conflict takes place in space, he introduced a very useful theorization for understanding the relationship between bodies and space. Lefebvre conceives urban space as a triad composed of lived space, imagined space, and designed space.<sup>5</sup> In this theorization, the corporeal (lived space),

<sup>2</sup> On urban metaphors used in urban planning, see for example Secchi, and Boyer. Cresswell, too, discusses the notion of the city and the trope of the corporeal being used to describe urban mobility, in particular as regards the circulatory system (7–8).

<sup>3</sup> For a history of the great urban movements of the beginning of the twentieth century, consult Fishman.

<sup>4</sup> The notion of the “open work” is taken from Eco’s *Opera aperta*.

<sup>5</sup> This is a free reinterpretation of Lefebvre’s thought. For the original formulation of the space triad, see Lefebvre, 31–46.

symbolic/narrative (imagined space) and physical (designed space) dimensions merge into a whole to create what Marc Augé would have defined as “places” or “non-places,” as the case may be. Drawing on Lefebvre’s thought, we could venture to redefine place as a whole composed of a spatial “container,” the “content” of the bodies that use it, and the images and symbols that represent it. Space is indeed the container, the theatre, the scene, symbolised and imagined in various ways, within which bodies act. The social conflict actually involves all three dimensions of the Lefebvrian triad.

Bodies in space are elements endowed with meaning. Walking, staying in space are also a process of signification, as is clear from different forms of public assembly, from gay pride parades, to religious (and often ethnic) processions, to public and military ceremonies, to simple individual movements. The application of John L. Austin’s speech act theory to bodies in space is particularly useful in explaining these processes of signification.<sup>6</sup> Significant bodies also have a performative power, modifying representations associated with them and thus constituting “new” places, and promoting the right to the city of marginalized social groups in various ways. But what is most relevant is the performative value of the representations themselves. As several case studies have shown, the utopian or dystopian narratives of place have the power to trigger processes of spatial purification and gentrification;<sup>7</sup> or they can also, to the contrary, trigger dynamics of social/spatial degradation.<sup>8</sup> These considerations highlight the need to study space from different disciplinary angles, simultaneously involving physical space, lived space, and imagined space.

The so-called “Spatial Turn” of the past few decades has, moreover, illustrated how the intersection of the Humanities and spatial thought (geographical, architectural, social, etc.) provides a fruitful mode for interrogating the world around us, as well as the text. Geocriticism (Westphal; Tally) and areas of study such as the Spatial Humanities or Urban Humanities have provided important critical frameworks for practicing a textual criticism which focuses on the built environment or the material world that surrounds us. From the late 1980s to the 1990s, the innovative movement known as Ecocriticism emerged and has

<sup>6</sup> After using Austin’s speech act theory to reformulate the concept of gender, Judith Butler, in her more recent research, has applied it to the interpretation of public gatherings: see Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. On this subject, see also Giovannoni, “La democrazia del camminare”, 128–43.

<sup>7</sup> See for example: Giovannoni’s “Utopia and Dystopia in Tuscan Spatial Narratives,” 35–49.

<sup>8</sup> On this question, a fundamental reference continues to be Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961).

expanded to include Ecofeminism and Post-Humanism. Key figures in these movements, especially for the Italian context (and beyond), are Rosi Braidotti and Serenella Iovino. Several of the essays in this issue adopt such theories in order to interpret urban spaces, both represented and actual, reflective of a burgeoning in Italian Studies textual criticism which engages with the spatial.<sup>9</sup>

### The Body Theorized

While on the one hand post-humanism and ecofeminism have led to the realization that the Earth cannot be construed solely through an androcentric viewpoint, and that a holistic vision of existence, one that encompasses the non-human, is vital, in geographical thought the inclusion of the human subject and cultures and societies within the sphere of the spatial has risen to the fore in the past few decades. Human and Cultural geography have demonstrated the necessity of studying, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the socio-spatial nexus so as to ensure that human subjectivity is included. At the same time, philosophy has shifted away from the body-mind dichotomy which privileged the metaphysical, recognizing that the way in which we perceive the world through our body is of enormous significance.<sup>10</sup> Holloway and Hubbard elucidate:

Descriptions of how conceptions of the body have changed over time serve to stress that bodies, often thought of as natural, are inextricably related to and bound up with social relations. Today, then, bodies (which are of course inseparable from minds) are frequently focused upon by geographers intent on exploring the relationships that exist between people and place. As such, examining what our bodies mean — and what we can do with them — in different places offers an interesting perspective on geographies of everyday life.  
(197)

Thus, the two geographers underscore the importance of the inclusion of the corporeal perspective when thinking about the spatial. There has in fact been a blossoming of geographical thought which is centred on the corporeal, due in no small part to the ground-breaking work of Judith Butler on the body and performativity. Thanks to this philosopher's work on the social construct of gender which undermines codified notions of masculinity and femininity,

<sup>9</sup> We refer to studies by Binetti or Iacoli, to mention just a couple of examples; for more, see Ross's article in *Italian Studies*.

<sup>10</sup> And as a result, we can see the impact of the area of Phenomenology, for instance, which relies on the sensorial perception of the world around us.

and her insistence on the bodily rituals that characterize our everyday performances of gender, normative conceptualizations of gender have been entirely upended. Geographer Minelle Mahtani summarizes Butler's pivotal influence on Geographical thought, saying that her "theorization of gender has reshaped geographers' understandings of identities/bodies and their spatialities" and that Butler's "notion of performativity has been recast to theorize the concept of space" (65). The interplay of the (performative) body within the geographical sphere, therefore, cannot be underestimated, and the essays contained in this volume explore in multifarious ways how cities and bodies interact, drawing on diverse theoretical stances.

### Urban Locations

Historically, the city has long played a fundamental role in human society: since ancient times it has constituted the location of culture and diversity. Italian society has undoubtedly held a distinctive relationship with its urban spaces, due in no small part to the rise of medieval urban centres through trade and banking and, subsequently, the development of city states and courtly culture during the Renaissance. Italian thinkers, starting with Tommaso Campanella's *La città del sole* (1602), have a longstanding tradition of reflecting on the role of the urban sphere in society. With the rise of industrialization, internal and transnational migration and changing demographics in Italy in the nineteenth to twentieth and twenty-first centuries, certain urban centres have expanded exponentially, resulting in an increased attention to questions of urban planning and an even more marked engagement with urbanism in literature and the arts. The chronological range of contributions in this issue begins with the Renaissance and moves to the nineteenth century; unsurprisingly, perhaps, because of the rise of the city in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the majority of the contributions concern modern and contemporary society.

The essays in fact comprehend a wide variety of Italian urban locales. While some pieces address multiple locations as portrayed in a particular author's opus, others focus on a specific urban reality. Predictably, perhaps, Italy's major urban centres which have a consolidated history of literary production, or have been the subjects of urban thought and urban planning — such as Rome, Milan, Naples, Venice, Turin, Trieste and Florence — are all explored in this issue. But other, less commonly studied Italian urban locales, emerge in these analyses as well, such as Bari, the Tuscan steel town of Piombino, or the Sardinian urban locations of Nuoro and Oristano. In some instances, non-Italian urban locations

constitute the subject of analysis, as in the case of New York as perceived by the Italian Fortunato Depero, the wanderings of Simone De Beauvoir in Paris, or an artist's own engagement with a de-commissioned industrial building in the UK. The contrasting locations serve to highlight differences and commonalities in the approaches towards urban space and enrich the volume within this comparative context. And while up to this point we have highlighted actual physical locations, in some instances the cities or spaces dealt with in the volume cannot be connoted as belonging to the sphere of reality, but rather to comprise unspecified, hypothetical, or virtual settings, which serve to reflect the (corporeal) poetics of the authors discussed.

### Cities and Cultural Stereotypes

The issue opens with two articles which concern early Modern to Nineteenth Century responses to urban life and the cultural milieu judged as typical of the city examined. Andrea Scapolo's essay, "Finally I made it to the City': Comic Violence and Culture Clashes in Ruzante's Dialogues," studies representations of peasants and the rural world in the literary work of Ruzante (Beolco). The first part of the essay provides a historical-political framework of the phenomenon of the urbanization of peasants and their consequent cultural clash with urban dwellers. Scapolo traces the literary *topos* of the peasant who goes to the city in Beolco and in other contemporary authors. Ruzante's representations are recognized as being more realistic than those of his contemporaries, because of his direct knowledge of the rural world.

Rome, Florence and Naples feature in the texts by Giacomo Leopardi analysed in Andrea Penso's essay, "A Glimpse of the City: Leopardi's Perceptions of the Urban Space in Florence, Rome and Naples." Penso notes that Leopardi uses his acute observational skills to watch (for instance, locals in cafes or salons) and characterize the inhabitants of each of the three cities, contrasting the different customs, appearances and behaviors, denigrating those who embrace progress. Drawing on various texts by the poet, and in particular his personal correspondence, Penso illustrates how Leopardi categorizes the three cities he visits according to stereotypical notions, while at the same time demonstrating his own sense of superiority.

### **Sensing the City: Perceptions and Visions of Urban Space**

As outlined above, investigations of bodily interactions with urban space are perforce linked to the senses and, in many instances, to the question of perception. The articles in this section concern the interplay between space and emotions as connected to corporeal perception, as well as the importance of vision when investigating the connections between the body and the city. Saragosa and Visciano's contribution, "Spazio ed emozioni: la percezione delle invarianti strutturali come strumento per 'fare territorio,'" investigates the relationship between the morphology of space and its perception, in a context in which settlements are fragmented and have lost the organic wholeness typical of the city of the past. The perception of territory is studied through geo-referenced photos shared on the main digital platforms and by highlighting the emotions associated with such photos. These data are then related to the physical features of the environment, in an attempt to establish rules that allow for the redesigning of spaces in order to improve the way in which they are perceived and enjoyed.

Alessia Martini's essay, "A Tumultuous Shipyard': Urban Visions of New York in Fortunato Depero's Art and Narratives," investigates the artistic production of Depero during his New York period. Although the American metropolis is presented as a model of a futurist city, it is interpreted via the lens of the classic Italian town. For example, its skyscrapers are compared to medieval towers and cathedrals. These representations create a sort of Thirdspace, as defined by Edward Soja, in which the real and the imaginary blend together. Marinetti's typical idea of futurism as *tabula rasa* and as the glorification of speed and dynamism is also complicated: on the one hand, there is the fascination for New York; but on the other, in Depero's rendering of the metropolis, the city is described as grey, oppressive and alienating.

Another visual exploration of embodiment in urban space is found in Marina Spunta's "Dentro la città': Gabriele Basilico's Photography and the Embodied 'Experience of Place.'" Spunta illustrates how this celebrated photographer's production of the late twentieth century focuses on architectural subjects, and documents the decline of the industrial city and the blurring of distinctions between the urban and the rural. Drawing on architectural and urban theory, Spunta demonstrates how Basilico's work is inherently tied to the positionality of the photographer, as well as the viewing subject's gaze, thus locating the body within his photographic production and investigating the experience of place in rich and complex ways.

John Sunderland's "Inside the Tender Shed. A Critical Evaluation of an Arts Project Two Decades on" serves as a point of intersection and juxtaposition to



the preceding pieces on visual renderings of the cityscape. This essay, too, concerns the medium of photography, but approaches it from the viewpoint of the artist himself who reflects on the highly evocative urban space of industrial ruins of railway engineering works in Crewe, UK, as well as on his own work, looking back at it after a period of twenty years. Sunderland, who is both a photographer and an archaeologist, documented the tender shed in a photographic exhibition before the building's destruction and, much later, manually accelerated the decay of some of the negatives, in a process which drew parallels between the industrial ruination of the tender shed and the deterioration of the artefact itself. Reflecting on traces of the body in the industrial ruin, and on memory and place, Sunderland's essay constitutes an affirmation of the role of the arts in (post) industrial society.

### **Walking in the City: Textual Perambulations**

Closely tied to the issue of the perception of urban space and sensory interactions with the environment, is the theme of mobility, walking in particular. Many theorists and critics have examined the question of walking and how the moving subject perceives his or her spatial context. One need only think, for example, of Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust*, or the many studies of the *flâneur* and, in more recent times, the *flâneuse*.<sup>11</sup> Barbara Pezzotti's contribution, titled "The Flâneur Detective as Time Traveller: Social Criticism in the Urban Environment," concerns the figure of the detective as *flâneur* in the Italian tradition. Drawing on the notion of the chronotope, Pezzotti examines how the perambulating detective can be seen as practicing a kind of time travel, as he looks both to the past and to the future. She also emphasizes the key role of place in the Italian tradition of crime fiction, focusing then on the crime writing of Colaprico and Valpreda as prime examples of these dynamics.

Chiara Degli Esposti's essay, "Wandering Women: Feminist Urban Experiences in Simone de Beauvoir and Elena Ferrante," compares female *flânerie* in Simone de Beauvoir's autobiography and in Elena Ferrante's quadrilogy. Beauvoir's *flânerie* takes place mainly in the urban spaces of Haussmann's Paris. It has an emancipatory value, being performed at night and in contravention of oppressive social and family rules. Her relationship with her friend Zaza, who is firmly tied to these rules, is a mirror image of the relationship between Elena and Lila in the Ferrante quadrilogy: while the former emancipates herself through a

<sup>11</sup> In this regard Wolff's essay on the "The Invisible *Flâneuse*" is fundamental; see also Parsons, among others.

brilliant intellectual path, the latter remains in the asphyxiating environment of their native quarter. Applying Butlerian gender theory, Degli Esposti interprets Beauvoir's voyeurism towards prostitutes and her friend as a possible repressed form of lesbianism. On the other hand, Elena's gaze towards her hometown and Lila comes from a detached, bourgeois attitude, which positions both her native city and her friend in a position of subalternity.

### Gendering the Urban Landscape

As noted above, the corporeal modes through which the human subject engages with and is formed by urban space are profoundly influenced by gender. Many of the contributions in this issue concern wholly or in part questions of masculinity and femininity when considering Italian urban space in a variety of socio-historical contexts. Flora Derounian's essay, "Seamstresses in the City: Modernity and Anxiety in Post-war Italian Film," examines the theme of the mobility of the bodies of seamstresses in 1950s Italy as a form of social and gender emancipation in the two films *Le ragazze di Piazza di Spagna* by Emmer and Antonioni's *Le amiche*, set respectively in Rome and Turin. In a historical context characterized by strong economic development and rapid urbanization, women's work is perceived on the one hand as a factor of social emancipation, and on the other as a threat to the established social order. The dynamics of female emancipation/segregation tend to break the dichotomy between male public space and female private space: in both films, the tailoring workshop is a private space in which a reversal of roles can take place. Women's new spatial and social mobility is, however, also perceived as transgressive and can lead to disastrous outcomes, such as Elena's suicide in Emmer's film. Derounian thus suggests that these representations of women's work and emancipation, which are portrayed as dangerous and corrupt, reflect post-war Catholic morals and are part of a more general problematization of modernity.

Olimpia Pelosi's essay, "Euridice e la 'città d'ombre': spazio urbano e 'corpo abietto' nel 'percorso' autoriale di Helle Busacca," serves, in its spatio-corporeal analysis, to shed light on a woman poet whose work is wholly deserving of greater scholarly attention. Pelosi's insightful inter- and intra-textual reading carefully traces urban themes and the corporeal through Busacca's production, which spans several decades, from the mid-twentieth century to the turn of the millennium. Busacca, who was born in the *messinese* but moved to various locations around Italy throughout her lifetime, presents — according to Pelosi — a tormented portrayal of cityscapes, one which is characterized by fragmentation.

This fractured urban space is linked, furthermore, to Busacca's depiction of the body as abject, rendering herself a liminal subject, akin to Eurydice, a trope ably harnessed in her poetry.

Young women's bodies figure prominently in the urban spaces featured in Avallone's novel, *Acciaio*, as seen in the essay by Silvia Ross, titled "Silvia Avallone's *Acciaio* and the Industrialized Spaces of the Tuscan Coast: Place, Corporeality, and Female Agency." Ross makes a case for this woman writer whose works have received scant critical attention to date, although she presents a dynamic and original vision of Piombino, a town on the Tuscan coast dominated by the Lucchini steel plant. Ross, drawing on ecocritical and ecofeminist theory, explores how the two adolescent female protagonists' bodies seem to intertwine with the materiality of their surroundings, while at the same time constituting the object of the male gaze. For Ross, *Acciaio* investigates women's agency within the ecosphere, in its exploration of the theme of female friendship.

Female friendship also takes center stage in Elena Ferrante's quadrilogy on Naples, as witnessed in Ruth Glynn's contribution, "Decolonising the Body of Naples: Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan Novels." Much has been published of late on this highly successful writer, and the present study makes a significant contribution to the growing number of critical articles on her work. Glynn's nuanced and thoughtful reading of Ferrante's well-known books hinges on the two girls' contrasting representational value vis-à-vis the urban space of Naples. Glynn argues that Lenù stands for the "northern" colonizing gaze which constructs the city as a "somatope," while Lila, in her ties to their neighborhood, represents the object of this "Northern" colonizing gaze. Glynn concludes that, despite the author's dismantling of the somatopic Naples constructed by the "Northern" gaze, the trope of the corporeal Naples is particularly seductive and seems almost to resurface at the end of the tetralogy. For Glynn, "Ferrante's project thus represents an ambitious attempt to tackle the somatopic structures underpinning the construction of Naples in the wider cultural repertoire and, in the light of feminist and postcolonial critique, to transcend them."

### **Centre and Periphery: Spaces of Exclusion and Inclusion**

Rigid borders or definitions which posit a distinction between centre and periphery have been (rightly) questioned by urban theorists. Such divisions are connected also to questions of inclusion and exclusion, whereby the peripheral is

often linked to the marginalization of specific groups or individuals.<sup>12</sup> The essay by Galimberti and Orsini, “Strategie di esclusione urbana a Milano: spazi pubblici autoreferenziali,” studies — through the illustration of selected projects/processes of transformation — some of the ways in which public space is produced in Milan today. Although the perception of urban space is based on the conviction that it is freely usable and practicable, the projects studied by the authors show a tendency towards closure and separation, a symptom of a more generalized, inadequate social and cultural integration.

Metropolitan Milan, as well as Rome, feature in Chiara Giuliani’s “Domesticating Public Space in Italian Migration Literature: The Bench and the Park,” in which the scholar investigates the female figure as *flâneuse* in two texts defined as migration literature: Anita in Gabriella Kuruvilla’s *Milano, fin qui tutto bene* (2012), and Safia in Amara Lakhous’s *Divorzio all’islamica a viale Marconi* (2010). Both characters, in their wanderings throughout the cosmopolitan urban centres of Milan and Rome, use public spaces such as the bench, the bar or the local park as a means of creating a sense of home. Employing theories on domestication, Giuliani reflects on how, for these two female characters, the intimate engagement with public space provides them with a sense of agency and connection, despite the dangers that they may face (as female and/or migrant subjects) in their wanderings.

The third essay in this section, Carola Farci’s “Policentrismo e spazi d’identità: le realtà urbane della Sardegna di Alessandro De Roma,” focuses on cities often neglected by standard literary production: Nuoro, Oristano and Cagliari. Farci teases out the imbalanced relationship between Emilio and Pasquale, friends since childhood, as portrayed in De Roma’s *La mia maledizione* (2014), pointing out how the former’s move to different urban spheres works in tandem with his identity construction. Drawing on geocriticism, Farci illustrates how these Sardinian urban centres serve as a backdrop which underscores the two male protagonists’ troubled friendship, characterized by socio-economic disparities and unresolved rivalries.

### Re-membering Urban Spaces

The recollection and reconfiguration of urban zones characterize the two essays in this section. Charles Klopp’s contribution, “Trieste Remembered in the Corporeal Poetry of Claudio Grisancich: *Album* and *storie de fausta*,” analyses

<sup>12</sup> David Sibley’s work on geographies of exclusion is of special note in this regard.

some works by the dialect poet Grisancich, whose writings are framed in the context of the literary life of the Northeastern city. Klopp's reflection focuses, among other things, on the meanings attributed by the poet to the use of dialect. According to Klopp, Grisancich's choice of avoiding punctuation and capital letters seems to evoke certain movements of the body. In some of Grisancich's texts, the violent and brutal behavior of certain characters emerges, while in others, the component of nostalgia prevails.

Memory, both individual but, more importantly, collective, features prominently in the representations of Rome as illustrated in the photographic texts examined by Letizia Modena in "The Architectonics of Memory: Space, Power, and Identity in Contemporary Rome." Modena provides a thoughtful analysis, informed by postcolonial theory, of two texts: *Roma negata. Percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (2014), which contains portraits by Rino Bianchi accompanied by a narrative penned by the affirmed Italian writer of Somali origin, Igiaba Scego; and, second, the African-American Carrie Mae Weems's photographic project titled *Roaming* (2006). Modena's interpretation of these two texts demonstrates how the photographers' privileging of the "minority" body within the built environment of the Eternal City provokes a reflection on what architecture and monuments both reveal and conceal in terms of the nation's history, while at the same time providing the subjects photographed with a degree of agency.

### **Cities and Bodies in Dissolution**

The essays in this final section explore urban spaces and corporeal representations that feature the disintegration, dismantling or dissolution of cityscapes and/or the body. The section opens with Francesco Capello's "La mente orale. 'Città di carne', fusionalità e cannibalismo nella poesia del primo Marinetti," which applies contemporary psychoanalysis to the interpretation of the anthropomorphic landscape of Marinetti's "Città di carne." According to Capello's interpretation, Marinetti projects some of his deepest impulses onto this urban space, which in psychoanalytic terms assumes the connotations of "transfert-object" and is connoted as "fusional." These impulses emerge from the numerous (mainly) oral fantasies associated with the anthropomorphized elements described in the poem, among which the city, the sun, the sea, the stars and the future. The combination of these instinctive and compulsive descriptions constitutes the performative narrative structure of Marinetti's poem.

Daniel Raffini, in his "Città e corpi evanescenti in Gianni Celati tra diario di viaggio e racconti," investigates the relationship between the transformations

of the Po Valley landscape and the behavior of its inhabitants in the three works *Quattro novelle sulle apparenze*, *Narratori delle pianure* and *Verso la foce*. Raffini's thesis is that the loss of identity and structure of the Po Valley landscape corresponds to an increasing *spaesamento* of its inhabitants, as well as to a change in their bodily perception. The essay then focuses on the temporal dimension of inhabiting places, referring to the studies of Gaston Bachelard and Marc Augé.

In "Una *Waste Land* barese: *La ferocia* di Nicola Lagioia fra spreco e abbondanza," Stefania Lucamante investigates the *pugliese* writer's depiction of the urban space of Bari as a locus of waste and excess. In her ecocritical and theoretically informed essay, the author posits that Lagioia's novel portrays family relationships and an urban sphere symptomatic of the *Capitalocene*, whereby contemporary society's anthropocentric obsession with the accumulation of goods and the values of capitalism inevitably leads to the disintegration of family relationships, society, and the natural world. These concerns are incarnated in the corpse of Clara, the main female figure in the novel, which opens the text and becomes the symbol of the male exploitation of the female body and the preoccupation with material goods that result in waste and excess, or *dépense*, to use Bataille's expression aptly employed by Lucamante. In her analysis, she examines the complex family dynamics and male-female relationships in the novel, positing that Lagioia's exploration of bourgeois society in Bari ultimately provides little hope for a change in human beings' relationship with their environment.

Jessica Sciubba's essay, "Blurring Bodily Boundaries: On the *rione*'s Abjective Agency in the Cycle of *L'amica geniale*," focuses on the interpenetration between body and urban space in the first and fourth volumes of Elena Ferrante's quadrilogy. Sciubba's investigation applies diverse interpretive lenses, including the concept of trans-corporeity by Stacey Alaimo, queer theory, as well as the theory of abjection by Julia Kristeva. According to Sciubba, Ferrante's descriptions of Naples highlight the abject magnetism of this city, in which the boundaries between body and space, public and private, are continually violated. This lack of boundaries is also symbolized by the semantic oscillations of elements, such as water and the sea, factors of purification and at the same time of contamination. Ferrante's concept of *smarginatura*, used to describe the disappearance of any boundary between the self and the external environment, becomes a metaphor for the contamination and corruption not only of Naples but of the entire world.

The diversity and richness of the contributions to this volume illustrate the extent to which the question of urban space and the corporeal influences both the textual production in the Italian context, but also the thematic and theoretical approaches employed to interpret them or to reflect on our environment

more generally. The range of topics encompassed by the collection serves as a testament to the pressing need to understand the embodied nature of our interactions with our spatial surroundings in a wide variety of contexts and periods, both within Italy and beyond.

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