



# STILLNESS *IN* MOTION

ITALY, PHOTOGRAPHY, and the  
MEANINGS OF MODERNITY

Edited by Sarah Patricia Hill and Giuliana Minghelli

STILLNESS IN MOTION: ITALY, PHOTOGRAPHY,  
AND THE MEANINGS OF MODERNITY

*This page intentionally left blank*

# **Stillness in Motion: Italy, Photography, and the Meanings of Modernity**

**EDITED BY**  
**SARAH PATRICIA HILL**  
**AND GIULIANA MINGHELLI**

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS**  
Toronto Buffalo London

© University of Toronto Press 2014

Toronto Buffalo London

[www.utppublishing.com](http://www.utppublishing.com)

Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 978-1-4426-4933-0 (cloth)



Printed on acid-free, 100% post-consumer recycled paper with vegetable-based inks.

Toronto Italian Studies

---

#### **Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Stillness in motion : Italy, photography, and the meanings of modernity /  
edited by Sarah Patricia Hill and Giuliana Minghelli.

(Toronto Italian studies)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4426-4933-0 (bound)

1. Photography – Italy – History – 20th century.
2. Photography – Social aspects – Italy – History – 20th century.
3. Italy – Civilization – 20th century.
4. Italy – History – 20th century. I. Hill, Sarah Patricia, 1971–, editor
- II. Minghelli, Giuliana, editor III. Series: Toronto Italian studies

TR79.S75 2014      770.94509'04      C2014-905020-8

---

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial assistance to its publishing program of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario.



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund for its publishing activities.

Every effort has been made to secure permissions for the material reproduced in this book. Any errors or omissions brought to our attention will be corrected in subsequent editions of this book.

# Contents

---

*List of Figures* vii

*Acknowledgments* xiii

Introduction 3

SARAH PATRICIA HILL AND GIULIANA MINGHELLI

## **Part One. National Beginnings and Modernist Fears**

1 Photography and the Construction of Italian National Identity 27

ROBERTA VALTORTA, WITH SARAH PATRICIA HILL  
AND GIULIANA MINGHELLI

2 Local Colour and the Grey Aura of Modernity: Photography,  
Literature, and the Social Sciences in Fin-de-Siècle Italy 67

MARIA GRAZIA LOLLA

3 Eternal Speed/Omnipresent Immobility: Futurism and Photography 97

GIULIANA MINGHELLI

## **Part Two. Modern Memory Objects: Social Histories of the Photograph**

4 The Peripatetic Portrait: Exchange and Performance in Migration  
Photographs at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century 133

GIORGIA ALÙ

5 *Presente!* The Latent Memory of Italy's Great War in Its Photographic  
Portraits 149

LUCA COTTINI

**Part Three. Photography and the Acceleration of Modernity:  
Reality-Commodity-Violence**

- 6 Italian Neo-Realism between Cinema and Photography 183  
BARBARA GRESPI
- 7 Photographic Excess: “Scandalous” Photography in Film and Literature after the Boom 217  
SARAH PATRICIA HILL
- 8 Images of Violence, Violence of Images: The “Years of Lead” and the Practice of Armed Struggle between Photography and Video 244  
CHRISTIAN UVA

**Part Four. Critiques of Modernity: Stillness, Motion, and the Ethics of Seeing**

- 9 The Body in and of the Image in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi 273  
ROBERT LUMLEY
- 10 Intersections of Photography, Writing, and Landscape: The Italian Landscape Photobook from Ghirri to Fossati and Messori 288  
MARINA SPUNTA

**Part Five. Documents and Experiences**

- 11 A Photograph 317  
UMBERTO ECO
- 12 Essays: Photography and the Ready-Made and Apollo and Daphne: A Myth for Photography 322  
FRANCO VACCARI
- Interview with Franco Vaccari 333  
GIULIANA MINGHELLI

*Bibliography* 349

*Colour plates follow page 142*

# Figures

---

- i Unknown photographer, daguerreotype of the Temple of Saturn at the Roman Forum. Rome, 1840–1845 7
- ii Secondo Pia (1855–1941), The Shroud of Turin, May 1898 11
- iii Xanti Schawinsky, 1934–XII. Chromolithographic poster for Italian national referendum 14
- 1.1 RAI *Intervallo* 28
- 1.2 Eugène Sevaistre, Sicily. Segesta. Site of the battle won by Garibaldi. Undated 35
- 1.3 Eugène Sevaistre, Revolution in Palermo. Barricades in Via Maqueda. February 1860 36
- 1.4 Eugène Sevaistre, Bombardment and capture of Gaeta. The Armory of S. Antonio. February 1861 37
- 1.5 Eugène Sevaistre, The Palermo Revolution. The hat of the chief of police on a barricade in Via di Porta di Castro. 2 June 1860 38
- 1.6 Eugène Sevaistre, Bombardment and capture of Gaeta. Dead Neapolitan soldiers in the Citadel. February 1861 39
- 1.7 Ludovico Tuminello, Giuseppe Garibaldi. 1874 41
- 1.8 Cesare Bernieri, Giuseppe Mazzini. Undated 42
- 1.9 Alinari Brothers, Victor Emanuel II King of Italy. Undated 43
- 1.10 Anonymous, Nino Bixio. Undated 44
- 1.11 Album of photographs of the Mille who landed in Marsala 45
- 1.12 Giuseppe Incopora, Portraits of the brigand Salvatore Vittorino, 1875 47
- 1.13 Enrico Seffer, Portraits of brigand Gaudenzio Plaja da Giuliana and brigand Giovanni Lo Zito da S. Mauro, ca. 1877 47
- 1.14 Anonymous, Portrait of brigand Paolo Pintacuda, Palermo 48
- 1.15 Anonymous, Corpse of the brigand Giuseppe Nicola Summa known as Ninco-Nanco. March 1863 49
- 1.16 Page from an album of Neapolitan delinquents. First decade of the twentieth century 51
- 1.17 Carlo Naya, Venice. Undated 54
- 1.18 Carlo Ponti, Piazza San Marco 56

- 1.19 Photograph from the album of Angelo Cormanni, taken during the 1911 Italo-Turkish War 59
- 1.20 Photograph from the album of Angelo Cormanni, taken during the 1911 Italo-Turkish War 59
- 1.21 Photograph from the album of Angelo Cormanni, taken during the 1911 Italo-Turkish War 61
- 1.22 "I carabinieri in Tripolitania," *L'Illustrazione italiana*. 18 February 1912 62
- 2.1 Frontispiece. *Il fotografo*. 5 January 1856 70
- 2.2 Frontispiece. *Il fotografo*. 5 July 1856 71
- 2.3 Photography in the Village. *Roma antologia illustrata*. 4 May 1873 73
- 2.4 Frontispiece of Giuseppe Sella's *Il plico del fotografo*. 1863 75
- 2.5 Filippo Palizzi. Public scribe, no. 18. From the series *Antichi mestieri napoletani*, ca. 1853 76
- 2.6 Giorgio Sommer. Public scribe. ca. 1870–86 77
- 3.1 *Dad's car in the ditch – Luce Marinetti*. June 1908 98
- 3.2 *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti*, ca. 1910 101
- 3.3 Mario Nunes Vais, *The Futurist group*, 1913 103
- 3.4 *Fortunato Depero and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wearing Depero's Futurist waistcoats*. Turin, 1925 104
- 3.5 Fortunato Depero, *Self-portrait with grimace*. Rome, 11 November 1915 109
- 3.6 Fortunato Depero, *Self-portrait with clenched fist*. Rome, 24 March 1915 109
- 3.7 *Fortunato Depero playing hide-and-seek*. Rome, 1916 110
- 3.8 Fortunato Depero, *Self-portrait with cigarette*. Rome, January 1915 110
- 3.9 Fortunato Depero, *Double self-portrait*. Rome, 24 March 1916 111
- 3.10 Fortunato Depero and Rosetta Amadori, *Bolletta romana*, Rome, May 1916 113
- 3.11 Gustavo Bonaventura, *Photodynamic portrait of A.G. Bragaglia*, 1912/13 115
- 3.12 Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *The typist*, 1911 117
- 3.13 Etienne Jules Marey, *Chronophotographic study of man pole vaulting*, 1890–1 118
- 3.14 Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *Change of position*, 1911 119
- 3.15 *Portrait of Anton Giulio Bragaglia/Bragaglia*. Studio fotografico. Rome, ca. 1924 121
- 3.16 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Montagne + Vallate + Strade X Joffre*, 11 February 1915 124
- 3.17 Antonio Fornari, *Giacomo Balla in front of the painting Il Fallimento*, 1919 125
- 4.1 Studio portrait of Catalina Zorzenon, migrant from Friuli. Buenos Aires, ca. 1915 141
- 4.2 Panucci family. Sydney, early 1930s 142
- 4.3 Guglielmo Luti from Fosciandora (Lucca) and a friend. New York, 1919 144

5.1	A soldier posing like a tourist	156
5.2	A soldier posing like a tourist	157
5.3	Quinto Bertozi	160
5.4	Cesare Casadei	161
5.5	Pietro Moschini	162
5.6	Salvatore Brunazzi	163
5.7	Giovanni Gervasini	164
5.8	L. Mancini	165
5.9	Pages of a photo-diary, from the album of Ottorino Cangini	166
5.10	Pages of a photo-diary, from the album of Ottorino Cangini	167
5.11	<i>Il figlio del reggimento</i>	168
5.12	Typical representations of the <i>retrovia</i>	170
5.13	Typical representations of the <i>retrovia</i>	170
5.14	Typical representations of the <i>retrovia</i>	171
5.15	The view from the trench	172
5.16	Soldiers' bodies	173
5.17	The military shrine of Redipuglia	174
5.18	Remnants of war transformed into daily objects: a clock	175
6.1	Walker Evans, <i>Waterfront Warehouses. Louisiana, 1936</i>	186
6.2	Alberto Lattuada, <i>Quadri antichi, copie e stampe esposti all'esterno del negozio di un antiquario</i>	187
6.3	Walker Evans, <i>Houses. Atlanta, Georgia, 1936</i>	190
6.4	Walker Evans, <i>Scott's Run mining camps near Morgantown, West Virginia. Domestic interior, 1935</i>	191
6.5	Cover of <i>Tempo</i> , 1939	195
6.6	Walker Evans, <i>Floyd Burroughs, Cotton Sharecropper. Hale County, Alabama, 1935–1936</i>	196
6.7	Federico Patellani, <i>Camallo, Savona, 1939</i>	197
6.8	Dorothea Lange, <i>Between Weedpatch and Lamont, Kern County, California. Children living in camp ... Rent \$2.75 plus electricity</i>	200
6.9	Federico Patellani, <i>Milan, July 1945</i>	200
6.10	Vittorio De Sica, from <i>Sciuscià</i> (1946)	201
6.11	Luchino Visconti, from <i>Ossessione</i> (1943)	202
6.12	Dorothea Lange, <i>Toward Los Angeles, California, 1937</i>	203
6.13	Luchino Visconti, from <i>Ossessione</i> (1943)	205
6.14	Alberto Lattuada, <i>Passeggiata della sera</i>	206
6.15	Production still from <i>Ossessione</i> (Luchino Visconti, 1943)	207
6.16	Luchino Visconti, from <i>La terra trema</i> (1948)	210
6.17	Paul Strand, <i>The Family</i> , from <i>Un paese</i> (1948)	211
6.18	Emilio Gómez Muriel, Fred Zinnemann, from <i>Redes</i> (1936)	212
7.1	Tazio Secchiaroli, <i>Anthony Steel and Anita Ekberg</i> , Rome, 1958	218
7.2	Paparazzo hovers behind Marcello and Maddalena on Fellini's via Veneto. From <i>La dolce vita</i> (1960)	221
7.3	Anita Ekberg's 1956 arrival in Rome reinvented as Sylvia's. From <i>La dolce vita</i> (1960)	222

- 7.4 Miraculous visions. From *La dolce vita* (1960) 223  
7.5 Anonymous amateur photograph, ca. 1950s 225  
7.6 Luigi Ghirri, Lucerne 1970–1, *Paesaggi di cartone* 229  
7.7 A crucial detail? From *Blow-Up* (1966) 231  
7.8 Thomas and Verushka. From *Blow-Up* (1966) 232  
7.9 Pasolini and Gadda; Communist party meeting. From *La divina mimesis* (1975) 234  
7.10 A group of partisans; Gramsci's tomb. From *La divina mimesis* (1975) 236  
7.11 Dino Pedriali, *Pier Paolo Pasolini. Chia, 1975* 238  
8.1 The Red Brigade photograph of Aldo Moro. Rome, March 1978 245  
8.2 The Red Brigade photograph of Aldo Moro. Rome, March 1978 245  
8.3 The Banda della Magliana photograph of the corpse of Massimiliano Grazioli Lante Della Rovere. Rome, April 1978 248  
8.4 The Rote Armee Fraktion snapshot of Hans Martin Schleyer. Wiesbaden, September 1977 248  
8.5 The Red Brigade snapshot of Idalgo Macchiarini. Milan, March 1972 250  
8.6 The Red Brigade snapshot of Ettore Amerio. Turin, December 1973 252  
8.7 The Red Brigade snapshot of Mario Sossi. Genoa, 1974 253  
8.8 Roberto Peci in the Red Brigade video filmed by Giovanni Senzani. Rome, 1981 255  
8.9 The Red Brigade snapshot of the murder of Roberto Peci. Rome, August 1981 256  
8.10 Members of the “XXII Ottobre” gang and Alessandro Floris. Genoa, March 1971 260  
8.11 Autonomia Operaia militant shooting a gun. Milan, May 1977 261  
8.12 Mimmo Rotella, *Scontro armato*, 1980 262  
8.13 Detail of Paolo Pedrizzetti's photograph of an Autonomia Operaia militant shooting a gun. Milan, May 1977 264  
8.14 Gianni Giansanti, Aldo Moro's corpse. Rome, May 1978 266  
8.15 Rolando Fava, Aldo Moro's corpse. Rome, May 1978 267  
9.1 Film frame from *Karagoez – Catalogo 9.5, 1979–81* 275  
9.2 Film frame from *Images d'Orient, tourisme vandale*, 2001 281  
9.3 Film frame from *La marcia dell'uomo*, 2001 283  
9.4 Film frame from *Oh! Uomo*, 2004 285  
10.1 Luigi Ghirri, from *Atlante* 295  
10.2 Luigi Ghirri, *Scardorari, Strada sull'argine*, from *Il profilo delle nuvole* 298  
10.3 Luigi Ghirri, *Cadecoppi. Dalla strada per Finale Emilia*, from *Il profilo delle nuvole* 301  
10.4 Vittore Fossati, *Villa Minozzo, Fonti di Poiano, 1997*, from *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* 305  
10.5 Vittore Fossati, *Montagna Sainte-Victoire, 1999*, in *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* 307

- 11.1 Autonomia Operaia militant shooting a gun, as photographed by amateur photographer Paolo Pedrizzetti. Milan, May 1977 318
- 12.1 Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale n. 4*, 1972 323
- 12.2 Franco Vaccari, cover of *Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico*, 1979 324
- 12.3 Marcel Duchamp, *Égouttoir* (Bottle rack), 1914 330
- 12.4 Franco Vaccari, *John Wayne Padano*, from *Radici*, 1955/1965 333
- 12.5 Franco Vaccari, pages from *Le tracce*, 1966 335
- 12.6 Franco Vaccari, *Cane che guarda*, from *La città vista a livello di cane*, 1967–8 337
- 12.7 Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale n. 4*, 1972 339
- 12.8 Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale n. 4*, 1972 340
- 12.9 Franco Vaccari, *Bar Code-Code Bar*, Venice Biennale, 1993 341
- 12.10 Franco Vaccari. *Esposizione in tempo reale n. 8: Omaggio all'Ariosto*, 1974 343

## Colour Plates

- Plate 1 Luigi Ghirri, *Rimini 1985*
- Plate 2 Olivo Barbieri, *site specific\_ROMA 04, 2004*
- Plate 3 Giacomo Balla, *Fallimento* (Bankruptcy), 1902
- Plate 4 Portrait of Italian immigrants. New York, ca. 1902
- Plate 5 Gianni Bertini, *Lui piange*, 1977
- Plate 6 Film frame from *Trasparenze* (Transparencies, 1998)
- Plate 7 Vittore Fossati, *Oviglio, Alessandria, 1981*, from *Viaggio in Italia*
- Plate 8 Franco Vaccari, *700 KM di esposizione Modena Graz*, 1972

*This page intentionally left blank*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

Many people inspired, supported, and contributed to the publication of this book, and we are grateful to them all. We would like to acknowledge in particular the encouragement and unfailingly generous support of the late Ron Schoeffel, our original editor at the University of Toronto Press. We are also deeply grateful to Siobhan McMenemy, who took up Ron's work at a very difficult time with grace and efficiency, and supported the book through to the end. Our sincere thanks go also to Professor Virginie Greene (Chair of Romance Languages) of Harvard University and Professor Neil Quigley (Provost) and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Victoria University of Wellington for making possible essential financial support for the project. We warmly thank the artists and archives who provided images and assistance and the many colleagues whose observations, critiques, and enthusiasm have enriched the book throughout its long gestation, particularly Dr Giacomo Lichtenber and Professor Geoffrey Batchen. Finally, an enormous debt of gratitude is owed to our families, and in particular to David Capie and Harris Gruman, for their support and considerable patience.

*This page intentionally left blank*

STILLNESS IN MOTION: ITALY, PHOTOGRAPHY,  
AND THE MEANINGS OF MODERNITY

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Introduction

---

SARAH PATRICIA HILL AND GIULIANA MINGHELLI

Contemplating the first daguerreotypes of “a motionless, lunar Italy, suspended over bottomless pasts,” the social historian Giulio Bollati pondered how photography’s modernizing vocation might relate to such a changeless and pastoral scene (17; [Figure i](#)). What happens when the visual medium of modernity encounters this “deviant and peculiar” (*ibid.*) historical environment? Would Italy’s timelessness alter, perhaps impair, what photography could mean, its ability to express industrial Europe? To raise the question of photography in Italy, of a medium that has shaped modern experience in ways still mysterious and unexplored, is to raise the equally problematic and unsettled question of how Italy relates to modernity. *Stillness in Motion* seeks to explore and map various ways in which Italian culture, photography, and modernity intersect. Recent studies have finally begun to address the long-neglected subject of Italy and photography, approaching it in terms of art history, representations of gender, race and ethnic difference, or the “sister arts” debate over visual and verbal art forms.<sup>1</sup> This book offers a complementary perspective, engaging with the work of photographers who have probed photography’s relation to modernity and above all examining how photography has been used by non-photographers, or at least those for whom photography was not a profession: artists, writers, and theorists, but also ordinary Italians for whom photographs took on complex and often intensely personal meanings. To paraphrase Arjun Appadurai (and Mieke Bal), this is a book about the social life of photographs. Following the desire to investigate “the visual practices that are possible in a particular culture, hence, scopic or visual regimes” (Bal, “Visual Essentialism” 9), the chapters explore how literature, the social sciences, the artistic avant-garde, cinema, popular culture, everyday practice, and politics have confronted the medium and in the process highlight key attitudes towards modernity. The contributors – art historians, cinema, cultural studies and literature scholars, artists, and theorists – approach photography as a rich and unstable entity: a technology that embodies and inflects modernity, a cultural practice that affects every sector of Italian society, and a material object embedded in new social and artistic realities.

Along with the question of what photography says about Italian culture, these pages explore a second, complementary one: what does Italy’s relation to photography reveal about the medium, in all its infinite reproducibility, complex temporality, and ambiguous ontology? The book seeks to suggest ways in which specific acts

of looking, artistic appropriations of the medium, and even the materiality of the landscape give rise to theoretical and creative reflections on photography that are uniquely grounded in the Italian historical and cultural environment. Examining the meeting of photography and Italy as a means to enrich our contemporary understanding of the medium and of the modernity it expresses, this book moves beyond Bollati's original articulation. The opening questions could be reframed along these lines: how does the encounter between a country belatedly entering into the modern industrial age yet endowed with a sophisticated visual culture foreshadow issues that are central to the current global culture of the image?

Many are the paths that we could have followed in the pursuit of these questions. Rather than propose a national history of photography, the book traces a series of movements and transactions that, following a rough chronological trajectory, pinpoint in the materiality of photographic practice specific historical moments and articulations of modernity, revealing multiple photographies and multiple Italies. Taking as its starting point Italian Unification and the early modernist period, the first section of the book, "National Beginnings and Modernist Fears," explores the initial exchanges between Italy and the quintessential modern visual technology: the mutual interaction of photography and nation building, the contested position of photography within the newly born national literature and budding social sciences, and the role photography plays in the modernizing project of the futurist avant-garde. These essays reveal the highly ambiguous attitude of artists and politicians towards a modernity they both feared and revered. Such ambiguity is reiterated and confirmed once we consider how the question of technology is marginalized, if not absent, in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century philosophical reflections of thinkers such as Benedetto Croce, Giovanni Gentile, and Antonio Gramsci.<sup>2</sup> It is precisely in reaction to this long-standing and persistent intellectual disinterest in photographic technology that we decided to concentrate on the specificity of the medium, its wealth of histories, and its profound effects on Italian culture in a broad sense.

Photographs don't simply replicate the world iconically but are themselves part of it – material objects like the things they depict.<sup>3</sup> From the nineteenth-century *cartes de visite* widely used during the Italian Risorgimento to the commodified paparazzi shots of the 1960s, photographs take on great plasticity and agency. As Miriam Hansen has pointed out in relation to Siegfried Kracauer's reflection on the materiality of photographs, "They spawn and participate in public life and disclose their meanings through social usage and cultural practices" (36). Furthermore, Kracauer's "photo-things" do not exist in an abstract timeless space, rather they are historical and transient and their meaning is constantly reconfigured between the split-second exposure, the commodified existence and the archival afterlife (36). It is in this very materiality and historicity, where photographs record the natural appearance of the prevailing social order that the possibility of cultural critique is to be located.<sup>4</sup> Bringing to light vernacular uses of photography, the book's second part, "Modern Memory Objects: Social Histories of the Photograph," undertakes just such a critique. Its two chapters carry out an intensive study of two instances of "photo-things" and the photographic practices that generated them: the photographs of emigrants and of

First World War soldiers. They examine how these photographs in all their touching and tangible materiality are the site of phantasmagorical projections of desire, memory, and self-fashioning.

The changing nature of the medium is addressed directly in Part III, “Photography and the Acceleration of Modernity: Reality-Commodity-Violence.” This section illustrates and reflects upon photography’s increased circulation, the speeding up of the actual technology, and the intensification of the visual contents with shock effects that reflect the heightened commercialization and political exploitation of the images in a new geopolitical field. The contributors focus on three crucial turning points for Italy in the second half of the twentieth century: the immediate post-war period, the *miracolo economico*, and the “leaden years” of the 1970s. Engaging key social and political issues, this section traces an original path for the history of a medium suspended between a local and global vocation. It moves from an early instance of the international exchange of photographic codes and styles such as the one that connects neo-realism and the US Farm Service Administration photographers, to the consumerist acceleration of image production in the Italy of the paparazzi, and ultimately to the brutal exploitation of the instantaneous indexicality of the Polaroid in terrorist “documentary” practices.

The last sections, “Critiques of Modernity: Stillness, Motion, and the Ethics of Seeing” and “Documents and Experiences” with essays by Umberto Eco and Franco Vaccari, bring us to the contemporary period, to focus on some of the defining moments of Italy’s innovative and still largely unknown contribution to thinking photography. Far from the modernist fears of photography, these more theoretical reflections engage directly with what is now an old technology, yet one that is still tirelessly updating itself. Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi’s use of photography’s materiality as a critique of cinematic movement, Luigi Ghirri’s practice and theorization of multimediality and an ecology of seeing, and Vaccari’s groundbreaking analysis of the technological unconscious initiate a rethinking of the temporality and materiality of the medium and reflect on the ethos of the modernity that photography enabled, accompanied, virally unleashed and still relentlessly documents and critiques.

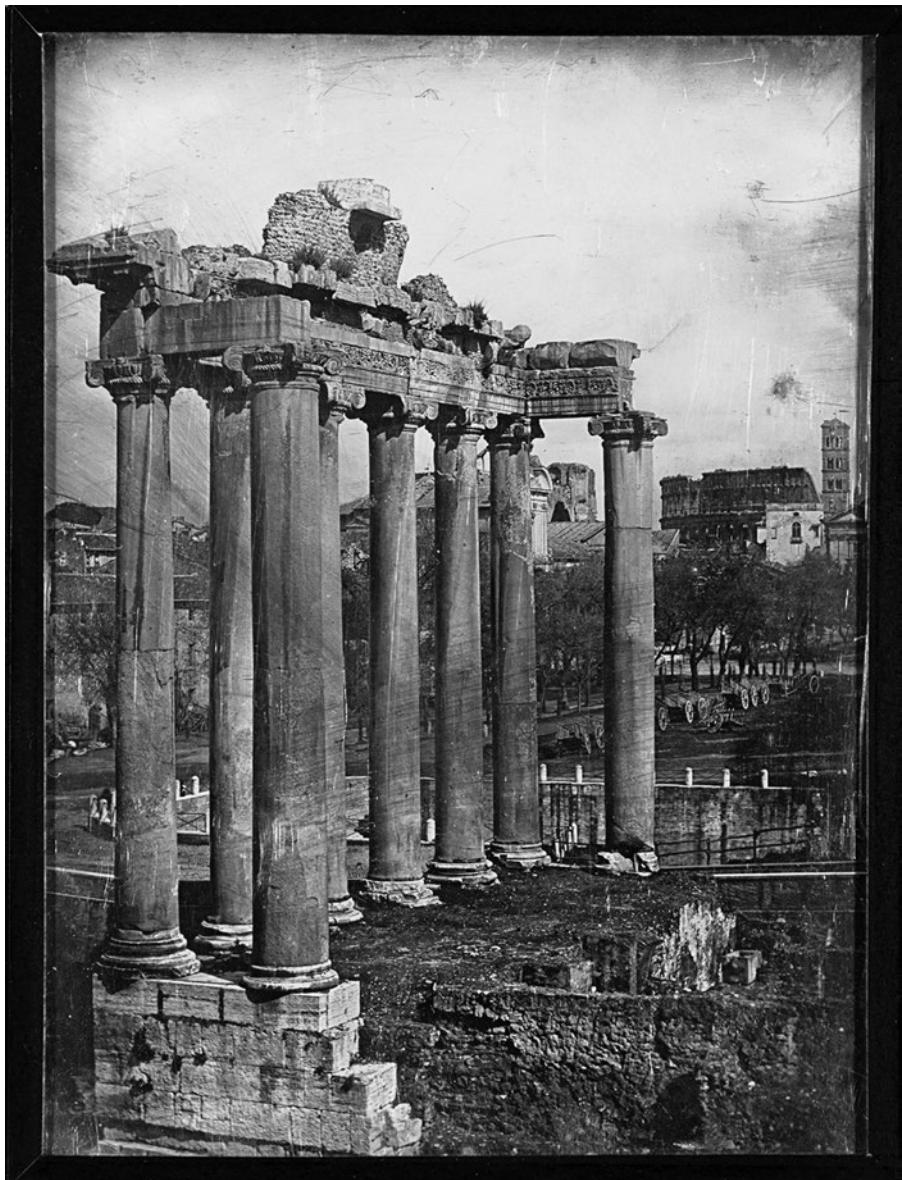
Ultimately, the book’s goal is to isolate through the photographic image points of stillness that contain the currents and counter-currents of a culture in motion. The motion is that of modernity, Italy’s slow, uncertain, and contradictory advancement towards industrialization, urbanization, and a commercial culture. The photographic medium partakes of that motion with its specific evolution that created machines that were increasingly perfected and portable, as well as faster in their capturing of the world, more immediate in the production of its images. Within this normative notion of an ever-accelerating modernity, we maintain that photography’s inherent ability to *still* the world, to focus on isolated and frozen points of becoming, gives it a unique hermeneutic power to question social and cultural tensions and reveal instances of ideological invisibility. Even if muted by the endemic proliferation of images, photography’s vocation to afford, in Walter Benjamin’s words, a *Denkbild* remains unchallenged and, if anything, is rendered more urgent. Each chapter within

the collection offers discrete moments of analytical and theoretical stillness that allow the authors to assess the historical motion of Italian culture and the photographic medium. Thus, the twin notions of *stillness* and *motion* are not just descriptive of the medium, history, and movement of Italian culture but also express the overall methodological and structural conception underlying the book. They also embody its critical and theoretical horizon as articulated in the artistic practices of Ricci Lucchi and Gianikian's photographic cinema, Ghirri's landscape photography, and Vaccari's photographic installations. In other words, the notion of photographic stillness allows for a critical engagement that advances alternative ethical articulations, questioning modernity's imperative motion and proposing an ethical slowing down of our perception and engagement with the world and its visual afterlife.<sup>5</sup>

### **Thinking Photography through the Lens of Italy**

As will be clear by now, a basic working assumption underlies this study: the belief that photography is no mere epiphenomenon but rather a crucial point of entry through which to understand the experience of modernity. It is true that the appearance of the new medium on the world scene is not connected with momentous historical events like wars, changes of government, or political structures, but it is intimately intertwined with profound transformations like the industrial revolution and the development of consumer capitalism. Photography's impact occurs according to a different calendar, a temporality that has more in common with the silent invisible action of geological mutations. Like modernity, photography restlessly unfolds in a series of transformations and slow and pervasive infiltrations of human practices and social structures. This particular relation to temporality accounts for the ability of the photographic medium to adapt and escape obsolescence, "an ability to grow with the times and to speak to all times" (Minghelli 9), so that its history offers a palimpsest of modernity. Italian photographer Franco Vaccari turns the tables on the perception of photography's marginality when he states that with Daguerre's invention "it is not the photograph that is delivered to the world, but the world that is offered to the photograph" (*Inconscio* 96). This observation highlights how the photograph is never a passive object but in the moment it is appropriated always enacts an appropriation, an interpretation, a reflection on the act performed and an intervention on ways of seeing and the things seen.<sup>6</sup> Hence the double importance of the first daguerreotypes of Italy that Bollati describes. These images are not simple documents but rather "*spettrali radiografie storiche*" ("spectral historical X-rays"; Bollati, "Note su storia e fotografia" 17), which, by taking hold of Italy, reveal its historical delay.

In Bollati's account, photography emerges as the technology of modernity, a fore-runner of a new temporality that brings the idea of forward motion to bear on a stubbornly unmovable, transhistorical landscape. This being the case, we might observe another temporal tension at work in the primal scene of Italy's first encounter with photography, a tension which highlights the medium's mixed and ambiguous relation to time, a double allegiance to a modern future and a monumentalized past. Photography's modernizing vocation, the mechanical reproduction of the image and



**Figure i** Unknown photographer, daguerreotype of the Temple of Saturn at the Roman Forum. Rome, 1840–1845. © Archivio Alinari.

its multiplication, coexists with an (albeit problematic) indexical rootedness that is loyal to specific objects, places, and moments, the expression of a desire that is quite ancient. Photography's advent, according to film critic André Bazin, marked the realization of humankind's most primitive aspiration and oldest dream: to preserve life and defeat death – a modern act of mummification ("The Ontology of the Photographic Image" 237). No other technology contemporaneously reaches back to the pyramids and projects us forward, well before the word was even contemplated, into an age of globalization. Seen from this perspective, the encounter between photography and Italy is a particularly complex business. Far from being alien to the dreamy monumental and pastoral landscape of Italy, strewn with ruins and dotted with picturesque figures, photography engages in a subtle conversation with this environment. The movement is double: as photography frames the materiality of Italy, revealing its historical delay and backwardness, Italy in turn frames the photographic gesture, highlighting the medium's archaeological and antiquarian vocation.<sup>7</sup> But the ways Italy and photography critically reflect each other do not stop here.

The world that Italy offers to photography is a visually well-explored one. An investigation of photography in Italy has to take into account the pressure that Italy's long and richly sedimented tradition of the image and of seeing exerts on the new medium. Upon its arrival on Italian soil, the modern technological image finds a visual environment that centuries of native and foreign painterly and printed representations had already thoroughly mapped and codified. For centuries Italy has been identified with the picturesque, defined and conventionalized by the eager image-seeking eyes of Grand Tour visitors and since then mechanically multiplied by an all-pervasive and homogenizing tourist industry. In capturing the Italy that both tourists and local elites expected to see, photography was itself captured by a well-established and highly coded iconography. Furthermore, the monumentality of Italy commands a very specific gaze that both responds to the eye of the camera and contains it within a specific visual regime. Bollati recalls Giacomo Leopardi's 1822 description of the disproportion between the monumental grandeur of Rome's ancient urban spaces and the onlooker who, dwarfed by this encounter, can engage the spaces only visually: "Man's sensory faculties, in these places, are limited to pure seeing" (qtd. in Bollati, "Note su storia e fotografia" 22). Well before being impressed on plates, Italy's monuments and vistas enforced a voyeuristic, externalized mode of consumption that rendered them ready-made photographic subjects.

An ingrained culture of spectacle permeates Italian society, from its piazzas, churches, and palazzos to the humblest street corners and private homes. Leopardi's analysis of the optic relationship of the human subject to the Italian landscape prefigures precisely how photography would adopt the well-worn pictorial modes that still largely shape the picture-postcard images of Italy marketed both internationally and at home. Having lived for centuries with a heightened visibility of its monuments and landscapes, which went along with a parallel visual erasure of its lived historical experience, Italy has endured the gloriously precarious life of an image-simulacrum. Its historical position is paradoxical as a country that enters only belatedly into the modern industrial age and the status of nationhood and yet, because of its existence

as a picture, precociously foreshadows a postmodern condition. Long before Italy achieved nationhood, it was, far more than Metternich's "geographical expression," a pictorial expression, a series of stereotyped *vedute* that masked a multitude of realities and achieved a global reach and appeal.

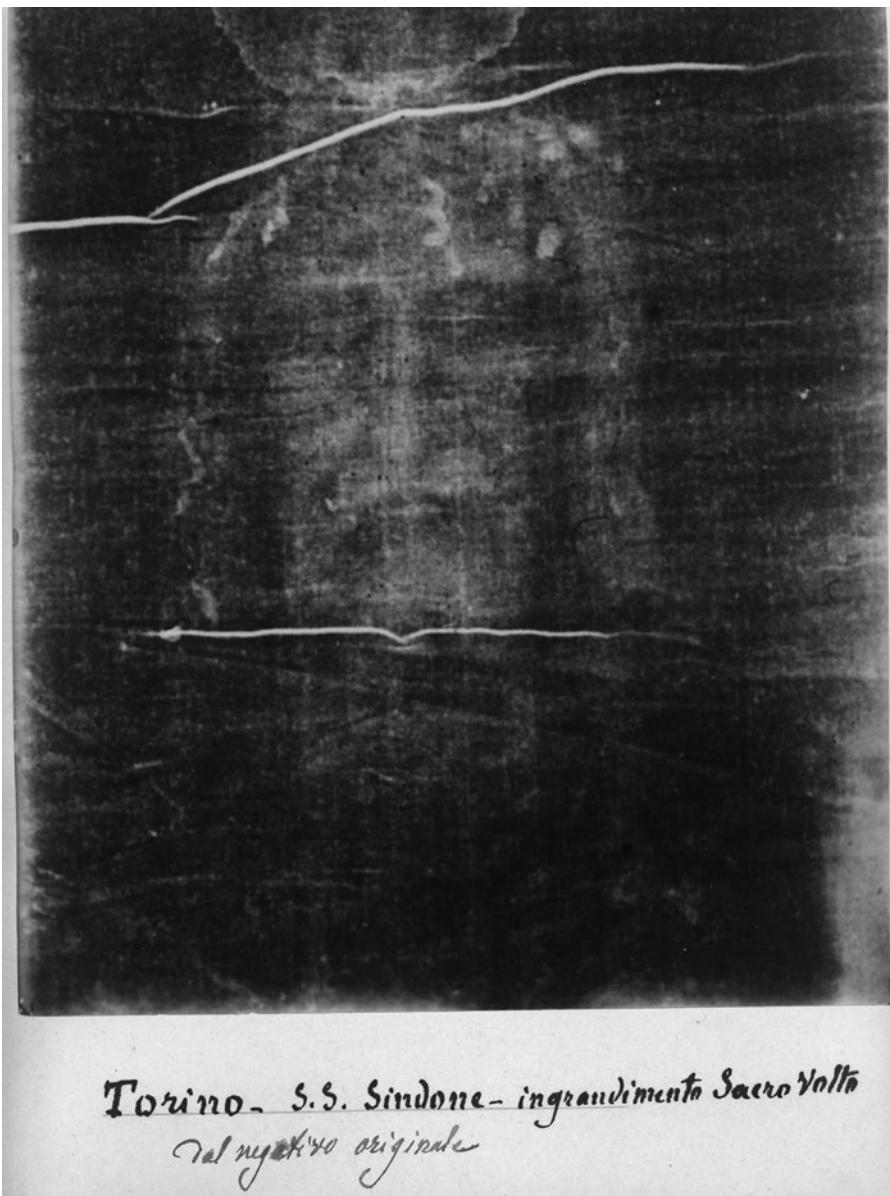
It is exactly the power of this deeply rooted tradition that contemporary Italian photographers will have to confront. Luigi Ghirri's "Rimini" (see [Colour Plate 1](#)), a photograph of the theme park *Italia in miniatura* (Italy in Miniature) from his collection *In scala* (*To Scale*, 1977–8), reveals one strategy adopted to come to terms with Italy's picturesqueness. With their look of hyper-detailed, clean, and plastic scaled-down models, Olivo Barbieri's aerial photographs playfully quote Ghirri and stage the very same anti-picturesque impulse from a diametrically opposed perspective (see [Colour Plate 2](#)). The two photographers, each in his own way, ironically play with Leopardi's alienating experience of being dwarfed by Italian monumentality, taking stock of the banalization of the awe-inspiring, of the ultimate touristic marketing of Italy, preshrunk for the consumer's convenience. Interestingly, in both of these images the postcard image of Italy is still operative, thus reaffirming an auratic quality of the photo even in these instances of extreme postmodern reduction.

Photographs of Italian cities and landscapes, from the early daguerreotypes to the postmodern visions of Ghirri and Barbieri, give the lie to Benjamin's belief that mechanical reproducibility drains the aura out of the image. Overcharged with history and art, the materiality of Italy is intensely auratic: "a strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it might be" (Benjamin, "The Work of Art" 2002, 104). Sacred and profane at the same time, material and sensual and yet never quite secularized, the image in Italy is – to quote Benjamin's analysis – part of a cult of beauty which embraces a strong belief in the unique value of the authentic work of art. Given this powerful belief, it is perhaps not surprising that Italian culture would oppose a resistance to a new notion of art advanced by photographic technology, an art where reproduction takes the place of notions of uniqueness and what Benjamin calls the exhibition value replaces the sacral value of the image. Benedetto Croce's idealistic aesthetics, celebrating subjective poetic intuition over technique and the materiality of the medium, could be read precisely as an act of negation and containment, a philosophical embodiment of the resistance to thinking art in relation to technology. Deeply influenced by Croce's thought, many Italian intellectuals acted for a long time as if photography did not bring in a radical shift ripe with artistic and theoretical potential. As in other Western countries, photography had to come to terms with a philosophical tradition that devalued the image, but in Italy this situation was further complicated by the country's saturated visual environment and intellectual conventions. On the one hand, an overpowering visual history dulled the edges of photography's technological otherness by leading it back into the known parameters of the painterly or the purely documentary. On the other, high culture treated photography as just another image – albeit more realistic, accurate, and accelerated – and despised it accordingly. Umberto Eco, one of the first Italian thinkers who broke with the Crocean tradition to elaborate a theory of

modern media, pointed out an ingrained elitist attitude in Italy towards mass culture – photography being one of the first and most egregious of its modern manifestations – tracing it back to the early Catholic church ideology as embodied in Onorio of Autun's formulation: “*Pictura est laicorum literatura*” (“Images are the literature of the layman”; *Apocalittici* 17).

In the first decades following its invention, photography spawned mixed and contradictory attitudes in Italian cultural circles. On the one hand, the scientific and journalistic communities received photography – a testament to the positivist faith in science’s ability to penetrate the mysteries of nature – with extraordinary enthusiasm. For the majority of intellectuals, however, photography remained mechanistic, stolidly documentary, at best a fascinating hobby or a useful scientific tool.<sup>8</sup> Yet this dismissal disguised deeper and often unspoken intellectual mistrusts: first of all a fear of the power of the dehumanizing machine and, second, of photography’s potential to disrupt comfortably accepted “truths” – namely, the new medium’s ability to reveal ideologies, social constructs, and cultural manipulations. Interestingly, an early and isolated theoretical investigation of these issues is to be found in a novel. Luigi Pirandello’s *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* (The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio), which originally appeared as *Si gira!* (Shoot!) in 1916, offers a rare and very advanced reflection on the photographic medium whose insight and theoretical value is confirmed by the presence of this text in Benjamin’s canonical essay “The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility” (1936–9). Pirandello depicts a nightmarish modernity where humans have been enslaved by the machines they created and in particular by the camera, to whose hungry maw they feed their lives and souls. The hero of Pirandello’s novel, the camera operator Serafino Gubbio, muses that photographic technology risks exposing “that metaphorical ideal which our countless fictions, conscious and unconscious, our fictitious interpretations of our actions and feelings lead us inevitably to form of ourselves” (*Shoot!* 123).<sup>9</sup> In a way foreshadowing Benjamin’s notion that “*the camera* introduces us to *unconscious* optics as does psychoanalysis to *unconscious* impulses” (*Illuminations* 237), Pirandello recognizes how photographic technology reveals what he calls the “something more” that people “do not wish or do not know how to see” (*Shoot!* 4). Pirandello represents an exceptional example of an Italian artist who was aware that photography is not inert but has the power to lay bare an unconscious dimension of the visual and to affect deeply human self-perception.

Nonetheless, neither Pirandello nor his contemporaries explored the interpretive powers of the camera. In fact, as the chapter on Futurism shows, even the work of the Italian avant-garde (in this way radically distinct from other European movements such as Dada and later Surrealism) struggled to marginalize and contain the ambiguous and unsettling nature of photography. What are the cultural reasons behind this mistrust? Without entering into an in-depth discussion, we might point to the powerful influence that the Catholic iconographic tradition exerts on Italian culture.<sup>10</sup> The images of saints, miracles, the Shroud of Turin (that famous proto-photograph; [Figure ii](#)), all allude to an idea of the pure superficiality of the image or, in other words, to the absolute visibility of the divine.<sup>11</sup> The idea that the image can say everything at once



**Figure ii** Secondo Pia (1855–1941), The Shroud of Turin, May 1898. Collodion glass plate negative. Courtesy of Il museo della Sindone, Turin.

and that the sacred can be immediately experienced annihilates a more complex and problematic conception of the image itself. The absolute relation of worldly signs to a transcendental signifier censors the proliferation of a chaotic, anti-hierarchic, and secular disorder of meanings, desires, and impulses as the one enacted by a visual and psychological unconscious. This rejection of photography's plurality and secular unveiling of the aura might be one of the reasons why Italy never had its own Eugène Atget.

As a result of the denial of the camera's hermeneutical power, a serious theoretical engagement with the medium was long delayed in Italy. When it was discussed at all, photography tended to be addressed by critics rather than theorists, and this had a crucial influence on the ways in which the medium was conceived.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Italian photography's unusually long struggle to be recognized as an art form ultimately and ironically limited much discussion of the medium to the realm of art history, where it took the shape of a relatively straightforward account of the works of certain key photographer artists. This situation impeded a clearer understanding of photography as a shared socio-cultural as well as artistic phenomenon and practice. Photography represents an oxymoronic point of failure in the Italian visual field that only begins to be overcome as late as the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s. From the early isolated cases of the Futurists like Depero and Bragaglia, who treated photography as an arena of avant-garde experimentation, to the work of artists like Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, Luigi Ghirri, and Franco Vaccari, who advanced new interpretations of photography's relation to modernity, to the historical, sociological, and semiological approaches of figures like Giulio Bollati, Franco Ferrarotti, and Umberto Eco, and the more recent theorizations of photography like those of Renato Barilli, Gillo Dorfles, and Claudio Marra, we can discern a growing engagement with photography.

If photography's loaded relationship to temporality initiated a reflection and complex exchange with the Italian environment and its history, photography's equally ambiguous engagement with space sparked new understandings of the concept of nationhood and Italy's particular experience as a nation. Photography displays a double spatial vocation: on the one hand, it uproots and disseminates the materiality of the world in countless images, thus constituting a first instance of the globalization of culture; on the other, it expresses faithfulness to the irreducible materiality of experience, thus constantly reiterating its apparent commitment to the local, regional, vernacular, and indexical. Karen Strassler argues that "photography embodies [a] tension between the globalized scope of modernity and the more narrow, territorialized ambitions of nationhood" (13). Yet we could say that, in fact, photography questions and bypasses both dimensions. Photography both supports and collapses the aspirations of a global modernity and undermines the borders of the nation by simultaneously overshooting and dissolving them. In this sense, photography reconfigures the verbal model of social imagination that Benedict Anderson advanced in *Imagined Communities*. If, in Anderson's analysis, print fosters a national imaging bound by a common language, we could say that the photographic image inaugurates a double movement towards the globalization of the notion of community and its

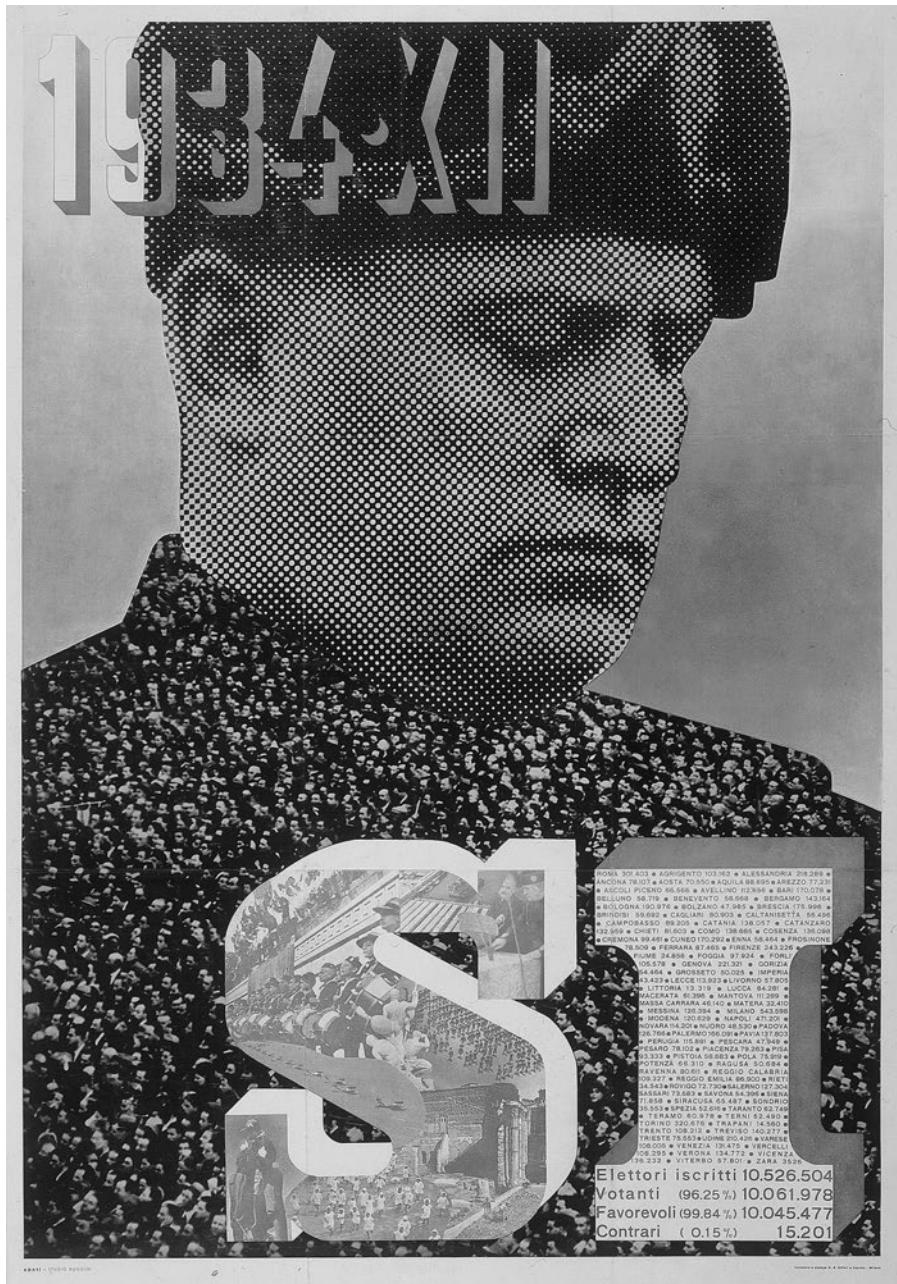
concomitant vernacularization. Local iterations of international photographic genres such as, for example, the portrait, the identification photograph, or the mug shot, raise questions about the limits of categories of national photography, pointing instead to the imagined communities projected by photographic bodies, behind which the phantasmagoric concept of nation shifts and splinters.

In Bollati's reflection, photography's modernizing intervention was intimately intertwined with another modern technology which set in motion a new socio-political organization of the peninsula: the nation-state. Italy was unified little more than twenty years after the official appearance of photography, in 1839, in time for the new medium to document both the difficult invention of a modern nation and the resistance to that process. While validating and recording the birth of the new state, photography spoke of communities beyond and within the national enclosure, often giving a face and voice to experiences that had been marginalized and did not fit within the unified mould. As this collection demonstrates, photography provides access to counter-histories of the nation, unofficial accounts of the last 150 years. What is more, the photographic documentation of the country's multiplicity of regional, social, and historical identities reveals the existence of multiple Italies, all offering narratives running against the grain of the national myth and complicating the ongoing story of Italy's strange relationship to modernity.

### **Points of Stillness in Italy's Unfolding Modernity**

As Bollati suggests, arguably the first official Italian contribution to the history of photography was the introduction of censorship during the Franco-Piedmontese campaign of 1859, when photographers – along with thieves and corpse robbers – were kept from roaming and documenting the battlefields (26–7).<sup>13</sup> It is telling that one of the earliest Italian institutional reactions to photography was of dread and a desire to keep at bay the revealing eye of the optical lens. Two years later this fear of photography's dangerous gaze and its uncontrollable reproducibility was echoed in the Cardinal Vicar of Rome's 1861 edict banning nude photographs and requiring photographers to apply for a permit from the police (still required of professional photographers in Italy until 1998). From its earliest decades, and even before Unification, photography in Italy was closely connected with social control, both secular and religious.<sup>14</sup> Confirming this institutional desire to tame and contain both photography and its subjects, an early figuration of the photographer, unearthed by Maria Grazia Lolla in [Chapter 2](#), shows an individual wearing the ambiguous uniform of the policeman and timekeeper. Early on, photography was enlisted into the creation of national myths and was pressed into fashioning a stubbornly fragmented and contingent reality into a unified modern narrative. Twenty years of Fascist rule pushed this nationalist project even further, with the medium officially recruited to record state spectacle and propaganda ([Figure iii](#)), to the exclusion of less palatable sights,<sup>15</sup> even as various vernacular and artistic practices continued to tell other stories.<sup>16</sup>

In the book's first chapter, "Photography and the Construction of Italian National Identity," Roberta Valtorta traces photography's complex role in such national



**Figure iii** Xanti Schawinsky, 1934–XII. Chromolithographic poster for Italian national referendum. Collection Merrill C. Berman; Photo Credit: Jim Frank.

myth-making, considering the medium's impact on the formation of concepts of an Italian national identity before, during, and after Unification. As noted above, at the time of photography's invention, Italy was still a political abstraction but with a long and well-established visual history. Valtorta, echoing Bollati, points out that the Italian resistance to modernization and photography is a result not of material but rather of ideological "backwardness." It lies not in the material conditions of nineteenth-century Italy but rather in the complex intersection of culture, ideology, and national officialdom. Referring to amateur and professional photographic practices, and including a number of previously unpublished early photographs, Valtorta examines how the histories of photography and the idea of Italy intersected and intertwined, showing how photographic technology picks up on earlier cultural forms – such as the myth of "*il Bel Paese*" dating back to Dante and Petrarch, and the iconography of the Grand Tour – as it both documents and performs acts of nation-building. In so doing, the eye of the camera turns inward and outward. Gazing inward, photography documents, defines, and promotes the country's artistic and natural beauty, its rich cultural and archaeological heritage, and its range of types and typologies (both folkloristic and scientific). Looking outward, it shows Italians the foreign shores where their emigrant compatriots arrive, as well as the colonies their soldiers subjugate and the enemies they seek to defeat, defining Italianness against a template of difference and asserting an heroic narrative of national identity.

Zooming in on the rich territory of early Italian photography mapped in Valtorta's essay, Maria Grazia Lolla's, "Local Colour and the Grey Aura of Modernity: Photography, Literature, and the Social Sciences in Fin-de-Siècle Italy," closely engages photography's cultural and political performative role. She focuses on the reception, the practices, and the discourses surrounding the new photographic technology on the eve and in the aftermath of Unification. In her analysis, the medium works as a powerful litmus test that reveals the hopes and anxieties which the onrush of modernity and the push to socially unify the country stirred in the ruling and intellectual elites of the new Italy. Lolla examines the "horizon of expectations that Italian photography met at its inception" and locates photography's main mandate in the demand to capture local colour, a maniacal pursuit shared by Italian novelists, artists, and social scientists. What was behind this frantic search to represent and memorialize the ambiguously defined and elusive quantity named "local color"?

In Lolla's argument, local colour – namely, the fast-disappearing singularity and pristineness of the rural Italies pre-existing Unification and modernization – becomes an ideal ground where widespread attitudes towards Italy's diversity and identity may be unearthed. The analysis of the discourse surrounding local colour serves multiple purposes: to reveal the clichéd aesthetic of the photograph fostered by commercial photographers and reinforced by the printed media; to analyse the impetus behind the emergence of the new anthropological and ethnographic disciplines; and to dissect the stylistic and moral impulses which drove the artistic project of *verismo*. From this analysis emerge the mixed attitudes, ranging from nationalistic enthusiasms to anxieties of modern "levelling," that literature, art, and ethnographic research displayed towards the photographic medium and its mandate to deliver cultural difference to

the heart of metropolitan modernity. Lolla hints at the profound political implications underlying the pursuit of local colour, pointing in particular to the subtle shift away from the search for a national self-knowledge that would provide the cement of a more durable union, to the expression of a murky constellation of anti-nationalist, anti-modernist, and politically conservative attitudes (from federalist proposals to dreams of medieval restoration of a stable, colourful, and ordered peasant class).

Lolla argues that photography ultimately exasperated rather than assuaged fears about the disappearance of local colour by homogenizing difference and reproducing the typical, the average. Indeed, the photographic medium might have contributed to what she terms the “greyification” of the world, and yet the more interesting element that emerges from Lolla’s analysis is how the slavish and paradoxically blind search for the already known pursued by writers, artists, and ethnographers severely limited the potentialities of photography. So it happens that Giorgio Sommer’s photographs of Neapolitan types literally restage popular engravings produced in the eighteenth century under the Bourbons or that painter-photographer Arnaldo Ferraguti sets out to recapture the rustic literary types previously described by De Amicis and Verga. A doubt sneaks in. Far from being a feared photographic after-effect, the much-lamented greyness supposedly unleashed by the industrial era well precedes the advent of modernity. Greyness is the colour of “local colour,” a visual effect created by the stereotyped repetitions of the same mythical, romanticized, immutable image of a country and of its picturesque people. The homogeneous cultural understanding of the photographic medium as a pernicious agent of modernity reveals an ingrained resistance to engage directly both with the materiality of photography and the reality – yet to be scripted and/or illustrated – of the Italian territory and its peoples. This hostility and resistance to the medium are what the next chapter will explore within the project of the artistic avant-garde.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, different conceptions of photography coexist side by side: photography as a social and anthropological document, pictorialist photography aspiring to the status of artwork, and photography as a means of both scientific research and occultist exploration. Photography appears tamed, conventionalized, and *passatista* and, at the same time, perpetually destabilizing, a medium that unleashes a technological and cultural unconscious.<sup>17</sup> Giuliana Minghelli’s chapter, “Eternal Speed/Omnipresent Immobility: Futurism and Photography,” shows how Futurist photography confronts all these uses and conceptions of the photographic medium, eliciting a series of responses ranging from suspicion to refusal and *schifo* (disgust), as well as acceptance as a necessary evil, violent appropriation, and playful interaction. Minghelli argues that photography occupies a contested and ambiguous position in the Futurist project. While artists like Balla and Boccioni are involved “in a secret dialogue with photography,” others like Bragaglia and Depero openly engage with the medium. Indeed, Depero’s experimentation is so productive that with Futurism, despite Marinetti’s overall negativity and indifference, photography became something else again: an experimental avant-garde art. However, the encounter between Futurism and photography brings to the fore the profoundly embattled attitude of Italian Futurism towards modernity, at once embraced through

a rhetoric of speed and action and yet secretly dreaded for the far reaching challenges it made to the very foundations of society. While photography evokes contingency – our uncertain belonging in a here and now – Futurism works towards the impossible monumentalization of action and speed as eternal recurrences outside any historical temporality. Analysing photographic time, Minghelli investigates how, through interruption and slowing-down of temporality, the medium advances a critique of Futurism's lasting myth of modernity as speed and endless change and creates alternative economies of energy and meaning and thus a different idea of modernity.

Minghelli's chapter interrogates the temporality of photography in avant-garde artistic practice and reveals the deep-seated anxiety about photography as representative of modernity that lies behind the nationalist, scientific, and literary uses of photography described by Valtorta and Lolla. In contrast, the following two chapters explore how the medium was invested with a positive, mediating role in creating individual and collective memories out of two of modernity's most shattering experiences: war and emigration. These events are the powerful testing grounds for a complex and dialogic definition of Italianness. Traumatic memories lie behind the apparently placid surface of the photographs Giorgia Alù considers in her chapter, "The Peripatetic Portrait: Exchange and Performance in Migration Photographs at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century." The history of Italian migration has been the subject of considerable research, much of it based on material found in public and private archives in Italy and abroad and much of it in the form of photographic evidence. These photographs speak to us of departures and returns as well as of achievement and failure. They are visual traces of desire and of a journey to another identity. Alù's chapter analyses a specific type of photograph narrating the Italian diaspora at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century: studio portraits of migrants. Italian emigrants often sent these portraits, together with letters, to their families back in Italy, reducing spatial distance and transporting a faraway place and life into the imagination of the viewers in Italy. These images show the migrants as they wanted to appear to their relatives and friends left in Italy: distinguished and triumphant.

However, most of these photographs are *mise en scène* to disguise poverty and struggle. They are part of a collective imagery of social aspiration and delusion, hope and displacement made up of portraits and subjects that exist only in and for the photographic studio. The photographs are sites through which narratives of collective belonging (and exclusion) were fabricated. Through the rituals of photographic self-representation and by using and repeating similar poses and props, migrants could construct notions of themselves as an "imagined community" rooted in fantasy. Alù's chapter therefore looks at the photograph's function as a tool of desire and of self-definition and self-fashioning in the context of Italian migration. She examines the tensions surrounding the fabrication and fabulation of a collective and personal identity through photographic means, as well as the meanings these types of images can acquire once they are put into circulation, both in the country of production and in Italy.

Another body of vernacular photographs has the power to evoke the sheer extent of loss and trauma and interrogate institutional history through a silent narrative.

Moving on from Valtorta's discussion of the significance of early Italian war photography for narratives of national identity and the emergence of a multiplicity of personal histories, Luca Cottini's chapter examines the private photographic portraits of Italian soldiers – at the moment of their departure and from the front – during the years of the Great War. His study of this inventory of images aims to document the process by which the non-propagandistic photographic image creates and superimposes, even before the “real” experience, a posthumous memory of events. It does so through mechanisms that both sacralize (the photo-relicuary) and banalize (the photo-souvenir) the war. This represents a defensive substitution of a peaceful memory for the trauma of an unspeakable experience, through the visual repetition of a preconstituted initial memory. Bringing into question the myth of the unknown soldier by individualizing the faces of individual combatants, it also offers a significant example that helps explain analogous mechanisms that both construct, via the sacralization of the collective myth of the Great War, and reclaim, through a banalizing display (in postwar memorializing, from diaries to monuments and museums), collective suffering.

Barbara Grespi's chapter, “Italian Neo-Realism between Cinema and Photography,” focuses on a different culture of movement and exchange to those discussed by Alù and Cottini: that of iconic modes and ways of seeing, and the photographic circulation of landscapes as myths. At the same time, a profound continuity ties these two moments. The formal exploration of photographic realism in the 1930s and 1940s is inspired precisely by the call of the everyday and its humble, anonymous protagonists, first seen through the photographic lens in the portrait photography analysed in the two previous chapters. Following a similar transatlantic current to the one Alù maps, which brings a stream of images from the United States back to Italy, Grespi explores how the body of photographs developed by the New Deal's Farm Security Administration project inspired a certain idea of reality and helped elaborate a rhetoric and an ethics of vision that profoundly influenced Italian post-war narrative and cinema. What role did the images of Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans have in helping create the estranged gaze that dominates much of neorealist cinema? Through a comparison of journalistic photography in America and Italy, the exploration of the dialogue between film and photography in the work of film directors like Alberto Lattuada, and the explicit use of American photography by writers like Elio Vittorini in his 1941 anthology *Americana*, Grespi traces both precise visual exchanges and a general vocabulary of seeing that profoundly influenced the iconography of films like Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione*. The result was images with great geographical precision – the actual streets and landscapes of Italy – that at the same time exuded an epic atmosphere, a grandeur that breathed the wide horizons of desolate American plains. She shows how modern images coming from far-off depression America were absorbed and reinterpreted into the material reality of the Italian environment, giving rise to a regional vernacular cinema that achieves a global status and recognition as quintessentially Italian. Moving with ease between visual and narrative traditions, America and Italy, Grespi sketches “a mythology about destruction and what comes afterwards” that provocatively links the economic ravages of capitalism to the ruins

of the war and celebrates the birth through photography of socially marginal subjects, unseen before, now monumentalized in narrative and cinema.

As Grespi shows, in the immediate postwar period neo-realism's experimentation with indexicality offered new possibilities for photography outside colonialist, nationalist, and propagandistic schemas. Yet in the following decades, photography's key roles in the creation of a society based on image consumption introduced new kinds of mistrust of the photographic image and new ways to exploit the photographic means for creative, commercial, and political ends, sometimes pushing towards violent extremes and exposing the latent potential violence of the medium itself. The chapters by Sarah Hill and Christian Uva map these cultural transitions that take photography away from a more direct engagement with reality to the glitter of simulacra and the violence of propaganda and focus on the mutual influence of artistic and popular/vernacular practices.

Sarah Hill looks at the way commercial and popular photographic images helped reshape public and private notions of what could and should be shown and seen in Italy during and after the boom of the late 1950s and early 1960s. She argues that aggressive new photographic practices – symbolized above all by the figure of the paparazzo but echoed also in vernacular and artistic practices – enlarged the scope of the visible, while at the same time enforcing norms of visibility and accepted visual identities. She shows how the period of the economic miracle represents a crucial shift in Italians' uses of and understandings of photography, which emerges clearly as a problematic symptom and product of consumer modernity. As she points out, "In the very moment in which Italy finally catches up on industrialization, photography is already pointing the way to a post-industrial economy." Examining works by Italo Calvino, Federico Fellini, and Michelangelo Antonioni, and ending with an original analysis of the largely neglected connections between Pier Paolo Pasolini and photography, she argues that photography played a crucial role in how Italy transformed into a capitalist "society of spectacle," as Guy Debord would call it, and in shaping how some of its most important artists and intellectuals conceptualized the shifting cultural landscape. Hill demonstrates that for these intellectuals, photography embodied both the frantic energy and the sense of melancholy and loss that the economic boom produced.

The cynical paparazzo practice of creating events in order to record them is taken to its horrifying extreme in the pictures Christian Uva discusses in "Images of Violence, Violence of Images: The 'Years of Lead' and the Practice of Armed Struggle between Photography and Video." The chapter analyses the iconography of the Italian Years of Lead through the photographic and audiovisual documents produced by the protagonists of the armed struggle themselves as well as by external witnesses. An essential reference point in this analysis is the tragic "episodic photo-story" carried out by the main Italian terrorist movement, the Red Brigades. Starting with the first photograph of Idalgo Macchiarini's kidnapping in 1972, this photo-story moves on to that of Justice Mario Sossi and the famous photographs of Aldo Moro, concluding with the video of the execution of the "traitor" Patrizio Peci, which precedes by almost twenty years al-Qaeda's violent video practice. The chapter examines the

specific modalities that govern the more or less conscious construction of these visual messages, which were fundamental elements of the military strategy of the *partito armato*. Uva convincingly analyses the Red Brigades' media strategy, highlighting photography's doubly crucial role: as a document produced for the external intimidation of society and an internal testimonial that works as an act of propaganda to build and strengthen the movement. The terrorist use of photography is discussed in the context of contemporary counter-culture reflections on the relation between the society of the spectacle's daily consumption of images and revolutionary practices of communication, including the notion of militancy as communication. Through a thorough exploration of photographic representations of violence, Uva invites a reflection on the possible connections between terrorist violence and the latent violence of photographic technology and modernity itself (such as the relation between the immediacy of the Polaroid shots and the early "hit and run" practice of the Red Brigades).

Uva focuses both on photographs produced by terrorists as well as on photographs produced from the outside, images such as Paolo Pedrizzetti's famous 1977 photograph of a young extremist pointing a gun at the police during a demonstration in Milan. Besides their immediate forensic value, these images have acquired an historical charge as "decisive moments of an era" that capture "the way we experience history and change and the possible meanings of our modernity." Uva's chapter addresses a central issue of modern photographic hermeneutics. Commenting on the photograph of the Moro kidnapping represented in the American photographer Sarah Charlesworth's installation *April 21 1978*, Barry Schwabsky observed: "Sometimes the line between understanding pictures and being understood by them is hazy."<sup>18</sup> Far from being simple explanatory postcards from the past, the Moro photographs reveal a crucial mechanism of modern photographic reception. Their suspended violence reflects the historical conditions of their production and use, and captures how the violent event is experienced photographically, not as a process unfolding in time and narrative but as a decisive, ready-for-consumption, violent (hence speechless) moment.

In contrast with the cynical and pessimistic appropriations of the medium in the paparazzo and terrorist photographic practices that Hill and Uva consider, the concluding chapters of the book engage with a new ethics of photographic seeing that developed contemporaneously and in direct response to the commercialization and speeding up as well as spectacular and violent deployments of photography in late modernity. Robert Lumley's chapter, "The Body in and of the Image in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi," considers the materiality of the body and of the photograph itself in the cinema of experimental filmmakers Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi. Since the late 1970s, they have been making films in which found footage from the cinema of the early twentieth century forms a palimpsest – layers of images reworked and overwritten so that the past re-emerges as a ghost in the present. A return to the photographic origins of cinema through the slowing down of the film and the rephotographing and blowing-up of the single frames is at the core of the filmmakers' memorializing project. The recuperation of the hidden sensual and

perishable materiality of the photograph within the filmic movement is the starting point for an ethical reflection on modern visual technologies and their relation to history, modernity, and power. An extraordinary attention to detail and to the single frame is combined with rhythms of editing that induce hallucination, reinventing images with a power to move and shock associated with the early history of cinema. Foregrounding for the viewer the physicality of the act of seeing, the filmmakers start a critical reflection on the ideology of progress and the violence of modernity.

Themselves avid collectors and cataloguers of films, notably documentaries, Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi have undertaken journeys through history – from the rise of imperialism to the wars and genocides unleashed during and in the wake of the First World War – and across continents or, in the name of their most celebrated film, *Dal polo all'equatore* (From the Pole to the Equator). Their films analyse precisely the kinds of instrumentalized uses of the photographic medium discussed in earlier chapters, such as Fascist propaganda, as well as the creation of myths of national identity, the development of a consumer society, and the exploitation of photographic technologies in conventional and extra-parliamentary politics. Indeed, a widely felt preoccupation with the revival of Fascism and political violence during the years of the *strategia della tensione* helps explain the political commitment of figures like Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi, even if their *impegno* is channelled entirely through an artistic project that eschews the propaganda and didacticism of politics. Their choice to operate as autonomous artists, controlling the production and distribution of their work, connects them to a broader movement in 1970s Italy that sought to achieve independence from the market and political patronage. Even more importantly, in their photo-cinematographic work Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi anticipate a growing awareness in Italy of the importance of confronting the Italian colonialism whose history helps us to understand present-day racism. Their films challenge the ideas that aesthetic pleasure in the image is suspect and incompatible with critical thought and that when images trigger emotional responses they are inevitably manipulating the spectator. The chapter reflects on the theory and practice of the photographic image in their work and argues that the difficulty of classifying the films in terms of customary categories, such as documentary, is due to their radical assault on dominant ways of looking and understanding the world through photographic technologies. By returning to photography, Lumley argues, Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi rediscover cinema “as a lost object and reinvent the act of seeing.”

Marina Spunta’s chapter, “Intersections of Photography, Writing, and Landscape: The Italian Landscape Photobook from Ghirri to Fossati and Messori,” considers the work and influence of a photographer who saw the medium as a means of making peace with the materiality of the landscape by “looking at things as they ask to be looked at.” Taking Ghirri’s seminal landscape works of the 1980s as her starting point, Spunta argues for the importance of considering the theoretical triangulation of photography, writing, and landscape in order to evaluate the impact of photography in contemporary Italian culture. This approach takes into account photography’s influence on writing, and vice versa. Spunta also assesses the role of the photographic image in the construction of landscape and identity, and the importance of the

discourse on space and place in forging contemporary Italian photography, which, since the 1980s, has mostly engaged with landscape. The chapter discusses the novelty of the Italian landscape photobook in bringing together photography and writing in a single text, thus in exposing possible tensions between visual and verbal culture. It focuses particularly on Ghirri's collaborative project *Viaggio in Italia* and discusses his role in making both photography and landscape more visible and in rewriting photography in close dialogue with writing. The recent collaboration between Vittore Fossati and Giorgio Messori, *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* (2007), takes Ghirri's experimentation a step further. Spunta shows how their works create a dialogue between photography and writing on the theme of landscape and art, moving beyond the traditional resistance of Italian culture towards the photographic image.

The fifth and final section of the book includes three brief theoretical essays that eloquently reflect on the mysterious centrality of the photograph to modern culture. They are by an Italian theorist and a photographer who have played key roles in the contemporary Italian engagement with the photographic image. Umberto Eco's groundbreaking "Una foto," originally published in 1977, considers the role of photographic technology in mediating experience and memory and in shaping public and private perceptions of reality. Examining the iconic photo of a student pointing an automatic pistol during a demonstration in Milan taken in May 1977 in the midst of the student and worker protests, Eco points to the way in which it becomes not simply an image of a particular individual but rather affords a commentary on a whole political and social context.<sup>19</sup> Eco's piece is followed by two short essays on photography by avant-garde photographer and theorist Franco Vaccari, taken from his profoundly innovative and influential *Inconscio tecnologico* and previously unpublished in English. In the first of these, "Photography and the Ready-Made," Vaccari notes that from the early 1970s onwards, the awareness of the relationship between photography and Duchamp's concept of the ready-made begins to make itself felt. However, merely pointing to the parallels between them is not enough. Vaccari underlines their considerable differences and defines the concept of "total photography" in relation to the ready-made. In the second essay, "Apollo and Daphne: A Myth for Photography," Vaccari observes that the myth of Apollo and Daphne is usually viewed with an emphasis on the nymph, who transforms herself into a laurel tree in order to escape the desires of the god. He argues that in reality the myth speaks of desire's blunders and defeats. For Vaccari, this is precisely what happens to photographers, who, just as they believe they have mastered reality, find themselves holding nothing but its inert remains. Vaccari's essays are contextualized by Giuliana Minghelli's interview with him, in which he discusses the relationship between humans and technology and in particular his experience of photography's role in Italian culture.

The desire to dialogue with the compelling interventions of contemporary artists and intellectuals lies at the heart of this book. Variously situated within current critical debates, the chapters investigate how thinking photography through its Italian manifestations suspends and redeploys our understanding of the medium, probes the fabric and consistency of the entity known as Italy and gives an ex-centric account of

the notion of modernity. Each question explored here – such as the relation between photography and nation, photography and artistic avant-gardes, as well as the weight of internal imagined communities in the civic imagination of the wider collectivity of the nation – opens up new areas of research, suggesting alternative approaches for investigating Italy's complex and unresolved relation to modernity. The studies in this book offer one possible mapping of the ways the unruly object that is photography traverses neatly defined conceptual and geographical boundaries and simultaneously perpetuates and undermines a concept of Italy suspended between movement and containment, dramatic transformation and seemingly eternal fixity: a stillness in motion.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See, for example, Ajello; Alù and Pedri, *Enlightening Encounters*; Ceserani, *L'occhio della medusa*; Pelizzari; and Verdicchio. As the first comprehensive English-language history of photography in Italy, Pelizzari's book is a particularly useful introduction for the non-Italian reader.
- <sup>2</sup> A study of this theoretical resistance would offer an interesting alternative account of a well-known chapter of Italian intellectual history. Undoubtedly this is a story in urgent need of being told, yet, had the book turned in this direction, it would have been a very unphotographic one – in fact, perhaps a story without photography at all. One possible imaginary point of departure would be the encounter between the tourist Walter Benjamin and the native Benedetto Croce at the Naples conference on philosophy in 1924.
- <sup>3</sup> For a recent insightful discussion of photography and materiality within the Italian context, see Leonardi, *Fotografia e materialità in Italia*.
- <sup>4</sup> Sure enough, the very notion of materiality has evolved from the daguerreotype to the digital; arguably it has been impacted by the latest virtualization and endless conversion and transfer of the image from one medium to the other – even though the screen (computer or smart phone or other device) is nonetheless a material support that grounds the image. Christian Uva and Robert Lumley touch upon this aspect of the materiality of photography in their essays.
- <sup>5</sup> Many titles have recently appeared that invoke the twin notion of stillness and motion, among others: *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography* (2008), *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorythms* (2012), and *Between Still and Moving Images: Photography and Cinema in the Twentieth Century*. Yet, as is immediately evident, the focus of these volumes is the exploration, already pioneered by Laura Mulvey's *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (2006), of the relation between cinema and photography. Our volume engages movement and stillness beyond the technological tensions between photography and cinema to address different notions of modernity, temporality, and cultural change in the context of Italy's eccentric historical position.
- <sup>6</sup> On the agency, affective, and social power of images, see J.T. Mitchell.

- 7 Recognizing photography's social and scientific value in his speech to the French Academy of Science on 6 January 1839, Francois Jean Dominique Arago stressed (since he counted being a tool for archeological research among its primary uses) documentation in the service of imperialistic appropriation of ancient monuments. See Lolla 32.
- 8 On the scientific reception of the daguerreotype in Italy, see Maffioli.
- 9 "Quella metafora di se stesso, che inevitabilmente dalle nostre finzioni innumerevoli, coscienti e incoscienti, dalle interpretazioni fittizie dei nostri atti e dei nostri sentimenti siamo indotti a formarci" (*Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* 100).
- 10 On the impact of the Catholic visual tradition in the development of the political imaginary during Fascism, see Fogu.
- 11 In his discussion of Secondo Pia's first photographs of the Shroud, Ando Gilardi reflects on the allegiance between modern technology and religion as well as the close and early relation between the Catholic Church and photography ("Creatività" 552–6).
- 12 On this intellectual tradition, see Quintavalle, *Messa a fuoco* xxvii; and Marra *Forse in una fotografia* and *Pensare la fotografia*.
- 13 See also Verdicchio 82–3.
- 14 For a discussion of photography's evolving relationship to government and political power in Italy in the context of war photography and an overall reflection on photography as historical document, see Mignemi, *Lo sguardo* 100–32.
- 15 To give just one example, Alfred Eisenstaedt's famous 1935 picture of the bare feet of an Abyssinian soldier killed in the invasion was seen all over the world but censored in Italy.
- 16 Fascism's deployment of photographic technology for propaganda purposes, in particular through the Istituto Luce, is one of the few aspects of Italy's relation to photography that has been extensively researched. See, for example, Insolera; Lazzaro and Crum; Luzzatto; Mignemi, *L'Italia s'è desta*; Tobia; and Zannier, *Fascismo 1922–1943*.
- 17 The Italian intellectual unwillingness, even among the Futurist avant-garde, to confront photography's unveiling of the optical unconscious has extensive ramifications and hints at a connection between the marginalization of photography and Italy's long-standing indifference toward psychoanalysis, something that endures even after the late demise of Crocean aesthetics.
- 18 The installation, part of Charlesworth's 1977–9 *Modern History* series, consists of reproductions of dozens of Italian and international papers showing the first Moro photograph, but with all text excised. It illustrates among other things the different valence that such images are lent in different contexts. See [http://www.sarahcharlesworth.net/series-view.php?album\\_id=34&subalbum\\_id=53](http://www.sarahcharlesworth.net/series-view.php?album_id=34&subalbum_id=53).
- 19 Published for the first time in English in Eco's *Faith in Fakes* and more recently reprinted in Liz Well's 2003 anthology *The Photography Reader*, where it showcases a semiotic approach, it is published here in a new translation and with the photograph of which it speaks, thus placing Eco's critical reflection on photography back within its Italian historical-political context and in dialogue with the visual element on which it is based.

## **PART ONE**

---

### **National Beginnings and Modernist Fears**

*This page intentionally left blank*

# 1 Photography and the Construction of Italian National Identity

---

ROBERTA VALTORTA, WITH  
SARAH PATRICIA HILL AND GIULIANA MINGHELLI

## Television, Photographic Vision, and the Debate on Italian Identity

It was thanks to Italian national television's *Intervallo* (which appeared whenever programming was suspended) that I, like many of my generation, came to imagine and perhaps finally understand Italy. As children and teenagers, we saw flocks of sheep grazing in the sunny countryside and postcard-like images of monuments and scenes from so many cities and places on the black-and-white television screen, accompanied by a familiar refrain (Figure 1.1). Watching them, we felt that this was Italy. Countryside and sheep, mountains, lakes, seas, ancient architecture, piazzas, churches, castles, archaeological finds: they were photographs that filled the homes of all the peninsula's inhabitants, confirming our belonging to a territory in which a particularly blessed natural environment embraced the most beautiful art. The RAI Italian television *Intervallo* from the sixties and seventies was a little jewel: a brilliant pedagogical operation that offered Italians a photographic idea of Italy by way of television and at the same time a singular, still rudimentary form of tourist promotion of places that were unknown to the majority but that merited their own postcard.

Just as the *Intervallo* showed us the landscapes of Italy, another extraordinary program called *Non è mai troppo tardi* (It's Never Too Late), broadcast between 1960 and 1968, allowed us to see the faces of Italians at the extremes of the social spectrum. A complete televised literacy course, it showed the teacher, Alberto Manzi, gently teaching illiterate adults (of whom there were still many) to read and write the national language, helping more than a million Italians to complete their elementary school diplomas (Bindi 172). In the very midst of the economic boom – a period that saw the dramatic process of internal migration from south to north that transformed peasants into workers and eventually led into the eruption of workers' and students' protests – the impact and success of this program show how cultural unification was still an ongoing and pressing project in late-capitalist Italy.

A century earlier, in the immediate aftermath of political unification, a similar attempt to talk to everyone and to inspire a feeling of national identity in their readers underlies Abbot Antonio Stoppani's 1875 book *Il Bel Paese* and Edmondo De Amicis's 1886 novel *Cuore*. Emblems of the post-unification climate, both books sought to address all citizens of the kingdom, and particularly young people, with a clear educational purpose. *Il Bel Paese* aimed to teach of the natural beauty of Italy,



Figure 1.1 RAI *Intervallo*.

“il bel paese / ch’Appennin parte e ’l mar circonda et l’Alpe” (“the lovely country ... that the Appenines divide and the sea and the Alps surround”; Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, CXLVI, 202). The famous *Cuore* taught young people love of country, respect for family and the authorities, and the spirit of sacrifice, brotherhood, and obedience through stories whose protagonists were children from different regional and social backgrounds. The desire to establish a common cultural ground for the inhabitants of a country that achieved political unity very belatedly runs through the work of Stoppani and De Amicis and the RAI programs, despite the many decades that separate them.<sup>1</sup> This constant pedagogical effort highlights the tenuous relationship – in need of continual reaffirmation – that ordinary Italians and intellectuals alike have always entertained with the notion of national identity. Indeed, many scholars have argued that this doubtful, dissatisfied relationship is itself a very significant aspect of Italianness. As Silvana Patriarca has shown in her book *Italian Vices*, the recurrent negative self-representations (the insistence on the Italians’ lack of character), which have symptomatically affected the Italian political and cultural imagination, make Italian attempts at nation building paradoxically resemble an ongoing process of national doubting.

If there was one Italian intellectual who studied the complexity, if not the elusiveness, of the Italian national character, it was Giulio Bollati (1924–96). In his important 1979 essay, “Note su storia e fotografia” (“Notes on Photography and History”), discussed in the introduction to this book, he explicitly connects the question of Italian identity and the history of unification to the photographic medium and Italy’s quest for modernization. Examining Italian culture and society at the moment of photography’s invention, he points to a crucial issue:

Let us admit that, enchanted by the earliest historians and theorists’ fascination with the medium, whose origins they investigate in the heart of bourgeois capitalist industrial culture, we have neglected to ask ourselves what the relationship between photography and backwardness might be in a country like ours; considering that the beginnings of Italian photography on the margins of the European industrial revolution must have had an effect on its subsequent development and marked its character. (“Note” 17–18)<sup>2</sup>

The investigation of how Italy’s technological primitiveness and political disunity impacted the character of Italian photography is closely intertwined throughout the essay with the debate about national character. Bollati articulates the tension between modernity and Italian “backwardness” particularly effectively in his discussion of the poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837). Although Leopardi lived in the prephotographic era, his early meditations on the compatibility between modernity and tradition and his exploration of Italy’s delay in relation to other European countries are crucial to frame photography’s uncertain position in Italian culture. In 1824, in his *Discorso sopra lo stato presente del costume degli italiani* (Discourse on the Present State of the Customs of the Italians), Leopardi writes of the backwardness of Italian society (indeed, the *lack* of society) and links the Italian disadvantage in achieving a “modern civilization” to the inability of the noble class to guide society and to the wealthy bourgeoisie’s lack of awareness and desire to build a modern economy and social ethos. Confronted with this dispiriting reality, Leopardi concludes that modernity lies elsewhere, in northern Europe: “It seems that the North’s time has come … No-one would hesitate to choose the northerners for images of the modern,” while in Italy there is “a lack of industry and of every sort of activity” (qtd. in Bollati, “Note” 25).<sup>3</sup> According to Leopardi, the country exists in a state of prolonged antiquity, fearful of the new and particularly of industry.

The history of photography is intimately related to the advance of industrial civilization. It was born with it, developed its functions and its languages, following the changes and technological revolutions of which the digital image is the most recent postmodern or post-industrial embodiment. As Marina Miraglia highlights, the socio-economic context of photography’s birth in France and the United Kingdom was very different from the Italian one:

Photography sunk its roots earlier, more durably and deeper in those countries where the formation of large national aggregates, supported by non-absolutist political systems, kept pace with the transformation of capitalist-industrial society and in which the new

entrepreneurial classes were able to express their libertarian ideals and their own class interests more forcefully and decisively than elsewhere. (“Note per una storia” 11)

In 1839, when Dominique François Arago officially presented photography in Paris, Italy was not yet a unified nation-state but rather a set of small kingdoms and duchies ruled by various Italian and foreign powers and utterly marginal to the industrial development that was shaping the rest of Europe. Indeed, for most of the nineteenth century Italy lacked precisely the industrial base, national consciousness, democratic system, and active entrepreneurial class that Miraglia describes. Where, then, are the roots of Italian photography to be found? Patriarca argues for “the need to go beyond the frontiers of the nation when studying nationalist discursive formations, particularly among the peoples that occupy, at any particular historical time, a rather ‘peripheral’ or ‘semi-peripheral’ position” (“Indolence” par. 8). Likewise, to trace a history of Italian photography back to its beginnings, or to outline a photographic history of the development of Italian national identity, it is essential to consider transnational aspects as well as specific, local iterations. To understand the development of photographic culture in Italy, we must consider the phenomenon of the Grand Tour, the foreign travelling photographers and the cosmopolitan make-up of the Italian northern cultural elites who represented themselves photographically and photographed their concept of the nation.

That said, nascent industrial conditions did exist in the north of the Italian peninsula, mostly in Lombardy and Piedmont, the territory of the Savoy monarchy. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Piedmont actively, if timidly, began to enact legislation that would effectively build its hegemonic role in Italian politics at a time when the majority of the northern Italian nobility struggled to articulate a common political and social program for national unification. In the last years of his reign (which ended with his abdication in favour of his son Victor Emmanuel II in 1849), Charles Albert had introduced a reformist economic policy that led to an alliance among the crown, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie and the consequent rejuvenation of production facilities in the industrial-capitalist sense. From the 1850s on, Cavour energetically embraced this course, initiating a series of modernizing reforms that liberalized trade and encouraged the development of infrastructure. While photography appeared on Italian soil from the inception of the medium and flourished with itinerant photographers (many of them foreigners) and studios all over Italy, it could be argued that it was ultimately in connection with the political drive harnessed by Piedmont that a concept of “national” photography was born.

Emerging at the end of the eighteenth century from the demands expressed by the French Revolution, the extremely complex cultural as well as economic and political project of the Risorgimento eventually led, through a very tortured process, to the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 and the annexation of Rome to the kingdom in 1870. Bollati identifies the Risorgimento as the precise historical moment in which the necessity of defining and creating a concept of “Italianness” becomes paramount:

At that time, “Italian” ceased to be merely a word describing a cultural tradition, or the generic name for what was included within the boundaries of the peninsula, and completed and realized its meaning to include membership in an ethnic community with an independent political personality. The definition of “Italian,” of “Italianness,” became at that point, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a political problem whose solution depended on whether the nation-state of Italy would achieve an identity and a citizenry, or remain a mere legal and diplomatic structure. (“L’italiano” 43)

The crucial question of how political and cultural identity might coalesce has been taken up repeatedly in Post-Unification Italy and to some extent still remains open. Alberto Asor Rosa, one of the many who have considered it in depth, writes that “‘Italian’ or, better, the Italic, is what is formed and appears at the level of the ‘substratum’ rather than the level of ‘national identity’ in the true sense” (xxix). He defines the substratum as

that set of biological as well as cultural and anthropological characteristics, which are mainly located in the common language (signs and meaning together), an unmistakable point of arrival that does not erase differences (anything but), but rather materializes them in a system of relations and mutual exchanges. (xxix)

He argues that national identity and the substratum are two levels that mutually influence each other, allowing for a less ideological and more concrete vision of Italianness over time. Asor Rosa highlights a tension between visibility and invisibility – namely, between indexicality and ideology – which is particularly helpful to understand photography’s potentially crucial role in the project of unification. The medium will be called upon to contain and catalogue the visible manifestations of the substratum, anchoring fluid imaginings and ideological tensions in emblems of collective belonging. It is in this context that the examples of early Italian photography discussed in this essay – such as the photographs of monuments or regional types and the cartes de visite of the heroes of the Risorgimento – find their significance.

To fully understand the context and import of these photographic interventions and how they embodied ideas of Italianness, it is important to remember the long-standing and complex intellectual debate that surrounded the question of national identity. It was not easy for the thinkers of the Risorgimento simultaneously to identify and build in real time the Italian character, giving it a face that would be meaningful in relation to institutions as well as traditions, since this character had formed over the centuries, starting from classical antiquity in an almost subterranean fashion through tortuous exchanges among communities, municipalities, and families. It was also difficult to define as a whole because of constant political and territorial divisions and because of the nation’s relationship with the Catholic Church, itself one of the inhabitants of Italian territory. It was an identity that was above all imagined rather than lived, not perceived in its territorial specificity as

such but always in comparison with other national identities. In contrast with the more economically advanced nations of Europe, Italians often felt themselves, like Leopardi, to be in a state of inadequacy and delay, in line with what Asor Rosa calls “Italian pessimism” (xxix).

At the time of the Risorgimento, this imagined Italian identity was a literary and intellectual construction. Indeed, the influential nineteenth-century literary critic Francesco De Sanctis went as far as to claim that literature’s crucial transhistorical function was to help construct an idea of nationhood. But even well before De Sanctis, from the birth of the Risorgimento onwards, through the voices of intellectuals and politicians such as Antonio Greppi, Vincenzo Cuoco, Federico Confalonieri, Gian Domenico Romagnosi, Giovanni Berchet, and Alessandro Manzoni, Italian culture develops a number of possible combinations of tradition and modernity, conservation and innovation that over time make it impossible to reconcile ideal desires and intentions with a real ability to implement decisions. While outwardly optimistic, an undercurrent of doubt about the national character traversed many of these reflections.

An example of “Italian pessimism” is Vincenzo Gioberti’s statement in 1843 that the Italian people “are a desire and not a fact, an assumption and not a reality, a name and not a thing, and I do not even know if such a term is in our vocabulary. Rather there is Italy and an Italian race joined by blood, religion, an illustrious written language; but divided in terms of governments, laws, institutions, popular speech, customs, emotions, habits” (11).<sup>4</sup> The extent to which this conflict between imagined unity and actual division can be seen as constitutively Italian is evident from the fact that the same concern appears in the words of the Italian national anthem itself. Goffredo Mameli’s “Canto degli italiani” (1847), later known as the “Inno di Mameli,” is often considered aesthetically unsuited to the genius and creativity of the Bel Paese, sometimes even mocked, but it is actually very Italian in the way that it expresses, in both words and music, the struggle to achieve an Italianness based on unity as opposed to nonunity: “We were for centuries/ downtrodden, derided/ because we are not one people/ because we are divided./ Let one flag, one hope/ gather us all./ The hour has struck/ for us to unite./ Let us unite, let us love one another,/ For union and love/ Reveal to the people/ The ways of the Lord./ Let us swear to set free/ The land of our birth:/ United, for God,/ Who can overcome us?”<sup>5</sup> As in Gioberti’s statement above, an ideal Italian unity must assert itself against the many real divisions that separate Italians.

The imperative is therefore to overcome the lack of character of the Italians (worn down by their long political servitude – slumbering in their isolated villages and separated from one another by the different powers that govern them) through the memory of their ancient greatness and by the energy of resolutions aimed at economic and intellectual modernization. This could occur through federalist proposals like those of Gioberti, Cesare Balbo, and Carlo Cattaneo, or through the decidedly unitary ones, like those of Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Melchiorre Gioia, that were the ultimate winners in the process of unification. For all of these Risorgimento thinkers, the concept of a unified nation had its roots in the idea of Rome as a symbol of civilization,

whether it be the Catholic Rome of Alessandro Manzoni and Gioberti, or the Republican Rome Mazzini saw as leading towards the brotherhood that would bring about the great moral progress of nations, or the classical Rome that would be sung by Giosuè Carducci after unification and sadly later revived by the fascist dictatorship.<sup>6</sup>

In Risorgimento pedagogical literature, everything was to be remade and every thought addressed to all Italians. Carlo Cattaneo – one of the guiding lights of the Risorgimento – poignantly conveyed the flurry of often-antithetical imagings that invested the concept of “the Italians.” He wrote in 1839:

The Italy that fervidly sought to restore the memories of its resurgence wanted to reconnect the chain of social literature, and return it to being an instrument of civic life rather than the plaything of the idle. Writers were no longer satisfied to boast of genius in a circle of initiates, but set themselves up as teachers of the multitudes and envoys of the useful and the true. Parini and Gozzi mocked the inertia of those lounging comfortably in Lombard coaches and Venetian gondolas; Beccaria, Verri, Bandini and Filangieri investigated civil institutions; Baretti scolded the Italians because they were not British; and Alfieri thought to remake them from scratch, because they were no longer Romans. He wished them to be manly, stern and furious. Others soon after began to want them to be ethereal, mellifluous and full of sighs; there are those who hope they will soon all be black with coal and poor quality iron. So then, the writers chose bold, noble, perhaps impossible goals, as if the nation were a raw material without opinions, without antecedents, without a will ... (Cattaneo, “Vita” 12)<sup>7</sup>

Along with De Sanctis, Cattaneo was one of the few to believe that the nascent Italian bourgeoisie could and should realistically attune itself to the contemporary world, without fear that the advent of industry would bring the destruction of the agricultural economy and the values connected with it. But it seemed very difficult to eradicate the attachment to the idea (enshrined moreover in much nineteenth-century European literature outside Italy) of a fundamentally rural Italy linked to a backwardness that is on the one hand a problem but on the other a sort of mythical, noble condition in a moral sense: an unchanging Arcadia.<sup>8</sup>

So in the context of this intellectual invention of Italianness, what might be the function of the newborn medium of photography, mechanical art and daughter of the industrial revolution, in a country not yet aligned with the European process of modernization? It comes as no surprise that it was Cattaneo’s journal *Politecnico* in Milan that in 1839 announced the discovery of the new medium and described it with particular attention to its technical and scientific applications. This focus contrasts with Macedonio Melloni’s contemporaneous report on the daguerreotype to the Royal Academy of Sciences of Naples, also in 1839, where the usefulness of the new tool was located in its capacity to document monuments and works of art. Interestingly, in these two early appraisals we find articulated the double task that lay ahead for photography as it entered the Italian territory: to be a tool to catalogue and celebrate the national patrimony *and* an agent of

modernization and, more specifically, since the two things are often made to coincide, of national unification. Following these two possible paths during and after the Risorgimento, photography would strive to express the elusive substratum of the newly founded community.

### **Places and Faces of the Risorgimento**

Photography was immediately called to tasks of national interest in the aftermath of unification, but even during the long process of the Risorgimento it played a crucial role. If the events of the French Revolution, the faces of its protagonists, and the landscapes through which they moved have come down to us through painting, drawing, printmaking, miniatures, and physionotrace reproductions, it is the photograph that brings back to us the faces and places of the Italian Risorgimento. Stefano Lecchi's photographs of Rome after the siege of 1849 and the fall of the Roman Republic are the first example of war photography. The series the French photographer Eugène Sevaistre carried out in Palermo during and after the siege of 1860 is an important one ([Figures 1.2–1.6](#)). Sevaistre, along with Giorgio Sommer, also documented the city of Gaeta after the 1861 surrender. Antonio D'Alessandri is responsible for the images of the pontifical troops at Anzio in 1862 and at Rocca di Papa in 1866, and of the clashes between Garibaldi's redshirts and the Pope's troops at Mentana in 1867. In 1866 the German photographer Moritz Lotze photographed the Austrian army's last defences in the Veneto, while Gioacchino Altobelli and Ludovico Tuminello photographed Rome after the breaching of Porta Pia in 1870.<sup>9</sup> As Bollati reminds us, for both technical and ideological reasons, there is nothing epic about the image of the Italian Risorgimento that these photographers show us ("Note" 26).

Bollati in fact draws an interesting parallel between Italian Risorgimento war photography and Mathew Brady's almost contemporary photographs of the American Civil War that might help us understand the special quality of Risorgimento iconography. In the 1860s, photography could not adequately capture movement, but given this common constraint, Bollati notes that the Italian photographs are distinguished from the American ones by their "particular way of solving the relationship between stasis and movement ... The problem is not technical but rather political and historical ... stillness and gaps are essential and not accidental elements of the historical process in question" ("Note" 26).<sup>10</sup> While Brady's photos let us touch the drama of the conflict, Risorgimento photography shows us, both with the images of the campaigns and the official portraits of its heroes, a sanitized aftermath, a sense of war as interval or as fait accompli. The photographs of the theatres of war do not narrate the unfolding of military action but rather give us shots of battlefields, views of cities barricaded and landscapes devastated. An excellent example of this contrast is to be found in Sevaistre's Italian war photographs. In the stereoscopic photograph of the site of the battle of Calatafimi, Sevaistre deploys a distant, almost aerial view of the site which renders the conflict utterly remote, transforming the bloody battleground into a topographical



**Figure 1.2** Eugène Sevaistre, Sicily. Segesta. Site of the battle won by Garibaldi. Undated. Stereoscopic albumen silver print mounted on card. Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.



N° 9

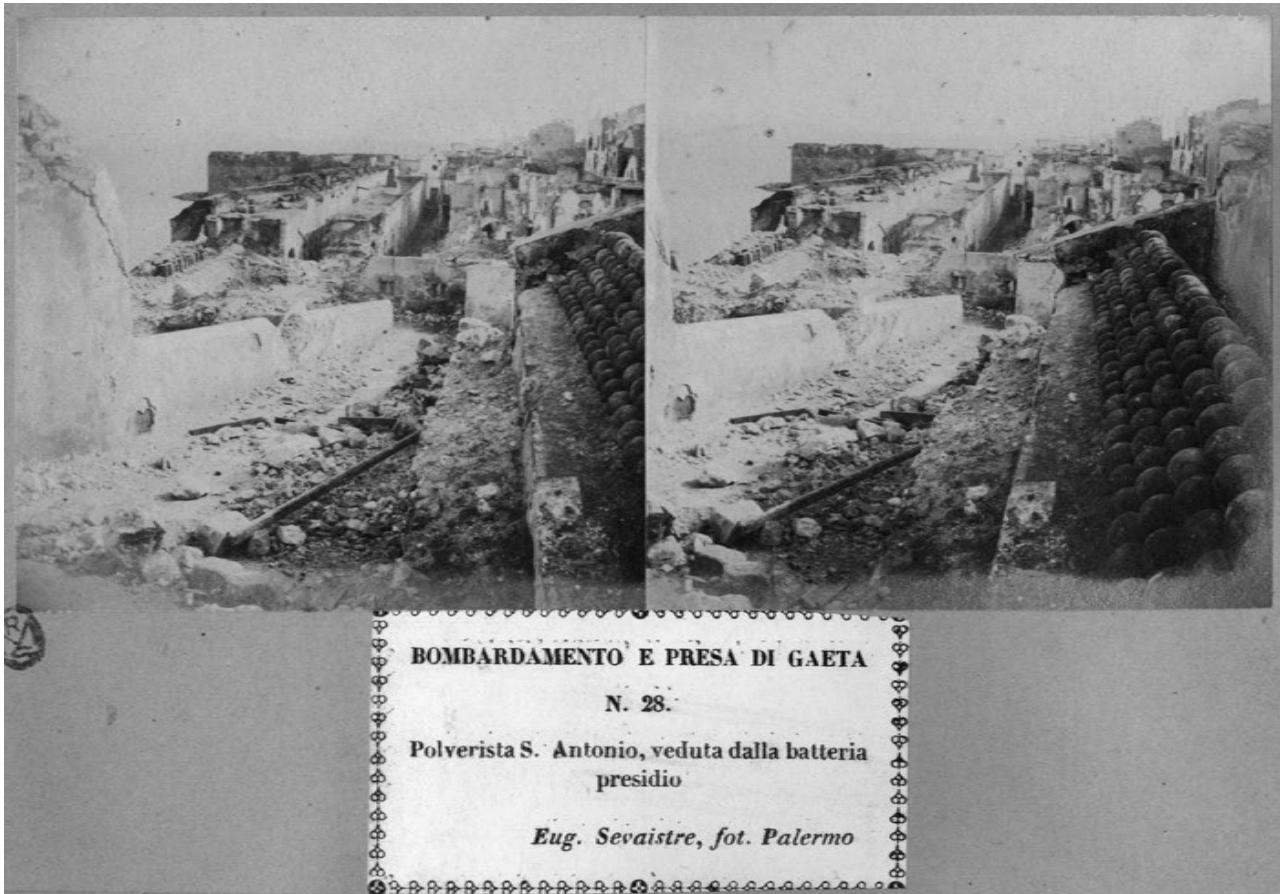
Barricades de

Num. 9.

REVOLUTION DE PALERME.

Barricades de Porta Macqueda

Le 2 juin 1860.



BOMBARDAMENTO E PRESA DI GAETA

N. 28.

Polverista S. Antonio, veduta dalla batteria  
presidio

Eug. Sevaistre, fot. Palermo

Figure 1.4 Eugène Sevaistre. Bombardment and capture of Gaeta. The Armory of S. Antonio. February 1861. Stereoscopic albumen silver print mounted on card. Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.

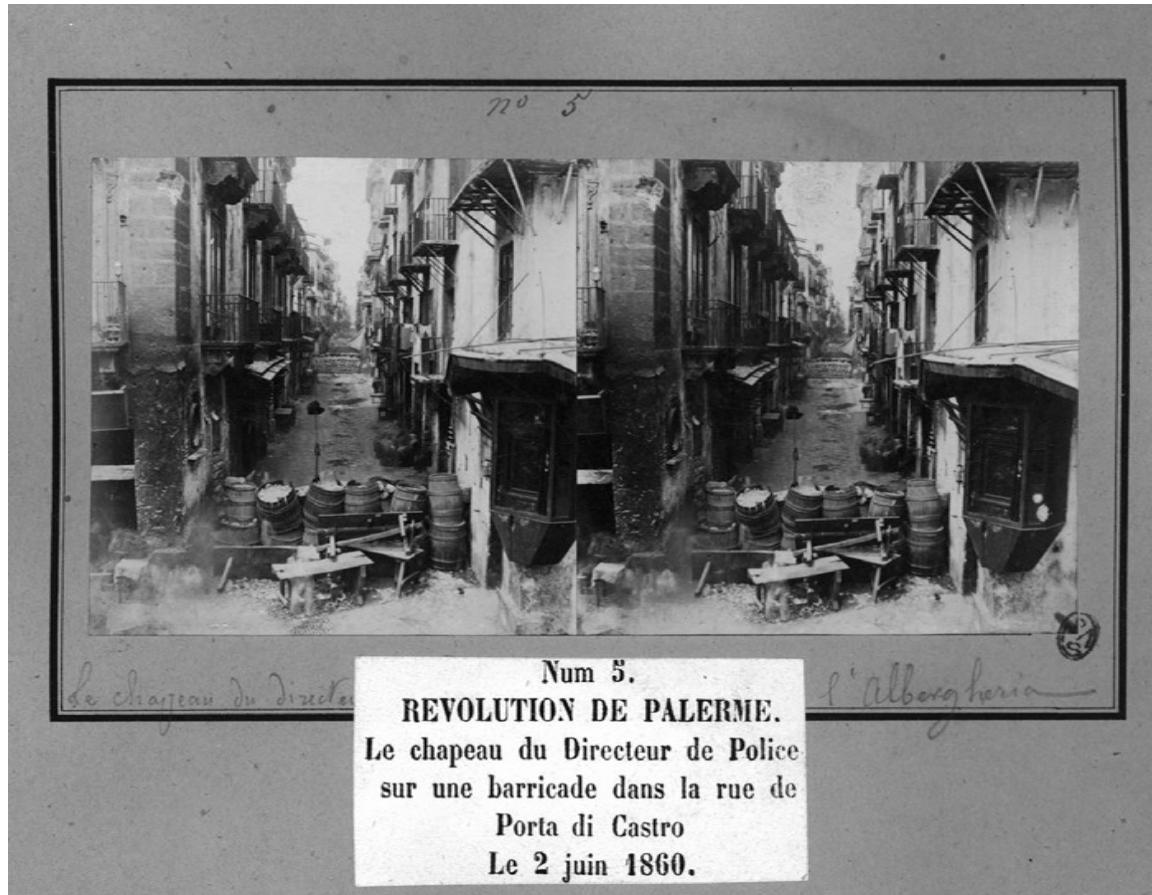
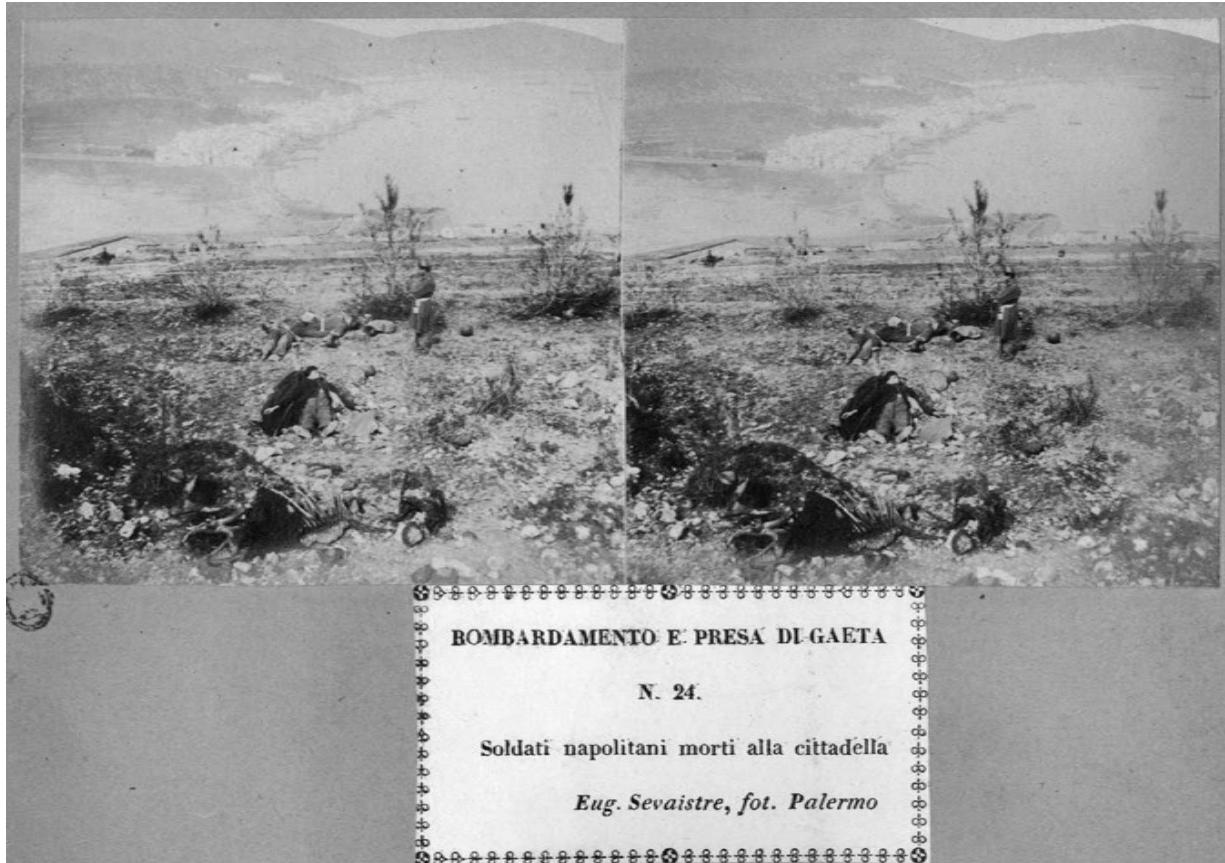


Figure 1.5 Eugène Sevaistre. The Palermo Revolution. The hat of the chief of police on a barricade in Via di Porta di Castro. 2 June 1860. Stereoscopic albumen silver print mounted on card. Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.



BOMBARDAMENTO E PRESA DI GAETA

N. 24.

Soldati napolitani morti alla cittadella

Eug. Sevaistre, fot. Palermo

Figure 1.6 Eugène Sevaistre. Bombardment and capture of Gaeta. Dead Neapolitan soldiers in the Citadel. February 1861. Stereoscopic albumen silver print mounted on card. Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.

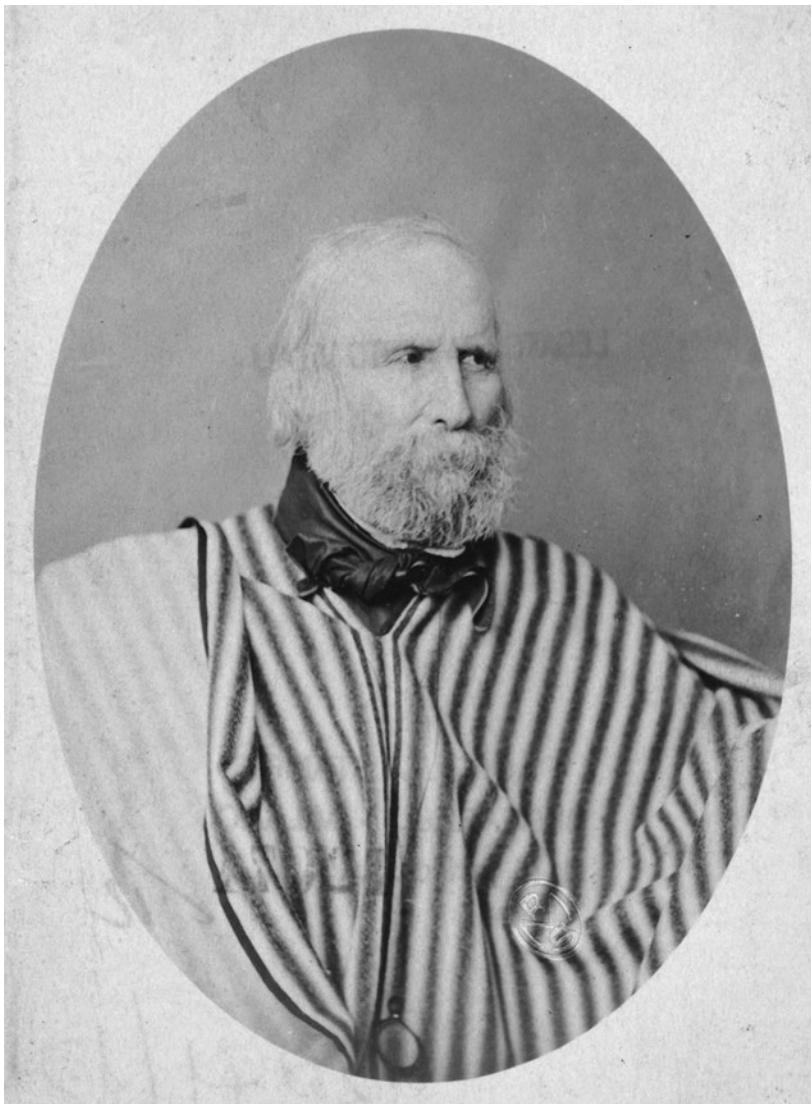
survey (Figure 1.2). The only traces of the battle itself are the puffs of smoke visible at the bottom of the hill. The true visual drama of the image stems from the technical choice of photographing the length of the valley and the striking line of the road in order to showcase the ability of stereoscopic photography to create an illusion of three-dimensional depth.

Analogous distancing effects are invoked even in Sevaistre's photographs closer to ground level. In the above photographs (Figures 1.3, 1.4), the barricaded city of Palermo resembles a stage set waiting for the action to begin, while the architectural damage wrought by the conflict on the town of Gaeta seems almost indistinguishable from the look of ancient ruins. Italy is ghostly, a country either suspended in a theatrical temporality, as in the photograph of Palermo, or receding into a ruinous past. The photograph of Gaeta bears no signs of the modern technology of war but spells an inevitable archaeological vocation.

Similarly, the human cost of war is rendered remote by the almost total absence of living figures. Sevaistre's photograph of a Palermo street inhabited only by the lonely hat of the chief of police propped up conspicuously on a barricade ironically underscores this emptiness. Even when human bodies do appear, they are at once theatrically arranged and almost blended with the environment, as in the photograph above taken directly on the battlefield.

Erased from the landscape of war, the human presence migrated en masse into the photographic studio where another vast body of Risorgimento photographs was created. These are the official portraits of the cast of the Risorgimento, from Giuseppe Garibaldi – by far the most photographed – to Giuseppe Mazzini, from Count Cavour to King Victor Emanuel and the Savoy royal family, from Rosolino Pilo to Nino Bixio and Carlo Pisacane, Ippolito Nievo, Francesco Crispi, Bettino Ricasoli, Massimo D'Azeglio, and the Bronzetti brothers (Figures 1.7–1.10), not to mention the portraits of the “defeated”: from the Bourbon rulers to the Pope to the Austrian rulers. They were the work of photographers like Alessandro Duroni, André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, Adolf de Mayer and Pierre-Louis Pierson, the Alinari brothers, Luigi Sacchi, Carlo Ponti, Alphonse Bernoud, Luigi Montabone, Giovanni Battista Scutto, Ludovico Tuminello, Henry Le Lieure, Gustave Le Gray, and many other unknown figures. Their subjects were the heroes of the Risorgimento, excised from their fields of action and represented in the safe confines of the photographic studio.

The diffusion of these portraits played a key role in initiating the process of bringing together the protagonists of the political and military struggle and the aristocratic and bourgeois public. In this way, photography became an important conduit of cultural sharing, helping the Italian ruling classes to become familiar with non-local leaders who, in the absence of such realistic portraits, would have remained unknown or have been represented through less “objective” art forms such as painting and drawing. In contrast, photography allowed for a simultaneously “true” and celebratory representation. The photographic rendering of the great heroes of the Risorgimento seemed more authentic and familiar inasmuch as the aristocrats and bourgeoisie who saw or kept these portraits in their homes had already themselves become accustomed to having their photographic portraits taken. This was the case particularly from the end of the 1850s onward, with the introduction of cartes de visite, 54 mm by 8.9 mm



**Figure 1.7** Ludovico Tuminello, Giuseppe Garibaldi. 1874. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.

albumen prints that became very popular and were traded among families and friends. As Maria Antonella Pelizzari argues, “This modern visual currency contributed to create a Risorgimento pantheon of statesmen, philosophers and volunteer soldiers” (38). The case of the volunteer soldiers is an interesting one because it reveals the transition of photography from a prized commodity readily available only to the

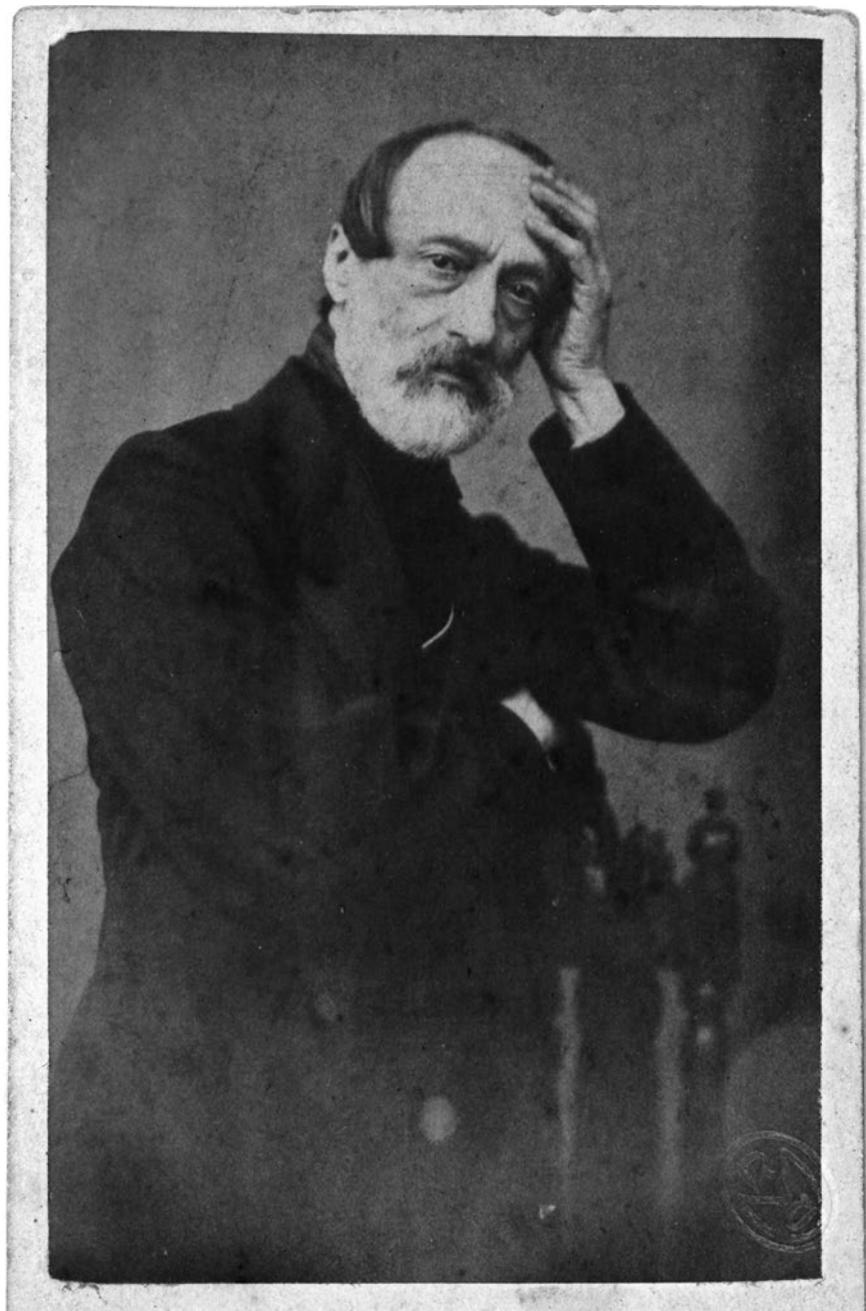


Figure 1.8 Cesare Bernieri, Giuseppe Mazzini. Undated. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.



**Figure 1.9** Alinari Brothers, Victor Emanuel II King of Italy. Undated. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.



Figure 1.10 Anonymous, Nino Bixio. Undated. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.



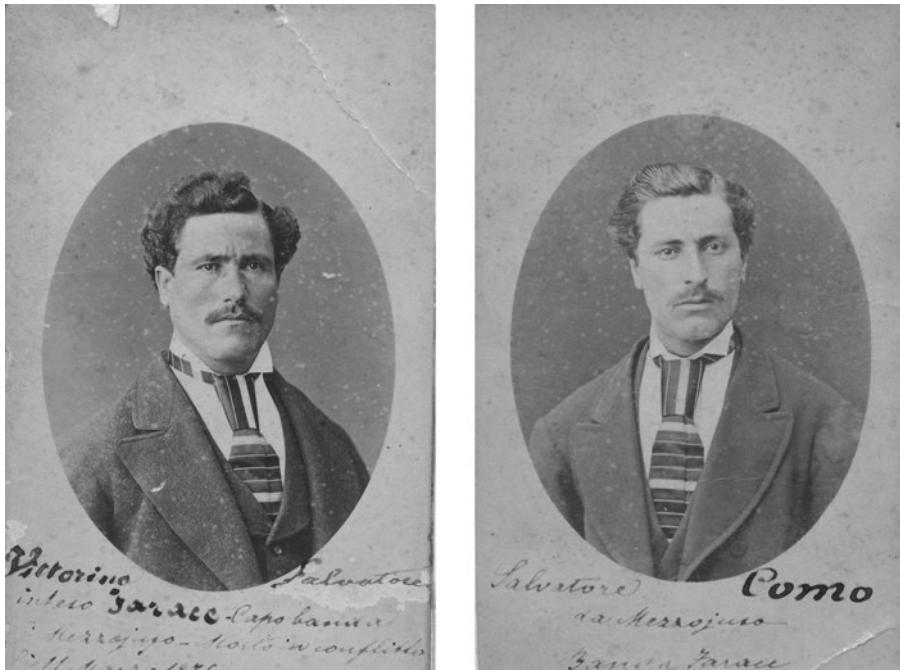
Figure 1.11 Album of photographs of the Mille who landed in Marsala, n° 2,604–3,004, page 1. Albumen silver prints on card (cartes de visite). Courtesy of Civico Archivio Fotografico, Milan.

upper classes, who were both producers and consumers of these images, to a wider social context of consumption.

Alessandro Pavia's *Album dei Mille* is a marker of this moment of transition. Pavia's collection of cartes de visite cost between a quarter to a third of the average annual income and was intended to present more than a thousand portraits of Garibaldi's original volunteers.<sup>11</sup> According to Lamberto Vitali, a great collector of Risorgimento photographs and the first Italian historian of photography, "The *Album* was published with the patronage of Giuseppe Garibaldi, who kept an example of it ... by his bedside" (118). Collectors who bought the "complete" album (the Pavia collection in fact never reached the projected 1,089 photographs) or others who bought single photographs could keep acquiring new ones that Pavia realized as he found other former *garibaldini* to photograph. The new images could be inserted into a personal album or into those Pavia sold with empty pages at the end. For this reason, no one album of the *Mille* totally resembles another; in a way each one is customized according to the financial means, interests, and social point of view of the collectors. Furthermore, while Pavia's expensive edition had a limited circulation, many similar "homemade" albums were created by *garibaldini* throughout Italy, each holding different compilations of cartes de visite, an interesting token of the early democratization of photography in Italy.<sup>12</sup>

These collections of faces of heroes make a striking counterpoint with another vast body of portraits that was widely circulated, exchanged, and collected in carte de visite form. This was the body of photographs of bandits, both alive and dead, posed in front of the camera by officers and soldiers of the kingdom or by their own initiative in the photographer's studio ([Figures 1.12–1.15](#)).

It was in this remarkable and at times gruesome way that the faces of many southern and central Italian peasants were photographed for the first time, making their dramatic appearance in the nation's visual history. The phenomenon of brigandage that developed in the 1860s indicated the disquiet of the rural poor in the new nation-state: anti-Unification, pro-Bourbon, clerical forces pushed peasants, shepherds, and wage earners into conflict with the new Piedmontese established order, which responded with bloody acts of repression. From a strictly institutional point of view, the photographs documenting the war on brigandage were a manifestation of a new form of unitary pedagogy focused on controlling dissent. This repressive use of photography is underlined by the fact that, as Carlo Bertelli points out, "almost all the photographs are now preserved in the archives of the Carabinieri and the Bersaglieri, in penal archives and in the Lombroso Museum in Turin" (71). At the same time, their intended disciplinary quality is undermined by the power of photography to outstrip propaganda. In its democratic impetus to show everything, the medium revealed the existence of these other, marginalized Italians, far down the social ladder. As Bertelli notes: "The nobility and warrior-like pride of these iconic images, desired by the bandits themselves and so similar to those of the Papal troops, the Zouaves and Garibaldi's volunteers, are the signs of a new heraldry" (71). The uneasy coexistence of the *Album dei Mille* with similar compilations of cartes de visite such as Enrico Seffert's *Collection of Brigands in Sicily* (ca. 1877; [Figure 1.13](#)) highlights



**Figure 1.12** Giuseppe Incopra. Portraits of the brigand Salvatore Vittorino (handwritten caption: “Vittorino Salvatore in Farace leader of the Mezzojuso band, killed in conflict 11/3/1875”) and brigand Salvatore Como (handwritten caption: “Salvatore Como da Mezzojuso – Banda Faraci – Arrested”). Palermo. 1875. Albumen silver prints. Courtesy of Museo Giuseppe Pitrè.



**Figure 1.13** Enrico Seffer. Portraits of brigand Gaudenzio Plaja da Giuliana and brigand Giovanni Lo Zito da S. Mauro, ca. 1877. Albumen silver prints. Courtesy of Museo Giuseppe Pitrè.

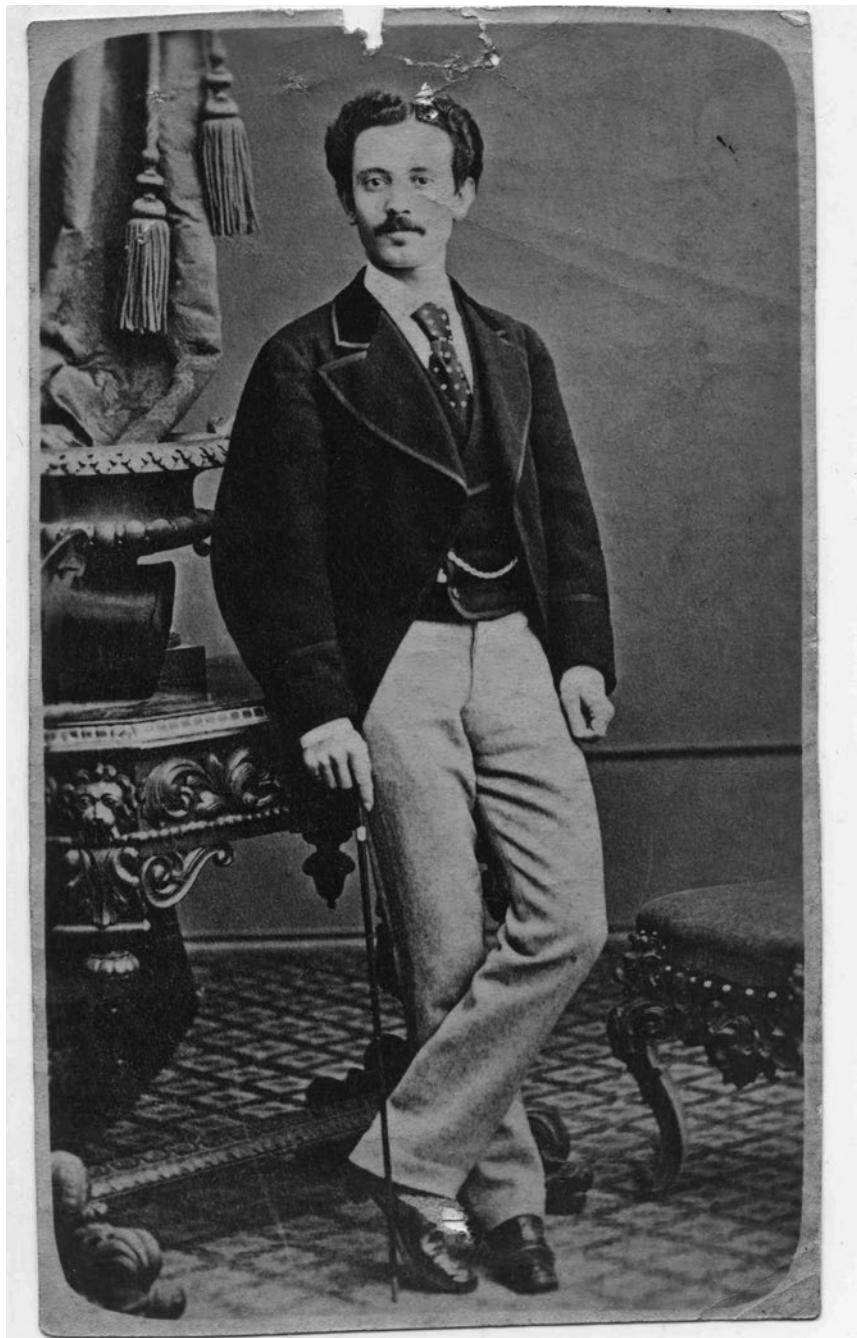


Figure 1.14 Anonymous. Portrait of brigand Paolo Pintacuda, Palermo. Albumen silver print. Archives of the Museo di Antropologia criminale “Cesare Lombroso.” © Museo di Antropologia criminale “Cesare Lombroso.”

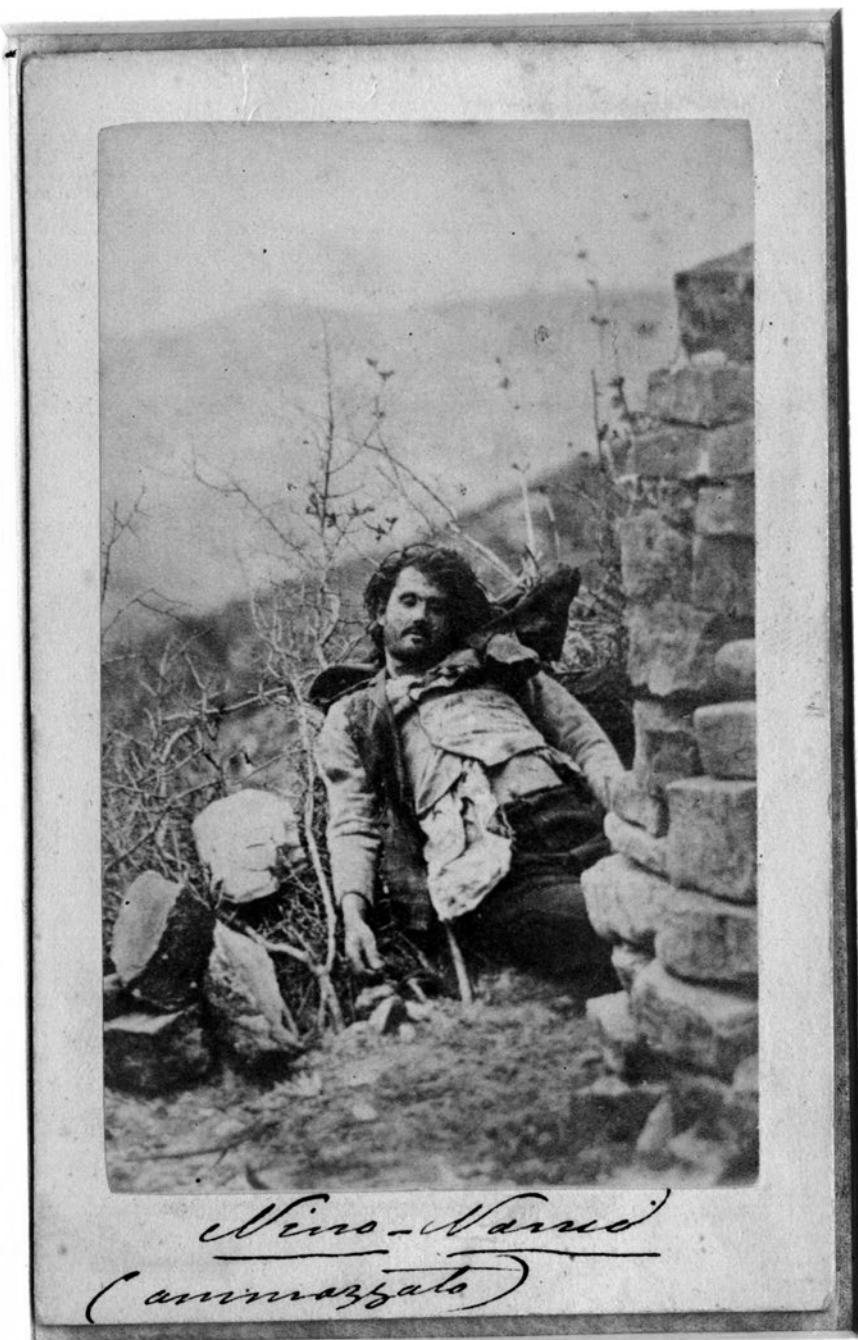


Figure 1.15 Anonymous. Corpse of the brigand Giuseppe Nicola Summa known as Ninco-Nanco. March 1863. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento, Rome.

the disruptive potential of a medium, which, in the very moment that it works in the service of a unified, homogenized notion of Italianness, also questions its ethics and even viability.

### **Italy or the Bel Paese: Visual Catalogues of Exclusion and Belonging**

The second half of the nineteenth century is the great moment of anthropology, ethnology, and folklore. These disciplines played a crucial role in the definition of the new national entity and of its citizens. In his physiognomic studies in the realm of criminology and prison systems, Cesare Lombroso, author of the vastly influential *L'uomo delinquente* (Criminal Man, 1876), made extensive use of the photograph as a scientific means of cataloguing types to define and separate normal from abnormal. His project displays, as Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg argues, “an uncanny double of Italy, the ‘other side’ of the project of making Italians” (229). The people in these photographs are also poor Italians who in some ways resemble the brigands: they are criminals, people with mental illness or deformities, marginalized people whose appearance is measured and categorized by anthropometry.

Lombroso’s visual measurements and classifications of types were very influential for the budding science of criminology and police profiling. In his *La fotografia nelle funzioni di polizia e processuali* (1908), the manager of the Italian police’s photographic department, Umberto Ellero, praised the identification photography and measurements developed in late nineteenth-century France by Alphonse Bertillon. For Ellero, they functioned as a guarantee against “those who in a thousand different ways … burst out from every country and in every country in opposition to the law, [blocking] the road that leads toward the welfare of all” (2–11). Ellero’s words reveal how the idea of a unified nation relies for its articulation and survival on a restrictive notion of what constitutes citizenship. This criminal discourse finds a larger, if subtler, resonance in the pervasive debate on the weakness of national character, a debate often cast, as Patriarca has observed, in terms of “public vices that needed to be corrected.”<sup>13</sup> In these anthropometric studies of “abnormal” Italians such vices seem to find a reassuring form, which could be visually contained and scientifically measured. While the art historical genre of the portrait offered a protocol of representation that gave dignity to the brigands, anthropological photography introduces another, “scientific” protocol, one that reveals more brutally structures of power and racial prejudices pervading the national project.

Nineteenth-century Italian social photography also has much to tell us about the question of national identity. With the same cataloguing spirit of ethnographic photography, a group of Italian and foreign photographers (the Alinaris, Carlo Naya, Giorgio Sommer, Alphonse Bernoud) active from the mid-nineteenth century onward created a body of photographs of popular types and trades, local customs, urban and rural figures. Unlike Lombroso’s anthropological photography, which aims to study its subjects’ traits objectively, this body of work does not lay claim to



**Figure 1.16** Page from an album of Neapolitan delinquents. First decade of the twentieth century. Albumen silver prints on card. Archives of the Museo di Antropologia criminale “Cesare Lombroso.” Photo R. Goffi. © Museo di Antropologia criminale “Cesare Lombroso.”

a straightforward documentary style, recounting “real life,” but rather looks for the poor in the picturesque sense, setting typical figures in pose (it will take someone like the great author of *verismo*, Giovanni Verga, to create more immediate and honest photographs of peasants).<sup>14</sup> So here we have the water carrier, the strawberry seller, the urchin, the chair maker; here are people eating macaroni, snail sellers, pipers, shoe shiners, the travelling scribe, the fishmonger, poor people celebrating in traditional costumes, the woman from the provinces, the prostitute, the beggar, people from the streets who seem as though they were created to be part of a nativity scene: a theatrical staging of the poorest part of Italian society in the service of representing for the nation “local color,” as Maria Grazia Lolla explains in detail in the following chapter.

The expressive fiction and lack of sincerity of this stereotypical representation, which emerges from the tradition of engraving and watercolour (Bartolomeo Pinelli’s genre scenes, for example), characterize the photographs of the poor and working classes produced for foreign tourists.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, some old-fashioned trades are still

represented like this in the old postcards to be found in Italian provincial towns. This theatrical, stereotyped and in a sense aestheticized way of seeing reveals a certain refusal to look at and understand one another, and an insistence on picturing the country through a long-established, exoticizing, foreign gaze. Italy may have been politically unified, but foreign domination continued through these images that internalized a colonizing gaze that saw Italians as premodern, tradition-bound, and unchanging.

The first coherent attempts to create a complete, systematic, and more authentically “Italian” catalogue of social types that were clearly more closely aligned with a patriotic national project of celebration and description of the territory will emerge only towards the turn of the century. In 1900, for example, the Società Fotografica Italiana (Italian Photographic Society) offered a comprehensive photographic publication of the types, habits and customs, crafts, social life, economic activities, and civil and religious ceremonies of the Italian people. The spirit behind the survey was all-encompassing: “We recommend disdaining nothing, collecting everything, and especially the most humble, the most common things, which in fact are usually the most distinctive” (Società Fotografica Italiana). This spirit found an echo in the aims of a much larger association, that of the Italian Touring Club, which came to occupy a leading role in this photographic project. The Club was founded in 1894 (under the name Italian Touring Cycling Club, at a time when cycling and photography were similarly elite forms of entertainment) in order to promote tourism across the whole peninsula and to encourage respect for the environment, knowledge and preservation of the landscape, and artistic heritage. Since its very beginnings, the club made extensive use of photography as a means of spreading information. In 1899 the club launched the idea of illustrating Italy by region, including an ethno-anthropological section divided into habits (clothes, ancient and modern homes, rustic houses), popular customs (weddings, funerals, rural and religious practices), ethnic types (e.g., Sicily, Sardinia, the Alpine valleys), and pathological types (congenital myxedema, pellagra, leprosy, malaria) (Favari). The Italian Touring Club had pointed suggestions for its travelling members to direct and give a clear national impetus to such a monumental enterprise:

Would it not be useful to illustrate our country by means of photographs taken on the spot, and coordinated in line with clear, well-defined goals? ... To have members and adherents gather the material to illustrate what Italy is. To gather it by means of photography, this widespread, extraordinary second human eye. To order it so that every region of our country can appear in its various aspects, and present a pleasant spectacle to the curious and a field of observations and documents to the scholar. (Favari)

The program envisioned a detailed analysis, region by region, of natural beauties, antiquities, picturesque places, architecture, and monuments. Beyond the reductive

rhetoric of unity and Unification, the encyclopaedic strategy behind these projects, with their interest in difference and multiplicity, potentially complicates the notion of Italian character.

In addition to other activities, the Italian Touring Club became intensely involved in publishing. Its publishing outputs consisted of magazines, guides, and albums, as well as series of illustrated books dedicated to cities and regions. The objective was high-quality reproduction and the diffusion of visual materials promoting the beauty of the country to its citizens. Works like its monumental *Attraverso l'Italia. Raccolta di 2000 fotografie di vedute, tesori d'arte e tipi popolari*, published in 1902, which was also distributed in “regional” instalments, provided a varied narrative of Italy and its beauties, with photographs by the Alinari brothers, Anderson, Brogi, Naya, and Sommer. This collection solidified a view of Italian monumentality that had been well-established from the later part of the nineteenth century and codified in a formal vision which the following undated photograph by Carlo Naya well exemplifies ([Figure 1.17](#)).

From the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1960s, the Touring Club used photographs from the best existing archives (Alinari, Brogi, Anderson, Vasari), members themselves (who during the First World War numbered 100,000 and by the mid-thirties, nearly 500,000), and many amateur and professional photographers (Vittorio Sella, Louis Pacha, Eugenio Interguglielmi, Caesar Schiaparelli, Luca Comerio, Giulio Parisio, Emilio Sommariva, Domenico Riccardo Peretti Griva, Stephen Bricarelli, Achille Bologna, Bruno Stefani Quiresi Ezio, Giulio Galimberti, Fosco Maraini, and Mario Carafoli). Later the Italian Touring Club commissioned great photographers like Paul Monti, Pepi Merisio, Gianni Gardin, Toni Nicolini, Francesco Radino, Mimmo Jodice, Mario Cresci, Giovanni Chiaramonte, and Luigi Ghirri (whose influential work is discussed in detail in Marina Spunta’s chapter in this book) in an effort to adapt Italy’s image to the changing visual culture of the country. According to Italo Zannier, the Touring Club’s project was based on “a balanced iconography” and “a concept of beauty that was never excessive” that created “a fresh gust of airy, sunny landscapes in a perennial springtime, as a ‘tourist program’ legitimately expects, but without falling into picture-postcard clichés” (Zannier, “Cento anni” 11–12). The varied, though traditional and always positive images of Italy that the Touring Club spread consolidated the idea of a country of tours and holidays in Italians’ perceptions and feelings, a contemporary reiteration of the Bel Paese.

The Touring Club represented a specifically Italian appropriation of the Grand Tour tradition. From the end of the seventeenth century through the entire eighteenth century and beyond, Italy, which already since the Renaissance had been the traditional destination of foreign travellers, writers, artists, scholars, and diplomats, was the ultimate destination of the tour, the famous journey of education, training, and leisure for young gentlemen of Europe and beyond.<sup>16</sup> There were numerous intellectuals and artists who did the tour, creating diaries, novels, paintings, and watercolours about their travels in Italy; the intellectuals and artists included



Figure 1.17 Carlo Naya, Venice. Undated. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

George Byron, Carl Gustav Carus, René Chateaubriand, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Wolfgang Goethe, Charles Dickens, Henry James, and Herman Melville, as well as John Ruskin and Alexander John Ellis (photographers themselves), and also Percy Bysshe Shelley, Stendhal, the Goncourts, the Marquis de Sade, William Turner, and many, many others. Their various works, as well as those of local painters and photographers, contributed to the literary and visual image of a marvellous, ancient, sublime, picturesque Italy transmitted to Italians and foreigners alike. The Italian Touring Club's project represented a national appropriation and a significant although still limited "democratization" of the grand tourist experience. This being the case, we might observe that in the body of images produced by the Club the new, national gaze lives in the persistent shadow of an old, picturesque image of Italy, born from the intersection of foreign and elite perspectives. Coming in the wake of a visually saturated picturesque tradition, Italian photography faced a momentous task: to

reclaim a worn image of Italy and challenge the enduring dominance of an external gaze, and in the process achieve, if not national unification, at least a visual emancipation of Italy. This very ambiguity (the coexistence of national and foreign gazes) permeates Italy's other great private photographic project: that undertaken by the Alinari studio in Florence.

The Alinari brothers were the first and most tenacious visual narrators of the image of Italy as an “open air museum,” since with great intuition they had the idea of attempting to catalogue photographically all of Italy’s enormous architectonic, artistic, and landscape patrimony. Their project made a crucial contribution to the creation of the Italian identity that Italians of all social and cultural backgrounds have most deeply internalized: the one connected to the ancient world and to the primacy of art, an idea that sees artistic and natural beauties as inextricably intertwined. The Alinari firm, founded in Florence in 1854, worked without pause to reproduce and spread Italian art through an intense publishing program and an extensive marketing of reproductions of the images produced and preserved in its massive archives. The Alinari photographs, which methodically enact the rules of Renaissance perspective so long cultivated by the figurative culture of Florence and central Italy in general, yield, as Bollati points out, a way of seeing places and monuments of the country so classic, clear, and robust as to succeed eventually in standing in for the objects themselves in the perception and experience of Italians and others (Bollati, “Note” 34).

No other vision of the country, neither that of the Touring Club nor even of the great contemporary landscape photographers, can be separated out from that original, authoritative Alinari schema. The entire history of Italian art passed through its photographs, at various levels: the Alinari public was not only made up of the educated classes, of scholars and teachers, but also of students at every level – that is, the readers not only of books on art but also of school textbooks. A fundamental contribution to creating a national consciousness was the publication in 1921 of the volume *Il Paesaggio Italico nella Divina Commedia*, which contains photographs depicting Dantean places almost all by Vittorio Alinari. He wrote:

With the same love with which Dante sang of “beautiful Italy,” with the same tenacity and fervor that he undoubtedly needed in order to reach, along savage, rough and stern pathways, the places that left their indelible mark on the Poem, I began to read the sacred canticles with the intention of marking all the passages alluding to the Italian landscape, and, having identified the places alluded to, procuring graphical representations of them ... I decided ... in some way to repeat the wanderings of the great exile ... And not with the hope of deriving any use for myself from it, but only out of my living love for “beautiful Italy.” (vii–viii)

The Alinari company’s cultural and commercial project was merely the largest; with the advent of photography many other studios sprang up in many Italian cities with the aim of reproducing works of art and views to sell to tourists.



**Figure 1.18** Carlo Ponti, Piazza San Marco. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

Some of the most important were those of Robert MacPherson in Rome, Brogi as well as the Alinari brothers in Florence, Carlo Naya and Domenico Bresolin in Venice, Alphonse Bernoud and Giorgio Sommer in Naples. In addition there were numerous photographers, a number of them foreigners, who dedicated themselves to representing the Bel Paese's natural and artistic wealth, from Giacomo Caneva to Carlo Ponti and Frédéric Flacheron, from Tommaso Cuccioni to Charles Balthazar Simelli, from Gioacchino Altobelli to Louis Sacchi and James Anderson, from the Bisson brothers to Gustave Eugène Chaffourier, Eugène Piot, Calvert Richard Jones, and Léon Gerard.<sup>17</sup> In part they harked back to the tradition of painting and engraving and in part introduced new ways of seeing, determined by the technology itself or, for those who were professionals, by the necessity of using new products to compete with the painters, designers, and engravers, whose market share they were slowly taking over.

Ultimately the Alinari absorbed the archives of many of these studios (e.g., Brogi, Anderson, Chaffourier, Marinelli, Florentines, Michetti, von Gloeden, Wulz, Viliani, and Trombetta) and bought several collections of photographs and books. In 1985 Fratelli Alinari became the Museo di Storia della Fotografia Fratelli Alinari and in 2006, the Museo Nazionale Alinari della Fotografia.<sup>18</sup> It is the unique story of a private company that by its own initiative stands in for public institutions and for the Italian state itself in two areas that contribute greatly to the construction of collective identity and cultural history: the recording of artistic and landscape heritage and the collection and conservation of photographs as themselves objects of cultural value.

For a long time the young Italian state judged photography as a mere tool of documentation and not a complete form of expression (the law granting photography status as part of the nation's cultural heritage dates only from 1999). Nonetheless, the government did play a somewhat important role in the task of establishing a photographic archive of the country's artistic heritage. In 1892, the National Photographic Department was established within the Ministry of Education's Directorate General of Antiquities and Fine Arts. A Royal Decree of 1907 entrusted to the department the photographic material created during the production of the "catalogue of things of historical, archaeological and artistic interest," with the stated intent being "to draw up a precise and methodical inventory of monuments, objets d'art and antiquities" (Regio Decreto).<sup>19</sup> This seemingly secondary initiative of the government rested upon one of the cornerstones of Italian identity. If we consider that the political experience of the Risorgimento remained largely circumscribed to an elite, it could be argued, in fact, that the Italians' deepest sense of belonging has been linked to an aesthetic awareness of living in the Bel Paese. Beauty is one sure point where "character" and "Italianness" congeal, and yet it is a problematic one, giving rise to an ambiguous consciousness, where the idea of a historical cultural primacy problematically merges with a nagging sense of having been, and remaining, a beautiful object for others to behold. The temptation as Italy struggled to think of itself as a unified country was to settle for beauty in place of character.

## A Democratizing Medium? The Italian People and War Photography

Tragically, the first true opportunity for a great majority of Italians to see themselves as a nation, more or less consciously, and to get to know themselves and one another through photography is offered by war. In *I Malavoglia* (1881), Giovanni Verga describes the astounding arrival of a photograph in the tiny village of Aci Trezza. This photograph depicts the young ‘Ntoni, who had himself photographed while serving in the army on the continent in the immediate aftermath of Unification. As this page of Verga’s confirms, photography became a truly popular object of consumption with national conscription (along with the contemporary phenomenon of emigration). But it was the colonial wars, which saw the Italian Kingdom engaged in Africa, from the early eighties of the nineteenth century to the early forties of the twentieth century, and ultimately the First World War that gave a renewed urgency to the theme of national identity for the recently unified country. While the Liberal government’s policy to pursue national unification through war was profoundly anti-democratic (something that would be fully revealed with the turn to totalitarianism after the First World War), it is precisely within this frame of war that photography emerged as a democratic medium. Enlisted from above to record and forge the identity of Italians, photography, appropriated from below, ultimately complicated any official history it was called upon to document.

Colonial photography appears in large quantities and in various forms:<sup>20</sup> through illustrated magazines (after the introduction of halftone printing in the late eighties), through the distribution of official photographs of soldiers for propaganda purposes, and through the private photograph albums that illustrate various aspects of daily life in the colonies, as well as of war itself via postcards, which were an important means of communication. The production, circulation, and consumption of images not made by professional photographers are critical because these photographs were able to penetrate the fabric of families and society as a whole.

The photographs taken by Angelo Cormanni, a soldier (possibly officer) in the third telegraphic unit stationed around Benghazi during the 1911 Italo-Turkish War are one such example. They record different moments of the war experience, from tourism and life in the trenches to Generale Briccola’s visit to the troops. In photographs such as these, the soldier, both photographer and photographic subject, is at the same time the producer and consumer of colonial images, thanks to which he establishes a dialogue with those left at home. In this way, photography begins to become an instrument of collective memory, a phenomenon Cottini analyses in depth in Chapter 5 in relation to the the First World War portraits of common soldiers. In these colonial snapshots, even the anonymous soldier can construct his own image on a model produced by the myths of war propaganda and participate in adventure and conquest: sadly, the element of exotic Africanness adds a new and spectacular element to the photographs, enhancing the mass appeal of the images.



Figure 1.19 Photograph from the album of Angelo Cormanni, taken during the 1911 Italo-Turkish War. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.



Figure 1.20 Photograph from the album of Angelo Cormanni, taken during the 1911 Italo-Turkish War. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

Sega and Magotti, in their analysis of the image of the Italian colonies in the illustrated press, point out:

For the peasant farmer dying of hunger, or the unemployed person, or the petty bourgeoisie in search of escape, the myth of the colony serves as a means of finding an image of oneself, an identity which is also structured around the concept of strength. The easy conquest of the land of Africa corresponds to the promise of an easy appropriation of wealth, women and slaves. In other words: there is someone poorer than us in relation to whom we can play master. (Sega and Magotti 14)

In the popular imagination Africa is identified with redemption from poverty. Colonialism, which like industrialization, Italy achieved belatedly, projects an image of a united, strong country like other European nations. According to this mythology, Italians would now depart for a foreign country not as poor immigrants but as soldiers, not to ask but to take, and even, so the story went, to provide roads, sanitation, civilization. At the same time, Italy had actually begun the long season of migration, another social factor that, thanks to the use of family photography, achieves a problematic strengthening of national identity and enacts a sudden and fantastic encounter between backwardness and modernity: the migrant is, in fact, a very significant figure in the imagery of Italianness, as Giorgia Alù's chapter in this book underscores.<sup>21</sup>

The myth of Africa relies on means of mass communication. The weekly that promulgates its values (those of a dreamy, sentimental colonialism with a human face) and ideologically imposes consensus by way of both drawings and photographs, although still not precisely journalism, is undoubtedly *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, which addresses the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy that had become bourgeois (its publication of portraits, both engraved and photographic, of dead officers, whose faces acquire an identity thanks to print and become the faces of heroes is particularly interesting). In contrast, the popular weekly *La Domenica del Corriere* prefers drawings (as in Achille Beltrame's famous covers) with a more pedagogical and celebratory rather than informative function.

The celebratory propaganda images of the First World War disseminated through the same newspapers in the period 1915 through 1918 have the same function and aesthetic. *L'Illustrazione Italiana* published about eighteen hundred photographs of the war and *La Domenica del Corriere* about eight hundred, but no image shows dead on the battlefield identified as Italian, as if only the enemy fell, or in a few cases the ally (Schwarz 4). The faces of the dead Italians are again the "ID photos" of heroes, which stand next to portraits of the members of the Supreme Command, who were still alive and directing military actions, from Diaz to Badoglio to Cadorna. A similar patriotic significance is to be found in the photographs in the pages of *La Tribuna* and the *Corriere dei Piccoli*, which showed children images designed to evoke virtuous feelings. Although there were many professional photographers (like Arnaldo Fraccaroli, Luca Comerio, Aldo Molinari) and agencies present, these photographs were checked and very often taken by the Photographic Department of the Supreme Command of the



**Figure 1.21** Photograph from the album of Angelo Cormanni, taken during the 1911 Italo-Turkish War. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

Royal Army. The images aim to confirm in readers the desire for glory and victory, showing “our war: episodes and pictures” – that is, apparently “day-to-day” moments of the soldiers’ lives that would be acceptable to their families (Schwarz 4–7).

Particularly interesting in relation to the dissemination of images of conflict in Italy is the publication entitled *La guerra* by the Treves brothers, which appeared in bookstores in instalments from 1916 until 1921: eighteen volumes with hundreds of illustrations and military maps, each dedicated to a different theme (*La battaglia di Gorizia, In alta montagna, L’Albania, L’Aviazione, La Carnia, La battaglia da Plava al mare, Armi e munizioni, Il Carso*, etc.). As Wladimiro Settimelli writes:

It was a publication dedicated to the middle class, the middle class that provided the war with officers and NCOs, the connective tissue of the army, the nationalist spirit and a sense of the fatherland as something to defend in real ways in order to save home, goods, a decent occupation, and a social position that was certainly not proletarian. (69)

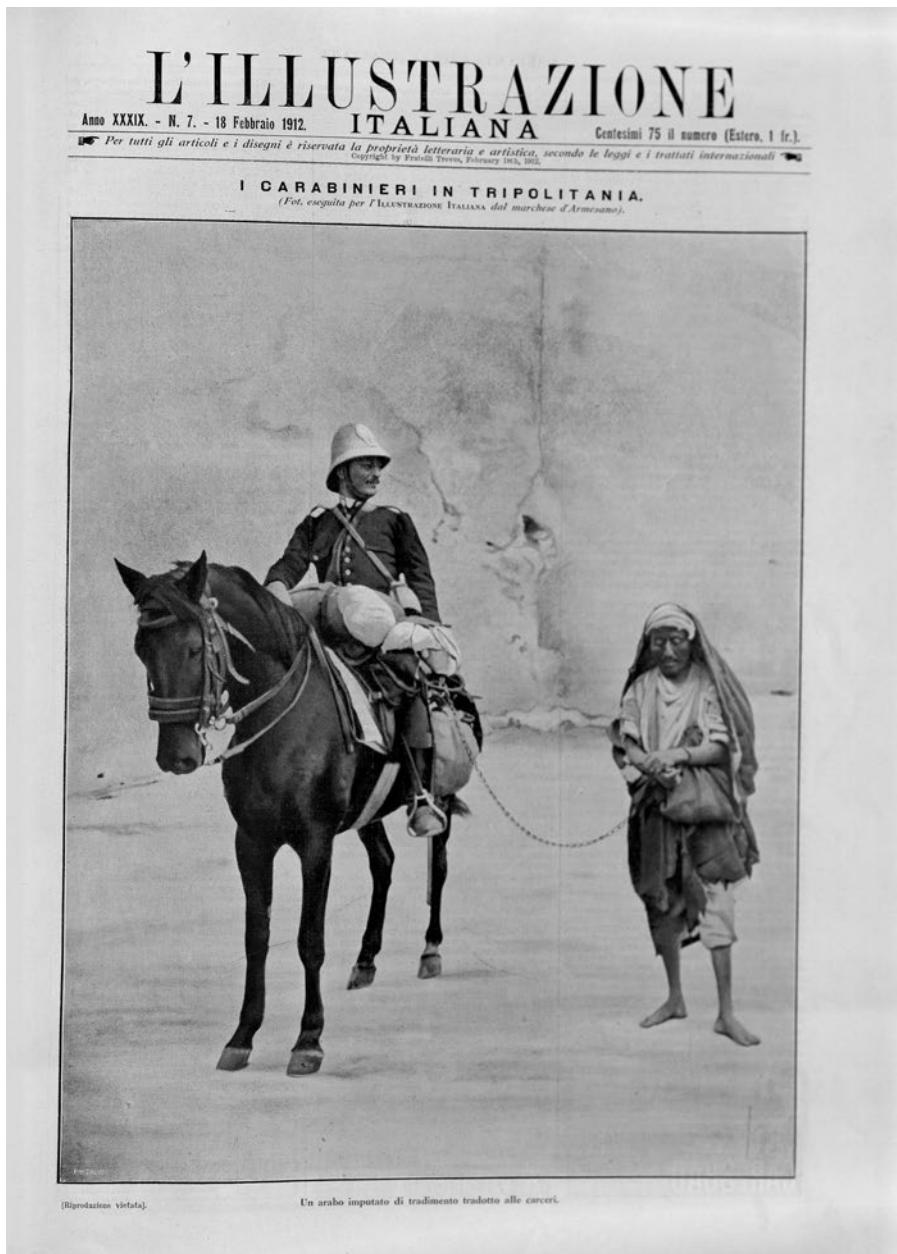


Figure 1.22 “I carabinieri in Tripolitania,” *L’Illustrazione italiana*. 18 February 1912.  
Courtesy of HCL, Widener Library, Harvard University.

The photographs, rigorously controlled by the Supreme Command, never show destruction, massacres, or executions but rather the damage caused by the enemy, the excellent organization of the Italian army, and also the beauty of the Italian mountains and valleys. In this way, beauty and goodness bind Italians together against the enemy, as Luca Cottini points out in his chapter on the First World War photography in this book. Within these images, character and a strong national consciousness are attested to and find a certification of sorts in the everlasting trope of the Bel Paese, Italy's surest ontological substratum.

An unofficial, spontaneous way of telling the war came from the soldier photographers (almost all of bourgeois or aristocratic origin, since the use of the camera was not yet within the economic means or social habits of the poorer classes), who made albums with portraits, moments of daily life, and places, and sometimes diaries, and sent home photos of themselves and their other companions from different parts of Italy. Those who did not take photographs were still photographed and could nevertheless send their families a few images of themselves, just as the emigrants that Alù discusses did, enclosed in an envelope with a letter or by postcard. In addition, one special circumstance meant that everyone had a portrait taken: the moment of enlisting. As Carlo Brogi explained in 1896: "The conscript off to his regiment, as soon as he has put on his military uniform, takes care to send his photograph to his family and to the inconsolable girl he left at home" (qtd. in Rivoir 10). Enlisting is a social ritual that marks the entrance into the adult world and as such, as Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, it requires a photographic witnessing. Compulsory military service becomes, over time, an important moment of the first encounter and social exchange between young people born in different areas of the country: the photographs that they bring with them and sometimes take, send, and receive from home during their military service, as well as postcards of places, constitute a slow interstitial bonding that builds a common awareness of belonging.

### **Conclusion: After the Interval**

Through wars of unification, a mythical feeling for the peninsula's natural and artistic beauties, emigration, dreams of Empire, and the First World War, Italy takes its first steps on the difficult path of building a national identity, accompanied at every turn by photography. In the aftermath of the "Great War" – the real watershed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – twenty years of Fascist dictatorship relaunch, amid violence and severe suffering for the country, the problematic question of Italian identity. Even after the Second World War, the upheavals of the reconstruction, and the economic boom, this identity is not resolved. In every crucial moment of Italy's troubled history as a nation, photography continues to play a significant role, both officially and unofficially, in constructing and documenting often-conflicting notions of Italianness.

The RAI *Intervallo* of my childhood is one instance of this kind of photographic construction of an Italian identity. While addressing a new modern audience, an

Italian people more strongly bound together socially and linguistically by the new medium than they ever were by ideals of unification, wars, or political propaganda, the *Intervallo* reaches back to the nineteenth century to the pedagogical efforts of post-unification authors and intellectuals, the cult of the Bel Paese, and the desire to represent and catalogue the riches of the land in all their individual manifestations. In this sense the *Intervallo* (very representative of the overall cultural policy of the RAI), is one small piece of an ongoing unfinished project. All those humble and previously unseen places (Apecchio, Pesaro; Caccamo, Palermo; Pozza di Fassa, Trento) gave a true measure of the wealth and mystery of a land and invited each one of the spectators in the intimacy of their home to know and behold them. Perhaps no photographs were scrutinized for as long, through so many repeated views, and by such a large collectivity as those of the Italian *Intervallo*. The historical monumentality of Italy deployed on the television screen was the point of stillness, a metaphorical eye of the modernist maelstrom finally unleashed by the *miracolo economico* on a still pastoral Italy. The *Intervallo* images accompanied by soothing harp music worked as a reassurance that the past, beauty, the most important elements in our DNA patrimony were there to stay. As if to give a further reassurance that this was indeed the case, Italy was stilled in the immobility of a photograph, which faded softly into the next, a gentle televisual motion that propelled Italy and photography towards modernity and its promises of new virtual communities.

## NOTES

- 1 As John Agnew has argued, the lack of a common “landscape ideal” of Italy was one of the factors that held back the development of a feeling of national identity.
- 2 “Confessiamolo, incantati dal fascino dei primi storici e teorizzatori, che indagano la fotografia nel cuore della cultura borghese capitalistica e industriale, abbiamo trascurato di chiederci quale potesse essere il rapporto tra fotografia e arretratezza in un paese come il nostro; considerando che gli inizi della fotografia italiana ai margini della rivoluzione industriale europea, non potevano non essere senza effetti sugli sviluppi successivi e segnarne il carattere.” All translations are the editors’.
- 3 “Sembra che il tempo del settentrione sia venuto ... Niuno dubiterebbe di scegliere i settentrionali per immagini del moderno”; “mancanza di industria, e d’ogni sorta d’attività.”
- 4 “è un desiderio e non un fatto, un presupposto e non una realtà, un nome e non una cosa, e non so pur se si trovi nel nostro vocabolario. V’ha bensì un’Italia e una stirpe italiana congiunte di sangue, di religione, di lingua scritta ed illustre; ma divisa di governi, di leggi, d’istituti, di favella popolare, di costumi, di affetti, di consuetudini.”
- 5 “Noi fummo da secoli/ Calpesti, derisi/ Perché non siam Popolo/ Perché siam divisi/ Raccolgaci un’unica/ Bandiera, una speme/ Di fonderci insieme/ Già l’ora suonò ... Uniamoci, amiamoci/ L’unione e l’amore/ Rivelano ai Popoli/ Le vie del Signore/ Giuriamo far libero/ Il suolo natio/ Uniti per Dio/ Chi vincer ci può?”

Translation taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Il\\_Canto\\_degli\\_Italiani](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Il_Canto_degli_Italiani), last accessed 19 May 2014.

- 6 On the many interpretations of the city of Rome, see, for example, the special issue of *Annali d'Italianistica* on the capital city.
- 7 “L'Italia infervorata a restaurare le memorie del suo risorgimento, volle riannodare la catena della letteratura sociale, e da trastullo di scioperati tornarla strumento di vita civile. Gli scrittori non furono paghi ormai di far millanteria d'ingegno in un crocchio d'iniziati; ma si diedero maestri alle moltitudini e nunci dell'utile e del vero. Parini e Gozzi sbeffiarono l'inerzia adagiata nei cocchi lombardi e nelle gondole veneziane; Beccaria, Verri, Bandini, Filangieri scrutarono le istituzioni civili; Baretti sgridò gli Italiani perché non erano Inglesi; e Alfieri pensò rifarli da capo, perché non erano più Romani. Egli li volle virili, torvi, frementi; altri cominciò poco di poi a volerli tutti eterei, melliflui e sospirosi; non manca chi li spera tra poco tutti neri di carbon fossile e di ferraccia. E allora e poi, gli scrittori si elessero fini arditi, altissimi, forse impossibili, come se la nazione fosse una materia prima senza opinioni, senza antecedenze, senza volontà ...”
- 8 On the enduring Romantic myth of a “premodern,” Arcadian Italy, see, for example, Luzzi.
- 9 See Vitali; Paoli; Mormorio; and Bollati, “Note.”
- 10 “il modo peculiare di risolvere il rapporto stasi-movimento ... Il problema non è tecnico, ma politico e storico ... l'immobilità, le lacune, sono elementi essenziali, non accidentali, del processo storico in questione.”
- 11 There were many more *garibaldini* than the original thousand volunteers – namely, those who joined the *Mille* for the whole duration of the southern campaign up to Naples. For the 150th anniversary of the unification, the *Archivi di Stato di Torino e Genova* created a web page for a project entitled *Alla ricerca dei garibaldini scomparsi* (In Search of the Lost *Garibaldini*), whose stated goal is “to save from anonymity a multitude of unknown heroes coming from all the regions of Italy, Europe, America and Africa.” There the approximate number of the Garibaldi army is set at 35,000 *garibaldini*. <http://archiviodistatotorino.beniculturali.it/Site/index.php/it/progetti/schedatura/garibaldini>, last accessed 5 Jan. 2014.
- 12 The story of the Pavia Album owned by the Risorgimento Museum in Fidenza is an instructive one. The album was donated by the son of Luigi Musini, himself a *garibaldino* (though not one of the *Mille*), to the museum which carries his name. The album seems to be a collection of separate cartes de visite which Alessandro Pavia sold by subscription, or at least an entirely newly bound album, because the covers are different from the ones produced by Pavia. The album page shown here is part of two anonymous unbound volumes generically titled *Fotografie dei Mille sbarcati a Marsala* (held in the Fondo Lamberto Vitali at the Civico Archivio Fotografico in Milan).
- 13 Interview with Patriarca. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzS7zb9gFH4>, last accessed 16 Nov. 2012.
- 14 See Garra Agosta, *Verga fotografo*, and Minghelli, “L'occhio di Verga.”
- 15 See Miraglia, “Journey” 45.
- 16 See Brilli, *Viaggio*; and Brilli, *Quando viaggiare*.
- 17 See Musée d'Orsay.
- 18 See Weber and Malandrini.

<sup>19</sup> With the creation of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, then Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, in 1975 the Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale merged with the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione. See Tomassini, “Gli Alinari” Parts I and II.

<sup>20</sup> See “Fotografie e colonialismo/2,” and Goglia.

<sup>21</sup> See also Giusa and Astore.

## 2 Local Colour and the Grey Aura of Modernity: Photography, Literature, and the Social Sciences in Fin-de-Siècle Italy

---

MARIA GRAZIA LOLLA

The birth of photography in its Daguerreian incarnation is accompanied by a dense and influential certificate that strove to shape the medium's future life. I am referring to the report that François Arago presented to the French Chamber of Deputies in July 1839 in hope of persuading the government to grant Daguerre and his partner a pension in exchange for the right to patent photography to the French. A scientist and a politician, Arago pitched the daguerreotype primarily as a tool of archaeological research while also emphasizing photography's geopolitical potential. For an audience still smarting from the memory of the French defeat in Egypt at the hands of the British, Arago evoked the possibility that photography might at least have led to a scholarly victory: "If photography had been known in 1798, we should now have correct images of a somewhat considerable number of emblematical pictures" (qtd. in Daguerre 22). Photographs of hieroglyphs, Arago continued, would provide cheaper, more plentiful, and, most of all, more accurate images. In fact, they would be so accurate as to downgrade to "fictitious" the documentary value of the images produced by any other existing technology: "Provide the Institute of Egypt with two or three sets of apparatus, and in several of the large plates of the celebrated work the fruits of our immortal expedition, vast extents of real hieroglyphics will soon replace the fictitious ones" (ibid.). But just as he advertised photography's ability to deliver the "real" to the scholarly community, in a rather perplexing coda, Arago extolled photography's superior capacity to capture "local color": "The drawings will everywhere surpass in copy and local color the works of the most skillful painters" (ibid.).

In copy *and* local colour? Were accuracy and cultural difference made legible a hendiadys? Did Arago believe that it mattered to Egyptologists, politicians, or even the general public that photography could capture, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* has it, "a representation in vivid detail of the characteristic features of a particular period or country"?<sup>1</sup> Or was Arago hoping that photography would capture a monument's "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 220) – that is, its "aura"?

The first few decades of photographic practice would show that, while Arago was right in predicting that photography would result in cheaper, faster, and more accurate images of monuments, he was mistaken in believing that the new technology was capable of capturing the relationship between local colour and monuments, and in assuming that archaeologists and art historians would welcome being distracted

from the study and appreciation of monuments by such unmonumental subjects as workers, passers-by, or local inhabitants. Even tourists turned out to be unwilling to purchase a souvenir of their journey into the past defaced by a reminder of its unattractive, uncomfortable, and contested social present.<sup>2</sup> But further investigation into the early culture of photography and into the broader intellectual history of the time shows that Arago's casual and seemingly contradictory reference to the importance of local colour in archaeological photography touched on a fundamental concern of the age.

A notoriously “under-theorized notion” (Kapor 8), at the most basic level, local colour was characterized by a yearning for cultural specificity. Like photography, it gained currency in the late Romantic period in France but continued to matter to photographers, social scientists, men of letters, artists, and the reading public throughout the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States.<sup>3</sup> A casualty of modernity, a scarcer and scarcer commodity in a world that was experiencing the rapid and traumatic disappearance of the local – and of colour for that matter – both at home and abroad, primarily at the hands of economic and political transformations, local colour mattered so much that the preoccupation with reproducing it, in images and in words, studying it and, occasionally, preserving it, comes across as some kind of scholarly, artistic, and literary obsession. If it is true that archaeological photography did struggle to accommodate the human presence within its frame by including human figures and eventually pushed local colour away from the monuments altogether, it is also true that local colour thrived in ethnographic or anthropological photography, in genre photographs, and the photography of local costumes as well as in the new academic disciplines of anthropology and ethnography and in the reflections and the artistic practice of painters and novelists.

In this chapter I focus on the pursuit of local colour in the culture of post-unification Italy, a time when the double imperative of becoming Italian – and forgoing local identities – and becoming modern – and giving up the past – fuelled fears of the impending “greyification” of the nation and led photographers, social scientists, and men of letters into a frantic quest for colour. I touch on the politically charged nature of the pursuit of local colour, increasingly furthered no longer in the hope that the nation’s self-knowledge would provide the cement of a more durable union but to undermine political unity at home and promote expansion abroad. I then discuss how, *in spite* of the fact that local colour was politically divisive and central to key issues such as the “southern question” and the “social question,” artists and writers working in Italy in the last decades of the century were solely concerned with how best to “render” local colour, in word and image, and how they consequently produced artefacts that contributed precisely to the grey averages that they abhor.

### **Photographers and the Pursuit of Local Colour**

Arago’s soldering of photography and local colour in one of the earliest conceptualizations of photography to appear in print alerts us to the fact that reproducing local colour was part of photography’s horizon of expectations. We find a similar

set of connotations in the frontispiece of the Italian journal *Il fotografo* – a short-lived weekly that began publication in Milan in 1855. An illustrated journal which was not only very sparsely illustrated but also, in spite of its title, not dedicated to the advancement or practice of photography or even to the publication of a single photograph, *Il fotografo* provides a precious insight into what was desired of the new technology. When it first appeared, the frontispiece displayed a multitasking photographer standing on a makeshift wooden platform. Looking down at his watch, the photographer holds the shutter of his camera as he gets ready to immortalize an unspecified moment of oriental flavour. Wearing a uniform that suggests his kinship both with the policeman and the timekeeper, he is unmoved by the sight before him. In fact his eyes are on his watch, not on the scene, apparently intent only on ensuring the proper functioning of the machine. Behind him lies a typographer's busy shop; next to it, a newspaper salesman who sells copies of the journal to a woman with children in tow and a man in top hat; while a few more individuals wait to purchase their copies, a gentleman reads his. The scary disciplinarian impossibility of the photographer and the haunting rigidity and seriality of the metropolitan consumers contrast starkly with the more obviously animated humanity of the scene of local colour.

It is remarkable how much is packed into this image – so impossibly narrative, despite its wish to convey instantaneity, so backward-looking in the flavour of its traits, reminiscent more of a fifteenth-century woodcut than a nineteenth-century photograph. Most immediately the image captures photography's main mandate to fix the anthropological other on the brink of extinction and deliver it as quickly as possible to the heart of metropolitan modernity. It is worth noticing that in this vision of “the photographer,” local colour is neither ancillary to the reproduction of monuments nor is it a function of the representation of some event happening in a faraway land. Local colour is what is being photographed. One is tempted to view this plate as an abstraction of local colour in the context of its impending disappearance since, as we look on, we become aware that local colour is less a function of a place than of a moment in time. The native figures in oriental garb do nothing but sit and, more importantly, point with their fingers and their somewhat anxious, frantic looks towards the future: the moment and place occupied by the photographer, the typographer, the newspaper seller, and the readers; the moment and place when local colour will cease to exist in real life and will begin to inhabit the fragile pages of a weekly.

With a last backward glance at a past on the verge of disappearance, photography is here represented not just as fulfilling its mandate to duplicate local colour with the utmost accuracy but also as the modern technology responsible for its very disappearance. As the outsized sailboat makes clear, photography promises to handle local colour like any other commodity. It will harvest, package, and ship cultural difference to the metropolitan centre most efficiently, thus sharing a destiny that brings to mind Karl Marx's reading of modernity, paraphrased by Jonathan Crary as “the process by which capitalism uproots and makes mobile that which is grounded, clears away or obliterates that which impedes circulation and makes exchangeable what is singular” (Crary 10).

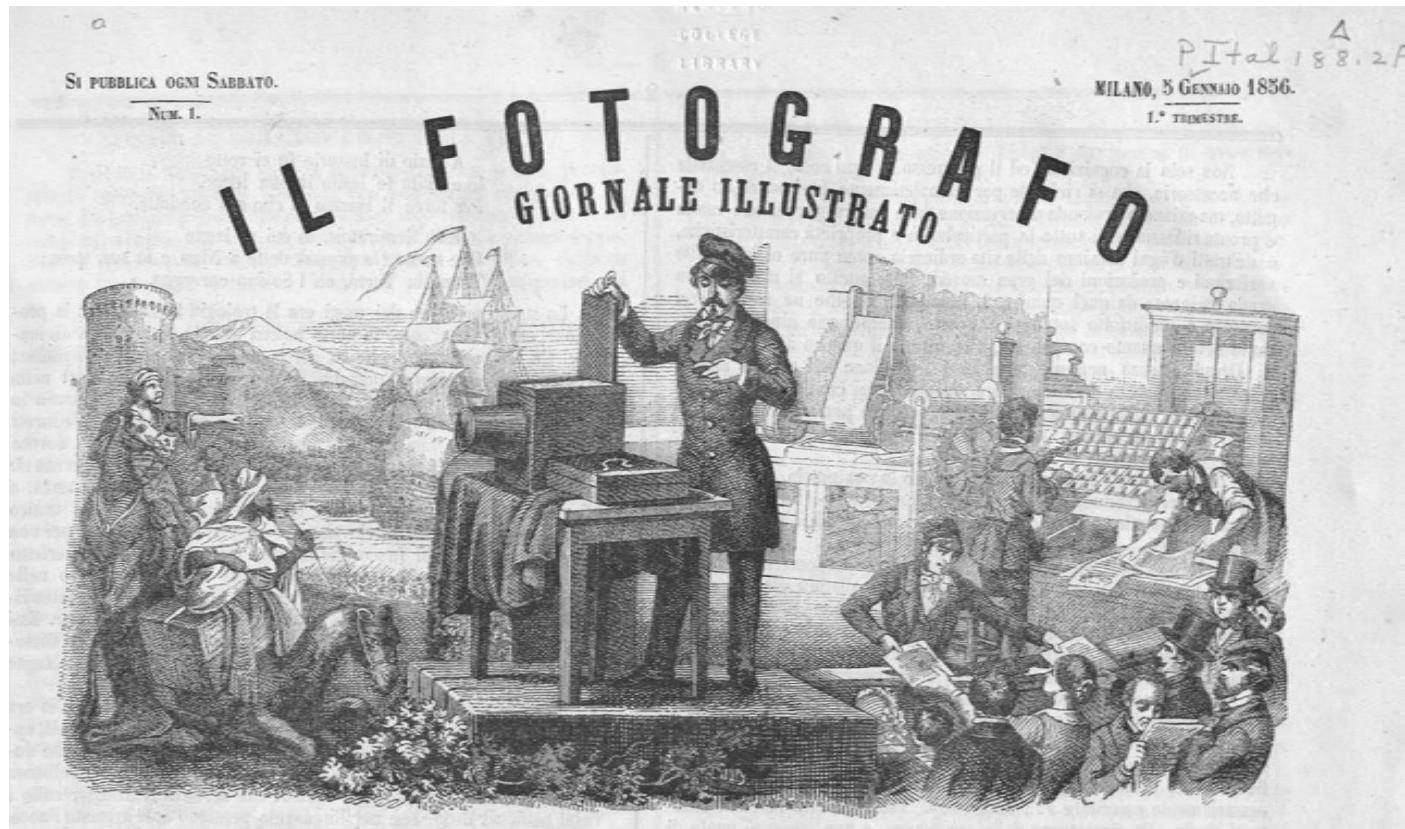


Figure 2.1 Frontispiece. *Il fotografo*. 5 January 1856. Courtesy of HCL, Widener Library, Harvard University.

N. 27. — SI PUBBLICA OGNI SABATO.

— 209 —

MILANO, 5 LUGLIO 1856.

# IL FOTOGRAFO

GIORNALE ILLUSTRATO

STORICO, STATISTICO, GEOGRAFICO, LETTERARIO, SCIENTIFICO, ARTISTICO.

PREZZO ANTICIPATO D'ASSOCIAZIONE.		
PER	3 mesi L. 3 —	Per le province della
MILANO	6 " 6 —	Monarchia franco di
	12 " 12 —	spese postali:

Le Associazioni si ricevono  
in Milano dalla Lit. Corbetta edit., contr. S. Pietro  
all'Orto n. 907, fuori dai  
principali librai ed Uffici  
Postali.

I gruppi, le lettere ed altro  
si dirigono franco di spe-  
se all'editore, F. Corbetta.

## SOMMARIO.

Vivieri. — Malattia dei cereali. — I Propilei a Monaco. — Infortunio di locomotiva presso Potsdam. — Descrizione geografica dell'Oceania e dell'Africa. Storia dei Congressi politici. — Il bottone e la bottoniera.

## Disegni.

Vivier. — Malattia dei cereali. — I Propilei a Monaco. — La locomotiva Jupiter che precipita nell'Havel presso Potsdam. — Tipi francesi ai bagni e alla campagna. — Confidenze di due soldati Zuavi.

## AVVERTENZA.

Si pregano quei signori, a cui è scaduto l'abbonamento colla fine dell'appena spirato mese di giugno, di rinnovarlo con sollecitudine per la regolarità della spedizione.

EDIMOSI IL SCONVOLTO DI CORNO

Figure 2.2 Frontispiece. *Il fotografo*. 5 July 1856. Courtesy of HCL, Widener Library, Harvard University.

Like Arago's speech, the frontispiece of *Il fotografo* chronicles the desire for local colour that accompanied the birth of photography. But at the same time, it also conveys a potent anxiety over the feared disappearance of local colour that photography seems to exasperate rather than assuage. This dark vision of local colour swallowed into a world of flat factories, tall smoke stacks, and top hats brings to mind the apocalyptic vision that Edmondo De Amicis evoked for the future of Constantinople. Reporting on Turkey in 1877 through the filter of his own experience of the capitalist transformation of Italy, De Amicis issued this prediction:

I see the Constantinople of the future: ... the hills will be flattened, the groves razed to the ground, the multicolored houses knocked down; the horizon will be cut in every direction by the long, rigid lines of the buildings, of the workers' houses and the factories, in the midst of which will rise a myriad of high workshop chimneys ... on the bridge of the Valide Sultan one will no longer see anything but a stream of black cylindrical hats and caps ... everything will be solid, geometrical, useful, grey, dull, and a huge dark cloud will perpetually veil the beautiful sky of Thrace. (*Costantinopoli I*, 151–2)<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps because it offered too disquieting a vision of photography, this frontispiece was quickly replaced by a far more reassuring view. Within a year, *Il fotografo* sported a new image where the photographer had traded the regalia of the policeman and the timekeeper for those of the painter. His lens now focuses on nothing specific but merely points forward – to the future, presumably. To the photographer's side is an alpine landscape and under him cherub-like representations of the arts that feed into the shop of the typographer. Tendrils and decorations soften all.

In another nonphotograph that appeared in 1873 in the weekly *Roma antologia illustrata*, also in its first year of existence, we see represented the continued amity between photography and local colour suggested by Arago. More Italian in flavour and more lighthearted in tone, the engraving *La fotografia nel villaggio* (Photography in the Village) zooms in on the act of photographing peasants in costumes to display a photographic practice that routinely traded in local colour. The engraving shows a pompous-looking photographer intent on immortalizing a young woman who seems intimidated, almost diminished in stature by the process, and very, very still. The presence of children giggling, women whispering, and pets simply looking on generates a sense of bonhomie that was lacking from the frontispiece of *Il fotografo*.

The accompanying article makes clear that photographing peasants was what photographers did to make a living. Not unlike Arago, the editor begins with a description of the photographic process and moves immediately to its application to the reproduction of local colour: "The man surrounded by mystery and admiration is a poor devil of an artist-photographer, who has set off wandering though the countryside to reproduce the lively rural types in order to earn a few coins" (Anonymous, 202).<sup>5</sup> Local colour is here presented as the routine, default business of photography.



**Figure 2.3** Photography in the Village. *Roma antologia illustrata*. 4 May 1873. Courtesy of HCL Widener Library, Harvard University.

In a very interesting – almost unique – turn, the editor goes on to imagine the impact of photography on the photographed and describe a transaction that was profitable for both parties:

That pretty country lass is there, erect and vain, still unaware of what is happening. But how delighted she will be when she sees her pretty appearance reproduced on a little square of paper! She is overjoyed, she runs to show it to her relatives and neighbors, never satisfied with looking at herself. Finally that image will pass into the hands of someone dear to her: he, in the heat of the sun, exhausted by labor, dripping with sweat, pausing from working the earth, will pull out that paper from his breast and, contemplating that pretty portrait, reminded of the original, will feel his vigor and the joy of work reborn in him.<sup>6</sup> (202)

The photographer's exploitation of the market in local colour is here balanced by the girl's ambition to be chosen. Where the illustration published in *Il fotografo* left us with the impression that photography had taken the local, body and soul, to turn it into paper, the editor of *Roma antologia illustrata* reassures us that the girl is an individual in flesh and blood first and a type second. Partaking of both the typical and the unique – to which I will return – in this case the photographed will live on and contribute to making life and work in the countryside more desirable.

Far more than a prediction, Arago's intuition of photography's potential in the reproduction of both monuments and local colour is validated in the actual practice of pioneers of Italian photography such as Luigi Sacchi and Giorgio Sommer. Making the most of a medium that could not accommodate movement, both Sacchi and Sommer engaged in the systematic reproduction of monuments and depopulated Italian cityscapes alongside staged photos of local colour. We must also note that the photography of local colour was to be highlighted in one of the first manuals of photography to appear in Italy, Giuseppe Sella's *Il Plico del fotografo. Trattato teorico pratico di fotografia* (Practical and Theoretical Treatise of Photography, 1863), whose frontispiece showed a free-standing camera directing its gaze at a woman in costume.

And even when, at the turn of the century, photography was no longer constrained in its choice of subject by technological deficiencies, it was still to be described as local colour's most natural advocate. Scouring the country in 1905 in search of what he feared were the last traces of colour, the painter-photographer Arnaldo Ferraguti expressed his gratitude for photography's timely arrival:

The picturesque is destined to disappear with the disappearance of the beautiful, brightly coloured costumes of our farmers, of religious festivals and plays, of everything that gave a unique physiognomy to the life of our villages. Let us at least try to keep a memory of it that will remain a historical document for the future. In this task, may drawing and photography accompany words, since thankfully photography arrived in time to fix on the plate the most accurate and credible memory of a world of beauty and faith, a simple and sincere life, that is dying, killed by the department stores of ready-made clothes, bazaars and workers' unions.<sup>7</sup> (qtd. in Milan 50–4)

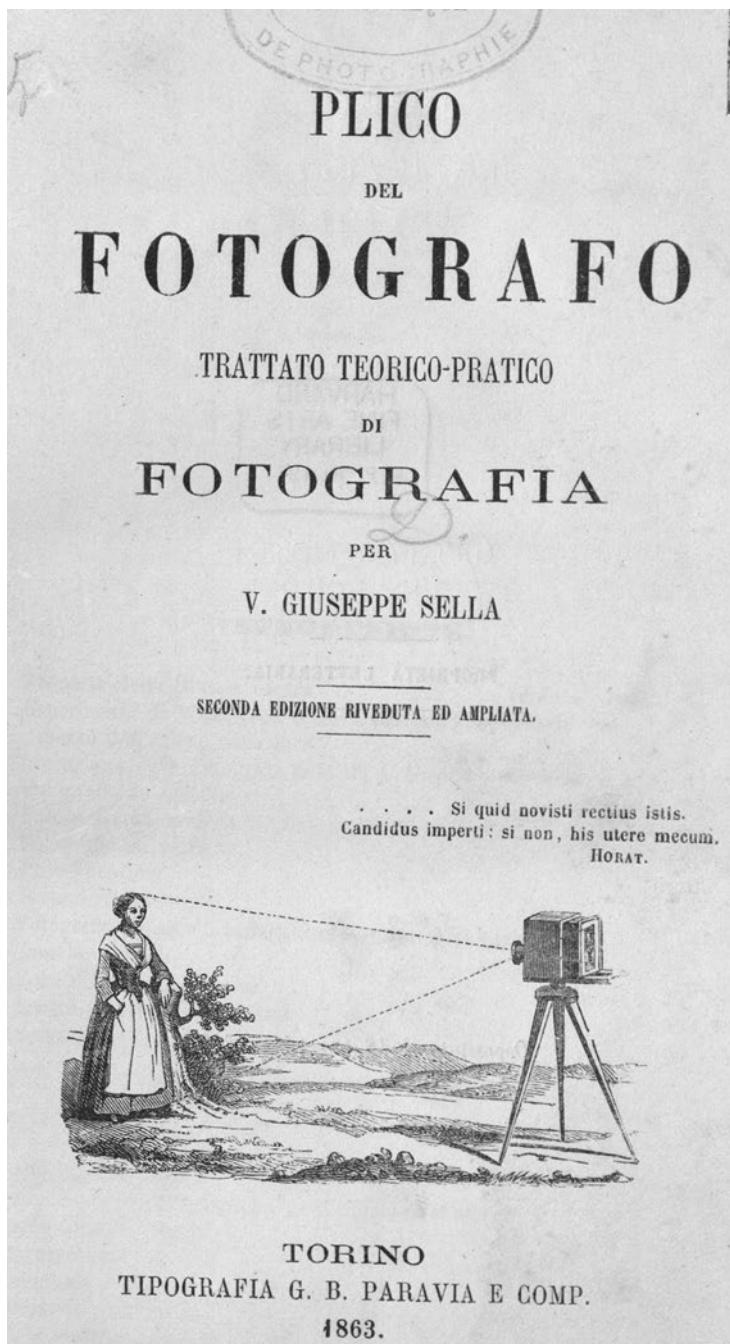


Figure 2.4 Frontispiece of Giuseppe Sella's *Il plico del fotografo*. 1863. Courtesy of HCL, Widener Library, Harvard University.



**Figure 2.5** Filippo Palizzi. Public scribe, no. 18. From the series *Antichi mestieri napoletani*, ca. 1853. Colour copper plate engraving. Collection of the editors.

Upheld as the ideal antidote to the unwelcome change brought about by a farrago of causes – from the progress of the clothing industry to the rise of socialism – time and again photography is welcomed as a timely and time-saving gift best suited to memorialize civilizations – especially those known to be ending – in museums and newspapers alike. In the same year that Ferraguti covered local colour for *Il Secolo XX*, Giovanni Santoponte planned a museum of photography that would contribute to visualizing “an entire civilization” on the verge of extinction:

From a photograph of a monument ... to the reproduction of the customs and usages threatened by the invasive, leveling civilization, to the image of a specimen of local flora or fauna, to the portrait of a famous man, everything that ultimately may give us an exact conception of the genius of a people and the environment in which they live. (Zannier, *Cultura fotografica* 246–7)

Essential as it was to the definition and the practice of early photography, the desire to preserve the face of local colour – and to preserve it as quickly and systematically



Figure 2.6 Giorgio Sommer. Public scribe. ca. 1870–86. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of Photobibliothek Switzerland.

as possible – predates the invention of photography and far exceeds its practice. Sommer's most iconic photographs of Neapolitan local customs, after all, were staged versions of the more popular illustrations produced in the eighteenth century beginning with the *Campagna di rilevazione dei costumi locali* (Campaign to Survey Local Customs) launched by King Ferdinand IV in 1783.

Likewise, Sacchi's *Monumenti, vedute e costumi d'Italia* (Monuments, Views and Customs of Italy, 1852–5) owes much to the investigation of the local customs of the Kingdom of Italy that Napoleon ordered in 1811. Most immediately, photography could be seen as simply inheriting the mandate to capture local colour from the previous technology of image reproduction that had come onto the scene a mere ten years earlier promising to cut costs and, especially, time: lithography. A passing reference to lithography included in Giuseppe Montani's 1828 review of Stendhal's *Armance* (1827) suggests that because it was a speedier method of image making, lithography was “especially” suited to the representation of local customs:

Quick: the pencil, a stone, four marks dashed off, and *pace* to Morghen and Longhi. – The world is moving fast, my friends. Who can keep up with its novelties with an engraver's burin? ... Along with the need for lithography the need for what I will call a ‘lithographic’ literature was also made manifest. Wherever social movement is greatest, the less time there is to wait for descriptions or finished representations of what is happening. The representation of customs, in particular, needs to be done like a lithographer's sketch.<sup>8</sup> (qtd. in Carpi 193)

Although in this passage it is not clear whether lithography simply mirrored or rather caused the acceleration of the pace of literature, it is clear that the mere thought of the speed of modern change evoked the wish to memorialize vanishing local colour with the help of lithography.

Like lithography, photography was perceived as so “especially suited” to producing the illusion of permanence in a world that was changing too fast that it was sometimes invoked as the synecdoche for preservation in image *and* in word by Italian ethnographers of the nineteenth century. Reviewing Leonardo Vigo's *Raccolta amplissima di canti popolari siciliani* (Vast Collection of Popular Sicilian Songs, 1876), Salvatore Salomone-Marino wished for a tool that could, so-to-speak, “photograph dialects” (qtd. in Bronzini, *I “Canti popolari toscani”* 59). Dedicating the second edition of his *Costumi e usanze dei contadini in Sicilia* (Customs and Rituals of Sicilian Peasants, 1897) to the Prince Don Pietro Lanza some twenty years later, Salomone-Marino again imagined the ethnography and the photography of Sicilian peasants as wholly fungible: “My intent was to serenely and faithfully delineate, or, rather, photograph our peasant, in his external and internal life, from his good and less good side, at home and out and about” (Salomone-Marino, *Costumi e usanze* vi).<sup>9</sup> Writing about Sicilian peasants could be described as a photographic act.

### **Ethnography, Unification, and Local Colour**

The “wish for local colour,” to paraphrase Geoffrey Bachtен, or better still, the frantic wish for local colour, both precedes and exceeds the wish for photography. That local colour was becoming scarcer was obvious to the tourist's naked eye.

Travelling in Italy in 1878, Samuel Manning could not help noticing the standardization of European habits: “The lover of the picturesque however will not fail to observe with regret that what was peculiar and characteristic in the habit of the people is passing away. Dress is rapidly becoming the same all over Europe” (16). Horror, more than regret, was the emotion that the anthropologist Giulio Fano felt when at the end of his journey around the world he landed in the United States as the century ended and issued a prophecy on the impending greyification of the globe: “Think with terror that the world is Americanizing and that before long civilization’s leveling action will have given the surface of the earth a gray tint of a depressing uniformity” (Fano 430).<sup>10</sup>

The same pathos that informs the photography of local colour and the comments of tourists is the impetus behind the tremendous growth of ethnographic research – both professional and amateur – across Europe and the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. The invention of photography, in fact, is coeval with the rise of what the anthropologist Tullio Tentori has named “the anthropological need” a craving for cultural difference that left its mark on the practice of tourism as well as on the social sciences and the arts.<sup>11</sup> Not only was 1839 the year that photography came to be, but it was also the year that saw the foundation of the Parisian Société ethnologique followed, shortly after, by the foundation of the American Ethnological Society (1842) and the Ethnological Society of London (1843). And the year 1846 is when the neologism *folklore* was coined. In Italy, the first ethnological society would not be instituted until much later – in 1905 – followed by the establishment of the first Ethnographic Museum in 1906. The main impetus for both were the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Risorgimento, culminating in the Roman Ethnographic Exhibit of 1911. But the professionalization of the passion for local colour into the new (state-sponsored) academic disciplines of anthropology and ethnology dates from the birth of Italy as a modern nation in the 1860s and played a key role in the modernization of the country in the 1880s. There, as we shall see, not unlike photography, ethnography displays a double vocation: as a force of conservation of the past and as an essential agent of that very modernization that would result in the destruction of the local colour that it purported to memorialize.<sup>12</sup>

Modern inventions dominated by a quintessentially modern frenzy, photography and ethnography were expected to attend to the same fragile and impermanent object and to move at the same speed – as fast as possible: “Quick! Quick!” as Montani had it (qtd. in Carpi 192). Beginning with the questionnaire that the French Celtic Society drafted, in 1802, in hope of recording in words the traditions that Napoleonic rule had swept away, ethnographers were in a hurry. In a document destined to be the model of the Napoleonic investigations into popular culture in both France and Italy, the members of the Celtic Society voiced the need “to hurry to draft our questions since the Code and the other institutions that now govern France will fatally lead to the disappearance of a large number of curious customs” (Rigoli and Savarese 83). Collecting and researching Italian superstitions in the decades in which Italy experienced most intensely what consistently comes across as the grey acceleration of

modernity, the anthropologist Paolo Mantegazza evoked a doomsday scenario and urged ethnographers to “hurry”:

We must hurry to examine our consciences, or I should say, to make this general confession, because civilization, progressing with accelerated (though not harmonic) motion, is eliminating many superstitions. On the other hand, increased and faster communications are mixing up good and evil, removing the local colour from both and merging them into a uniform shade. Yet it is precisely in local differences that we must look for the features of individual villages and the sources of ethnic studies on the origins of Italy's multiple bloodlines.<sup>13</sup> (qtd. in Puccini, *L'uomo e gli uomini* 226)

A direct consequence of the (uneven) acceleration of the speed of life, the disappearance of local colour could only be handled by accelerating the speed of ethnographic research. Likewise, congratulating Lamberto Loria on the opening of the first Italian Ethnographic Museum in Florence in 1906, Pasquale Villari repeated Mantegazza's rejoinder almost verbatim: “To reach this goal, however, it is necessary to hurry, not to waste time ... Before long it will be impossible to collect even half of what we can collect today” (qtd. in Loria 8).<sup>14</sup> More pessimistic than Villari, his colleague Athos Mainardi thought that it was simply too late. Indeed, in the space of a few short years, what had seemed immutable and unmovable had become a fleeting and momentary presence, an instant to be photographed before it was lost.

Contributing to the ethnographers' frenzy was the fact that local colour was not just frightfully impermanent but also notoriously elusive. To its enthusiasts, it was known for its resistance to domestication in words and image. The earliest explorations into popular culture such as Pietro Ercole Visconti's “Saggio di canti popolari della provincia di Marittima e Campagna” (Essay on the Popular Songs of the Provinces of Marittima and Campagna, 1830) were marred by the awareness of the natural hostility of the peasants to sharing – uncoerced – their traditions with the erudite: “Having asked the peasants and their wives to dictate to me the verses they were singing, some of them refused completely, others barely finished even after seeing the prize, and they satisfied me only after much insistence when forced to do so by the express command of the person who had authority over them” (Bronzini, *Canti popolari* 310).<sup>15</sup> Some thirty years later, Cesare Correnti registered the same “diffidence” on the part of “the poor” to the “curious or prying gaze” of the metropolitan observer: “The poor, I know by experience, are wary of those who come before them with the air of being wealthy, wise, as protectors” (qtd. in Cocchiara 219).<sup>16</sup> Social scientists and government officials were not any luckier. The investigation into the living conditions of the peasants in Italy that Stefano Jacini promoted was sabotaged by the reticence of those interviewed.

Photographers met with the same diffidence. On a state-sponsored trip to Lapland in search once again of untouched local traditions, Mantegazza recorded his frustration when he sought to obtain photographs of the inhabitants: “I made clear my desire that those people should come the next day to Elvebaken to be photographed. The old

woman would not hear of it and the *pige* (girl) complied with my honest desire only after an hour of discussion” (73).<sup>17</sup> Asked to contribute photos of men and women from Abruzzi to the ethnographic exhibition of 1911, Mainardi found extremely unwilling subjects: “It is impossible almost everywhere to make large photographic studies of heads. We must be content with little snapshots taken by surprise. All the women have their men in America and one of the agreements made at the moment of departure is precisely the prohibition to be photographed” (qtd. in Puccini, *L’itala gente* 104–5).<sup>18</sup> Reminiscing about the journey he took in 1889 on board one of the ships carrying emigrants to South America, when he was working on an illustrated version of De Amicis’s popular *Sull’Oceano*, Ferraguti took note of the emigrants’ resistance to photography:

I endured all the trouble in the world to persuade some of my travelling companions to pose for my drawings and photographs. Actually, I will say even more. My albums or my camera lens spread such terror that if modern machine guns routed the enemy as I routed the “class passengers” with my innocuous and modest weapons, there would be no more bloodshed! (qtd. in Milan 47–8)<sup>19</sup>

Backtracking from his boutade, Ferraguti gave credibility to a widespread fear of photography because of its sinister association with the government:

But, in fact, on second thoughts, must I not have had just the air of a policeman that day, and even some of the following ones? Especially when I appeared at the bow, followed almost always by the Purser, with a folder under my arm, a pencil stuck in my ear and a camera in hand to wander between groups, to study them as if searching for escaped criminals or cashiers on the run. And who would have believed that I was drawing or taking notes, with that inquisitorial air of mine?<sup>20</sup> (qtd. in Milan 48)

“Typical emigrants” responded to inquisitors and photographers with fear and diffidence, unable to appreciate the innocence of practices better known to them for their association with the policing state that had so sadly failed them.

Uppermost in the motivations for research on local colour was anxiety over what was named “levelling,” “veil of uniformity,” “the levelling steam roller” “depressing grey tint,” a process sometimes understood as the inevitable, unstoppable, universal, and natural by-product of “progress.” In his appeal to colleagues to contribute to the study of superstitions, for instance, Mantegazza evoked the image of a geological shift to convey the idea of cultural change: “Traditions overlap their geological layers as though in a great riverbed and bring their floods, which then modify each other, often leaving obscure their ancient origins and the true nature of the rock that later appears to us” (qtd. in Puccini, *L’uomo e gli uomini* 227).<sup>21</sup> Natural as a geological shift for some, for others the loss of local colour was the regrettable result of political action. Seemingly quietly resigned to capturing on the page “the last images” of a people – Sicilians – destined to disappear, Salomone-Marino published his research on popular traditions in the *Archivio per lo studio*

*delle tradizioni popolari* (Archive for the Study of Popular Traditions, 1882) as an act of both patriotism and piety:

In a time of transaction [*sic*] like ours, in which civilization, fashion, and commerce have largely erased and soon will erase all the differences of nation, class, individual, it is patriotic and the duty of the historian to collect and preserve the last images of a people who until yesterday had a strong individuality, which they have now spontaneously sacrificed by joining the unity of the great Italian family.<sup>22</sup> (I, 10)

A statement that began with a reference to universal “time” and “civilization” ended with a poignant allusion to Italian unification’s role in requiring the “sacrifice” of local specificity. Working on the traditions of Calabria, Raffaele Riviello would uphold the same chronology: “From 1860 onwards the innovative spirit of revolution was in everything, whirling and violent … so that the work of a few years equaled and surpassed the work of many centuries” (Riviello 59).<sup>23</sup> Invoking the usual farrago of joint causes – government, education, the railway, social mobility, fashion, the credit economy – 1860 stands out as the precise moment when traditions that had existed for centuries came to an end. According to Vil-lari, “the veil of uniformity” that threatened to envelope the whole of Italy began at the precise moment of unification: “The unification of Italy leads naturally to a rapid unification of laws, customs, and national life. A uniform layer spreads across the diversity of our customs in the various provinces, a diversity that will then continue more or less slowly to disappear altogether” (qtd. in Loria 8).<sup>24</sup> The natural consequence of the far-from-natural act of political unification, the loss of a strong cultural identity for Mainardi could be dated quite accurately to the Risorgimento: “The idea of a museum of Italian ethnography had to arise in 1860, because that was when the bastardization began” (qtd. in Puccini, *L’itala gente* 93).<sup>25</sup> Indeed, before and after 1860 has been naturalized as the best taxonomy by which to organize Italian local traditions.

The “bastardization,” the “disappearance,” and the “sacrifice” of local traditions began with the Risorgimento. This stance often colours the work of the first Italian ethnographers so deeply as to turn ethnographic research into a running commentary on the success and desirability of a unified nation. Some fifty years from the unification of Italy, the same historical moment that had been hailed as the triumph of the rights of the local over the super-national powers across Europe will begin to be rewritten as an authoritarian and illegitimate abuse of power. Writing in 1904, Giuseppe Sergi calls national unifications a “brutal fusion,” a “violence against nature” – and advocates for a federal solution (Sergi 21–2).<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Loria and Mochi harboured no illusions that Italians shared anything more than a political union: “Local life in the various regions of the country presents such deep differences … that political unity is now in many cases the only (and almost artificial) tie that links in a single structure the various peoples of the peninsula who until now were almost strangers to each other”<sup>27</sup> (qtd. in Puccini, *L’itala gente* 128). Loria quite simply imagines ethnology as *instrumentum regni* and, like Sergi,

advocates for a different political solution: “A profound knowledge of the customs and traditions of each of our provinces will likely give rise to special laws matching those habits, those customs ... This is what our ethnography must give us” (qtd. in *Lares* 79).<sup>28</sup> Not unlike Loria, De Gubernatis declared up front that researching local customs was no academic exercise. Evoking the long list of factors contributing to the loss of national character – “parliamentary life, the free press, universal suffrage, compulsory education, emigration, gas light, then electric light, the railways, the telegraph, congresses, the great national armies” – and referring to Italy as “a dominator,” De Gubernatis argued that the miraculous survival of local traditions needed not only to be studied but protected legally (6).<sup>29</sup>

With Italy made and the Italians in the process of being reluctantly produced, ethnologists began to wonder whether Italy had been created at the cost of losing what made Italy Italy. In fact we could argue that the establishment of modern ethnological research set out to memorialize local colour but in fact contributed to its eradication. As Sandra Puccini has noted, “Between 1870 and the mid 1880s, the introduction of anthropology in the academic world appears as one of the weapons – albeit perhaps not the most disruptive one – deployed by politicians in the battle for the modernization and laicization of Italian Society” (*L'uomo e gli uomini* 18). Just as they were sworn enemies of church taboos that stood in the way of the affirmation of evolutionary theories, the social scientists who formed the new Italians were committed to “building Italy as a technologically, economically, socially, scientifically and civically modern country” – a goal that was hardly compatible with the preservation of local colour (Tentori 57).

### **Ethnographic Photography and the Social Question**

Endangered and precarious, cement or solvent of national unity, and very hard to catch in word and photo, local colour comes across as a sporadic presence. In practicing their science, ethnologists-turned-legislators furthered the impression that local traditions were rooted in place – that is, in specific regions. Discussing the foundation of the first Italian Ethnographic Museum, Aldobrandino Mochi noted that “not all regions” could equally contribute material to the institution, as the civilizing process in Italy had “devastated” only “some” (*Lares* 37). Almost an afterthought, the Italian Ethnographic Society owes its existence to the unplanned stop in a small southern village. The foundational myth of the society as recounted by Loria in 1912 tells us:

In 1905, before going to Africa for my research, I had to go to Circello del Sannio. And there I had the idea of abandoning my studies of exotic ethnography that had hitherto obliged me to carry out distant and dangerous trips, and instead focus on our people ... On my way back, stopping at the station of Benevento, I saw a large group of people who were going to Naples and would sail for the Americas thus dressed in their typical and different attires ...<sup>30</sup> (*Lares* 9)

Watching the colourful dress of the Italian peasants leave, literally and physically, with the body of the emigrants who were to depart for the new world by the

millions, and approaching the end of his life and career, Loria decided to establish the first Italian Ethnological Society in an effort to chronicle the fleeting Italian local colour.

Although ethnographers would increasingly look to the Americas when searching for the most authentic version of local traditions,<sup>31</sup> by positioning the first foundation stone of Italian ethnography in Circello del Sannio and the second in Naples, Loria reinforced the perception that the ideal habitat of local colour was the chronotope of the half-wild, impervious, mysterious south. Indeed, this view had been current in Italy since the declaration of the first Parliament in 1861 – and the coeval declaration of war against brigandage. Not unlike Loria, Leopoldo Franchetti began his *Condizioni economiche ed amministrative delle province napoletane* (Economic and Administrative Conditions in the Neapolitan Provinces, 1875) by emphasizing the disquieting strangeness of the southern regions: “We found a people confined in a half-savage country, enclosed in their filthy villages and surrounding fields, with no roads to get away, ignorant and hardworking” (1).<sup>32</sup> Reaching further south, all the way to Sicily, Franchetti and his partner, Sidney Sonnino, in their better-known *La Sicilia nel 1876*, presented the island as truly other. A train ride lead them through “the vast desert of the Sicilian countryside” and terminated in a remote station where the (northern) traveller is overwhelmed by the fear of the mysterious and the unknown:

At each train stop one searches for the city or town whose name one hears shouted out ...  
The train departs again and the traveler is imperceptibly invaded by the emotion of someone who finds himself in the middle of mysterious and unknown things; the valleys that open onto the street, then turn around and hide behind a hill, it seems that they must hide strange and never-before-seen things ...<sup>33</sup> (23–4)

Empty, steep, dark, unviable, and impenetrable and, more importantly, so hyperbolically “mysterious and unknown” appeared the south to Franchetti and Sonnino that Luigi Capuana would not be able to resist the chance to parody it: “From one end of the island to the other, a tomb-like silence. In the countryside, as far as the eye can see unburied bones shine in their whiteness, and half-rusted guns glimmer ... One walks for miles and miles between skulls and shin bones ... The spectacle is horrible and awesome at the same time” (*La Sicilia e il brigantaggio* 32).<sup>34</sup>

But travelling with Italian ethnographers, novelists, or photographers, or even with tour book authors, we gain the impression that the ever-moving frontier of local colour was to be found in class rather than place. In Starke’s classic Italian guidebook we find the following statement: “It is only among the peasantry that one can form a just idea of Italian beauty; and perhaps, I might add, it’s only among the peasantry one can form a just idea of the Italian character, inhabitants of populous cities being nearly alike, whether in London, in Paris, Vienna, Florence or Rome” (80). Likewise, Salomone-Marino stated his “predisposition for the peasants” in the opening remarks to his *Archivio per lo studio delle Tradizioni Popolari* (Archive of Popular Traditions, 1882): “I prefer the

peasants because they constitute the most noble, the most guileless, the healthiest, the most industrious, the most honest part of the populace” (1).<sup>35</sup> Similarly, searching Italy for images of local colour, it is the working classes that will catch Ferraguti’s attention:

Our readers will have noticed that bit-by-bit we are illustrating the various picturesque manifestations of Italian popular and working life; the life of our dear country which presents in every province special types, costumes, and attitudes of an industrious existence.<sup>36</sup> (qtd. in Milan 54)

Theoretically omnivorous, photography was in fact strongly bound by class. See, for instance, how Fano recommended that ethnographic photographs should be taken when he attended the Second Photographic Congress held in Florence in 1899. Fano was keen to capture photographically people and things, individual and collective practices. For the individual ones he suggested the types, the customs, the attitudes, the expressions be documented; for the collective ones, he drew the photographers’ attention to family and social life, the civil and religious ceremonies, arts, trades, industry, commerce, shops, furniture. “As for the types,” he insisted that they should be photographed “in front and profile, with or without headdress. It would be desirable also to have an image of the whole body undressed with measurements on the side to give us an idea of the real dimensions, such as a meter long stick” (qtd. in Puerto, 84, 99). For Fano it was acceptable and commendable in the name of scientific inquiry to photograph the lower classes with their things as if they themselves were things, front and profile as if they were criminals – and ideally also if they were despoiled of their clothes and of any trace of agency. Adding to Fano’s recommendation, Loria also favoured shots where the peasants were caught unaware: “Snapshots obtained as much as possible by surprise so that in the photographed subjects we might not notice any intentional movement or attitude” (qtd. in Faeta 40).<sup>37</sup> Ethnographic research itself, in Villari’s words, aspired to study the people “when it is not yet able to study itself” (qtd. in Puccini, *L’itala gente* 14).<sup>38</sup> Salomone-Marino wanted to “surprise the Sicilian peasants unaware” – “attempting to surprise their precise character” (*Costumi e usanze* 2).<sup>39</sup> Needless to say, no one would have imagined instructing photographers to provide photos of undressed members of the middle and upper classes alongside their “things” and with a stick to facilitate the apprehension of size. The middle and upper classes, in fact, will neither be photographed unaware nor interviewed. Social scientists such as Leone Carpi found that their science stopped at the threshold of class. Not unlike Verga, who had set out to surrender a fictional representation of all the classes coping with the challenge of social mobility, Carpi planned to investigate the habits and the identity of the entire Italian society but struggled to complete his research when he began working on the middle classes.

But if ethnographers were quick to lend their expertise to legislators so that ethnic differences could be protected, they were just as quick to dissociate themselves from advocating for the rights of the lower classes. Salomone-Marino evoked the spectre

of Socialism when he clarified that he favoured peasants, but of one specific political denomination:

Mind you, I speak of the old-fashioned peasants whose generation is already in decline and in a few years will be sought in vain. The new ones do not fit our case: the unavoidable conscription returns them to us sharper, more know-it-all, more civilized but also with a load of insufferable ambitious, unprocessed and corrupt ideas.<sup>40</sup> (*Costumi e usanze* 3)

For Salomone-Marino, unadulterated local colour could be found away from the city and in the peasants, but only those who lived before Italian unification – or those who were happy with their lot.

### **Technologies of Local Colour**

Turning from the investigations of social scientists and photographers to the reflections of writers, publishers, and painters working in the first few decades following Italian unification, the same anxiety over the loss of local colour and its obverse, the horror of the grey of modernity, can be detected. There are more references to the “inexorable leveling of civilization,” “the regrettable uniformity,” “the uniform varnish,” and the “grey color of the present.” In *Gite di un artista* (1884), Camillo Boito regretted that the perhaps soiled but colourful picturesque was giving way to modern cleanliness: “All of this powerful and picturesque unity is fading into the drab, invading, invincible, thrice-cursed cleanliness of today” (xlivi).<sup>41</sup> Apparently following the lead of literature when it discarded dialect, painting seems to be threatened by this same regrettable levelling trend: “God forbid the same thing will happen in painting as in drama; dialect theatre bit by bit disintegrates and is dispersed” (402–3).<sup>42</sup> As early as 1824, literary critics such as Montani pointed out that levelling threatened to make the idea of national literatures obsolete: “Have not all European literatures fundamentally become identical by now?” (qtd. in Carpi 174).<sup>43</sup> Writing some fifty years later, in 1882, Luigi Capuana would decry the uniformity of the upper classes and their literatures as the main impediment to an original Italian novel: “Modern peoples have lost most of their old individual character. Indeed, one can say that the Italian, French, English, of German of certain social classes no longer exists. The aristocracy and the bourgeoisie now are not of this or that nationality but European” (*Scritti critici* 42).<sup>44</sup>

Far weightier than the word of writers was the opinion of the publisher Emilio Treves, who threatened to cut funding for the sad dark literature of the present. In a letter to De Roberto that was included in De Roberto’s *Documenti umani* (Human Documents), Treves wrote:

All the characters are odious. Is it possible for a whole society to be like that? And even if it were, is it artistic to paint pictures all of one color, removing the color contrasts, such as those of passions and feelings? The color pink was rightly mocked, but at least it was cheerful; black, all black, has the same faults, plus that of being sad ... I no longer want to publish ... such stories.<sup>45</sup> (*Romanzi* 1, 627)

As if in response to Treves's concerns, and in the hope of finding both publishers and readers, Capuana suggested that writers, paralleling the journey of Italian ethnographers, pursue the regional novel: "We must, for now, seek originality precisely in the regional novel, especially where the sincerity of temperament and character has not yet been adulterated by the hypocrisy of civilization at large" (*Gli "ismi"* 177).<sup>46</sup> He suggested that they hurry: "And it would be good if this moment of contemporary Italian life not be lost without leaving a trace" (177–8).<sup>47</sup> Likewise Neera, in the preface to *Il castigo* (1891) – a work dedicated to Capuana – explained her decision to relocate her fictions to the more colourful province:

Artistically I love the province, it both inspires and relaxes me; I find it more elevated, more intimate, more personal than the big city, where by dint of jostling and tumbling everybody ends up all the same, where corners are rounded off, edges are sharpened, colors are muted, where everyone takes on the appearance more or less of the latest fashion plate.<sup>48</sup> (6)

Once again, like the ethnologists, novelists looking for colour redirected their gaze to the more varied subject matter provided by the lower classes. Nicola Misasi, for instance, had planned to write about the region of Calabria but ended up memorializing the condition of the lower classes in his *Racconti calabresi* (1881):

but to know a country in its nature and its tendencies, it behooves us to study not the cultured and educated classes, but those in which nature is maintained absolutely primitive and virgin, and therefore the characters of my stories will be poor peasants, and often servants of peasants, who are like the dregs of Calabrian society.<sup>49</sup> (1)

It is important to underline that writers went to great lengths to specify that, far from being motivated by the urge of political action or even sympathy, their interest in the lower classes was a purely literary exercise. Lest his advice could be misunderstood as a political program, in the essay "Per l'arte" (1885) Capuana specified that the *veristi*'s choice of the lower classes was a second-best "expedient": "So, as an expedient, we addressed our attention to the lower strata of society where leveling has not yet made its effects felt" (*Scritti* 130).<sup>50</sup> For Verga, it was a matter of convenience: "Scenes and individuals of the people are easier to portray, because they are the most picturesque and the simplest" (qtd. in Tellini 88).<sup>51</sup> The peasant "Nedda," according to Capuana, was "more valuable" to the artist than the high society women that Verga had portrayed in his earlier fiction: "In the world of art that peasant girl was worth more than they" (*Scritti* 29).<sup>52</sup>

Writers and art critics insisted that what interested them was simply "how" to best convey local colour. In a piece that appeared in print in 1876, Boito named local colour the true "torment" of the artist:

Color in the double moral and material sense is the great torment of the artist today.  
*Local color:* to feel and portray a Venice that could be nothing other than Venice;

*coloritura*: to emulate with the palette those fanfares of hues, those toned-down shades that come from the salt water and the *scirocco*; from the smelly vapors of the canals.<sup>53</sup> (*Storielle vane* 495)

Painters needed to keep pace with the changed conventions by which local colour was made recognizable: “To think, then, of a reality so singular and fantastic as that of Venice, and in our time, in which it is not enough to paint a bridge, a gondola, a stole ... or a Doge’s carriage to obtain local color” (500).<sup>54</sup> Far from being a durable marker of cultural difference, the sought-after unchanging in a constantly moving world, local colour aged like anything else. Boito looked for a colour that would be convincing and appealing to the few.

For Cletto Arrighi, as for Boito, local colour was the main challenge that novelists writing after Manzoni faced: “The principal study of a writer must be that of a style that is able to render local color, and the so-called genius of the place” (27–8).<sup>55</sup> In the preface to *Gli ultimi coriandoli* (The Last Confetti, [1857]) Arrighi shared with readers the “dilemma” that a modern writer faced when wanting to honour local colour and still be read by a large, national audience:

Now I wonder. What style should be adopted for a contemporary novel set in an Italian city or province where Italian is not spoken at all? There is no escape from this dilemma. One can render local color as much as possible, recounting and above all making the characters speak in such a way that, despite the purists, the style preserves the genius of the local phrase and the language is forced toward that end. Or, alternatively, one can write in pure Italian, avoiding any municipal expression, however much vigor, appropriateness and novelty it may contain, and thus sacrifice for the good of style and language that blessed local color, which is truly the purpose and main merit of a novel, considered from the artistic perspective.<sup>56</sup> (29–30)

For local colour to be recognizable it had to cease being authentic. Real local colour would not have been intelligible to “Italians” – namely, to the northern elites who were its consumers.

And whereas Arrighi refused to compromise – he chose to write novels in pure Tuscan and drama in Milanese dialect – the *veristi* will. De Roberto addressed the question of “questo benedetto colore locale” (this blessed local colour) in the preface to *Documenti umani*, which he imagined as a long open response to Treves – the Treves who refused to publish the same old grey novels of the naturalists. Like Capuana and Verga, De Roberto upheld the naturalistic novel’s predilection for the lower classes on account of their sharper contours and superior recognizability:

A peasant, a worker, a sailor, and a miner have certain characteristics that are exclusively theirs, specific in appearance, dress, behavior and speech, which make them recognizable from a hundred miles away; the elegant crowd that fills a salon is more uniform and offers less of a possibility for observation.<sup>57</sup> (*Romanzi* 1, 634)

Evoking a gallery of curious figures – the farmer, the factory worker, the sailor, the miner – and making an argument that would have better served a painter, De Roberto argued that the lower classes offered a more varied view and more recognizable types. As to how to render it best, De Roberto would settle for the compromise solution pioneered by Verga:

Between the two extremes, I attempt, following Verga's example, a conciliation; onto the canvas of Italian I embroider dialect, risking a solecism here and there, overturning certain periods, sometimes I translate literally, I borrow expressions wholesale, and relate many proverbs just in order to achieve this blessed local color not only in dialogue, but also in the description and narrative.<sup>58</sup> (*Romanzi* 1, 635)

Just as he settled for recognizable – average – types for the subject matter, between the two extreme sides – of using the nonintelligible Sicilian dialect and the supremely intelligible Tuscan – De Roberto settled for what is presented as an average of the two: for the happy medium of the playful and decorative embroidery of threads of Sicilian over an Italian canvas, which was the solution Verga favoured. Verga indeed, having set out to pioneer a novel that would seek to reproduce local colour even in its very language and tone, not just the subject matter – “this risky attempt to leave the imprint of local color as much as I could also on the style of my book” (106)<sup>59</sup> – had no patience for dialect and would settle for the invention of a fictional “average” Sicilian (340). Quite consistently, when contemplating the possibility of an illustrated version of his short stories, he will ask friends to supply him with photos of “typical peasants.” And it is with portraits of typical peasants by Ferraguti that *Vita dei campi* will eventually be published in 1893. The *veristi* did not advocate for the preservation of local colour, and furthermore, like the ethnologists and photographers of local colour, in their careful engineering of averages and types, they contributed to producing the same greyness that they abhorred.

### The Grey Average of Modernity

I would like to end by touching on how Ferraguti’s photography of local colour is a compelling example of how the modern pursuit of local colour, so keenly wished for in the earliest conceptualizations of photography, was practiced in such a way that it only hastened its demise. Far from documenting the “individual,” photography of local colour favoured the typical. The readers of *Illustrazione italiana* were told that Ferraguti had travelled to Sicily looking for typical peasants:

Ferraguti ... went to Sicily in the same places where Verga got his specimens; he looked for the same types of peasants, of manual laborers, of miners. The same types of women in love, jealous, wicked, cruel, sweet and impetuous, he studied them and portrayed them ... and his rendition of firm, black lines; his contours, his harsh energy correspond to Verga’s harsh stories.<sup>60</sup> (qtd. in Milan 50)

With the same spirit, he had boarded the Galileo in search of the “types” that De Amicis had described in *Sull’oceano*:

A strong desire, a lively anxiety had invaded me ... to know, that is, if in that batch ... chance had favored me by sending my way the precise types I could not do without. Would there by any chance be a young lady from Mestre on board? A more-or-less authentic *garibaldino*, but who also had a distant physical affinity with the skeptical hero of De Amicis’ episode?<sup>61</sup> (qtd. in Milan 47–8)

Searching for “a more-or-less authentic *garibaldino*,” Ferraguti was more interested in averages than in individuals. Mariella Milan has detailed the ease with which Ferraguti used images that were supposed to be locally specific in different contexts:

there are considerable intersections and iconographic borrowings and Ferraguti appears rather casual in bringing together and combining images from different geographical contexts. [For example,] in one of his sketches for *Rosso Malpelo* ... the figure of the little Sicilian sand quarryman ... is taken from a photograph, reversed, published later to illustrate the festival week in Ciociaria.<sup>62</sup> (54–5)

More ambitious than Verga and De Roberto, Ferraguti accomplished what had seemed impossible: he photographed an average Italian local colour.

In a revealing non sequitur, addressing the question of the future of the novel in Italy in 1872, the novelist Antonio Fogazzaro created an association between the passion for photography and the levelling of modernity: “Our time is marked by the passion for portraying ourselves and seeing ourselves portrayed. Civilization’s progress has spread a uniform veil over individual life” (28).<sup>63</sup> In Fogazzaro’s puzzling remark, there is a fear that far from fostering the unique, photography was thriving at the expense of the individual. In Walter Benjamin’s reading, what “withered” in the age of mechanical reproduction, was precisely the “aura” – a notion that, however undefined, bore remarkable similarities to local colour. “Overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction” (*Illuminations* 223), photography promised to disappoint Arago’s desire that it would make local colour immortal.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Entry “local color” in OED online version; entry first published in 1903.

<sup>2</sup> See Lolla.

<sup>3</sup> See Kapor for a nuanced and thorough study of the concept in the French and American contexts.

<sup>4</sup> “Io la vedo quella Costantinopoli futura ... I colli saranno spianati, i boschetti rasi al suolo, le casette multicolori atterrate; l’orizzonte sarà tagliato da ogni parte dalle lunghe linee rigide dei palazzi, delle case operaie e degli opifici, in mezzo a cui si drizzerà una

miriade di camini altissimi di officine ... sul ponte della Sultana-Validè non si vedrà più che un torrente nero di cappelli cilindrici e di berrette ... tutto sarà solido, geometrico, utile, grigio, uggioso, e una immensa nuvola oscura velerà perpetuamente il bel cielo della Tracia.”

- 5 “L'uomo circondato di mistero e di ammirazione è un povero diavolo d'artista fotografo, che per guadagnare qualche moneta si è messo in zonzo per le campagne, affine di riprodurre i vivaci tipi campestri.”
- 6 “Quella vaga forosetta è lì impettita e vanitosa, inconscia ancora di quello che sta accadendo. Ma quale sarà il suo giubilo quando vedrà la sua vaga sembianza riprodotta in un quadratino di carta? Ella è al colmo della gioia: corre a mostrarla ai parenti, ai vicini, non paga di guardarsi da sé medesima. Infine quell'immagine passerà nelle mani di una cara persona: e questa negli ardori del sole, sporsata dalla fatica, grondante di sudore, sostando dal lavorare la terra, trarrà quella carta dal petto e contemplando quel vago ritratto al pensiero dell'originale sentirà rinascere in se' il vigore e la gioia della fatica.”
- 7 “Il pittoresco è destinato a scomparire, colla scomparsa dei bei costumi vivaci di colori delle nostre contadine, delle feste religiose, delle sacre rappresentazioni, di tutto ciò che conferiva una fisionomia spiccatà alla vita dei nostri villaggi. Cerchiamo almeno di serbarne un ricordo che sia documento storico per l'avvenire; e alla parola si accompagnino il disegno e la fotografia, poiché per fortuna la fotografia è arrivata ancora in tempo a fermare sulla lastra il ricordo più esatto e più credibile di un mondo di bellezza e di fede, di vita semplice e sincera, che va morendo, ucciso dai grandi magazzini d'abiti fatti, dai bazar e dalle leghe di resistenza.”
- 8 “Presto: la matita, una pietra, quattro segni alla scappata, e stieno pur comodi Morghen e Longhi. – Il mondo è in gran movimento, amici miei. Chi può tener dietro col bulino alle sue novità? ... Col bisogno della litografia s'è manifestato il bisogno d'una letteratura, dirò così, litografica. Ove il movimento sociale è maggiore, meno c'è tempo di aspettare descrizioni, o rappresentazioni finite di quel che accade. La rappresentazione de' costumi in ispecie, vuol proprio essere fatta come gli schizzi che ci danno i litografi.”
- 9 “Io ho voluto serenamente, fedelmente delineare, dirò meglio, fotografare il contadino nostro, nella sua vita esteriore ed interiore, dal lato buono come dal non buono, in casa e fuori di casa.”
- 10 “Pensate con terrore che il mondo va americanizzandosi, e che fra poco l'azione livellatrice della civiltà avrà dato alla superficie della terra una tinta grigia di una deprimente uniformità.”
- 11 See Buzard.
- 12 The first chair of anthropology will be established in Florence in 1869, followed shortly after by the foundation of the *Società italiana di antropologia e etnologia* (1870) by Paolo Mantegazza, by the *Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari* (1882) by Giuseppe Pitrè and Salvatore Salomone-Marino, and then by the *Rivista per le tradizioni popolari italiane* (1893) by Angelo De Gubernatis.
- 13 “Noi dobbiamo affrettarci a fare questo esame di coscienza, o diremo quasi, questa confessione generale, perché la civiltà che progredisce con moto accelerato (benché non armonico), va cancellando molte superstizioni; mentre d'altra parte le cresciute

e più rapide comunicazioni vanno rimescolando il bene e il male, togliendo all'uno o all'altro il colorito locale, per fonderli tutti in una tinta omogenea. Eppure è appunto nelle differenze locali che si hanno a cercare i lineamenti dei singoli paesi e i fonti [sic] di indagini etniche sulle origini delle molteplici stirpi italiane” (“Inchiesta sulle superstizioni in Italia”).

- 14 “A raggiungere questo scopo è però necessario affrettarsi, non perder tempo ... Fra non molto riuscirebbe impossibile raccogliere anche la metà di quello che possiamo raccogliere oggi.”
- 15 “Richiesti que’ contadini e le donne loro di dettarmi i versi che cantavano, alcuni vi si ricusarono all’intutto, altri cessero a stento anche a vista del premio, e dopo lunga insistenza si condussero solo a soddisfarmi per espresso comando di tale che su di essi avesse autorità.”
- 16 “Il povero, lo so per prova, diffida di chi gli viene innanzi coll’aria di ricco, di sapiente, di protettore.”
- 17 “Espressi il desiderio che quei signori venissero il giorno dopo a Elvebaken per farsi fotografare. La vecchia non ne voleva sapere e la pīge (fanciulla) non si lasciò piegare al mio onesto desiderio se non dopo un’ora di discussione.”
- 18 “È quasi ovunque impossibile fare studi fotografici in grande di teste. Bisogna contentarsi della piccola istantanea di sorpresa. Tutte le donne hanno i loro uomini in America e uno dei patti, alla partenza, è appunto il divieto di farsi fotografare.” On the eventual uses of photography by Italian migrants, see Giorgia Alù’s essay in this volume.
- 19 “Durai tutte le pene del mondo a persuader qualcuno dei miei compagni di viaggio a posare per i miei disegni e per le mie fotografie. Dirò dippiù, anzi. I miei *albums* o l’obbiettivo della mia macchina fotografica spargevano tale terrore che se le moderne mitragliatrici sbaragliassero il nemico come sbaragliavo io i ‘passeggeri di classe’ con le mie innocue e modeste armi, non vi sarebbero più carneficine!”
- 20 “Ma, difatti, ripensandoci bene, dovevo proprio aver l’aria di un poliziotto, quel giorno ed anche qualcuno dei consecutivi, specialmente quando apparivo a prua, seguito quasi sempre dal Commissario di bordo, con una cartella sotto un braccio, un lapis infilato all’orecchio ed una macchina fotografica fra mano a girandolare fra i gruppi, a studiarli come in cerca di malfattori evasi o di cassieri in fuga. E chi avrebbe mai creduto ch’io disegnassi o prendessi appunti, con quella mia aria da inquirente?”
- 21 “Le tradizioni sovrappongono come in un grande alveo geologico i loro strati e portano le loro alluvioni, che poi si modificano a vicenda, lasciando spesso all’oscuro le antiche origini e la natura vera della roccia che più tardi ci cade sotto gli occhi” (“Inchiesta sulle superstizioni in Italia”).
- 22 “In un tempo di transazione [sic] come il nostro, nel quale civiltà, moda, commerci hanno in gran parte cancellato e cancelleranno presto del tutto le differenze di Nazione, di classe, di individuo, è carità di patria e dovere di storico il raccogliere e conservare le ultime immagini di un popolo che fino a ieri ebbe una spiccatissima individualità, della quale ha fatto ora spontaneo sacrificio rientrando nell’unità della gran famiglia italiana.”
- 23 “Dal 1860 in poi lo spirito innovatore di rivoluzione fu in ogni cosa turbinoso e violento ... sicché l’opera di pochi anni valse e superò il lavoro di molti secoli.”

- 24 “La unificazione d’Italia porta naturalmente una rapida unificazione delle leggi, dei costumi, della vita nazionale. Un velo uniforme si va stendendo sulla diversità dei nostri costumi nelle varie provincie, diversità che anderà quindi più o meno lentamente scomparendo del tutto.”<sup>25</sup>
- 25 “L’idea di un Museo di etnografia italiana doveva sorgere nel 1860, perché da allora comincia l’imbastardimento.”
- 26 “Fusione brutale attuata dalle unificazioni nazionali”; “la fusione acquista il carattere di violenza sulla natura.”
- 27 “Si profonde differenze presenta la vita locale nelle diverse regioni della patria ... che l’unità politica è per ora in molti casi l’unico vincolo, e quasi artificiale che leghi in una sola compagine i vari popoli della penisola fino a oggi rimasti pressochè estranei gli uni agli altri.”
- 28 “La conoscenza profonda degli usi e costumi di ogni nostra provincia dovrà probabilmente far sorgere leggi speciali che si attagliano a quelle usanze, a quei costumi ... Questo ci deve dare la nostra etnografia.”
- 29 “La vita parlamentare, la libera stampa, il suffragio universale, l’istruzione obbligatoria, l’emigrazione, la luce del gas, poi la luce elettrica, le ferrovie, il telegrafo, i congressi, i grandi eserciti nazionali.” De Gubernatis’ discussion continues as follows: “I dominatori impongono per lo più al popolo la loro lingua ufficiale e per mezzo delle leggi e del costume signorile creano un certo abito di vita esterna che dispone ogni paese ad una certa uniformità servile ... il modo di vestirsi degli abitanti d’Italia si va sempre più accostando a una foggia unica; e pure ... si mantengono ancora in parecchie regioni d’Italia gli usi tradizionali, questi usi vanno diligentemente ricercati e descritti ... Fino ad ora, le costumanze locali dè nostri vari popoli furono notate per oggetto di sola curiosità ... Se invece ... noi le raccogliessimo, ordinassimo e confrontassimo tutte, arriveremmo alla facile persuasione che questi documenti ... obbligherebbero il legislatore italiano a ritornare sull’opera propria.”
- 30 “Nel 1905, prima di andare in Africa per i miei studi, dovetti recarmi a Circello del Sannio. E là mi venne l’idea di abbandonare gli studi di etnografia esotica che mi avevano fino allora obbligato a viaggi lontani e pericolosi, e di occuparmi invece del nostro popolo ... Al mio ritorno, fermandomi alla stazione di Benevento, vidi un numeroso gruppo di persone che andavano a Napoli: e si sarebbero imbarcati per le Americhe così vestiti dei loro caratteristici e diversi abbigliamenti ...”
- 31 See Loria 8; Puccini, *L’itala gente* 93; Mochi in *Lares* 35.
- 32 “Vi trovammo un popolo confinato in un paese mezzo selvaggio, racchiuso nei suoi luridi borghi e nei campi circostanti, senza strade per allontanarsene, ignorante e laborioso.”
- 33 “Alle fermate del treno, si cerca la città, il borgo di cui si sente gridare il nome ... Il treno riparte, ed il viaggiatore è insensibilmente invaso da quel sentimento che prova chi si trovi in mezzo a cose misteriose e sconosciute; le valli che si aprono sulla strada, poi voltano, e si nascondono dietro un’altura, pare che debbono nascondere cose strane e non mai viste ...”
- 34 “Da un capo all’altro dell’isola, silenzio di tomba. Le campagne, a perdita d’occhio, biancheggiano di ossa insepolti, luccicano di fucili mezzi arrugginiti ... Si cammina, per miglia e miglia, tra cranii e stinchi ... Lo spettacolo è orrendo e grandioso allo stesso tempo.”

- 35 “Io prediligo i contadini perché formano essi la parte più eletta del popolo, la più ingenua, la più sana, la più laboriosa, la più onesta.”
- 36 “I nostri lettori si saranno accorti che andiamo a mano a mano illustrando le varie manifestazioni pittoresche della vita popolare e operaja d’Italia; del nostro caro paese che presenta in ogni sua provincia tipi speciali, costumi speciali, atteggiamenti speciali di una esistenza laboriosa.”
- 37 “Instantanee ottenute per quanto possibile di sorpresa perché nelle persone fotografate non abbiano a notarsi movimenti o atteggiamenti intenzionali.”
- 38 “Quando egli non è ancora in grado si studiare se stesso” (Villari, “Filosofia positiva” 1860).
- 39 “Cercando di sorprenderne l’indole precisa.”
- 40 “Intendiamoci, io parlo dè contadini del vecchio stampo de’ quali la generazione già declina e fra pochi anni sarà invano cercata. I nuovi non fanno al caso nostro: la indispensabile coscrizione ce li restituisce più svelti, più saputi, più civili ma insieme con un fardello di ambiziose e indigeste corrotte idee.”
- 41 “Tutta questa forte e pittoresca unità va svanendo nella scialba invaditrice, invincibile, arcimaledettissima lindura odierna.”
- 42 “Dio disperda il presagio: accadrà nella pittura quel che accade nella drammatica: il teatro in dialetto a poco a poco si scomponе e disperde.”
- 43 “Tutte le letterature europee non sono oramai divenute identiche ... pel fondo delle cose?”
- 44 “I popoli moderni han perduto, in gran parte, il loro vecchio carattere particolare. L’italiano, il francese, l’inglese, il tedesco di certe classi sociali si può anzi dire non esistano più. L’aristocrazia e la borghesia oramai non sono di questa o di quella nazionalità, ma europee.”
- 45 “Tutti i personaggi sono antipatici. È possibile che una società sia tutta formata a quel modo? E lo fosse pure, è egli artistico dipingere i quadri tutti di un colore, sopprimere i contrasti di colore, come quelli di passioni, di sentimenti? Il color rosa fu giustamente deriso, ma almeno era allegro; il nero, il tutto nero, ha gli stessi torti, più quello di essere triste ... Racconti simili ... non voglio più pubblicarne.”
- 46 “L’originalità noi dobbiamo, per ora, cercarla appunto nel romanzo regionale, specialmente là dove la sincerità delle indoli e dei caratteri non è stata ancora sofisticata dalle ipocrisie della civiltà generale.”
- 47 “E sarebbe bene che il presente momento della vita italiana contemporanea non spariscia senza lasciare tracce. [sic]”
- 48 “Artisticamente io adoro la provincia; essa m’ispira e mi riposa insieme; la trovo più elevata, più intima, più personale della grande città, dove a furia di urtarsi e di rotolare si riesce tutti eguali, dove gli angoli si smussano, i profili si affilano, i colori si smorzano; dove si piglia su per giù l’aspetto dell’ultimo figurino.”
- 49 “Ma per conoscere un paese nella sua indole e nelle sue tendenze, fa d’uopo studiar non le classi colte ed educate, ma quelle in cui la natura è mantenuta affatto primitiva e vergine; e perciò i protagonisti dei miei racconti saran poveri contadini, e spesso servi di contadini, che sono come il basso fondo della società calabrese.”

- 50 “Allora, per ripiego, rivolgemo la nostra attenzione agli strati più bassi della società dove il livellamento non è ancora arrivato a render sensibili i suoi effetti.”
- 51 “Le scene e le persone del popolo sono più facili a ritrarsi, perchè più caratteristici e più semplici.”
- 52 “Nel mondo dell’arte quella contadina valeva assai più di loro.”
- 53 “Il colore nel doppio suo senso morale e materiale è un gran tormento dell’artista d’oggi. *Colore locale*: sentire e ritrarre una Venezia che non possa essere altro che Venezia; *colorito*: emulare con la tavolozza quelle fanfare di tinte, quelle smorzature di toni che nascono dal salso dell’acqua e dallo scirocco; dalle esalazioni puzzolenti dei canali.”
- 54 “Pensare poi a un vero così singolare e fantastico qual è Venezia, e in questo tempo nostro, nel quale non basta dipingere un ponte, una gondola, una stola da senatore od un corno da doge per ottenere il *color locale*.”
- 55 “Il principale studio di uno scrittore, dev’essere quello di uno stile, che sappia rendere ad evidenza il color locale, e il così detto *genio del luogo*.”
- 56 “Ora domando io. Quale sarà lo stile da adoperarsi in un romanzo contemporaneo nel quale sia scelto per luogo dell’azione una città od una provincia d’Italia, dove non si parla punto l’italiano? Da questo dilemma non si esce. O rendere il più che è possibile il color locale, raccontando e sopra tutto facendo parlare i personaggi in modo che, a dispetto dei puristi, lo stile conservi il genio della frase nativa e la lingua sia forzata a questo scopo, oppure scrivere puro e pretto, schivando ogni locuzione municipale per quanto nerbo e proprietà e novità contenga, e sacrificare così allo stile e alla lingua quel benedetto colore locale, che è pure lo scopo e il merito principale d’un romanzo considerato dal lato artistico.”
- 57 “Un contadino, un operaio, un marinaio, un minatore hanno dei caratteri esclusivamente proprii, specifici, indelebili, nella fisionomia, nell’abito, nel modo di fare e di parlare, da renderli riconoscibili a cento miglia lontano; la folla elegante che popola un salone è più uniforme, si presta meno all’osservazione.”
- 58 “Fra i due estremi, io tento, con l’esempio del Verga, una conciliazione: sul canavaccio della lingua conduco il ricamo dialettale, arrischio qua e là un solecismo, capovolgo certi periodi, traduco qualche volta alla lettera, piglio di peso alcuni modi di dire, e riferisco molti proverbi, pur di conseguire questo benedetto colore locale non solo nel dialogo, ma nella descrizione e nella narrazione ancora.”
- 59 “Questo tentativo arrischiatò di lasciare più che potevo l’impronta del colore locale anche allo stile del mio libro.”
- 60 “Il Ferraguti … è andato in Sicilia, nei luoghi stessi dove il Verga ha preso i suoi esemplari; ha cercato i medesimi tipi di contadini, di lavoratori della terra, di lavoratori delle miniere. Gli stessi tipi di donne innamorate, gelose, perfide, crudeli, dolci e irruenti, e li ha studiati, li ha ritratti … il segno suo reciso, nero; i suoi contorni, lo slancio brusco rispondono ai racconti bruschi del Verga.”
- 61 “Un gran desiderio, un’ansia vivissima mi aveva invaso … il sapere cioè, se in quella infornata, il caso … mi avesse favorito facendo giungere a proposito qualcuno dei tipi che mi erano indispensabili. Ci sarebbe mai stata a bordo una signorina di Mestre? Un garibaldino più o meno autentico, ma che avesse anche una lontana affinità fisica con lo scettico eroe dell’episodio deamicisiano?”

- 62 “gli incroci e i prestiti iconografici si rivelano consistenti e l’artista ferrarese appare piuttosto disinvolto nell’accostare e nel combinare immagini provenienti da contesti geografici diversi. ... In uno dei disegni per *Rosso Malpelo*, la figura del piccolo cavatore di sabbia siciliano ... è ricavata da una fotografia, ribaltata, pubblicata più tardi a corredo di *Settimana di sagra in Ciociaria*.<sup>62</sup>”
- 63 “Il nostro tempo è percorso dalla passione di ritrarsi e vedersi ritratto. La civiltà progrediente ha steso sulla vita individuale un velo uniforme.”

### 3 Eternal Speed/Omnipresent Immobility: Futurism and Photography

---

GIULIANA MINGHELLI

#### Introduction: “On the Extreme Promontory of Centuries”

Crawling out of a “*bel fossato d’officina*” (“lovely factory drain”), emerging covered with slime like a new hybrid species born from the fusion of man and his racing car, the founder of Futurism, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, dictated his “*prime volontà a tutti gli uomini vivi della terra*” (“first will to all the *living* men of the earth”) with a manifesto first published on the front page of the 20 February 1909 edition of *Le Figaro*.<sup>1</sup> With this death-like birth inspired by a car accident which landed Marinetti and his beloved Isotta Fraschini in a ditch outside Milan, Italian Futurism establishes a momentous trope for the avant-garde and modernity at large: the ever-renewed race of newness away from obsolescence, of modernity away from its mortal, be it organic or metallic, husk. Endowed with the authority given to final words, Marinetti’s last will is turned into a first will, beginnings and ends switch places and merge in the 1909 *Manifesto*.

We stand on the last promontory of the centuries! ... Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the impossible? Time and space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed. (Marinetti, TIF 10)<sup>2</sup>

From this promontory, the future stretches out like a promised land to be claimed through a great act of “hygiene” that will raze the past to the ground: books, museums, art, women, and eventually the Futurists themselves, if they survive their youthful prime. Futurism involves a perennial speed, an ongoing overflow of energy, is dispersive and wasteful: don’t save for tomorrow what can be utterly burned today. Ideally it leaves no traces behind. Futurism speaks for the future as “eternal omnipresent speed” and yet, like the feral beasts of old, Futurism does not live for the future; all its energy is spent in the present moment. What then is the future in Futurism?<sup>3</sup> Even though the closing image of the manifesto is an aged group of Futurists warming themselves at a fire of their manuscripts, no Futurist artefact was burned. What did disappear in earth and fire were so many “living men of the earth” to whom Marinetti’s “first will” was explicitly directed: the millions who were annihilated in the First World War’s trenches. Seen from the promontory



**Figure 3.1** *Dad's car in the ditch – Luce Marinetti*. June 1908. Gelatin silver print. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti Papers. Courtesy of Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

of less than a decade later, the manifesto appears as a call to extinction for the human species it addresses.

Even after a century marked by technological destruction like the past one, the idolatry of speed and the desire to clean the slate are still profoundly appealing. It might be, as Italo Svevo suggested in 1923, an irrepressible instinct, a necessary stage on our technological-evolutionary path. As if responding to the Futurist impulse with an equally apocalyptic and yet profoundly ambiguous scenario, *La coscienza di Zeno* ends on the most extreme of promontories, one though where no spectator is left standing to enjoy the spectacle, and where the crowning act of human self-perfection coincides explicitly with self-annihilation: “There will be a tremendous explosion, but no one will hear it and the earth will return to its nebulous state and go wandering through the sky, free at last of parasites and disease” (Svevo 1,085).<sup>4</sup>

Many apocalypses later, a hundred years in the future, it is advisable to approach the old and yet still so modern Futurist mystique of speed, ubiquitous and ever-renewed technology, and aerial perspective by stepping down from extreme promontories to gain a more everyday vantage point. The photograph, a humble, prosaic, and familiar object, will afford such a perspective to explore the Futurists’ idea of

modernity. Born at the height of the industrial revolution, and yet still revered after numberless upgrades and mutations as an indispensable staple of our everyday environment, photography embodies in a unique way the epic of newness, ephemerality, and eternal return that marks the historical unfolding of modernity. Yet, while keeping up with the times, photography enacts over and over what seems a profoundly anti-modern gesture of stilling the world, of metaphorically storing away energy, while leaving endless traces behind. One would be hard pressed to imagine a more unfuturistic configuration of energy, hence the suspicion and feigned disinterest that Marinetti and the overall movement displayed towards the medium. What happens when the “eternal speed” of Futurism is captured by the “thoughtful immobility” of photography? Through an analysis of its photographic production, this essay will explore Futurism’s ambivalent attitude towards this “old” technology. The intent is to gauge through the photographic medium the myth of speed of Futurism and the nature of its commitment to the technological future while exploring photography’s alternative economy of modernity. Forgotten and dormant within the medium, this economy expresses an ethos at odds with Futurism as well as our ongoing modernity. The stilling of the moment suggests the possibility that while moving with the times one can pause and, by virtue of this gesture, critique the imperatives behind modernity’s forward movement. Photography questions modernity’s relation to time in a yet more radical way. The photographic pause works against modernity’s compulsive consumption of energies which, knowing no postponement, relinquishes the very idea of the future and offers instead the literal “conservation” of human experience. As the title of this book suggests, photography can be read productively as a stillness in motion, an interpretation of modernity’s meaning as a twin gesture of commitment both to the future and to the past.

Too distant in its constitutive stillness from the Futurist frenzy and yet too close to the Futurist poetic of analogy; not old enough to be art and yet too old and nineteenth- century to be counted as modern—photography occupies an ambiguously productive position in the Futurist project.<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding its verbal commitment to modern technology, Futurism displays an oddly timid and wavering attitude towards the mechanically reproduced media of photography and cinema (the manifesto of “Futurist Cinematography” is penned in 1916 and “Futurist Photography” only in 1930). This fact alone suggests how the much-vaunted allegiance of the Italian avant-garde movement to modernity is a complex affair, an unspoken mixture of desires and fears. Futurism held a gamut of different attitudes towards photography. Artists such as Giacomo Balla and Umberto Boccioni, while haughtily opposed to any contamination between their art and the reproductive technology, were involved “in a secret dialogue with photography” (Lista, *Balla* 10). From 1891 to 1894, Balla worked in a renowned photographic studio in Turin and a photographic vision informed his early divisionist paintings;<sup>6</sup> in addition, both he and Boccioni were deeply influenced by Etienne Jules Marey’s photographic study of movement. Marinetti was profoundly distrustful

of photography and yet was open to including photographic experimentation on the colourful bandwagon of his avant-garde movement. Despite these prevailing negative reactions, the fact remains that with Anton Giulio Bragaglia and Fortunato Depero – artists who openly confronted and creatively worked with the medium – photography, the prosaic tool of trades and professions, the mass medium for bourgeois mementoes and pictorial reveries, became something else again: an experimental avant-garde art.

The double birthplace of Futurism – journalistically, on the front page of the Parisian *Le Figaro* in the “capital of modernity,” and geographically, in one of the least industrialized European nations – points to an original spatial and temporal displacement informing the Italian avant-garde; namely, to the fact that the modernity celebrated by Futurism is more an aspiration than a historically attained reality. No instrument better reveals the cultural and ideological ramifications of this tension than the photographic medium. This reflection will start by exploring how photography, while pliably lending itself to the Futurist vision, ends up unveiling, through a sort of intrinsic resistance, the fragility of the Italian avant-garde’s grandiose dream of modernity.

### **Marinetti: The Fear of Photography**

The sitter rarely seems to have a relaxed attitude in front of the camera, usually forcing himself to adopt the pose one might expect of the heroic avant-garde artist. Consequently his poses are usually defensive, frowning, with arms folded, as he glares defiantly at the lens, revealing his revolutionary engagement with Futurism against the inquisitorial gaze of the camera-as-Father. (Lista, *Futurism* 14)

So Giovanni Lista describes the attitude of non-cooperation of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti towards the camera. There is no dialogue between the mercurial founder of Futurism and a photographic gaze that stubbornly rests on him. Given his aspirations, Marinetti’s defensiveness might be well-founded. Photography spies into the future-leaning present, arrests it, and dispassionately archives it. Nothing could be more alien to the ideal of frenzied action that perpetually consumes the Futurist moment. But why should the dispassionate gaze of the camera be perceived as inquisitorial and where does the summons come from? It is not just the past and the father that threaten to displace the present of Futurism but, more dangerously, the summoned future. No matter how petrifying to its object, the gaze itself moves through and beyond the image and, as if refracted by it, leaves the sitter behind, eternally marginalized. Photography is both ancestor and descendant, setting up an impossible temporal genealogy for an avant-garde which defines itself as the severance of all ties to a fixed before and an impossibly fluctuating after; which aspires to be an artistic and historical alpha and omega. The Futurists’ attitude towards photography gives rise to various attempts, from Depero’s photo-performances to the sophistication of Bragaglia’s photodynamism, to energize photography while



**Figure 3.2** *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti*, ca. 1910. Gelatin silver print. Sanden/Hulton Archive. © Getty Images.

taming its aloof and god-like impassivity. Notwithstanding these interventions, photography remains for Futurism the least favourite and most unsettling of all modern devices.

Behind each and every one of Marinetti's tumultuous initiatives is the humming of a machine. The near-deadly embrace between the poet and his faithful racing

car marks the birth of the founding manifesto. Later, the “swirling propeller” of the airplane will dictate the destruction of syntax and the dreadnought will teach Marinetti to appreciate the “geometric splendor” of the new futurist universe. But not all machines are alike and not all of them make good partners. While exuding action, speed, and danger, the machines that Marinetti sensuously embraces are obedient tools which, notwithstanding their anthropomorphization and animalization, entertain a relation of subalternity with their human operator. Thus, despite the dullness of its silent and passive qualities, the camera should also be appealing for its utter obedience to its operator. Yet this submissiveness is deceptive, as in the very moment the camera is used and manipulated, it uses and manipulates human subjects through its reproductive power. Such an uncanny and dangerously anarchic technology which threatens at every step to marginalize the man/artist/subject is a very troubling embodiment of modernity.

As if to dispel this threat, Marinetti dismissed the medium as a *passeïst* mechanism that reiterates ad infinitum the stale bourgeois world. But despite being relegated to a nineteenth-century limbo along with its moonlights, gondolas, and monuments, photography returns to loom over Marinetti’s project as a stubborn revenant that reveals intriguing ambiguities. The artist who dreams of a “multiplied man,” of fusions between metal and human flesh, of poetic participation in the “lyric obsession of matter” is that very Marinetti who strenuously objects to his becoming a photograph, arguably the first fully accomplished interfacing between animal and machine, a fusion in a silvery emulsion of animate and inanimate from a common play of light and dark. The poet who strives towards the elimination of the subjective “I” is that very Marinetti who feels slighted at the objectification of the camera eye. Finally, Marinetti, the impresario of action and velocity, having to bear with photography as an unavoidable tool for self-promotion, ironically rejects the newer and faster technology of the snapshot in order to embrace the least photographic evil, the most *passeïst* and bourgeois of all photographic genres: the studio portrait.

As argued by Lista, the posed photograph is the preferred form of self-representation chosen both by the individual artists and the Futurists as a group. The emblematic picture taken in the controlled space of the studio promises to extract a symbolic value from the portrait, thus saving the individual “essence” from the multiple possible deformations of the lens (Lista, *Futurism* 14). Ironically, by choosing the studio portrait Marinetti embraces the more leaden of photographic genres, and while he does so with the intent of controlling the camera, he totally submits to the stilling law of photography, bowing to and magnifying its power.<sup>7</sup> The parodic result: the posed, official photographs of the Futurists express an “essence” far from the rebellious dynamism of the manifestos. The words might be in *libertà*, but the artists, notwithstanding Fortunato Depero’s whimsical vests, parade themselves in starched bourgeois uniforms.<sup>8</sup>

Is this effect photography’s fault? Is photography, as Marinetti seems to suggest, an inherently bourgeois tool which keeps recreating the world, no matter how avant-gardist



**Figure 3.3** Mario Nunes Vais, *The Futurist group*, 1913. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione-MiBAC, Fondo Nunes Vais, n. inv. E 097932.



Figure 3.4 *Fortunato Depero and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wearing Depero's Futurist waistcoats*. Turin, 1925. Gelatin silver print. Photo Reportage Cav. Silvio Ottolenghi. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio del '900, Fondo Fortunato Depero.

or revolutionary it might be, in its own image? As Depero's photographs will soon show, this is hardly the case. Photographs might freeze and distort individuals' features, but they do reveal ruthlessly the social and historical unconscious of an age. The disturbing historicity of the photograph gives the lie to the Futurist posture. It is this historicity which Marinetti found so objectionable, a ball and chain impeding the Futurist flight "at full speed beyond history and anatomy" (Marinetti, *Monoplane du Pape* 253–4).<sup>9</sup> Luckily, other dramatically new and more alluring machines could drown the intractable camera with their noise. Aviation and wireless telegraphy, the technologies du jour, which afforded the most spectacular shocks to the unheroic human body, take centre stage in the Futuristic pantheon.<sup>10</sup> Temperamental, aesthetic, and ontological incompatibility seems to drive the Futurist marginalization of photography and yet, at a closer look, it is not difference that drives the exclusion but rather, surprisingly, a deep stylistic consonance between Futurist poetics and photography.

In the 1913 manifesto "Destruction of Syntax – Wireless Imagination – Words-in-Freedom," Marinetti insightfully recognizes a revolution in perception induced by scientific and technological advancement at the origin of Futurism:

Futurism is founded on the complete renewal of human sensibility induced by great scientific discoveries. Those who use the telegraph, telephone and gramophone, the train, bicycle, motorbike, automobile, transatlantic, aereostat, airplane, cinematograph, newspaper (a synthesis of a day of the world) don't reflect on the fact that all these diverse means of communication, transportation and information exercise a decisive influence on their psyche. (Marinetti, TIF 57)<sup>11</sup>

In the long list of mostly nineteenth-century technologies, photography stands out eloquently through its absence. Unlike trains and train stations, tunnels, films, cities, battlefields, cannons, gasoline, and electric bulbs, photography is not one of the "*luoghi abitati dal divino*" ("sites inhabited by the divine") where velocity, the modern divinity, "*si agita furiosamente*" ("moves furiously"; Marinetti, TIF 114).<sup>12</sup> If considered as a material object, and as a practice that stills movement, photography is anathema to Futurism, but as a technology which multiplies the world through images, photography stands at the very roots of the futurist enterprise. Well before airplanes, cinemas, and bicycles, and in a much more capillary way, photography had been quietly infiltrating all levels of human experience and profoundly rewiring human perceptions, thus exerting a long lasting, if subterranean, cultural and epistemological impact. Given this crucial role in fashioning modern sensibility, photography more than any other technology is behind the aesthetic revolution of the twentieth-century avant-gardes. "*L'universo sarà il nostro vocabolario*" ("The universe will be our vocabulary"; TIF 120), declares Marinetti in "Futurist Cinematography," but for nearly a century the universe *had been* the everyday vocabulary of photography. For this reason, far from being a marginal ruse, Marinetti's neutralization of photography is a necessary step on the way to appropriate photography's

*technē* for his own reinvention of poetic language.<sup>13</sup> What are the main elements of this rewiring of perception sparked by photography that eventually ignites avant-garde experimentation?

In “Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” Benjamin describes the crucial operation set in motion by photography in the following terms:

The technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his or her own particular situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced. (2003, 254)

Through detachment and reactivation, photography dismantled piece by piece a holistic image of the world, made it paper thin and portable, thus creating a chaotic superimposition of unmoored objects. Photography realistically duplicated reality and modernistically decontextualized it in an infinite set of quotable moments. As Marjory Perloff recognized, this is exactly what the “artists and poets of the avant-guerre understood as the collage process” (73).<sup>14</sup> Defying the separateness of art and reality, around 1912 Picasso and Braque started to put the world together by lifting objects out of their natural environment (be they newspapers, wall paper, lace) and transferring them to a new context within the artistic frame. The technique is one of displacement and juxtaposition; the effect is one of strangeness and disorienting shock. Perloff individuates the unprecedented and truly modern quality of this artistic practice as “an intuitive grasp of how the world might be put together” (Perloff 72). Yet, before the pieces could be artistically rejoined in a new order, somehow the world must be taken apart, an operation that could not be improvised. One would think the First World War or an equally momentous historical phenomenon could have accomplished that operation, when instead it was photography which, through the best part of the previous century, prepared the ground for a new artistic vision by multiplying, scattering, and dislocating the real in a numberless and ever-increasing amount of visual splinters lying in wait for a new constellation of meaning. Photography is the origin of the aesthetic of collage, bringing about a logic of accumulation and quotation that replaces the coherent pictorial image in visual art and the logical connection in verbal art. After photography, hierarchy, pictorial or verbal, gives way to parataxis. If, as it has been argued, the advent of photography liberated painting from the shackles of imitating reality, it did so in yet another sense, by bringing about a different notion of art making, one based not on mimesis but agglomeration.<sup>15</sup>

Consonant with the contemporary avant-garde in painting, Marinetti’s manifesto “Destruction of Syntax” (1913) and the earlier “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature” (1912) display, in Perloff’s words, “an elaborate program of collage aesthetic with respect to literary discourse” (56). However, relying as it does on an analogical style and a boundless multiplication of the visible without hierarchy or narrative (“There are no categories of image, noble or coarse or vulgar, eccentric or natural”; “Technical Manifesto” 43), the Futurist “*immaginazione senza fili*” recalls

more closely photography than the highly contained experience of collage.<sup>16</sup> All the elements advanced in the “Technical Manifesto” – the call for an illogical construction of the sentence “by disposing the nouns randomly as they are born” (TIF 41); the use of the verb in the infinitive to “give a sense of the continuity of life” (TIF 41); the use of chains of double substantives to create an aesthetic effect through sheer accumulation rather than stylistic ordering; the necessity to “fuse the object directly with the image that it evokes” (TIF 41) – summon both the lyrical synthesis that dominates the single photograph and the epistemology of disjunction and juxtaposition fostered by the proliferation of photographic images.<sup>17</sup> Yet photography is mentioned only *en passant* in the manifesto, solely to be dismissed as a lesser form of analogy.<sup>18</sup> In so doing, Marinetti disregards or covers up the fact that photography’s lasting influence on the stylistics of the avant-garde should be traced not to its indexical nature but to the mechanism of detachment and reactivation which gave rise to an anarchic universe of images, portable, free floating, endlessly reproducible, decontextualized.

Forget photography, says Marinetti; it is the “swirling propeller” that taught modern man and the poet “the deep love that connects distant, seemingly diverse and hostile things” (TIF, “Technical Manifesto” 42). And indeed, as Jeffrey Schnapp pointed out, the Voisin biplane on which Marinetti flew over Milan in 1910 afforded an unprecedented visual position to the leader of Futurism. This being the case, why did no aerial image find its way into the 1912 manifesto? Georg Simmel pointed out the dulling of the perceptual system of the modern city-dweller engulfed in the shock of urban hubbub. In a similar way, the heightening of stimuli by aviation (and other modern technologies) may be inseparable from a proportional dulling effect. The speed and noise worshipped by the Futurists do not produce keener sight or hearing, no matter how high the airplane flies or how loud the propeller shouts. “Aerial speed has multiplied our knowledge of the world” (TIF 41), says Marinetti.<sup>19</sup> Yet by 1913 the experience of flight was still so exceptional, even among the privileged, that it could hardly have already achieved the radical temporal and spatial transformation of analogical perception. Marinetti himself unwittingly supports this very point:

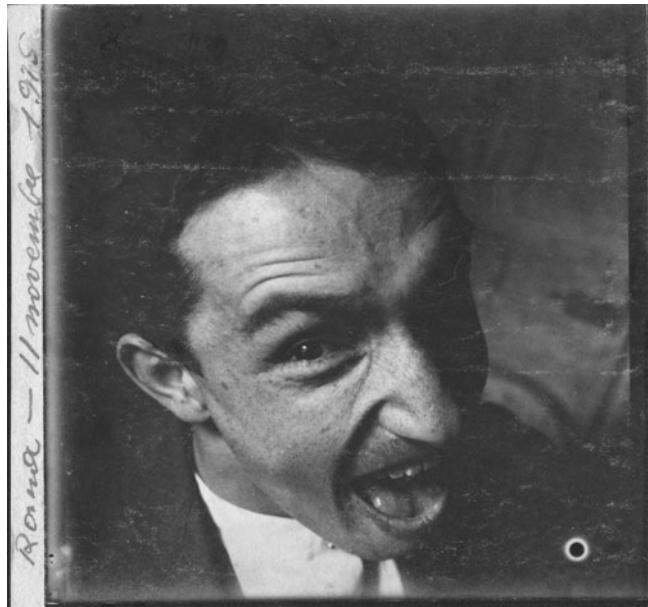
An ordinary man can in a day’s time travel by train from a little dead town of empty squares, where the sun, the dust and the wind amuse themselves in silence, to a great capital city bristling with lights, gestures, and cries ... By reading a newspaper the inhabitant of a mountain village can tremble each day with anxiety, with the Chinese revolutionaries in China, suffragettes in London and New York, Doctor Carrel, and the heroic dog-sleds of the polar explorers. The cowardly and sedentary inhabitant of any provincial town can indulge in the intoxication of danger, by going to the movies and watching a great hunt in the Congo. He can admire Japanese athletes, Negro boxeurs, eccentric inexhaustible Americans, fashionable Parisians, by paying one lira in the Variety Theater. Lying in his bourgeois bed, he can enjoy the distant and expensive voice of a Caruso or a Burzio. (Marinetti, “The Destruction of Synthax,” TIF 57–8)<sup>20</sup>

The acceleration of life, the love for the new, and the multiplication of desires are some of the effects resulting from this array of modern experiences. Strikingly, only in one instance are speed and travelling involved, all the other cases evoke sedentary experiences of modernity (newspaper, cinema, theatre, or gramophone). Marinetti displays a mixed attitude in his description: he scoffs at the petit-bourgeois nature of the modern spectacle enjoyed from the comfort of an armchair and, at the same time, rejoices at the multifarious excitement of the world that the reproductive technologies have put into circulation. Notwithstanding his preference for speed and danger, what emerges, perhaps unwittingly, from this modern fresco, is the fact that it is not travel per se but travelling through visual and acoustic representations that projects the more vivid and convincing image of a world and “man multiplied through the machine” (Marinetti, TIF 59). Modernity, be it the thrill of a speeding car, a North Pole exploration, revolutionary struggles or sporting events, is predominantly a mediated experience, an image to be consumed. “*Noi porremo lo spettatore al centro del quadro*” (“We will place the spectator at the centre of the picture”; Boccioni 9), announce the Futurist painters. Italy and the Futurists entered modernity by stepping into a collage of historical displacement, the representation of things modern and the actuality of their experience. Weighted down by the historical and industrial belatedness of the country, Italian and futurist modernities hover between two snapshots: the dusty, sunny piazza of a provincial Italian town and the electrifying streets of Paris. Separate and incongruous, the two images creatively and ambiguously collide in a publicity stunt, the announcement in *Le Figaro* of the birth of the Italian avant-garde.

### **Depero: Photography as Play**

Much more than in Marinetti’s staid portraiture, the avant-garde spirit of the movement finds a significant engagement with photography in what Lista defines as the photo-performance of Fortunato Depero, a younger artist who joined the Futurist group in 1914. If Marinetti crosses his arms before the camera in an act of defiance or defence, Depero instead shouts, gesticulates, and plays with the lens.

Through his images, the Italian avant-garde discovers and explores a new dynamic between human being and optical machine. Against Pirandello’s idea put forward in *I quaderni di Serafino Gubbio* (Shoot!) of the camera eye as an alienating experience, Depero’s encounter with the camera creates what Walter Benjamin defined as *Spielraum*, a space of ludic interaction that reinvents the relation between man, technology, and the world (“The Work of Art” 2003, 265). In a movement so often inclined to bombast, ideological venom and self-deceit, this child-like playfulness points to what is truly energetic, future-oriented, and free in Futurism. With these photographs, the long established codification of the studio portrait is dissolved by the advent of a new language that does away with the sense of duty and decorum in favour of raw emotionality and role playing. At the same time, these *foto-azioni* rupture the nineteenth-century idea of photography’s essence as photo-document (which Marinetti simply replicates) by reinventing the photograph as performance



**Figure 3.5** Fortunato Depero, *Self-portrait with grimace*. Rome, 11 November 1915. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio del '900, Fondo Fortunato Depero.



**Figure 3.6** Fortunato Depero, *Self-portrait with clenched fist*. Rome, 24 March 1915. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio del '900, Fondo Fortunato Depero.



**Figure 3.7** Fortunato Depero playing hide-and-seek. Rome, 1916. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio del '900, Fondo Fortunato Depero.



**Figure 3.8** Fortunato Depero, *Self-portrait with cigarette*. Rome, January 1915. Gelatin silver print mounted on card with blue ink text. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio del '900, Fondo Fortunato Depero.



Figure 3.9 Fortunato Depero, *Double self-portrait*. Rome, 24 March 1916. Gelatin silver prints mounted on card. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio del '900, Fondo Fortunato Depero.

and provocation. The desire to play is not only a theme; it extends to the materiality of the medium – as in the portrait (Figure 3.8) where the photographic borders are violated and redrawn by writing. This use of photography connects Depero’s art to later Dadaist practices and other avant-garde experimentation to come (Lista, *Futurism* 36).

This perspective suggests a way to read his stunning *Double self-portrait* (24 March 1915; Rome). The image, a sequential repetition of the same photogram, stages the persistence of the image and forces a reflection on the nature of the photographic icon. The photograph is here foregrounded as a sign not because of a dematerialization of the image, as Lista maintains (*Futurism* 35), but rather through the return to materiality – the glimmer in the eyes, the sensuality of the lips, the play of light and shadow – that cannot be dismissed. Meanwhile, through the agency of the camera, a new image of the artist-protagonist as a vital yet ephemeral subject-in-becoming comes to light. With Depero, modernity has entered the space of the photograph.

Depero's Futurist adventure started in December of 1913 when he moved from his native Rovereto to Rome. He entered the Futurist scene and soon established himself, exhibiting with the Futurists on 13 April 1914 at the *Esposizione Libera Futurista Internazionale* together with Marinetti, Balla, and Boccioni, as well as international artists such as Archipenko and Kandinski.<sup>21</sup> Apparently this Roman debut was a great personal success – six of the seven works sold were his paintings. In the years from 1914 to 1916, Depero's close collaboration with Balla leading to the 1915 manifesto "Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe" contributed to switching the centre of Futurist activities from Milan to Rome and marked the transition from a first Futurism dominated by Boccioni's dynamic and analytic vision to a second plastic and chromatic Futurism (Scudiero, *Fortunato Depero* 20).

Depero did not enter the Futurist movement as a photographer, and luckily so, because if he had tried, he might not have been accepted at all, as was the case for Bragaglia. Because of his interest in multimedia art, Depero worked in diverse venues and materials such as painting, theatre setting, and costume design, sculptural puppetry, commercial design, collage, tapestry. Within such a rich and varied production, his photography remains an incidental activity, so much so that the leading critical works on Depero make no mention of it (Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Depero*; Scudiero, *Depero istruzioni*; Scudiero and Magnetti and Belli). And in effect, the photographs collected in the Depero archives at the MART museum in Rovereto do not demonstrate a sustained interest in expanding and elaborating the expressive potential of the photographic medium. Depero's photo-performances represent a relatively small body of images realized between 1915 and 1916, during the initial years of his militancy in the Futurist movement. The fact that they were used as postcards suggests an immediate rationale for their realization; namely, the creation of calling cards promoting the new young member whose photo-performances in their intent to "*colpire ... sbalordire ... far sorridere*" ("hit ... stun ... make one smile") visually embody the energy and violence of Marinetti's manifestos.<sup>22</sup> Beside these few strikingly experimental shots, the majority of photographs taken in those years depict more traditional images of Depero, Depero and his companion Rosetta, portraits of Rosetta, groups of friends, and futurist exhibitions.

Having said this, it should be noted that even the more traditional images in the collection display a winning lightness, playfulness, and freedom. If Marinetti's as well as the group portraits of the movement evoke officialdom, Depero's images highlight the dialogic nature of photography, a conversation woven between the subject, the camera, and the photographer behind the camera. Even the violent *Self-portrait with clenched fist*, a Futurist photographic manifesto of a sort, displays an energy and intimacy between the represented subject and the camera that engages the viewer in a jolting confrontation with the artist.

Usually all Depero's photo-performances are attributed to Depero himself. But a certain looseness about his authorship raises the question of the actual identity of the photographer. Lista captions all the photographs in the photo-performance



Figure 3.10 Fortunato Depero and Rosetta Amadori, *Bollella romana*. Rome, May 1916. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio del '900, Fondo Fortunato Depero.

series whether they are close-ups or full body shots like the ones showing Depero playing hide-and-seek in the street or Depero climbing a tree, *Self-portraits*. Even the photograph showing Depero and the Swiss poet Gilbert Clavel acting out a pantomime is attributed to Depero. Certainly, Depero could have set up automatic shots; yet it seems unlikely that this is what he actually did in every case. A visit to the Depero Archive does not reveal any definitive evidence about authorship. Only in a couple of instances is it specified in writing on the picture that Depero himself was the author – one such example being *Autoritratto-risata cinica 16*

*Aprile 1915* (Self-portrait-cynical laugh 16 April 1915). In a series of later playful photographs taken in 1926 on a visit to Lake Garda, depicting Depero sticking his head out of the boards of a bridge, the images are attributed to Rosetta Amadori Depero.

Depero left Rovereto for Rome in December of 1913 after the death of his mother. Already romantically involved with him, Rosetta reached Depero a few weeks later on 11 January 1914. Against the will of her family, she lived with Fortunato through those early years of his artistic apprenticeship. Depero described “the intimate and hard enjoyment of one’s irrepressible passion and youthful madness. Rosetta irons eight hours for Lire 1,50. I joyfully skip meals, working obstinately and inaccessible” (Depero, “Nozze clandestine” 314).<sup>23</sup> Rosetta eventually married Depero in 1919. What breathes through these early photographs is the energy of those “anni di gaia e triste giovinezza ardimentosa” (“years of happy, sad and daring youth”) spent under the twin stars of death raging in the trenches across Europe and a sensual and artistic passion in an obscure garret in Rome (Depero, “Note” 17). Knowing how Rosetta did on occasion take pictures and how she later collaborated on the creation of the *Casa d’arte Futurista*, opened by Depero in 1919 upon his return to Rovereto, it is easy to imagine that she may have been the silent visual archivist of the early years of Depero’s initiation into Futurism. The freedom and playfulness which circulates in these images is less programmatic than electrically charged. Another way to read Depero’s photo-performances is as an unprecedented and utterly modern declaration of love, raw and shouted, scornful of “moonlights,” both a declaration for Rosetta, possibly the photographer, and for the common project of Futurism.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps “*the promontorio estremo dei secoli*” (Marinetti, TIF 10) was a terrace in Rome circa 1916.

### The Bragaglia Brothers: Photodynamism as a Counterphotography

If Marinetti silences photography and Depero dialogues with the medium, Anton Giulio Bragaglia uses photography against itself, generating movement, through photodynamism, within the still image. Far from being an occasional and temporary activity, photography for Bragaglia was an all-consuming pursuit which resulted in experiments leading to the rethinking and reinvention of the medium. Although Bragaglia and his younger brother Arturo were inspired by Futurism and thought of themselves as Futurists, because of the opposition of Boccioni, they were never allowed into the Futurist group. Initially supported by Marinetti, Bragaglia incurred the wrath of Boccioni because of his appropriation and retooling of the concept of pictorial dynamism in the service of his photographic project and was excommunicated by the latter artist in a 1913 article in *Lacerba*. Boccioni’s rejection was the immediate result of Bragaglia’s publication in June 1913 of *Fotodinamismo futurista*, a presentation of two years of photographic experiments and lectures. While Bragaglia’s photodynamic theory and practice radically changed the field of photography as an art, it exposed the antagonistic relation between the futurist avant-garde and the photographic medium, as well as a profound ambivalence in Futurism towards modern technology as a whole.



Figure 3.11 Gustavo Bonaventura, *Photodynamic portrait of A.G. Bragaglia*, 1912/13.  
Gelatin silver print. Private Collection, Milan.

Ironically, the opening gesture of Bragaglia's essay is to demolish photography – “a trade that belongs in shops next to the sausage maker's”; “old static cadaverous practice”; “pedestrian reproduction” – in the name of a new art that would express life, movement, and energy; namely, “the essential character of modern life” (Bragaglia 18).<sup>25</sup>

“We want to revolutionize photography and achieve progress in the medium: in order to purify, ennable, and truly elevate photography to an art” (13).<sup>26</sup> Photodynamism's revolutionary intent goes hand in hand with a fairly *passéist* perspective. Bragaglia perpetuates the tired question of whether photography might or might not be art by declaring photodynamism to be an artistic “purification” of photography's cold reproduction of reality. If Walter Benjamin identified the advent of technical reproduction with the inevitable loss of aura of the art object, Bragaglia, fearing this loss, works against mechanical reproduction to recuperate the aura. How does the photodynamic image reinstate the auratic value to the photograph?

Thus, we are pleased that we can render life in its unique, logical expression ... We completely purify the operation of the camera, which is directed and dominated *by us*, so that it can register what is in *our* sensibility, and in so doing we violate the power of the objective thing to the point that we can even make the camera perceive its transcendental dimension to the extent permitted by its mechanical photographic nature. (Bragaglia 16)<sup>27</sup>

The new photodynamic art is a domination over the machine, a violence exercised on the lens. Photodynamism negates photography's specificity in at least three respects. Programmatically, it represses mechanical reproduction and its autonomy in favour of human subjectivity, what Bragaglia refers to as the spirit. Technically, through the use of low speeds – which “inject” movement in the image – it strives to undo two features that define photography's very essence: the visual arresting of movement and the transparency of the camera eye. Finally, the dismissal and erasure of the materiality of the medium coincide with the rejection of the materiality of the world, the “immobile and cadaverous real,” in favour of a transcendental dimension, “life in its unique, logical expression” (16).

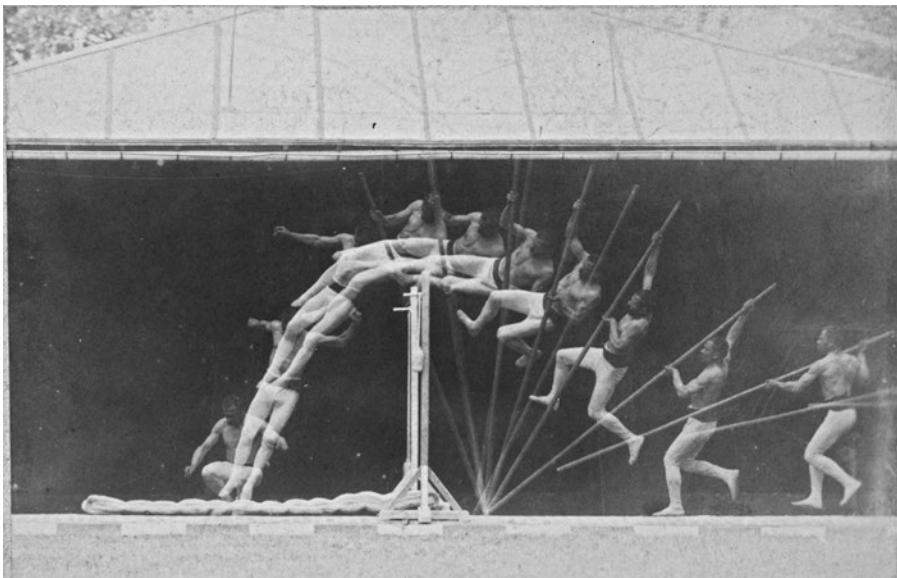
A close observation of one of the images realized by Bragaglia will illustrate how photodynamism achieves a liberation of the human element while reifying the machine. The 1911 *The typist* shows that the camera entertains a different dialogue with biological and mechanical objects and reveals the temporal tensions that traverse both photodynamism and photography in general. Peter Wollen theorized the temporality of photography as split in the opposition between the ontological stasis of the image (what he codes as “ice”) and the variable duration of its possible subjects (which can be states, processes or events thus ranging from “ice” to “fire”). Given this split, photography is congruent with the temporality of a motionless object and dissonant with living or moving bodies, even as they are paradoxically reduced to a “frozen tongue of fire” (Wollen 110). Bragaglia's photodynamic image brings to the fore what goes unnoticed in a normal photograph, letting the fire (the



**Figure 3.12** Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *The typist*, 1911. Gelatin silver print. Gilman Collection, © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, © ARS.

living hand) escape the ice (the photographic stilling) to pursue its energetic dance.<sup>28</sup> Significantly, this photograph highlights a take on the machine which seems to set Bragaglia and the Futurists slightly apart. On the one hand, the photodynamic image humiliates the mechanical (both camera and typewriter) in favour of what is vital and thus gives the lie to the Futurist idea of the superior and autonomous vitality of machines which redeem an otherwise pathetic and weak humanity. On the other hand, the typewriter appears solidly monumental while the human hands are a ghostly light effect, a revenant from a faraway human past, rather than a bold and enticing appeal to the future. In Bragaglia's photodynamic theory, the artist's hand and eye are celebrated in their ability to distil pure motion from reality, and yet the human domination of the "soulless" mechanism, be it the camera or the typewriter, hangs on a thin ephemeral thread.

Bragaglia takes great pains to situate his art against other contemporary visual technologies: the chronophotography developed in the 1880s by the French physiologist Etienne Jules Marey, which studies distinct phases of movement on one photographic surface; the "banalization" of cinema; and "the stupid and obscene copy of appearance" (Bragaglia 16) of the snapshot. This polemical effort, intended to highlight photodynamism's temporal configuration, lays bare the ideological underpinnings of its mechanical manipulations.



**Figure 3.13** Etienne Jules Marey, *Chronophotographic study of man pole vaulting*, 1890–1. Albumen silver print. Courtesy of George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film.

To illustrate the revolution introduced by his *foto movimentata*, Bragaglia compares photography to a clock. Chronophotography is a clock whose face shows only the quarters of an hour; cinema one where the face shows the minutes as well; photodynamism one that shows not only the seconds but the fractions of seconds. Although in reality Bragaglia's photographs seem a middle term between chronophotography and cinema, he maintains that the resulting image is faster than both Marey's sequential photo *and* cinema. What photodynamism seeks to do is to transport and condense the movement of cinema into the single photograph – as Bragaglia explains, “Every object in motion needs to be reproduced multiplied, as if being reborn from itself” (23).<sup>29</sup> In this way the *foto movimentata* realizes in the moment a “synthesis of movement” (45) that negates at the same time the photographic instant – the arbitrariness of the snapshot “[which] has arrested motion in absurd positions” (17) – and the negation of the instant achieved in cinematic progression. Photodynamism displays a similarly mixed relation to chronophotography: while it shares a scientific analysis of the gesture, it rejects Marey’s experiments with the decomposition of movement in favour of a “dynamic sensation,” “unified, and *deeply fused* and synthesized by the *trajectory* of the action” (25).<sup>30</sup> Thus, while cinema, chronophotography, and the snapshot are united by their fragmentation and disintegration of life “senza



**Figure 3.14** Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *Change of position*, 1911. Gelatin silver print. Gilman Collection, © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, © ARS.

*alcuna legge, con meccanico arbitrio*” (“without rules, with mechanical arbitrariness”; 27), photodynamism searches for a vital unifying rhythm. Interestingly, the photodynamic search for the essence of vitality in a synthesis of the gesture is predicated on the disappearance of embodied life. Bragaglia’s images dematerialize the bodies through light and movement in pursuit of “*la trascendentale qualità del reale nel suo spostamento*” (“the transcendental qualities of the real in its unfolding motion”; 7).

To see is not enough. Bragaglia affirms the reasons for *intravedere* over *vedere*, taking a swipe at the indexicality of the image to highlight instead what supposedly lies in-between or beyond the mimetic image and its stillness, something which he calls interchangeably the pure energy of the act or the manifestation of the spirit. If the other modern visual technologies are predicated on the clarity of the reproduction, photodynamism attains its artistic results through the nebulization of the image, life dissolved into the murky suggestion of transcendence.

Photodynamism, Bragaglia declares, is the direct expression of modern vertigo: the speed of a racing car, the rioting crowds, the flying airplane. Yet, none of these tokens of modernity appear in his images. On the contrary, many of the titles (*The carpenter sawing*; *The slap*; *The bow*) hearken back to a time of handicraft and aristocratic tableaux. The majority of Bragaglia's subjects are isolated human figures or gestures set in a stage-like space, surrounded by a uniform dark background. The resulting luminescent trails of the photodynamic images evoke not modernity but rather an atemporal ghostly afterimage. "Bragaglia's future has an ancient heart," reflects Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, as he points out how his avant-garde image is dipped in an "undercurrent of mystery ... magic, panpsychism, atmosphere of a séance" (Fagiolo dell'Arco, "Moderna magia" 195).<sup>31</sup> But the anti-modern character of Futurist photography is not limited to an ironic flirtation with the occult. There are deeper contradictions that suspend the photodynamic visual revolution between past and future.

Bragaglia denies the modernity of existing visual technologies in order to claim an avant-garde position for his own technique. The snapshot, says Bragaglia, does not represent modernity but only mummifies it while for him photodynamism renders the emotion of movement. Yet, if the snapshot freezes the lived moment, its high shooting speed also allows us to grasp the vertiginous unfolding of modern life. Photodynamism, on the other hand, seeks to represent the maelstrom of modernity by eschewing the speed and agility of the snapshot in favour of the leisure and control of an image created in the lab. Along with Marinetti, Bragaglia retreats to the studio, where it is possible to carry out abstract experiments in motion, to "isolate" the gestures and then "inject movement" into them in a highly controlled manner to obtain the purest distillation of modernity. Withdrawn from the restless movement of cities, crowds, and machines, and thus from any historic-existential context, life and art seem capable of fusing in a pure and dynamic gesture, a simulacrum of energy plus action plus speed.

The image of photodynamism as a sped up clock whose face registers the milliseconds suggests the idea of an interstitial time flowing on a fantastic quadrant, abstracted from any known temporal order, a time infinitely divisible yet one that, as in Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the turtle, is also infinitely slowed down. This slowing down is not only metaphorical but structural, inherent to the technique used by Bragaglia. If the snapshot "freezes" the world in the blink of a millisecond, the "velocity" of the photodynamic image is the result paradoxically of a reduction of the shooting speed, an extreme overexposure: the photographic eye stays wide open as if it could not see the world that clearly. Photodynamism slows down both cinema and photography – it expresses a *tecnologia frenata* (technology with the brakes on). Zeno had intended his paradox as a defence of his teacher Parmenides, who argued that movement is nothing but illusion. The Futurist refuses to contemplate such a notion, but we, many technological wars and ecological disasters later, might want to reconsider.

Bragaglia's reflection and photographic practice was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Photodynamism's vital unfolding of energy



**Figure 3.15** *Portrait of Anton Giulio Bragaglia/Bragaglia*. Studio fotografico. Rome, ca. 1924. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio del '900.

and movement finds its referent in Bergson's concept of duration (*la durée*), the temporal manifestation of the immediate data of consciousness, a reality of multiplicity, mobility, and freedom where there is no mechanistic causality. But while Bergson's *dureé* is heterogeneous, interpenetrating, and progressive (an irreversible flow), Bragaglia's duration is conceived more as an interval, closed and perfect, like a gesture fully completed. Escaping the unpredictability of becoming, movement is staged as necessary and self-contained: a theatrical synthesis (e.g., *Changing position* or *The slap*). Channelled along *one* possible preordained trajectory, the photodynamic image stages the drama of the isolated gesture, absolutely classical in its respect of the unities: action in no time and no space, or in all times and all spaces.

The questions of which time, which space, and which action are, on the contrary, inseparable from the photographic image.<sup>32</sup> Photography is Janus-faced: on the one hand, it adheres to the reality that it reproduces, thus reiterating the latter's status quo; on the other, the image is endowed with its own "reality," is "unhinged" from the object, profoundly anarchistic and open to different meanings and interpretations (Which time, place, action?). The transcendence and mystery of the event and gesture are not metaphysical but historical in nature. With the intent of representing the vital trajectory of movement, Bragaglia seeks to overthrow the "cold realism" of photography, but in so doing he also stifles photography's element of surprise and doubt. For him, photography becomes a controlled abstraction of light and movement "eternally repeated and reborn from itself" (52). If the gesture measured in the interval does transcend the human condition, it transcends as well the ongoing flux of modern life. Modernity, openly evoked in the image "which moves," is implicitly negated – as is photography itself – in the instant when photodynamism transforms movement into monument, the gesture into a closed work of art.

Is photography, then, materially and ideologically incompatible with the Futurist project? At the same time clear and uncertain, objective and distorting, photography is feared by the Futurists most of all for its ability to reveal an optical unconscious. With *foto movimentata*, photodynamism attempted to rethink photography against its grain. One important contribution of Bragaglia's experiments is the insight that photography could entertain different types of relations with temporality.<sup>33</sup> If cameras, as Roland Barthes suggested, could be thought of as "clocks for seeing," which time does the photographic "clock" of Futurism measure?<sup>34</sup> Photodynamic images, while using many captions in the gerundive, thus signifying process, represent unfolding movement as a state and action as substance, an ontology beyond time. The Futurist clock is a clock without hands, displaying the bare face of time, safely beyond modernity's reach.

Photography is a kind of inverted or mirroring reflection of the Futurist project. The photographic image confronts us as an everyday object, commonly read as tautological and yet, once truly looked at, a cipher of the chaos and anarchy of our modern relation with the world and time. Futurism, on the other hand, announces itself as chaos and anarchy but after "a moment" comes to resemble the snapshot

as described by Bragaglia, a tautological repetition of a pre-existing order. Depero's *foto-azioni* stand as an exception. By celebrating the vital moment of contingency, they offer a contrary movement in which Futurism, by yielding to playfulness, truly opens itself up to the future, to the desire, expressed by Balla and Depero in their 1915 manifesto "The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe," of reconstructing the universe not with violence but "*rallegrandolo, cioè ricreandolo integralmente*" ("by cheering it up; that is, by recreating it integrally"; Crispolti and Scudiero 18).<sup>35</sup>

### **Conclusion: Balla, *Fallimento***

*Fallimento*, painted in 1902, depicts the lower part of a shop in Via Veneto closed for bankruptcy (see [Colour Plate 3](#)). Giacomo Balla uses a divisionist technique to render the vibration of light and a photographic effect to create an illusion of absolute realism.<sup>36</sup> The painting achieves a very striking *mise en abyme*: within the hyperrealistic, photographic representation of a scene of ordinary urban squalor is contained a surface of abstract representations, childish scribbles, lighthearted and careless, done with chalk on the barred door. Organized within the single panels of the door, these chalk drawings seem like discrete paintings at an exposition which prefigure stylistically the abstract turn that will soon define the visual arts, a turn that Balla himself will fully experience proceeding as he did from Realism to Divisionism, to Futurism. Furthermore, given the mixing of written and visual, the images represent a direct antecedent of the Futurist "Words-in-freedom."<sup>37</sup> This resonance can be tested against Marinetti's 1915 *Parole in libertà*, a mixing of letters, drawings, and lines of force which achieves an interpenetration of written and visual, a disruption of typographical linearity through the freehand gesture. The "MARIA MARI M" in Balla's children's scribbles resonates with Marinetti's "MaAA AAa petite" and "MOn AMIiiii." What sets free Marinetti's composition is not child play but the violence of the First World War. The war is signified by a series of driving vectors which explode the representational hierarchies as well as the quaint old words of endearment. Next to them, other words equally shop-worn – "VIVE LA FRAANCE" and "MORT AUX BOCHES" – survive almost unscathed by the modernistic assemblage, bespeaking the undying romance of nationalism and racial propaganda.

As in Marinetti's *Parole in libertà*, in *Fallimento*, past and future come together ambiguously and overlap in the form of competing media (painting and photography) and competing aesthetics: painterly realism, the photographic image, and avant-garde abstraction. Past and future entertain a mute dialogue, reciprocally using, correcting, and negating each other.

About twenty years later, after Realism, Divisionism, and Futurism, and on the eve of Fascism, Balla will have himself photographed in front of this very painting ([Figure 3.17](#)). What is the final effect of this photograph that portrays the artist in front of a painting that "photographs" a reality in which brutal objectivity coexists with childlike fantasmagoria? The superimposition of the photographed artist



**Figure 3.16** Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Montagne + Vallate + Strade X Joffre in Parole in libertà: consonanti vocali numeri*, ed. F.T. Marinetti, Milan, Direzione del Movimento Futurista, 11 February 1915. Courtesy of Mart, Archivio di Nuova Scrittura, Collezione Paolo della Grazia.

over the photographed painting, conflates reality and fictionality and produces a sensation of vertigo that destabilizes both terms. Balla's *Fallimento* is traditional in its rendition and revolutionary in its subjects. The abstract drawings on the door, a childish and primitive vision of the world, constitute an early instance of pictorial *objet trouvé*: the common and invisible sidewalk, what is not art, becomes a subject



**Figure 3.17** Antonio Fornari, *Giacomo Balla in front of the painting Il Fallimento*, 1919. Gelatin silver print. Private Collection, Milan.

for art, and it will soon dictate a new idea of art. In *Fallimento*, painting and photography meet at a fork in the road – soon the realist photographic vision will be forced to declare bankruptcy in the new universe of the futurist avant-garde. The work of the Impressionists and Cezanne will be sifted through the colour patterns and geometries of cubism and a century of abstract and informal art. Many avant-gardes later, at the time of American pop and conceptual art, the tension, passage, and crossover between painting and photography will find a pointed articulation in Robert Smithson's description of a 1967 exhibition as "language to be looked at and/or things to be read."<sup>38</sup>

"RAGAZZI INCOSCIENTI SCARABOCCIANO SULLA PORTA DI UN NEGOZIO FALLITO. AN. 1902" ("Thoughtless children scrawl on the door of a failed store. Year. 1902"; Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Giacomo Balla* 17) Balla wrote on the back of the canvas half a century later, a description verging on historical appraisal. In our own time of passage and change, "on the extreme promontory of centuries," Balla's commentary seems to invite a reflection on *this* cultural moment. The past is a closed up shop and the drawings the happy-go-lucky gesture of the future that is coming. But *Fallimento* encompasses both past and future, a possible epitaph for the nineteenth century – century of realism and photography – and a forewarning of the dangers contained in the ahistorical and techno-vitalist gesture of an avant-garde, all too self-conscious and yet unconscious of the European future.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Marinetti, “Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo” in *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, hereafter abbreviated TIF, 9. All translations are by the author.
- <sup>2</sup> “Noi siamo sul promontorio estremo dei secoli! ... Perché dovremmo guardarci alle spalle, se vogliamo sfondare le misteriose porte dell’Impossibile? Il Tempo e lo Spazio morirono ieri. Noi viviamo già nell’assoluto, poiché abbiamo già creata l’eterna velocità onnipresente.”
- <sup>3</sup> The Futurist’s claim to have annihilated time and to be living in an already attained “assoluto” forces us to reassess carefully the aspiration of the movement “to provide a vision of a possible future” (Perloff xxvi). For a discussion of Marinetti’s ambiguous relation to time, see Sartini Blum and also Cesaretti.
- <sup>4</sup> “Ci sarà un’esplosione enorme che nessuno udrà e la terra ritornata alla forma di nebulosa errerà nei cieli priva di parassiti e di malattie.”
- <sup>5</sup> The notion of a conflictual relation between photography and Futurism is critically well-established and yet contradictorily explored. See Lista, *I futuristi* and *Futurism*, as well as Regnani. Regnani fails to dwell on the materiality of the Futurist practices and what they reveal about the Futurist ideology of the machine. His extended treatment of photodynamism amounts to an uncritical reiteration of Bragaglia’s claims.
- <sup>6</sup> Frequented by painters like Pelizza da Volpedo and writers like Edmondo de Amicis, the studio of Pietro Paolo Bertieri practiced an art photography without décor, relying only on the play of light. Lista observed: “In a very similar way, in his portraits, Balla would turn to light as an aesthetic and psychological element to qualify the image” (*Balla* 4). Lista speaks of an “early dissociation” between photography and painting in Balla’s experience and notes how “the better part of his artistic itinerary will be determined by the attempt to reconcile these two languages through integration, above all forcing painting to assume the tonal sharpness and the optical sensitivity of photography or even the differentiated seriality of lithography. But it is precisely the language of photography, as an art of light, that seems to have marked his artistic imagination” (4).
- <sup>7</sup> For an analysis of “the integral relationship between the still photograph and the pose,” see Wollen (110).
- <sup>8</sup> Lista rightly observed how “the futurists felt extremely vulnerable in front of the camera as they wished to project an elective image of themselves, establish an ideal model for their identity” (*Futurism* 33). Yet in his reading, Lista fails to point out the aesthetic and ideological weakness of their position as they accuse photography of reducing the complexity of being to the brutal fixity of a sign and then, in order to escape the machine’s autonomy, pursue a frozen emblematic image stiffly submitted to their mental control. As a result, Lista ends up ambiguously endorsing the Futurists’ contradictory view of photography, a medium both conventionally realistic and uncontrollably surreal in its deformations.
- <sup>9</sup> The full passage reads: “volant à tire-d’aille hors de l’histoire et de l’anatomie, en vacance, en vacance,/ loin de la vulve, morne collège obligatoire!”
- <sup>10</sup> Campbell has argued for the centrality of wireless telegraphy and the radio to Marinetti’s Futurist poetries (51–67). Previously, Schnapps examined the complex linking of material

experience, historical desire, technological innovations, and cross-pollinations funneling through the dictating propeller of Marinetti's 1912 "Technical Manifesto."

- 11 "Il Futurismo si fonda sul completo rinnovamento della sensibilità umana avvenuto per effetto delle grandi scoperte scientifiche. Coloro che usano oggi del telegrafo, del telefono e del grammofono, del treno, della bicicletta, della motocicletta, dell'automobile, del transatlantico, del dirigibile, dell'areoplano, del cinematografo, del grande quotidiano (sintesi di una giornata del mondo) non pensano che queste diverse forme di comunicazione, di trasporto e d'informazione esercitano sulla loro psiche una decisiva influenza."
- 12 The original passage reads: "Luoghi abitati dal divino – I treni; i vagoni ristoranti (mangiare in velocità). Le stazioni ferroviarie ... Io prego ogni sera la mia lampadina elettrica; poiché una velocità vi si agita furiosamente" ("The New Religion-Morality of Speed").
- 13 Arguably, Futurism maintained a similarly cautious and parasitical relation toward the cinematographic medium, as Piero Gobetti shrewdly pointed out: "Because cinema has precisely all the characteristics that Marinetti would like to give to poetry" (86–9). Only late in 1916, and in response to a pirate Futurist movie *Mondo Baldoria*, produced in 1914 by Aldo Molinari, did Marinetti together with Corra, Settimelli, Ginna, Balla, and Chiti pen the "Cinematografia futurista" (see Strauven).
- 14 Interestingly, Perloff chooses to focus on the mechanism of reproduction in the abstract and leaves unaddressed the specific technology – namely, photography – from which Benjamin's reflection stems.
- 15 Collage and agglomeration are preferable terms to describe the photographic origin of the visual and verbal avant-garde practices. How do they differ from montage, usually chosen to describe the Futurists' *parole in libertà*? Perloff explains how *collage* refers to static objects and spatial relationships, while *montage* to objects in movement and temporal relationships. Although the former is applied to visual arts while the latter to verbal, *collage* seems a better term because it highlights the operation of disjunction and juxtaposition of what are perceived as heterogeneous components. *Montage* is a term derivative from film and, as Jean-Jacques Thomas notes in "Collage/Space/Montage," "montage aims at the integration of the diverse combinatory constituents and, as such, provides unity" (85). In montage, the effect is one of fluidity. Finally, in photomontage, the original disassembling operation of photography is belatedly appropriated under the reverse sign of assemblage and montage. I share Perloff's opinion that "collage is the master term, montage techniques being the offshoot of early collage practice" (246). To this I would add that collage, together with all its later incarnations, is in turn the offshoot of the photographic revolution.
- 16 In "Marinetti, Marconista," Campbell presents the writing of the *parole in libertà* as an immediate recording of the voice/sound/waves of *oggetti in libertà*, the language of matter. This privileging of the aural moment erases the visual dimension of the *Parolibere* and fails to take into account the poetics of analogy. The *parole in libertà* are not a simple linear transcription of a message but more importantly an improvised and liberated visual configuration. The freedom of the Futurist word, buzzed or clicked by a machine, is tied to the breaking of the linearity of the message in the

simultaneity and synthesis of the image. This very tension between machine straight talk and the circuitous talk of old plain imagination (wireless by definition) can be discerned in Marinetti's double and contradictory allegiance to the straight line and the zigzag.

- 17 The originals read: "Bisogna distruggere la sintassi disponendo i sostantivi a caso, come nascono"; "Il verbo all'infinito può, solo, dare il senso della continuità della vita"; bisogna fondere direttamente l'oggetto coll'immagine che esso evoca"; and later he notes: "Non vi sono categorie d'immagini, nobili o grossolane o volgari, eccentriche o naturali. L'intuizione che percepisce non ha né preferenze né partiti presi" (TIF 43).
- 18 "Gli scrittori si sono abbandonati finora all'analogia immediata. Hanno paragonato per esempio un animale all'uomo o a un altro animale il che equivale ancora, press'a poco, a una specie di fotografia" (TIF 42).
- 19 The originals read: "Siccome la velocità aerea ha moltiplicato la nostra conoscenza del mondo, la percezione per analogia diventa sempre più naturale per l'uomo" (TIF 41); and later he clarifies: "L'analogia non è altro che l'amore profondo che collega le cose distanti, apparentemente diverse e ostili" (TIF 42).
- 20 "Un uomo comune può trasportarsi con una giornata di treno da una piccola città morta dalle piazze deserte, dove il sole, la polvere e il vento si divertono in silenzio, ad una grande capitale irta di luci, di gesti e di grida ... L'abitante di un villaggio alpestre, può palpitar d'angoscia ogni giorno, mediante un giornale, con i rivoltosi cinesi, le suffragette di Londra e quelle di New York, il dottor Carrel e le slitte eroiche degli esploratori polari. L'abitante pusillanime e sedentario di una qualsiasi città di provincia può concedersi l'ebrietà del pericolo seguendo in uno spettacolo cinematografico, una caccia grossa nel Congo. Può ammirare atleti giapponesi, boxeurs negri, eccentrici americani inesauribili, parigine elegantissime, spendendo un franco in un teatro di varietà. Coricato poi nel suo letto borghese, egli può godersi la lontanissima e costosa voce di un Caruso e di una Burzio" ("L'immaginazione senza fili").
- 21 At the end of 1914 a letter to Giacomo Balla signed by Boccioni, Marinetti, Russolo, and Carrà marks his official acceptance into the movement (Scudiero, *Fortunato Depero* 10).
- 22 Lista confusingly credits both Depero and Bragaglia as the first to create Futurist mail art: "In March 1915 Depero stuck these self-portraits on to cards, added messages and hasty sketches in tempera and watercolor in red, black, yellow and blue and sent them to Carrà and Marinetti. He not only invented photo-performance, but also produced the first example of Futurist mail art" (*Futurism* 35). "Anton Giulio's research on photodynamism is recorded from 8 July 1911, the day he sent a photodynamic image entitled *Salutando* from his home town in Frosinone ... Photodynamism was the first modern revolution in photography and it began to be disseminated by means of postcards" (*Futurism* 22). Scudiero credits Bragaglia for sending the first mail art (*Futurismi postali* 79). Surprisingly, in the long section dedicated to Depero, he does not make any mention of the photo-performance cards.
- 23 "Godimento intimo e duro della propria passione prepotente e della propria adolescente pazzia. Rosetta stira otto ore a Lire 1,50. Io salto allegramente il pasto, lavorando ostinato e ermetico" (originally in *Fortunato Depero nelle opere e nella vita*, Trento, 1940).

- 24 This affords an interesting case for a reflection on women and sexual economy within the Futurist movement. Against Marinetti's erasure of woman and romantic love, substituted by a new erotics of the machine, Depero's case brings to the fore a complex intertwining of economic dependency (Rosetta was financially supporting him), sexual cathexis, and artistic creation. In "Note autobiografiche ed elogio a Rosetta" (Autobiographical Notes and Panegyric to Rosetta) he speaks of Rosetta as "domestica della fede ... sacerdotessa delle pene e del conforto" (handmaid of faith ... priestess of suffering and comfort) "crocerossina dell'arte" (Red Cross nurse of art), and later he notes: "Arte e amore sono due grandi capitali spirituali di felicità e bellezza, ma praticamente di magra cucina" (Art and love are two great spiritual sources of happiness and beauty, but practically speaking, they make a lean cuisine; 18). For an appraisal of women's contribution to Futurism which briefly deals with Rosetta, see Bentivoglio and Zoccoli (140). See also Re's extensive reflection on these themes, more recently in "Futurist and the Feminine: New Perspectives."
- 25 The original reads: "mestiere che si esercita nelle botteghe accanto al salumaio"; "vecchia cadaverica statica"; "pedestre riproduzione"; "il carattere essenziale della vita moderna." Translations are by the author.
- 26 "Noi vogliamo realizzare una rivoluzione, per un progresso, nella fotografia: e questo per purificarla, nobilitarla ed elevarla veramente ad arte ..."
- 27 "Godiamo così, di poter rendere la vita nella sua unica, logica espressione ... purificando così, completamente, l'operato della macchina *da noi* dominata e guidata a segnare ciò che è nella nostra sensibilità, violentando la potenza dell'obbiettivo sino a fargli percepire anche ciò che, si dice, per esso trascendentale, data la sua meccanica natura *fotografica*."
- 28 The unfolding of modernity has been characterized by a progressive masking of the visual fact displayed in this photodynamic image – namely, that notwithstanding the shift from mechanical to electronic technology; the energy source remains one and the same: biological life – living and manual in the former case, dead fossilized carbon life in the latter.
- 29 "ogni oggetto in moto deve venire riprodotto moltiplicato e rinascente da se stesso."
- 30 "unificata e profondamente fusa e sintetizzata dalla *traiettoria* del gesto stesso."
- 31 For a study of magic, spiritism, and the transcendence in Futurism, see Matitti; Cigliana; and earlier, Celant.
- 32 "The Lover of photography is fascinated both by the instant and the past ... the new-zero duration" and the "ever-receding then" (Wollen 108). Here stands another of the photographic paradoxes, the inevitable coexistence in the photograph of presence – Roland Barthes's "that-has-been" – and a discourse of a buried and irretrievable origin.
- 33 Photodynamism's lasting effect on photographic theory is attested by some recent publications: Lawrence Rainey's more extensive translation in *Modernism/Modernity* ([2008] 15.2) and the recent reprint in David Company's anthology *The Cinematic* – a reflection on slowness and speed in photography and cinema – of Caroline Tisdall's older translation originally in Phillips, *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*.
- 34 Barthes evokes the nineteenth-century origin of the photographic implements by linking them "to techniques of cabinet making and the machinery of precision: cameras, in short, were clocks for seeing" (*Camera Lucida* 15).

- <sup>35</sup> See Crispolti and Scudiero, *Balla and Depero. Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo* and the accompanying essays by the curators. The manifesto is born at the time of Italy's impending participation in the war – 11 March 1915 – and Scudiero stresses the ludic nature of the text polemically opposed to the militarism of Marinetti and *Lacerba*. Lista, on the contrary, reads it as a dialectical moment in the Futurist pursuit of creation through destructive palingenesis.
- <sup>36</sup> A propos of *Fallimento*, Lista noted: “The photographic visual, radicalized with a daring that was missing completely from contemporary bourgeois photographic taste, appears also in the unusual framing, as in the extraordinary *Fallimento* in which the sudden foreshortening of the image is equivalent to the caesura in epic narrative.” (*Balla* 7).
- <sup>37</sup> Fagiolo dell'Arco in *Omaggio a Balla*, published for the first time a preparatory drawing done by Balla of the children scribbling, thus bringing attention to their importance: “A child's writing (ready-made), so real as to seem fake, a prelude to the *parole in libertà*. A tool for a return to a pre-linguistic childhood (Dada has not yet come to judge)” (35). Lista, on the other hand, reads in the drawings a foreshadowing of modern graffiti and street art (*Balla* 22).
- <sup>38</sup> Smithson's words are the title of a recent book by Liz Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At. Language in 1960s Art*.

## **PART TWO**

---

### **Modern Memory Objects: Social Histories of the Photograph**

*This page intentionally left blank*

## 4 The Peripatetic Portrait: Exchange and Performance in Migration Photographs at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

---

GIORGIA ALÙ

If you would like to understand the history of Italy completely, you should look carefully at portraits ... In people's faces there is always something of the history of their time to be read, if one knows how to read it.

(Giovanni Morelli, qtd. in Burke, *Eyewitnessing* 1)

This chapter looks at photographic portraits produced during the initial period of the Italian diaspora, from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. These portraits were often circulated with letters exchanged between the Italian emigrants and their families and acquaintances back in Italy. The exchange of photographs helped to maintain kinship ties and the images mostly served as mementoes and as icons of remembrance. The Italian migrants' traumatic physical departure to the new land could be compensated for by their virtual return home in the form of a photographic image. In this way, images reduced spatial distance, transporting migrants' own desires and unknown faraway lives into the imagination of the viewers. These pictures do not speak to us only of departures and returns but also of achievements and failure. In them the subjects pose as they wished to be represented and as they wanted to appear to their relatives and friends left in Italy: distinguished and victorious. They are visual traces – and promoters – of desire and of a journey to another identity.

In 1977 – in one of the very rare articles on photographic studio portraiture of migrants – Estelle Jussim pointed out that in this kind of photograph the sitters seem to regain their personality. For Jussim, it was by posing in the photographic studio of the host country as they wanted to be represented that these individuals could shed – if only for a short time – the epithet of “immigrant” and aspire to recapturing their lost individuality (183–99).<sup>1</sup> What, however, does the photograph really capture and represent of its subject?

One only needs to glance through the thousands of photographic portraits gathered and collected in private and public archives or simply jealously preserved in family albums to perceive a formal and public presentation of the self: the immobility of the sitter in front of the camera eye, his or her posing suspended in an idealised condition, and the sense of personality enduring in time that the portraits convey. A considerable number of these images are to be found readily in migration archives and museums in

Italy such as the Fondazione Paolo Cresci in Lucca, the Fondazione Sella in Biella, the Museo regionale dell'emigrazione Pietro Conti in Perugia, AMMER: Archivio multimediale della memoria dell'emigrazione regionale in Udine, and the Fondazione Agnelli in Turin. In the following pages, I will begin by discussing how migrants could represent themselves according to new economic and social practices through their portraits. According to F.R. Myers, photographs, like any other images, should be seen as "unrelentingly and unquestionably social, located in specific, historically constituted worlds" (54). The journeys of both the migrants and the images were essentially movements – both international and rural-urban – across boundaries of languages, identities, and economies.

The years between 1896 and 1913 were a period in which Italian emigration reached a high point and Italy began its transformation from an agricultural to an industrial economy. Yet, this relatively rapid development could not keep pace with the growing population and the widening gap between the north and the south of the country. The new nation promised in 1860 failed to materialize. Emigration and colonization, therefore, began to be seen as crucial elements to shape the face of the newly formed kingdom (Allen and Russo 8). In particular, as discussed by Mark Choate, at the turn of the century, the Italian state promoted the image of an expatriate network of Italians abroad – made up of emigrants, exiles, expatriates to the colonies, and unredeemed inhabitants of the territories – in order to spread the idea of a greater Italy uniting all members of the Italian nation, at home and abroad. Within this framework, photographic portraits of Italian migrants responded to a complex system which saw the circulation and exchange of images strictly linked to social and economic codes, as well as political interests. Within this context, I will look at some of the reasons why migrants recurrently turned to this kind of representation and the way their identity could be fabricated in the photographic studio and in the portrait. I will also consider some of the effects and uses of such a visual construction and the value it acquired when put into circulation. I will, however, mostly refer to individual portraits and to photographs of small groups posted to Italy, setting aside photographs sent abroad from Italy, and portraits of family groups.

### **Mechanical Self-Reproduction**

As is well known, the daguerreotype's secret was revealed to the world in France in 1839 and immediately reached Italy, too.<sup>2</sup> Although Daguerre's and Talbot's invention was recognised and introduced to the Italian public quite promptly, an awareness of photography as a means of communication, collective expression, and personal representation developed more slowly there than in other parts of the world. As other chapters in this volume have noted, Italy, unlike other European countries such as France and England, enjoyed a major industrialization process only after its unification at the end of the nineteenth century. The lack of a strong entrepreneurial bourgeoisie – as an economic and political class – as well as the slow circulation of ideas due to censorship and poor infrastructure in pre-unified Italy have often been identified as some of the main causes of the slow cultural attention to the power of the camera (Miraglia,

“Note” 427–9). Nevertheless, professional and dilettante photographers spread around the country very quickly, together with photographic manuals and other related publications. And in 1889, following the founding of the Società Fotografica Italiana in Florence and its periodical publication, the *Bullettino*, photography was finally on its way to being promoted at the national level (Quintavalle and Maffioli).

Photography’s commercial success in Italy was initially secured by the reproduction of works of art and the documentation and cataloguing of architecture, painting, and sculpture. Columns, arches, domes, bell towers, and many other kinds of work of art, especially in Rome, Venice, Florence, and Naples, were favourite subjects of daguerreotypes. As Roberta Valtorta points out in Chapter 1 of this volume, it is, in particular, to the Alinari brothers, in Florence, that Italy owes the major cataloguing process of its artistic heritage executed on thousands of photographic plates. By the 1840s, however, portrait studios had opened in almost every big city worldwide. In the 1850s the collodian or wet-plate process lowered prices, sped up production, and increased the quantities of photographic images produced. Mass-production in portrait photography arrived, in particular, with the invention of the so-called cartes de visite or portrait-cards, patented in 1854 by the French photographer André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri.<sup>3</sup> Initially carte de visite photographs circulated among the bourgeoisie as a form of symbolic capital or social currency. In Italy, professional photographers opened their studios in cities such as Rome, Turin, Milan, Venice, Naples, and Palermo, and in 1895 Carlo Brogi published his *Il ritratto in fotografia, appunti pratici per chi posa*.<sup>4</sup>

Many studio photographers catered to the increasing demand for quick and inexpensive portraits and showed little interest in aesthetics. Others, in contrast, tried to produce more carefully and artistically composed photographs (Davenport 75–90). For these professionals, elements of pose, background, and lighting were meant to harmonize with the sitters in order to enhance their serious, calm, and dignified expressions. All general advice to photographers on posing faithfully parroted the instructions previously provided to painters (Linkman 46; Wichard 21–33). Photographs were meant to be about personal worth and dignity, qualities that were essential themes in Renaissance portraiture. Avoidance of any intimacy, too, had to be applied to photographs of family groups. The photographic portrait had to express duty and decorum and needed to avoid any emotion; its function was to permit the viewer to look at the subject portrayed, not into him or her. In this way, for the sitters, the photographer’s studio became “a place of ritual transcendence and self-contemplation” (Poole 107–10).<sup>5</sup> As Benjamin put it:

During the long duration of these shots they grew as it were into the picture and in this way presented an extreme opposite to the figures on a snapshot ... Everything in the early picture was designed to last ... Even the folds assumed by a garment in these pictures last longer. (“A Short History” 17)

The full-length depiction in the cartes de visite facilitated the introduction of appropriate accessories, drapery, and backgrounds. In order to achieve their pictorial effects photographers also referred to the repertoire used in eighteenth-century

painted portraits: landscape or interior settings, columns, pillars and balustrades, curtains, carved tables, and chairs (Linkman 52). Mannerism, uniformity of feelings, poses, and expressions became institutionalized in these photographic portraits all over the world. The millions of photographs produced from the 1860s up to the 1880s disseminated particular canons of aesthetic value, moral judgment, taste, and distinction that characterised images of nineteenth-century bourgeois culture. In so doing, the developing photographic portrait market helped to shape feelings of community or sameness among upper- and middle-class subjects (Poole 112).

The cartes de visite were used for a wide range of representational tasks and the use of the negative permitted the creation of any number of positive prints. Their most common use was as personal calling cards. Often, the person offering his or her carte would dedicate the photograph to a friend, relative, or a lover with a personal note or dedication inscribed across the top or back of the portrait. Most cartes also carried an embossed logo on the back indicating the photographic studio where the portrait was made.<sup>6</sup> Visible, iconic traces of social relationships, the cartes were collected in albums, exchanged among friends, and flaunted as evidence of the breadth and quality of an individual's circle of acquaintances. The image which was captured and immortalized through the lens – and circulated through society – would remain as a permanent testimony of the subject's moral and material achievements. In this way, the photo portrait was both a form of commodity and representation. Standardised and widely disseminated, it expressed the shared interests of class groups within countries emerging economically at international level. As a form of what Benedict Anderson called "print capitalism," these images – a mass produced and interchangeable commodity – contributed to shaping specific forms of self-imagining, personal aesthetics, and elements of style that would characterize bourgeoisies and bourgeois cultures in different parts of the globe (36).

By the end of the nineteenth century photographic portraiture reached its peak of popularity and thanks to radical changes in format and cost it became more accessible even among the lower classes. The cartes de visite fulfilled what André Disdéri himself referred to as the "civilizing mission of photography" (Disdéri). Photography became a more democratic means of representation; all working people could afford the little luxury of having a likeness of themselves taken from street vendors. The quality of photography, however, reflected the social class. Nineteenth-century photographers were also classified according to the type of clientele they portrayed (Mirzoeff 71–3). The standardised poses and settings used by the photographer for his bourgeois client started being adopted by people from less privileged socio-economic groups, from rural dwellers to factory workers. In many countries around the world, a remarkable number of these new sitters had just arrived from Italy in search of a new life.

## **Visible Journeys**

It is important to highlight the fact that circulation of mass-produced images and the success of the studio photograph occurred together with the increasing mobility of people around the globe. With reference to travel photography, Peter D. Osborne

explains how throughout the nineteenth century photography acquired the function of “unifying the geographical, economic and, indeed, imaginary territory across which capitalism was being extended” (11–12). In the complex relationship among mobility, the global distribution of images, and the circulation of money, nineteenth-century capitalist culture was produced. Such a relationship, however, should be understood and analysed also considering mobility in the context of the dramatic new migratory movements that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Mass migration supplied labour where capital needed workers, profoundly affecting the evolving global economy of the time. Between 1815 and 1939, more than fifty million people departed from Europe to non-European destinations, mostly to North and South America but also to South Africa and Australia.<sup>7</sup> Internal migration, especially rural-urban movements, involved about half or more of the total European population by the middle of the nineteenth century. About fourteen million Italians emigrated between 1871 and 1914, and about twenty-three million left their country in the hundred years since unification in 1860. In the 1880s, the worldwide agricultural crisis struck Italy, and its people – as in Ireland and Poland and Jewish-settled territories – became part of the capitalist world’s labour force. In 1896, with the end of the international depression, Italy began to enter the ranks of the world’s wealthiest industrial nations, and emigrants constituted an amazing resource for the growing Kingdom of Italy. Emigrants sent home hundreds of millions of lire each year in banks supported by the Italian state (such as the non-profit Banco di Napoli) and contributed significantly to Italy’s international balance of payments on the gold standard. Moreover, Italian exporters relied on emigrants to purchase Italian products, and Italians abroad relied on commerce for contact with their native land (Choue 72–100).

Transcontinental railroads and steamships facilitated and speeded long-distance migration and also made seasonal cross-Atlantic moves possible. Migration was a move between economic stages of development. Unskilled, mostly male, Italian rural workers moved within Europe and overseas in order to work in construction, mining, or industry or on plantations – or even in search of cheap land in fertile plains (Hoerder 332–3).<sup>8</sup> They provided labour to the emerging capitalist countries when industrialization was transforming the old social order; in exchange they received remittances that were sent back to their homeland and contributed dramatically to solidifying Italy’s historic economic boom. Moreover, many potential emigrants who could not afford the costs of leaving Italy were aided by previous emigrants currently residing in the receiving countries. Help took the form of remittances, prepaid tickets, accommodation, and subsistence upon arrival in the new land.

Unskilled male Italians tended to emigrate as individuals rather than in family groups. They entered the host societies at the bottom. In the United States, for instance, labelled as racially inferior and then associated with crime, mafia, and the “Black Hand,” this anonymous mass became recipients of charity and objects of social, political, and economic control. In the host country, the migrant’s presence was frequently considered as a disturbance. Their arrivals and miserable living conditions were often documented, recorded, and controlled, and romantically or piteously

conveyed as well as satirised through visual images, such as sketches, drawings, and photographs in magazines and newspapers.<sup>9</sup> The hundreds of photographs framing Italian migrants landing at Ellis Island taken by journalists and officers are clear examples of the role of photography in maintaining racial and class hierarchies through the demarcation of the poor and the foreign. Photographic portraits, too – taken, for instance, by criminologists and anthropologists – became the format of photographic documents, official projects, and social surveys in which, according to John Tagg, “the code of social inferiority framed the meaning of representations of the objects of supervision or reform” (37). These images enabled forms of surveillance and disciplinary power through the way the migrants – in detention and deportation processing stations, police cells, prisons, homes, and schools, for instance – were presented, arranged for the camera, and offered to the viewer.

Attempts like Jacob Riis’s famous (very often posed) documentary photographs of slum dwellings in New York, published in his book *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (1890) and in *Scribner’s Magazine*, or the social, aestheticized photography of Lewis Hine, or the portraits by Frances Benjamin Johnston, also played a role in this process. Their purpose was different from the institutional uses of photography that controlled, profiled, and objectified foreigners. Nevertheless, works similar to those of Hine and Riis visually constituted the Italian migrants as Others and played a role of isolating the foreign bodies and making them the centre of public attention as objects of judgment.

In contrast to the uses of photography imposed on them from without, Italian migrants saw the photographer’s studio as a place of a democratized and participatory practice. Subject to racial, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic barriers, excluded from services, employment, accommodation, and housing, many Italian migrants saw the photographer’s studio as a place where they could assert control over their own visibility and its fabrication. Both the photographer’s studio and the photographic image provided spaces where such a construction could be situated against the effects of marginalization and displacement (Homberger).

### **Visual Resistance**

According to Abdelmalek Sayad, the immigrant discovers the “individuation” of his or her body as it is a “body that is socially and *aesthetically* designated as a foreign body” (204). One strategy to oppose to structures of domination, power, and surveillance is, therefore, to oppose the Others’ scrutinising gaze in order to allow the possibility of agency. In many of his writings, Michel Foucault describes domination in terms of “relations of power” and refuses the assumption that “power is a system of domination which controls everything and which leaves no room for freedom” (qtd. in Fornet-Betancourt 124). For Foucault, instead, in all relations of power “there is necessarily the possibility of resistance” (*ibid.*). Resistance can also be accomplished by returning the gaze. As stated by Stuart Hall (with regard to Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*): “This look, from – so to speak – the place of the Other, fixes us, not only in violence, hostility and aggression, but in the ambivalence of its desire”

(“Cultural identity” 29), as well as in what bell hooks calls an “oppositional gaze” (94–105).

Italian migrants turned to mechanical reproduction in order to endure a social, spatial, and temporal displacement. Posing in the photographic studio, staring at the camera, and choosing to fix an idealized image of themselves in time and space, migrant subjects could reinforce their presence within the host society, while situating their bodies in opposition to dominating strategies of control and representation. In this way migrants could respond to the public objectification of their bodies by the receiving country’s institutions (for instance public health and education), practices, and representations. The photographic portrait could supply a vision of urbanity and advancement that stood in contrast to the images of destitution and disorder. The migrants entered this complex mechanism in the attempt to reconstruct a personal identity and a new life for themselves and for their families left behind in Italy. Wanting to pose, pay, and be framed for their own families and acquaintances was a way for the migrants to recapture their body and soul.

Through these black-and-white or sepia-toned pictures, the migrant could overcome his or her absence-presence dilemma. In his *La Double Absence*, Sayad explains how “the absence of the emigrant and the presence of the immigrant” are both correlative and dependent (124). The migrant is simultaneously present and absent in both the native society and host society. The body, therefore, becomes the migrant’s referent and the only certainty to the sufferance of his or her temporal and spatial dislocation. The migrant lives in the space and time of the memory of home and in the present reality of the new country. Through the photograph, Italian migrants could both fill their absence in Italy and, at the same time, reinforce the presence and visibility of their bodies in the host society. And what was invisible of the migrant (dignity, aspiration, decorum) as a component of an anonymous, troubling mass, was then made visible and presentable in the photographic portrait; a public visual exterior displayed a private, secreted interior. And, as stated by Sayad:

We present ourselves and are present through our bodies, and the body is the bearer of social identity: it is that identity. That is why the body is the object of attempts to make it presentable, or in other words to model it in such a way as to make it conform as closely as possible to what is seen as a legitimate configuration. (260)

Migrants’ identity is thus shaped through a complex intersection of experiences that include what migrants were in the home country and what they are becoming – or desire to become – in the new land. Their identity is also a cultural process that attempts to give imaginary and real coherence to personal and family displacement, as well as to a national diaspora. According to Hall, cultural identity is, indeed, a process in constant transformation; not just a matter of “being” but rather of “becoming.” Moreover, it is an unstable point of identification constructed through language, acts, and artefacts, including images (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora”).

The migrant becomes spectator of his or her own photographic body. He or she can look at his or her own image, which is simultaneously a trace of a past moment

and of a desire.<sup>10</sup> The presence-absence of the migrant mirrors, however, his or her presence-absence as subject of the photograph, as explained by Barthes. In the photographic portrait, the migrant's body is frozen in a death-like pose. By deciding to be photographed, the migrant participates in his or her transformation into an Other and an object. How, then, was such an image constructed, and what were some of the outcomes of such an identity transformation and fabrication?

### **Presented at Their Best**

Through mobility and labour abroad, the Italians integrated into processes of production and circulation of capital, goods, and images. The portraits produced in the photographic studios offered migrants the possibility to exchange money for a beautified and idealized "reality." Through these photographic representations and money, they managed to produce and exchange both a performance and a desired identity.

In the photographer's studio poses, background, facial expressions, decorative furniture, and objects very often replicated the settings and atmospheres already adopted in middle-class portraiture. Every element was carefully orchestrated in order to capture and frame the migrant's desired object: social ascension. Upon such a suitable stage the sitter could perform his or her ideal. This is clear for instance in [Figure 4.1](#), where the female subject seems suspended between reality and an imaginary space; she gracefully stares and smiles at the camera as if searching for an ideal pose and a desired status. In the studio, the world was slowed down to a point of stillness, and the photograph was called upon to prolong an idealised self carefully chosen for public display (Jussim 198). While everything – bodies, money, and communities – was in constant motion, the photograph – a veritable trace of a past moment – granted "status," literally a fixed presence.

As we see in [Figure 4.1](#) and [Colour Plate 4](#), the sitters assume bourgeois poses and the image crystallizes a manner that subjects adopted in the public performance of a role. Supervised by the photographer, migrants learnt "a new way of seeing themselves in the eyes of others" and to see themselves as "an image" (Trachtenberg 29).<sup>11</sup> As Graham Clarke points out, the portrait offers the "promise of the individual through a system of representation which at once hides and distorts the subject before the lens" ("Introduction" 3). The portrait's meaning exists, therefore, within wider codes of significance (for instance, space, posture, and dress) that have, in turn, already framed and fixed the individual. The photographic portrait, in this way, "reflects the terms by which the culture itself confers status and meaning on the subject, while the subject as image floats problematically between exterior and interior identities" (Clarke, "Introduction" 3).

In these images, the sitters are dressed as for a special occasion; they look good and want to make a good impression on those who will see their photograph. Facial expressions are often contrived and serious, and poses are rigid. Such an effect is strengthened in [Colour Plate 4](#), where the two subjects are both in the same formal and mirroring pose; their severity seems to communicate status; furnishing and objects frame their formality in the attempt to convey social and economic accomplishment.



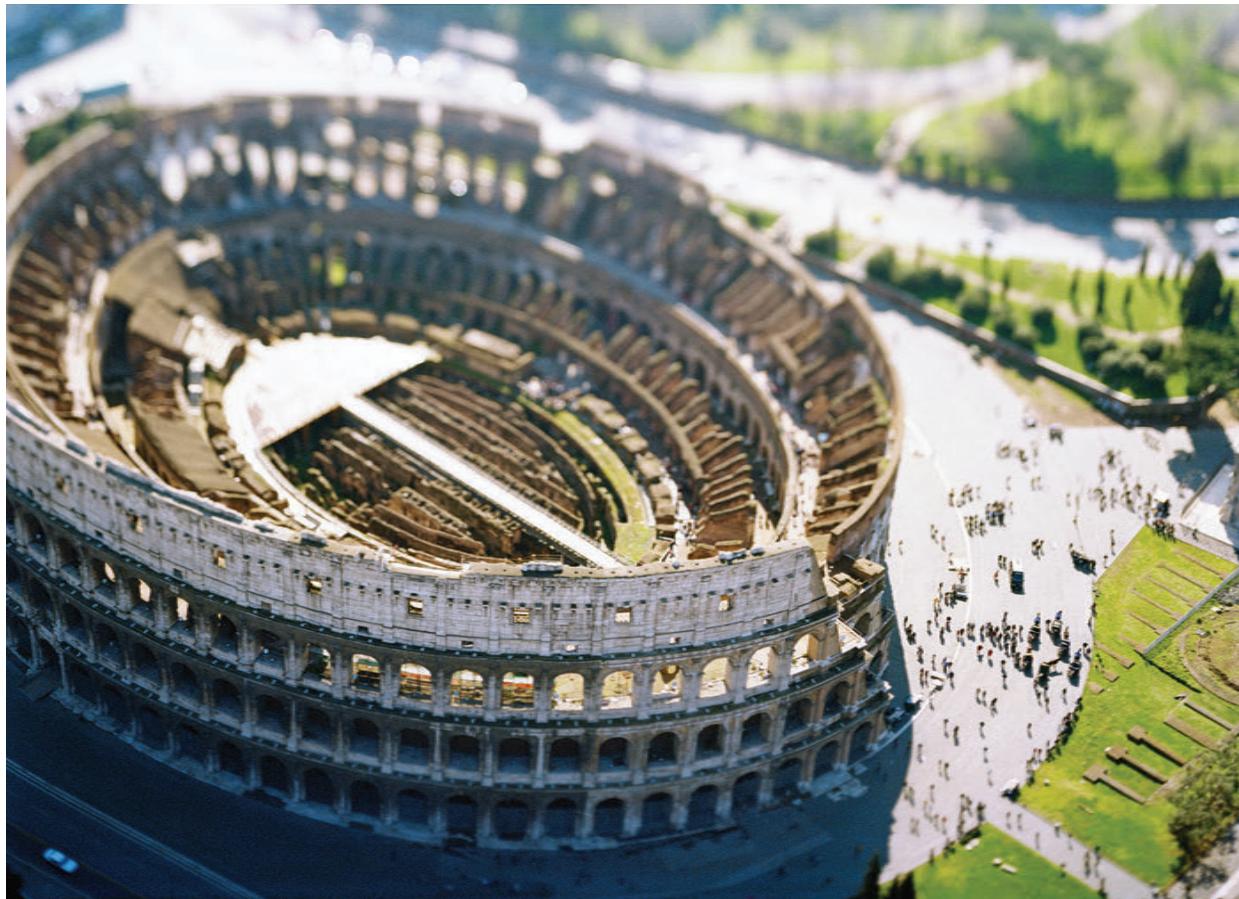
**Figure 4.1** Studio portrait of Catalina Zorzenon, migrant from Friuli. Buenos Aires, ca. 1915. Albumen silver print mounted on card (cabinet card). Courtesy of AMMER (Archivio multimediale della memoria dell'emigrazione regionale – Friuli Venezia Giulia).



**Figure 4.2** Panucci family. Sydney, early 1930s. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the Panucci family.



Colour Plate 1 Luigi Ghirri, *Rimini* 1985. © Eredi Ghirri. Courtesy of the Ghirri estate.



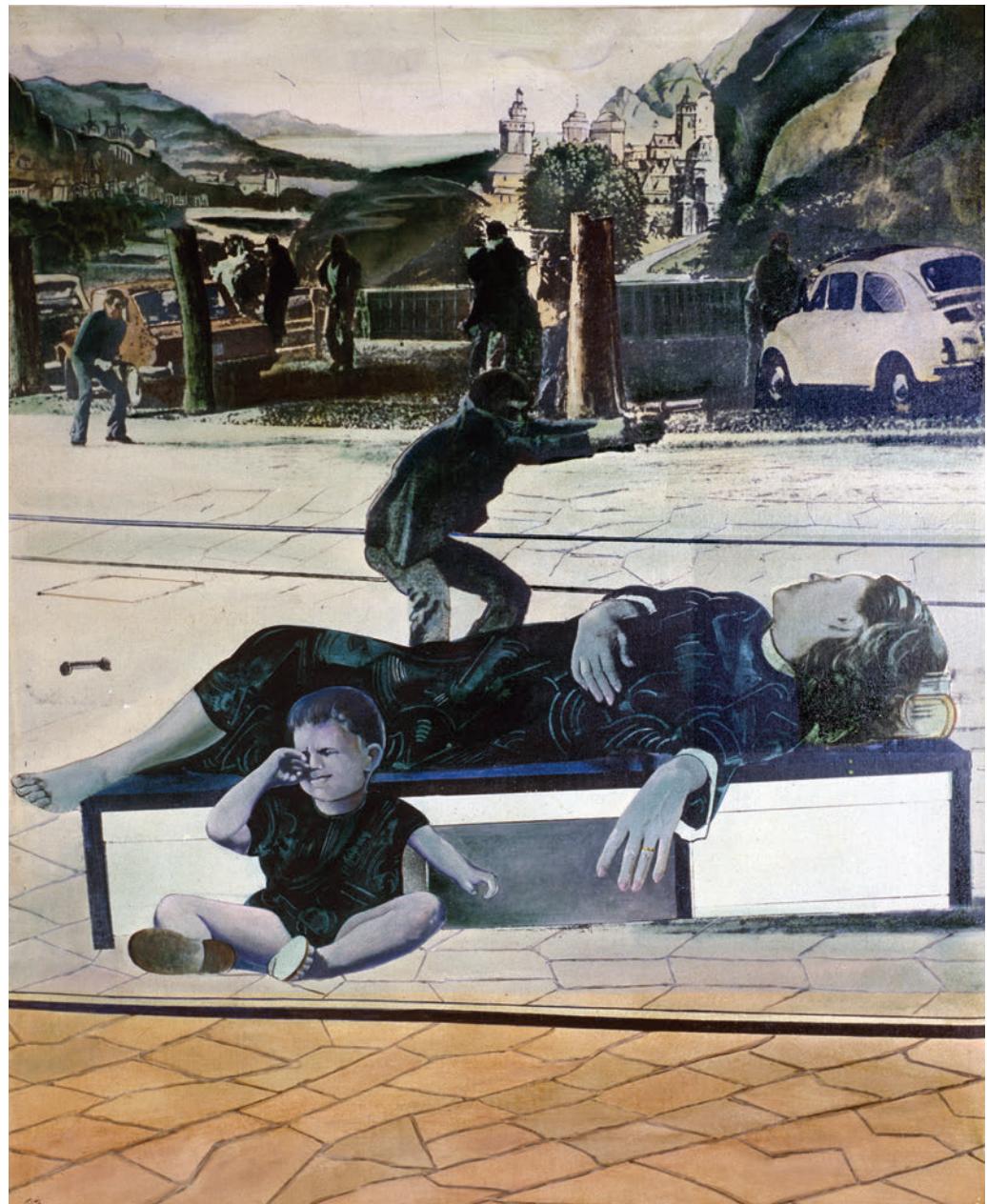
Colour Plate 2 Olivo Barbieri, *site specific ROMA 04*, 2004. Chromogenic colour print. © Olivo Barbieri. Courtesy of the artist.



Colour Plate 3 Giacomo Balla, *Fallimento* (Bankruptcy), 1902. Painting, oil on panel. © ARS.



**Colour Plate 4** Portrait of Italian immigrants. New York, ca. 1902. Hand-coloured albumen silver print mounted on card (cabinet card). Courtesy of Fondazione Paolo Cresci, Lucca.



Colour Plate 5 Gianni Bertini, *Lui piange*, 1977. Painted silkscreen print. Courtesy of Archivio Frittelli.



**Colour Plate 6** Film frame from *Trasparenze* (Transparencies, 1998). © Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi. Courtesy of the artists.



Colour Plate 7 Vittore Fossati, *Oviglio, Alessandria, 1981*, from *Viaggio in Italia*. © Vittore Fossati. Courtesy of the artist.



Colour Plate 8 Franco Vaccari, *700 KM di esposizione Modena Graz*, 1972. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

Often, the poses reveal the subject's humble background and his or her unease with the camera, like the man on the right in [Figure 4.2](#). In other photographs, in contrast, the sitters pose with a slight smile as if expressing optimism or achievement; some portraits, for instance, were made to celebrate a promotion, a new job, or a successful business.

The settings tend to recreate an imaginary interior environment with panel backdrops, chairs, columns, plants, stairs, and windows. In this kind of theatrical arrangement, the sitters appear as they wished to be seen. Photography was made "subservient to the creation of an illusion" (Kroes 45) which, on other occasions, could be more dramatic. Posing in the studio while driving cars (real or made of cardboard) was, for instance, quite popular, as in [Figure 4.3](#). Here, the attention is shifted from an internal (and often domestic) environment to a fictitious outside space. Often these images were just intentionally humoristic attempts to enliven a dull reality through fiction, and they were not essentially fabricated to mislead those left at home. The representational code behind this particular genre of studio photography was widely known in Europe and America.<sup>12</sup> The use of studio props, however, could also serve the purpose of deliberate fabulation; in these cases, the fictitious overstatement went beyond the representational conventions that sitters and beholders shared in common. Clear cases of theatrical impression management, these photographs were the visual complement to the inflated accounts in many of the immigrants' letters; a private answer to the sombre, and very often miserable, reality of the immigrant's life (Kroes 46–55).

Whether the sitters had actually reached the aspired social status in the new country or were just faking it, these migrants objectified and materialized themselves through the production and dissemination of their body as public symbol according to pre-existing social and economic discourses.<sup>13</sup> Within transnational movements of things, capital, and people, Italian migrants became part of a culture in which the public presentation of the self – and the creation of identity that it implies – was achieved through both visual fabrication and exchange.

Photographs from abroad were a means to consolidate or even invent a status; they were representations of aspirations, geographical and social mobility, achievements, advancements, and hopes of social ascension. It can be argued that this photographic self-representation often facilitated an exclusion of peasant or regional background. Donna Gabaccia has argued that before 1914 the typical Italian migrant did not have a clear national identity but only a strong attachment to his or her town, village of birth, or community, to which half of all migrants returned. The identification with the new, distant Italian nation remained limited to urban, educated, and bourgeois persons (3–8). The portrait was, instead, a place where the migrants could play with their identification with the host country and perform a modern subjectivity. It would be erroneous, however, to read these images as a total acceptance of the cultural identity of the host society. The land of adoption is, in fact, very often conceived by migrants as a place of residence where new cultural forms can threaten traditions and roots.<sup>14</sup> The portrait (and the photographer's studio) should rather be perceived as a kind of third space, an in-between location, where migrants could define an idealized status



Figure 4.3 Guglielmo Luti from Fosciandora (Lucca) and a friend. Gelatin silver print. New York, 1919. Courtesy of Fondazione Paolo Cresci, Lucca.

in the middle of a process of identity shaping. Just like the high-street photo-portraits of Afro-Caribbean migrants in post-war Britain analysed by Stuart Hall, this sort of portrait and subject exist only in and for the photographic studio time and space (“Reconstruction Work” 152–64). In the confined space of both the photographer’s studio and of the photograph, the models seemed to live inside rather than outside the moment. Specific collective or ethnographic identities were thus presented through negation. The photographic space, again, displays a self between presence and absence, and invisibility, therefore, does not imply exclusion or denial. Moreover, other marks that, on the other hand, needed to be concealed, very often appeared and disturbed the intended codes to visual representation. In these photographs, humble outfits, worn shoes, distressed – often lost or apprehensive – facial expressions, and cracked hands easily and very often come into view, as in Figure 4.2. Signs of humbleness and sorrow are keys to the contradictoriness and theatricality of these portraits. They point at the reality behind the performance. At the same time, similarly to Barthes’s *punctum*, they fix and disturb our gaze – they pierce, “prick,” or “bruise” the viewer – on a part of the image that translates it as a whole. These marks move our gaze beyond the theatrical paraphernalia of the given-to-be-seen towards what lies

behind and, therefore, trigger an affective response from the viewer. Although these signs disturb the social fabrication of the image, they reinforce both its aspirational intention and the singularity of the subject. However, rather than being just an “accident,” as for Barthes’s *punctum*, they are historical and real traces of the individual’s identity that are hard to veil.

Nevertheless, the portrait made in the host country was an expression of its subject’s conscious will to be seen and remembered in a specific way by present and future generations. As stated by Susan Sontag, “After the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed” (*On Photography* 11). The migrant will return to his or her status, but his or her image will outlast its viewer. In this way the subject’s aims are positioned according to what the Other (the photographer, family, friends, as well as institutions back in Italy) wants to see. The Other will see the subject as the object of his or her own desire (Marsh 87–91).<sup>15</sup> The object, however, is never fully captured; as in, in the photograph it never becomes present: it is rather frozen and framed in time and space (Marsh 263). The photograph registers a corporal trace, an index, while at the same time fixing such an image in a temporal and spatial dimension.<sup>16</sup> The time, in particular, is the past of the photograph; any time the portrait is looked at by the subject himself or herself or by his or her family it refers to a public moment that “has been,” to a presence-absence, as well as to both a physical and a visual journey to another idealised identity. Yet, in most cases, such images are not mere representations of a past moment but rather the projections of a desired future.

Family and friends at home received the photo by post; they avidly scrutinized every part of it, as if that unique moment fixed on paper could reveal to them every single detail of the “real” life in the foreign country. For the people at home, whether an image of a potential condition or of an actual achievement, the portrait became the promise to exchange the representation for the real experience, the copy for the original. It could also offer encouragement to expatriate. On many occasions, in fact, such photographs were used by unscrupulous shipping companies and their agents to deceive poor people in Italy into believing that a prosperous life awaited them abroad.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, these images contributed to creating a shared discourse of the way the Italian migrants wanted to be seen and imagined, particularly in their native countries. At the moment of reception of these pictures, the whole community of immigrants could be envisaged as represented by association in one image by people at home. More specifically, through global practices of visibility and exchange, photography democratized both accessibility to and availability of a collective identity. At the same time, these photographs functioned as sites through which narratives of collective belonging (and exclusion) were fabricated. Through the rituals of photographic self-representation (and viewing) and by using and repeating similar poses and props, migrants could construct notions of themselves as an “imagined community” rooted in fantasy. Photography – along with print technology, as discussed by Anderson – contributed to the creation of a shared sense of fraternity, power, and time. For Anderson, the newspaper was crucial in constructing a sense of national

belonging and a sense of community (in anonymity) where none existed. The photograph, on the other hand, evokes the ghost of past belonging, intimacy, and community where none exists any longer. Paradoxically, at a time when Italy was inventing itself as a nation, migrant photography seems to bypass any restrictive sense of “Italianness” and instead to generate a new sense of a globalized community as transnational belonging. These centrifugal forces tied to the phenomenon of emigration were addressed and tentatively harnessed by the Italian government.

After Italian unification, statisticians and ethnographers travelled all around Italy to make the new political entity imaginable (and imagined) to Italians. Above all, scientific means were employed both to produce an alternative portrait to the foreign representation of Italy as a country of backwardness and crime and to help in its slow political and economic consolidation (Doumanis 94). As Valtorta shows in her chapter, photography, in particular, became an integral part of this visual mapping of Italy, through the work of the Alinari brothers, among others, as mentioned earlier. The distribution of plates representing ruins, antiques, and architecture from all over the peninsula and its islands was followed by a production of photographic portraits of regional customs, works, and activities in the attempt to identify all the “cultural variations of a national norm” (Doumanis 95). In Italy, photography was thus employed as one of the institutional scientific resources for the invention of a composite Italian nation-state. At the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, photographic portraits of migrants, too, contributed to positioning representational politics at the heart of an Italian nation-building project. In these photographs, faces and poses could be used by the Italian government and (liberal) political forces in periodicals and state-sponsored exhibitions as special evidence that testified to the success of Italian migrants and of Italian migration (and colonization) in general: “Beyond the idealized ‘nation-state’ of the Kingdom of Italy, uniting all members of the Italian nation in a single state, there was the imagined ‘nation-superstate,’ a network of Italians worldwide in a supranational global nation” (Choate 6).<sup>18</sup>

Yet, photography as used by migrants was essentially the instrument for an imaginary, transnational kinship beyond any institutional usage and state rhetoric. The specificity of the migrants’ portraits lies precisely in this visual and virtual nation building that they perform through personal desire, exchange, and family relationships.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

In the 1930s, the snapshot spread all around the world, and immigrants did not really need the studio photographer any longer. The advent of mass media and of the Italian economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s marked the advent of a culture based on the “libidinous gratification which encourages us all to *identify* our pleasures in order to develop and refine them” (Holland 119) and what Guy Debord has called the “society of spectacle.” Communications home became instantaneous through cheap fax, Internet, and mobile phones. Digital photographs are now attachments to emails, and distance is also visually reduced through a proliferation of visual means.

The time of the photographic portrait has collapsed. The world is now seen in flux. Other and more sophisticated forms of photographic performance have replaced the social illusion of the studio photographic portrait. Yet, photography is still, according to Gilles Deleuze's definition, a social machine, an "assemblage" of technical procedures, signifying effects and economic functions (*Foucault* 13). And the photographic portrait, in particular, maintains its function as a sign that both describes individuals and inscribes their social identity (Poole 11; Tagg 37). Description and inscription are based on established conventions; subjectivity, in fact, is produced through signifiers, languages, and modes that pre-exist the individual.

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographic portraits of Italian migrants responded to precise contemporary economic, cultural, and social changes. Today they provide us with invaluable historical evidence of the way ideologies and identities change with time and experience, and of the mental or metaphorical "image" of the self and others as well as of a country in general. They were based on standardized forms of self-imagining and personal aesthetics which had characterized nineteenth-century bourgeois culture in different parts of the globe. By translating the migrant's aspirations into a visual artefact, the photograph played a fundamental role in the ideological construction of the migrant's newly desired social and economic identity. Poses, dress, and objects reflected an intricate game of meaning in which exterior appearance framed and fixed a fabricated public self. The subject being photographed, the photographer, and the viewer, thus, all collaborated in a performative process driven by desire.

Studio portraits of Italian migrants and of their families taken in the host country acquired more than an affective and self-aspirational significance. The portrait was, therefore, a platform which offered migrants a space and a time to probe, consolidate, or idealize a status. It was a stage on which they could enact publicly an imaginary transition to another identity whose representation would survive for a long time. The photographic portrait was also a powerful means by which social and economic processes of accumulation, possession, and circulation played a crucial role in the maintenance of transnational – as well as family – relations. The production and exchange of these images helped to produce the formation of a visual archive that situated the Italians abroad into a variety of complex discourses, including those of economic and social status, as well as nationality and nationhood.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Some reflections on Italian migrants and family photographs include the following: Gentile and Ortoleva; Gibelli; Ortoleva, "Una fonte difficile"; Ostuni. Consider also Corti.
- <sup>2</sup> For an overview of the history of photography in Italy, see Bonetti and Maffioli, especially 15–41; Zannier, *Storia della fotografia italiana*; Zannier et al., *The Self and Its Double*.
- <sup>3</sup> France, Britain, and America were the countries mostly responsible for the dissemination of photography. British and French travellers had a crucial role in making photography

popular also in Asia, Africa, and the Antipodes, while the Americans took photography to South America and the Pacific. See Davenport; Hannavy; Reeder. For a history of studio portrait photograph, see Henisch and Henisch 11–54.

<sup>4</sup> The manual was published with an introduction by Paolo Mantegazza, the first president of the Società Fotografica Italiana.

<sup>5</sup> See also Rouillé.

<sup>6</sup> See Poole 109.

<sup>7</sup> See Baily; Hatton and Williamson 95–122; Hoerder 331–66. An additional million migrated to European destinations, as well as to locations within their respective countries. Italian intercontinental migration began in the decades following the final unification of the country in 1870 and, generally, stopped in the early 1970s. It was a global movement which saw individuals migrating to multiple destinations of choice. In an imperfectly documented process that involved the movement of people back and forth from Italy to various locations abroad an unknown number of times, approximately twenty-six million Italians left home and more than half of them returned. Italian emigration increased and reached a peak in the early years of the twentieth century.

<sup>8</sup> See also Baily. For numbers and destinations of the Italian diaspora, see Rosoli.

<sup>9</sup> Consider also Alfred Stieglitz's famous emblematic photograph *The Steerage* (1907), portraying immigrants returning to Europe.

<sup>10</sup> This “desire” should also be understood in Lacanian terms, as a desire *from* the Other. This is the desire to be the object of the Other’s desire and gaze. See Lacan. For a more extensive discussion of this concept in relation to photographs of Italian migrants, see Alù.

<sup>11</sup> See also Goffman; Kozloff 168.

<sup>12</sup> On the use of props and backdrops in studio photographs at the end of the nineteenth century, see also Henisch 11–54.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of photography and the display of the body, see Lalvani.

<sup>14</sup> On this subject, see Fortier.

<sup>15</sup> See also Lacan.

<sup>16</sup> See Barthes, *Camera Lucida*; Benjamin, “Little History.”

<sup>17</sup> Fiction has often made references to this situation. For one recent example, see Belotti.

<sup>18</sup> Choate discusses the construction of a prestigious image of Italian migration during the Liberal government. He argues how Italian emigration and colonialism developed together, joined by proposals to settle Italian African territories with emigrants diverted from the Americas. To forge the new Kingdom of Italy the Liberal Italian state considered emigration and colonial expansion as one and the same.

<sup>19</sup> Both processes, however, inside and outside Italy, entailed travel and mobility.

# **5 *Presente!* The Latent Memory of Italy's Great War in Its Photographic Portraits**

---

LUCA COTTINI

As soon as it broke out in 1914, the European War immediately revealed its unprecedentedly global nature. As the first mass-mediated event of modernity soon transformed into the collective "great" War, it produced both a worldwide narrative and a totalizing memory. This occurred both quantitatively, in the proliferation of visual and verbal sources during and after the conflict, and qualitatively, in the extraordinary capacity of its imagery to penetrate subtly the private life of millions all over the world. While traditional studies on the memory of the conflict concentrate on published material (written memoirs or the official images filtered through censorship and propaganda), this research proposes instead an initial exploration of the unpublished repertoire of private sources and in particular of amateur photography. Focusing on the specific case of the Italian front, the intent is to provide a critical perspective on an underestimated mnemonic source. This largely unexplored material represents indeed a site where the official global narrative of the conflict intertwines with its fragmented private stories,<sup>1</sup> as well as a productive starting point to reconstruct the cultural process of negotiation from individual to collective memory of the war.

## **A Rhetorical and a Chronological Premise**

In considering photographic material, like any other war-related source, two methodological premises are needed: one rhetorical (What is the specific language that an object speaks?) and one chronological (What is the specific moment in which memory is produced and activated?). Any communicative channel that a source employs is influenced by a double rhetoric: public and private. On the one hand, the public rhetoric of war saturates the narrative of events through over-mediation,<sup>2</sup> and neutralizes the conflict's violence through repetition. As such, it functions as a device for silencing both political adversaries (by stigmatizing their defeatism or draft-dodging) and veterans, as described in Palazzeschi's *Due imperi mancati* (Two Missing Empires), in the overwhelming celebration of a Roman parade: "Flowers, songs, applause, shouts, tears. They open their mouths a little to say something: tears, shouts, applause, songs and flowers. They go quiet, they try to speak again: flowers, flowers, flowers. They would like to raise their voices to make themselves understood: anthems and tears, tears and anthems"

(“fiori, canti, applausi, grida, lacrime. Aprono un poco la bocca per dire qualche cosa: lacrime, grida, applausi, canti e fiori. Si chetano, si riprovano a parlare: fiori, fiori, fiori. Vorrebbero alzare la voce per farsi intendere: inni e lacrime, lacrime e inni”; 171). On the other hand, a concomitant private rhetoric emerges, made up of the silence of the soldiers’ spiritual shipwreck (as emphasized in the title of Ungaretti’s *L’allegria di naufragi* [The Joy of Shipwrecks] or in the emblematic scene of the drowning of Rubè’s lover in Borgese’s eponymous novel) *Rubè*,<sup>3</sup> of the hallucinated horror of their war remembrances;<sup>4</sup> of their void of memory,<sup>5</sup> and of identity.<sup>6</sup> This silence, rather than signifying the end of the possibility to narrate (as Benjamin proposes in *The Storyteller*), conceals instead a quest for an appropriate language to express the soldiers’ bewilderment as they are confronted with civil society’s lack of interest in their “nasty” truth<sup>7</sup> and with the disproportion between their trauma and their capacity to verbally process it.<sup>8</sup> In conjunction with stuttering and ellipsis (poetically reproduced by Palazzeschi and Ungaretti in the form of a graphic blank), the photographs’ “public intimacy”<sup>9</sup> similarly deploys a silent, alternative language of reprocessing, connecting the narrative space of the self to that of the global war.

In addition to this, it is also important to stress the fact that the moment of time in which a memory is produced (and reactivated) influences the very meaning of the remembrance itself. With the gradual disappearance of the last generation of First World War witnesses indeed the current memory of the events shifted from a direct narrative – either of survival (after the fall of Fascism) or revival of the first world conflict in the aftermath of the second<sup>10</sup> – to an archaeological perspective, focused on the finds of a “buried life” (Fussell 326), and centred on a growing valorisation of local histories and unpublished archival materials. In light of this archaeological descent into First World War memories, it is therefore useful to outline briefly the changing semantics of each source, according to the moment of its production and fruition (before, during, or after the war).

In the years immediately preceding 1915, the growing expectation of the conflict created in Italy by the Libyan campaign and the interventionist campaign<sup>11</sup> contributed to constructing a “cultural template” (Ashplant 34) of the way in which the impending war should be remembered. In this sense, D’Annunzio’s depiction of the present as a rejuvenating rite of spring, or Serra’s representation of it as the *kairòs* of a generation, not only replicated the premade Risorgimento pattern of national reawakening but also established its strong model for future remembrance.

During the war years, the narration of the conflict remained suspended between silence and patriotic ready-made fictions. As emphasized by the recurring presence of the *confine* – both on the maps of the Isonzo frontline (regularly displayed on newspaper front pages) and in the frequent accounts from the space behind the lines – the narrative of war, as Andrea Cortellessa points out, is split into two discrete levels of reality: the *zona di guerra* and territorial Italy.<sup>12</sup> It is in this parenthetical time-space that memory remains suspended.<sup>13</sup> In spatial terms, for the soldiers in the trenches, war coincides with the infernal silence of a life-in-death,<sup>14</sup> whereas for the city inhabitants, it turns into a theatrical staging

(from the intervention to the conquest of Gorizia, from Caporetto to Vittorio Veneto), filled with spectacular adventures and scenery, and shaped as a didactic narrative of national unification.

In temporal terms, for the soldiers, trench warfare coincides with the mute *limbo* between a past life and a future death (even in the case of survivors), whereas, for public opinion, war – as Clemente Rebora puts it in 1917 – is “*oramai un affare liquidato*” (“by now it is a done deal”; qtd. in Cortellessa 14). Its official narration remains suspended between the past – in the backwards-looking repetition, especially after Caporetto, of pre-war templates of fall/rebirth and of draft-dodgers/combatants (echoing the old hawks/doves scheme) – and the future, in the forward-looking attempts by publishers and intellectuals to conjecture about its aftermath and by the government (with the establishment in 1916 of the Ufficio Storiografico per la Mobilitazione for the systematic collection of personal files and biographies) to construct its unambiguous memory for posterity.

In the aftermath of war, Fascism and its reassertion of a rigid social order stifled the process of negotiating the conflict’s traumatic effects (an act of containment visually symbolized by the burial of the unknown soldier at the Vittoriano in 1921). At the same time, memory persisted. A familiar postmemory of the events was built as a replica, a *posteriori*, either of the conflict’s pre-established mnemonic template or of its state of division and suspension. Figuratively represented in the recurring image of two parallel streams of soldiers, going to and from the front, mumbling vaguely about the war,<sup>15</sup> the tangency of the two conflicting narratives of the war hence does not engender a dialogue but rather ends up in a failed communication. In the post-war twilight between (as in Eliot’s *Waste Land*) the “burial of the dead” and the brutal start of a new life (making April, as in the poem, the “cruellest month”), the veterans’ rhetoric remains that of a mutilated silence (an unspeakable life-in-death, an ongoing search, an indirect language),<sup>16</sup> whereas the civilians’ rhetoric, in line with the ideal of reconstruction (of ruins, of the *gueules cassées*, of psychological traumas), revolves instead around repetition and exhibition. This rhetoric of repetition – of interpretative patterns (the myths of redeeming violence, of social order against the rallying masses), of long lists of names of dead soldiers on the walls of Italian *piazze*, of visual representation (in the repeated image of pre-war portraits), of memories (in the serial production of war anthologies and diaries)<sup>17</sup> – contributes, along with the construction of the *sacrari*, to the marmorization of the remembrance. It also obeys a double logic: of ceaselessly exhibiting the façade of one’s own participation in the war and of containing/concealing trauma under an external cover (the frame of a photograph, the volume of a book, or the marble of a monument, or simply a stoic attitude).<sup>18</sup>

### **Writing the Self: Photography and Literature**

Confronted with the inconsistencies present in several interpretations of war-related sources – in general, the limitation of the analysis to verbal material only and, more specifically, the grouping of texts according to criteria of class (as for Isnenghi’s

paternalistic division between “*truppe*” and “*ufficiali*”) or degree of mediation (as for Bartoletti’s artificial separation between *una tantum* writers and professional ones)<sup>19</sup> – the above-mentioned rhetorical and chronological premises serve two purposes. First, they combine various analytical approaches: a top-down state-centred study (Anderson; Hobsbawm), a bottom-up reconstruction of social agencies of mourning (Winter), and a scrutiny of oral history (Portelli). Second, they expand the focus on war memory to non-literary sources. In studying the interaction between the productive fruition of each object (in its capacity to create symbolic and mental values) and the written *memorialistica*, this analysis provides a broader anthropological perspective on the construction of war memory, centred on Simmel’s categories of homologation and difference in his 1903 essay “Metropolis and Mental Life.” Within this horizon, every war-related source (verbal, visual, objects) constitutes a point of intersection (always changing according to the position of observation) between a local/personal and a global/collective memory, as well as a site (with a specific individual/standardized rhetoric) where a dialectic process of cultural negotiation continuously takes place.

In the context of this expanded background of investigation, a more detailed focus on private photographs represents an invaluable tool for understanding the process of creation of war memory. Their capacity to speak a language other than that of the written texts (diaries, letters, memoirs) illuminates a peculiar coexistence in them of public and private, document and fiction, standardization and singularity. The great epistemological value of private photography thus lies in its positioning. In the context of the general sources (objects, monuments, visuals, oral testimonies) or of the written memories of war (newspapers, books, postcards, pictures), private photography locates itself indeed in the “*zona intermedia*” (“intermediate zone”; Bollati, “Note” 5), where the two separate narratives of repetition and silence, written and oral, public and private representation coexist and intersect. A private photographic source constitutes indeed both a public “*écriture de soi*” (“writing of the self”; Lacaille 14) – at the intersection between the “uni-forming” rhetoric of the industrial war and each individual’s specificity – and a silent fictional language, giving birth to a dynamic epistemology. In autobiographic genres of the portraits in uniform and the photo-diaries, photographic sources highlight a specific interstice of knowledge of the war itself, thanks to their oxymoronic quality of photography’s presence, both exposing a private-made-public (i.e., transformed into a collective narration) and unveiling a private-made-hidden (a singularity that re-emerges within a standardized memory).

A similar double dynamic can be traced in Alvaro’s *Vent’anni* and Palazzeschi’s *Due imperi mancati*. A comparison with these literary works highlights the signifying system at work in the visual genres of portrait photography and photo albums. Alvaro describes the public “uni-formation” of the single individuals as they put on military dress – through the image of the “uniforms that equated them all” (69) and of men becoming in them “sex whose every part obeys in the same way, mouths that say the same words, ask the same questions, await the same replies” (66).<sup>20</sup> At the same time, however, he also witnesses how, in the annihilation

produced by such a homologating war, a mysterious force continues to assert his forgotten individual existence (“Anch’io, oggi, sotto il cannone, non pensavo più … domani, quando torna non penserò più, eppure una forza dentro di me, mi dice: rimani, e mi assiste fino all’ultimo” [“I, too, today, under the cannon, did not think any more … tomorrow when it returns, I will not think anymore, and yet a force within me tells me: stay, and assists me until the end”]; 135). Palazzeschi represents such coexistence of an exposed yet hidden dimension of himself in the episode of his first day of military life, in which he describes how he lined up naked, like all the other soldiers, in the barracks’ courtyard. By addressing a fellow comrade, naked like him, with the ambivalent “*ecco, guarda, siamo uguali ora*” (“here, look, we are the same now”; 59), he certainly suggests that his exposed privacy makes him undifferentiated from all the others but also, as we can deduce from his deliberately contrastive use of irony, that the soldiers’ apparent uniformity is instead making visible their unnoticed most personal differences. What fiction unveils temporally, photography portrays synthetically in a flash. In this way, photographic sources make immediately available two cognitive advantages: first, they visually unveil the standardized character of many of the written sources (implicitly questioning their status as candid records) and, second, they trace, even in the most bureaucratic or celebratory memory, the emergence of a latent individual epistemology.

The first dynamic of private made public is readily apparent. In a war so powerfully dominated by “universal rules of standardization, rationalization and accentuation of uniformity” (Gibelli, *Nefaste meraviglie* 551), so unanimously mediated as an adventure tale, and so dreadfully marked by the sequences of deaths (resembling industrial production statistics), even the apparently intimate and candid narration of a photograph emerges, in its public dimension, as a necessarily uniform communicative language, propelled by the urgent need to “fix the images of this unseen war, surpassing any contemporary’s imagination, on a stable support” (Lacaille 14).

The second dynamic of private made hidden presents a more complex situation. In a collective war, where the writing of an image or a text serves the purpose of both laying claim to and alienating the self – producing the “advent of oneself as other, a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity” (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 12) – photography in particular sheds light on the silent language of the “*viventi ammutoliti*” (“speechless living”; Sbarbaro 67), who are “neither living nor dead” (Eliot, *Waste Land* vv. 39–40), as well as on their intimate work of dealing with trauma. Palazzeschi offers a literary representation of this personal memory work that emerges above the conflict’s standardization, in *Due imperi mancati*, through the figure of the poet himself – in charge of the “*eredità militari*” (“military inheritances”; 118) in Tivoli – who rummages through the remaining fragments of the fallen soldiers’ lives, in order to decipher, beyond any rhetoric, the life embedded in those miserable things<sup>21</sup> and to create and tell from them an unknown story, an untold fiction of the war (“*una pietosa bugia*” [“white lie”] or “*un’informazione che potesse essere un*

*sorsò di calma*" ["information that might offer a sip of peace"]; 119) for the relatives of the dead soldiers.

### The Social Practice of Photography

In order to understand the relevance of private photographic images during the First World War in Italy, it is useful to reflect upon the massive diffusion in those very years of the social practice of photography. The growing habit of individual photography – before, during, and after the war – sparks three different trends: of the portrait in uniform; of the photographic diary; and of "*fotoceramica*" – namely, the transposition onto ceramic of a soldier's portrait for his tombstone.

In the years before the war, and going back as far as the 1880s, the tradition of photo-portraiture was very lively in Italy. Beside the honorific functions of the cartes de visites and cabinet card portraits, photography was largely adopted as a tool for judiciary and political evidence (thanks to its capacity for authentication and unambiguous identity assessment) and as an instrument for scientific and anthropological research (e.g., in Lombroso's cataloguing of criminals' physiognomy or in his ethnographic collections of "generic 'inhabitants,' members of a class or of a social category, of different artists and craftsmen, of citizens from a particular city, province, or region"; Bollati, "Note" 37). These cultural uses of photography influenced and inflected the pre-war habit of photographing soldiers in uniform, creating a genre of the last picture before departing for the front that served the two traditional purposes of assessing an identity and of creating a graphic census of the nation. In the first sense, the *Comando Supremo* exploited photography's "magical value" (Benjamin, "Little History" 236) by transforming the diffuse social practice of photo-portraiture (which emphasized a person's rite of passage into adulthood) into a "potent means ... of gaining control" (Sontag, *On Photography* 155) over the subjects represented. It also established the practice as an effective tool for the census of the male population and for preventing desertion.<sup>22</sup> In the second sense, faced with the impelling need for a univocal representation of the nation at war, the filing of these standardized portraits constituted a decisive anthropological element in the process of "uni-forming" Italians: by determining, as Bollati suggests, the "correct vision" ("Note" 28) of "the figure of itself that the nation wanted to offer (or impose)" ("Note" 17) and by safeguarding the "ideological unity" ("Note" 28) of the country at war. The checklist for each personal file at the archive of the *Ufficio storiografico di mobilitazione generale* (containing, for each soldier, dead or alive, "a) l'atto di nascita b) l'atto di morte c) il ritratto d) cenni biografici con l'aggiunta, eventualmente, di lettere manoscritte o stampate e di altre memorie" [a] birth certificate b) death certificate c) portrait d) biographical notes with the possible addition of handwritten or printed letters or other memoirs; in Caffarena 119]), clearly shows how these pictures were meant to be assembled, like a mosaic, as the "tiles of an extended national monument" (Caffarena 119), aimed at offering a larger "picture of Italy at war" (Bracco 15).

With the war, the practice of individual photography boomed, especially among officers and middle-class soldiers, in conjunction with the increased production and rapid diffusion of cameras. Equalling the success of postcards (“freely distributed in the measure of three per week to every enlisted soldier”; Delbello 291), photography became the principal medium of communication between the front and territorial Italy, thanks to its acknowledged capacity to certify a person’s presence and to offer a physical support for remembrance. Even if the *Comando Supremo* formally prohibited “*fare fotografie, schizzi, rilievi, in zona di guerra a chi non sia specialmente autorizzato*” (“to take photographs, sketches, topographical notes, in war zone for everybody who is not explicitly authorized”; 146)<sup>23</sup> – a ban, by the way, that was “largely ignored, with the very complicity of the ranking officers” (Fabi “La fotografia nel conflitto”) – amateur photography spread across all fronts and gave rise, almost by default, to the habit of collecting war pictures in albums and photo-diaries. The common individual practice of storing war images, as if they were entries of a written diary or pieces of a narration (like that of a tourist trip; Figures 5.1 and 5.2),<sup>24</sup> was so widespread that still today these private sources “overcome, in quality and interpretative potential, the available official military documentation produced by the corps’ special units” (Fabi).

In the immediate aftermath of war, the evidence of the high number of deaths and, as a consequence, the need for commemorative images, provided the input for the parallel development and diffusion of the practice of photo-reproduction “of the dead soldiers’ portrait on ceramic ovals for their tombstone” (Favarro) and of the habit of publishing small biographies (from ten to a hundred pages long) or celebratory booklets for the remembrance of a deceased friend or relative. The post-war rise of such a biographical-necrological genre – structurally defined by the combination of photo-reproductions of the late soldier’s portrait in uniform (often chosen as the cover of these booklets) and the reverential narrations of his heroic life and martyrdom – constitutes a peculiarly Italian case.<sup>25</sup> This is because of the number of titles (2,300 in Dolci and Janz’s catalogue), the statistical evidence of non-public funding (coming, in almost 75% of cases, from private individuals acquainted with the deceased), and, most importantly, the particular mechanism of creation, via these booklets, of a fictional memory a posteriori of the war, which could, at the same time, “compensate for a missing funeral” (Janz and Dolci 28), and refashion the soldier’s death, often meaningless and brutal, through the narration of a praiseworthy life or “a clean beautiful death” (Janz and Dolci 30). The focus on this peculiar genre reveals the emergence of a particular memory, which turns familial grief into national pride, private pain into public exhibition, existential despair into political expediency. Such a public exposition (visual and verbal) of private sorrow certifies the existence of a common unofficial practice of processing the trauma of war and yet constitutes, at the same time, as Janz and Dolci suggest, a subtle form of “censorship and taming of mourning itself” (44).



**Figure 5.1** A soldier posing like a tourist in an exotic destination in front of the conflict's most spectacular scenes. Gelatin silver prints from photograph album. Courtesy of Alberto Pedroli.



Ponte sull'Osouyo a Sagrado

Figure 5.2 A soldier posing like a tourist in an exotic destination in front of the conflict's most spectacular scenes. Gelatin silver print from photograph album. Courtesy of Alberto Pedroli.

With the passing of time and the distancing of war remembrances, the individual practice of photo-viewing (on albums and tombstones) transforms private photographs into real sites (or mental maps) of memory. For a coeval viewer, a personal photograph perpetuates the image of a past life (containing, in its frame, the re-emerging ghosts of war) and uninterruptedly opens up an endless dialectic between its fragmentary dimension and the global conflict. For us, observers almost a century later, this dialectic between the present of the observation and the past remains intact, thanks to the double temporal nature of photography, which reproduces, with a simultaneous contingency – the sign (as with handwriting) of a *there is/there was* – also the *duration* of a distant present, one that still interrogates and provokes us to reconstruct the hidden link connecting those individual stories to the totality of war memory.

### **Photographic Repertoires: Portraits and Photo-Diaries**

The analysis of the war's private photographic material positions us at the very border between individual and masses, the sense of participation and that of alienation, written and mute language. The specificity of the Italian visual repertoire of war opens a new chapter in the study of photography in Italy and also offers a new insight into the study of war memory more generally, not only because of the way amateur collections provide an “indispensable integration and counterpoint to the often too controlled official images” (Fabi) or a less reticent snapshot of the crude reality of the conflict but above all for their “capacity of dialogue and comparison with the other sources available to the historian: the whole iconography produced by the conflict, the official military sources, the press and *memorialistica*, diaries, letters and memoirs by soldiers and civilians, war cartography and so on” (Fabi). In proposing a reading of this amateur material (mostly derived from the publication of private archives during the last decades), I intend to focus now, through the lens of the aforementioned categories of homologation and difference, on two distinct typologies of photographs: the photo-portraits taken before departure and the photo-diaries from the front.

At a first glance, the pictures under consideration (similarly to the autobiographical writings of the self and of war) appear to “speak” a rather standardized and almost predetermined language, analogous to that of postcards: either left blank, with only the date and signature (and the stamp “verified for censorship”) to simply confirm one’s existence, or written, for the illiterate, by someone else.<sup>26</sup> The portraits of the soldiers (Figures 5.3–5.6) are rather conventional and follow a repetitive pattern.

The pose of the servicemen is standard: they are all serene, with their feet often crossed and their hands either relaxed sideways or leaning on a support, as a persisting trace of the old pre-Risorgimento style and of “the period when, because of the long exposure time, subjects had to be given supports so that they would remain fixed in place” (Benjamin, “Little History” 282). The pictorial background is clichéd,

composed by blossoming gardens or essential pieces of furniture (a column, a chair, a table) or the display of modernity's trendy new objects (like cigarettes) and machines (like an airplane, car, or motorcycle, not yet readily accessible to the larger public; Figures 5.7 and 5.8).

The visual impact of these portraits in uniform – in parallel with the common scene of the *vestizione* in many war memoirs – is that of a perfect uniformity, ratifying both the separation of the self from the image (alienation) and the completed symbolic process of national unification. The repetitive, fixed pattern of these portraits constructs a unary space, lacking *punctum* (i.e., that “subtle beyond” offering a little “infra-knowledge” about the personal reality of the represented individual; Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 30) and the element of time itself. The visual conventions of these stereotypical fictions – confirmed by analogy in the similar photo-portraits of women and children destined for their male counterpart at the front – give representational form to the impelling need to support memory and to certify candidly one’s own identity to a relative or a friend. The photo-diaries from the front, analogously, in their overlapping of visual and verbal expression (Figures 5.9 and 5.10), use a rather standardized language.

Their implicit goal is that of satisfying a need for immediacy and for overcoming, through candid pictures of the war (or candid words, as in the case of written diaries), the sense of saturation of the territorial rearguard, “the impression that people talk too much about war and always in the same way” (Brunetta 19).<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, rarely does the photographic private autobiography of the war get to the line of fire and even more rarely does it get to the point of visually documenting (or resentfully denouncing)<sup>28</sup> the crude violence of the conflict. The war narrated by these photo-diaries is therefore the war immediately behind the lines, suspended over an immobile daily life, in parenthesis between the military and civil state. The photographic albums from the front are thus assembled from a number of collected and serialized pictures – probably distributed among the soldiers and later inserted in a diary as pieces of a personal narrative. These standard images usually show particular events (the visit of the king to the soldiers, or of D’Annunzio, or the adoption of an orphan by the brigade; Figure 5.11) and conventional representations of free time in the *retrovia* (jokes, curious deeds, encounters with local women, or daily activities, such as eating, attending mass, shaving, etc.; Figures 5.12–5.14). The reason for this immobile representation of a “normal” war (and for the visual abstinence from its drama) lies in the desire to find in the *retrovia* a therapeutic space of leisure, freed from the daily vicinity of death, which could give “men the feeling of still being human even within these inhuman conditions” (Lacaille 15).<sup>29</sup>

Although highly conventional – both in the case of the portraits and in the albums from the front – these representations of the conflict contain, under closer inspection, some important singular aspects. In observing these pictures, indeed, not only are we transported to the border between life and death (as we are able to see, as Paolo Monelli does in the eyes of a soldier returning from the front, “che cosa vi segni l’averne indulgiato ai confini della vita, ed esserne ritornati” [“what



Figure 5.3 Quinto Bertozzi. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Biblioteca Malatestiana.



**Figure 5.4** Cesare Casadei. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Biblioteca Malatestiana.



Figure 5.5 Pietro Moschini. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Biblioteca Malatestiana.



**Figure 5.6** Salvatore Brunazzi. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of Biblioteca Malatestiana.



Figure 5.7 Giovanni Gervasini. Gelatin silver print. In Prando.



Figure 5.8 L. Mancini. Gelatin silver print. In Mancini.



Figure 5.9 In the pages of a photo-diary, verbal and visual narration of the war, private pictures, and newspaper clippings are combined. From the album of Ottorino Cangini.



Figure 5.10 In the pages of a photo-diary, verbal and visual narration of the war, private pictures, and newspaper clippings are combined. From the album of Ottorino Cangini.



**Figure 5.11** Official pictures, like the popular *Il figlio del reggimento*, were inserted in photo albums as part of a personal narrative. Gelatin silver print. From the album of Ottorino Cangini.

having lingered on the borders of life, and having returned from there shows you"; 3]) but we are also brought to the point where an invisible individual history cumulatively informs a collective history. If we look at the portraits, the evidence of each soldier's face marks the indelible sign of a personal unique specificity. As we can see in the model of the "last picture" – with the relatives already dressed in mourning; alone and in uniform (for the sake of remembrance at home or for the tombstone ceramic); or with comrades or hospital fellows (for the sake of tracking them down after the war) – the facial effigy, like the personal name, constitutes the only possibility of individual existence when confronted with the annihilation of the war.

At the border between the war's overstimulation and the struggle for an individual existence (as in Simmel's description of urban life), one photographs (or writes), therefore, in order to be, in order to exist. The repetition of names in long lists in the public sphere and the jealous private conservation of these pictures (handed down

from generation to generation until our present), or the storing of names in personal memories (as in Palazzeschi's search for his fellows: "Salzano, Di Donato, Cerrone, Sperandeo, Zimei ... dove siete? I vostri nomi sono ancora vivi nella mia mente e nel mio cuore, come i vostri occhi e il vostro sorriso" ["Salzano, Di Donato, Cerrone, Sperandeo, Zimei ... where are you? Your names are still alive in my memory and in my heart, like your eyes and your smiles"]; 84), document how these images represented real relics, symbolizing the ideal continuation of a soldier's life. Along the same lines, if we look at the photographs from the front, we find there impressed, on paper, the sign of the eyes that took them. This individual gaze conducts us from the massively documented life of the retrovia, emptied of the war's drama, to the less represented and visually censored life beyond the *confine*. In rare cases, private photographers have the courage to pass the frontier (often portrayed, not by chance, as a photographic subject) and to superimpose the camera on their eyes, in the line of fire, in order to depict either the personal perspective on the landscape surrounding one's own trench (Figure 5.15) or the crude materiality of war (dirt, wounds, mutilation, corpses; Figure 5.16).

This limited patrimony of individual witnesses to the atrocity of the warfront, which reveals the drama missing in the retrovia's photo-narrations, assumes a different cultural relevance in the light of Italy's post-war resistance to the publication of images openly representing destruction, violence, and death.

As emerges from the case of the publication in 1924 of *War Against War* by Ernst Friedrich (in German, English, French, and Hungarian, and significantly not in Italian), the disquieting images of war surface in other European countries (for the purpose of deterring men from repeating this tragedy in the future) but remain generally concealed in Italy. The Italian resistance to the visual representation of a traumatic war (in the abolition of violence from the public sphere and in the general avoidance of death and ruins in private photography) contributed to the silent public repression (under the façade of an over-repeated narrative) of a latent ghost of war and yet, at the same time, to the constant and ongoing development of the conflict's subterranean memory.

### The Latent Knowledge of War

This introductory overview of such an immense repertoire of private photography, rather than trying to exhaust or categorize the richness of material that is yet to be discovered, aims at proposing a methodological shift in the traditional analysis of the role photography played during the war by moving away from questions of censorship or propaganda to focus on the alternative knowledge that the production and use of these photographs offers. The study of amateur war photography, in addition to providing contextual clarifications to the *corpus* of textual memoirs through their productive dialogue with other historical sources, gives us a valuable tool for a broader interpretation of Italy's cultural history (at the very point where the oral and private repertoire of the conflict overlaps with



**Figure 5.12** Typical representations of the *retrovia* include daily activities like shaving. Gelatin silver print mounted on card. Courtesy of Alberto Pedroli.



**Figure 5.13** Typical representations of the *retrovia* include daily activities like attending mass. Gelatin silver print mounted on card. Courtesy of Alberto Pedroli.



La solennità in guerra - Un banchetto a San Lorenzo di Melega - Boni - Rouchetti - Serutti - Poiristis - Botta - un i più cari amici di guerra -

Figure 5.14 Typical representations of the *retrovia* include daily activities like eating in company. Gelatin silver prints mounted on card. Courtesy of Alberto Pedrioli.

its social and political account) and for the exploration of the First World War's unconscious knowledge.

In offering these initial considerations on the hermeneutic significance of the war's archival material, however, some relevant questions remain open for further discussion. What *episteme* do these pictures produce within domestic intimacy? How does



**Figure 5.15** The juxtaposition of eye and camera: the view from the trench. Gelatin silver print. In *Ricordi di guerra*.

this visual material make manifest the subtle penetration of state power into the individual sphere? Where is the exact border between a personal memory (presumably “pure”) and a collective one which constantly violates the knowledge each one has of himself, and violently imposes, by force of repetition, a “counter-memory” (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 91) upon other versions of events? To what extent does this marginal repertoire characterize itself as a point of resistance to this very power through its language of silence and poetic imagination?

The *presente!* that all these pictures infinitely replicate (as it is monumentally displayed on the marble stairs of the Redipuglia war shrine; [Figure 5.17](#)) constitutes the threshold between two concomitant typologies of memory around the same represented subjects: one coming from the bright, repeated façade of a *camera lucida* (similar to the eye-blinding rhetoric of candid authenticity in war memoirs) and the other coming from the hidden development of a *camera obscura* (similar to the silent and ever-changing elaboration of variables in oral or choral storytelling, or in poetic and fictional invention).

The first kind of memory, that of a *camera lucida*, starts from the fragmentary record of an image, or a piece of writing, and, by replicating ad infinitum the presence



Figure 5.16 Disquieting images of soldiers' bodies left unburied. Gelatin silver print. In Persegati.

of this relic (in the unquestionable immediacy of its physical support), ends up deferring its content of remembrance to the “strange web of time and space” (Benjamin, “Little History” 285) at a far distance. Paradoxically, the same instrument meant to record and assess authentic evidence, by infinitely repeating its façade – or, in Freudian terms, by its compulsion to repeat a trauma with the same scheme, in memory or in writing – works instead as a protective shield for the custody and the distancing of the intolerable in memory. This happens initially by locking up an immutable, uniform version of remembrance and subsequently by building upon it



Figure 5.17 The military shrine of Redipuglia. Colour photograph. Wikicommons.

the aura of a myth. Initially, the repeated presence of photography works to remove war's uncanny in three ways. First, it contains pain within the frame of a picture or of a narrative scheme (made up, in photo albums and diaries, of serial episodes: the call to serve, life in the barracks, the expectation of war, the train trip to the front, life behind the lines, the arrival at the front). Second, it anesthetizes a re-emerging trauma through the reconversion of war remnants into souvenirs or living-room furnishings (Figure 5.18) and the banalization of shock (in order "to domesticate it, normalize it, and, in time, absolve it"; McQuire 153). Third, it blinds any other possible memory in a "general amnesia" (McQuire 130) through the crystallization of a premade representation.

Subsequently, the repeated presence of photography works, through its standardized lack of punctum and time, to remove the contingent present of war to a mental parenthetical elsewhere, temporally and spatially distant from daily life. The repetition of the initial fiction (of the pose in the photo-portraits, of the autobiographical self-fashioning in war memoirs), hence, authenticates a premade memory of the conflict and with time transforms it, paradoxically, into the reality of a myth. The



**Figure 5.18** Remnants of war transformed into daily objects: a clock. Colour photograph. In Fabi "La guerra in salotto."

photographs in uniform, like the photo-diaries, can therefore be interpreted as pre-made templates for a future memory of war, purified of violence and already filled with the aura of legend.

The second kind of memory is that of a camera obscura "*dell'immaginazione, della fantasia, dell'inconscio, dell'io trascendentale*" (of the imagination, of the

fantasy, of the unconscious, of the transcendental I; Mazzucco 24). In the dialectic between the subject's presence as image (in the living-room frame or in the album) and his physical or temporal absence, the photographic record becomes the site of the darkroom, where the poetic development of memory (*mythopoiesis*) and the fictional reprocessing of trauma constantly take place. In parallel with oral tradition, choral repertoire, and poetic rewriting (Ungaretti, Montale, Sbarbaro, Rebora), as well as very few memoirs of invention regarding the war (Palazzeschi's *Due imperi mancati*, Borgese's *Rubè*, Alvaro's *Vent'anni*), individual photography embodies the existence of a dynamic memory, constantly reshaping itself, in its simultaneous descent into hell (in the dialogue with the dead) and ascent to an ever-changing present. Although mute and stored in the silence of the domestic walls, the fragmentary, and therefore never absolute, language of these photographic images contains an ever-developing story and embodies the evidence of a fluid space of memory, which maintains itself by means of a continuous reprocessing act (*fictio*). Through this site of photography, at the same time a ruin and a magic mirror, the observer can, on the one hand, dialogue with a living past, track it down and develop it into an individual story, and, on the other, project his or her hallucinations in order to cure a trauma or screen the beloved (as often happened during the projection of many war movies) or those who were forgotten, in order to call or search for them by name.

In conclusion, the value of this study of private war photography consists in the initial exploration of this unfathomable language of *mythopoiesis*, which escapes the strict web of official memory and the logic of written documentarism. The evidence of the latent epistemology that these visual sources produce (through their impossible dialogue with the hidden ghosts of war and their constant reinvention of memory in endless variables) opens up a new dynamic hermeneutical space, which sheds light on other similar sources (oral and choral tradition, poetic and fictional rewritings) and invites us, at the same time, to a renewed interpretation of the war's cultural history in Italy. The existence of this silent hermeneutical space not only makes visible what Paul Fussell defined as the unconscious spectre of the Great War, running throughout the whole twentieth century, but also brings to the surface its subterranean fluid memory, which still informs, as a cultural template, the narration of our present conflicts.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The rhetoric of the fragment is recurrent in coeval literature: from Palazzeschi's column for Lacerba *Spazzatura*, to Boine's *Frantumi*, Sbarbaro's *Trucioli*, and Montale's *rottami* (as in the original title of *Ossi di seppia*).
- <sup>2</sup> In the introduction to his memoir *Trincee*, Carlo Salsa writes: “Penso anch'io oggi che, sulla guerra, si sia scritto e parlato a sazietà ... Si sono udite poi troppe narrazioni ... Siamo giunti così ad un punto di saturazione: l'argomento della guerra è passato agli atti come una pratica sdrucita, e, a riparlarne, c'è da far inorridire le belle signore golose di letteratura alla moda” (“I also think that today, on the war, more than enough

has been written and said ... Too many narratives have been heard ... In this way, we have reached a point of saturation: the topic of war has been filed away as an outworn document, and to bring it up again would only horrify the lovely ladies greedy for fashionable literature”; 15). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the author’s.

- 3 The *topos* of the shipwreck indicates, in war narrations, a lost memory and self, as Alvaro recalls in *Vent'anni*: “Adesso, a distanza, tutto ci appare senza nesso. Siamo come dopo un naufragio, buttati su una spiaggia, e accanto a noi il mare ha deposto a caso gli elementi più disparati che ci accompagnavano nel viaggio” (“Now, from a distance, everything seems unconnected. We are like the shipwrecked, cast onto a beach, and beside us the sea has deposited the disparate objects that were with us on the journey”; 228).
- 4 As described by Monelli in the killing of an enemy: “Questo di stamani, questo si chiama ammazzare, e anche da vecchio rivedrò sempre netto il guizzo del colpito, e l’abbattersi del corpo morto, e me ne resterà l’orrore nella memoria” (“What happened this morning, this is what is called killing, and even as an old man I will always see clearly the start of a shot man, and the fall of the dead body, and the horror of it will remain in my memory”; 157).
- 5 “Nulla mi è rimasto delle voci, degli urli, dei rumori, degli scoppi; come se la scena l’avessi vissuta, immagine vana fra altre immagini vane, sullo schermo di una pellicola muta” (“Nothing has remained with me of the voices, the shouts, the noises, the explosions; as if I had experienced the scene as a useless image among other useless images, on the screen of a silent film”; Monelli 198).
- 6 “Il sentimento della propria identità, di essere una persona e non altro, che rispondeva a un nome, a una memoria, a ricordi, a un passato, si smarriva insensibilmente dietro a una nebbia, e non erano più che elementi di quella scena immobile” (“The feeling of one’s own identity, of being one person and not another, who answered to a name, a memory, a history, a past, was insensibly lost behind a fog, and all that remained were elements of that immobile scene”; Alvaro 211).
- 7 Fussell explains the silence of the veterans, with their impossibility of finding adequate expression of their trauma and with the public’s lack of willingness to listen to an unpleasing version of the war (“We have made *unspeakable* mean *undescribable*: it really means *nasty*”; Fussell 170). Malaparte portrays this dynamic in a veteran coming from the front: “taceva, ché se lo facevano parlar di guerra e se egli diceva la verità – fango, morti, pidocchi, ingiustizie – se diceva che la guerra era difficile e penosa, che molto si doveva sanguinare per prendere Gorizia e Trieste o Trento, che gli austriaci si battevano, e bene, subito gli veniva gettata sulla faccia la parola: *disfattismo*” (“He remained silent, since if they made him talk about war and if he told the truth – mud, deaths, fleas, injustices – if he said that war was difficult and distressing, that a lot of blood had had to be shed to take Gorizia and Trieste or Trento, that the Austrians were fighting, and well, the word “defeatism” was suddenly thrown in his face”; 101).
- 8 In reply to a person’s inquiry, Salsa admits: “mi costrinse a parlare: a parlare di me, del mio passato. Io brancolai tra i miei ricordi con parole sghembe, cercando di trovare un’espressione di cui mi sentivo incapace” (“He made me talk: talk about myself, my past. I fumbled among my memories with oblique words, searching to find a way of expressing myself of which I felt incapable”; 208).

- 9 I borrow the expression from Giuliana Bruno's book *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts*.
- 10 After Gadda's *Diario della prigionia* and Monicelli's *La grande guerra* in the 1950s, the field of First World War memoirs remains lively until the 1980s: with Zanzotto (*IX Ecloghe*, 1962), Morselli (*Contro passato prossimo*, 1975), Marin (*In memoria*, 1978), and Rigoni (*L'anno della vittoria*, 1985).
- 11 Both Pascoli, in *La grande proletaria si è mossa*, and D'Annunzio, in *Canzone d'oltremare* (emphatically closing with the verse: "Italia, alla riscossa, alla riscossa!" ["Italy forward on the foe, forward on the foe!"]), celebrate war as the occasion of the nation's rebirth and as the antidote against the ghost its past defeats (Lissa, Dogali, Adua) or the evils of *Giolittismo*.
- 12 Although Gibelli (2005) states that soldiers often visited schools and received letters from students, the common perception of war was that of a rigid separation of fronts – as appears in the citizens' sense of boredom and information-saturation regarding the events, and in the veterans' awareness of the abyss ("Un abisso ci separa, che mai nessuna comunione di fede, nessuna comunanza d'interessi ricolmerà" ["An abyss separates us, that no communion of faith, no commonality of interests will ever bridge"; Monelli 190]) – between the internal rhetoric ("Dicono: i nostri cari soldatini e ci trattano da bambini ... sembra che lo facciamo per dare loro delle emozioni" ["They say: our dear little soldiers and they treat us like children ... it seems that we do it to so that they can feel something"; Alvaro 117]) and the world of the front ("Qui non c'è la guerra: la guerra è lassù, per noi, nell'altro mondo: e qui cosa ne sanno?" ["Here there is no war: the war is up there, for us, in the other world: and here what do they know about it?"; Salsa 200]). Palazzeschi visualizes the space between the two worlds in the description of his furlough from his service in Florence to Bologna ("Mi tornarono alla mente le vicende della caserma e mi parvero tanto lontane, lontane da me come non mi avessero mai appartenuto, eppure soltanto pochi chilometri e una notte mi separavano da esse" ["I recalled the events of the barracks and they seemed so distant, as distant from me as though they had never been a part of me, and yet only a few kilometers and a night separated me from them"; 94]).
- 13 Cortellessa stresses the importance of the recurring metaphor of the parenthesis in describing the condition of war: in Saba's *Parentesi militare* and in Faccioli's play *La parentesi* (1916), as well as in Palazzeschi's chapter "Tra parentesi" in *Due imperi mancati* and, on the British front, in David Jones's book *In Parenthesis*.
- 14 The perception of the trench as an infernal site, where night, smoke, screams, and bombings hyperstimulate the senses and separate the self from the body (as for Dante's damned), is summed up by Rebora's "si spettra" ("one becomes spectral"; "Stralcio"; 219) and by his representation of the body as a thing ("la cosa cade recisa dal tempo" ["the thing falls, severed from time"; "Coro a bocca chiusa"; 225]).
- 15 Alvaro describes the scene of the encounter: "Passò poco dopo un autocarro, con uomini a bordo, sdraiati. 'Come è andata?' 'Chi lo sa?' rispose una voce. Fabio riconobbe le mostrine del suo stesso reggimento: 'È uno dei nostri battaglioni che ha fatto l'azione.' L'autocarro scomparve; quegli uomini seduti guardavano di lontano, con occhi fissi. Alla svolta uno fece un vago cenno con la mano" ("A little later a truck

with men stretched out on board came by. ‘How did it go?’ ‘Who knows?’ replied a voice. Fabio recognized the insignia of his own regiment: ‘It’s one of our battalions that was in action.’ The truck disappeared; those seated men looked into the distance, their eyes fixed. At the turn-off, one of them made a vague hand gesture”; 92). The same scene appears analogously in Salsa: ““*Che novità ci sono?*” *L’interrogato fa un gesto vago: pare non sappia come rispondere. Poi sembra risolversi per una via intermedia. ‘Brutte’.* ‘Puoi dire’. ‘Eh, sono pasticci’. ‘Lo sappiamo’ ‘Non sapete nulla’... ‘Ci immaginiamo’ ‘Non si può immaginare. Bisogna vedere. Non si può dire: bisogna vedere’” (““What news is there?” The man questioned makes a vague gesture: he seems not to know how to reply. Then he seems to decide on a middle ground. ‘Bad news.’ ‘You don’t say.’ ‘Eh, it’s a mess.’ ‘We know.’ ‘You don’t know anything.’ ... ‘We imagine.’ ‘You can’t imagine. You have to see. You can’t say: you have to see””; 22).

- <sup>16</sup> Ungaretti’s description of his *Ritorno* as a “*pallido involucro*” (“pale shell”), or an “*arido manto*” (“arid mantle”; 91), parallels Monelli’s representation of the veteran’s “*inutile vita ... nemmeno più tesa verso un futuro che non si osa indagare, che penzola monotonamente aggrappata a ricordi immutabili ed esasperanti*” (“useless life ... no longer even aimed toward a future one dares not think about, that dangles monotonously, clinging to unchanging and maddening memories”; 175) and Salsa’s picture of a veteran from Carso, who “*pare curvato così da un pensiero enorme: adocchia a quando a quando obliquamente, senza sorridere del nostro riso, senza animarsi mai, senza intendere; torna dalla trincea, dall’oscuro mondo di laggiù*” (“seems bowed down by a huge thought: he glances obliquely from time to time, without smiling at our laughter, without animation, without understanding: he returns from the trenches, from the dark world down there”; 21).
- <sup>17</sup> Among the most important anthologies dedicated to the Great War are Prezzolini’s *Tutta la guerra: antologia del popolo italiano sul fronte e nel paese* (1921), Volpè’s *L’Italia in cammino* (1927), Omodeo’s *Momenti della vita di guerra: dai diari e dalle lettere dei caduti* (1934), and Formigari’s *La letteratura di guerra in Italia* (1935).
- <sup>18</sup> Hiding mourning under a façade of patriotism and titanic resistance is the theme of Pirandello’s novella *Quando si comprende* (1919), describing a proud father of a fallen soldier bursting into tears at the realization of the harsh reality of his son’s death. In the same way, Ada Negri’s short story *Mater Admirabilis* (1917) presents the alienated figure of a stoic mother mechanically hiding/confessing that, after her son’s death, “*nulla nella sua vita è mutato. Solo, il suo figliolo è morto*” (“nothing in her life has changed. Only, her boy is dead”; 262).
- <sup>19</sup> Isnenghi’s division between *ufficiali* and *truppe* (officers and troops) in *Il mito della grande guerra* perpetuates the opposing hermeneutics between written narration (of an active urban bourgeoisie) and silence (of the passive masses of workers/peasants). Bartoletti’s classification, based on degrees of mediation and on a distinction between narratives of the self and narratives of reportage, falls into the temptation of a structuralist reduction of the war narration.
- <sup>20</sup> “uniformi che li eguagliavano”; “sesso che ubbidisce in ogni parte allo stesso modo, bocche che dicono le stesse parole, fanno le stesse domande, aspettano le stesse risposte.”

- <sup>21</sup> “Le cassette, o dei semplici sacchetti che contenevano le cose appartenute ai militari defunti. Poca biancheria, il portafoglio con le lettere della madre, della fidanzata, della moglie, una lettera già francata e chiusa e non spedita, più il rasoio e il pennello, una scatoletta di cipria o un blocco di magnese, un pezzetto di sapone” (“The boxes or simple bags that contained the belongings of the dead soldiers. Some underwear, the wallet with letters from their mother, girlfriend, wife, a letter already stamped and sealed and not sent, the razor and brush, a little box of powder and a block of magnesium, a piece of soap”; Palazzeschi 118).
- <sup>22</sup> The same kind of controlling dynamic develops during the war years, with the organization of a “prostitutional system” (Franzina 221) of legal brothels, sponsored by Cadorna as “forms of hygienic vigilance and social control over prostitutes and their clients in uniform” (170).
- <sup>23</sup> Parte II, capo I, *Prescrizioni per il servizio fotografico e cinematografico*, punto 26 (Part II, heading I, Prescriptions for the photographic and cinematographic service) in Renzi *Il cinematografo al campo*.
- <sup>24</sup> “The middle-class soldiers bring to the front (on every front) their cameras, in no different way than what they would do in the occasion of a long, adventure-filled trip” (Fabi, “La guerra nel mirino” 57).
- <sup>25</sup> “In no other society involved in the Great War can we observe a comparable phenomenon. In France and Germany no more than 120 similar publications have been located and neither in England they seem to be frequent” (Janz and Dolci 14).
- <sup>26</sup> On the British front, the Field Service Postcard, which construed this kind of preassembled language made of “infinite replication and utter uniformity,” constituted “the first widespread exemplar of that kind of document which uniquely characterizes the modern world: the *form*” (Fussell 185).
- <sup>27</sup> “Soon enough, people started to realize that the public, bombarded weekly by war images and stories, underwent a rapid process of adaption, addiction and refusal of images which didn’t provide any new information and emotions” (Brunetta 18). One example of this thirst for the new is in the 1917 episode of the “climbing the slopes of Mount Berico by the citizens of Vicenza, for the sake of seeing the war’s line of fire on the Asiago Plateau, as if they were going to watch a fireworks show” (20).
- <sup>28</sup> Such visual memories (as for the letters) operated a systematic “removal of the horrors” (Caffarena 84), erasing any “reference to the violence committed against enemies” or to the “pleasure to kill them” (86).
- <sup>29</sup> Lucio Fabi explains the absence of horror from these pictures as the search by soldiers for “relaxing, albeit not properly peaceful, situations and atmospheres, disconnected from the crude necessity of the conflict and for this reason smoothening and therapeutic” (Fabi). Lacaille explains this absence by considering that “since death was present everywhere, operators therefore photographed life very much” (Lacaille 15).

## **PART THREE**

---

### **Photography and the Acceleration of Modernity: Reality-Commodity-Violence**

*This page intentionally left blank*

## 6 Italian Neo-Realism between Cinema and Photography\*

---

BARBARA GRESPI

No other period in the history of Italian cinema has been so thoroughly analysed as that of neo-realism. This is both because of the intense critical and philological attention paid to its key films and because of the historical importance attributed to the movement as a whole, which was as much revolutionary and utopian as it was multivoiced and multivalent. A crucial period of renewal of forms and subjects in film-making (1945–9),<sup>1</sup> though brief, neo-realism has been investigated from different socio-cultural perspectives and has also elicited archaeological research into the films of the 1930s, aimed at tracing the new style of representation back to its forerunners, directors such as Roberto Rossellini, who bridge the two periods.<sup>2</sup> In fact – and this is the perspective I propose here – the neo-realist gaze seems to be the product of a series of transformations of the visual sphere centred on photography. In particular, it is a gaze that results from that complex process of historical and aesthetic legitimisation of the visual document in the 1930s that initially took place in the United States and northern Europe, and that was only reflected later in the more resistant Italian context. In Italy, documentary photography takes centre stage first as a key tool of mass media communication, and in particular of the newly developing illustrated magazines, and only afterwards as an artistic form. A neo-realist photographic aesthetic does not begin to be discussed until the 1950s, in relation to an anthropological and social current that critics see as strongly inspired by post-war cinema.<sup>3</sup> The diffusion of photographic documents in the Italian illustrated magazines and their increasing ability to reshape the visual sphere, and consequently also the aesthetic horizon of cinema, takes place instead between the 1930s and the 1940s. In those twenty years the exchanges between the two media are therefore multiple and reciprocal, and it is precisely within these intersections that the neo-realist gaze develops.

In attempting to understand the novelty of this gaze, the critical tradition has perhaps attributed too much importance to the Second World War as a watershed event, an agent of the demolition of the visual stereotypes of the Fascist era and a key driver of the search for “real” liberated images. André Bazin reiterates this popular argument (which Jean-Luc Goddard takes up again in the fifth chapter of his *Histoire(s) du cinéma* [1988–98]) in his essay on “Le Réalisme cinématographique et l'école italienne de la Libération,” (1948), republished in Volume 2 of his *What Is Cinema?* There, while recognizing the value of the forerunners of neo-realism, like Mario

Camerini, Alessandro Blasetti, and the early Rossellini, he identifies the war as the factor that thrusts these precursors into a coherent whole. What is more, for Bazin it also adds fundamental traits of originality that in various places he describes as “characteristic of the Italian artistic temperament” (*Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* 318). In widening the discussion to address the photographic phenomenon, the associated critical argument – that is, the strict Italianness of the neo-realist form – also needs to be reformulated more precisely.

Neo-realism is not so much, or not only, a visual invention related to an entirely Italian tradition of reality (going back above all to *verismo*) but also a form of appropriation and translation of documentary models typical of a certain vein of international and especially American photographic journalism. Various studies have addressed the strong impact of American photographic journalism on the Italian cultural context but have only considered cinema in terms of the transference of themes and subjects.<sup>4</sup> And yet there exists a more precise syntony between post-war Italian cinema and American social photography, which is only superficially a question of the forms and patterns through which reality is framed. Fundamentally, it concerns a shared documentary idea: a *documentary epic* that Cesare Zavattini theorizes in his writings and various directors, such as Luchino Visconti, Vittorio De Sica, and Alberto Lattuada, translate into their films.

This conception of the visual document takes shape in the American context in the second half of the 1930s in relation to the work of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the now-legendary government organization whose mission, through the work of about thirty photographers and their director, Roy Stryker, was to supply documentary evidence of the poor rural US living and working conditions that New Deal reformist efforts sought to ameliorate. The FSA operated for eight years (1935–43) and produced a body of about 270,000 photographs, which were intended to sensitize the American people to the conditions of poverty, disadvantage, and neglect of the US rural population. Regardless of the heterogeneity of these photographs, which may differ from or resemble the forms found by Italian neo-realist filmmakers, the great utopian drive behind the work of the team itself had many points of contact with the impetus of neo-realism. What counts is that the FSA produced the first great poverty epic by showing natural and industrial landscapes, and above all severe, larger-than-life portraits of sharecroppers, farm workers, and the homeless, reminiscent of Nadar’s nineteenth-century portraits of the writers of his time. The effect comes from the photographers’ preference for large-format cameras (4-by-5 or 8-by-10 inches), which were generally used inside a studio rather than on location, which was already the domain of the reportage 35 mm camera. This accounts for the photographs being so clear-cut and bright, so monumental, and, at the same time, so profoundly authentic. Their combination of legend and news report, of epic and reportage is also present in neo-realist cinema, in which the document is often placed within symbolic frames – not only visual ones, as we will see, but also, famously, narrative ones. Neo-realist tales are chronicle-based narratives only at a superficial level; indeed, they have a high dramatic quality and sometimes a narrative skeleton with an almost allegorical tone (see Zavattini’s and De Sica’s works, for example). Zavattini, who began his

career as a journalist, seems to have perceived this particular aspect of the films he loved and made when he stated that the increasing prominence in neo-realism of the document, with its dilated time frame, produced a new epic form.<sup>5</sup> Many years later, and perhaps not entirely by chance, Zavattini entrusted a renowned American photographer with the production of a sort of neo-realist *Spoon River Anthology*, the photobook *Un paese* (1955), an intense portrayal of rural Italy shot by Paul Strand, with captions by Zavattini himself. In view of the intersections between cinema and photography, *Un paese* undoubtedly represents the text that brings the movement to its conclusion, while confirming the deep-rooted relationship between American visual culture and neo-realist fiction that may well have been its starting point.

### **The Impact of American Photography on Italy**

Olivier Lugon has recently reiterated the basic distinction between documentary photography and photographic documentation, or rather between an aesthetic of the document and its use for informative ends within a means of mass communication (*Le style documentaire*). In these terms, neo-realism absorbs the American documentary aesthetic in part directly from the works of the master of Stryker's team, the photographer Walker Evans, the "Senior Information Specialist" whose job it was to define the overall approach of the group's work (it was he who would suggest the use of large formats, in contrast with the initial approach of Arthur Rothstein, who set out with a Leica and the idea of simply taking "candid camera" shots). It also absorbs this aesthetic through the mediation of the illustrated magazines that in the United States published the FSA photographs and in Italy imitated them through the work of a number of great photographic journalists. The works of the major American photographers of the time, including those of the FSA, started to appear in magazines such as *Life* and *Look*, established in 1936 and 1937 respectively, which had a significant circulation in Italy and were undoubtedly widely known among Alberto Mondadori's entourage of leftist intellectuals and journalists.<sup>6</sup> However, when the FSA photographers began to send their work to the magazines, they also begin to betray Evans's rigor, adopting a more sentimental and in particular more narrative vein that was more easily amalgamated with the photojournalistic style that *Life* was imposing internationally with the masters of the immortalized moment, such as Alfred Eisenstaedt and Margaret Bourke-White.

Published in the volume *American Photographs* in 1939 on the occasion of the artist's first solo show at MOMA, Evans's photographs entered Italy stealthily, but their impact on the Italian cultural context was powerful. Ennery Taramelli has pieced together a part of the story, identifying three places where this explosive visual material was assimilated: the well-known group of anti-Fascist artists who gathered around the journal *Corrente*, in which Evans's book was reviewed; the photobook *Occhio quadrato* by Alberto Lattuada (1941), which followed the model of *American Photographs*; and the anthology *Americana. Raccolta di narratori dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (1941), edited by Elio Vittorini, who published the majority of Evans's photographs in the book's iconographical appendix.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 6.1** Walker Evans, *Waterfront Warehouses. Louisiana, 1936*. Gelatin silver print. Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection.

On further investigation, it is clear that in each of the strategic places on which Taramelli focuses there is also a point of contact with the world of cinema. Giulia Veronesi, who wrote the enthusiastic review of Evans's work in *Corrente*, invited Italian filmmakers to take inspiration from the American photographer's exemplary gaze and spare, dry realism.<sup>8</sup>

Barren and rigorous, lacking any aesthetic complacency ... Evans' work represents one side of America, uncontaminated by the influence of decadent Europe, the innocent and natural side of America. No skyscrapers or cowboys to be found, Evans looked at simple homes and people (the anonymous faces of Americans of any color). The way their lives are shaped and socially organized is most clearly represented here ... No special technical device, no cuts or special frames, no romantic effects such as blurring and vignette-like subjects to make the photographs more conspicuous. They are but documents. Certainly, this book lacks "humor"; but is full of deep and mindful human concern. Maybe only photography, which of course includes the cinema, allows for the documentation of life in such a measured way. (2)



**Figure 6.2** Alberto Lattuada, *Quadri antichi, copie e stampe esposti all'esterno del negozio di un antiquario*, from *Occhio quadrato* (1941). Gelatin silver print. © Alinari Archives (gift of Lattuada, Florence).

Another member of *Corrente*, the director Alberto Lattuada, acted as a crucial transmitter of pictures from overseas. At the time, Lattuada was poised between cinema and photography, and he explicitly referred to an American model both in his photographic debut with the collection *Occhio quadrato* and later on the film set. Lattuada admitted to having been fascinated by a mysterious American photobook, which taught him

how far “a photo should break away from formal research, from calculated spaces and abstract things” (Berengo Gardin 52). Like Evans, Lattuada searched for the humble and intimate side of Milan, with its popular and suburban areas, its everyday life, its discarded objects, its street activity, and its impoverished domestic interiors.

Yet Lattuada’s is a version of Evans cloaked in nostalgia and romanticism, which failed to arouse the enthusiasm of the future directors of neo-realism: the periodical *Cinema*, the forge of the movement,<sup>9</sup> which published a regular photography feature for amateurs and dealt with artistic photography with a focus strictly limited to the Italian panorama,<sup>10</sup> reviewed Lattuada’s work very unfavourably in 1941:

I cannot see how the material Lattuada looks at with “the eyes of love” is the most suitable, the most exciting, and the richest of human experience. I am suspicious of the Campo de’ Fiori junk dealer’s rusty junk, of those overused tailor’s and barber’s dummies, of that moving, moved, philanthropic nineteenth-century gaze at men living in hovels or dens, at sickly children, and at single cooks and laundrymen. We are reminded, though remotely, of Patini and Nono, of Mancini and of many others, even more modern. All of this betrays the literary origin of the practice that follows Lattuada’s commendable theory. (126–7)

Lattuada would continue to frame spaces of poverty and destruction with one eye on a brutal America (not only the realist one of photography but also the *noir* version of the gangster movie) and the other on a more sentimental and nineteenth-century past. The initial trolley shots of a destroyed Turin in *Il bandito* (The Bandit, 1946) reveal this approach, which is even more evident in the opening of *Il delitto di Giovanni Episcopo* (Flesh Will Surrender, 1947), where the visual enumeration of workshops with craftsmen at work recalls his forays among the junk shops of Milan.

Less well-known than Lattuada’s, but equally in search of a form of immediate realism, is the photographic activity of Luigi Comencini, the other director involved in the *Corrente* movement. In his collection of photographs (one hundred shots dated between 1945 and 1948), he similarly investigates Evans-like subjects, such as deserted landscapes, humble occupations, and urban architecture.<sup>11</sup> But it is above all the writer of the group, Elio Vittorini, who carries out the most significant appropriation of Evans’s images, not by imitating them but rather by publishing them in his own anthology anonymously and accompanied by captions that correspond to a sort of free indirect thought.

The importance of Vittorini’s selection and translation of the anthology *Americana* (1941), which includes stories by William Faulkner, Stephen Crane, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, James Cain, and Erskine Caldwell, is widely recognized. Fewer people know, however, that the volume also contains a large number of images of paintings, films, and especially photographs meant to reconstruct step-by-step US history and mythology. Vittorini did not carry out critical research on American photography but rather used the images as an intellectual, by playing on free association and on the captions, as he had obviously learned from periodicals and especially from Leo Longanesi’s refined experimentation in the journal *Omnibus* (1937–9), which

marks the beginning of the circulation of decontextualized photos.<sup>12</sup> As in *Omnibus*, where the street photographs, the emotional heart of the page, were misrepresented, surrealist-style, by sarcastic and light-hearted captions (“Paris, fall fashion” reads the caption under the photo that shows a man wearing a jacket and a tie, carrying a briefcase, and walking down a boulevard in a gas mask [38, September 1938]), the images in *Americana* are redefined via unusual associations and ironic statements, such as the caption commenting on the bombing of a bridge during the Second World War, which reads “The men need to warm up” (Vittorini 434). There are no credits for Vittorini’s illustrations, separated from their original context and reassembled, regardless of their internal chronology, along the lines of an unconventional historical account. This way, the reader-spectators feel closely related to the images, which they can consider their own, since the author of the images is unknown and the setting cannot be traced back to somewhere precise, far off, and alien. Replying to Pavese, who congratulated him on the success of his anthology, Vittorini subtly points out his friend’s silence about the iconographic section, which he considered to be a fundamental element of his project.

You should have added that my selection of illustrations could have been more brilliant, considering the superb material, available a few years ago, from which I could choose. And do you not find the captions contrived to the point of being ambiguous? It was my main concern and cause of distress for a long time. (*I libri, la città, il mondo* 25 June 1942)

At the time of this exchange, the regime’s emphasis on national self-sufficiency had become more rigid, and the “material” Vittorini hinted at may well have been the American and to some extent the European press, which before then was more easily accessible. Out of the mass of images to be found in fiction, a considerable number of film frames are easily identifiable (a frame from *Metropolis*, in addition to landscapes reminiscent of Ford and frames from Chaplin and Keaton films). Next to the only academic painting (*The Wyndham Sisters*, by John Sargent), there are popular prints and illustrations, and many photos from the major American photographers, from the historical documents of the frontier era to Edward Weston’s photos (the shabby WC in *Golden Circle Mine*, 1939). Vittorini tells of immigration through Lewis Hine’s Ellis Island (*Climbing into America*, 1906) and Alfred Stieglitz’s steerage (*The Steerage*, 1907), images he supposedly took from their respective monographs. To represent the War of Secession, he used *Life*’s historical photo of Lincoln visiting the military camps (Alexander Gardner, 1862).<sup>13</sup> From the same issue of *Life*, he must have also drawn upon the photo-reporter William Vandivert’s photo of rural America.<sup>14</sup> There is also the photo by Johanna (Hansel) Mieth, a *Life* photo-reporter, of young people’s unemployment (*Boys on the Road*, 1936), marked by a sort of surreal estrangement, to which the caption “And where are we now?” “It is not a long way back” only adds, referencing *Towards Los Angeles* by Dorothea Lange (1937; [Figure 6.12](#)), which appeared in an issue of *Look*.



**Figure 6.3** Walker Evans, *Houses. Atlanta, Georgia, 1936*. Gelatin silver print. Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection.

In *Americana*, a significant number of photographs that are hard to identify could belong in terms of style and subject (depression, rural drought, the homeless asleep on shop doorsteps) to the FSA body of work or at least to social realism more broadly. But the real iconographic core of the volume is represented by about thirty photographs by Evans, scattered throughout and mixed with others. From *American Photographs*, Vittorini chose faces of young workers and children, semi-deserted landscapes with a gas pump in the foreground, shop fronts, suburban walls covered in advertising posters, home interiors with scratched walls, and crumpled beds marked with the indentations of bodies.

The concreteness of the humble detail, discovered in all its materiality, is associated with the grandeur of the monument, as if the image were a last-minute substitute – and commemoration – for a reality about to disappear. According to Sontag, Evans seems to express an “impersonal,” “noble,” and “reticent” realism, which is meant to nullify the subject (*On Photography* 1978, 30). This makes it seem as if it were



Figure 6.4 Walker Evans, *Scott's Run mining camps near Morgantown, West Virginia. Domestic interior, 1935*. Gelatin silver print. Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection.

being looked at by an alien, unable to tell the difference between bodies, places, and landscapes, and so lining them up one next to the other. Evans was familiar with the alien gaze, having trained in Europe, in Atget's Parisian architectures and Nadar's portraits. He then came across Paul Strand's alienated, stylized, and frontal photography, which did the rest.<sup>15</sup>

In assembling *Americana*, Vittorini manages to preserve the purity of Evans's gaze, even though he mixes his images with the abovementioned variety of models of photographic journalism, around which he engages in a dialogue with certain directors, as I will demonstrate. Lattuada will do the same thing in cinema, more freely incorporating images from the whole American documentary repertoire. In *Senza pietà* (Without Pity, 1948), in the scene that stages Carla del Poggio's bewilderment at the shoot-out that brings her into contact with an African-American soldier, he seems to recall the Mieth photograph commented on by Vittorini and discussed above.

What is more, Lattuada's interest in the field of illustrated journalism is sealed by his friendship with Federico Patellani (whom I will examine in more detail shortly), the leading exponent of Italian photo-reportage and co-producer of Mario Soldati's *Piccolo mondo antico*, on which Lattuada worked as director's assistant.

### **Italian Photojournalism and Neo-Realist Cinema**

Only with the rise of photographic reportage does Italian photography begin to be in tune with international visual culture, experimenting with freer methods of representation far from the calligraphic and pictorial approaches of the Fascist era. This occurs precisely during the 1940s, when "straight" photography – that is, without any filters or manipulations – had been established for over ten years in the rest of the world and was seen as a major aesthetic challenge of modern art. The first Italian yearbook, *Fotografia. Prima rassegna dell'attività fotografica in Italia* (1943)<sup>16</sup> laments the dramatic national delay in these terms:

At least three generations of photographers have dealt with the theme of grazing sheep, reflections, sunsets over a lake, ubiquitous nuns with their wind-blown gowns, believing that only subjects of this type were suited to an "artistic" representation. They were not interested in the world, changes in lifestyle and mentality, or in the revolution and then evolution of our culture's ethical and moral values ... We do not want to hear any more of photographs which look like paintings by Rembrandt, portraits which can be mistaken for pastels by Rosalba Carriera, and landscapes after the manner of Tuscan Impressionists ... Let photography be free of intellectual bias, and give us untainted images. (Scopinich 7)

But in fact, alongside images thoroughly immersed in the regime's rhetoric, the *Fotografia* yearbook also published the works of Luigi Veronesi, Albe Steiner, Carlo Mollino, Arturo Bragaglia, Giuseppe Pagano, and Enrico Peressutti, a group of architects and graphic designers that gravitated around the magazines *Domus* and *Casa Bella* or Antonio Boggero's Milanese studio. From these centres, which certainly enjoyed the healthier artistic climate of transalpine and overseas countries, came the first signs of an international photographic imagery, albeit limited to abstract photography. Veronesi's *Fotogemma* was inspired by László Moholy-Nagy, whereas Mollino's *Mondi sommersi* followed Man Ray. Those who leaned towards more vivid subjects, such as the street, work, and country life, were inspired by the photos of

Lewis Hine, the father of American social photography, whose work falls somewhere between formalism and documentarism. Both Pagano's *Muratore*, representing a man in his undershirt and set, in constructivist style, among iron scaffolding, and Peressutti's *Riflessi*, representing two workers suspended in the air, are resonant of Hine's "acrobats" working on the Empire State Building under construction. These debts have never been fully acknowledged, although Mollino does mention them in the important volume he published at the end of the decade, following the abstract and experimental line of Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Man Ray, and Edward Weston, all published in Italy for the first time there.<sup>17</sup> Thus in 1949, not only did Mollino disregard the parallel international documentary line of the 1930s, but he also ignored the contemporary local experimentations, already underway – nearly a decade later than in the cinema – in image-reality. Just a year later, the scene was to be revolutionized by the major works of neo-realist photography. Ethnological studies were carried out to rediscover the underdeveloped areas in the south and north of the country: Franco Pinna's work in Calabria in 1952; Federico Patellani's in Sardinia in 1950; and Tranquillo Casiraghi's in Milan-Torretta, starting in 1950. Other important contributions were the travel photographs of Pietro Donzelli and Enrico Pasquali (which in fact had already started in 1946) and the street sketches of Gianni Berengo Gardin and Roberto Spampinato (1950).<sup>18</sup>

By the time photography became neo-realist, then, film had already won the battle some time earlier through Rossellini's image-facts, as Bazin called them. But if it is true that film had prepared the ground for photography, it is also true that film seems to have drawn its own aesthetics of the document from the use of photography in the illustrated magazines. In these contexts, the phototext – in which events are recounted through horizontal strips of photographs commented on with captions, like a movie on paper – gradually comes to prominence.<sup>19</sup> Much has been written about the influence of cinematic language on the layout of illustrated magazines,<sup>20</sup> and no doubt the great popularity of newsreels encouraged a narrativization of the news in printed form, as though it were a filmed report. But it is also true that the relationship is reversible: while the magazine makes itself into a paper film, film adopts the magazine's direct, documentaristic visual approach.<sup>21</sup> A historical reason for the weak narrative of neo-realist cinema, which Deleuze describes as a crisis of the sensori-motor image and the triumph of the pure gaze, lingering on environments and landscapes (*L'Image-Temps* 12), can be found in the close relationship between post-war cinema and the reportage photography that preceded it, in which the narrative connections are inevitably weak or collapsed, and the focus is on events as witnessed.<sup>22</sup>

For Bazin, more simply, this influence is perceivable in the kind of cinematography that characterizes neo-realist films, as he writes in a page that seems to have gone unnoticed. He maintains that the camera in *Sciuscià* and in *Paisà* "has somewhat of the human quality of a Bell-Howell newsreel camera, a projection of hand and eye, almost a living part of the operator, instantly in tune with his awareness" (*What Is Cinema?* Vol. 2 33). He goes as far as to say that in these films cinematography plays a minor expressive role, which does not depend on the films being shot mostly on location but rather on the fact that "we tend to identify the reportage style with

the grayness of newsreels" (ibid.). It is as if Italian directors consciously aimed at a hybrid of information and narration, a sort of semi-literary cine-journalism.

What is more, the formation of many neo-realist cinematographers in the field of photojournalism or the newsreel should not be underestimated: two out of the three key names of cinematography of the period come from photography and the newsreel. These were, Aldo Tonti, who was a photojournalist before his cinematic debut and his great work on Luchino Visconti's *Ossessione* (Obsession, 1943),<sup>23</sup> and Otello Martelli, director of photography on Rossellini's *Paisà* (Paisan, 1946) and Giuseppe De Santis's *Riso Amaro* (Bitter Rice, 1949), who worked at the Istituto Luce (responsible for newsreels) during the war. The third, Aldo Graziati, cinematographer for Vittorio De Sica's *Umberto D* (1948) and Visconti's *La terra trema* (The Earth Trembles, 1948), represents an exception, a case of the confluence of a strictly photographic culture in film (as well as a reconciliation between set photography and cinematography). Graziati was a professional photographer, though self-taught, who trained by studying the light of the paintings of Caravaggio and doing an apprenticeship in the photographic studios of Paris, first as a portraitist and then primarily as a set photographer.<sup>24</sup> I will later briefly compare Graziati's and Tonti's contribution to Visconti's cinema and the parallel evolution, in terms of documentary, of set photography, a practice that once again demands a close comparison of cinema and photography in those years.

Finally, the illustrated magazines anticipate many neo-realist subjects. Either directly, by giving shape to the subject from the beginning, as in the case of *Sciussià*, which was a photo-text with photographs by Piero Portalupi and commentary by Vittorio De Sica before it was a film,<sup>25</sup> or indirectly, by setting an agenda of themes and examples. One has only to browse through *Tempo*, the weekly edited by Alberto Mondadori (1939–43), to realise that it was, like *Cinema*, a hothouse of neo-realist ideas and trends. It first appeared with Cesare Zavattini as editor (as well as author of stories, serialized novels, and film and theatre reviews) and Carlo Bernari (the novelist whose *Tre operai* paved the way for literary neo-realism) as managing editor, and Salvatore Quasimodo, Gino Visentini, and Alberto Lattuada standing out among its contributors. In the eighth issue (1939), there is a reportage on the back-breaking work of rice weavers: "The water is slimy, and cold in the morning; staying bent is difficult, and until you get used to it, your fingers ache" ("Fanterie della risaia" 12). The De Santis-style images that illustrate it show groups of women during a break. In issue number 149 (1942), there is a feature on the bombing of Paris, illustrated by pictures reminiscent of Rossellini's rubble images. They show ruined and demolished buildings, men and women trudging through the rubble, and children looking out over the destruction. A caption reads, "What are these children doing? After miraculously escaping the disaster, they have come back in the morning with their surviving relatives, and where their home was ..." ("L'assassinio" 19). Finally, in issue number 157 (1942), a pre-Visconti feature on Acitrezza can be found under the title "Il paese dei Malavoglia" (The Village of the Malavoglias), in which Carlo Bernari gave an account of his visit to the Sicilian village, illustrated with some photographs which specifically refer to several passages from Verga's novel.

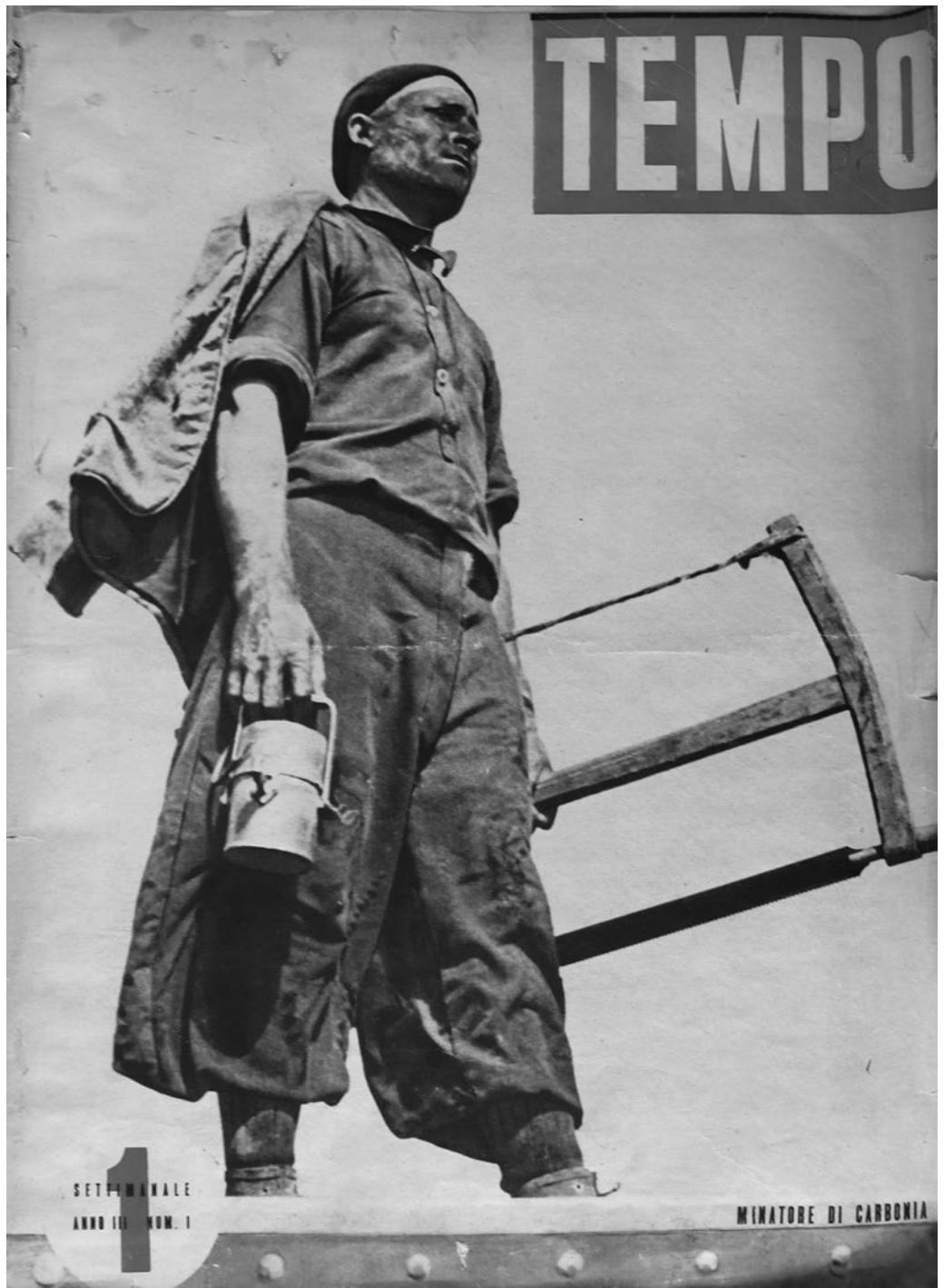


Figure 6.5 Cover of *Tempo*, n. 1, 1939. © Mondadori Portfolio.



**Figure 6.6** Walker Evans, *Floyd Burroughs, Cotton Sharecropper, Hale County, Alabama, 1935–1936*. Gelatin silver print. Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection.

In this context, in which a neo-realistic sensibility was developing, worked Federico Patellani, a major figure not just for his artistic talents but also as an intermediary among the worlds of reportage, art photography, and the cinema.<sup>26</sup> Before becoming the leading voice of photographic neo-realism, Patellani worked for *Tempo*, finding his models in America right from the beginning. What is more, *Tempo* imitated its

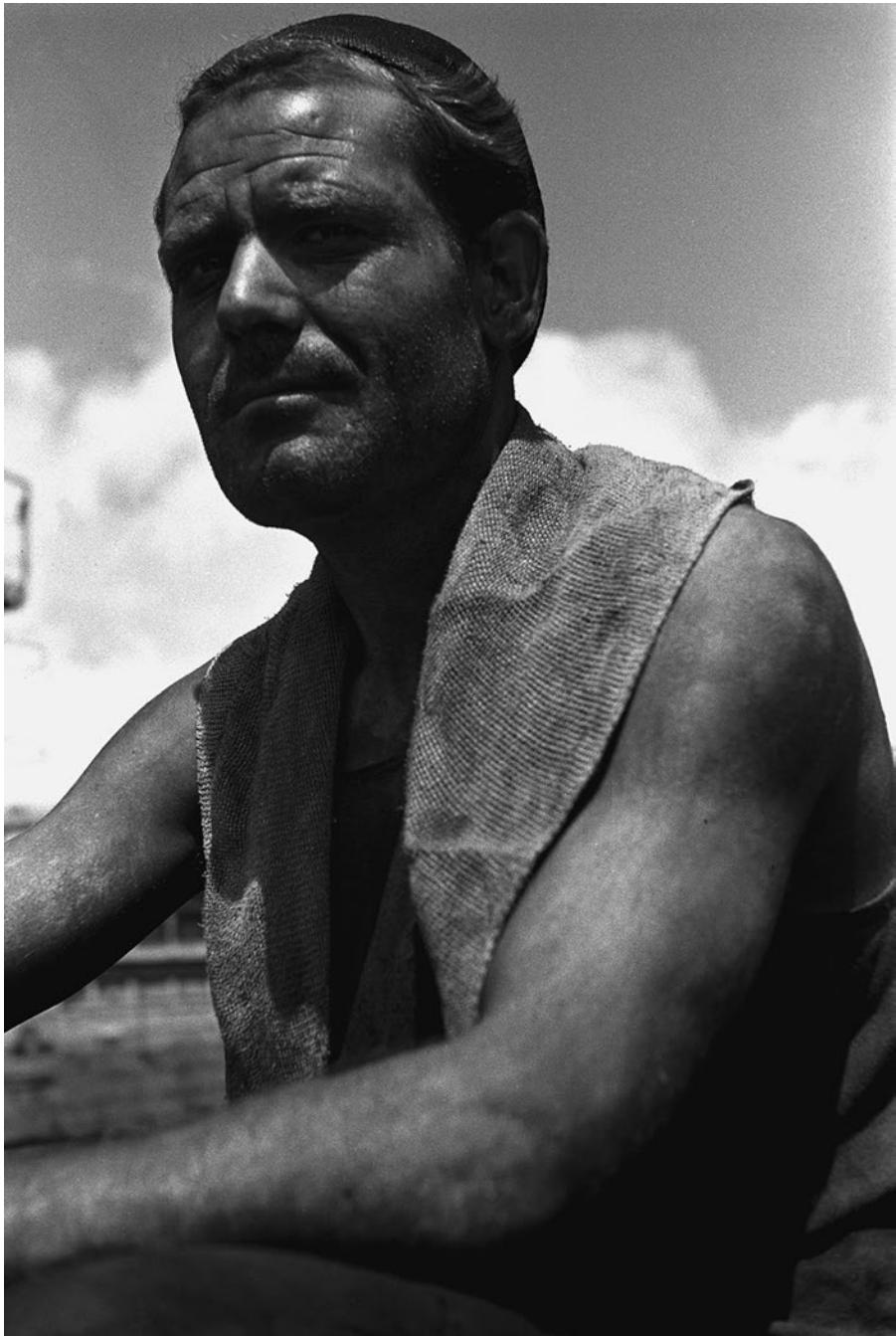


Figure 6.7 Federico Patellani, *Camallo, Savona, 1939*. Gelatin silver bromide print. Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea – Fondo Federico Patellani – Regione Lombardia. © Patellani Estate.

American cousin *Life* programmatically, as is clear from the graphic cover design, the chromatic choices, and the lettering itself.<sup>27</sup>

Like the first issue of *Life*, showing on its cover the gigantic dam underway at Fort Peck, Missouri, photographed by Margaret Bourke-White from below, as a representation of the national momentum and a manifesto of powerful photography, the first issue of *Tempo* showed a full-page picture of a miner from the Sardinian town of Carbonia, reproduced with the same *contre-plongée* technique, as an emblem of the regime's massive public works and a declaration of the magazine's intention to give maximum prominence to a new type of photography. Yet the choice of a miner in his work gear reveals an ideologically ambiguous interest in the more disadvantaged social classes. And even though the feature inside by Lamberti Sorrentino, another key figure of the periodical, is perfectly consonant with Fascist rhetoric, some photographs seem to express a spirit of their own. The small Sardinian town of Carbonia is rhetorically "life in the sun, and cheerful and contagious vitality" ("Minatori" 14) and work is a ritual marking the day until the evening, when "women appear on their doorsteps, smooth-faced and calm-looking" (15). But, on the next page, the close-up of a miner, surfacing in the dark night, with his eyes standing out white in his soot-blackened face, is so powerful as to anticipate Patellani's denunciation-photo (*Minatori di Carbonia* 1950), the manifesto of photographic neo-realism of the 1950s.

If Patellani aspired, like all ambitious photojournalists, to work for *Life*,<sup>28</sup> his aesthetic model was not the sensational snapshot but rather the school of the broad social portrait. During his *Tempo* years, his photography would linger over landscapes and faces, often connected with farming (cornfields, a mill wrapped in clouds, and the enigmatic face of a peasant woman wearing a scarf around her head; *Tempo*, n. 156, 1942), developing a slow monumentality, reminiscent of many FSA images. The porter waiting at the Savona harbour (*Tempo*, n. 14, 1939), one of his first covers, looks like any of the farm labourers in America's depressed rural areas and in particular like the emblematic image of such labourers: the cover of Walker Evans and James Agee's photobook (Figure 6.6).<sup>29</sup> The covers have in common the same casualness of an ordinary gesture turned into a pose, the imposing body, the easily identifiable work wear, and most of all the choice of a frontal point of view and of staring into the camera, two factors denoting solemnity and frankness.

Commenting on the FSA human catalogues, Susan Sontag speaks of a realism in which there is a marked abstract component – the obsessive search for a precise expression, posture, or look best suited to a preconceived idea of poverty, dignity, and exploitation (*On Photography* 6). Different visual patterns reveal the strong conceptual dimension of this body of work, like the image of the children peering out of the window of a shack, a sort of wooden womb, which marks their social condition as children of poverty and marginality (Figure 6.8). Patellani must surely have had one of these photos in mind when he shot, in 1945, the shacks on the outskirts of Milan (Figure 6.9).<sup>30</sup>

Patellani says he drew inspiration from cinema, the art of the living and moving image, but equally his photography seems to have given something back.<sup>31</sup> The child's face peeking out of an inhospitable womb becomes, for example, a figurative constant in *Sciuscià*, which repeats it with variations a dozen times. First it is just

little Giuseppe, who looks at the little girl who is his friend through the bars of the window of the truck taking him to the reform school; then we see his face in prison together with his cell mates (Figure 6.10). The motif is repeated again and again in a dramatic crescendo that culminates with a close-up of Pasquale (Franco Interlenghi) behind bars, beside himself with rage and about to escape. The whole film therefore seems to revolve around this journalistic photograph, both brutal and symbolic, which is repeated between passages of lesser visual intensity.

### Visconti and the Documentary Epic

This visual pattern in which settings encapsulate and describe in great detail bodies in all their unadorned brutality, fixing them fatefully in their social essence, is also central in the films of another great exponent of neo-realism: Luchino Visconti. In Visconti the conflict between Evans's radical documentarism and its humanist translation into photographic reportage is resolved. On the one hand, Visconti works on the alienness of the gaze in several ways, not least through the presentation of the Stranger, the main protagonist of his films, and his way of seeing the country; on the other hand, he reworks the visual forms of photojournalism through the contribution of the two great cinematographers mentioned above: Tonti and Graziati.

Evans's photographs showed Italy that it is possible to look at the world without filters, whether technical (i.e., the "straight" quality of the picture), ideological, or even cultural. The secret is to become foreign, to frame things as though they could not be recognized. It is obviously a utopia, a challenge rather than a viable model, which, however, is realized biographically in Visconti's directorial approach. Visconti has the opportunity and the ability to see Italy from outside. As the intellectual cosmopolitan he was, and also because of his cultural formation, he often travelled between Paris and New York, and from those strategic latitudes he captured something of the reality that is more difficult to see from inside Italy. And in a certain sense, he recounts it through the Stranger, whose neo-realist version oscillates between the tramp of *Ossessione* – with his pure, uprooted gaze (as in the initial anonymous subjective shot of the landscapes of the River Po), extraneous to the universe he is about to enter – and Toni of *La terra trema*, a fisherman who has experienced the outside and, in coming back to his village, sees his own world as if for the first time, in fact without recognizing it. Visconti, too, was a stranger within the *Cinema* group, since he was the point of entry of foreign culture into the group's network of literary references, mostly geared to recovering the realist tradition of *verismo*.

When he came into contact with the *Cinema* workshop, in 1940, Visconti had in fact just returned from a crucial stay in France. He had been frequenting Jean Renoir's sets for over five years,<sup>32</sup> as *assistant réalisateur*, working alongside Jacques Becker, but also – and more relevantly – with Henri Cartier-Bresson, who was about to enter photojournalism through David Seymour and Robert Capa. Renoir's flesh-and-blood films were already points of reference for *Cinema*'s critics, who yearned for images less watered-down and fake than those circulating in Italy. To Visconti, though, they were an aesthetic and human revelation: "I had just come from a fascist country,



Figure 6.8 Dorothea Lange. *Between Weedpatch and Lamont, Kern County, California. Children living in camp... Rent \$2.75 plus electricity.* Gelatin silver print. US National Archives, photo no. 521700.



Figure 6.9 Federico Patellani, *Milan, July 1945.* Gelatin silver bromide print. Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea – Fondo Federico Patellani – Regione Lombardia, © Patellani Estate.



Figure 6.10 Vittorio De Sica, from *Sciuscià* (1946).

where you were cut off from all information, you were not allowed to read or know anything, or have personal experiences. It was a shock to me. When I came back to Italy, I was a different person altogether" (qtd. in Callegari and Lodato 100). According to most of his biographers, this change was not just political, despite his contacts with the popular front, but rather existential, to do with the libertarian and tolerant atmosphere of Paris at the time. On top of his conversations with Renoir, there were his full-immersion sessions at the small Panthéon cinema, where Visconti saw the films of Ejzenštejn, Pudovkin, and Nikolai Ekk. But the centre of all of his French experiences was Coco Chanel's salon, where he met Renoir, and Horst P. Horst, a rising star of fashion photography, who worked for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazar*, between France and the United States, with whom Visconti had his first homosexual love affair.<sup>33</sup>

When Visconti met De Santis on the legendary steamer to Capri at Easter in 1940, he had already come into contact with the cinema and brushed, so to speak, against the world of photography and of photographic journalism. In the eyes of the Roman activist critics he must have been a promising young talent, whose credentials lay



Figure 6.11 Luchino Visconti, from *Ossessione* (1943).

in having cowritten the script for Renoir's *Tosca*, which was interrupted by the beginning of the war and would eventually be shot by Renoir's assistant director, Carl Koch. In the meantime, Visconti started to work with De Santis on various adaptations, from Alain Fournier to Melville, and from Thomas Mann to Julien Green. The newsroom, however, was more and more oriented towards realist literature, which two young members of the clandestine communist party interpreted as a many-voiced account "inspired by a humanity in pain, but still hoping" (Alicata and De Santis 127). According to Alicata and De Santis, going back to Verga also meant working along the same lines as Renoir and Duvivier, who had started over from the realist tradition of Maupassant and Zola. Visconti was a perfect candidate, even though he was not yet familiar with Verga, his education being based on the European bourgeois novel. In fact, the world of the great Sicilian writer affected the young Visconti far beyond the group's expectations. He immediately bought the copyright of *L'amante di Gramigna* and, together with De Santis, Alicata, and Puccini, wrote the screenplay and sent it to the government, where it was buried. Minister Alessandro Pavolini, annoyed by what he considered to be just "a story about



**Figure 6.12** Dorothea Lange, *Toward Los Angeles, California, 1937*. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration – Office of War Information Photograph Collection.

bandits,” applied preventive censorship (Alicata and De Santis 127). Consequently, a purist project, deep-rooted in the national literary tradition, was replaced by a hybrid halfway between American literature and French cinema. The group fell back on the detective novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, by James Cain, in a French version, which Visconti received from Renoir, probably written by Duvivier;<sup>34</sup> the outcome was *Ossessione*.

Visconti said he was concerned about “transferring the story into Italian settings” that were much more specific than those of the previous adaptation by Pierre Chenal (*Le dernier tournant* 1939) (Micciché, *Visconti* 32). What he actually did, however, was translate Italian provincial places and landscapes into the visual language of American realism, previously banned from the cinema of the Fascist regime.<sup>35</sup> Situated on the edge of a big dusty road winding between empty fields and sandy banks, Bragana’s inn, in which the film is set, is a fragment of the Po Delta landscape (it is an ex-customs house) rewritten through a *topos* of the American province on which much social photography has focused (for example, the gas pump in the middle of nowhere appears in famous photographs by Evans). Other locations more precisely identify a small, marginal side of Italy, such as a town square, a village fair, or an out-of-the-way tavern. However, the great, dramatic spaces of the film cancel out the Italian geography, substituting it with landscapes that represent the memory of foreign documentary images rather than specific documents of Italy: the van parked in the street opposite the signs of a public place, the tramp on the road, and a pair with suitcases setting off as if they are about to hitchhike (Figures 6.11 and 6.12).

Images such as these abound in the repertoire of the FSA, and they crystallized in the photojournalism that derives from them. There is also a series by Evans in which the image of a grocery store, with a man standing in front of the entrance with his hands joined and his back to the viewer, comes after the detail of a sign reading “McCollum.” In the same way, in the initial sequence of *Obsession*, Gino (Massimo Girotti) stands in front of the entrance to the inn in an identical pose (and with the same hat), followed immediately afterwards by a shot of the sign reading “Trattoria.”

There is no evidence of Visconti coming into contact with the works of Evans, even if the historical circumstances suggest that there were occasions when it might have happened. Visconti was in New York the same year as the first FSA exhibition at the Central Palace and Evans’s one-man show at the MOMA.<sup>36</sup> There are no hints of Visconti having an interest even in Evans’s influence in Italy, but some images in *Ossessione* seem to have absorbed something from Lattuada’s experimentations, especially those representing Gino, after the crime, as a human remnant within a defunct micro-universe, where objects, such as chairs, tables, and furniture, might well end up in a Milanese dump, like those in *Occhio quadrato* (see Figures 6.13 and 6.14).

As to Vittorini’s influence, not only could Visconti not be unaware of *Americana*, interested as he was in American literature, but he also had a direct relationship with the writer, having considered in 1945 the possibility of adapting his novel *Uomini e no* (Men and Not Men, 1945) for the cinema. In the letters exchanged between the two to this end, a nota bene about an issue of *Life* proves that their dialogue also concerned photography.<sup>37</sup>

The American magazine cannot possibly have had anything to do with a novel on the partisans, whereas it is quite plausible that it was connected to Visconti’s major project in 1945: the play *Tobacco Road*. It was based on Erskine Caldwell’s 1932 novel of the same name, which Jack Kirkland had adapted into a very successful American theatre piece in 1933 and which John Ford in 1941 had turned into a curious film. Caldwell, one of the realist writers included in Vittorini’s anthology,



Figure 6.13 Luchino Visconti, from *Ossessione* (1943).

worked with the photo-reporter Margaret Bourke-White (whom he later married) on a sort of visual development of the novel, which required an eighteen-month journey into the heart of the agricultural proletariat in the United States South. Bourke-White published some of these photos in *Life*, while the rest of them were published in a popular photobook, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937). Caldwell wrote the comments and captions and often gave voice to the characters portrayed by Bourke-White. John Ford seems to have made use of these images for his film adaptation (*Tobacco Road*, 1941), as he did with those from the *Life* repertory for *Grapes of Wrath*, based on John Steinbeck's novel of the same name (1939), itself inspired by a trip the writer had taken, following the photo-reporter Horace Bristol, along the path of Oklahoma migrant sharecroppers. Bristol would have liked to make an illustrated book together with Steinbeck, like that of Caldwell and Bourke-White, but he produced only a reportage, published in *Life* in June 1939. When the film was released, various magazines noticed how the actors closely resembled the sharecroppers photographed by Bristol in build, posture, and situation. A *Life* feature reproduced the original photographs next to the relevant frames.<sup>38</sup>

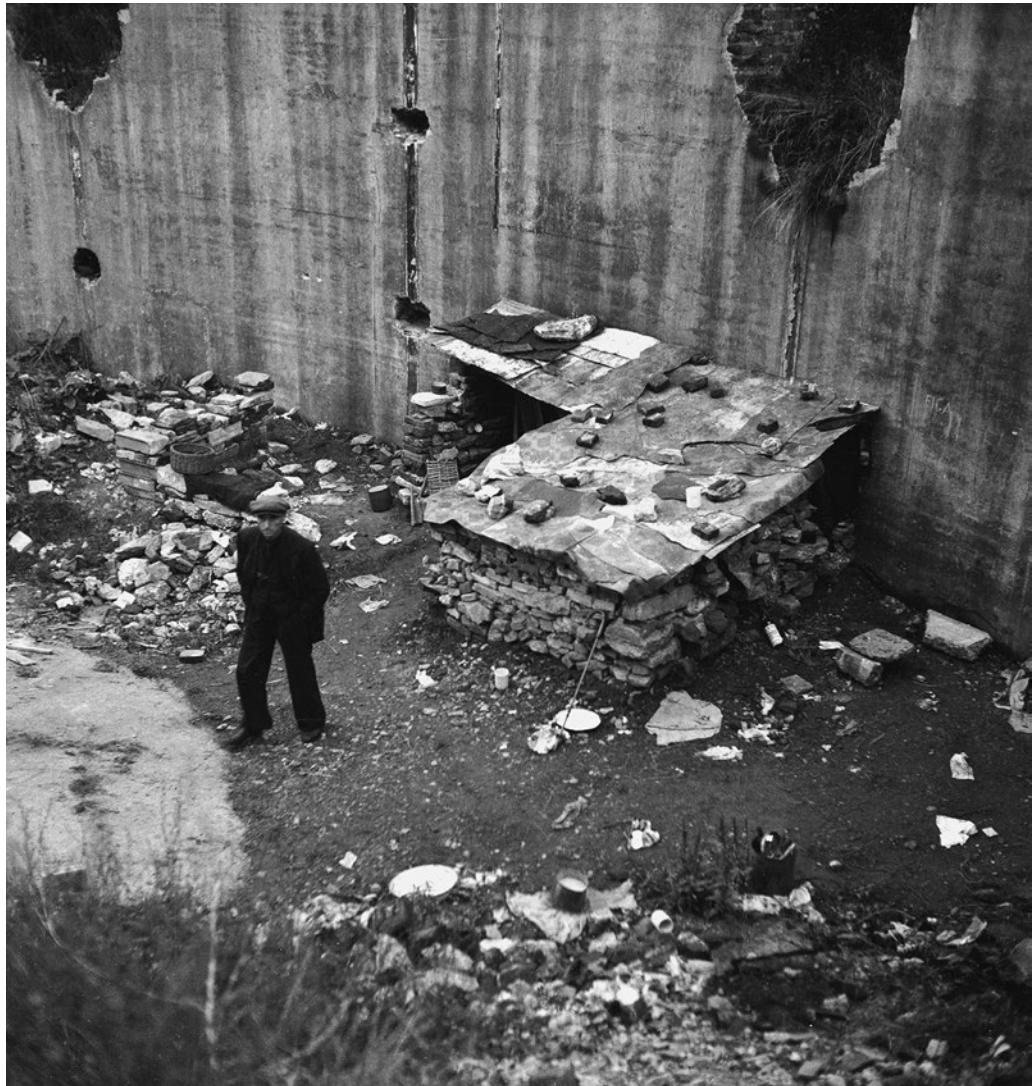


Figure 6.14 Alberto Lattuada, *Passeggiata della sera*, from *Occhio quadrato*. Milan, ca. 1940. © Alinari Archives (gift of Lattuada, Florence).

Critics have noted a certain similarity between Visconti's staging of the play and Ford's images.<sup>39</sup> However, the possibility that Ford's two social films were a direct source for Visconti needs to be confirmed above all in historical terms, since *Grapes of Wrath* was distributed only in 1948 and *Tobacco Road* in 1950 because of the 1938 Alfieri law, which stopped American films from coming to Italy until the end of the



**Figure 6.15** Production still from *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti, 1943). Courtesy of Comune di Cesena.

war.<sup>40</sup> Some sort of surreptitious infiltration of those two films into the world of cinema production in which Visconti was involved could be imagined, but it is simpler to think that the similarity between Ford's film and Visconti's *pièce* might be the result of both directors making use of the same photographic repertory. This would account for Visconti's interest in *Life* in 1945, when he first considered shooting his own *Grapes of Wrath* (he even signed a contract with Lux)<sup>41</sup> and started work on the adaptation of Caldwell's novel into a play.

In Visconti's crucial experience with realist theatre (Moneti 133), photographic reportage would thus be central, so much so as to illuminate retrospectively the realism of *Ossessione*.<sup>42</sup> What is more, on that film set there were at least two other people who were sensitive to the forms of photographic journalism: the cinematographer Aldo Tonti, himself a former photo-reporter, and the set photographer Osvaldo Civirani. Tonti experimented with a luministic style that aimed at documenting drama, giving concreteness to objects and surroundings in the internal scenes and seeking a more

abstract coldness in the external ones. Tonti's images became doubly documentary with Civirani's contribution, which revolutionized set photography by breaking the convention of posing actors with ad hoc lights at the end of a take and initiating the idea of reporting on a film as it was being made. The tripod was abandoned, and the camera (a 6x9 Plaubel) was silenced so that it would not disturb the director and could work simultaneously with the film camera. Civirani's "photo-cinematographical" film strips (more than 2,600 negatives, of which only 260 remain)<sup>43</sup> thus bring neo-realist cinema back to the paper from which, perhaps, it came. Halfway between photograph and film frame, as the shot that fixes an incomplete gesture of Massimo Girotti's shows (Figure 6.15), Civirani's set photographs produce a very complex overwriting that doubles the film's documentary coefficient.

This bias towards the aesthetics of photojournalism is rebalanced in Visconti's next film, *La terra trema*, which emphasizes the monumental nature of the images, despite the fact that the initial project was explicitly documentary (the film was originally a reportage on the problems of Sicilian fishermen, commissioned by the Italian Communist Party prior to the 1948 elections).<sup>44</sup>

*La terra trema* is widely considered to be the epitome of all neo-realist principles, above all for the choice of the theme, the realist (*verista*) novel *I Malavoglia* by Verga, and then for many other reasons. These include its social issues, the use of non-professional actors (the community of Aci Trezza fishermen), the abandonment of both literary dialogue and "pure" Italian in favour of the local dialect, the rejection of both studio shooting and artificial sets, and the choice, therefore, of a plurivocal perspective and a narrative not just inspired by everyday news but modelled on everyday life. Visconti combines these choices, almost too consonant with the neo-realist project, with an extremely rigorous and abstract mise en scène, where every gesture is both natural and symbolic, and every human and social detail immediately transcends itself.

The style of *La terra trema* is complex,<sup>45</sup> and Aldo Graziati's photographic contribution, which dramatically sculpts each scene through strong contrasts of light, adds to Visconti's theatrical setting in a progressive subordination of the ethnological phenomenon. However, like *Sciuscià*, *La terra trema* is marked by a series of "image-facts" that are very similar in style and subject. These are the slow and semi-static portraits of the Valastro family, which are almost photographic. Between one portrait and the next runs the story of the events, which is told in pictures that are less visually significant than the frames which present the Valastros in everyday life, like fossils embedded among the stones of their simple dwellings.

Visconti's portrait of the Valastro family is very similar to the human documents of the FSA in the close relationship between spaces and bodies that it establishes and in the choice of a frontal point of view (a cardinal precept of Evans's teaching). The authenticity of the bodies Visconti presents is not separate from their being posed to find a precise fit with the places they belong to, as if each person had to find and occupy their own niche, thus falling back into a place established over centuries and across generations, and where roles stay unchanged and irreversible forever. The woman at the window looking out, the young men leaning against the walls: these

are fleeting gestures but also abstract identities, which Verga himself consolidated in his late nineteenth-century photo-portraits.<sup>46</sup> They will appear again, unchanged, four years after Visconti's film in the photographic series planned by Cesare Zavattini, which is very similar in how it looks at the archaic family: the photobook *Un paese* (1955).

*Un paese* returns to the north (Luzzara, in the province of Reggio Emilia); the fishermen become farmers again, and their photographic portraits do not echo the American model but are simply made by an American photographer, Paul Strand, who works side-by-side with Zavattini, author of the captions that comment on the images. The two met in 1949, on the occasion of the International Convention of Cinematography in Perugia, where in fact neo-realism was already being debated. It was Strand who came forward with the proposal to publish a photobook on some Italian places, and Zavattini did not let the opportunity pass him by, recognizing the chance to frame a foreigner's gaze on Italy, as he tells us in his preface:

When Strand made me the proposal I've just told you, I felt like closing my eyes and putting my finger at random on the map of Italy; and then, together with Strand, going to where the finger was pointing, either northward or southward, in order to become Italian instead of just being it. (Strand and Zavattini 1981, 7)

Zavattini's need to "become Italian" by looking at his own country with foreign eyes, and in this case American ones, sums up the essence of the neo-realist gaze so far introduced. On the other hand, Strand's proposal is also symptomatic of a general sense of familiarity that ties American photography to Italian neo-realism, and not only of an interest in it, which was about to be reversed in a sort of reciprocal movement.<sup>47</sup> The familiarity that Strand notes must be linked to the aesthetic question that culminated in Visconti; the comingling of document and abstraction. In fact, Strand's photography always lay between a straight approach to reality and modernist experimentation, beginning with his first important work, *Blind Woman* (1916), which had a special impact on Evans. At this stage, Strand looked for the archaic not only in pre-selected subjects but also in the tools used, going back to working on portraits with the same obsolete and cumbersome cameras that were used by FSA photographers, searching for an absolute and eternal image, able to reveal the human essence within trades, social roles, and natural forms.<sup>48</sup> Like the Valastros, the Luzzara farmers seem like survivors from a distant past, frozen in a moment of time that goes beyond the photographic instant.

Strand and Zavattini's photobook was to have been the first volume of a never-realized Einaudi series of photographic essays entitled "Italia mia" (My Italy), each dedicated to an Italian town and seen through the eyes of a director (Rome by Rossellini, Milan by Visconti, and Naples by De Filippo). Zavattini saw it as a means of launching the prototype of "neo-realist books," in which captions served only to reproduce the sounds, the languages, and the moods of the place, thus corroborating the documentary value of the images.<sup>49</sup> However, his unmentioned models were the American photobooks by Bourke-White and Caldwell (1937), by Dorothea Lange



Figure 6.16 Luchino Visconti, from *La terra trema* (1948).

and Paul Taylor (*An American Exodus*, 1939), and by Evans and Agee (1941). The list should also include the Bristol-Sternberg project, which fell through and eventually became a novel and a film. It may not be accidental that, in 1940, Zavattini anticipated his original idea for *Un paese* in the pages of *Cinema*, right next to the photograph of the Joad family in *Grapes of Wrath*:

Another film, My Village. A cameraman, an electrician, a worker, the assistant director and me. We are going to live in my village for four or five months. You can do with little money, just the film ... three or four months in my village, surrounded by about fifty children to whom I can say in dialect, ver la boca da peu (open your mouth a little more). Maybe with these youths we could really take over the village, a village without books, but with large woods, levees and the Po. ("Quadernetto di Note" 172)

The future script-writer of *Ladri di biciclette* and *Sciuscià* was planning to make a very small film, which would grow even smaller over the years and become nothing



IT-POR-1337

**Figure 6.17** Paul Strand, *The Family*, from *Un paese* (1948). Gelatin silver print. © Aperture Foundation Inc., Paul Strand Archive.

but voice and eye: an American eye and an Italian voice, *The Spoon River Anthology* of Neo-Realism.

Perhaps Strand, with his proposal to Zavattini, also wanted to claim some authorship over the movement. He had worked with Pare Lorentz on a documentary commissioned by the FSA, which Antonioni held up as an example in the journal *Cinema*, but above all he had anticipated neo-realist subjects in a much earlier experiment, from 1933: the film *Redes* (directed by Fred Zinnemann and Gomez Muriel), which was belatedly released in the United States as *The Wave* (1937) and in France and Italy as *I ribelli di Alvarado* (1949). This second film attempt appears to be the direct antecedent of *La terra trema*.<sup>50</sup>

*Redes* was the result of Strand's personal research into the poor living conditions of a community of fishermen at Alvarado, a small town on the Mexican Gulf, and his



**Figure 6.18** Emilio Gómez Muriel, Fred Zinnemann, from *Redes* (1936).

contacts with the inhabitants of the bay, whom he eventually asked to act as themselves in the film. The story focuses on the consciousness-raising process of Miro, a young fisherman who is so poor that he cannot afford to have his son treated, and so low on the social ladder that he is not entitled to his master's credit. When Miro's son dies, he tries to mobilize his fellow fishermen, but not all of them follow him. As a result, there is a fight between the two opposing factions, which leads, with the complicity of the masters, to the hero's death.<sup>51</sup> The use of real Mexican fishermen, a real location, and the local language shows the same kind of choices that Visconti made for his masterpiece, fifteen years later. Moreover, many passages are quite similar (Miro's desperate speech on the hill is like Toni's on the beach), and there is also the same sense of historical fatality, even though it is compensated, in the American story, by the consciousness generally achieved after the hero's sacrifice. Nevertheless, Strand and Zinnemann's photographic and directorial choices are extremely different in formal terms. *Redes* is a film of estranged details, such as the fisherman's sculpted back, somewhere between the lustrous muscles of the Potemkin sailor and the surreal volumes of *Pepper No. 3* by Weston; the mass of silver fish or the sea-corroded bottom of the boat are more consonant with Ejzenštejn than with Visconti.

Zavattini, who had seen *Redes* in Cuba (i.e., in 1953), did not seem to consider those beautiful images familiar (Gualtieri 118). Yet, when the film was released in Italy, many critics remarked its influence on *La terra trema*.<sup>52</sup> This was perhaps because

the luministic quality of Visconti's films was most striking,<sup>53</sup> or perhaps because the more general influences of American photography on the post-war Italian cinema were already apparent. Just as the novels of Steinbeck and Cain provided Pavese with "men and words through which to discover Italy," so the work of the great American photographers, and their photojournalistic rewriting, furnished that discovery of the right images, characterized by a mode of representation both detached and epic, sometimes leaning more towards the formal gesture, sometimes to the mimetic one (223). This crucial "borrowing" locates the neo-realist image between document and monument, between America and Italy, between cinema and photography.

## NOTES

\* An earlier version of this paper was first presented at the International Conference on Bridging Communities (29 June–3 July 2007, Trieste University), then published in *L'anello che non tiene. Journal of Modern Italian Literature* (University of Wisconsin, Madison, Spring/Fall 2008–9) and subsequently in Ugo Volli (ed.), *Musica, spettacolo, fotografia, design. Storia della Cultura Italiana*, vol. IX, Turin: Utet, 2009; at the Turin conference *Il lavoro sul film* (2–3 December 2009, Turin University), this paper was improved by the suggestions of discussants professor Peppino Ortoleva and professor Raffaele De Berti, and in this final version I have expanded the cinematographic references beyond Visconti and initiated a discussion of neo-realist set photography.

1 From the "short" periodization to be found in Farassino 30–3.

2 See Renzi, "Il Neorealismo"; and Forgacs, "The Making and Unmaking."

3 See E. Viganò.

4 See Taramelli's fundamental 1995 book, which sparked my interest in this topic.

5 Cesare Zavattini argued: "The document moves forward in its true length to show where the true epic is" (qtd. in Rondolino, "Cinema" 66).

6 In a recent publication, Raffaele De Berti studies the circulation of foreign illustrated magazines in Italy in the 1930s. He extends his analysis to the European scene, stressing the centrality of the German model (the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*), which also laid the foundation for the American press, and exploring the influential cases of *Vu* and *Marianne* (see De Berti and Piazzoni 37).

7 Taramelli has pointed out the centrality of Evans's photographs in Vittorini's anthology. See Taramelli 86–7.

8 For a profound reading of Evans's photography, see Stott. See also Ortoleva, "Il mito."

9 *Cinema*, a magazine first issued in 1936, with Vittorio Mussolini as its editor from 1938 to 1943, proved to be the medium used by the ideologists of neo-realism.

10 *Cinema* does not mention *Life* until March 1952, n. 82, pp. 127–9.

11 See *Appunti di un cineasta*.

12 On *Omnibus*, see Albonetti. See also Forgacs and Gundel 144–5.

13 The photograph was published on page 42 of the 14 February 1938 issue of *Life*.

14 Published on page 24. The photograph is of an old man sitting on a garden chair, an image from the rural comedy "Aaron slick from punkim crick," staged in Mikado.

- <sup>15</sup> See Rathbone and Evans.
- <sup>16</sup> The issue was briefly dealt with in Lucas and Agliani.
- <sup>17</sup> See Mollino. Mollino published a handful of realist photographs, but he was no theorist of the movement.
- <sup>18</sup> See E. Viganò 11–13 on the different branches of neo-realist photography.
- <sup>19</sup> See Campani. After the pioneering book by Barbara Le Maitre, recent publications on the relationship between cinema and photography include Beckman and Ma; Campbell and Cramerotti; Guido and Lugon; Rossaak.
- <sup>20</sup> On the debt *Life* owes to cinema, see Wainwright.
- <sup>21</sup> If it is true that illustrated magazines testify to the effort of the publishing industry to adapt to modern visuality, where cinema has a predominant position (see De Berti and Piazzoni X), it is also true that they are the instruments through which photography achieves a widespread diffusion, becoming a mass cultural form and influencing, in its turn, filmic language.
- <sup>22</sup> This is the brilliant synthesis of the question proposed by David Forgacs, who interpreted Rossellini's *Germania anno zero* (Germany, Year Zero, 1948) as a photographic essay inspired by the numerous European reportages on damaged children of the Second World War. See Forgacs, "Photography."
- <sup>23</sup> See Tonti.
- <sup>24</sup> See Ellero et al.
- <sup>25</sup> The reportage is reproduced in Micciché, *Sciuscià* 237–40.
- <sup>26</sup> On Patellani's journalistic work, see the fundamental Bolognesi and Calvenzi.
- <sup>27</sup> Alberto Mondadori explicitly asked his editorial staff to copy *Life*. See the account of Bruno Munari, the graphic designer of *Tempo*, in Del Buono. See also Claudia Magnanini's "Chi ha *Tempo* non aspetti *Life*" (in De Berti and Piazzoni 309).
- <sup>28</sup> "The *Life* issue can be sorted out with a bundle of letters that could be published in one volume. It can be summed up in a few sentences. I have known for a long time now that I am short-listed among the Italian photographers they could possibly ask to contribute. I know that, sooner or later, I will be working for *Life*, but I also know that so far, despite my sending them first-class articles, I have received only polite comments in reply" (from the manuscript dated 7 March 1949, owned by the Museo della Fotografia Contemporanea, Fondo Patellani, Cinisello Balsamo, Milan).
- <sup>29</sup> A collection of photographic portraits of sharecroppers taken between 1937 and 1939 by Walker Evans and with commentary by James Agee. The book was published in Italy only in the 1970s.
- <sup>30</sup> The routes followed by these influences are, however, particularly hard to trace (see Raeburn 325). No more than fifty FSA photos appeared in the two magazines Patellani was practically in charge of between the 1930s and 1940s. A dozen of them appeared in *Life*, and around forty in *Look*, which, however, made particular use of the icons of the Great Depression (see Finnegan).
- <sup>31</sup> Patellani wrote: "If I am right in my aspiration to take photos which are topical, vivid and vibrant, like most film shots, I think one should look at the cinema for inspiration for today's photography ... 'Movement photography' requires choosing a narrative moment, as we are accustomed to seeing only in the cinema ... one needs to know how to capture

the instant posture, a movement, something sensational and the essence of everything” (qtd. in Scopinich 134). In the article Patellani maintains that photographic journalism also derives from the newsreel in terms of its basic ideas.

- 32 Visconti probably contributed to *Toni* (1934), *Une partie de campagne* (1936), and *Les bas-fonds* (1937), although opinion is divided on this. See Micciché, *Visconti* 21; and Rondolino, *Luchino Visconti* 55.
- 33 See Renzi, *Visconti Segreto*.
- 34 Visconti mentioned a French version (Callegari and Lodato 69), but according to Renzi, Duvivier’s was not just a translation but an adaptation, and the original novel was read by the group only after the film was finished. See Renzi, *Visconti Segreto*.
- 35 According to Quaresima, Visconti’s “hybrid” was to be an icon of neo-realistic landscape up to *Il grido* (41). On the landscape of *Ossessione* between cinematographic myth and geographical report, see also Bernardi.
- 36 The exhibition at Grand Central Palace was held from 18 April to 29 April 1938, while Evans’s one-man show ran from 28 September to 18 November 1938. Visconti’s American trip is not precisely dated, but he probably was in the United States in the winter months of 1937–8. See Rondolino, *Luchino Visconti* 67
- 37 “Please let me have, as soon as possible, that issue of *Life* that I asked you for by telegram,” wrote Vittorini in a page margin (from the manuscript owned by Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Fondo Visconti, Rome).
- 38 The first article on the subject appeared in *Boxoffice* magazine. See *Life*, 1940 10–11.
- 39 Gianni Rondolino wrote: “In the realism of the representation ... in the scenic construction and in the character’s portrayal, it is not difficult to notice the influence of the film of the same name by John Ford” (*Luchino Visconti* 174).
- 40 Guido Aristarco reviewed the film in *Cinema*, n. 35, March 1950: 188–9. In issue 26 (23 March 1946) of the periodical *Il Politecnico*, edited by Elio Vittorini, in the cinema section, the decision by government officials to refuse permission for films like *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Tobacco Road*, and *Citizen Kane* was still being lamented.
- 41 Vittorini’s letter was dated simply 1945; the contract with Lux for *Grapes of Wrath* was signed in May 1945; the first staging of *Tobacco Road* was 4 December 1945. See Micciché, *Visconti* 76.
- 42 The presumed influence – also supported by Forgacs (“Photography” 257) – of Ford’s *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Tobacco Road* on the cinematography of *Ossessione* is even more difficult to demonstrate in historical terms, even bearing in mind Visconti’s European travels; the hypothesis of the mediation of photographic journalism seems more plausible.
- 43 According to Antonio Maraldi, in conversation with the author. See also Civerani.
- 44 See D’Amico and De Carvalho 116.
- 45 *La terra trema* is perhaps the most analysed film of the Italian cinema. See Casetti in Micciché *La Terra Trema*.
- 46 Verga’s photographs – 327 glass plates and 121 celluloid negatives – were found in 1966 and date back to at least 1878 (see Minghelli, “L’occhio”; and Mutti). Noa Steinatsky has recently traced an interesting parallel between Verga and Visconti’s visual approaches.

- <sup>47</sup> See Ortoleva, “Una strana avanguardia” on Agee’s interest in *Sciuscià* and the “neo-realistic” aesthetic of reality in American cinema of the 1950s (Kazan first of all).
- <sup>48</sup> John Berger speaks of cross-sections of a life, inseparable from its continuity and at the same time eternal; he wrote that in Paul Strand’s photographs “the exposure time *is* the lifetime” (47).
- <sup>49</sup> Zavattini wrote: “You will go around with a stenographer to gather opinions about the place and the people that we are to see in the photographs” (qtd. in Gualtieri 14).
- <sup>50</sup> The first was an abstract documentary about New York, called *Manhatta*, which Strand shot in 1921 with Charles Sheeler.
- <sup>51</sup> Analysis based on the film copy owned by UCLA, Los Angeles.
- <sup>52</sup> It was a clear anachronism, since *La terra trema* was released before the Italian screening of Strand’s film. But it is also true that *Redes* was released in the United States on 20 April 1937 – that is, just before Visconti arrived there.
- <sup>53</sup> Indeed, there are very distant connections between Visconti and Strand via Eijzenstein: Aldo Graziati was perceived as an “Italian Tissé” (Ejzenstein’s most famous cinematographer), and Strand seemed to have been inspired by Tissé, who in turn was apparently influenced by Horst, the fashion photographer Visconti met in Chanel’s salon. See Ellero et al. and Chiarini.

## 7 Photographic Excess: “Scandalous” Photography in Film and Literature after the Boom

---

SARAH PATRICIA HILL

The post-war boom that transformed Italy’s economy and society also saw an explosion of photographic imagery and its uses in Italian society – as art, as advertising, as popular journalism and as the main way in which ordinary people recorded their daily lives. By the mid-1950s Italy had emerged from the shadow of Fascism and the violence, destruction, and poverty of the war into unprecedented prosperity and mobility. The immediate post-war determination to document previously unseen realities, rather than the Fascist fictions Italians had been fed for years, was overwhelmed by other images that reflected a fast-changing society dramatically reshaped by industrialization, urbanization, and consumerism. These kinds of images represented new possibilities that appeared to be opening up to Italians, from consumer goods like appliances and motor vehicles to the glamorous world of the famous, who were themselves part of a new culture of mass media and image production. In the very moment in which Italy was finally catching up on industrialization, photography was already pointing the way to a post-industrial economy. From the neorealist ethic of witnessing, recording, and contemplating contemporary reality, there was a dramatic shift marked by the new drive to produce and consume images of pseudo-reality, typified in particular by the figure of a new kind of photographer who was providing unprecedented glimpses into the world of the rich and famous. The paparazzo phenomenon that emerged in Italy, and particularly Rome, was a key force in the subsequent development of popular culture in that country and all over the world. Splashed across the pages of illustrated magazines like *Oggi* and *Lo specchio* and the weekly *L’Espresso*, paparazzi photographs did not simply document events but rather conjured up an exotic world of celebrities and aristocrats, as well as public relations stunts and an array of enticements apparently far removed from the drudgery of daily life. At the same time, the paparazzi unveiled this glamorous existence and brought it closer to the world of the average Italian, in a sense democratizing glamour just as the camera democratized image-making. In a circular process, they provided models for increasingly camera-equipped Italians to pose as the stars of their own lives and made celebrities out of ordinary people whose lives were touched by tragedy or scandal. All this fed into the development of a cult of celebrity and a “celebritization” of daily life that continue to play a significant role in global media.

This chapter examines some of the ways in which four of Italy’s most important twentieth-century writers and filmmakers – Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni,



Figure 7.1 Tazio Secchiaroli, *Anthony Steel and Anita Ekberg*, Rome, 1958. Gelatin silver print.

Italo Calvino, and Pier Paolo Pasolini – engaged with the troubling issues the new Italian photographies raised about the power of the photographic message and its blurring of the distinction between fiction and reality, and the changing values of the belatedly modernized and precociously postmodern Italy it captured. I argue that for these intellectuals, photography – an ambiguous product of industrial modernity, a fragile record of a vanishing past, and a primary symptom of the birth of the society of spectacle – came to embody the sense of both melancholic pathos and frenzied vitality the economic boom produced.

Celebrities' conspicuous consumption, leisure, and mobility made them both aspirational symbols of the new Italy and a focus for the cameras of the paparazzi, who in turn achieved notoriety for the lengths they were prepared to go to in order to catch celebrities unawares or provoke them into an undignified display. Tazio Secchiaroli, the greatest of the paparazzi and the figure on whom Fellini based the character of Paparazzo (thus coining the term) in *La dolce vita*, achieved instant notoriety in 1958 with antics like provoking the deposed King Farouk of Egypt into overturning a restaurant table and then photographing him doing it, and snapping the actor Anthony Steel reacting in fury while Anita Ekberg waited for him in a car (Figure 7.1).

Secchiaroli suspends his celebrities, unposed and undignified, in a moment of vigorous action, their expressions strangely blank. Undeniably, part of the photograph’s power lies in its unexpected compositional strengths – for example, in the way Ekberg’s arms echo the straightness and bend of Steel’s, the strong black-and-white contrast, and the vertical lines of the two men’s ties. Nevertheless, the “value” of the paparazzo photograph lies fundamentally in its lack of pose rather than in its formal qualities – indeed, this photograph’s meaning as a paparazzo shot is in part guaranteed by markers of photographic immediacy and speed, such as flash lighting, the figure cut off by the frame, and the asymmetrical composition of the figures. As Wayne Koestenbaum argues, this kind of photograph is typically “a reaction shot, and therefore indirectly foregrounds the traumatizing agency and desire of the seemingly invisible paparazzo” (10). The economically driven desire for a “money shot” means that rather than just recording events, the paparazzo very often played a key role in precipitating what Daniel Boorstin in his 1961 book *The Image* would term “pseudo events.”

Secchiaroli and his colleagues (photographers like Velio Cioni, Marcello Gepetti, Elio Sorci, and Sergio Spinelli) were the “petulant photographers” that the writer and screenwriter Ennio Flaiano described as the just deserts of “a society as troubled as ours, which expresses its frigid will to live more by exhibiting itself than by truly enjoying life” (June 1958).<sup>1</sup> The flip side of the paparazzo’s moment-by-moment approach to representing the famous in the hopes of catching them unawares was the exponential increase in photographic production more generally, which, as Karen Pinkus notes, led to the “production of vernacular imagery in which stars and ordinary people come increasingly to resemble one another” (2). The period of the economic miracle represents a moment of a crucial shift in Italians’ uses of and understandings of photography. Domestic photography of everyday life, rather than just ceremonial occasions, became ever more important in these years, as the camera – like the refrigerator and later the television – took its place as one of the required accoutrements of the modern middle-class family. Other commercial forms like advertising and fashion photography experienced a similar boom.

Overtly pandering to the lowest visual appetites, even while sometimes producing striking and beautiful images, the paparazzo appears to revel in sinking photography to the lowest order of representation – precisely the position to which Italian high culture had long since relegated it. At the same time, the paparazzo also embodies photography’s own unruly nature: its capacity to disrupt and disturb comfortable assumptions, to reveal more than it purports, even as it produces images that apparently conform to a set of pre-established norms. Looking at paparazzo photographs of the 1950s and 1960s now, a double temporality is apparent. On the one hand, for the paparazzo, the value of the photograph lay in its newness, its speedy (often via Vespa or Lambretta) capturing of a fleeting and preferably scandalous moment of fame, not to be preserved and cherished in an album of memories but rather to be sold and consumed, ready to make way for the next one. On the other hand, from the perspective of the long historical *durée*, paparazzo shots, like all photographs, monumentalize

the moment as irrevocably past, something that lends a paradoxically elegiac quality to these images of rampant and fleeting frivolity.

As the introduction and earlier chapters have demonstrated, in Italy photography was already a suspect form in many quarters, seen predominantly as a technical rather than an artistic medium and one whose public uses had been closely associated with the propaganda of the fascist *ventennio*. Its latest vernacular incarnations only served to confirm some of the prejudices against it and heighten anxieties over a society whose values were seen by both left wing and conservative commentators as rapidly changing for the worse. The image consumerism embodied in commercial and domestic photography of the 1950s and 1960s was of considerable concern to many contemporary intellectuals. But these kinds of photography also provided them with essential insights into Italy's rapidly transforming political and social landscape.

### Fellini and the Birth of the Paparazzo

Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1960) represents a watershed in Italian cinema for its spectacular depiction of the heady blurring of the real and the cinematic, and the glamorous and the sordid, as well as the clash of old and new values in a society of unprecedented social and geographical mobility. The film not only commented on Italian society and culture but also offered audiences an awareness of what Marcia Landy calls "the self-conscious uses of cinema as a major arbiter of contemporary life" (208). Its stylistic appeal was enormous, influencing and reflecting everything from fashion (the turtleneck sweater is still known as a *dolcevita* in Italy) to music, painting and media culture, and it played a key role in mythologizing a modern, urban world that stood in stark contrast to neo-realism's humble rural or impoverished settings. As mentioned above, it also gave the paparazzi their name: that of the eponymous street photographer sidekick (played by Walter Santesso) of Marcello Mastroianni's journalist protagonist (the character Marcello Rubini).

There is some debate about where Fellini and Flaiano found the name Paparazzo, an ambiguous genesis that points to the paparazzo's complex artificiality.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of the origins of the name, Koestenbaum notes:

The paparazzo is a fiction, not a vocation; it is a complicated cultural construction, composed certainly of recognizable behaviors, but also of misty projections. Like "flaneur," "sadomasochist," "vegetarian," or "abstract expressionist," "paparazzo" describes a practice, but also a refined, phantasmatic field of images, allegiances, and disavowals. (9)

Fellini's film both defined this field and captured its complexity by simultaneously critiquing and revelling in the sensual pleasure of the paparazzo fantasy. His paparazzi are like an evolutionary response to the glamorous fauna of the via Veneto – part of a new ecosystem founded on the consumption of the image. The event is the recording of the event via the paparazzo's gaze, rather than what happens to lie in front of that gaze – be it celebrity tiffs, fake miracles, or squalid deaths. In another very significant shift from the aesthetics of neo-realism, events no longer simply happen in the street, recorded (or not)



Figure 7.2 Paparazzo hovers behind Marcello and Maddalena on Fellini’s via Veneto. From *La dolce vita* (1960).

by the photographer. Commercial pressures dictate that drama has to be created out of uneventfulness and a demand for it created and supplied.

The paparazzo represents an apt symbol of the symbiosis of cinema and daily life in the Rome of the 1950s and beyond. Pinkus points to a clear relationship between the photography of scandal and the development of a new style of filmmaking “that seemed to mobilize the paparazzo shot, with all of its contradictions and instability” (2). In these terms, *La dolce vita* is the most famous and self-reflexive instance of such borrowing, depicting the often-unsavory antics of the new photographers and quoting some of the most striking stylistic aspects of their images. As Marcello, Maddalena (Anouk Aimée), and Paparazzo travel by car or on foot along the via Veneto, with its lights, vehicles, and cafes, the movie camera emulates the mobility of the Vespa-borne paparazzo camera, and both capture the literal and figurative signs of a society on the move (see Figure 7.2). This is not typical of Fellini’s style, so it is noteworthy that he employs these techniques in particular when recreating the worldly, shifting scene of via Veneto and its occupants – in constant motion (as well as upwardly mobile), except when stilled by a camera flash.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the sudden scene changes and obvious editing in *La dolce vita* – such as the cut from a panorama of St Peter’s Square to an extreme close-up of an exotic masked dancer in a Rome nightclub – recreate the sense of turning a page in an illustrated magazine from one startling photographic shoot to another.

Made by a man who himself achieved the status of what Frank Burke describes as that of the “director as superstar” in these years, *La dolce vita* represents the excesses of the burgeoning cult of celebrity and the new ways in which photography enabled – and at times forced – individuals to become the stars of their own lives (1). The frenzied paparazzi surrounding the voluptuous Hollywood actress Sylvia (Anita Ekberg)



**Figure 7.3** Anita Ekberg's 1956 arrival in Rome reinvented as Sylvia's. From *La dolce vita* (1960).

are the same ones who circle Signora Steiner (Renée Longarini), who, still ignorant of the deaths of her husband and children, asks "What? Have you mistaken me for a movie star?" In front of the cameras, both women must play the roles assigned them by a consumerist society equally hungry for images of celebrity and tragedy.

Sylvia's descent from the airplane is a beautifully choreographed re-enactment of Anita Ekberg's own carefully performed arrival in Rome in May 1956. Fellini takes the photographic reportage (available online from the Archivio Storico Istituto Luce) of the frenzy surrounding the event and elevates it to a level of spectacular visual composition and comic brilliance (Figure 7.3).<sup>4</sup> The actress' entrance is staged in every way, as is clear from the moment the paparazzi insist on her redoing her exit for a better photograph in a meta-filmic moment that anticipates the themes of *8½*. The posed nature of the entire process is echoed by the radio announcer's effusive commentary, the absurd presentation of a pizza – "colourful symbol of Italy" – and the exaggerated gallantry of those who whisk her away to the waiting car. Sylvia consumes her slice of pizza as the waiting men long to consume her – the "*bella bisteccona*," as one of them puts it – emphasizing the nature of stardom as a consumer product. The symbiotic relationship among the producers, subject, and consumers of the image of the star is emphasized again later when Paparazzo is told to leave her alone and replies, "But I'll give you fifty percent of the profits!"

Yet Fellini makes it clear that Mrs Steiner's descent from the bus is almost as much of a staged event as Sylvia's from the plane. While Mrs Steiner is still unaware of the role she has been assigned, Fellini makes the viewer uncomfortably conscious of the photogenic nature of tragedy and of its value as a spectacular visual product to be consumed. As Marcello and the police inspector wait for the bus in the desolate space in front of the Steiners' modern apartment block, the paparazzi wait, too, ready to photograph for a hungry public the dramatic scene of revelation and distress that must



Figure 7.4 Miraculous visions. From *La dolce vita* (1960).

surely unfold when Mrs Steiner learns of her husband’s murder of their children and suicide. The police inspector asks Marcello to call off his photographer friends, but Marcello can no more do this than he can extricate himself from a life lived entirely on the surface and from the society of mass consumption whose appetites he, too, contributes to feeding.

The society of the economic miracle is the society of the fake miracle – another staged pseudo-event – as Fellini makes explicit in the scene of the purported sighting of the Madonna by two Roman children in the poverty-ridden outskirts of Rome. Once again, the paparazzi crowd around the children in a frenzy of flashes to document their brief moment of celebrity (Figure 7.4). Hundreds of hysterical and desperate people hoping for their own personal miracles throng to the tree where the children supposedly saw the Madonna, pulling it to pieces in their desperation to collect pieces of it as relics. The scene ends with the discovery that one of the sick people who have been brought to the scene has died. As a priest blesses the body, Paparazzo makes the sign of the cross and then takes a photograph. For Paparazzo and the tastes he feeds, a live star, a false miracle, and a dead body all equate to a product to be sold and consumed – one that requires the photographer’s effort (“*sta fregatura*,” as Paparazzo himself calls it) to come into being.

Even without the presence of a horde of photographers, the partygoers of the final scene seem to be performing their hedonist rituals for a camera they no longer know how to do without. The discovery of the enormous fish on the beach, sometimes interpreted as a reference to the discovery of the body of Wilma Montesi on a beach near Rome, allegedly after a drug-fuelled orgy at the house of an aristocrat in April 1953 and the subsequent “Montesi scandal,” ties the ending of the film back to the merging of photographic and lived reality at its heart.<sup>5</sup> Frank Burke points to the shift in Fellini’s work “from films about ‘life’ to films about ‘representations of life’” but

places *La dolce vita* still in the phase of a certain social realism (31). Importantly, however, this realism is deployed in the service of representing the disappearance of reality under the weight of the photographic and the cinematic. Even as his film revels in this spectacular and beautiful disappearance, Fellini locates within it the loss of pre-boom values and ways of being, exposing, and exploiting to the full the deliberate glamour and unintentional pathos of the paparazzo shot.

### **Calvino's "Lens Madness"**

Italo Calvino, too, reads the photographic culture of the years of the boom as emblematic of the loss of older values of community and communication that many of his works of the 1950s and 1960s describe.<sup>6</sup> While all his writing shows his interest in the visual, several pieces from this period focus in particular on photography and its intrusions, distortions, and omissions. Although sceptical of many aspects of photographic practice and consumption, Calvino was fascinated by how a photograph is simultaneously singular and endlessly repeatable, an individual moment that nevertheless forms part of an ever-expanding mosaic of images documenting minutiae and major events.<sup>7</sup> His interest in vernacular photography (as both a means of documenting the newly widespread practice of leisure and as itself a leisure practice) shows his concern with the transformation of daily life into a spectacle that feeds on itself, where photographs of events substitute for the events themselves. In considering photography's omnipresence and new roles in the Italy of the boom, he initiates a series of reflections on the medium and its relation to a changing society and to the fundamental questions about being and representation that are a constant in his writing.

Calvino's 1955 article "La follia del mirino" expresses a great interest in and wariness about photography. Defining himself emphatically as a non-photographer, he turns his attention to the amateur rather than professional variety. Nevertheless, there is a distinct family resemblance between Flaiano's "petulant" paparazzi and Calvino's photograph-obsessed amateurs: the hordes of Italians who by the mid-1950s were spending their Sunday mornings hunting down photographic opportunities like the example shown in Figure 7.5, returning "*tutti contenti come cacciatori dal carniere ricolmo*" ("all happy like hunters with full game bags") to await anxiously the photographic prints that would finally allow them to "*prendere tangibilmente possesso della giornata trascorsa*" ("take tangible possession of the day they have spent"; 2,218). Calvino's representation of these "*fotografi da strapazzo*" ("third-rate photographers") suggests that he sees the democratization of the photographic medium as doing nothing to overcome its fundamental unreality, while exponentially increasing its invasive impact. Calvino's observations are based on the Benjaminian questions of whether reality can be recorded photographically and how what is photographed relates to reality. Calvino questions the notion that the snapshot is somehow more "real" than the studio photograph, arguing that the posed photographs of the past, with their load of social, anthropological, and aesthetic meanings, as well as all the fake, forced, hypocritical aspects of a family grouping, are perfectly analogous



Figure 7.5 Anonymous amateur photograph, ca. 1950s, found at Porta Portese market, Rome. Gelatin silver print. Collection of the author.

to the contemporary family snapshot, which, he argues, in nine out of ten cases gives a false image of the family. As Marco Belpoliti points out, Calvino sets up a polemical parallel between literature and photography, comparing the charm of old, posed photographs to the texts of the past that stylistic criticism transforms into “invaluable monuments of language and taste” (*L'occhio* 118).

Calvino’s assertions about photography show clearly how he uses the medium to reflect on issues central to his writing and resonate with later writings that deal with photography’s invasiveness and omnipresence and the question of its difference from or similarity to writing, such as his *La giornata di uno scrutatore* (1963; *The Watcher*, 1971) and *Palomar* (1983; *Mr Palomar*, 1985).<sup>8</sup> They reveal his desire for an impersonal, rational perspective; his interest in processes of observation, vision, and blindness; and his obsession with exhausting the descriptive possibilities of the world. He compares the obsessive photographing of his invented photographer with the diary and autobiographical literature, making the claim that in these apparently rational forms lurks “*un tentacolo di pazzia*” (“a tentacle of madness”; 2,218). Instead, he argues, “*la vera ragione umana è scelta, organizzazione, invenzione*” (“True human reason is choice, organization, invention”; 2,218) – terms that sum up key elements

of his own writing and oppose it to what he implies is a photographic aesthetic of unthinking realism and pseudo-rationality.

In the article's last paragraph he argues for the different status of the professional (but non-paparazzo) photographer, “*che sa che la realtà della storia si legge nei suoi continui momenti eccezionali, non nella sua (apparente) mediocrità quotidiana*” (“who knows that historical reality is to be read in its continuous exceptional moments, not in its [apparent] day-to-day mediocrity”; 2,220). Yet with time Calvino lost faith in the distinction between Cartier-Bressonian *moments décisifs* and the banality of daily life captured by the amateur. This change of heart is evident in “*L'avventura di un fotografo*” (The Adventure of a Photographer) a fictionalized rewriting of the 1955 article drafted in the late 1950s and published in 1970 in the collection *Amori difficili* (Difficult Loves, 1984). It reflects the results of Calvino's ongoing use of photography and “photographic man” to think about the substitution of representation for reality and reflect on alienation in contemporary society. Calvino's principal arguments – some taken verbatim from the earlier article – are now put into the mouth of the protagonist, Antonino Paraggi, who initially assumes Calvino's role of non-photographer, but lurches to the opposite extreme, becoming a sort of super-paparazzo in the persistent invasiveness of his photography.

Antonino is scornful of his friends' obsession with documenting every aspect of their lives and refuses to join their hunt for the ungraspable (“*L'avventura*” 1,103). However, he is seduced into picking up a camera by the charms and flattery of two young women who want him to record their enjoyment of their leisure time (an important phenomenon of the so-called economic miracle) and soon finds himself in the throes of an obsession with capturing the image of one of them, Bice. Unlike the amateur and professional photographers Calvino discusses in the 1955 article, Antonino takes an intellectual or even philosophical approach to photography. As such, he carries out a series of experiments that follow the history and conventions of photography and their development, from the carefully posed and socially loaded portraits of the nineteenth century on through the history of photography. In this, too, he is the photographic alter ego of his author, whose experimentation with literary styles and genres led ultimately to metanarrative novels like *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (1979; *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, 1981), which explores the processes of producing and consuming novels and points to a crisis of representation brought about by their proliferation.

Antonino's attempt to “capture” Bice meets only with failure, however, since “*quel segreto che gli sembra d'esser lì lì per cogliere sul viso di lei era qualcosa che lo trascinava nelle sabbie mobili degli stati d'animo, degli umori, della psicologia*” (1,103; “that secret he seemed on the very point of capturing in her face, was something that drew him into the quicksands of moods, humors, psychology” 228).<sup>9</sup> Like Calvino in almost of all his narratives, Antonino pulls back from those perilous regions. Rather than seeking to show the inner Bice, he decides to try to capture the outer layer, the mask that she, like everyone, wears. Using increasingly sophisticated photographic equipment, he experiments

with photographing Bice in innumerable poses and attitudes, and in increasing degrees of undress. After using up dozens of photographic plates, he tells her to get dressed, since “*ormai ti ho presa*” (1,106; “I’ve got you now” 223) and is stunned when she bursts into tears. He discovers that he is in love with her, and from then on his passion for Bice is inextricably bound up with his obsession with photographing her.

The act of photography is part of the process of seduction, yet Antonino’s eventual physical possession of Bice is less important to him than his doomed attempt to possess her photographically. When his friends question him about his concentration on only one photographic subject he replies that this obsessive focus is a deliberate methodological choice: “*La fotografia ha un senso solo se esaurisce tutte le immagini possibili*” (1,107; “Photography has a meaning only if it exhausts all possible images” 233). Antonino’s irrational assertion of the necessity of totalizing photography recalls Calvino’s comments in the earlier article about the “tentacle of madness” in forms that try to capture reality in its totality, but it also connects with Calvino’s own desire to exhaust the possibilities of signification in literature and his interest in seriality and combinatorial games.

The story illustrates a longing for authorial impersonality that is common in Calvino’s writing. In this case, it is also a desire for a total absence of posing that only the absence of the viewer’s greedy gaze could make possible – something utterly unattainable in a society of spectacle. Antonino desires above all to catch Bice unawares, unposed:

*tenerla sotto il tiro d’obiettivi nascosti, fotografarla non solo senza farsi vedere ma senza vederla, sorprenderla com’era in assenza del suo sguardo, di qualsiasi sguardo ... Era una Bice invisibile che voleva possedere, una Bice assolutamente sola, una Bice la cui presenza presupponesse l’assenza di lui e di tutti gli altri.* (“Avventura” 1,107)

[to keep her in the range of hidden lenses, to photograph her not only without letting himself be seen but without seeing her, to surprise her as she was in the absence of his gaze, of any gaze ... It was an invisible Bice that he wanted to possess, a Bice absolutely alone, a Bice whose presence presupposed the absence of him and everyone else.] (233)

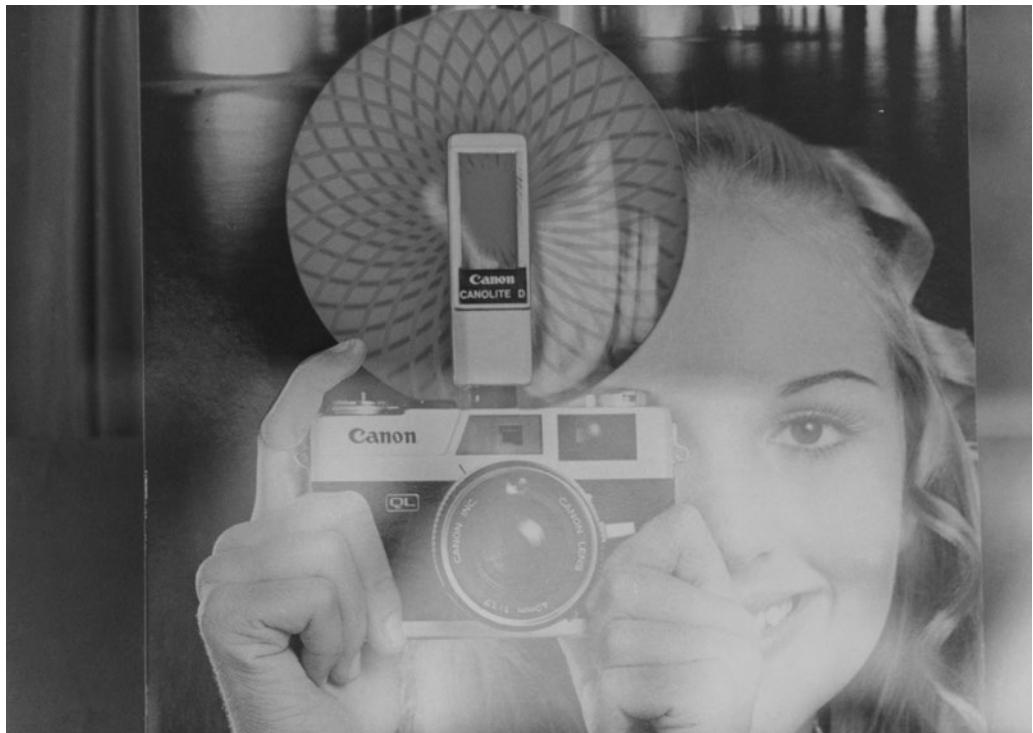
If the invisible object of his desiring gaze is this unseeable Bice, then equally Antonino’s unattainable fantasy is to be a kind of “non-existent” paparazzo, invading his subject’s unseen existence in the most radical way imaginable.<sup>10</sup> The impossibility of achieving this kind of photography connects the medium to the kinds of impossibility of writing that are at the heart of Calvino’s self-reflexive later works, which grapple with problems of authorial objectivity and how to make sense of external phenomena in a society in which moments of connection and communication between humans can only be fleeting or illusory.

Like the eponymous protagonist of *Palomar*, Antonino vainly tries to fix the unfixable and create a total representation of reality piece by piece in order to master it by possessing it. But the bitter trick of the illusion of possession that photography grants the photographer – what Franco Vaccari in Chapter 12 of this book calls the “defeat

of desire and intention” – becomes painfully evident when Bice leaves Antonino, and it is brought home to him that a photograph always depicts both a presence and an absence: the presence of the image of the photographic subject at a given moment and the literal absence of that subject.

Antonino now photographs the objects that surrounded Bice in his photographs, capturing “*l’assenza di Bice*” (1,108; “the absence of Bice” 233). He decides to create a catalogue of everything that resists photography, “*lasciato fuori sistematicamente dal campo visivo non solo delle macchine ma degli uomini*” (1,108; “systematically omitted from the visual field not only by cameras but also by human beings” 234). He begins photographing the photographs in the newspapers piled up in the apartment, establishing a connection between “*il suo obiettivo e quello di lontani fotoreporter*” (1,108; “his lens and that of distant news photographers” 234). Unable to reconcile the question of the relation of the different forms and modes of photography, he rips up all his photographs of emptiness and his photographs of photographs. He is about to throw away these scraps wrapped up in newspaper when he is struck by the thought that “*Forse la fotografia totale ... è un mucchio di frammenti d’immagini private, sullo sfondo sgualcito delle stragi e delle incoronazioni*” (1,109; “Perhaps true, total photography ... is a pile of fragments of private images, against the creased background of massacres and coronations” 235). The image forcefully recalls the photographic culture of the 1950s and 1960s, with illustrated magazines in which paparazzo photographs jostled with news images and pictures of ordinary life, the magazines in turn taking their place in domestic spaces where snapshots and portraits of family life sat alongside the other trappings of consumer culture. Where earlier Antonino’s obsession with photographing all of reality restored photography to that reality, Calvino here points to the reabsorption of photography into the world of the photographic. His obsession now is with how image consumption undoes representation. Calvino’s description of the relation of public and private images again illustrates the dramatic blurring of the margins between them in the Italy of the economic miracle. Like the other artists discussed in this chapter, Calvino points to the incommensurable disproportion between the day-to-day private sphere and the spectacularized public sphere, between the unknowable and the cliché, even as the one collapses into the other.

Antonino is inspired to take one last photograph of his collage of private and public images. Finally, having exhausted all other possibilities, he realizes that “*fotografare fotografie era la sola via che gli restava, anzi la vera via che lui aveva oscuramente cercato fino allora*” (1,109; “photographing photographs was the only course that he had left – or rather, the true course that he had obscurely been seeking all this time” 235). As Marco Belpoliti argues, the story’s ending illustrates the idea that “the true path of the writing-photography of the world is the writing-photography of writing-photography itself, a circular process of self-reflexivity from which there is no escape” (*L’occhio* 124). In these terms, Calvino’s choice of the Dantean name “Bice” – a reminder of the quintessential ungraspable woman of Italian literature – for Antonino’s muse suggests that rather than guiding



**Figure 7.6** Luigi Ghirri, Lucerne 1970–1, *Paesaggi di cartone* © Ghirri Estate. Colour photograph. Courtesy of the Ghirri Estate.

her devotee to paradise, this Beatrice has abandoned him in a postmodern inferno of photographic simulacra.

### **Boom! Antonioni’s *Blow-Up***

A similar hell lurks below what is perhaps the most famous cinematic meditation on photography’s relation to an unknowable reality, Michelangelo Antonioni’s classic 1966 film *Blow-Up*. Antonioni, himself a photographer, had directed the John Van Druten play *I Am a Camera* in 1957, and many of his early films show his interest in the medium, particularly in its popular forms.<sup>11</sup> In *Blow-Up* he returns to photography to reflect on the relation between images and things and the question of whether the camera reproduces or produces reality. Both the content and the form of the film challenge traditional narratives and reiterate Antonioni’s recurrent theme of an alienating modernity that renders true human communication impossible. Basing the film loosely on a short story by the Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar and on the life of British fashion and celebrity photographer David

Bailey, Antonioni set it in the swinging London of the 1960s and cast mainly British actors, including David Hemmings and Vanessa Redgrave. The film's often-startling images and lush colour compositions render the mod world the protagonist inhabits. But for all its deliberate markers of Englishness (down to the grey weather and busby-wearing guardsman of the opening scenes, and the extensive use of Victorian and Brutalist London architecture) and its carefully drawn portrait of a very specific moment of London's recent history, *Blow-Up* is in some ways a peculiarly Italian film which reflects a concern with the issues of visibility and invisibility and the commercialization of seeing that other post-boom Italian intellectuals and artists were exploring in relation to photography. As Angelo Restivo notes, "*Blow-Up*'s brilliance comes out of its uniquely hybrid position: where the 'Italian question' of the indexicality of the image – having been taken to its limit by the Italian cinematic tradition – now is brought to bear on a new, com-modified image, and the resulting subjectivities that emerge from such an image culture" (108). The film's critique of the indexicality of the photographic image overturns the bases of neo-realism and clears the way for a new, globalized reality, even as it bears the weight of the Italian visual tradition from which Antonioni emerged. Earlier chapters in this book have shown how photography both asserted and questioned the concept of the Italian nation right back at its birth. Here, in a very different situation and indeed a different country, Antonioni bears witness to the birth of globalization while at the same time showing both the internationalism and specificity of photography.

An apparent gulf between human eye and photographic technology becomes clear in the famous scene in which the protagonist, Thomas, a high-profile fashion photographer, enlarges a series of photographs he has sneakily taken of a couple in a park, only to discover apparent evidence of a murder that must have taken place before his unseeing eyes.<sup>12</sup> While he thought he was witnessing (and intruding upon, paparazzo-like) a romantic encounter, his camera was registering details that later enable him to decipher completely different stories from the same scene – a version of Benjamin's "unconscious optics" (*Illuminations* 237). As Thomas lines up the enlargements and examines them with a magnifying glass ([Figure 7.7](#)), Antonioni's movie camera transforms the still photographs into a crime film – a literal instance of photographic stillness in motion. A narrative constructed from photographic "evidence" seems to lend authority to Thomas's initial belief that his presence saved a man from attempted murder and then to his subsequent conclusion that the murder did take place, something apparently confirmed by his nocturnal return visit to the park and the discovery of a corpse in exactly the position captured on film.

But the fact that Thomas constructs more than one story from the same pictures already challenges the notion that the proof offered by photographs – serial and reproducible by nature – could be singular. This becomes only too clear when the photographs are stolen, and he is left with only one blurred image of what may or may not be the shape of a body.<sup>13</sup> When he returns to the park and finds that the corpse has also vanished, the narrative itself disintegrates, along with the line dividing evi-



Figure 7.7 A crucial detail? From *Blow-Up* (1966).

dence and invention. The evidence of his eyes and that of the camera are equated in the moment in which they are both negated. Playing on the double meaning of the term *blow up*, Antonioni shows how the search for an increasingly detailed picture of the truth leads to the explosion of meaning into multiple unreadable fragments and possible narratives, like a microcosm of Antonino's collage of photographic scraps. The director ends the film with a meta-filmic argument for the impossibility of escaping or standing outside representation, with Thomas himself disappearing before the viewer's eyes. *Blow-Up* suggests that in a world ever more mediated by photographic images, the distinction between eye and lens, truth and fiction becomes increasingly impossible to ascertain.

Thomas is suspended between two apparently opposed photographic aesthetics, one closer to *La dolce vita*'s visions of glamour and celebrity, the other to the neorealist roots of postwar Italian photography. His photographic investigation is set in the context of his career as a successful fashion photographer and his work on a book of photographs of the homeless. His job as a fashion photographer requires him to meld truth and fiction into a palatable form for consumers – one that stimulates them to buy, just as it rewards him economically – and situates him in a world of photographic superficiality and gorgeous but untrustworthy images. At the same time, his book project, for which at the beginning of the film he has been sleeping at a homeless shelter and taking pictures of its regulars, suggests a desire to document neglected social realities. Ultimately however, Thomas's lack of empathy for his photographic subjects, be they fashion models, dying vagrants, or indeed a putative murder victim,



Figure 7.8 Thomas and Verushka. From *Blow-Up* (1966).

reveals that his camera reduces them all to objects of visual consumption, cut off from any possibility of genuine human contact or connection.

Thomas is so dependent on his camera that it has become for him the intermediary between himself and what surrounds him. He views the world in fragments: a result of the way his camera mediates his relation to experience and the cause of his ultimately fruitless attempt to use his camera as an epistemological tool. Although the film hints at other aspects to his character, in a number of scenes Thomas is shown as verbally inarticulate, materialistic, voyeuristic, and emotionally distant, his camera lens a prosthetic eye. He is profoundly detached from those around him, as the screens, frames, panes, and lenses through which he sees and is seen make manifest. It is only the act and processes of photography that can rouse him to something resembling passion. His appetite for the many objects he feels he must have – from a piece of a broken guitar or an airplane propeller to a particular painting, photograph, or woman – vanishes as soon as he possesses them or when they disappear from sight.

For Thomas, visual possession is the only kind that counts. In another famous scene, he photographs the fashion model Verushka in a kind of violent pseudo-seduction, straddling her and pushing his camera down towards her before kissing her neck and telling her, “Hold that … Give it to me! Give it to me! Hold that! Yes … yes … yes!” and then casually stepping off and over her to collapse onto a sofa once he has the pictures he wants (Figure 7.8). Thomas has gone beyond Calvino’s Antonino and his amorous attempts to possess Bice through photography, to a point where visual consumption of the photographic subject within a system of economic exchange

replaces physical consummation and human interaction. A circular and aggressive voyeurism is the only possible outlet of desire in this system of consumerist scopophilia – the paparazzo aesthetic taken to the extreme.

Yet photography also offers the possibility of returning to the mysterious, the unseen, and the unseeable. Antonioni’s film subverts the whodunit formula, as the protagonist is unable to resolve the mystery by deciphering photographic clues, and his attempts to reconstruct a story from photographic and other fragments are doomed to failure. Instead, the film focuses on the desire to represent the unrepresentable and to know the unknowable, which photography comes to symbolize, as in Calvino’s “L’avventura di un fotografo.” Thomas’s disappearance at the end of the film is perhaps the only means of representing the unrepresentable absence of the blank page, the dark screen, the area cut off by the edge of the photograph. As Calvino’s work affirms, this space of absence is also the birthplace of every literary, filmic, or photographic appearance. In the context of a society in thrall to the myth of total visibility – a visibility to be consumed – Antonioni, like the other authors discussed here, poses the crucial question of what happens in such a society to the invisible, the space of alternative values that resist a purely consumerist way of seeing.

### **Scandalous Bodies: Pasolini and Photography**

A fascination with how late-capitalist consumer society polices the boundaries of what can and cannot be seen as well as what can and cannot be spoken lies at the heart of the late works of Pier Paolo Pasolini. His radical, cynical, and compromised critique of the society of spectacle recognizes its own defeat from the beginning but continues to seek out spaces of resistance and refuse the logic of what he saw as the consumer inferno of late 1960s and early 1970s Italy. Perhaps Italy’s most controversial and “scandalous” intellectual, he underwent what Simona Bondavalli calls a “transition from avant-garde author of the page to celebrity author of the screen” (24). Persecuted by numerous trials and libels, his photographed image was widely circulated and played an important role in perceptions of his non-literary public persona. Pasolini was also keenly aware of the extent to which photographic celebrity was a product of a capitalist consumer society that he saw as all-encompassing and inescapable, employing the metaphor of a palace inside a prison to describe consumerism’s results. He argued in *Lettere luterane* that while intellectuals occupied themselves with considering the palace (i.e., the seat of traditional power), what they failed to recognize was that “leaving the Palace you fall back into a new ‘inside’: the penitentiary of consumerism” (qtd. in Bondavalli 27). In this new order, as he wrote in *Saggi sulla politica e sulla società*, “the intellectual is *where* the cultural industry places him: *because* and *how* the market wants him” (qtd. in Bondavalli 29). As a result, as Bondavalli puts it, “Pasolini responds to the critical tendency to divert attention from the subject in art by creating a spectacular self: not by avoiding the spectacle that threatens his literary identity, but by embracing it and using it critically” (29). While Bondavalli assesses this process in relation to Pasolini’s editorials and interviews, my contention here is that his understanding of photography’s role in the

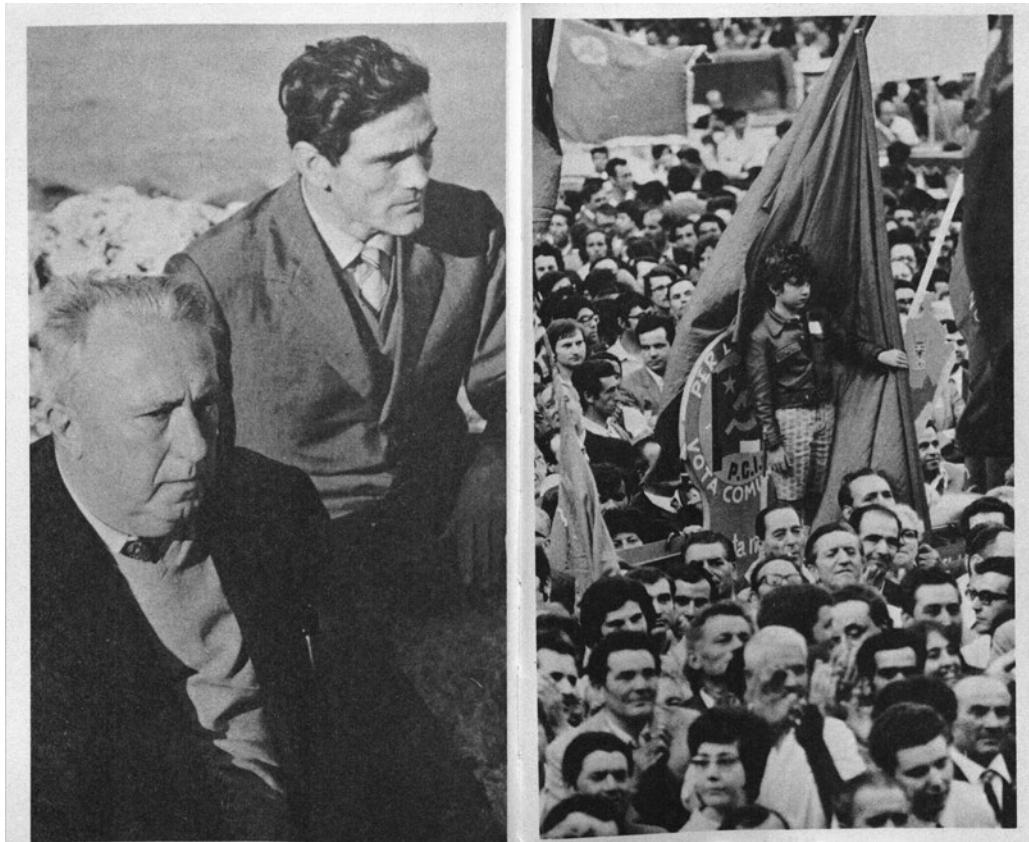


Figure 7.9 Pasolini and Gadda; Communist party meeting. From *La divina mimesis* (1975).

commoditization of the intellectual shaped his own uses of the medium but tragically failed to affect his own post-mortem commoditization.

As a filmmaker, Pasolini's relationship to photographic images was a particularly intense one, but in the years leading up to his death, he engaged with still photography in some interesting but remarkably little-studied ways.<sup>14</sup> One example is his *La divina mimesis* (sent to the publishers just before Pasolini's death in 1975).<sup>15</sup> The book is a fragmented and fragmentary prose rewriting of Dante's *Divina Commedia*. In it, Pasolini encounters his younger self, the poet of *Le ceneri di Gramsci* (1957; *The Ashes of Gramsci*), who serves as his Virgil through the neocapitalist inferno of 1960s Italy (the decade in which Pasolini began his career as a director and made the majority of his films). It offers an apocalyptic view of contemporary Italy and what Pasolini saw as the ideological, poetic and, intellectual crisis that afflicted both him and his society. The book includes a series of twenty-five photographs in a separate

section entitled “Iconografia ingiallita” at the end, showing a series of living and dead figures, places and objects of significance to Pasolini, such as the left-wing martyrs Grimaù and Lambrakis, Gramsci’s tombstone, Pasolini with Carlo Emilio Gadda, and groups of communists and Fascists. While the photographs are necessarily fragments – sliced out of reality, as Christian Metz would have it – the text, too, is deliberately constructed to be fragmentary, as the only possible means of expressing the author’s sense of personal and societal crisis.

Within the text, Pasolini makes explicit the connection between the yellowed photographs and his younger self and earlier works by repeatedly using the term *ingiallito* (*yellowed*) to describe all three. The notion of yellowing expresses the ways in which poetry is marginalized in the infernal society of the economic boom and the poet’s own loss of faith in the idea of the *poesia civile* (civic poetry) written by the younger Pasolini of *Le ceneri di Gramsci*. Describing both his Virgil figure and his written works with the same term he uses to describe the yellowed photographs (*La divina mimesis* 14, 15), Pasolini emphasises his sensation of the fading and dying of all three. The oft-repeated term *ingiallito* implies the slow disappearance of a writing that is no longer able to represent the new reality of the 1960s and the fading from memory of the period with which it was engaged. As Rinaldo Rinaldi writes, this shows the reduction of his poetic project of the 1950s to purely commercial terms: “A book [is] a product inserted like all the others into the industrialized universe; an object subject to purchase and sale, to consumption (perhaps critical) and to ‘yellowing’” (194–5).<sup>16</sup> At the same time, amid an inferno of commercialization, of which the photograph’s reproducibility and disposability are symptomatic and in which poetry itself seems destined to yellow and fade, Pasolini makes use of the “chaotic,” living form of the book and the fragmentary nature of the photograph to create a space in which poetry might survive to outlive its author and its historical moment.

Pasolini writes in the preface that the photographs “vogliono avere la logica, meglio che di una illustrazione, di una (peraltro assai leggibile) ‘poesia visiva’” (“aim to have the logic of a ‘visual poem’ [which is, apart from anything else, quite *legible*]”). In describing the photographs as a poem, and the often highly lyrical text as a document, the author defines unexpected roles for word and image and deliberately undermines the documentary status of the photographic image. Rather than employing photographs as a means of authentication and possession of the past, Pasolini uses them to emphasize its ungraspable nature and the pain of its fading. For example, one of the photographs shows a group of partisans, placed opposite a picture of Gramsci’s tomb (Figure 7.10). The reader comes to the image in the appendix, long after the description in the text of the partisans. Nevertheless, it resonates strongly with what Pasolini writes there, where he recalls a moment in which it seemed that the dream of unity among bourgeois intellectuals and workers could be accomplished and expresses a tremendous sense of loss: “Guarda le loro fotografie ormai ingiallite. Erano popolo. Erano gioventù. Erano classe operaia” (“Look at their now-yellowed photographs. They were the people. They were youth. They were the working class”; *La divina mimesis* 31–2). He places the emphasis on the pastness of these partisans,

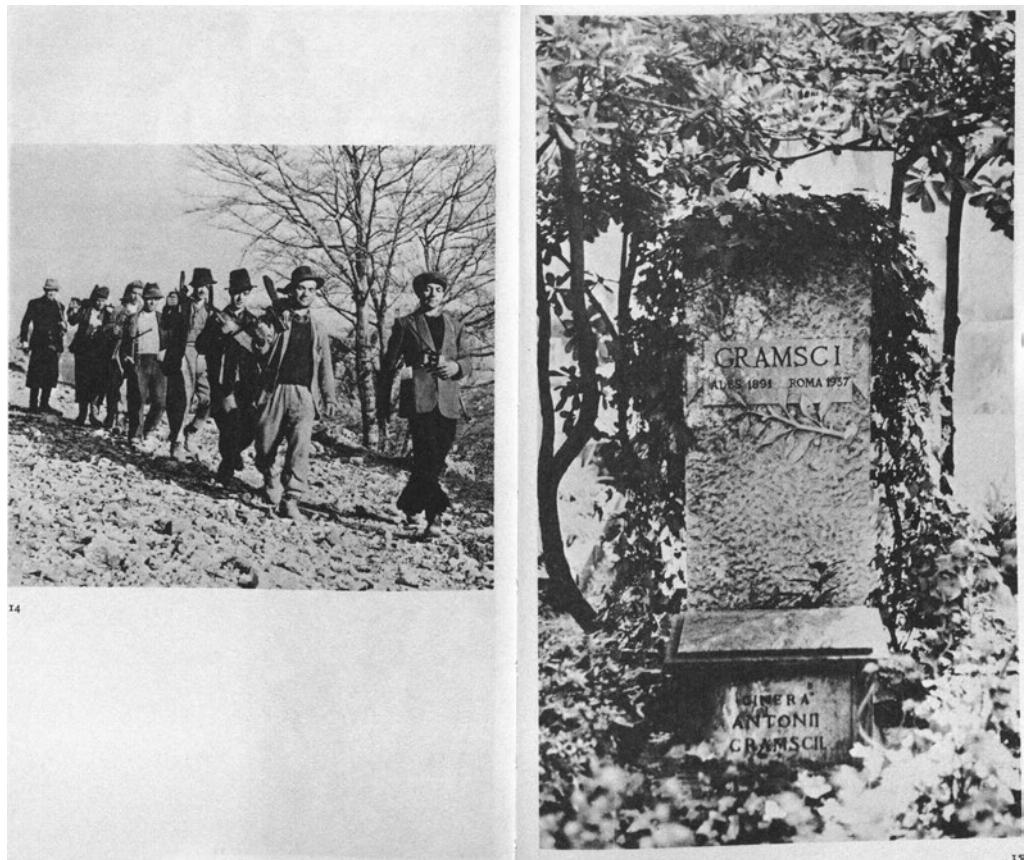


Figure 7.10 A group of partisans; Gramsci's tomb. From *La divina mimesis* (1975).

with an obvious nostalgia for a moment that has faded like the yellowed photographs of the men.

Pasolini's descriptions of his younger self or of his memories of an earlier time often make reference to potentially pernicious photographic effects. For example, he describes himself looking at his defenceless younger self with "*quello sguardo che finisce con l'umiliare chi osserva e chi è osservato. Un'indebita appropriazione della realtà altrui, che rende ancor più indebito lo stringimento di pietà che poi se ne prova*" ("that gaze that ends up humiliating both he who observes and he who is observed. An undue appropriation of another's reality that makes the shudder of pity that one then feels about it even more undue"; *La divina mimesis* 22–3). The description of the gaze that humiliates both he who observes and he who is observed and of the "undue appropriation of another's reality" recalls the intrusiveness of a

photographic gaze based on the desire to *commodify* such appropriated realities. The scandal photography of the 1950s and 1960s stands at the opposite extreme to Pasolini’s definition of the “scandalous” nature of his works, whose content and style shocked and horrified many of his contemporaries. Sam Rohdie points out that despite Pasolini’s participation in all levels of contemporary mass media, “he refused to deliver it an accommodating product” (Rohdie, *Passion* 128), instead opting to discomfort the reader/viewer in terms of both form and content. For Pasolini, “scandalous” meant the means by which he guaranteed his work’s “unconsumability and unpossessability” (*ibid.*).

Pasolini’s collection and arrangement of the photographic images that follow the text of *La Divina Mimesis* suggest an increasing interest in how the still photographic image relates to these questions. For Walter Siti, “*Petrolio* links up with *La divina mimesis* to form a comprehensive imitation-emulation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. The novel is almost a derisive, consumer Paradise following upon the *Inferno* of this earlier text” (68). A crucial link between the two works is the remarkable series of photographs Pasolini asked the young and talented Dino Pedriali to take just a month before his death.<sup>17</sup> According to Pedriali, the writer intended to use these photographs as an appendix to his unfinished and at the time unpublished *Petrolio*, an extraordinary allegorical and political experimental novel. After having Pedriali take a series of photographs of him at Sabaudia, he swore the photographer to secrecy and invited him to come to his house at Torre di Chia, where Pedriali spent a day and a night photographing the writer. While the photographs that Pedriali took of Pasolini writing, sketching, and reading during this visit have appeared in a number of venues, the photographer initially refused to show the series of nude photographs taken on the same visit after Pasolini’s death, and so they remained relatively little-known for years.<sup>18</sup> In an interview with me in Rome in 2008, Pedriali stated that Pasolini had a very clear idea of what he wanted the photographs to show and how they were going to relate to *Petrolio* (Hill and Pedriali), something that he has reiterated on numerous subsequent occasions.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the fact that Pasolini had already included photographs in his *La divina mimesis* provides a precedent for this type of phototextual experimentation.

Pedriali says that Pasolini asked him to take a series of nude photographs in whatever way the photographer saw fit, but to make it appear as though the writer were unaware of his presence, to give the impression of someone who was being spied upon. Only at the end of the series would he appear to intuit the presence of someone observing him. The photographs held in the Cineteca di Bologna correspond closely to this outline and show Pasolini in his room, lying on his bed or sitting on a chair reading or walking about the room. Although the Cineteca di Bologna photographs are not numbered or collected in any obvious order, they can be arranged to follow a clear narrative and temporal progression, which can be deduced from the changing light and from the photographed actions of the subject.

The photographs are taken from outside the house, looking in through the bedroom window, as is clear from the reflections of trees and sky in the glass of the window in the earlier photographs, and by the shape of the window frame visible in



Figure 7.11 Dino Pedriali, *Pier Paolo Pasolini. Chia, 1975*. Gelatin silver print. © Dino Pedriali.

the foreground of many of the images, as in Figure 7.11, where the tilt of the camera suggests a surreptitiously taken picture. At the same time, the angle and the striking contrast of light and dark draw attention to how the edges of the window and of the photography itself doubly frame Pasolini's nude body, lit from behind as though by spotlight. The positioning of the photographer (and hence the viewer) outside these frames and edges suggests a voyeuristic gaze that observes without being observed. The photographic narrative appears to begin with Pasolini apparently unaware that he is being watched, as he lies naked on his bed reading a book. In various photographs, he moves from the bed to a chair, onto his feet, and, apparently glimpsing something or someone out of the window, towards the glass. He raises a hand to his brow and leans against the glass in order to be able to see out, rather than just see his own reflection in the glass. He peers out into what is now the dusk, as though aware that someone is out there, watching him.

Although as art photographs taken with their subject’s permission Pedriali’s are very different from paparazzi images, they mimic the trope of unveiling something the subject would have preferred to keep hidden. Indeed, Pasolini described the complicity that lies behind all such images, in that consumer society creates a market for them and must therefore supply that market, so that the price of fame is the right to control one’s own image: “It is a kind of game, whose rules are accepted by both sides: on one side the exploiters, producers, publishers, directors of bourgeois magazines, whoever they are – on the other the exploited, that is the person who had the disgrace to be successful” (qtd. in Bondavalli 29). Yet in their artful artlessness, their interplay of inside and outside, observer and observed, Pedriali’s photographs are very far from the product of a hasty rush for a photographic scoop.

Furthermore, the full-frontal nudity of some of the images – juxtaposed with the open book held in the author’s hands – goes beyond the conventions of the paparazzo shot and the demands of the fame image market to confront the viewer with the “scandalous” body of Italy’s only openly gay celebrity intellectual. The photographs are a confirmation of Pasolini as a scandalous subject, which is what the mass media consumerist system needed him to be, but in the (photographic, in this case) performance of this role lies his critique: “I take advantage of capitalist structures to express myself, and I do it, therefore, cynically” (qtd. in Bondavalli 42). As there is no longer a point at which to stand outside the society of spectacle, he critiques it from within by constructing a spectacular image of himself that – in its conscious use of an evidently fictional photographic narrative – in turn points to the constructed, fictive nature of all such images.

In discussing Pasolini’s approach to the interview, Bondavalli notes that Pasolini “treats ‘regular’ interviews as creative work, fashioning a coherent author that will please literary critics and a ‘scandalous’ persona that will satisfy the public eager for celebrity insights” (37). In contrast, the interviews Pasolini inserted into his films and poetry “become metaphors of the artist’s problematic relation with [the culture] industry and examples of his skilful manipulation of the media” (*ibid.*). Were the Pedriali photographs intended to perform a similar function in relation to *Petrolio*? While the issues of photographic doubling, voyeurism, and commodification of the body and its image can clearly be related to central themes of *Petrolio*, with its doubled “Carlo” protagonists, the question of how, precisely, Pasolini intended to use Pedriali’s photographs in relation to the novel can only be a matter of speculation today.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, as Belpoliti points out, *Petrolio*’s deliberately disrupted structure, in which the plot is continually interrupted by the narrator’s conversation with the reader, itself suggests the appropriateness of a photographic component that would have functioned as part of the “meta-story” (Pasolini 80). The Pedriali photographs intended for *Petrolio* show that Pasolini – himself so often the subject of paparazzi photographs – had a strong awareness of the role of the photographic product in contemporary consumer society and an interest in collaborating with a different kind of photographer to explore the possibilities of a photographic self that could “scandalously” escape that economy. By entering bodily into his work, that photographic self stages (at least figuratively) what Bazzocchi calls “the anxiety

of self-annulment” that haunts *Petrolio* (qtd. in Belpoliti, *Pasolini* 83). In this way his self-exposure is not just an act of aestheticizing narcissism but a way to put an image of himself “into the work’s circulation of meanings, and thus annul himself” (Bazzocchi). If this is the case, then, Pasolini’s use of his own image pushes the cannibalistic intrusion of paparazzo photography to its ultimate extreme, in an attempt to force a way out of the infernal capitalist structures in which he saw himself and his society as trapped.

According to the poet Dario Bellezza, the Pedriali nude photographs represent “the last scandal for which he was preparing” (24). But instead, the photographs of Pasolini that were published were the shocking pictures of his dead body, taken at Ostia on the morning of 2 November 1975. John Di Stefano writes that it was the police who provided this “final image of Pasolini’s body.” As he puts it:

The gruesomeness of this image and the fact that it was even considered fit to print sent a profound and horrific message to anyone who dares challenge the order and assert his or her difference ... It is a testimony to the fears of a society. This is the last image we have to ‘remember’ Pasolini by. (23)

In fact, this was not to be the “last image” of Pasolini. In February 1979, *L’Espresso* published the very differently scandalous – and all too consumable – ones of his naked, battered corpse on the autopsy table.

In the photographs of the poet’s body in the morgue we see not only the extreme end of the paparazzo spectrum but also the degree of institutional complicity and/or corruption that must lie behind them. For Bellezza, these pictures were a vicious and hateful sign of a kind of persecution beyond the grave, a “second killing” carried out on a defenceless victim (50). The publication of these photographs raised alarming questions about the way the story of Pasolini’s life and death was being framed and the reasons for the morbid curiosity behind such pictures. Bellezza’s suggestion is that while the nude photographs Pasolini chose to have taken would have deeply scandalized those who were horrified by his politics, his sexuality, and his art, these same people were far less upset by the gruesome photographs of his cadaver. He contrasts this with the reaction to the publication of the morgue photographs of Aldo Moro. While there was an investigation into how the latter came into the public domain, and those responsible were eventually punished, no such investigation took place in the case of Pasolini.

Pasolini chose to have Pedriali take photographs of his fifty-year-old body, willingly submitting to the camera’s gaze and the photographer’s intuition – and, as I have argued, exploiting its objectifying potential to resist the invisibility his society would seek to impose on him. But, as Bellezza writes, “he would never have wanted to be remembered by his friends, his readers, and his admirers with those photos torn who knows how from the hands of the morgue police” (29). He goes on to say that the publication of “those repugnant photographs” stems from “a psychotic and necrophiliac force that ... wants to recall not what Pasolini was and will always be, a poet, but only a clinical, pathological case” (*ibid.*).

These remarks recall Allan Sekula’s characterization of the emergence in the nineteenth century of photographic portraits and depictions of the body as part of “a system of representation capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*” (345). The honorific function emerged from photography’s popularization and degradation of portraiture’s traditional function of “providing for the ceremonial presentation of the bourgeois self,” while the repressive function stemmed from “the imperatives of medical and anatomical illustration” and worked “to establish and delimit the terrain of the *other*, to define both the *generalized look* – the typology – and the *contingent instance* of deviance and social pathology” (*ibid.*). In the context of their connection to *Petrolio*, Pedriali’s photographs can thus be interpreted as an attempt to undermine bourgeois convention by employing the honorific function of photography in the interests of a ceremonial presentation of a story of “deviance.” In Sekula’s terms, Bellezza’s repulsion at the publication of the photographs of Pasolini’s body reflects his anger at the co-opting of Pasolini’s image into the *institutional* typology and archives of deviance.

Playing with the conventions of paparazzo photography and the photograph’s connection to scandal journalism, Pasolini subverts the commercial and consumerist logic of such imagery to his own ends. While Calvino and Antonioni question the hermeneutic value of the photograph, and Fellini points to its ambiguous role in documenting a newly compromised, cinematic reality, Pasolini interrogates the logic of a capitalist economy of scandal with a scandalous photography that accompanies a scandalous text of consumer and media modernity. For all four, vernacular and commercial uses of photography take on a new significance as markers of a profound shift not only in the cultural values and traditions of a country catapulted from agricultural backwardness to a modernity already inflected with the signs of its own passing, but also in understandings of the relations between an ungraspable reality and its fictive or filmic representations.

What troubles the four artists discussed here about the speeded-up photographic phenomena of the new consumer society is how they appear to flatten out lived reality and equate everything under the sign of consumer modernity. The diffusion of kinds of photography connected to what I have called a paparazzo aesthetic – and ethics – of invasiveness and consumption, an apparent desire to show more and more of life that in fact enforced a commoditized death, is a symptom of the economic miracle and the society of the boom, one that for these artists signified the end of real miracles and the birth of the dime-a-dozen variety. The line between lived and photographed reality seemed to blur and disappear, creating a sort of entropy in which wildly diverse images began to assume a uniform value as products to be sold and consumed. In very different ways, Fellini, Calvino, Antonioni, and Pasolini reflect on photography’s complicit but also revelatory role in a period of cultural crisis and seismic societal shift. From Anita Ekberg’s posing, via Calvino’s amateur photo hunter and failed philosopher, to Antonioni’s glamorous and alienated photographer and Pasolini’s resistant “deviance,” a trajectory of “miraculous” transformation leads inexorably from the staged immediacy of the paparazzo shot and the glossy patina and posing of the fashion page, along with their amateur imitations, to the repression of the “deviant” body and the salacious horror of its battered post-mortem display. From the glamour of via Veneto to the

desolation of Ostia, by way of the fashion plate and the family snapshot. At the same time, the four artists also recognize that a photograph always sees and shows more than its maker and/or subject intend, subverting society's coercive uses of photography and demonstrating its anarchic tendency to allow other meanings to break through. In a frenetically mobile society and a context of total visibility, the photograph's stillness, edges, and omissions offer a reminder of the unspoken and unspeakable, the unseen and the unseeable, from which these alternative possibilities can emerge.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This book features dates in lieu of page numbers.
- <sup>2</sup> One story is that Fellini took it from a character in George Gissing's *By the Ionian Sea* (1901), another that it was a childhood acquaintance of Fellini's, and another that Flaiano found it in an obscure opera libretto. On the various theories about the term's origins, see Gold; Mosino; Quaglio; and Raffaelli.
- <sup>3</sup> It is well known but worth remembering that Fellini's is a reconstruction in every way: his (flat rather than sloping) via Veneto was designed by Piero Gherardi and built at Cinecittà's Studio 5. Fellini praised it as "better and more real than the original" (Kezich 201).
- <sup>4</sup> The series of photographs (DAD054-41-DAD054-52) is available from the LUCE archive here: <http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/jsp/schede/fotoPlayer.jsp?doc=506&db=fotograficoDIAL&index=10&id=undefined&section=/#>.
- <sup>5</sup> On the significance of the Montesi scandal and its connection to Italy's changing media culture, see Pinkus.
- <sup>6</sup> See, for example, his Marcovaldo stories (1963), which recount the picaresque misadventures of a poor southern immigrant in an industrialized northern Italian city where consumerist values dominate.
- <sup>7</sup> Marco Belpoliti points to the privileging of photography over cinema in Calvino's work, despite the fact that his writings on cinema, such as his *Autobiografia di uno spettatore*, are much better known (*L'occhio* 128).
- <sup>8</sup> For more on the visual and photographic aspects of these works, see Belpoliti *L'occhio*.
- <sup>9</sup> English translations from the short story are taken from William Weaver's translation (Calvino, "The Adventure").
- <sup>10</sup> Calvino's *Il cavaliere inesistente* (*The Nonexistent Knight*) was published in 1959 and in English translation in 1962.
- <sup>11</sup> See, for example, his very early short film *L'amorosa menzogna* (1949), on *fotoromanzi*, and *I vinti* (1953), with its use of newspaper crime section photographs.
- <sup>12</sup> In calling the photographer protagonist "Thomas," I follow the screenplay and critical tradition; he is never referred to by name in the film itself.
- <sup>13</sup> On the significance of *Blow-Up*'s careful attention to photography's plurality, see Nardelli.
- <sup>14</sup> Pasolini's first film, *Accattone*, came out in 1961, and his last, *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*, in 1975.

- 15 For more on *La divina mimesis* and an earlier and differently focused version (in Italian) of some of the arguments developed here and below, see Hill, “La morte” 131–49.
- 16 This is symbolized in the photograph of the Nymphaeum in Valle Giulia, where the prestigious literary prize, the Premio Strega, was awarded, juxtaposed with a group of Fascists and in the references to the commercialization and banalization of literature that recur in the text – for example, when he contrasts the partisans with the conformists who flock to “quella orribile ‘Valle’ – che mi aveva talmente riempito il cuore di terrore per la vita, e per la poesia ...” (“that horrible ‘Valley’ – that had so filled my heart with terror for my life and for poetry”; 9).
- 17 Although as Bazzocchi rightly points out, it is important to note that in Pedriali’s case, Pasolini chose the young photographer and wanted his work to be part of a particular project, rather than relying on “found” images as in *La divina mimesis*.
- 18 He exhibited some of them for the first time at the Galleria Luciano Inga Pin in Milan in 1978. A selection was included in the exhibition “Pier Paolo Pasolini. Fotografie di Dino Pedriali” at the Triennale di Milano, 15 June–28 August 2011. See also the accompanying book of photographs (Pedriali). Prints of the photographs are also to be found among Laura Betti’s papers in the Centro Studi Archivio Pier Paolo Pasolini at the Cineteca di Bologna.
- 19 See also Hill “La morte.” For subsequent statements, see, for example Amè; Pedriali; “Scatti di vita”; and L. Viganò.
- 20 Despite the editors’ meticulous attention to reproducing accurately every note, erasure, and repetition from Pasolini’s manuscripts of the unfinished work, and despite the fact that the existence of the photographs was known, when the novel was published in 1992 the photographs were not included, nor indeed mentioned. Nor do the editors appear to have attempted to pursue the possibility of including them.

## 8 Images of Violence, Violence of Images: The “Years of Lead” and the Practice of Armed Struggle between Photography and Video

---

CHRISTIAN UVA<sup>1</sup>

A grey background, a symbol, and two words in white; below, cropped at the forearms, the figure of a man with a tired expression and head slightly bent, a t-shirt showing under his open shirt...

It is one of the most well-known images in the history of instant photography: the black and white Polaroid of Aldo Moro, the president of the Christian Democratic Party, left by the Red Brigades (along with the “communiqué no. 1,” announcing the beginning of the trial against Moro) in an underpass in Largo Argentina, Rome, inside an orange envelope, on March 18, 1978, two days after the politician’s kidnapping and the killing of his armed escort.

Published in the papers on March 19, this photograph – together with the one published on the 21st of April (in which Moro is holding a copy of the newspaper *La Repubblica* featuring the headline “Moro assassinated?”) – represents the point of maximum codification of a tragic narrative told in pictures.

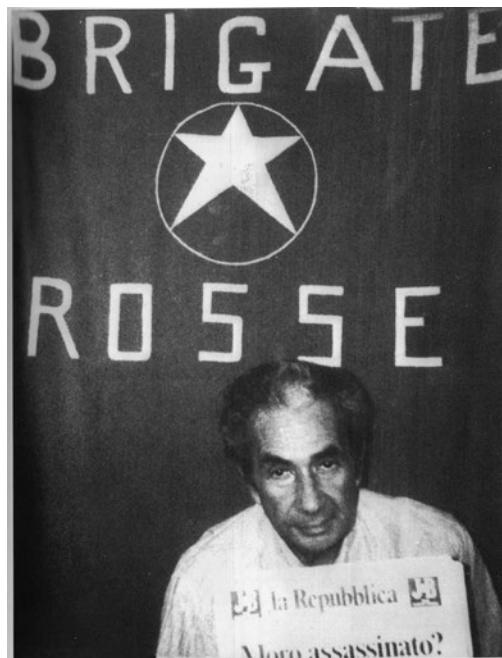
The Red Brigades had inaugurated this narrative six years earlier, when on 3 March 1972, they kidnapped and photographed Sit-Siemens manager Idalgo Macchiarini with a gun aimed at his head and a sign hanging from his neck with the slogans “Hit and run. Nothing will remain unpunished. Strike one in order to educate one hundred.”

Using the simulacrum of the “man who suffers violence at the hands of other men” (Stabile 1) as a launching pad, this essay will examine the iconography of the Italian “Years of Lead” (the period of social turmoil and political violence in Italy that lasted from the late 1960s to the early 1980s) as it was shaped by the photographic and audio-visual documents produced by those who took part in the armed struggle. Such documents offer a visual record of the violence carried out by and on individuals in those years and a reminder of the latent violence of the photographic technology and of modernity itself. The stilling of the photographic subject, which countless theorists of photography have compared to the stillness of death, is imbued with violence in these images in which, to paraphrase Roland Barthes, death is literally the stake.

Yet the immediate value of the first Polaroid that the terrorists led by Mario Moretti in the “people’s prison” where the “heart of the State” was kept took is that of a simple image whose purpose is to prove that a person is alive and well. The photograph of Moro is therefore, in the first instance, a typical demonstration of the Peircean indexical value that photography is often said to possess: that of



**Figure 8.1** The Red Brigade photograph of Aldo Moro published on 19 March 1978. Newsprint photograph from Polaroid. Rome, March 1978.



**Figure 8.2** The Red Brigade photograph of Aldo Moro published on 21 April. Newsprint photograph from Polaroid. Rome, March 1978.

an existential or physical connection between the sign and its referent. As Barthes notes, photography functions as “an antiphon of ‘Look,’ ‘See,’ ‘Here it is’” (*Camera Lucida*, 3); that is to say as certification, irreducible testimony of the existence of a given phenomenon. The Polaroid qualifies therefore, first of all, as *a photographic document* (as newspapers at the time described it) whose purely denotative value is emphasized by its having been produced by means of automatic and instantaneous device – the Polaroid camera. The Polaroid process, designed to create “standard, stereotyped images” (Belpoliti *Da quella prigione*), revolutionized photographic practice precisely because it allowed for the instant production of a positive image of the photograph just taken (a precursor of current digital technology) with no need for the traditional photographic development process. Through this speeding up of the technology an almost instant access to the photograph’s stilling of its subject became possible for the first time.

The Polaroid shot assumes a particularly marked indexical value because of the immediacy of its fruition: “with a freshly-developed Polaroid we are faced with the photograph as index that refers us to a region of the world which is also in front of our eyes: thus the photograph recovers that availability, for the purpose of an experiential syntax, of grasping the (morphologic, lighting-based, etc.) correspondence between the enunciated photographic space and the photographed space-environment, just as it happens when we *point a finger*” (Basso Fossali and Dondero 182).

Thus the Polaroid camera becomes, in the hands of the Red Brigades, the most appropriate device for a clearly identified revolutionary practice, at least in its first phase, of “hit and run” (inherited directly from the Maoists and evoked in the 1972 Macchiarini kidnapping, as I will discuss shortly). The need for an immediate result (since for the proof that the hostage is alive to be effective, the photographic image must be as recent as possible) is coupled with the ease-of-use of instant cameras which surpass the famous advertising claim attributed to George Eastman at the time of their launch, more than a century ago: “you press the button, we do the rest” (Ford and Steinhort). In fact, with the Polaroid, even that “rest” (i.e., the laboratory procedures of development and printing) is resolved self-sufficiently, allowing in this case for a subversive organization like the Red Brigades to avoid having to entrust the printing of their photographic materials to third parties while at the same time conferring upon them the maximum level of authority as authentic documents. Since it does not have a negative, this type of photograph cannot easily be manipulated. In the case of the Moro Polaroids the only alteration experts ascertained was the resizing of the format, which the terrorists carried out by simply trimming with scissors to remove the camera’s serial number and brand. It is also important to remember that these images were never seen by the public in their original state, that is, in colour (which is how the editorial staff of the newspapers acquired them), but rather in the black and white print of the papers themselves.

The Moro Polaroids adhere to canons that coincide with those of police-style identification photos, in which the frontal viewpoint (usually accompanied by a profile of the subject facing right) is designed to make every detail clearly legible. The photographic image created by the Red Brigades thus appears to be a simple, direct or, as

Susan Sontag would say, *anti-artistic* picture (*On Photography* 24), but it is certainly an image with a precise, clear enunciatory intention. According to Ando Gilardi, “two indisputably ‘historic’ markers have manifested the maximum level of communication that has perhaps ever been reached by a photograph: the Polaroid of Aldo Moro and the shroud of Christ” (188). So it is that because of the precise *mise en scène* to which the prisoner is subjected (his resigned posture and especially his ‘costume,’ characterised by the abovementioned t-shirt that appears under his shirt), such an image is loaded with meaning, in this case political meaning. It takes advantage of what Barthes defines as the “store of stereotyped images which form ready-made elements of signification,” that is, the “historical grammar” of iconographical connotation” (Barthes, “The Photographic Message” 201) that perhaps Moro *in primis* seems to have wanted to exploit, as his letters demonstrate (Gotor).

What captures the attention in both Polaroids are above all the victim’s eyes (a Barthesian *punctum*), which pointedly fixate on those of the viewer, leaving no escape from his gaze. The radical terrorism of these kinds of photographs is situated in this constructed reciprocity. They are images in which, as the more recent videos of Al Qaeda beheadings tragically reiterate, the victim looks at us and implicitly reminds us that his destiny literally *re-gards* us (Lévinas 53). The Polaroids serve consequently not only to demonstrate that the hostage was still alive, but more importantly to construct an image of Moro antithetical to that of the powerful politician. He is shown as a weak creature stripped by the terrorists of his ‘royal’ clothes, or, to use Cesare Zavattini’s words about this photograph, as “someone like us, a brother” (“Prima durante dopo” 89).

The picture in this way assumes the status – to stay with the terminology used by Belpoliti – of an “advertising photograph” (*La foto di Moro* 6) in the service of a precise communication project: “kidnapping Moro was an act of propaganda on the part of the Red Brigades” (*La foto di Moro* 24). This enunciatory dimension is underscored in the Polaroid published on April 21, which features a crucial metalinguistic element in the form of the copy of *La Repubblica* with the “Moro assassinated?” headline. This represents the textual element that subordinates the “mythical” “purely denotative status of the photograph” to the connotative dimension from which the “photographic paradox” derives, according to Barthes, conferring on the image the possibility of “telling a lie” (“The Photographic Message” 198). This is what happens with another Polaroid taken during the same period as the Moro kidnapping, that of Duke Massimiliano Grazioli Lante della Rovere (taken hostage by the infamous gang known as the “Banda della Magliana” on 7 November 1977). The *Corriere della sera* published the Polaroid on 7 April 1978. The hostage was already dead, yet despite the evidence, no one at the time dared to doubt the continued life of the prisoner simply because he was shown holding a recent copy of a newspaper (in this case *La nazione*), just like Moro (Figure 8.3).

The Red Brigades’ Polaroid of Moro published on 21 April “has its alter ego in the photograph of the Duke. It uses the same technique of temporal referentialization on the one hand by marking its own truth-telling, on the other ... by directing the print media controlled by the government” (Migliore 130).



Figure 8.3 The Banda della Magliana photograph of the corpse of Massimiliano Grazioli Lante Della Rovere. Newsprint photograph from Polaroid. Rome, April 1978.



Figure 8.4 The Rote Armee Fraktion snapshot of Hans Martin Schleyer. Newsprint photograph. Wiesbaden, September 1977.

Behind such an image also lies an “aesthetic model,” a point of reference that motivates the terrorists to evolve their iconic practice further: the photographs and videotape<sup>2</sup> of the president of the Confederation of German Industry, Hans Martin Schleyer, left by the German group RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion) on 6 September 1977 – just six months before the Moro kidnapping – in the mailbox of an evangelist dean in Wiesbaden, together with a short message in the hostage’s handwriting and a letter by the terrorists ([Figure 8.4](#)).

Here again we find in the background the symbol of the terrorist group (a five-pointed star, not dissimilar to the Red Brigades’, with the outline of a machine silhouetted against it), balanced in the foreground by the hostage holding a sign stating the number of days since his capture: a textual source that eliminates any possible uncertainty about the violence of the photograph’s intended meaning and that the Red Brigades will improve upon by the use of the newspaper in Moro’s hand in the Polaroid of April 1978.<sup>3</sup> Both are cases of a “meta-photograph” – that is “an image in the second degree” – because of the textual dimension represented by the notice (for Schleyer) and by the newspaper (for Moro). These elements suggest a sense of reality that cites itself, “as in a meta-story or a meta-novel” (Belpoliti, *Da quella prigione*).

### The “Hit and Run” Shot: Macchiarini, Amerio, and Sossi

From this premise it is possible to move on to an examination of the photographs that, before the Moro Polaroids, dot the first few pages of the Red Brigades’ “family album.” These are pictures that, beginning in the early 1970s, provided a visual narration of the actions of armed propaganda and acquired therefore the status of “icons of the real and applied practice of Red Brigade terrorism” (Ceccarelli 46). The kidnappings of the Sit-Siemens executive Idalgo Macchiarini in 1972, of FIAT’s chief of personnel, Ettore Amerio, in 1973, and of the judge Mario Sossi in 1974 were the first through which the Red Brigades began to outline the strategy that would ultimately lead to the Moro kidnapping. While not politicians, Macchiarini, Amerio, and Sossi were nevertheless significant symbols of power.

The first of these photographs (printed in issue no. 4 of *Potere Operaio* on 13 March 1972) depicts Macchiarini ([Figure 8.5](#)), the victim of the Red Brigades’ first kidnapping. The image is strikingly different from the later Schleyer and Moro kidnapping photographs (and indeed from those of Amerio and Sossi, which I will examine shortly). The hurried composition that characterises this image, with the *dazibao* with the famous slogan “*Mordi e fuggi*” (“hit and run”) and the barrel of the gun pushed into the victim’s cheek, conveys a sense of utter agitation, recalling not a staged photograph but rather an actual “stolen” snapshot. This dramatic quality of the photograph is programmatically embodied in the textual meaning of the sign with the “*Mordi e fuggi*” slogan. Both elements, written and visual, find their justification in the lightning nature of the kidnapping, which lasted only half an hour and had the sole objective of producing that very photograph.

The setting of the different kidnappings is important in this regard. Circumstances dictated that the terrorists could not use a “people’s prison” (unlike with Amerio,



Figure 8.5 The Red Brigade snapshot of Idalgo Macchiarini. Newsprint photograph. Milan, March 1972.

Sossi, and Moro) but rather had to use the inside of the van in which the victim had been captured, beaten, and immobilized. On the one hand, the mise-en-scène appears on this occasion to be preordained and to adhere, as testified by one of the founders of the Red Brigades, Alberto Franceschini, to a “carefully calculated ... script” (Franceschini 62). On the other, what is missing from the final product is the more institutional, disciplinary coding of the Moro photographs, which mark a different phase of the armed struggle. What sets apart the shot of Macchiarini – taken by Mario Moretti, future leader of the Red Brigades and mastermind of the Moro kidnapping, as

discussed above (Grandi 234) – is the cramped, dramatic, and apparently improvised composition of the image. The crucial elements of the photograph are all crammed into the foreground: the badly unfurled sign hanging from the hostage's neck that the right hand of one of the terrorists, blurred in the shot, tries to keep straight, but especially the barrel of the gun, on the left of the frame, that digs into Macchiarini's cheek, balanced on the right by the barrel of another gun on which the victim fixes his terrified gaze. It is the detail of the weapon pushed into flesh that immediately conveys to the spectator the sense of a crude and unequivocal threat. Along with the more than explicit signs hanging from the victim's neck, this threat is elementary in its enunciation. The following statements by the founders of the Red Brigades stand as proof of the terrorists' symbolic investment in the iconic element of the gun. The first is from Franceschini: "the gun aimed at Idalgo Macchiarini's head changed the Red Brigades" from a "handful of young men with no future" into "a group that was starting to inspire fear" (65). The second is from Renato Curcio: "We had reflected on the fact that showing that weapon in the photo ... meant, for the first time, 'showing' an instance of armed struggle in the Italy of the 1970s. In reality, it was a rusty old thing that perhaps couldn't even shoot. What counted was its image-message, spread by all the media: the struggle is armed" (Curcio). Interestingly, these comments suggest that the very act of taking the photograph, and its subsequent publication, gave the terrorists a consciousness of their own identity and power and radicalized their strategy of violence.

Less immediately obvious in this picture is the semantic value of the visual signifier of that particular model of gun, which is not the famous P38 – the "metonymic object" of the Years of Lead – but rather a Luger, the weapon most directly connected with the Resistance. According to Franceschini, the signs hanging from the victim's neck also aimed to evoke those "seen in the photos of the partisan war hanging from the fascists' necks" (62).<sup>4</sup> The gloved hand holding the gun was that of Franceschini, who mentions the significance of the gun in his book, where he tells of meeting an old partisan who, encouraging the revolutionary aims of this young man who was close by now to joining the armed struggle, bequeathed him his own ideals, in the form of the Luger in question and a Browning taken from a German officer killed in the mountains.

So whilst, on the one hand, the hand-lettered dazibao hanging from the neck of the Sit-Siemens engineer explicitly carries the statement of a new and unprecedently violent intent on which the Red Brigades plan to found their revolutionary activity, on the other hand, the image of the gun connotes that practice in terms of a continuity with the partisan struggle, which the terrorists (as well as many former partisans) saw as having been betrayed by Palmiro Togliatti and by the other communist leaders at the end of the Second World War.

The photographs of Ettore Amerio ([Figure 8.6](#)), kidnapped on 10 December 1973 and freed eight days later, and Mario Sossi ([Figure 8.7](#)), the Genoa court judge kidnapped on 18 April 1974 and freed on 23 May of the same year, enter more specifically into the "aesthetic" territory that would be occupied four years later by the Moro Polaroids. While taken by amateurs, these images are characterized by an orderly



Figure 8.6 The Red Brigade snapshot of Ettore Amerio. Newsprint photograph. Turin, December 1973.

arrangement of the compositional elements that amplifies their chilling effect, even in the absence of the weapons and sign that crowd the Macchiarini photograph. The Sossi kidnapping, in particular, which was the first action that allowed for the possibility of killing the hostage, forced the Red Brigades to prepare that “people’s prison/photographer’s set” that would become central during Aldo Moro’s imprisonment.

While the framing of the Ligurian magistrate is different from that of Aldo Moro, the victim’s posture is similarly striking. Sossi is sitting on a chair, framed in medium long shot in front of the usual flag with the words “Brigate rosse” and the five-pointed star (not yet enclosed in a circle at this stage<sup>5</sup>), especially prepared by Mara Cagol.<sup>6</sup> Sossi looks into the camera with hands joined, in a pose reminiscent of the iconography of certain self-timer photographs but especially, once again, of the visual aspect of police photographs. This confirms how the images taken by the Red Brigades function not just as objects of propaganda but “also as a reversed police investigative tool, like a subversive Wanted poster” (Belpoliti, *Da quella prigione*). However,



Figure 8.7 The Red Brigade snapshot of Mario Sossi. Newsprint photograph. Genoa, 1974.

what disrupts the apparent ordinariness of the photograph is the mask<sup>7</sup> of bruises and tumefactions on the prisoner's face (particularly the right eye), which, like the gun in the Macchiarini photograph, makes explicit the violence and the threat of further violence. Violence, along with the purely documentary status of the image ("the hostage is alive"), and the claiming of responsibility ("the hostage is held by the Red Brigades") are key features of this photograph, too.

In the photographs of Amerio, Sossi, and Macchiarini<sup>8</sup> we glimpse the foundations of the media strategy of the Red Brigades, which consisted not only of "speaking" to

the enemy while striking fear into him or her but also, and perhaps more importantly, of a sort of internal propaganda, suggesting, along with the unambiguousness of the Barthesian *interfuit* of those shots, the concrete nature of a project capable of literally placing its hands on the vital nerve centres of the state. The Moro Polaroids dramatically amplified this strategy by turning the image in which the statesman is reduced to an ordinary man into a campaign poster for enlisting new recruits. In this sense, as Belpoliti has written, “The Moro photograph was their version of Uncle Sam’s *I want you*” (*La foto di Moro* 24).

### **Immortalising Death**

The iconographic itinerary of the brand of terrorism that pertains specifically to the Red Brigades is completed by what is perhaps the single most dramatic image of the Years of Lead: the photograph which shows “death at work” on the body of Roberto Peci, brother of Red Brigades member Patrizio, killed in an act of reprisal on 3 August 1981, in a squalid abandoned building on the outskirts of Rome by the gunmen of Giovanni Senzani’s new Red Brigades. This was a case of “comrades” executing another “comrade” (Roberto Peci had been a member of the armed party for a very brief time) with the purpose of putting a stop to the cascade of betrayals and repents. If this is the sharp and horrifying message of the last Polaroid in the “album of the Red Brigades,” it also represents the most eloquent visual testimony of the self-immolation and ultimate demise of the terrorist group: a process that for the first time was also documented through the video images used to record some of the stages of Peci’s imprisonment.

In a sense setting in motion the still photographs of previous victims, and approximately two decades ahead of Al Qaeda, the Red Brigades produced their first “terror video.”<sup>9</sup> Here, anticipating also the stylistic feature of the “television of pain,” which was about to establish itself in Italy, a VHS camera puts the viewer in front of the suffering of a hostage subjected to psychological torture by means of an evermore pressing interrogation, culminating in the death sentence pronounced by Senzani himself, off screen, while the zoom plunges into the panic-stricken expression of the victim.

The set is more or less the usual one, featuring the flag of the Red Brigades and some scattered, hand-written revolutionary slogans behind the subject, who faces the camera as if in a television-style program (Figure 8.8). What is striking, aside from the visual aspect, is the sound. This is characterised by the disembodied voice (a low, monotonous drone) of the executioner, hiding outside of the frame, and by the music, consisting of popular anthems and songs that vary over time and assume in this context a grotesque and almost horrific character. The “director” (Senzani himself) exploits the dialectic between what is inside and outside of the shot with great skill: everything inside the frame is “inevitably and inescapably subject to imprisonment, while what is outside of the frame, such as the voice of the executioner, is invested with power, including the power to make decisions on the fate of the person who is imprisoned within that frame” (Uva 32).



Figure 8.8 Roberto Peci in the Red Brigade video filmed by Giovanni Senzani. Rome, 1981.

This is the audiovisual terrain that precedes and sets up that final shot, both literal and photographic. If the life-as-progress – albeit towards a tragic and imminent conclusion – finds in the electronic image-flow the most appropriate medium for documenting its final moments, it is the image-instant of the “photographic pose” that fixes the split-second moment of death. It is here, furthermore, that the specificity of the video image comes into play, its nature of image-in-flow suggesting the notion of an image that is simultaneously imprinted and projected, a light-image that must not simulate movement, unlike the successive “poses” of cinema (Di Marino), because it consists of light dots (the *pixels*) that move incessantly on the screen. This movement determines a kind of viewing that always appears to be *live*. This is why time in the video is not only re-produced but produced, “shown in its passing” like the pixels themselves, but also through them (Lischi 8).

The photograph of the instant of Roberto Peci’s death (Figure 8.9) is once again the product of a careful as well as macabre staging in which nothing is left to chance, beginning from the scenery (reminiscent of Pasolini’s Roman novels and films) against which the last chapter of the tragedy takes place: a decrepit building near the via Appia Nuova with no ceiling, its walls smeared with manure, surrounded by scruffy lawns and piles of rubbish. The terrorists had already made their pledge: “they were going to kill him in the partisan tradition,” by “putting the traitor against the



**Figure 8.9** The Red Brigade snapshot of the murder of Roberto Peci. Newsprint photograph. Rome, August 1981.

wall,” wrote Roberto Buzzatti, a member of the commando and owner of the apartment/prison/set in which Peci was held (qtd. in Guidelli 58). That same “partisan tradition” that inspired the first photograph taken by the Red Brigades of Idalgo Macchiarini returns here as the guiding principle of the terrorists’ “direction,” allowing them to square the circle of their video-photographic “deeds,” which exploit to the full the violence of the image of violence.

In the Polaroid, which was published in most Italian newspapers, the frontality of the earlier images is replaced by a three-quarter point-of-view in which the subject – shot with a wide-angle lens that deforms the image, making its “spectacular atrocity”<sup>10</sup> even more grotesque – appears crouching on the floor with his hands tied and, behind him, at head-height, is the slogan “Death to traitors.” On the left of the picture, as in the Macchiarini photograph, a hand (no longer gloved) holding a gun with a silencer is visible. However, this time the weapon is no longer a mere prop, no matter how threatening, but rather an instrument of death transfixed in the moment of its action: specifically, it is a Beretta 34 with smoke coming out of the barrel from the shots that had just been fired. (Peci was killed by the bullets from this gun as well as those from a 56-calibre gun out of shot, for a total of eleven bullets fired at point-blank range.) While two members of the commando shot the prisoner, a third terrorist took the photograph, rendering explicit in a tragically effective way the deadly connection between the camera and the gun lucidly illustrated by Susan Sontag: “There is

something predatory in the act of taking a picture ... Just as the camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a sublimated murder" (*On Photography* 14–15). If it is true, as Sontag also claims, that "to take a photograph is to participate in another person's ... mortality, vulnerability, mutability" (*On Photography* 15), the Peci Polaroid takes this proposition to its extreme by making the moment of the camera shot (meaning the opening and closing of its shutter) coincide with the moment of the deadly gunshot (which also involves the operation of a shutter): it is the ultimate and definitive trial of the "mortality" and "vulnerability" evoked by Sontag (through the deadly gunshots inflicted upon the human being) that becomes in this instance the very object to be measured and fixed permanently on film.

In this manner, the photographic apparatus used by the terrorists becomes – in the words of Giovanni Fiorentino – a true "eye that kills."<sup>11</sup> This metaphor of the modern gaze, developed in the second half of the twentieth century and condensing "voyeurism, necrophiliac drive and scopophilia" (7), is perhaps best exemplified by the character of Celestino in Roberto Rossellini's *La macchina ammazzacattivi* (The Machine that Kills Bad People).<sup>12</sup> But even more than that, the Polaroid photograph of Roberto Peci assumes the value of a memento mori to the nth degree. In Senzani's intentions, the photograph was meant as a document that the Red Brigades handed over to history: "The society of the spectacle," explained the ideologist, "lives from these things, and we must be able to exploit these contradictions to regain control of the means of social communication" (qtd. in Guidelli 51). While this was Senzani's intention, these comments also suggest how the ideological struggle was becoming imbricated with the demands of the market. What is documented here is the evolution of these images of violence, as they are transformed from lived fact and visual experience to an effect to be consumed and endlessly reiterated.

### **Photography as Subversion and Weapon against the Enemy**

Senzani's statement is an echo of the spirit (here reduced to its ideological aberration) that informed some years earlier a text of great importance for the cultural debate on the subject of counter-information: *Senza chiedere permesso. Come rivoluzionare l'informazione* (Without Saying "Excuse Me." How to Revolutionise Information), a book edited in 1973 by Roberto Faenza in which video (or what in those days went by the name of videotape) was identified as the principal tool for a media-based disruption of the establishment and its key organs of operation in order to achieve what Pio Baldelli and Goffredo Fofi, in the closing essay of the collection, defined as "horizontal communication" (Faenza 222). In keeping with the militant philosophy that characterises it, the book has on its cover the image of a young "mop-head" with a *Porta Pack*<sup>13</sup> on one shoulder and a rifle on the other, an eloquent symbol of the grass-roots nature of the "Guerrilla Television," already popular in the United States (and of which Faenza's book aims to articulate a local version), that explicitly underscores the connection between the gun and the camera (whether of the video or photographic kind) discussed above.

It is also worth remembering that another book produced in this cultural and ideological climate was *L'arma dell'immagine. Esperimenti di animazione sulla comunicazione visiva* (The Image as Weapon. Animation Experiments on Visual Communication), published by Mazzotta in 1977, an anthology of observations on politics and visual culture edited by the Laboratorio di Comunicazione Militante, while a year later came *Mettiamo tutto a fuoco! Manuale eversivo di fotografia* (Let's Put Everything in Focus!<sup>14</sup> A Subversive Manual of Photography), whose title is also the slogan of an explicitly subversive artistic practice.<sup>15</sup> These are some of the paradigmatic traits of the “semiological guerrilla” radicalised to the point of distortion in the photographic and video activity (as well as the textual one of the communiqués) of Red Brigade terrorists, those “inattentive DAMS students”<sup>16</sup> (Belpoliti, *La foto di Moro* 20). This configured a field of action profoundly different – because of social identity, morphology, and objectives – from that of neo-Fascist terrorism. It is notable in this respect that the neo-Fascist “foot soldiers” were largely indifferent to the use of images as an operative instrument at the service of militancy, partly because of their ideological distance from the cultural climate of theoretical reflection on photography and insurrection of which the Red Brigades represented an aberration.

In this context the only right-wing example worth noting in relation to the itinerary outlined in this essay is the testimony of the former member of Ordine Nuovo Pierluigi Concutelli<sup>17</sup> about the plan (which was never carried out) to film the assault on the armoured car of Antiterrorism Unit chief Emilio Santillo. Recording the scene would have been motivated principally by the “aesthetic exaltation of violence, and the need to relive it in a spectacular dimension” (Fiasco 183). This objective sets apart the intent of neo-Fascist terrorists from those who carried out the communication strategy of the Red Brigades. The latter were less interested in the “spectacle” and more eager to produce effective and persuasive propaganda aimed not at the generic mass public but rather at the working class. Conversely, for a kind of terrorism that does not adopt the targeted strategy of kidnappings and that, when it does not take the form of “state terrorism” (in massacres from Piazza Fontana onwards), often devolves into actions that are contiguous with those of common criminality (as in the grass-roots action of the Armed Revolutionary Nuclei of Giuseppe Valerio “Giusva” Fioravanti), the use of any apparatus for producing images would ultimately be alien to the subversive practice.

The only significant exception is the cataloguing of political adversaries that united the most extreme fringes of both sides of the political divide in the 1970s. These archives, alongside thousands of records containing names, addresses, car registration numbers, and personal descriptions, included photographs of hundreds of individuals regarded as political enemies, often used by either side to organise ambushes and assaults. In several Red Brigade hideouts, for instance, filing cabinets were found containing not only photographs cut out from newspapers but also first-hand photographic investigations of prospective targets (Panvini 167–80).

Once again, and now quite literally, the canon of police-style identification photos (which goes back almost to the origins of photography and of the surveillance culture of modernity) must be considered as a semiotic horizon against which to interpret

the material. These images belong to the class of signs that serve as foundation of a circumstantial reconstruction (in this case by providing a precise reference to the identity of certain individuals) and differ therefore from photographs understood as a purely communicative resource. Tools of subversive organisations, these photographs constitute an archive of identification that at one and the same time strives to express an alternative power structure and conforms to the repressive function of photography employed by the disciplinary institutions of the state.

### **Postcards from the Years of Lead**

Up to this point I have focussed on the video-photographic artefacts produced *within* the armed struggle. However, further consideration must be given to the images that, as testimonies from the *outside*, are complementary to the former but concentrate no less effectively the memory and imaginary of the Years of Lead. One such example is the series of photographs – almost a mini-film sequence – that on 26 March 1971 captured the last moments in the life of Alessandro Floris, a security guard of the Genoa Housing Board killed by two members of the XXII Ottobre armed group during a robbery aimed at financing the organization. The two key images of the sequence ([Figure 8.10](#)) are the ones that show, first, Floris's attempt to block the terrorists' escape by grabbing one of them by the ankle, and then his fatal wounding by one of the robbers, who fires a succession of shots into his body with a 38-calibre handgun. In these dramatic shots we witness turmoil, heroism, cruelty, and finally death, but most importantly, we see fully condensed the violent escalation that would fatally befall the armed struggle in the following years.

These are also images of significant forensic value that would ultimately help the investigators to discover the identity of the terrorists. At the same time, they are of great journalistic value, worthy of the appellation, coined by Jean-Marie Schaeffer, of images that show the “decisive moment” (129).<sup>18</sup>

Three more pictures can be placed in the same category as the Floris photographs – two of them photographs (separated by a single year) of “decisive moments” of an era. These have acquired over time a great symbolic significance and are effectively considered *the* photographs of the Years of Lead. The first is the very famous photograph taken on 14 May 1977 in Milan of a member of Autonomia Operaia holding a gun in both hands at eye-level during a demonstration following the death of Giorgiana Masi in Rome two days earlier.<sup>19</sup> It was during this demonstration that Brigadiere Antonio Custrà lost his life. The second and third images, taken in via Caetani, Rome, 9 May 1978, almost exactly one year later, show the open trunk of the Renault 4 – the “*sconcia stiva*” (“indecent hold”), to use Mario Luzi's words (5) – in which the body of Aldo Moro was found.

The photograph of the “gunslinger” in Milan ([Figure 8.11](#)) is an object that falls into the category of *reportage* in which the element of the trace, the evidence upon which, later on, the investigator's attention will focus, coexists with the opposite dimension, determined by an “iconic/spatial operation” capable of relegating to the background the “indical/temporal” aspect, usually “necrotised” whenever a photograph “is



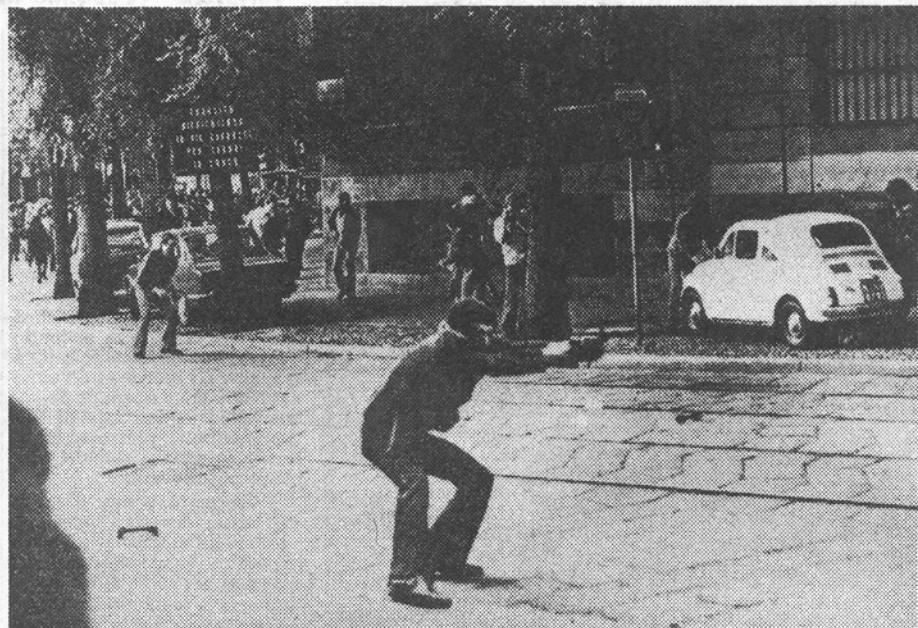
**Figure 8.10** Anonymous amateur photographer. Members of the “XXII Ottobre” gang and Alessandro Floris (above); the Murder of Alessandro Floris (below). Newsprint photographs. Genoa, March 1971.



**Figure 8.11** Autonomia Operaia militant shooting a gun, as photographed by amateur photographer Paolo Pedrizzetti. Newsprint photograph. Milan, May 1977.

completely detached from its referent and becomes infinitely reusable" (Basso Fossali and Dondero 74). This is precisely the status of this true "postcard" of the Years of Lead: an image that, while providing, by virtue of its wide angle lens, a wealth of details of the event (the plaque with the street name, a sign indicating men at work on a nearby road, etc.), immediately offers itself as a symbol (of political violence, of the zeal of the revolutionary movement of 1977). This function is evident both in terms of the anonymity that shrouded for a long time the man with the pistol wearing a ski-mask (whose image therefore did not represent *that* precise individual but more generally the very idea of political violence) and in terms of the man's plastic and almost stylised pose, so figuratively powerful (with those legs slightly bent, the torso leaning forward, the hands closed on the weapon, all forming a single unit with the gun itself, which is aimed outside of the shot and thus leaves total freedom to the imagination), so much so as to appear to have come directly from one of the many Italian-style crime stories that were so popular at the time.

irante lo scontro, anche se si esclude che abbiano colpito direttamente...  
n corso nel delitto e del ferimento di due altri poliziotti e di un passante



In questa immagine, scattata durante gli scontri, l'imputato Azzolini mentre spara

**Figure 8.12** Mimmo Rotella, *Scontro armato*, 1980. Silkscreen print. Courtesy of the Mimmo Rotella Institute.

This symbolic power finds a particular explanation in the fact that the photograph, as Paolo Fabbri and Tiziana Migliore have written, “slips from its concrete occurrence, that implied density, for the survival of concrete things in the sign, to abstraction, that scatters them” (136). For this reason, more than many other images of its kind, this photograph lent itself to all sorts of *détournements*, from its use in contemporary electoral posters to more interesting examples of reuse in artworks such as Gianni Bertini’s *Lui piange* (He Cries, 1977) (Colour Plate 5) and the photographic transfer by Mimmo Rotella entitled *Scontro armato* (Armed Clash, 1980) (Figure 8.12).

In this case, too, the photograph was not taken by a professional but by an amateur, Paolo Pedrizzetti, a detail that makes it a true snapshot, a masterly “theft of a moment” or rather, to return to Schaeffer, of a “decisive moment” fixed forever onto the bromide and into the iconographic history of the country.

In fact the shot that killed Custrà did not come from the 22-calibre of Giuseppe Memeo (this is the identity of the man with the gun in the picture, as the investigators eventually established) but from the gun of Mario Ferrandi, a fellow member of Autonomia Operaia who stood a few metres ahead of Memeo at the time and appears in another photograph crouching behind a parked car, holding his weapon. Clearly the dramatic events of that day were recorded as multiple moments and according to different points of view. Five different authors “certified” the chaos, the violence, the raging gunfire that lasted one minute on that Milan street. Among them was Antonio Conti, a photographer close to Autonomia Operaia who, in spite of knowing that he had captured on film images that might become “immortal,” decided not to turn the events of 14 May 1977 into a scoop.

An interesting aside is that Conti himself was caught in the photographic crossfire and appeared in the iconic image taken by Pedrizzetti. Guido Salvini, the examining magistrate who has conducted many important investigations on terrorism in Milan, recently noted this circumstance, commenting that when the case was reopened ten years later “we noticed that on one side of the famous photograph you could make out, next to a tree, another young man who was also taking pictures in via De Amicis. We didn’t take long to identify him: it was Antonio Conti, a freelance photographer who knew he was in possession of a historic roll of film but never used it, probably in order to avoid getting anyone in trouble” (qtd. in Bonerandi 14).

The photograph of the *shooting man* assumes therefore a further complexity that helps explain the great aesthetic interest that it has attracted over the years. What Justice Salvini described above is a *blow-up* analogous to the one carried out by Thomas (David Hemmings) in Antonioni’s eponymous 1966 film. However, whereas in the film the successive enlargements enable the photographer to discover the famous hand holding the gun emerging from a bush in the background of the shot, the image produced by Pedrizzetti’s camera holds a similar surprise for the investigators, except in this case the man with the weapon is in the foreground, and what is discovered in the background thanks to the enlargements, underneath a lime tree, is another camera that, in a game of mirrors, adds a metalinguistic dimension to the photograph and fractures “the past of the narration to inaugurate a time of simultaneous presence with the spectator” (Fabbri and Migliore 139) ([Figure 8.13](#)).

Going back to the symbolic value of the image of the member of Autonomia Operaia who shot his gun in via De Amicis published on 15 May 1977, in the *Corriere d’informazione*, a fundamental element must be noted: this is a photograph that succeeds in highlighting and at the same time denouncing to an extraordinary degree the *epos* of the political violence of those years. One is struck especially by the words of Umberto Eco (available in full in [Chapter 11](#) of this book), who immediately grasped the semantic weight that the shot would acquire in the years to come; he grasped that the image would become an emblem of the decline of the mass struggle. He wrote: “If it is licit (and it is necessary) to make aesthetic observations in such cases, this is one of those photographs that will go down in history and will appear in a thousand books” (“A Photograph”). Perhaps this is due to the “classic simplicity” that marks a photograph in which, in spite of the background presence of others, what dominates



**Figure 8.13** Detail of Paolo Pedrizzetti's photograph of an Autonomia Operaia militant shooting a gun. Newsprint photograph. Milan, May 1977.

above all (and especially in the cropped version of the shot, in which the man with the gun appears alone) is the figure isolated in the middle, an iconic element that, according to Eco, made it a “myth” capable of focussing a series of discourses, overcoming the single and contingent circumstance of its origins to express “concepts.” This representation, lacking a collective element, fixes (and perhaps elevates) the figure of the individual hero, and for this reason doesn’t resemble “the images which, for at least four generations, had been emblems of the idea of revolution.” In fact this “lone hero,” posing as a sort of avenger, is very distant from what is seen in revolutionary iconography, where “a man alone always [appears] as victim, sacrificial lamb.” According to Eco’s lucid analysis, this image ultimately evokes “other worlds, other figurative, narrative traditions that had nothing to do with the proletarian tradition,

with the idea of popular revolt, of mass struggle” (“A Photograph”) – in other words something that could not in any way pass through that individual gesture.

From this perspective, the photographs of the body of Aldo Moro in the trunk of the Renault 4 seem to be the fatal consequence of the tragic premise represented by the picture of the shooting man in via De Amicis, whereby the latter appears founded on a “tactic of signification by ellipsis” (Fabbri and Migliore 139). From the point of view of a hypothetical narrative tying together in a sequence the two images, it is as if the lifeless body of the Christian Democratic statesman, slumped like a duffel bag in the back of that car, ended up filling, in a sort of cinematic reverse shot, the portion of reality that the photograph of the gun-wielding member of Autonomia Operaia left in history’s out-of-shot field. According to the iconic story created by those frames, it is as if the bullet shot by that Beretta in via De Amicis had hit Moro himself, and he had become the sacrificial victim of an armed struggle. As has often been argued, the Red Brigades committed suicide by assassinating the president of the Christian Democrats. The Moro murder sanctioned the movement’s failure to find a real connection with the proletariat of which it was the self-styled vanguard and revealed the movement as an isolated phenomenon in Italian society, mirroring the individual gesture of the Milanese member of Autonomia Operaia.

The photographs of via Caetani, which soon travelled around the world, were taken by Gianni Giansanti,<sup>20</sup> a beginner who went on to become a highly regarded press photographer, and by ANSA reporter Rolando Fava. Here, too, we are facing the *showing* of a “decisive moment” captured in the instant of its occurrence, but also anticipated with great instinct and patience by the photographer himself. The shots that show the discovery of Moro’s body are in fact the result of a difficult and eventful wait, as though on a sort of photographic safari, during which the camera is pointed in the direction from which you know the animal you are waiting for must sooner or later appear. The prey in question is, in this tragic circumstance, the body of a man locked inside a car, initially announced as that of a “tramp, who had died abandoned” (Leonelli 23). After all, consistent with the degradation of the powerful *monarch* to the rank of persecuted *creature* carried out by the earlier Polaroids, the body of the man about to be discovered closely resembled that of a poor wretch, a tramp, who died after being abandoned by his political family.

Giansanti was the only person with a telephoto lens (as well as a 35 mm and a 50 mm lens), and it was that 200 mm lens that allowed him, from the first-floor window of a building facing the scene of the tragedy, to virtually position himself “centimetres away from the scene” (Leonelli 23). In this image, obtained with tungsten colour film, which produced bluish hues in exterior shots, the focal length employed caused a flattening of the perspective; this made the crowd of policemen, politicians, and onlookers appear even closer to the body (Figure 8.14). The body itself, placed on the small stage of the trunk to which the crowd’s gaze is magnetically drawn, appears nonetheless extraneous, distinct from that mass, ultimately alienated from a humanity that did in fact abandon him to his destiny. The stasis, the immobility of an entire political class – the photograph seems to say – is embodied in the corpse lying in its sheet metal coffin.



Figure 8.14 Gianni Giansanti, Aldo Moro's corpse. Colour photograph. Rome, May 1978.



Figure 8.15 Rolando Fava, Aldo Moro's corpse. Newsprint photograph, Rome, May 1978.

The image taken by Fava is just as famous and almost identical, although it was made with black-and-white film and with a shorter lens (therefore not as able to bring the subject close).

This photograph revealed an element that disturbs the general atmosphere of “adoration” of the corpse: namely, the single person who, positioned right in front of the trunk, turns his back on Moro’s body. He is likely a police officer attempting to manage the situation “on the spot,” issuing orders and giving directions, as evidenced by his raised right index finger pointing towards something out of the image; this is counterpoised almost symmetrically with what is being indicated by the man in front of him, pointing his finger beyond the vehicle containing Moro’s body.<sup>21</sup> This seemingly disrespectful quarrel highlights very effectively the climate of disorientation and confusion into which Italy was plunged in the aftermath of this tragic episode, which would mark the end of the First Republic: it can be argued that inside that steel sarcophagus lay “a way of understanding and practicing politics that had represented the most intimate essence of our republican history up to that moment” (Colombo 14).

These photographs complete the trajectory initiated with the Moro Polaroids analysed at the beginning of the chapter: a movement from the testimonial value of the photographs taken from *within* the armed struggle to the documentary value of images that, from the *outside*, rendered emblematic a historical period as thick with tension and widespread violence as it was rich with creative and cultural ferment. It is also a movement from the carefully staged construction of the symbolic moment at the service of a lucid media strategy put in place by terrorism, to the aesthetic of the “decisive moment” of photojournalism, split between the daily consumption of photographs characteristic of the “bourgeois” press and a militant practice committed to a critique of the police state and to the support of an oppositional culture. The dialectic between *the images of violence* and *the violence of images* translates into a true media terrorism whereby, as in the case of the Red Brigades, the victim is sentenced to “die of a violence that is not only represented by, but also inflicted through photography” (Frangia 35). Furthermore, this violence is not contained within the photographic object, or limited to the photographic subject, but reverberates outwards to strike the viewer. By stilling the violence of one of the most tumultuous moments of Italian history, these photographs capture not only the spirit of those times but the complex mechanism by which we experience photographically history and change, and the possible meanings of our modernity.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Giovanni Tiso.

<sup>2</sup> This was the first example of “videoterrorism” in history.

<sup>3</sup> It should be remarked that the RAF was also the first Western terrorist group to make use of film as well as photography, notably to document some passages of the trial against Schleyer.

- 4 The practice of hanging a sign from the neck of the victim goes back in fact to the militants of the Salò Republic and was intentionally appropriated by the partisans in order to turn it against their enemies.
- 5 On the right of the flag we can make out in this instance the phrase “Taking the fight to the heart of the State.”
- 6 Margherita Cagol, known as Mara, was one of the members of the historical core of the Red Brigades.
- 7 The make-up applied to Sossi’s face to produce the photograph that the Red Brigades used for a fake identity card of the hostage shortly before his release can be seen as an *actual* mask. The ID card would have enabled the occupants of the car (Franceschini, another member of the Red Brigades, and Sossi himself) to show their documents without raising suspicion had the police or the Carabinieri stopped them.
- 8 Here we must add two further video-photo testimonies of kidnappings, such as those of Sossi and Macchiarini, that ended in the release of the hostage – namely, that of Ciro Cirillo (27 April–24 July 1981), a councilor in charge of town planning for the municipality of Naples, whose “people’s trial” became the subject of a video document not dissimilar to Peci’s, and that of United States general James Lee Dozier (17 December 1981–28 January 1982), which produced a police-style identification photograph similar to the Polaroids that preceded the Peci kidnapping.
- 9 As mentioned above, the RAF had realized a video of their hostage Schleyer a few years earlier in 1977.
- 10 These are the words used in the trial documents.
- 11 Fiorentino borrows this vivid metaphor from the Italian title of a film by Michael Powell (originally *Peeping Tom*, 1960) in which a young psychopathic director kills young women with a dagger mounted on the tripod of his cinema camera and films his acts while forcing the victims to look at their own terrified expression in a mirror.
- 12 This is the 1952 film by Roberto Rossellini about a photographer in a small town in central Italy who, having met a mysterious character who grants him a supernatural power, discovers that he can dictate the life or death of the people that he photographs. Convinced to be doing the will of Saint Andrew, Celestino (this is the photographer’s name) proceeds to exterminate all the “bad guys” of the town in the name of good.
- 13 This was the first model of the amateur television-style camera, launched on the market by Sony in 1965.
- 14 But also, literally, “on fire” (translator’s note).
- 15 The book includes technical information alongside an *excursus* on the history of the medium and interviews with militant practitioners, including Tano D’Amico and Enrico Deaglio (then director of Lotta Continua).
- 16 The DAMS is a university degree in the disciplines of art, music, and performing arts first offered in Bologna in the early 1970s. Several of its graduates became key figures in the 1977 protest movement (translator’s note).
- 17 Concutelli was responsible for the killing of investigating magistrate Vittorio Occorsio (10 July 1976).

- 18 I use the expression *decisive moment* with reference to Schaeffer rather than to Henri Cartier-Bresson, since for Schaeffer the term implies a testimonial value of the image largely devoid of the aesthetic value that it assumes for Cartier-Bresson.
- 19 See also the essay by Umberto Eco on the photograph in this volume.
- 20 On 16 March 1978, Giansanti managed to take a series of pictures in via Fani immediately after the attack against Moro (including details such as the statesman's bag left on the ground, the bundle of newspapers on the rear seat of the car, and Moro's wife, accompanied by a policeman and a priest). Concerning the discovery of Moro's body, more important pictures of the tragic event were captured by photographer Rolando Fava – without forgetting the television shots taken by the private station GBR – who held them in a worldwide exclusive until they were sold to RAI.
- 21 My thanks to Paolo Russo for bringing this to my attention.

## **PART FOUR**

---

### **Critiques of Modernity: Stillness, Motion, and the Ethics of Seeing**

*This page intentionally left blank*

## 9 The Body in and of the Image in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi

---

ROBERT LUMLEY

The work of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi has acquired a significance in the second decade of the twenty-first century that could not have been anticipated when they began their partnership in art in the mid-1970s. Pioneering figures in Europe in making films using found or archival footage that record actions and events marked by war, genocide, and human catastrophe, they anticipated a growing preoccupation with historical memory and commemoration, which became central concerns within Western cultures.<sup>1</sup> Films such as *Dal polo all'equatore* (From the Pole to the Equator, 1986) and the trilogy based on World War One – *Prigionieri della guerra* (Prisoners of the War, 1995), *Su tutte le vette è pace* (On the Heights All Is Peace, 1998), and *Oh! Uomo* (Oh! Mankind, 2004) – all bore witness to the horrors of colonialism and war. They journey back in time but with a keen awareness of the recurrence of cycles of violence in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia after 1992 and in the wider world following the Iraq war of 1991. Using footage originally shot in the first half of the twentieth century, the films of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi speak of contemporary realities, making them implacable voices of conscience and dissent within Italy. At the same time, this contemporary quality of their archive-based work is inseparable from its relationship to the history of cinema.<sup>2</sup>

A return to the photographic origins of cinema through a manipulation of temporality and a reworking of the single frames is at the core of their memorializing project, an ethical reflection on the visual technologies and their relation to history, modernity, and power. Ricci Lucchi and Gianikian slow down the film flow in order to set it in (critical) motion again as a reflection on the ideology of progress and the violence of modernity. Playing with the precarious temporality and historicity of photography, they redeem the film footage by dwelling on the sensual materiality of the image (be it colour or profilmic invisible details in the frame) and foregrounding for the viewer the physicality of the act of seeing. By exploring the viewer's visual sensations and apprehension of the film image, the filmmakers release a countervailing potential in film that reveals cinema's imbrication with contemporary ideology, be it colonialism or the violence of war and Fascism.

Paradoxically, the impermanence of the materials with which they have worked, combined with the demise of analogue and the advent of digitalization, have helped to make Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi into witnesses and actors of a material transformation without precedent in visual culture.<sup>3</sup> The passage of time is visible not only in

what is documented – in the historical figures and landscapes reproduced – but in the documents themselves as they age and decay. Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi celebrate and mourn the passing of photography-based cinema.<sup>4</sup>

### **Early Works and Influences**

To understand how Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi make films that are simultaneously about something (war and colonialism) and about film (reproductive technique, the materiality of photography), it is necessary to take a step back and look at their early days as filmmakers. Neither of them went to film school nor did they have any involvement with commercial cinema. Ricci Lucchi studied fine art (painting) and Gianikian studied architecture, writing a dissertation on silent cinema. When they began to work with film together, they continued to see themselves as artists. Gianikian made work with 8mm stock produced by Kodak for the amateur market. He edited the film within the camera and experimented with superimposition. It was relatively inexpensive. There was no need for special lighting or actors or the whole paraphernalia of the film industry. The results could be shown in art schools, galleries, and film clubs. In America there was a burgeoning of artists' films from the late 1950s onwards, a movement that was given the name "Underground cinema" in the following decade. Andy Warhol was the best-known artist experimenting with film, but there were many other artist filmmakers whose work was shown internationally (Curtis; Renan). An Italian catalogue-anthology entitled *Cinema Underground Oggi* describes the situation from an Italian viewpoint:

This catalogue has come into being as a practical and easy-to-use guide to the "mysteries" and "rituals" of underground cinema – witness, confession, and even artistic legacy of a now huge movement of filmic ideas, which originated in post-war America with authors such as Maya Deren, Marie Menken, Kenneth Anger ... and that then found first in Britain and then in France, Japan and Italy a fertile terrain in which to grow and proliferate ... The new generation of filmmakers finds in Stan Brakhage and his 'Songs' ... and in Ken Jacobs and Jack Smith the gurus of a new religion of consumption that would explode a few years later with pop art and rock music. (Luginbühl 1–2)

Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi were part of an alternative film scene in Italy that would have been familiar with the American films from screening in clubs and festivals. It is no surprise, therefore, that when in the early 1980s they toured their own work in the United States, they were hosted in New York by Jonas Mekas, filmmaker and founder of what became Anthology Film Archives.

The impact of American art in all its forms was strongly felt in Italy from the time of the Venice Biennale of 1964 onwards. However, the responses were complex and mediated by European cultural affiliations. The new avant-gardes sought out their predecessors, rediscovering the work of Dada, the Futurists, Surrealists, and others. In film, particular attention was paid to Man Ray and Buñuel and the Russian filmmakers of the 1920s. When discussing Russian filmmakers whose work they



Figure 9.1 Film frame from *Karagoez – Catalogo 9.5* (Karagoez – Catalogue 9.5 mm, 1979–81). © Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi. Courtesy of the artists.

have admired, Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi refer to Dziga Vertov, Esther Schub, Grigori Kozinstsev, Ilya Trauberg, and Lev Kuleshov (*Voyages*). In their films of the 1970s, they openly acknowledged the influence of Surrealism in titles such as *Non cercare il profumo di Buñuel* (Do Not Search for the Scent of Buñuel, 1975) and *Klinger e il guanto* (Klinger and the Glove, 1975). At this time they were making what they called *cinema profumato* (scented films) at the screenings: the filmmakers released scents with the help of essences, test tubes, and a Bunsen burner. The scents formed the olfactory equivalent of a soundtrack that was designed to trigger memories and sensations in the audience. It embodied an idea of cinema conceived by André Breton as “a lyrical substance” in which chance and disorientation rather than narrative prevailed (Breton 81). The experiment with scent was highly original and had nothing to do with Hollywood’s notion of a “total cinema” that aspired to ever-greater realism (Farassino 25–7). It had affinities, instead, with the “expanded cinema” of the 1960s with its emphasis on performance and bodily sensation (Renan 227–57).

Unfortunately it is no longer possible to experience cinema profumato. Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi gave their last performance of the work at the Jeu de Paume in the late 1990s. In some respects it constitutes a closed chapter. A second phase opened with the discovery of historic found footage (a cache of films in Pathé 9.5 mm, the first stock made for an amateur market) and with the abandonment of scent. Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi started to make films based on rephotographing and re-editing old movies of every kind.

The transformation led to the making of *Karagoez – Catalogo 9.5* (Karagoez – Catalogue 9.5 mm, 1979–81), which took three years to complete – a veritable homage to silent cinema. It was not a restoration but new work with antecedents in films such as Ken Jacobs's *Tom Tom the Piper's Son* (1968–9), a reworking of a ten-minute film of circa 1905 made by Billy Bitzer, later cameraman to D.W. Griffiths, and influenced by Vertov's documentary films, such as *Man with a Movie Camera* (1928). Gianikian described the making of *Karagoez*:

I have frozen the movements of a dance ... The bodies of the ballerinas look like self-propelled statues ... In an excess of voyeurism I prolong the five frames of a woman uncovering her breast in an alcove that could not be perceived otherwise. I leave those bodies, faces, scenery and the Venetian fires to shoot a didactic film ... I photograph the slow movements of an underwater swimmer ... I observe the evolution of different types of jelly-fish that resemble underwater fireworks ... I return to Casanova and inside the rectangle of 9.5mm film I isolate a detail of two millimetres – the heart painted on the cheek of the ballerina. (83–4)

The eye is not that of the cameraman who makes his own films but of the film remaker who sees with the prosthetic eye of the optical printer.

The caesura that divides the early cinema profumato from the archival or historic found footage films with which Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi are identified has probably seemed all the greater due to the absence of the former from exhibition. However, an adequate account of the oeuvre needs to integrate this original but neglected experiment. Above all, it helps us to think about a fundamental aspect of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi's films as a whole – namely, the role of embodiment and of sensual apprehension on the part of audiences. In the words of the critic Philippe Azoury: “The cinema of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi depends essentially on the principle of sensation, and sensation is always acknowledged as the point of departure for every revelation” (5). The early films explicitly set out to explore the sense of smell. Accounts of performances underline the intensely physical sensations evoked in audiences. Film, filmmaking, and watching the film are conceived in a strongly experiential way, which, as Azoury suggests, persists through their work. In the 1970s, there were connections between their projects and developments within independent filmmaking, notably with performance-based expanded cinema and with structuralist currents which foregrounded, albeit in very different ways, the sensations and perceptions of the viewer and the materiality of the medium. Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi's practice, however, acquired a historical and political dimension that

they see as distinguishing it from the more formal, individual, and perception-based concerns of North American contemporaries.<sup>5</sup> Yervant Gianikian's preoccupation with the Armenian genocide, which his father had witnessed as a young boy, may have contributed to a vision of history as the ever-present threat of repetition and return. Meanwhile in 1970s Italy the experience of Fascism engendered fears of coup d'état and orchestrated political violence. The appeal to memory through bodily sensation of the earlier work is replaced by appeal to historical memory – historical memory embodied in the materiality and images of the film. At the same time, this shift towards the historical marked by new approaches to found footage was part of a wider cultural tendency noted by Jeffrey Skoller. Research in the archive opened up a whole new/old world to filmmakers. "For the first time in the history of the art form," writes Skoller, "filmmakers have an archive to sift through, analyse, and appropriate, allowing them to create their own metahistories. The history of world film culture has been a short but dense one that has permeated the consciousness of much of the planet, allowing cinema to become – like literature – a way of apprehending the world itself" (xxix).

The centrality of appeals to the bodily in the work of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi acquired a different valence in the late 1980s in relation to developments in filmmaking and film criticism and history. First, there was the "ethnographic turn" and the questioning of Eurocentric thinking and practice. Laura Marks coined the term *intercultural cinema* to refer to a cinema for which experimentation and appeal to "haptic visuality and embodied responses to images" were integral to its reflection on the "experience of diaspora, (post- or neo-) colonialism, and cultural apartheid" (Marks 1–23). Second, film theory itself was undergoing a major revision as a result of the critique of dominant models constructed in the 1960s and 1970s around semiological and psychoanalytical approaches. In their place was proposed a phenomenological approach associated with the work of Merleau-Ponty (Sobchack xi–xix). Both these developments have involved revisiting the early history of cinema and the first film theorists, and rediscovering the central place of the body in early films (Moore 12–25).<sup>6</sup> It is easy to see, therefore, how Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi's engagement with the materiality of film and with the bodily response of the spectator put their work at a crossroads where different developments in early twenty-first century film theory and practice met. At the same time, the filmmakers were charting a course that separated them from the narcissism and consumerism of the *Milano da bene* of the 1980s. Their political and ethical choices implied a thoroughgoing refusal of the new media market and party patronage. Their films expressed a radical otherness with respect to the society in which they lived.

### **Handling the Image**

Filmmaking for Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi is a way of life. Work is not a separate place or activity undertaken only at prescribed times. They are artisans and masters of a craft. They share their small apartment in Milan with the tools of their trade – the editing-table that once belonged to Luca Comerio is in one room with Gianikian's

homemade optical printer; a study space has shelves stacked high with box files; the living room doubles up as a viewing room when critics visit. The collections of objects and archival footage are housed elsewhere. However, their relationship to the materials is intimate and physical. Gianikian comments on the special smells of the film stock. When he works at the editing-table, he does not run the film through a *moviola* – it is too fragile. Instead, it is examined frame by frame (see [Colour Plate 6](#)).

The film is either held in the hand and scrutinized by the naked eye or turned manually through the optical printer and inspected with the help of the prosthetic eye.<sup>7</sup> For this purpose, Gianikian built an optical printer of his own. He enumerates its features:

It is a camera with microscope features, more photographic than cinematographic, and reminds me more of Muybridge and Marey's experiences than Lumière's. 347,600 frames were taken by hand for the film *Dal Polo all'Equatore*. The camera is equipped with devices for lateral, longitudinal and angular running. It can respect the frame entirely in the philological sense. Or it can penetrate the depth of the frame for detailed observation of the marginal zones of the image and the uncontrolled parts of the shot. The camera can respect the color of the original toning or hand coloring of the frame, but it can autonomously paint vast areas of film. The running speed depends on what you want to emphasize. ("La nostra camera analitica" 39)

The work is slow and labour-intensive. There are no shortcuts. Even short films take months to make, whereas the feature-length ones have taken several years apiece. The smallest details are memorized; "It is a kind of vivisection. We note what is happening in each frame, how many frames there are for every shot and sequence. We are very precise," says Gianikian (Macdonald 15).

The film usually needs to be repaired and the rate of deterioration contained, all of which requires extensive knowledge of the different formats, film stock, and techniques such as tinting. Knowing about the exercise of the craft at the time the original footage was shot feeds into the reworking of the film. Technical expertise includes knowing how to make and adapt the optical printer. But the secret of the filmmaking lies not in the technology as such but in the know-how that informs the mimetic approach that brings the filmmakers into contact with the methods and thinking of their predecessors. Remarks made by Walter Benjamin about learning by copying are pertinent. "One never really understands a book," he wrote, "unless one copies it" (qtd. in Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn* 125). Rephotographing plays an analogous role in the filmmakers' practice since an intimate knowledge of the original film is the precondition for its subsequent transformation into new work.

The hands, too, play their part in the process of interpretation and understanding. Direct contact with objects is not cursory. The sense of touch is part of the making. Immediate contact functions as a metaphor for the intimacy of "entering into the image." It is also associated with moments of revelation. For example, there was the occasion of the first visit to the laboratory of Luca Comerio, the pioneer of Italian documentary film, whose personal archive was to provide the footage for *Dal polo*

*all'equatore*. Gianikian held up the strip of film, saw the tinted images of a sailing ship at sea, and knew that they had to buy the archives. A sense of mortality accompanies the film-makers's relationship to the materials of their work. The dedication to Luca Comerio at the beginning of *Dal polo all'equatore* signals an awareness of the ephemerality of filmmakers as well as film. It states: "To Luca Comerio, pioneer of documentary cinema, who died in 1940 in a condition of amnesia. Chemical amnesia, mould, physical decay, decay of the image is the condition surrounding film materials."<sup>8</sup> In the years that have elapsed since the film was made, the images of the original have disappeared completely, leaving transparent film.

### The Body in Motion

Within the history of photography, the body's vulnerability and film are explicitly connected in the work of Eadweard Muybridge and Jean-Etienne Marey to whom Gianikian refers when discussing his "analytical camera" with its "microscope features" ("La nostra camera analittica" 53). Marey was a physiologist who, according to Marta Braun,

wanted to arrive at a visual description of all common types of human motion – the walk, the run, the jump, and so on – and the forces at work in their execution ... If motion is the most apparent characteristic of life, there is no doubt that it is also the most difficult to measure. Most of the movements in and of the body are invisible and have an intricacy – in form, duration, regularity, and amplitude – that defies any attempt to either capture or interpret them. Marey had chosen to explore a domain inhabited by invisible ephemera. (xviii)

For Marey, the body was an animate machine (see Figure 3.13). By contrast, Muybridge was an entertainer and illusionist, not a scientist. Although he pioneered stop-action photography, he produced spectacles, not analytical works, with his sequences of images (Rohdie, *Montage* 3–5). These included not only the canonical naked man walking or running but the woman undressing or, naked, turning and bending. As Linda Williams has argued, "Chrono-photography did more than document previously unobserved facts of movement ... this very machinery of observation and measurement turns out to be, even at this early stage, less an impartial instrument than a crucial mechanism in the power established over that body, constituting it as an object and subject of desire, offering up an image of the body as *mechanism* that is in many ways a reflection of the mechanical nature of the medium itself" (508).

Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi share the interest of Marey and Muybridge in using photography to show the movements that the naked human eye cannot see. They, too, magnify and multiply the image. They look at films frame by frame, treating them as the equivalent of the photographs of the chrono-photographers. Ordinary actions, such as walking, turning, bending, and carrying objects, feature in their films. However, Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi have an anthropological and historical outlook. For them, the movements and gestures are coded and inscribed within cultures, whereas

the chrono-photographers with their grid backdrops and laboratory-like conditions, at least in Marey's case, sought to picture ideal, universally valid examples of human movement with society and culture removed. The filmmakers, furthermore, make moving pictures – a time-based form – not the sequence of photographs of the chrono-photographers. Movements and gestures are recorded in their duration, even if the manipulation of speed entails the abandonment of the search for a film speed that seeks to replicate "natural" motion and the exploration of a frontier zone between the still and moving image.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the work of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi can be interpreted as an ongoing and relentless interrogation of the visual culture of modernity with its urge to survey, classify, and control. They return, for example, to the moment when the still image is put into motion in order to look again at a history too often seen as a march of progress. The assumption of progress, whether of technology or civilization, is examined in all tragic self-delusion. With the installation *La marcia dell'uomo*, constructed by Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi for the Venice Biennale in 2001, footage from Marey's Station Physiologique entitled *Hommes nègres, marche* is juxtaposed against amateur films from later in the century shot from the point of view of the colonizer. The slowing down of the film and the free movement of the spectator in front of the screens of the installation is designed to open up a (critical) space between image and viewer (Lumley 112–16; Païni and Hibon).

Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi give us a catalogue of human movement and gesture to invite a reflection on culture, representation, and power. If one simply takes the act of walking and looks at different films, the man or woman or child walking in slowed motion occurs again and again. Precise classification might include the stride of the Russian cavalryman, the even step of the Buddhist monk, and so on. The differences that strike the spectator have usually to do with the contrasts produced through editing – the contrast between, say, the easy gait of the tourist in India and the limp of the beggar, or between the aggressive assertiveness of the European hunter in Africa and the immobility of African bystanders.

### **Problematizing Spectatorship**

Anthropologists in the early twentieth century studied the bodies and behaviour of native peoples in order to find clues about the nature of their societies. Fatimah Tobing Rony refers to Marcel Mauss's claim that it was possible to "divide humanity into those who squat and those who sit" (21). In certain films, notably *Dal polo all'equatore, Images d'Orient, tourisme vandale* (Images of the East, Vandal Tourism, 2001), and the short films grouped under the title *Frammenti elettrici* (Electric Fragments, 2002–5), Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi help us to "catalogue" the movements and gestures in parts of the world conquered and ruled by European powers.

In the war trilogy, the filmmakers show the massed bodies of the European peasantry. Not only were millions of men to die in the First World War but the peasantry of Europe, after centuries of settlement, was doomed to extinction, along with its distinctive cultures and modes of life. Marcello Flores comments on *Prigionieri della*



**Figure 9.2** Film frame from *Images d'Orient, tourisme vandale* (Images of the East, Vandal Tourism, 2001). © Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi. Courtesy of the artists.

guerra: “The differences are noticeable, not only because the dance of the Russian prisoners is different from that of the Italian prisoners – in its rhythm, actions, and coral nature – but noticeable in that the way they wear moustaches or the way clothes corresponds to distinctive regional canons. However, what is even more noticeable is the uniformity – the masses of men who in peacetime would be working the fields ... a landscape monotonous in the harshness to which the men’s labor is subjected.” Flores finds the film remarkable for its close observation of “faces that are the same and yet different” and the contrast between the signs of individuality and the standardized uniforms of the mass (Flores). Once again, the cinematic approach of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi harkens back to another photographic project: August Sander’s *Face of Our Time* (1929). Sander believed that “the photographer with his camera can grasp the physiognomic image of his time”; “a typology of the body as a social index,” writes Graham Clarke, “is basic to Sander’s complex code of social identity. Posture and stance, for example, reflect part of a larger mapping of the body in relation to public status and self-confidence” (“Public Faces” 71). The photographer and the filmmakers share the ambition to catalogue and inventory society at a given moment

in time, as well as an awareness of the tensions between social roles and individual identities. Humanity appears in all its physical imperfection, social inequality, and cultural diversity. In *Images d'Orient, tourisme vandale*, ranks of Indian children do agricultural work in a field, their frail bodies scarcely able to manage the implements they use. In *Oh! Uomo*, a line of children who walk slowly and laboriously past the camera with their crutches and ill-fitting boots replicate movements first captured by the chrono-photographers, but theirs are bodies ravaged by malnutrition and disease, not perfect machines in motion. The body is made into a machine when it is broken. The hand that lights and holds the cigarette, the fingers that type, the arm that scythes, and the legs that walk – all are prosthetic devices shown by the documentary film. War not only destroys men's bodies, it inaugurates a new world in which bodies too are reconstructed and remade, a savage caricature of Marinetti's Futurist vision of "metallized flesh" (Poggi 150–80).

Historically, fascination with the body has been driven by a range of forces, from developments in science to the growth of pornography, not to mention the new technologies of visualization themselves. Analyses from a post-colonial perspective have argued convincingly that the history of modernity and its notions of the body cannot be separated from Western conceptions of colonized subjects and non-Western peoples as Other. Assenka Oksiloff writes that the non-Western body was conceived in its essence as "primitive" and that the shift in anthropology to an observational mode gave primacy to "direct, unmediated visual access to the native body" (Oksiloff 3–4).

In films from *Dal polo all'equatore* to *Terra Nullius* (2002), Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi show how the cameramen of the time juxtaposed Europeans with their modern technology against the "natives" with their primitive tools. An evolutionary schema implicitly frames images of Europeans carrying rifles and natives carrying spears. When Australian Aboriginals wear European clothing, it is tattered. In Ruth Ben-Ghiat's words, "Seeing is an integral part of the act of killing – violence as inevitable and a masculine rite; the ability of modern technologies to tame and vanquish nature, performance as a lens on the essence of the 'primitive'" (Ben-Ghiat xvii). The camera itself functioned as a weapon of war and imperialism.

### **Spectatorship and the Affective Image**

Audience responses to the films of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi suggest that a more phenomenological approach is particularly appropriate in their case. This might be deduced from their working method with its stress on manual intervention and mimesis, and from the depiction of extreme conditions of starvation, poverty, illness, and subjection to violence that recurs in them. The filmmakers set out to elicit strong responses. It is as if they are saying, the images you are seeing have themselves seen in reality what is now a projection on the screen. At the same time, the films of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi draw attention to themselves as historical footage that has been remade. The viewer is addressed as someone who is watching a film.

Vivian Sobchack gives a good summary of a phenomenological approach that examines how viewers watch films. She argues that there is a mimetic and physical



Figure 9.3 Film frame from *La marcia dell'uomo* (The Walk of Man, 2001). © Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi. Courtesy of the artists.

relationship to images that is not reducible to the cognitive and engagement with narrative. She writes:

Watching a film we can see the seeing as well as the seen, hear the hearing as well as the heard, and feel the movement as well as see the moved. As viewers, not only do we spontaneously and invisibly perform these existential acts directly for and as ourselves, in relation to the film before us, but these same acts are coterminously given to us as the film, as mediating acts of perception-cum-expression we take up and *invisibly perform* by appropriating and incorporating them into our own existential performance; we watch them as a *visible performance* distinguishable from, yet included in, our own. (10–11)

Such an embodied viewing experience was initially at the heart of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi's cinema profumato, but the films they made subsequently have equally worked in terms of affects not adequately comprehended through notions of "reading" and "decoding."

David MacDougall has commented on the limitations of a process of viewing in which people search for meaning. He writes:

When they see a film they worry about what they are supposed to think. Their thinking keeps interfering with the process of looking ... They cannot give themselves to the images of a film, and afterwards all that is left in their minds is a series of judgments, or a set of questions, or a list of items they believe have been left out. (MacDougall 7–8)

In relation to *Dal polo all'equatore*, for example, critics have compared the experience of watching to being in a trance or under hypnosis, suggesting surrender of control and a haptic response to the images and sounds. Giovanna Marini, singer, collaborator, and composer of the soundtrack to *Prigionieri della guerra*, spoke of the experience of watching this film as one of being pulled between a state of dreaming and an awareness of a horrific reality: “Everything appeared transformed and seen by another eye, rarefied and even dream-like images, yet there was always the harsh reality, utter truth” (115).

Often members of audiences react to images of violence in Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi’s films by covering their eyes and looking down, or by letting out involuntary gasps and sighs. The filmmakers have not hesitated to confront spectators, whether with images of pornographic scenes or surgery in medical documentaries. The body is shown in its vulnerability.

All descriptions of *Oh! Uomo* return to the scenes of eye surgery. Spectators are confronted with the close-up of an eyelid that is opened with tweezers by a disembodied hand before the remaining tissue is extracted from the empty socket. A trickle of blood is wiped away. As if it were the same patient (a trick of montage), a glass eye is inserted and “looks” to left and right as directed. The original training film has been transformed using the optical printer. The eye has now been placed at the centre of the screen in close-up. A film about surgery has become a defining scene in a film about looking (and not looking), a film that pivots around the relationship of the eye and the body. The sequence clearly alludes to the opening shots of *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) in which a razor blade cuts through an eyeball and a cloud cuts across the moon (Rees 48–9; Shaviro 54). There is an element of homage here to Surrealist films’ assault on the rationalist all-seeing eye. However, the filmmakers are making nothing up; “We are not interested in fiction,” they say, “but in the complexity of reality, even when it comes in the form of propaganda that we seek to take apart.” The difficulty of looking at an eye operation is matched throughout *Oh! Uomo* by other scenes observed by the mechanical eye of the camera that are similarly unwatchable, such as those of children starving or in pain. There is the look to camera that is directly aligned to the look of the audience, a haunting example of which is reproduced on the cover of the booklet and DVD of *Oh! Uomo* – a child looks down and looks up, looks down and looks up; a child near death’s door. The audience’s discomfort is intensified by removal of the reassuring frames of the medical documentary that held the images at arm’s length and conferred meaning on them. Instead, the act of showing disfigured faces and broken bodies is direct and unmediated, shocking.

When the films had an abundance of intertitles indicating appropriate responses on the part of audiences as well as informing them about exactly what they were



**Figure 9.4** Film frame from *Oh! Uomo* (*Oh! Mankind*, 2004). © Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi. Courtesy of the artists.

seeing, they could be allocated a label and classified. Luca Comerio's documentaries, it seems, were full of intertitles with a distinctive rhetoric associated with Fascism. Once taken away, without being replaced by another set of verbal signposts, the images lost a precise identification and acquired new potential for meanings. Audiences were no longer told how they should interpret and react to what they saw. The filmmakers allowed themselves only images and (sometimes) sound to work on, and sought to make films that "made sense" by working with and on the senses. It is the combination of troubling images in which the body (human and animal) is so present with the lack of words that direct us in how to respond that has provoked the greatest criticism of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi's work. The major anxiety is that privileging the image opens the way to aestheticization, making, for example, the bodies of colonialized people into a spectacle for Western eyes (Russell 21–2).

Concerning this critique, Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi recall their perplexity when they read Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*, which was published just as they were finishing work on *Oh! Uomo*. For Sontag, images

documenting atrocity and suffering had become another consumer product, a form of pornography. She wrote:

Perhaps the only people with the right to look at images of suffering of this extreme order are those who could do something to alleviate it – say, surgeons at the military hospital, or those who could learn from it. The rest of us are voyeurs, whether or not we mean to be ... In each instance, the gruesome invites us to be either spectators or cowards unable to look. (Sontag, *Regarding* 38)

Sontag's text is sometimes contradictory. She makes a case for the photography of war as well as arguing that photographs often serve to substitute rather than enhance memory. However, Sontag consistently maintains that it is through written language, notably literature, that explanation and critical understanding are really made possible. Overall, the argument seemed to call in question the filmic strategies pursued by Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi over many years, notably their minimal use of intertitles, complete refusal of commentary, and construction of narrative through editing; in brief, addressing the bodily "eye" of the spectator.

Sontag, however, was writing about the still photograph image, not about moving images. In important ways, therefore, the objections do not apply. The structure of the time-based medium enables the filmmaker to put images in sequence to create patterns, contrasts, juxtapositions. Although their early "scented films" were silent, Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi subsequently collaborated closely with composers and musicians to produce soundtracks that run parallel to the images. Taken one by one as isolated frames the images may be seen as enigmatic, mysterious, and exotic, but within the individual film, and within the oeuvre overall, they can be seen in relation to an identifiable critical practice on the part of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi. Voiceover didacticism is rendered redundant. At the same time, the viewer is not addressed as in a debate or essay. Affect and sensation are elicited by the films in ways not usually open to cultural forms that work within notions of rationality and mental, as opposed to bodily, responses. Nor does this relegate the work to a lower order of discourse analogous to the role of the illustration of the written text. On the contrary, the images recall those of early cinema when moving pictures amazed and sometimes quite literally moved audiences (Gunning). Only audiences are now aware that they are watching films once watched by other audiences almost a century previously. The physical responses might be similar in many respects, but spectators are also watching themselves watching with a heightened awareness of historical and cinematic time. Ricci Lucchi and Gianikian's return to photography rediscovers cinema as a lost object and reinvents the act of seeing.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Foot; Huyssen; and Winter.

<sup>2</sup> Translations into English in the chapter are all by the author unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> There is now an extensive and fast-growing literature in this area. See Cherchi Usai; Mulvey; and Rodowick.

- 4 Writing about the work of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi has tended to appear in journals and reviews. Collected volumes have brought together many of these in Italian and English texts, as in Mereghetti and Nosei; and Toffetti. For an English-language monograph, see Lumley.
- 5 Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi have sought to distance themselves in particular from the growing number of “found footage” films, which in their eyes completely lack historical awareness and respect (Mereghetti and Rossin 121).
- 6 Béla Balázs represents an interesting case with reference to the work of Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi; “A point in time existed for Balázs,” writes Rachel Moore, “in which language was unmediated and pure gestures were identical with the thought or, better, the feeling conveyed” (67).
- 7 Work on a strip of nitrate film is the subject of a short, *Trasparenze* (1998), which is beautifully described by Luisella Farinotti (49–51).
- 8 “A Luca Comerio, pioniere del cinema di documentazione morto nel 1940, in stato di amnesia. L’amnesia chimica, la muffa, il decadimento fisico dell’immagine, è lo stato che circonda i materiali filmici.”
- 9 Raymond Bellour notes: “Without doubt there will come the day when, faced with the need to see the history of film in a broader historical context, people will seek to understand it from the range of ways in which individuals consistently – but in a crescendo lasting almost forty years – opposed its progress and tried to stop it, in particular by trying to create speeds other than those dictated by the natural true-false rhythm of editing (or based on the analogy of movement). When that day comes, the exploration done for over twenty years by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi will be seen as a fundamental phase in a history whose (conceptual) boundaries it nevertheless explodes, since the force that holds it at the margins of both fiction and documentary categories can no longer be satisfied with avant-garde classifications” (79–80).

# 10 Intersections of Photography, Writing, and Landscape: The Italian Landscape Photobook from Ghirri to Fossati and Messori

---

MARINA SPUNTA

## Introduction

The photographer Luigi Ghirri played a pivotal role in positing photography as art and in raising its profile in contemporary Italian debates on visual theory. He did so both through his remarkable photographic works (largely connected to landscape) and through an extensive body of critical essays written in the 1970s and particularly in the 1980s. These texts, now mostly collected in the 1997 volume *Niente di antico sotto il sole* and in the recent *Lezioni di fotografia* (lessons delivered in 1989–90 but first published in 2010), are still largely unexplored as a coherent body of work and mostly unavailable in English translation. This chapter seeks to highlight the representation and theorization of landscape by the new school of photography that coalesced around Ghirri and its contribution to reflecting on the medium of photography itself. With this goal in mind, I focus on the ways in which, since the 1970s/1980s, photography has been posited in close relation with the other arts, most specifically (literary) writing, and how this cross-pollination has redefined the medium's tasks and ontology. At the same time, I seek to demonstrate the key role of Ghirri's photographic and critical work in stimulating Italian photographers to explore these possibilities. To this end, I analyse the collaboration of the photographer Vittore Fossati and the writer Giorgio Messori to show how they take Ghirri's lesson a step further, bringing photography and writing closer together on the page. I argue that their revisiting the notion of landscape both as a philosophical reflection on inhabiting and as an intrinsically aesthetic experience at the same time sensorial, intellectual, imaginative, affective, and historical/memorial is crucial to understand the Italian contribution to rethinking the photographic.<sup>1</sup>

Ghirri draws on the long history of landscape painting and its nineteenth-century photographic imitations and rewrites its lessons. He shifts the focus from picturesque landscapes to everyday, nondescript places and thus establishes a new aesthetics that seeks both to document such places and, most importantly, to give them a new aesthetic valence. I argue that Ghirri's lesson of (landscape) photography in the 1970s and particularly since the early 1980s has been instrumental in bringing about a greater attention to landscape and to the swift changes and cultural traumas of modernity in Italy. This occurred not only in contemporary photography, as in Fossati's work, but also in literature, an influence particularly noticeable in the writings of Gianni Celati

and of Messori.<sup>2</sup> All of these works share a focus on the “*qualsiasiità*” (“whatsoeverness”) of the landscapes, everyday spaces which engender a complex tension between belonging and displacement. Writers and photographers alike invite the reader/viewer to connect to these anonymous spaces even as he or she experiences them as symptoms of the displacement that defines globalized, post-postmodern culture. With this representational strategy, Ghirri sought to recover a sense of “experience,” in the Benjaminian sense of *Erfahrung*, as the experience of privileged, “auratic” inwardness, which Benjamin deemed threatened in contemporary society by technology and specifically by photography, the new medium of mechanical reproducibility. But, unlike Benjamin, Ghirri refrained from aligning photography with the disappearance of the “aura” of works of art, and instead understood it as a means to re-enchant places, specifically those nondescript, seemingly antiauratic places that speak to no one and yet through photographic intervention invite identification from any viewer. The momentous impact of Ghirri’s photographic practice and reflection becomes fully visible if we consider the latest developments in photographic theory in Italy. The crucial shift from the picturesque to the nondescript which redirects the focus from “artistic” to more “prosaic” sites challenges the strict divisions between “high” and “low” artistic practices and points to the recently developed concept of the medianity of photography.

Drawing on Bourdieu’s concept of photography as an “art moyen,” Claudio Marra describes photography’s “medianity effect” (Marra, *Le idee* 11). Rather than focusing on its status as an art in itself, Marra takes *moyen* to refer to the position of photography as something on the border, flexible, moving in an interstitial space between art and many widespread social practices. “The category of ‘mediano,’” Marra maintains, “could aspire to become the interpretive key to a series of cultural phenomena typical of our age,” such as the “destructuring” of art and the mixing of art and popular culture that has taken place since the avant-gardes (Marra, *Le idee* 11). Marra highlights both the great heterogeneity of fields in which photography has been used and the methodological unity with which it has been employed; this leads him to posit photography as a function (rather than seeking its intrinsic identity) and to emphasize its positive character of being situated in an in-between space that partakes of the external world and our senses and aesthetics (Marra, *Le idee* 20).

The concept of medianity acquires a particularly interesting cultural and institutional dimension in relation to photography’s role in the Italian context. In Italy, photography – traditionally considered secondary to figurative arts such as painting – has had to claim its own territory against, or in collaboration with, other disciplines. It is no surprise, therefore, that photographic practice and theory have struggled to gain a presence in Italy, both within and outside academia. Nor is it surprising that reflections on photography have often come from experts in different fields like writers, philosophers, socio-anthropologists, and art critics (such as Italo Calvino, Umberto Eco, and Massimo Cacciari), as well as photographers themselves (such as Ugo Mulas, Franco Vaccari, and Ghirri). Adding to this hybrid dimension is the fact that many photographers of the so-called ’68 generation (which includes, beside Ghirri, Guido Guidi, Mimmo Jodice, Mario Cresci, and Gabriele Basilico, to cite but

a few) arrived at photography via other arts.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising therefore that when such a “generation of intellectuals … who became a generation of photographers” (Quintavalle, *Muri di carta* 50) started practicing photography, they engaged in a dialogue with other disciplines, such as architecture, painting, and literature. Through the work of these and other artists and theorists, since the 1960s and 1970s, photography has been posited as a key philosophical object within contemporary culture, playing an increasingly pivotal role in the debates on art and reality and in the very definition and shifting understanding of what art is. This change brought about two important effects in the context of the present book: the redressing of the long historical invisibility of photography and its consecration as art, an art that radically challenged any previous notion of art and that posits itself in relation with other arts and cultural practices through the notion of medianity.

The medianity of photography invites an interdisciplinary/intermedial approach that, in line with recent theories of textual/visual studies, I pursue in this chapter.<sup>4</sup> Like interdisciplinarity, intermediality has recently gained much critical interest as the “interrelation between two arts, two practices, two objects, or even two discourses” (Baetens 67), as critics and scholars have focused on the prefix “inter,” on the in-betweenness of different media. While distinguishing between the two approaches, here I will draw on both perspectives to explore the theoretical and critical triangulation of photography, writing, and landscape in contemporary Italian culture.<sup>5</sup>

Like photography, the study of landscape is defined by the same characteristic of medianity. Since the 1970s and 1980s there has been a growing interest in place and landscape in a number of arts and disciplines, such as geography, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, critical theory, and politics, as well as photography and literature. This so-called “spatial turn” can be linked to growing practices of travel and displacement in post-modernity and to a greater sensitivity and institutional commitment towards environmental issues (D’Angelo, “Estetica ambientale” 308–11; and Valtorta, “Fotografia paesaggio” 30–3). At the same time, the much-discussed “visual turn” in post-modernity, characterized by the centrality of the photographic, has meant greater attention has been given to the impact of photography onto spatial studies, especially on geography, which explores the way spaces (and maps) are constructed through visualization (Schwartz and Ryan 2003). Drawing on these considerations, I argue that the discourses on and practices of photography and landscape representation should be considered in connection with each other and explored for their mutual influences. If photography is defined by its medianity, similarly landscape is distinguished by its intrinsic liminality, as it is studied in many different fields, and, like photography, it is often used as a means of interdisciplinary studies. In the words of philosopher Paolo D’Angelo, landscape is situated “on the *limit* between [the disciplines], in the space where they intersect” (D’Angelo, “Introduzione” 8). In positing a similarity between photography and landscape, I also develop Roberta Valtorta’s suggestion that the languages of photography and landscape have exerted a mutual influence on each other, as each has contributed to constructing a notion of the other (Valtorta, “Dilatazioni” 97).

Interestingly, as Marra (*Fotografia e pittura*) and Valtorta (“La fotografia dei luoghi”) remind us, the focus on landscape in photography in the 1980s did not simply mirror a greater interest in geography but allowed photography to reflect upon itself and upon its way of seeing the exterior and portraying itself as an art. In a key chapter of her recent book *Volti della fotografia*, suggestively titled “La fotografia dei luoghi come fotografia” (The Photography of Places as Photography) Valtorta claims that “the privileged observation of landscape (of the world) takes on in this light the meaning above all of a verification of the photographic operation” (246). Elsewhere, she goes as far as to claim that “landscape can also be seen as a true key for interpreting the development of contemporary photography” (Valtorta, “L’esperienza” 196). According to Marra, Italian photography of the 1980s is distinguished both by its focus on landscape and by its stylistic choices, especially its “particular harmony, created – implicitly and explicitly – with other forms of narrative, and in particular the literary” (Marra, *Fotografia e pittura* 222), a collaboration that continues in the following decades.

In post-modernity, the discourses on both landscape and photography are in line with the weakening of the subject, which is no longer posited as the “creator” of the external, as in the Romantic aesthetic tradition, but rather as a participant in a two-way relationship with the environment that “affects” the subject through different sensorial perceptions, from seeing to hearing. This interaction, which breaks down a clear distinction between subjective and objective positions, triggers a process of cultural rememoration and imagination that links the individual to a collectivity.<sup>6</sup> Such a process is central to Ghirri’s photographic practice and reflection, which is loaded with the historical and cultural poignancy of the encounter with a specific Italian landscape. Italy is a country that has witnessed a very rapid transition from a rural society to post-modernity; the speed of this transformation has allowed little time for coming to terms with this change and has often led artists to reflect on and at times lament the loss of cultural values. Ghirri, together with a number of artists, used landscape photography as a means of slowing down the rhythm of contemporary life and of taking stock of a fast-changing reality, juxtaposing the inherent stillness of photography with the “motion” of modernity.

This shift from a dominant viewing subject to a concept of place as inhabited space – a site of memory, community, and affectivity (Bonesio) – is connected to the recovery of aesthetics in both landscape theory and photographic theory as both an emotional and intellectual experience, which posits both disciplines in a closer, affective relation to the individual. According to Tosco, landscape has recently become more of a value, of an aesthetic, than a scientific term; similarly, for Signorini, photography has shifted from the idea of artistic work to that of aesthetic experience; this echoes a shift in emphasis from the creation of a work of art to performance and reception (Signorini, *Arte del fotografico* 123). Following these recent shifts, both photography and landscape theory have become concerned with traces, the pursuit of absent and vanishing objects, a focus linked to the ethical/aesthetic commitment of the geographer, the photographer, or the writer to recover inhabitable places before they disappear. The rise of a “scuola di paesaggio italiana” (Italian landscape school)

in the 1980s is a direct expression of this commitment. In this sense, the “school” should be understood in terms of these artists’ shared cultural horizon and common focus on landscape, rather than as an official grouping or a single methodology.<sup>7</sup>

The increasing focus on landscape in Italian photography is paralleled by the growing practice of publishing photobooks, a text type that brings to the fore the pivotal role of photography in bridging different media and disciplines and in bringing together diverse theoretical reflections. In the following pages I will consider the interrelation between Italian landscape photography and writing by focusing on the Italian landscape photobook from Ghirri onwards, analysing some of his seminal works from the 1970s and 1980s, in which he gave a new role to the photographer as an artist, as well as a critic, and centre stage to the reflection on place and landscape and on ways of inhabiting the earth.<sup>8</sup> Within the recent boom of interdisciplinary, textual/visual studies, the photobook has attracted growing critical interest as the closest cross-hybridization between literature and photography, as critics have sought to redress the marginality to which many of these texts have been relegated (see Bryant 11–20). This approach problematizes the intersection between the two arts through the relation between words and images in a text, exposing any resistance to the photographic image from the part of the verbal, while often staging a collaboration between a photographer and a writer. After examining Ghirri’s main photobooks, I will conclude by focusing on a recent text by Vittore Fossati and Giorgio Messori, *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* (2007), which closely draws on Ghirri’s lesson and, as I will show, takes it a step further in creating a phototext that is remarkable for the intersubjective dialogue between the artists and the intricate merging of media.

### **Luigi Ghirri and the Landscape Photobook**

Luigi Ghirri played a key part in reviving the Italian landscape photobook by shifting photography’s focus onto landscape, by placing greater importance on the photographic book, renewing its format and role within contemporary photography, and by variously inserting writing in his texts, thus practicing different forms of phototexts. The richness of Ghirri’s work draws on his eclectic interests and readings, which include theories of landscape, art and architecture, human geography, and aesthetics,<sup>9</sup> cinema and literature, as well as classical and popular music, an eclecticism that also emerges in his diverse collaborations with different artists and scholars. In one of his last interviews with the photography critic and historian Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, Ghirri voiced his commitment to “return landscape to central issues of representation” (Quintavalle, “Viaggio dentro” 136), lamenting the fact that people had lost the capacity to “see” the external and to realize its degradation. In this light, the choice of focusing on landscape, on “*ri-guardare il paesaggio*” (“taking another look at landscape”; 136), which underpins much of his work, can be seen as his effort to re-educate people to see the external, in order to make places more inhabitable and change the very notion of inhabiting from exploitative consumption to attention and cohabitation (Signorini, “Nuovo paesaggio” 11–33).

The choice of landscape is most interesting when considering the limited practice of this genre before the 1970s – a few photographers such as Paolo Monti and Mario Giacomelli, and later Franco Fontana were the exception (Calvenzi 118–19). In choosing to focus on landscape, Ghirri and his collaborators made a point of moving away from the immediate Italian tradition of photo-reportage (whose ethical commitment they retained, however) and recuperating the origins of photography in its initial focus on landscape. As they did so, they turned their gaze both to foreign photography and to other Italian arts, such as figurative arts (mostly De Chirico and Sironi) and postwar cinema, specifically revisiting a neorealist aesthetics of vision that celebrates the act of looking at marginal places with the aim of discovering beauty in forgotten realities and the intensity and slowness of vision. While giving a new importance to the role of landscape in Italian photography and initiating the “scuola di paesaggio italiana,” Ghirri also renewed the Italian photobook by drawing both on the tradition of the *livres d’artiste* (which present images of paintings accompanied by a writer’s or poet’s text) (Mussini, “Luigi Ghirri. Attraverso” 40) and on the great documentarist tradition in cinema and photography, particularly American photography (Valtorta, *Il pensiero* 189). As Mussini claims, Ghirri deemed the book to be the ideal means of disseminating his work, and of making photography more visible as an art (“Luigi Ghirri. Attraverso” 40), while at the same time moving beyond the “beautiful” picture to be exhibited, ideally locating photography between cinema and painting,<sup>10</sup> and deeply linking it with writing in his many experimentations with phototexts. Laura Gasparini reminds us that Ghirri paid great attention to the layout of his books, which he mounted like an artisan or a painter, leaving ample white margins around each image in order to trigger the reader’s imagination (Gasparini, “Profilo” 70–2). In so doing he posited photography as a narrative, as a series of images loosely linked through analogy that open up to the reader’s interpretations, and the photobook as the ideal, “impossible” book (to use his words) built on the interaction between words and images, which can be read in infinite ways.<sup>11</sup>

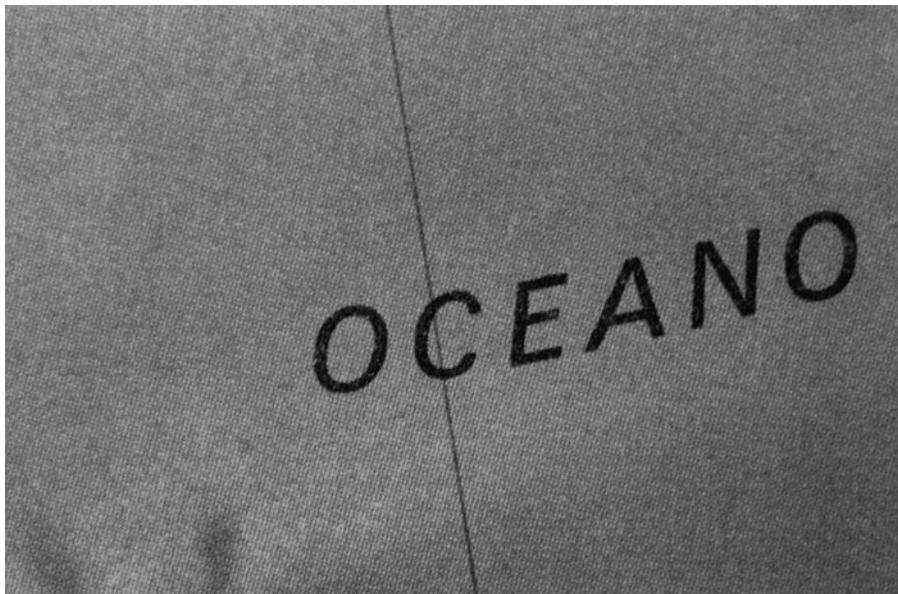
The focus on space and imagination and the importance of the book and of writing are already apparent in Ghirri’s 1970s photography, especially in one of his early works, *Atlante*, where his close-up photographs of atlases are followed by a one-page text which posits the atlas as “a *book*, the place in which all the signs of the earth, from the natural to the cultural, are conventionally represented” (n.p.), and photography as a means of deciphering the signs of the earth.<sup>12</sup> While introducing writing as an important part of his photographic book, in the post-face Ghirri stated the essence of his aesthetics as a reversal of the object of the photographic enquiry, from a focus on a purely external reality to one on reality understood as representation. Ghirri’s goal was to short-circuit the mechanism of representation by bringing to the fore and thus subverting the overpowering presence of (commercial) images which he felt were increasingly substituting direct experience in contemporary society; at the same time, he sought to recover a more direct experience of reality through imagination by showing the extent to which all our cultural practices are constructed and cannot exist outside the realm of representation, a reflection that Ghirri borrows directly from Calvino. While stating the exhaustion of all travel narratives in a world where

all places have already been discovered, and the impossibility to escape signification, in the post-face Ghirri took pains to reposit the value of imaginary travel and of the description of the external, both as physical sites and as cartographic representations. To do so he juxtaposed two opposite views – that of an atlas of the earth and of a map of the sky. The images of stars and constellations open and conclude the photobook, framing our view of the earth and blurring distinctions between far-away places and opposite points of view (from the sky or the earth). Ghirri posits photography as offering a new perspective on the external, as a way of looking from a reversed point of view – something he had already foregrounded in a discussion inspired by the image of the first photograph of the earth from the moon in the preface to his first book, *Kodachrome*.

The main body of the book is composed of macro-photographs of pages of maps or atlases, which represent mostly deserts or oceans and increasingly zoom in to show indistinct mountain ranges or coastlines, thus defeating the purpose of cartographic representation. The viewer is given no indication of what place is actually represented but rather is invited to make an imaginary journey within the realm of the mapped earth and sky. This is the case of the photograph of a blue rectangle which bears only the word *OCEANO* and is cut across by what the viewer assumes to be a meridian (Figure 10.1), or of the photograph that shows the letters HAR over a white space cut into squares and by diagonal lines of different colours, possibly suggesting the division into states of a section of the Sahara desert.

The emphasis on reading signs through acts of cognitive and creative mapping is reinforced by the big square format of the book (30-by-30 cm) and the very ample white margins around each photograph on the page. With this book Ghirri set the basis of his new aesthetics, positing photography not as a mere reproduction of reality but rather as memory, imagination, and narration, and showing, in Quintavalle's words, "that one travels not in the real but in the possible" (*Muri* 34). In *Atlante* Ghirri combined the lesson of conceptual art with what Marra calls the "experiential matrix" of his poetics, which emphasizes "the act and never the object, the practice and never the product," in order to "renew wonder" towards external reality (*Fotografia e pittura* 224). Although few critics understood Ghirri's experimentation at the time, this book later became "a sort of manifesto of the 'new Italian landscape'" (Calvenzi, *ITALIA* 118). Working purely with the symbolic coding of landscape, Ghirri established an intrinsic link between the highly codified nature of landscape representations and the power of our vision and imagination, which are triggered afresh by photography's ability to see things anew and from a different perspective.

After *Atlante* Ghirri variously experimented with landscape photography and with the photobook, using different formats, layouts, and models of interaction between image and word. In the 1980s he spearheaded a series of collective projects which included photographers and writers and, which, by calling for a close interaction with everyday landscape, redirected photography's focus onto a subject that had previously been largely neglected in favour of social issues or artistic experimentations. The first milestone project, *Viaggio in Italia*, which brought together the work of a large number of talented Italian photographers and which Ghirri edited with Gianni



**Figure 10.1** Luigi Ghirri, from *Atlante*. Colour photograph. © Ghirri Estate. Courtesy of the Ghirri Estate.

Leone and Enzo Velati,<sup>13</sup> is highly innovative in terms of landscape representation, as a “book constructed according to a model tied to space,” an “any old space” (Quintavalle, “Viaggio in Italia” 11) that reflects contemporary photography’s renewed interest in marginal spaces and in a documentary gaze. The book is deeply innovative also in terms of the interaction between photographic and written text on the page. As Valtorta writes, it “not only led the way to the great renewal that Italian photography has undergone in the last twenty years, but was able to create a dialogue between photography and art in general, architecture, literature, cinema” (Valtorta, *Racconti* 11).<sup>14</sup> An ingrained sense of displacement and loss of (local/regional) identity that Ghirri and others felt in the initial years of globalization inspired the project to reinhabit the world through photography and storytelling.<sup>15</sup>

In *Viaggio in Italia* Ghirri and his colleagues rewrote the *topos* of the “journey to Italy” through a documentary gaze, choosing not to photograph tourist sites but rather to concentrate on everyday landscapes, in an effort to rediscover Italy in the 1980s and expose the disappearance of landscape erased by the spreading of non-places and by our loss of sensitivity towards the exterior. As Giorgio Messori argued in an insightful essay for the twentieth anniversary of *Viaggio in Italia*, the novelty and beauty of the project lay in its effort to make readers aware of how they can see through coded filters, exploring the experience of a place through imagination and

associations (a reminder of *Atlante*), and sharing a common ethical/aesthetic view of places, in an effort to minimize the superimposition of an authorial poetics onto landscape – an intention that is also common to Messori's and Fossati's own photobook, *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre*, as will become clear (Messori, “Il mio incontro”).<sup>16</sup> In *Viaggio in Italia* Ghirri continued to experiment with an analogic narrative, a structure that is matched by Gianni Celati's opening essay, “Verso la foce (Reportage per un amico fotografo),” and, to a certain extent, by Quintavalle's preface (“Viaggio in Italia, appunti”). The importance of this project was manifold: first, it brought together different photographers (and a writer), many of whom later continued to work on landscape both individually and in collaboration with other artists. Second, it was instrumental in putting photography on the Italian cultural map and in initiating a critical reflection on its role and its relation to other arts. Finally, it made an original contribution to renewing the Italian tradition of landscape art and of the photobook through an aesthetics of re-enchantment, which seeks to overcome the disillusionment towards contemporary society and its consumption of places for a new affective relation to the exterior,<sup>17</sup> and looks for inspiration abroad, minimizing the overpowering influence of Italian figurative arts.

The novelty of Ghirri's photography of places – and of the photographs in *Viaggio in Italia* – lies in his capacity to combine many different lessons: the Western tradition of landscape painting, Renaissance and modern art, early photography (in the choice of empty landscapes),<sup>18</sup> and particularly American landscape photography – mostly Walker Evans and Paul Strand but also Robert Frank and Lee Friedlander. Ghirri also drew extensively on Italian postwar cinema, particularly on the images that, from Visconti's *Ossessione* to Antonioni's films, reworked key topoi of American documentary photography, a link which Barbara Grespi investigates in her insightful chapter in this book.<sup>19</sup> Finally, by drawing on the lesson of avant-garde and conceptual art, Ghirri opened photography to other arts, such as literature or music (e.g., in his 1994 *I luoghi della musica*), operating a real caesura in contemporary Italian photography.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most striking impression that *Viaggio in Italia* leaves the reader with is that of emptiness. However, it is an emptiness that is full of the traces of human presence, suggesting the disappearance of the human being, as if after a catastrophe – a clear critique of contemporary society and its abuse of the environment. It is no surprise that this photobook had such an impact on later visual and verbal representations of landscape, and also on landscape theories, as it brings to the fore what will become key notions of 1980s cultural discourse. For example, it connects the material emptiness of the image to the cultural desertification that growing industrialization and globalization have caused. It also embodies a search for a new aesthetics and ethical commitment to the external through a process of slowing down the gaze, directly opposing the increasing speed of media society. This effort could be seen alongside the cinematic work of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, which Robert Lumley illuminates in the previous chapter. Landscape photography, interacting with writing of a mostly descriptive or philosophical nature, such as Celati's, offers an ideal pause for reflection and for establishing a different aesthetics that

recreates an “auratic” quality in everyday landscapes through the inherent stillness of photography.<sup>21</sup>

The photograph, *Oviglio, Alessandria 1981* by Vittore Fossati, placed at the book’s opening, seems to convey this effort to turn everyday landscapes into “auratic” places (Colour Plate 7). This is a good example of how the notion of aura that Benjamin debunked is at one and the same time negated and recuperated in this postmodern moment. The *topos* of the road, which is common to other photographs in the volume, and to many of Ghirri’s images, including those in *Il profilo delle nuvole*, is clearly reminiscent of Italian cinema (beside the above-mentioned *Ossessione*, one might think of the Rossellini of *Viaggio in Italia* or the Antonioni of *Il grido*) and of American and Italian documentary photography, at times even quoting famous frames by Walker Evans or Dorothea Lange.<sup>22</sup> The perfect geometry and beauty of Fossati’s opening picture, its central view of a road disappearing on the horizon, with the rainbow hitting the centre of the image, directly resonates with the simple bareness of another photograph, Ghirri’s *Scardorari, Strada sull’argine* (published in *Il profilo delle nuvole*), where a young man on a scooter appears on the road in the very spot where, in Fossati’s picture, the rainbow meets the road (Figure 10.2).<sup>23</sup> A comparison between the two images reveals the subtle workings of photographic re-enchantment employed by the photographers.

In Fossati’s photograph, the rainbow acts as a manifestation of a wondrous event in an ordinary environment, but it could be argued that it nevertheless represents a cliché of picturesque landscape representation. At a closer look, however, the rainbow is neither auratic nor picturesque but simply the result of the light’s refraction on a spray of water from a prosaic irrigation hose. But in spite of and precisely because of this banalization of the event, the rainbow remains a numinous appearance, an instance of the continual possibility for renewing enchantment, a crucial lesson Fossati learned from Ghirri. This is an example of how these photographs unveil and thus demystify the codes of landscape while simultaneously reactivating them as an act of the imagination.

In Ghirri’s Scardorari photograph the human presence becomes explicit (Figure 10.2). In a seminal essay entitled “L’omino sul ciglio del burrone” (The Little Man on the Edge of the Ravine), Ghirri commented on the key role of the human presence in landscape photography, where it gave both a sense of measure and of space. He lamented its recent disappearance and with it the danger that photography might lose its role in representing the external world (Ghirri, *Paesaggio italiano* 20). Looking at the two photographs together, it becomes clear how the lowering of the auratic nature of the image is accompanied by a reactivation of the aura, which re-enters the picture precisely through its apparent negation. Thus, the fact that the lonely and anonymous human figure occupies the very same position as the rainbow suggests, as Ghirri’s essay argues, how this utterly contingent and passing human presence has been invested with the quality of the numinous event within the landscape.

An even more ambitious collaborative project, which ideally continued the work started with *Viaggio in Italia*, while focusing on Emilia Romagna (the “home” of Ghirri and many other contemporary Italian photographers) is *Esplorazioni sulla via*



Figure 10.2 Luigi Ghirri, *Scardorari, Strada sull'argine*, from *Il profilo delle nuvole*. Colour photograph. © Ghirri Estate. Courtesy of the Ghirri Estate.

*Emilia*, a project which resulted in two volumes – *Vedute nel paesaggio* (1986) and *Scritture nel paesaggio* (1986) – and which involved photographers, geographers, economists, and writers with the aim of portraying an image of the region between history and present. Although Eleonora Bronzoni and Giulio Bizzarri edited the books, Ghirri was the soul of the project, offering the initial idea, suggesting the name of many photographers, and collaborating on the production of the volumes, while Celati helped to choose the writers. As I have discussed this project in detail elsewhere (Spunta, “Esplorazioni”), here I will simply note its shared focus with *Viaggio in Italia* on a “minor” landscape, on reading the past in the traces of the present and on places of personal and collective memory. However, the two volumes on the *via Emilia* present a less close interaction between photography and writing, as the two texts do not talk directly to each other but rather offer a parallel reflection on the disappearance of the landscape in the Po valley and on the difficulty of recovering spaces of memory.

In 1989 Ghirri published two books of his own photographs, *Il profilo delle nuvole* and *Paesaggio italiano*, which both focus on landscape but present different

types of interaction between images and words. *Il profilo delle nuvole* follows the traditional format used in *Viaggio in Italia* of a written text (again by Celati) introducing a series of photographs, which constitute the main body of the book. As in *Viaggio in Italia*, in *Il profilo delle nuvole* the pictures appear both on the left- and mostly on the right-hand side, where they tend to be bigger, whereas the captions only appear on the left-hand side, sometimes accompanying the images, sometimes on their own. These stylistic choices, together with the choice of the A4 landscape format, confirm the primacy of the photographic image, which catches the reader's eye more quickly as it is placed on the right-hand side.<sup>24</sup> Ghirri laid great emphasis on our ever-changing perceptions and experience of the world and on the need to look attentively at a reality that is only apparently empty, striving to "pierce" the layer of representation. In this, his stance is consonant with that of both Michelangelo Antonioni and John Berger (Minghelli, *The Modern Image* 9–29), a connection that is reinforced through the work of Celati, who wrote on the filmmaker and collaborated with the British artist in his 2003 documentary *Visioni di case che crollano*. Moreover, the image of the clouds – and therefore of the sky – should be read in the light of a long tradition of landscape painting, particularly sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch painting. These works gave prominence to the sky, which occupied the majority of the canvas, a convention that Ghirri followed in lowering the horizon line in his photographs.

Ghirri's aim of making the representation of space more accessible, closer to individual perceptions, is powerfully conveyed by the image of clouds, a recurrent topos of many of his photographs which emerges from the very title of the volume, pointing to the variability both of the landscape and of human perceptions and imagination. This metaphor reveals the centrality of the notions of visibility and invisibility, appearance and disappearance in his poetics, while rewriting the tradition of landscape representation through a new rendering of space and place.<sup>25</sup> The image of the clouds also suggests the notion of "vaghezza" (literally, vagueness) which is key to the photobook and to Ghirri's and Celati's aesthetics.<sup>26</sup> This is in line with the aesthetic novelty of the text, which moves away from a narrow notion of pseudo-documentary fixity towards a more encompassing idea of observation and photographic exactitude that is sensitive to mutability and affectivity and that seeks to convey rather than solve the mystery of appearances.

Unlike *Viaggio in Italia*, here the photographs, all by Ghirri, are not divided in chapters but are accompanied by extracts from Celati's text on the disappearance of place and landscape, which reinforce the impression of vagueness and suspension conveyed by the images.<sup>27</sup> As the example below will show, the interaction between image and writing in this photobook is rather loose and evocative, rather than narrowly "illustrative." The photograph entitled *Cadecoppi. Dalla strada per Finale Emilia*, which is placed approximately at the centre of the book, offers a frontal perspective of a field in the foreground and a row of farm houses which cover the horizon and split the image in two halves: the earth and the sky (Figure 10.3). A few trees at both sides frame the image vertically; a few white clouds appear just over the hidden horizon and are partly covered by the roofs of

the houses, somewhat merging with the sky colour-wise. While the lines of the turned soil in the field lead the viewer's eye towards a central vanishing point, this vertical movement of the eye is blocked by the horizontal line of houses, which create a different organisation of space within the image. This type of framing and composition is quite common in Ghirri's photographs and suggests the dichotomic nature of much of his aesthetics, based on the effort to juxtapose and combine opposite views and to look at the world from a new, upside down perspective, as a means of investigating the culturally constructed nature of our gaze. With this apparently prosaic photograph, as in the other images in this text, Ghirri seeks to challenge our standard way of seeing things, and to question the fixity of our view of the exterior. Similarly, Celati's writing – both in the introduction and in the short texts reported alongside some of the images – repeatedly emphasises the variability of natural elements and of our perceptions of the world. In this case, the photograph *Cadecoppi*, which takes the whole of the right-hand page, is introduced on the left-hand page by two short fragmented paragraphs taken by Celati's introductory essay, which I quote in full:

*Ogni momento del mondo è riscattato dalla possibilità di ridargli una vaghezza, cioè di riportarlo al sentimento che abbiamo dei fenomeni.*

*... una attenzione elementare per fenomeni così indefiniti, indefinibili, di colore e di luce, da rendere persino traballante l'idea che esistano davvero "fatti" documentabili. Sono gli artifici della vaghezza: questo antico termine dell'arte italiana, per dire qualcosa che somiglia ai fenomeni delle nuvole, del cielo e degli orizzonti.*

[Every moment of the world is redeemed by the possibility of giving it back a vagueness, that is of bringing it back to the feeling we have of phenomena.

... a fundamental attention to phenomena of color and light so vague and indefinable as to shake the idea that documentable "facts" really exist. They are the artifices of vagueness: this ancient term of Italian art, to mean something that resembles the phenomena of clouds, of the sky and of horizons.]

Here Celati reflects on the intrinsic vagueness and changeability of phenomena, which challenge the very idea that any facts can be fixed and documented, and posits vagueness as a means of capturing and narrating the essence of what appears to the senses, as well as our own affective relations with spaces. Celati's text actively interacts with the image while reflecting on new ways to perceive the world. While the writing tends towards a definition of vagueness, thus apparently towards making visible the invisible, Celati seems to question the very nature of art/photography that posits itself as narrowly documentary, suspending any expectation of visibility. He points to how Ghirri redefines the central goal of photographic representation against the grain of common understanding. In his images photographic visibility is not a given but rather a process of interrogation, of discovering the invisible at the heart of the visible. In this way, the enigmatic quality of the photograph fully emerges and,



**Figure 10.3** Luigi Ghirri, *Cadecoppi. Dalla strada per Finale Emilia*, from *Il profilo delle nuvole*. Colour photograph. © Ghirri Estate. Courtesy of the Ghirri Estate.

in its marked horizontal layout, suggests the presence of another layer of meaning beyond appearances. It is through this double-inversion that both texts talk to and echo each other. Rather than simply documenting these places, Celati suggests that Ghirri's photographs seek to adhere to them by allowing room for remembrance and imagination; this approach is parallel to Celati's narrations of these places.

The success of Ghirri's photobooks can best be measured by the subsequent proliferation of photographic projects on landscape, from the Milan-based *Archivio dello spazio* to the Emilian *Linea di Confine per la fotografia contemporanea*, to the recent institutional interest that emerges in the projects funded by DARC, such as *Atlante italiano 2003 e Atlante italiano 2007. Rischio paesaggio*.<sup>28</sup> The growth of creative or commissioned works on landscape testifies to the key role held by contemporary photography in documenting everyday landscape, in increasing awareness and commitment towards it. Moreover, the impact of Ghirri's work can be measured by the increasing presence of photography in contemporary Italian literature in both an indirect way and a direct way (by inserting photographs in literary texts), from the prose of Celati and Messori, Ghirri's close friends and collaborators, to a growing number of travel writing texts that include photographs, such as Giulio Mozzi and Dario Voltolini's *Sotto i cieli d'Italia* (2004). Ghirri's lesson has also been assimilated by disciplines other than photography and literature, such as landscape aesthetics, geography, and architecture, which have opened up to his lesson of affective places and to a greater interdisciplinary approach.

### Messori's and Fossati's *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre*

Ghirri's lesson had a profound impact on Fossati, who, for William Guerrieri, "is perhaps the photographer who today in Italy has understood how to give continuity to the so-called 'Ghirri school'" (Guerrieri 21–2), and on the late writer Giorgio Messori, who, like Fossati, worked with Ghirri (and Celati) on some of the above-discussed projects and considered Ghirri a friend and "maestro." At an exhibition of their work in Castelnovo ne' Monti in March 2008, Fossati claimed that their book originated from their wish to "*riprendere dei ragionamenti interrotti con la morte di Ghirri*" ("to pick up again the reflections interrupted by Ghirri's death") and started at the multidisciplinary seminar held at the Casa dell'Ariosto in Reggio Emilia in November 1984 on "*La rappresentazione dell'esterno*" ("the representation of the external"), which gave rise to the project *Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia*.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* is a declared homage to Luigi Ghirri that shares many of his concerns: an aesthetics of re-enchantment based on an affective and imaginative relation to the exterior, the belief in the hybridization and mutual influence between different arts and disciplines, the interest in place and landscape, and the effort to recover a new way of seeing and experiencing reality. Following the example of Ghirri's photobooks, particularly *Viaggio in Italia*, which sought to reinvent the visual tradition of the "journey to Italy," *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* seeks to engage with the history of European landscape art and the debate around it by revisiting key places of inspiration of major European artists, including Alberto Giacometti's Swiss Engadina, Gustave Courbet's Jura, Francesco Petrarca's Vaucluse, Paul Cézanne's Sainte-Victoire, Johannes Vermeer's Delft, and Caspar David Friedrich's Pomerania, as well as Capri, while simultaneously maintaining the emphasis on everyday places.<sup>30</sup>

The success of Fossati's and Messori's dialogue is due to their shared poetics and long acquaintance with each other's work, with their chosen landscapes, and with the works of art previously inspired by these landscapes to which the text closely refers.<sup>31</sup> Their poetics is strikingly encoded in the title of the book, particularly in the phrase "*paesaggio terrestre*," which, despite the expectations raised by the table of contents placed at book opening, listing the above literary and artistic landscapes, first of all reveals their effort, inspired by Ghirri, to focus on earthly, minimal things through an estranged perspective. In Messori's words: "*essere in un paesaggio terrestre vuol dire allora abitare anche la materialità delle cose, essere nella pesantezza del mondo*" ("being in a terrestrial landscape means also inhabiting the materiality of things, being in the heaviness of the world"; 27). As Fossati suggested in an interview with Maggiori, the adjective "terrestre" should be read in its implied juxtaposition against extra-terrestrial, as the artists pretended to adopt the point of view of aliens. This choice can in turn be read as a reference to Ghirri's use of the sky in *Atlante* and the moon in *Kodachrome*. Many layers of perception traverse Messori and Fossati's "earthly landscapes." Following Ghirri, they look at them first as an enigma, which can be illuminated through art and through one's capacity to see the world as if for the first time, with childlike wonder. Second, they treat them as "*paesaggi interiori*"

(“internal landscapes”), “*spazi dell’anima*” (“spaces of the soul”). Finally, they recognize them as actual places revisited through their many representations in literature and the visual arts, spaces of a collective knowledge and imagination. Through the format of the photobook – that is, in the dialogue between photographs and texts – Fossati and Messori put the various ways to perceive and experience place and the different knowledges produced into creative circulation, fostering productive and unforeseen exchanges.

Beyond the closeness in poetics with Ghirri, *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* also presents Fossati’s and Messori’s original aesthetics, both in terms of landscape representation and of the interaction of word and image on the page. One of the most striking differences with Ghirri’s work is the choice of focusing nearly exclusively on landscapes charged with visual and literary history. Fossati’s and Messori’s decision to engage with the history of landscape representations, as much as with the places they choose to visit, reveals both an effort to reflect on the role of cultural traditions and on the place of the individual within these traditions, and to rethink the relationship between photography, writing, landscape, and painting in contemporary arts. Prompted by the disappearance of cultural traditions, Ghirri mostly focused on nondescript places in Italy, in order to imbue them with an auratic look, and transformed them into places of art.<sup>32</sup> Fossati’s photographs and Messori’s writing start, on the other hand, with famous artistic/literary places and then use a Ghirrian “auratic gaze” to explore the nondescript places that surround these iconic artistic sites, thus blurring the very distinction between artistic and everyday places.

To blur this distinction even further, and to present their poetic operation in reverse, as it were, the artists open the book with a chapter on the “prosaic” Villa Minozzo, in the Apennines near Reggio Emilia, Messori’s native area. This choice, harking back to Ghirri’s work, serves to show that, while literary places can be seen in their everyday reality, equally nondescript places like Villa Minozzo can be raised to the status of artistic places through the viewer’s or artist’s auratic gaze. But this opening hints at other crucial poetic elements. Villa Minozzo suggests a sense and a desire for “home,” which deeply informs this photobook and all of Messori’s texts. Yet the barren nature of this landscape evokes a sense of displacement and cultural desertification and thus Villa Minozzo serves to introduce the text’s key theme of “inhabiting displacement” – namely, the effort of preserving a sense of rootedness despite the growing sense of displacement and decay in post-modernity.

As mentioned, the most striking difference with Ghirri’s photography – and with the established tradition of the Grand Tour – is that Messori and Fossati mostly explore landscapes that are outside of Italy. Their journey moves in the opposite direction of the *Viaggio in Italia* – the journey to Italy – and offers an Italian perspective on northern landscapes and art. The direction of their journey can also be seen in the light of the *topos* of the “*viaggio al nord*” (“journey north”) that shapes the perspective of writers such as Celati and Pier Vittorio Tondelli. By choosing to narrate a number of key European literary/artistic

places which they experienced through their fragmented journeys between 1997 and 2002 and through the confrontation with pre-existing representations, the authors declare their debt to this visual/literary tradition and highlight the trans-national nature of our visual codes. Like Ghirri, yet in a different way, they thus move beyond the overpowering weight of the Italian visual tradition. Yet it should be observed that while seven chapters in the book focus on non-Italian places immortalized through art or literature, the remaining two – the first and last – take us back to Italy, thus framing our journey within an Italian perspective. After starting their journey in the Emilian Apennines, the artists conclude it in Capri; this is recorded in a final chapter, which was a later addition to the book. Just as the other literary places are explored in their everyday reality and through the authors' aesthetic experience, Capri is seen in its most prosaic but perhaps most truthful nature, in winter, devoid of tourists and, equally, through the eyes of the many poets and thinkers who chose it as their elective place throughout the ages.

Similarly, with respect to the interaction of words and image on the page, Fossati and Messori closely follow Ghirri's lesson and take it a step further. Although Ghirri was instrumental in introducing at once a closer and looser type of dialogue between photographs and writing in a text, in his photobooks the photographs normally retained centre stage, as seen above in the example taken from *Il profilo delle nuvole*. In *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* Fossati and Messori introduce an even closer dialogue between words and images in the text, as the format of the book is a vertical A5 novel-type, rather than an A4 landscape format, like *Il profilo delle nuvole*. While this format is normally used for a written rather than a visual text, Fossati's and Messori's book in fact presents both written and photographic texts on nearly every page, using images of different sizes and different patterns of interaction with the writing. In so doing the authors succeed in making images and words dialogue with one another. In a similar way to Celati and Ghirri, Messori and Fossati give rise to a text whose meaning is maximized by the association suggested (but rarely spelt out, in line with Ghirri's and Celati's lesson of open dialogue) by the co-presence of two semiotic systems, which are brought together into a single narrative. In the following pages I will consider how Messori and Fossati succeed in positing a close dialogue between image and word on the page as they reflect on prosaic and artistic landscapes, in their rewriting of the everyday landscape of "Villa Minozzo" and of one of the most famous artistic landscapes, Cézanne's Sainte-Victoire. Although these are very different places, Messori and Fossati in fact teach the reader to approach them similarly through attentive observation, imagination, remembrance, and contemplation.

One of the many examples of the close interaction between words and images in the opening chapter, "*Paesaggio terrestre attorno a Villa Minozzo*" (terrestrial landscape around Villa Minozzo), occurs two or three pages into the chapter.<sup>33</sup> On page fifteen Messori narrates that both he and Fossati started their journey by exploring the "*Fonti del Poiano*" (the springs of Poiano) in an attempt to define what is an "earthly landscape." The writer reflects on the common codified and clichéd way of



**Figure 10.4** Vittore Fossati, *Villa Minozzo, Fonti di Poiano, 1997*, from *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre*. Colour photograph. © Vittore Fossati. Courtesy of the artist.

seeing landscapes as made up of the same elements, the earth and the sky: “*l’idea che in fondo gli uomini vedono quasi tutti lo stesso paesaggio: la linea dell’orizzonte con sotto la striscia verde e marrone, e sopra l’azzurro del cielo*” (“the idea that ultimately people nearly all see the same landscape: the horizon line with the green and brown strip below, and above the blue of the sky”; 15). While reflecting on the culturally constructed nature of landscape and of perspective, Messori posits the landscape view as contemplation, as “*annullamento del sé*” (“annulment of the self”; 16). Placed immediately underneath the photograph which I am analysing here, *Villa Minozzo, Fonti di Poiano, 1997* (Figure 10.4), Messori’s text starts with a reflection on compositions with earth and sky: “*Per comporre l’immagine di un paesaggio terrestre bisognava sapere combinare questi elementi, distribuirli bene nello spazio*” (“To compose the image of a terrestrial landscape it was necessary to know how to combine these elements, distribute them well in space”; 16).

Indeed, Fossati's photograph offers us a perfect example of composition, of a central perspective view which is channelled by the river that cuts across the frame first diagonally, then pointing to the central vanishing point, between two mountains in the background, which, as in many of Ghirri's photographs, is hidden by mist in the distance. The precise, nearly specular framing of this image is reinforced by the mountains at each side, and by the country road on the left, which, like the river, contributes to bringing out the depth of field in this image. In the foreground, a man sits on a stone looking towards the horizon, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of this landscape; although he is shot from the back (a common strategy used by Ghirri, and by a long pictorial tradition), he is recognizably Messori, who appears in a similar pose in other photographs either later in this chapter or in the book. The positioning of the human subject in the image underlines its classical composition, since, like the driver of the scooter in Ghirri's photograph *Scardorari*, discussed above, Messori here is placed on one of the diagonal lines that cut across the frame, while at the same time demarcating a section of the golden ratio. In line with Messori's reflection in his text, this careful composition suggests the extent to which all landscape views are culturally constructed by the gaze of a human being, who is, at once, both onlooker and integral part of the landscape. The figure's positioning within the picture suggests a two-way, affective relation between the viewer and the place; moreover, his sitting position points to pausing, slowing down time and allowing for contemplation, even when at first sight nothing striking seems to be within view.

The close dialogue between the photograph and the written text on this page is apparent as Messori goes on to comment on the way in which the river directs the gaze in a landscape to the extent that the onlooker could lose themselves in the landscape view, and on how the invention of perspective served precisely to guide and impose a direction onto one's view of the exterior, and therefore to construct the notion of human self and identity. Interestingly, Messori's juxtaposes "*l'invenzione della prospettiva*" ("the invention of perspective") against "*ogni atto di contemplazione*" ("every act of contemplation"), which "*implica un annullamento del sé, un abbattimento delle difese dell'io*" ("implies an annulment of the self, a lowering of its defences"; 16); this apparent tension between two opposite points of view is later resolved in the stillness of the perspectival view, which, according to Messori, can favour "*l'estasi contemplativa*" ("contemplative ecstasy"; 16). This reflection on contemplation, which is key to the whole text, is echoed throughout the book by the ongoing exploration of seeing and of composition, as well as of the relation between the human being and the landscape, of the nature and beauty of everyday landscapes, and of the practice of re-estheticizing place. Although, like many other places depicted in this book, this landscape is far from picturesque, but rather prosaic, viewers are nonetheless invited to see it, like the artists do, through their experience of (other) places and through imagination, memory, and contemplation, and to re-enchant it with an "aura."

Another careful composition of a mountain view opens the sixth chapter, "*I motivi di Cézanne*" ("Cézanne's motifs"), dedicated to Cézanne's painting, which is one of the most revealing in the book. To convey Cézanne's realization that there is no single



**Figure 10.5** Vittore Fossati, *Montagna Sainte-Victoire*, 1999, in *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre*. Colour photograph. © Vittore Fossati. Courtesy of the artist.

version of reality, but rather infinite facets of the same thing, and his “obsession” with Mount Sainte-Victoire, this motif appears in nearly all of Fossati’s photographs in the chapter “I motivi di Cézanne,” which are all entitled *Montagna Sainte-Victoire 1999* and picture the mountain from various angles and in different lighting conditions, starting from the image at chapter opening (88).

This close focus shows the extent to which Cézanne’s commitment to “penetrare ciò che si ha davanti, e perseverare nell’esprimersi il più logicamente possibile” (“penetrate what is in front of us, and persevere in expressing himself as logically as possible”)<sup>34</sup> is followed by Messori’s clear, unassuming prose and by Fossati’s effort to find, like Cézanne, the “accordo reciproco” (“reciprocal agreement”; 93), “il giusto punto di tensione fra gli elementi che si componevano nell’inquadratura” (“the right point of tension among the elements composed within the framing”; 93). The fine-tuning of writing and image appears from the beginning, as the photograph

above, which serves as an introduction to the whole chapter, is followed by Messori's unassuming yet evocative prose:

*Per chi abbia familiarità con la pittura di Cézanne la montagna Sainte-Victoire può sembrare subito un'immagine già vista, un pezzo di mondo riconoscibile anche se prima non ci si era mai stati ... Eppure, proprio questo vorrebbe dire far torto all'insegnamento di Cézanne, al suo proposito di scomparire nella sostanza delle cose.*

[For those familiar with Cézanne's painting, the Mount Sainte-Victoire can seem immediately like an image they have already seen, a recognizable piece of the world even if you have never been there before ... And yet, it is precisely this that would mean doing an injustice to the teaching of Cézanne, to his intention to disappear into the substance of things.] (89)

Undoing what has become by now a visual cliché, Fossati reconstructs photographically Cézanne's act of vision, the placement of the mountain in a perfectly framed yet not completely enclosed space. Thus, he frames his photographic views with trees and bushes, slowly exposing the mountain to the viewer's eye in the course of the chapter. In so doing the authors also follow Peter Handke's slow description in *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire*, which acts as a second intertextual reference to the book and is cited in its Italian translation (1985) in the photobook's bibliography. Drawing on Bertone's suggestion that Handke and Cézanne search for a "landscape within the landscape already provided by memory," one can argue that Messori and Fossati similarly strive to experience a literary/artistic landscape and to rewrite the *topos* of the ascent to the mountain through the joint effort of conveying it both in writing and photography (14). As in Cézanne's paintings, the mountain is both ever-present and elusive and is differently portrayed in each photograph and in all of Messori's reflections, always in a new relation with the surrounding landscape and with the human presence (or absence). In this as in the other chapters, the layout and size of the image varies on every page, suggesting a continually evolving dialogue with the writing and the authors' effort to challenge any presumed primacy of one text over the other. In so doing Fossati and Messori show that they have learnt Cézanne's lesson and gained a deep experience of this artistic location, and of the place of the human being in it.

Throughout the book, as in the examples discussed above, the written and the photographic text, although independent, go hand in hand in proposing new readings of landscape, demonstrating in Messori's words, "*come fotografia e scrittura potessero andare assieme, come qualcosa 'che scalda il cuore'*" ("how photography and writing might go together, like something 'that warms the heart'"), an approach that reminds us of Ghirri's notion of photography as *innamoramento* (falling in love). Messori's tribute to Ghirri in *Nella città del pane e dei postini* (In the City of Bread and Postmen) clearly conveys his and Fossati's debt to the late photographer and his striving towards picturing an inhabitable place:

*Luigi andava in giro a fotografare il mondo come se fosse un album da sfogliare. E così è riuscito a farmi capire, meglio di tutti, che dal mondo è anche stupido difendersi. Tanto non siamo che passanti, stranieri anche alla strada che percorriamo ogni giorno.*

*E questo gioco di appropriazione, di sentire che qualcosa è nostro, è sempre qualcosa di momentaneo, una dolce illusione. L'importante è capire che questo gioco, questa illusione si può ripetere all'infinito e dappertutto, ed è forse questa la bellezza del sentirsi vivi.*

[Luigi went around photographing the world as if it were an album to flick through. And so he, more than anyone, managed to help me understand that it is stupid to defend yourself from the world. All the more since we are just passers-by, foreigners even to the road that we walk every day. And this game of appropriation, of feeling that something is ours, is always something momentary, a sweet illusion. It is important to understand that this game, this illusion can be repeated endlessly and everywhere, and this is perhaps the beauty of feeling that we are alive.] (Messori, "Il mio incontro" 178)

This image powerfully renders the game of reappropriation that both Messori and Fossati play in their book, as they rewrite the history of landscape representation up to Ghirri. As in Celati's *Verso la foce*, Messori's prose lays great emphasis on human contemplation and mortality, and on nature's beauty and immortality, and this is in line with Fossati's "*attenzione alle cose piccole, banali, data dalla coscienza della mortalità*" ("attention to the little, banal things, given by the awareness of mortality").<sup>35</sup> At the same time, being alive is here posited as an illusion and as an intertextual game, an albeit momentary "game of appropriation."

By considering some key works by Ghirri, and the last text by Messori and Fossati, I have explored the poetic consonance of these artists and outlined the development of Italian landscape photography and of the landscape photobook in the last three decades. As Valtorta notes, this development can be summarized as a shift from an epistemological/ethical effort to get to know the exterior world and to "create memory" in Ghirri's 1980s photography, towards a greater emphasis both on the rewriting of visual memory and on the individual and on contemplation and affective investment in Fossati's and Messori's work (Valtorta, "Sette domande" 21). A key lesson for Messori was viewing the photographs for *Viaggio in Italia* in 1984, which he felt for the first time spoke to viewers' personal experience of places. They reclaimed a space for the individual, and not just for the canon, in contemporary cultural practice, while at the same time recognizing the value of a shared tradition that he, like Ghirri, felt to be under threat.<sup>36</sup>

The intermedial form of the photobook which Ghirri renewed and Fossati and Messori further explored challenges a series of ingrained dichotomies that oppose text and image and image and world. In Fossati and Messori's photobook, a collective history and cultural patrimony is returned to a material space and is reinvented there through the personal affective experience. In this way, the photobook works as a reappropriation of the past and the projection of a possible future defined by new ways to inhabit the earth. The new aesthetic emerging from the hybridization of photography, writing, and landscape aspires to express a pedagogy of the gaze and, through a new practice of looking, to bring forth an ethical commitment to the world. At the heart of this new ethos is the photographic medium, which fosters a slowing down of the gaze, a charged attention to the outside environment and the human place

within it that is at once a critique of and the projection of an alternative to the homogenization of space in a post-industrial and globalized era dominated by the increasing speed of media society and the pressing question of environmental change. Through the work of Ghirri and his followers, contemporary Italian photography envisioned the medium as a crucial one where visual art and writing can reinvent their relation with reality, a place to construct an ecology of seeing understood as a civic project of engagement with the world.

## NOTES

I would like to thank Vittore Fossati and the Ghirri Estate for allowing me to reproduce some of their photographs.

- 1 With the notion of the “photographic,” Signorini indicates “a logic of the functioning of the image and one of the ways it relates to reality, the author and the viewer, typical of photography but common also to many other expressions of contemporary art” (*Arte del fotografico* 7), while Marra refers to “a sort of philosophy of the medium that ... is a perfect metaphor for a whole line of artistic research that has spanned the twentieth century” (*Le idee della fotografia* 155). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.
- 2 The centrality of Ghirri’s work in contemporary photography is convincingly summarized by Mussini, as he highlights “the change that [Ghirri] carried out upon the way of representing landscape over the course of the 1980s and in general on Italian photography of the last quarter of a century” (“Luigi Ghirri. Fotografie”).
- 3 For example, Basilico trained as an architect, and Ghirri studied and practiced first as a surveyor before becoming a self-taught photographer. Among these artists Ghirri is perhaps the most exemplary case, for the great eclecticism of his cultural interests (from music, cinema, painting, foreign photography) and of his occupations – he initially worked as a surveyor, then opened a graphic studio and a publishing house.
- 4 See Burgin, who posited photography as “texts inscribed in terms of what we may call ‘photographic discourse’” (qtd. in Clarke, *The Photograph* 27) and for whom, in Liz Wells’s words, “photography theory must be interdisciplinary and engage ... with processes of signification” (*Photography: A Critical Introduction* 26). Important for my work is Mieke Bal’s call in the early 1990s for a new cultural paradigm that recognized the deeply intertwined nature in contemporaneity of the verbal and visual domains (*Reading Rembrandt* 50) as well as more recent work by scholars such as Horstkotte and Pedri.
- 5 See also Hill, “Landscape.”
- 6 While recognizing the centrality of seeing in the construction of landscape, many recent theories emphasize the role of multisensorial perceptions in the aesthetic appreciation of landscape; among them, see Bonesio; Brady; and Griffero.
- 7 The main critics on the subject of landscape photography (Valtorta, Quintavalle, and Marra) agree on the idea of a “school” in a loose sense. See also Spunta, “Esplorazioni.”
- 8 Drawing on Parr’s and Badger’s recent work, here I employ their definition of the photobook as “a book – with or without text – where the work’s primary message is

carried by photographs” (6) – a definition that, however, fails to distinguish between texts of photographs only and texts of photographs and writing; to redress this lack, I will indicate the latter as phototexts, inscribed within the umbrella term of *photobooks*, which is most commonly used. See also Albertazzi and Amigoni; and Di Bello, Wilson, and Zamir.

- <sup>9</sup> Ghirri’s work is broadly in line with the renewed aesthetic approach to landscape in Italy in the 1970s, as evidenced in the work of Rosario Assunto, which in turn draws mostly on the German twentieth-century tradition of aesthetics of landscape – namely, works by Joachim Ritter and Georg Simmel, among many others. Ghirri was also interested in architecture; one of the texts that most fascinated him and the debate of the time was *Genius loci*, by the Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980), a text which draws on the Heideggerian notion of *Entortung*, as the loss of place that distinguishes contemporary living and leads to loss of identity, in order to posit contemporary places as lacking “memory,” “orientation,” and “identification” (Norberg-Schulz 19). Ghirri’s work and critical reflection are also in line with a growing number of works in human geography, in particular the work of Eugenio Turri from the 1970s, such as *Antropologia del paesaggio* (1974).
- <sup>10</sup> See Ghirri’s words in a video interview with Luca Buelli (qtd. in Gasparini, “Profilo” 53).
- <sup>11</sup> See Ghirri, “Postfazione” 33–9, 34. In the late 1970s Ghirri even opened his own publishing house, Punto e virgola, where he issued his first book, *Kodachrome* (1978) and other influential critical texts including Vaccari’s *Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico* (1979). Despite its short life this enterprise confirmed Ghirri’s intention to give photography more visibility as an art through the book form.
- <sup>12</sup> This approach is in line with the semiotic theory of the time and with Calvino’s poetics, which Ghirri quoted repeatedly.
- <sup>13</sup> According to the other editors Ghirri was the main coordinator of the project. The other photographers involved were Olivo Barbieri, Gabriele Basilico, Giannantonio Battistella, Vincenzo Castella, Andrea Cavazzuti, Giovanni Chiaramonte, Mario Cresci, Vittore Fossati, Carlo Garzia, Guido Guidi, Shelley Hill, Mimmo Jodice, Gianni Leone, Claude Nori, Umberto Sartorello, Mario Tinelli, Ernesto Tuliozi, Fulvio Ventura, and Cuchi White.
- <sup>14</sup> On the impact of *Viaggio in Italia* on contemporary Italian culture see Magri; and Valtorta, *Racconti dal paesaggio*. Quintavalle (“Viaggio dentro le parole”) posits Ghirri’s photography as central for the rediscovery of landscape in contemporary art, while Marra emphasizes its novelty in lowering of the gaze in “La sovversiva normalità dello sguardo” (in *Forse in una fotografia* 135–8).
- <sup>15</sup> In the film *Viaggio in Italia. I fotografi vent’anni dopo*, Guidi defines *qualsiasiità* as the focus on things that are closest to us, our everyday experience, as opposed to the focus on monuments and tourist sites. In this we detect a documentary effort that seeks to shed light onto every small object for its very existence and make such objects the subject of photography. A detailed analysis of Ghirri’s poetics, of *Viaggio in Italia*, and of other of Ghirri’s works can be found in Spunta, “*Il profilo delle nuvole*.”
- <sup>16</sup> Fossati also wrote an essay for the volume, “Due foto di viaggio,” and cowrote the script for the film *Viaggio in Italia*.

- <sup>17</sup> I have adapted the notion of “*estetica del reincanto*” (“aesthetics of re-enchantment”) from Rizzante’s 1993 book on Celati. On the revival of contemporary aesthetics see D’Angelo, *Estetica della natura*. See also Griffero. In an essay written for the twentieth anniversary of *Viaggio in Italia*, drawing on Benjamin’s notion of the destruction of experience in modernity, Celati talks about a *Stimmung* with places that underpinned the project, which he defines as “an atmosphere, an affective tonality – that comes before anything else. It is the tonality of the places we happen to see when we take the wrong road, or are lost, or tired, or during stops along a journey, or in empty days or moments, on the afternoons when we don’t know where to take refuge” (“Viaggio” 79).
- <sup>18</sup> In an insightful essay Maria Grazia Lolla demonstrated that nineteenth-century archeological photography was not at ease with the human being, whose presence, when brought in to produce an effect of “*vedute animate* or just to represent scale,” often resulted in a staged effect, to the extent that nineteenth-century manuals advised against representing people in photographs (Lolla 32–58).
- <sup>19</sup> Ghirri understood the influence of American photography of the Farm Security Administration on Italian neorealist cinema and photography, and clearly drew both on US twentieth-century photography and from Italian postwar cinema. However, just as the transnational influence between American photography and Italian cinema is still relatively unexplored, so is the mutual influence between Ghirri’s work and American as well as European photography.
- <sup>20</sup> See Quintavalle, *Muri di carta* 35.
- <sup>21</sup> This approach builds both on the consonance between photography and the tradition of aesthetics in Italy – a discipline that according to Paolo D’Angelo recovers its primacy in the 1960s/1970s by filling a gap in the philosophical, and more broadly, cultural reflection of the time – and on the growing impact of Walter Benjamin’s thought in Italy in the 1970s/1980s. See the chapter “Il ritorno dell’estetica come filosofia” in D’Angelo, *L’estetica italiana*.
- <sup>22</sup> Consider, for example, Walker Evans’s *Hitchhikers near Vicksburg, Mississippi 1936*, which also appears in Ghirri’s *Paesaggio italiano* (16), or Dorothea Lange’s *Toward Los Angeles, California 1937*. On Evans’s and Lange’s earlier influence on Italian visual culture, see Barbara Grespi’s chapter in this book, and Figure 6.14.
- <sup>23</sup> The other main difference between the two images is the presence of clouds in Ghirri’s photograph, as opposed to Fossati’s image.
- <sup>24</sup> See Spunta “The New Italian Landscape.” On image/word interaction in a text see also Hill, “Family Photography” and “Texts as Photographs.”
- <sup>25</sup> See Valtorta, *Pagine di fotografia italiana*, particularly *Firenze. Studio di nuvoli* by Alinari (c. 1900), where the clouds occupy most of the frame. Ghirri dedicated a photobook to the sky, *Infinito* (1974), taking a picture a day of the sky for a whole year.
- <sup>26</sup> As Celati recognizes, this term has a long history in Italian art – for example, in the poetry of Giacomo Leopardi. Hard to translate into English, it is closely intertwined with the idea of enchantment and imagination, and encompasses the auratic as described by Benjamin: “the appearance of a distance no matter how close it might be” (*The Arcades Project* 447).

- 27 Though a successful photobook, the separation of visual and written texts here indirectly testifies to the authors' inability to work together on a coherent "libro illustrato," which finally resulted in Ghirri publishing *Il profilo delle nuvole* and Celati *Verso la foce*, both in 1989 for Feltrinelli. A better example of integration between image and word on the page is found in Ghirri's *Paesaggio italiano*.
- 28 See Valtorta, Abati, and Sacconi as well as the various volumes published by *Linea di Confine*. DARC stands for Direzione generale per l'architettura e l'arte contemporanea/Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali.
- 29 *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre*. Exhibition of Vittore Fossati's photographs and presentation of the book in Palazzo Ducale, Comune di Castelnovo ne' Monti (Reggio Emilia), 31 March 2008, organized by the Assessorato alla Cultura del Comune di Castelnovo ne' Monti and the Biblioteca municipale Panizzi di Reggio Emilia.
- 30 In a previous essay on this text, which appeared in *Italian Studies* in 2011, I discussed its novelty in positing a closer relation between image and word on the page and of revisiting the Western literary and artistic tradition of landscape representation – from the above masters of European painting and literature to Ghirri and Celati – and I have argued that this underpins Fossati's and Messori's aesthetics of reenchantment for places, both "artistic" and "everyday."
- 31 The consonance between the artists' poetics does not imply a complete blending, nor does it erase their different views and styles, but rather builds on similar interests and predilections and on "finding common ground" (Hunter 36). Like Hunter, I echo Bryant's warning that "the collaboration model's privileging of authorship and homogeneity can also limit approaches to photo-texts" (14).
- 32 Ghirri, too, had explored foreign, or at least non-local landscapes – for example, Versailles in 1985 or southern Italy in the early 1980s – but found that his art was at its best when portraying familiar places, such as the Po valley.
- 33 The same layout of page sixteen – photograph opening the page and the writing underneath the image – is reproduced on page seventeen; this serves to emphasize the theme of specularity and contemplation that is addressed in these pages.
- 34 Fossati made these remarks in his introduction to the *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre* exhibition in Castelnovo ne' Monti (Reggio Emilia) in 2008.
- 35 Messori: "*Quelle fotografie finalmente non erano antagoniste alle mie esperienze più intime del vivere, viaggiare, abitare in quel paese che si chiama Italia. Più che i luoghi stessi, le foto infatti suggerivano l'esperienza che si può fare di un luogo*" ("Those photographs ultimately were not in opposition to my most intimate experiences of living, traveling, inhabiting that country called Italy. More than the places themselves, the photographs in fact suggested the experience that one can have of a place"; 103).

*This page intentionally left blank*

## **PART FIVE**

---

### **Documents and Experiences**

*This page intentionally left blank*

# 11 A Photograph

---

UMBERTO ECO

## Note

In the following essay, originally published in *L'Espresso* on 29 May 1977, Umberto Eco refers to contemporary events involving left wing demonstrations at the universities of Rome, Bologna, and Milan. From the end of the 1960s to the end of the 1970s – the so-called *anni di piombo* (Years of Lead) – a series of peaceful sit-ins and protests against the state was staged with the aim of changing Italian society, but they often became violent, even lethal. On 17 February 1977, Luciano Lama (1921–96) – a Communist politician and unionist – was forced to interrupt his address outside the University of Rome. The event quickly degenerated and violence erupted, leaving many protesters seriously injured in the clashes with fellow militants as well as with the Communist Party's security and the police. Eco opens his essay with a reference to Radio Alice, a free radio broadcasting from Bologna, which was closed by the Carabinieri on 12 March 1977. The men carrying .38s were left-wing militants who carried firearms in response to police and right-wing violence (the .38 referred to the Walther .38 pistol). The *movement* was a term applied to the informal coalition of leftist demonstrators (unionists, students, feminists, etc.). The photograph in question was taken in Via De Amicis in Milan on 14 May 1977 and was first published in the *Corriere d'Informazione* the following day (the masked gunman was later identified as Giuseppe Memeo). This is the photo to which Eco refers in his essay “Una foto”; Christian Uva discusses this very image in detail in [Chapter 8](#). The essay was collected in *Sette anni di desiderio*, published by Bompiani in 1983 and translated into English in 1986, and it appeared contemporaneously in *Faith in Fakes* by Seker and Warburg and *Travels in Hyper Reality* by Harcourt. Interestingly, every time the essay was printed without the photograph. This is the first time that text and image appear together. While arguably in 1977 there was no need to reprint a photograph that everybody knew, with the passing of the years and the widening of the context, the question of the absent document becomes more urgent. The fact that a critical analysis of an iconic image could continue to be published without the image itself is telling of an ongoing repression of the photographic. By publishing together Eco's analysis and the object of his analysis, the question of photographic communication is reopened in ways that might go beyond or at least complicate Eco's conclusions.



**Figure 11.1** Autonomia Operaia militant shooting a gun, as photographed by amateur photographer Paolo Pedrizzetti. Milan. May 1977. Newsprint photograph.

## A Photograph

UMBERTO ECO

The readers of *L'Espresso* will recall the tape of the last minutes of Radio Alice, recorded as the police were hammering at the door. One thing that impressed many people was how the announcer, as he reported in a tense voice what was happening, tried to convey the situation by referring to a scene in a movie. There was undoubtedly something singular about an individual going through a fairly traumatic experience as if he were in a film.

There can only be two interpretations. One is the traditional: life is lived as a work of art. The other obliges us to reflect a bit further: it is the visual work (cinema, videotape, mural, comic strip, photograph) that is now a part of our memory, which is quite different and seems to confirm a hypothesis already ventured – namely, that the younger generations have absorbed as elements of their behaviour a series of elements filtered through the mass media (and coming, in some cases, from the most impenetrable areas of our century's artistic experimentation). To tell the truth, it isn't even necessary to talk about new generations: if you are barely middle-aged,

you will have learned personally the extent to which experience (love, fear, or hope) is filtered through “already seen” images. I leave it to moralists to deplore this way of living by intermediate communication. We must only bear in mind that mankind has never done anything else, and before Nadar and the Lumières, it used other images, drawn from pagan carvings or the illuminated manuscripts of the Apocalypse.

We can foresee another objection, this time not from cherishers of the tradition: isn’t it perhaps an unpleasant example of the ideology of scientific neutrality, the way, when we are faced by active behaviour and searing, dramatic events, we always try again and again to analyse them, define them, interpret them, dissect them? Can we define that which by definition eludes all defining? Well, we must have the courage to assert once more what we believe in: today more than ever political news is marked, motivated, abundantly nourished by the symbolic. Understanding the mechanisms of the symbolic in which we move means being political. Not understanding them leads to mistaken politics. Of course, it is also a mistake to reduce political and economic events to mere symbolic mechanisms, but it is equally wrong to ignore this dimension.

There are unquestionably many reasons, and serious ones, for the outcome of Luciano Lama’s intervention at the University of Rome, but one particular reason must not be overlooked: the opposition between two theatrical or spatial structures. Lama presented himself on a podium (however makeshift), thus obeying the rules of a frontal communication characteristic of trade-union, working-class spatiality, facing a crowd of students who have, however, developed other ways of aggregation and interaction, decentralized, mobile, apparently disorganized. Theirs is a different way of organizing space, and so that day at the university there was the clash also between two concepts of perspective, the one we might call Brunelleschian and the other cubist. True, anyone reducing the whole story to these factors would be mistaken, but anyone trying to dismiss this interpretation as an intellectual game would be mistaken, too. The Catholic Church, the French Revolution, Nazism, the Soviet Union, and the People’s Republic of China, not to mention the Rolling Stones and soccer clubs, have always known very well that the deployment of space is religion, politics, ideology. So let’s give back to the spatial and the visual the place they deserve in the history of political and social relations.

And now to another event. These past months, within that variegated and shifting experience that is called “the movement,” the men carrying .38s have emerged. From various quarters the movement has been asked to denounce them as an alien body, and there were forces exerting pressure both from outside and from within. Apparently this demand for rejection encountered difficulties, and various elements came into play. Synthetically, we can say that many belonging to the movement didn’t feel like labelling as outsiders forces that, even if they revealed themselves in unacceptable and tragically suicidal ways, seemed to express a reality of social protest that couldn’t be denied. I am repeating discussions that all of us have heard. Basically what was said was this. They are wrong, but they are part of a mass movement. And the debate was harsh, painful.

Now, last week, there occurred a kind of precipitation of all the elements of the debate previously suspended in uncertainty. Suddenly, and I say suddenly because decisive statements were issued in the space of a day, the gunmen were cut off. Why at that moment? Why not before? It's not enough to say that recent events in Milan made a deep impression on many people because similar events in Rome had also had a profound effect. What happened that was new and different? We may venture a hypothesis, once again recalling that an explanation never explains everything but becomes part of a landscape of explanations in reciprocal relationship. A photograph appeared.

Many photographs have appeared, but this one made the rounds of all the papers after being published in the *Corriere d'Informazione*. As everyone will recall, it was the photograph of a young man wearing a knitted ski-mask, standing alone, in profile, in the middle of a street, legs apart, arms outstretched horizontally, with both hands grasping a pistol. Other forms can be seen in the background, but the photograph's structure is classical in its simplicity: the central figure, isolated, dominates it.

If it is licit (and it is necessary) to make aesthetic observations in such cases, this is one of those photographs that will go down in history and will appear in a thousand books. The vicissitudes of our century have been summed up in a few exemplary photographs that have proved epoch-making: the unruly crowd pouring into the square during the "ten days that shook the world"; Robert Capa's dying *militiaman*; the marines planting the flag on Iwo Jima; the Vietnamese prisoner being executed with a shot in the temple; Che Guevara's tortured body on a plank in a barracks. Each of these images has become a myth and has condensed numerous speeches. It has surpassed the individual circumstance that produced it; it no longer speaks of that single character or of those characters but expresses concepts. It is unique, but at the same time it refers to other images that preceded it or that, in imitation, have followed it. Each of these photographs seems a film we have seen and refers to other films that had seen it. Sometimes it isn't a photograph but a painting, or a poster.

What did the photograph of the Milanese gunman "say"? I believe it abruptly revealed, without the need for a lot of digressive speeches, something that has been circulating in a lot of talk but that words alone could not make people accept. That photograph didn't resemble any of the images which, for at least four generations, had been emblems of the idea of revolution. The collective element was missing; in a traumatic way the figure of the lone hero returned here. And this lone hero was not the one familiar in revolutionary iconography, which when it portrayed a man alone always saw him as victim, sacrificial lamb: the dying *militiaman* or the slain Che, in fact. This individual hero, on the contrary, had the pose, the terrifying isolation of the tough guy of gangster movies or the solitary gunman of the West – no longer dear to a generation who consider themselves metropolitan Indians.

This image suggested other worlds, other figurative, narrative traditions that had nothing to do with the proletarian tradition, with the idea of popular revolt, of mass struggle. Suddenly it inspired a syndrome of rejection. It came to express the

following concept: revolution is elsewhere, and even if it is possible, it doesn't proceed via this "individual" act.

The photograph, for a civilization now accustomed to thinking in images, was not the description of a single event (and, in fact, it makes no difference who the man was, nor does the photograph help in identifying him): it was an argument. And it worked.

It is of no interest to know if it was posed (and therefore faked), whether it was the testimony of an act of conscious bravado, if it was the work of a professional photographer who gauged the moment, the light, the frame, or whether it virtually took itself, was snapped accidentally by unskilled and lucky hands. At the moment it appeared, its communicative career began: once again the political and the private have been marked by the plots of the symbolic, which, as always happens, has proved producer of reality.

## 12 Essays: Photography and the Ready-Made and Apollo and Daphne: A Myth for Photography

---

FRANCO VACCARI

### ***Biographical Note***

Franco Vaccari was born in Modena in 1936. After completing his university studies with a degree in physics, he began his activity as a photographer in the second half of the 1950s. He was initially influenced by the work of a heterogeneous group of photographers, including Alberto Lattuada, Paul Strand, and William Klein, united by their interest in the materiality of place. His early photographs are atmospheric images of everyday life in his native Modena, documenting a provincial world moving towards a rapid modernization. Published only in 2007, these neorealist beginnings gave way to a surreal portrayal of the city to which he arrived via visual and concrete poetry (*Pop esie* [Pop poems], 1965, and *Canti di grilli* [Songs of the Crickets], 1967) in the photographic series *La città vista a livello di cane* (The City Viewed at Dog's Eye Level, 1967–8). His inaugural book, *Tracce* (Traces, 1966), is a series of photographs of scribblings, drawings, and torn posters on city walls, which the poet Adriano Spatola defined as a "mural mythology," recorded by a modern urban anthropologist. Vaccari occupies a significant position in the Italian photographic scene, and as Nicoletta Leonardi notes, his work reflects the central importance of materiality and of the urban environment as a space of artistic experimentation to artists working with photography in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s and beyond. His career embodies a peculiarly Italian path to late modernity that should be understood not in terms of "belatedness" but of cultural difference that challenges the dominant model of postmodern conceptualism and affirms a plural modernity that disrupts any easy centre-periphery dichotomy (Leonardi, *Feedback* 13).

Vaccari's work displaces the authorial figure of the photographer to reflect on the nature of photographic production, the constructedness of the image and the automatism of the camera. In *Photocollages* (1970) he produced a series of images by collating partial views to highlight how vision, like the image, is constructed. In the same year at a hippie gathering on the Isle of Wight, Vaccari explored the automatism of the camera by bracketing the presence of the photographer in the pictures, stopping every hundred metres to take a picture to his left and right. *Teatro delle orgie e dei misteri* (Theatre of Orgies and Mysteries), a recording of the twenty-four-hour performance of the artist Hermann Nitsch in 1975, continues this research.

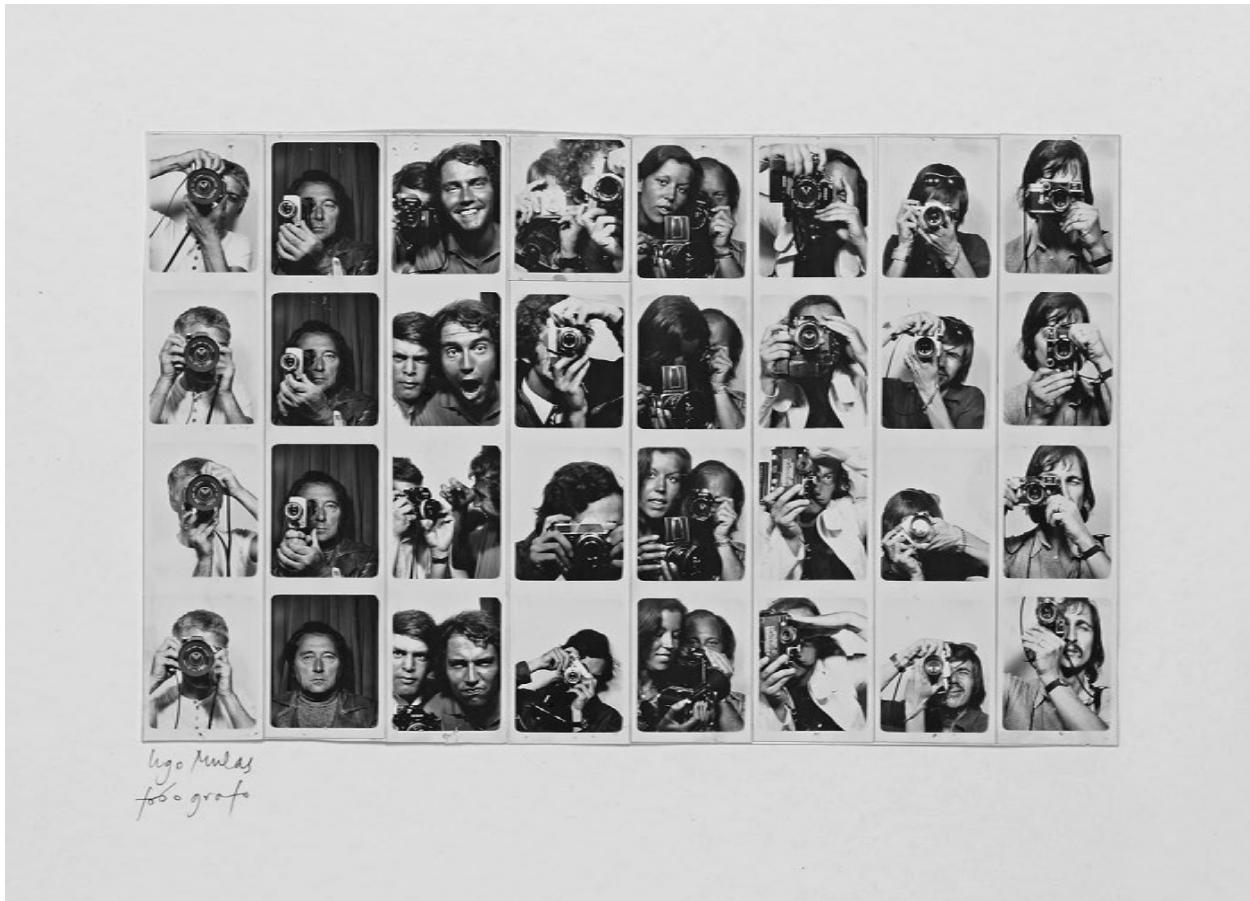


Figure 12.1 Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale n. 4*, 1972. Photobooth pictures. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

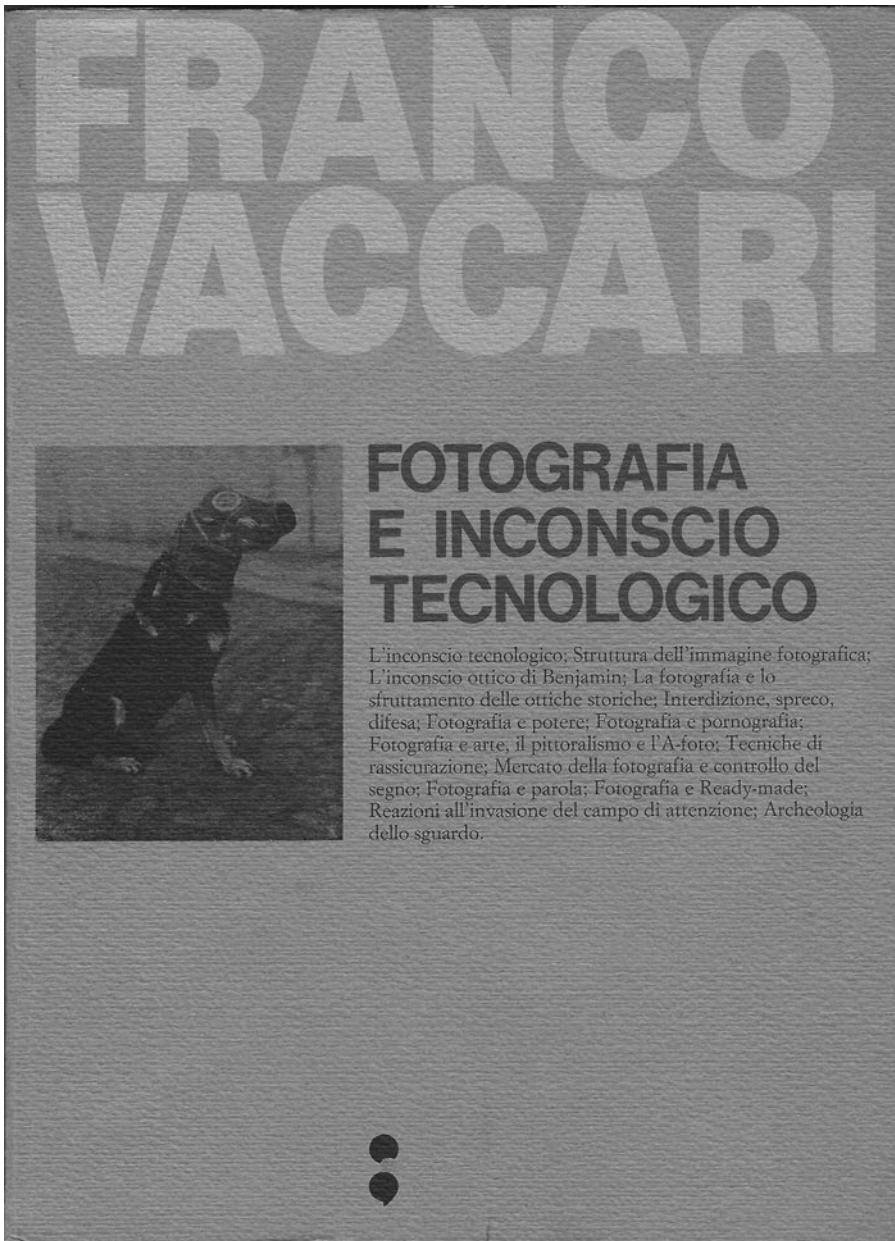


Figure 12.2 Franco Vaccari, cover of *Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico*, 1979. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

Vaccari's most innovative contribution to thinking through the relationship of photography to authorship, time, and event is the series entitled *Esposizioni in tempo reale* (Real Time Exhibition). The first of these, *Maschere* (Masks), dates back to 1969, and the most celebrated is *Lascia su queste pareti una traccia fotografica del tuo passaggio* (Leave on These Walls a Photographic Trace of Your Passage), realized for the thirty-sixth Venice Biennale, in 1972. Vaccari's work of the 1970s marked a crucial turning point in Italy as it opened the way to the recognition of photography as an artistic means of expression, even as he rejected established notions of the photographic auteur. Refusing the artist's traditional prerogative, Vaccari took his picture in a Photomatic booth, hung it on the wall, and stepped aside while visitors came and paid for their pictures to be taken and added their strip to the wall display. At the closing of the exhibit, the wall presented a cumulative image of a parallel world of the photographic experience collectively and unconsciously constructed. As Leonardi notes, the exhibit firmly emphasized the artist's belief in photography as a material object and a social actant playing an active role in a ludic act of reappropriation of self-portraiture (*Fotografia* 35, 46). Vaccari's *Omaggio all'Ariosto* Real Time Exhibition No. 8, was held in May 1974 and records a trip in the footsteps of a slipper-clad Ludovico Ariosto, author of the 1532 epic poem *Orlando furioso*, travelling from Carpi to Ferrara. This photographic documentation simultaneously became an exhibition as the images were sent to the Modern Art Gallery in Modena. Influenced by the artistic and political climate of the late 1960s and 1970s, these works show Vaccari's interest in sparking a process rather than just producing an object for consumption.

In recent years, Vaccari has continued the series of Real Time Exhibitions, the most recent being No. 35, in 2007, *Ex Albergo Diurno Cobianchi di Piazza Oberdan* (Former Cobianchi Daytime Hotel in Piazza Oberdan). After a first attempt in 1971, Vaccari finally succeeded in renting for a day the spa establishment in Milan, which was by then totally dilapidated. The photographic series of old and new images reflects on the material action of time and the changes in the forms of social spaces. Among his recent activities are film video installations. In 2003, for the Philosophy Festival in Modena, he realized "Provvista di ricordi per il tempo dell'Alzheimer" (Supply of Memories for the Time of Alzheimer's), which was displayed in a mini-cinema specially built for the occasion. The video installation *Lontano da* (Far From, 2005) investigates the changing social environment by focusing on the experience of the Rumanian housekeepers who have become an intimate part of the Italian human landscape.

The two essays translated here, "Photography and the Ready-Made" and "Apollo and Daphne: A Myth for Photography," are collected in the 2011 Einaudi edition of Vaccari's groundbreaking volume *Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico* (Photography and the Technological Unconscious), which originally appeared in 1979 with Punto e virgola, a publishing house founded by Luigi Ghirri. Following Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977) and preceding Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* (1980),

*Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico* is the first sustained contribution to the theorization of the medium put forward not by a philosopher or cultural critic but by a photographer. In Italy, it was the first extensive reflection exclusively focused on photography. Engaging the work of Walter Benjamin, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jean Baudrillard, and Pierre Bourdieu, Vaccari's essays shed light on the photographic medium as an instrument that allows the emergence of autonomous registrations that redefine notions of artist and spectator, as well as the very status of the work of art as a process occurring in the fluid exchange between human desire and technology. Vaccari conceives of photography as a precarious and mobile object which occupies a central position in our post-industrial culture and thus allows us a unique insight into the contemporary crisis of representation, our relation to images as commodities, and technology as the site where new social behaviours, cultural practices, and memories emerge.

## Photography and the Ready-Made<sup>1</sup>

FRANCO VACCARI

We have always focused our interest on the moment of the sign's production, completely ignoring the process whereby we legitimize the attention given to the sign. In a period like this, when our private time is occupied and forcibly colonized by a mass of signs in search of an audience – signs that attempt to elude our vigilance in every way, including subliminally – it is absolutely necessary to shift our attention from the producer to the consumer of signs.

A sign that is intentionally produced represents a desire to communicate, a request for attention. If it is true that the production of signs implies work, it is equally true that the attention given to the sign and its decoding also requires the consumption of energy and, therefore, work.

Probably an act of communication is enjoyable when the work it requires is profitable and leads to the discharge of energy greater than that required to produce it.

Freud said that “the pleasure in jokes ... arise(s) from *an economy of expenditure upon inhibition*, the pleasure in the comic from *an economy in expenditure upon ideation* (upon cathectic) and the pleasure in humor from *an economy in expenditure upon feeling*. In all three modes of working of our mental apparatus the pleasure is derived from an economy” (*Jokes* 149).

Society has probably always made use of techniques to regulate processes of communication with the aim of safeguarding and guaranteeing respect for the principle of the saving of energy. One of these techniques aimed at guaranteeing a profitable use of attention, a kind of insurance for a satisfying use of time, was one that required the person expecting to receive attention to display skill in executing the *object of attention*; such skill and ability bore witness themselves, in a sort of informational short-circuit, to all the work that had been necessary to produce such an object. This was immediately verifiable in the quality of the painter's brushstroke, in the purity or vocal power of the singer, in the height of the trapeze artist in the circus, in the complexity of the embroidery. Society required from everyone proof of ability in proportion to the social class they intended to address.

As soon as it appeared, photography provoked a dislocation of the rules that governed the distribution of attention. Arago's speech to the Paris Academy of Science in which he announced Daguerre's discovery bears witness to a perfect awareness of the revolutionary nature of the new medium. At the end of his speech, Arago concluded with the words: “It therefore seems indispensable that the Government should directly recompense Monsieur Daguerre and that France should nobly give to the world this discovery that can make an enormous contribution to the progress of the Arts and Sciences.” Reading between the lines, we find the sense of disproportion between the perspectives opened up by the new medium and whatever pretence individuals or nations might have had to manage them, inasmuch as, he seems to say, it is not the photograph that is delivered to the world but the world that is offered to the photograph.

Of all the elements that characterized the handmade image, the requirement for ability was perhaps the one that photography rendered most ridiculous. This short-circuiting of “ability,” photography’s almost total avoidance of it, blew one of the guarantees that the sign had to display in order to become an object of attention.

From this point of view, the problem posed by the photographic sign is analogous to that posed by Duchamp’s artistic production, and in particular by his ready-mades.

Duchamp did not construct, nor display any ability. He limited himself to choosing the most neutral objects possible, the most anonymous industrial products – anonymous because they show no trace of that work that would have been necessary to reveal in them a desire for communication and therefore incapable of justifying any attention whatsoever. Duchamp signed products that he exhibited as works of art to attract the maximum intensity of the gaze.

The central problematic of this operation is to be found not so much in the essentially innocuous aspects of his revival of alchemy but *in the problem of the concealment of the work that went into the production of the sign and in the overturning of the strategies of attention.*

The industrial revolution produced contradictions that manifest themselves in the distribution of precariously balanced energy; as with a joke, Duchamp, instead of exhibiting ability-work to receive attention, bets on contradictions and obtains the maximum result, apparently with the minimum effort, then spends the rest of his life defending those gestures. The work that usually precedes communication and appears in the form of ability this time follows it and appears in the form of consistency and critical lucidity.

*Thus even in this case we see the norm that protects paying attention from the dangers of waste being respected, albeit in an ambiguous way.*

*With Duchamp we see the complete divarication between the sign and its justification, between appearance and role.*

From a Lacanian perspective we could say that the Duchampian sign refuses to be the site of alienating projections, instead proposing itself as an irreducible subjectivity with which only a direct relation without intermediaries is possible.

With Duchamp there was an explosion of artistic activities in which the quantity of work exhibited is minimal. What I have said about Duchamp might be repeated for photography; fundamentally, every photograph is a ready-made.

Vice versa, we could even say that a ready-made is an object that coincides with its own image: it is a total photograph. If the fascination of photography lies in its ability to evoke the mystery of a presence by way of an absence, that of the ready-made lies in its evocation of an absence by way of presence. Returning to the problem of justifying attention, we might say that the era of indiscriminate, unreliable attention began with photography rather than with Duchamp.

Is it a coincidence that Duchamp’s ready-mades (the bicycle wheel, the bottle rack, the snow shovel, the metal comb, the ball of twine, the coat-rack, the urinal, the ampoule of Parisian air, the door etc.) are industrial products or in any case manufactured items that are typical of the industrialized world in their anonymity?

As such, we must keep in mind that, since they bear the imprint of the technological unconscious, they are signs. By choosing them, isolating them from their context, and transforming them into signs, Duchamp carried out something analogous to photography. Ready-mades share with photography a typical melancholy charge, and both transmit the sense of the fragment, the reliquary, the clue, the relict, and the trace. They render more acute our perception of time's irreversibility in the precise moment in which they stop time. There is no substantial difference between the action of cameras that produce images and that of industrial complexes that produce objects. We must not allow ourselves to be tricked by the fact that the production of the former is disseminated and widespread, and subject to personal motivations. The important thing is that in both cases the process of production takes place in obedience to codes that place the final object into a symbolic space of representation.

*Because of photography's responsiveness to individual motivations, it represents the perfect solution to the problem posed by industrial production, a problem that decoration had addressed but not solved – namely, how to customize the object to erase the presence of the production process.*

In photography, the intervention of codes that vary from individual to individual is so powerful and intriguing that it confuses and obscures the underlying structure. But there is no difference between people who decorate the body of their car and those who believe themselves to be the free creators of the photographic: both are engaged in maquillage. The narcissistic overvaluing of superficial codes, the infinite variety of cases to which they can be applied, giving rise to a false multiplicity, leave our understanding of photography still mired in nineteenth-century positions. From the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to the First World War, people have persistently worked on the means and products of industry, covering them with ornaments in an attempt to bring them within known formal systems.

The obsession with decoration can be seen today as a desire to domesticate those new forms that were proliferating at a frightening rate.

There was no clear surface that was not attacked by this decorative fury, particularly on products destined for the upper classes. The non-transparency of the work that went into the industrial object's production was probably felt as a threat where the fear of mass flattening, a sense of guilt for the hidden work, and the weakening of the sense of ownership linked to the dissolving of the uniqueness of the object all converged. In this way, the structures of the first electrical alternators were camouflaged by Doric columns, the barrels of guns were covered with hard, impossible lace, and sewing machines were like preserved gardens. A hopeless competition between the anonymous serialization of industry and the need to customize was underway. In this sense, all the work spent on decorating the industrial object is wasted since it is work born from the false perspective with which humans see themselves in relation to objects.

Duchamp's ready-mades represent the object's liberation from the obligatory tattooing that until then constituted the necessary condition for achieving visibility.

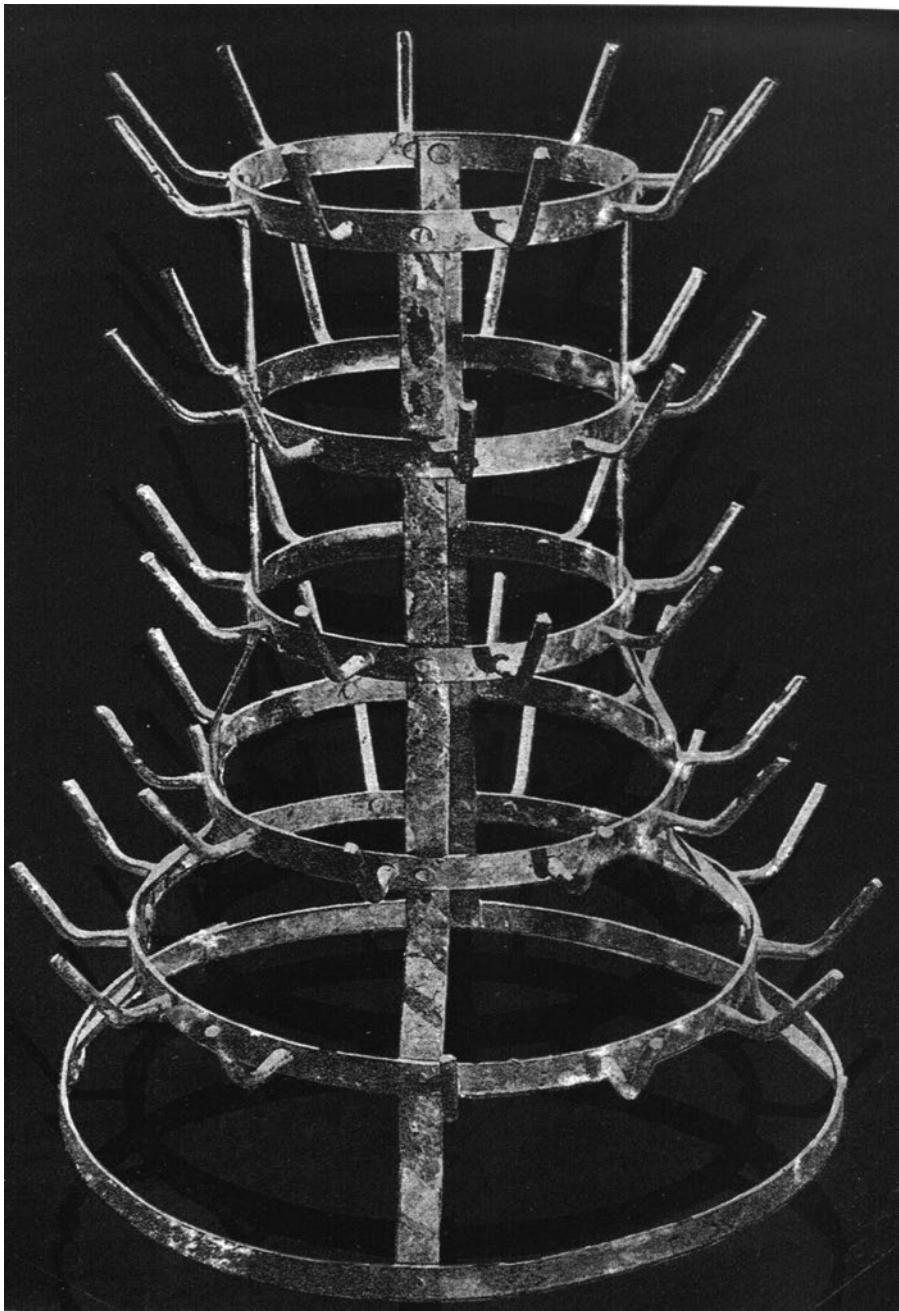


Figure 12.3 Marcel Duchamp, *Égouttoir* (Bottle rack), 1914. In *Duchamp messo a nudo*. Courtesy of Galleria Michela Rizzo, Venice.

## Apollo and Daphne: A Myth for Photography<sup>2</sup>

FRANCO VACCARI

Asking yourself where photography is going is like asking yourself about the destiny of the telephone. Both produced their mutations so thoroughly that they seem to have become part of our genetic makeup.

Onto these initial mutations, others – cinema, television, interactive television, and so on – have grafted themselves and are diverting our lives towards unpredictable outcomes, producing, according to Marshall McLuhan's image, an explosion of humanity and an implosion of the world. The two terms – *explosion* and *implosion* – do not indicate generically a sudden and drastic change but rather a change precisely in the dimensions we use to relate to our environment. In this way the concepts of large and small have lost their implicit reference to a human scale, the only one where experience became something real, while outside that scale, the uncertain spaces of the numinous and magic opened up. Today, far and near have become relative expressions without any reference to the reassuring space that painters could paint and thinkers like Newton and Kant could postulate as absolute.

In another work (*Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico* [Photography and the Technological Unconscious, 1979]) I said that one of the effects of photography was that of bringing close what was distant in space and time, and that Duchamp with his ready-mades pushed physically present objects away, to the point of making them untouchable, so that his ready-mades actually became total photographs where the distance between image and object was reduced to the point that the two coincided.

If photography was the detonator that set off increasingly violent spatial-temporal anamorphoses, it seems to me that now it is performing an opposite function. Once what disconcerted us about photography was its surprising proliferation together with its effect of sensory rarefaction. Pictorialism tried to domesticate the new medium by limiting it to forms that were close to the artistic tradition, and the only result was the creation of sheets of bad painting where the only photographic element that remained was a certain technological hardness.

An old myth, that of Apollo and Daphne, can help us understand this defeat of desire and intention. According to the myth, Apollo had designs on a young nymph called Daphne, who, on the point of being possessed by the god underwent a metamorphosis that transformed her into a laurel tree. Apollo, just as he believed he had reached his goal, found himself groping among leaves and branches rather than clasping a warm body.

Desire, if it does not respect and recognize the autonomy of its object, must deal with the irreducible nature of the object itself, which suddenly reveals its extraneousness. Photography, too, if misunderstood, allows only those aspects that make it essentially useless to surface.

Now that painting has lost any kind of necessity and image synthesis is increasing, paradoxically the task of recovering the physicality that the spread of virtual reality puts into crisis is delegated to photography. In fact, contrary to what the pictorialists of every era have always believed, a photograph is most truly itself the higher its degree of referentiality. Rather than being a limitation of the medium, this referentiality is its honour. It is precisely on humble photographic referentiality, rather than on the spectacular emphasis of virtual reality, that we can rely in order to stay in touch with the real, with memory and the emotions, and in this way seek to avoid arbitrary representations that mortify and disperse life.



**Figure 12.4** Franco Vaccari, *John Wayne Padano*, from *Radici*, 1955/1965. Gelatin silver print. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

### Interview with Franco Vaccari<sup>3</sup>

GIULIANA MINGHELLI

GM: Let's start from the beginning. Your university degree is in physics, so how did you get involved with photography?

FV: My father was the first photographer in a small town in the province of Modena. He was self-taught and eventually opened a photographic studio. Obviously then, there were cameras at home, but he never wanted to teach me anything, since he was afraid I would get excited by photography. He himself was a good photographer, but he was well aware that in Italy photography was an occupation without decent prospects and for that reason he always inhibited his talent and never seriously followed up on his passion. Now, although he didn't want me to get interested in these things, it was inevitable that I, too, ended up using cameras, already in high school. I participated in several contests and won some of them. I joined a photography club, but I didn't like the very traditional atmosphere so I went only once. For

years I looked upon this interest of mine with a vague sense of guilt, since I couldn't relate it to my own studies.

GM: A sort of vice.

FV: Exactly. A sort of secret vice, which I openly indulged in a little when I served in the army in Rome. I took a course to become a reserve officer and I was assigned to the army's Technical Centre for Chemistry and Physics. Since half of my day was free, as I didn't have any military obligation in the barracks, I started to frequent Roman artistic circles and to go to exhibitions, always on my own. I've always been aware of my apparent non-involvement in the official photographic scene, despite my long career as a photographer. It's still true today that in the landscape of Italian photography books like mine or even photographs like the ones I produced are very hard to find. But I never worried too much about that.

GM: At the beginning, though, you took photographs that fall within the parameters of what is recognized as neorealist aesthetics, such as those included in the volume *Radici* [Roots].

FV: Those photographs were published for the first time only two years ago. This means that for all these years, I kept them in a drawer. Nowadays, everybody wants to have an exhibition immediately. Yet I kept those photographs in a drawer for forty years. I was never in such a hurry; I never had such an anxiety to be present. I made them public when it seemed like they were ready to be accepted.

GM: This means that your photographic debut was *Le tracce* [Traces].

FV: *Le tracce* is a book that I struggled deeply over. The publisher, at the Frankfurt Book Fair, proposed a kind of binding that seemed exceptional to him, and I decided to use it in order to give my project the form of a gift packet. The problem was that the book was bound with rubber bands, and, as soon as one opened it and tried to browse it, pages just fell out in your hands. Of this book *Traces*, now only traces are left. Since only a few originals survived [and the remaining copies are displayed under Plexiglas covers as if they were relics], the book is now highly valued in the antiques trade.

GM: The self-destructing book! In an interview published recently, you were introduced in this way: "Franco Vaccari is not a photographer ... Franco Vaccari is a poet." Your relationship to photography is far from self-evident and taken for granted. I think about what photography meant to a thinker like Walter Benjamin [who has been an important influence for Vaccari]: a philosophical object, a way to reflect both on history and on modernity. If you were to tell me now what photography is for you, what would you say?

FV: At this point, it has started to become clear to me that photographs undergo two different kinds of development. The first is the one you obtain in the dark room, which reveals the latent image and then stabilizes it with the fixer. The second is the one that modifies the perception of the image with the modification of the observing context. What emerges in this second phase of development is the meaning of the image, which – unlike the image itself – does not undergo a final fixing but is subjected to the appearances of the cliché. What we are called to do when we consult this kind of archival material is to be aware of the oscillations of meaning and not to trust immediate

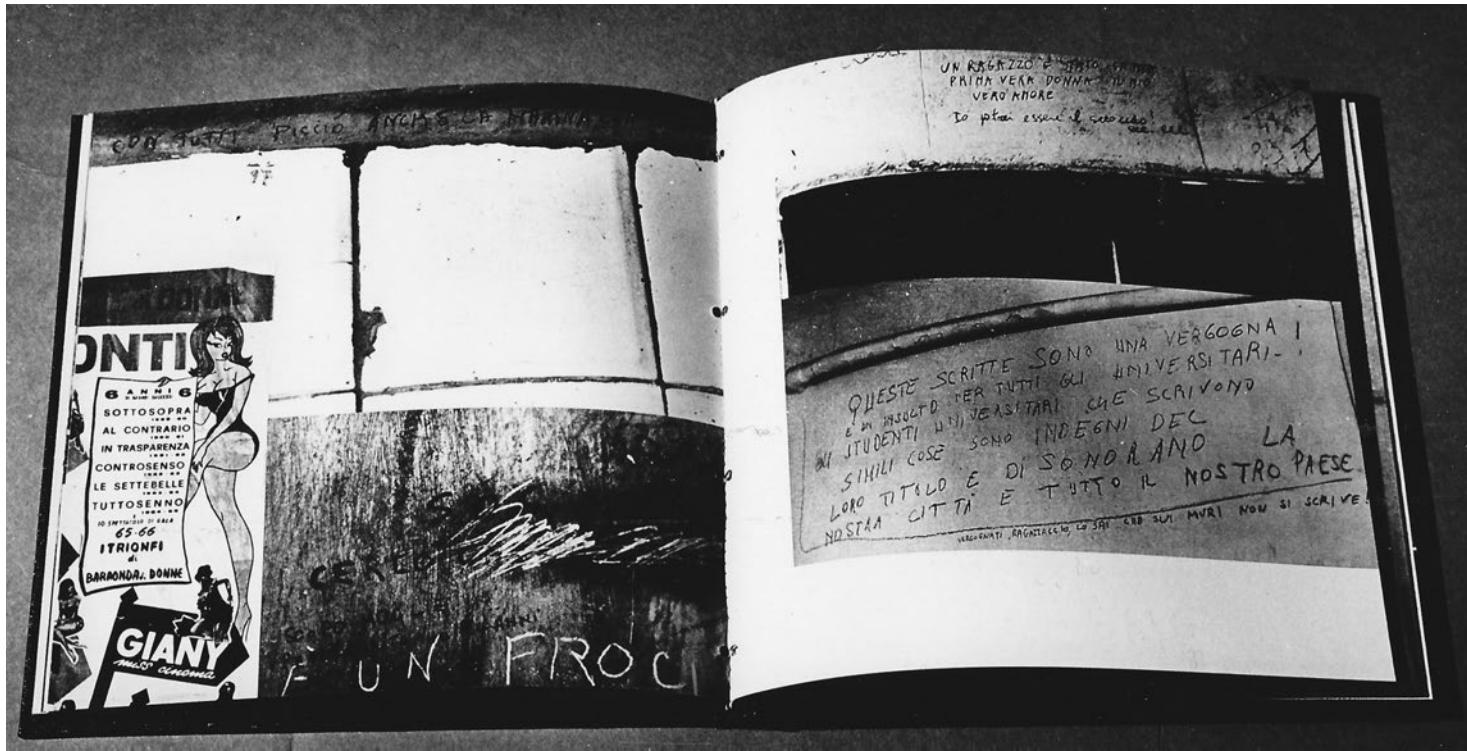


Figure 12.5 Franco Vaccari, pages from *Le tracce*, 1966. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

appearances. In the Jewish tradition, the study of the sacred texts identifies sixty-four levels of interpretation. One starts from the first – that is the one related to the letter, the literal – and ends up giving importance not only to words but also to the blank spaces between them. Now, the same stratification of meaning happens in photography: a meaning which is never just immediate but which continues to solicit interpretations. What you see immediately, in the end, is the lowest level of interpretation: it is the letter, the letter of the image. I started with an interest in the image, in the structure of the image, but then the problem of the image lost importance. It didn't satisfy me anymore.

GM: So would you say that photography for you is a philosophical, rather than an aesthetic, object?

FV: It's a philosophical object because it always implies a relationship with our own world and because its meaning is not as simple as it may appear. The commonplace about photography is that it gives away everything all at once. But actually, the opposite is the case.

This awareness is central to my work in Narrative Art, an investigation that I pursued at the same time as other artists working in the United States, in France, and in Germany. Narrative Art meant to me never being satisfied by something that gets exhausted in an image but always having to move in two parallel and different structures of meaning, such as word and image. In Narrative Art, words, although clearly referred to an image, shed light on certain aspects of the image that otherwise would not be perceivable.

GM: Given the necessity of detours, narrative or interpretive, in approaching a photograph, I'd like to know how theory and scientific models have informed your reflection on the photographic image.

FV: Certainly there are connections, but I'm only dimly aware of them. We are always poorly aware of the meaning of what we do. For example, I believe you are right when you say that my way of writing resembles the way one constructs a mathematical demonstration. Scientific methodology undoubtedly influenced my artistic activity in this sense: to me it is important always to identify a problem and then to look for its solution.

GM: In reading about and looking at your photographic production, I saw certain things, so I just wanted to lay them out for you and see how you react. Several times, you state that seeing is always seeing again, knowing is returning.

FV: We see only what we know. What we do not know, we do not see, so much so that seeing is, in practice, seeing again. Working with and against this cognitive automatism, I used photography to unhinge my visual conditioning and to manage to see what I didn't know. I'll give you an example you might know, since I have recounted it several times. In 1970, I went to the Pop Festival on the Isle of Wight. As soon as I arrived I realized that I was foreign to that environment. Therefore, in order not to project my prejudices upon it, I chose to photograph the event in the most neutral way I could. So I decided to take one picture to my right and one to my left, every hundred meters of my itinerary. Had I photographed according to my instinct, I would have projected what I knew, or though I knew, upon that hippie world, whereas I wanted to try to see what I didn't know.



**Figure 12.6** Franco Vaccari, *Cane che guarda*, from *La città vista a livello di cane*, 1967–8. Gelatin silver print. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

GM: I see here a possible connection with scientific methodology. You establish certain parameters for an experiment; in this case specific conditions structuring the encounter between the camera and the world. The resulting image in its absolute contingency then gives rise to another experiment by challenging the viewers to read what has never been written.

FV: There was one experience that somehow resembles a scientific experiment, and it is the one I made in 1972 at the Biennale in Venice, where I used a photomaton booth. My intervention consisted first in writing on its walls in four languages “Leave a photographic trace of your passage” and then in contributing the first strip of photographs. I have to add, for it seems important to me, that, in order to be photographed, the visitors had to pay. I believe that, in order for a thing to become emotionally significant, it has to require a sacrifice. The word sacrifice comes from *sacrum facere* [to make sacred]. The sacred has always been something that possesses a surplus of reality. It is an enhanced reality. So, in order for the choice of being photographed to be something real, and not virtual, a sacrifice was required. Visitors had to contribute a small payment, the standard amount that you would pay on the street. Well, when you asked me about possible connections between my photographic activity and the scientific world, I realized that what I just told you somewhat resembles a physics experiment: the photomaton space worked as a Wilson camera, where a trace was left by people, rather than by cosmic rays.

GM: Setting up an experiment involves a total uncertainty about the results. The power of your exhibit at the Biennale rests on this “live” tension over what the outcome will be. You prepared an experiment, and the experiment succeeded. What did it “demonstrate”?

FV: No one could guarantee a priori that the experiment would succeed, even if, a few hours after the opening of the exposition, as if I had taken an opinion poll, I saw that this thing was really taking off. The space bewildered the visitors, since they couldn’t see anything – there was just the machine and the invitation. Actually they should have known that the space was full – of what? – of the risk I was willingly running. The beginning of the seventies was also a cultural milieu in which some artists understood that they too had to make a small sacrifice and to run a risk to make what they were doing real. For example, Chris Burden<sup>4</sup> was in the line of fire, and he put himself into complex and risky situations. Another artist I felt very close to was Vito Acconci.<sup>5</sup> At that time, even if the phenomenon was not yet quite visible, one could detect the first symptoms of the crumbling of ideologies. Artists were certain only of what they experienced directly through their own body. From this perspective, the work Vito Acconci made is emblematic. Like him I also always constructed claustrophobic spaces, which in some way one could control.

GM: Yes, in fact starting from *Le immagini captate, La placenta azzurra, Bar Code-Code Bar* you created a series of spaces in which the spectator is physically contained in a box.

FV: I worked a lot on darkness and on closed spaces.

GM: This is a constant element in your work. And it strikes me that it reveals much of your relationship to photography. It seems that what interests you in this medium is indeed not the relationship to the surface of the image [which always leaves us outside] but

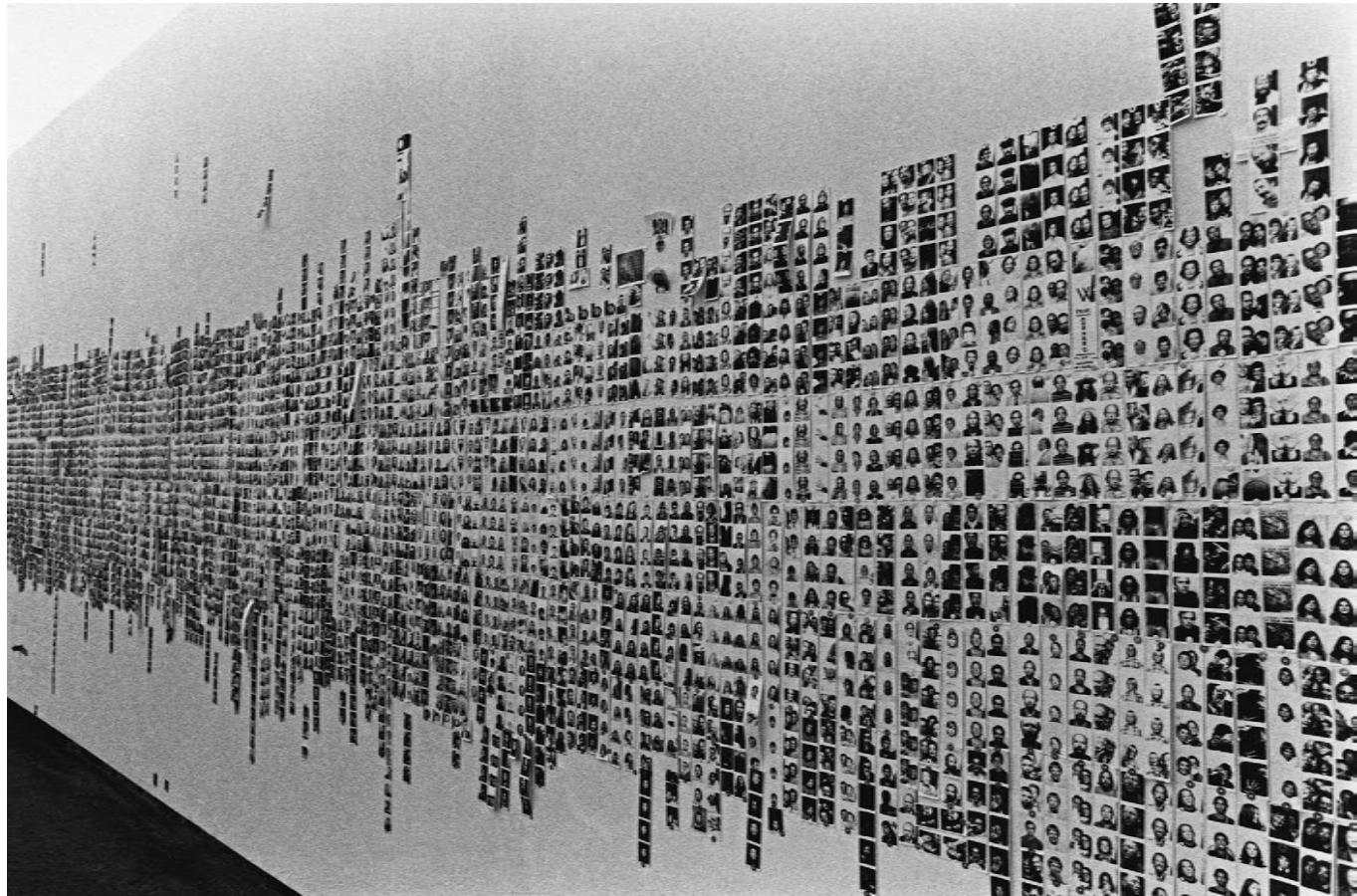


Figure 12.7 Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale n. 4*, 1972. Installation view of photobooth photographs. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

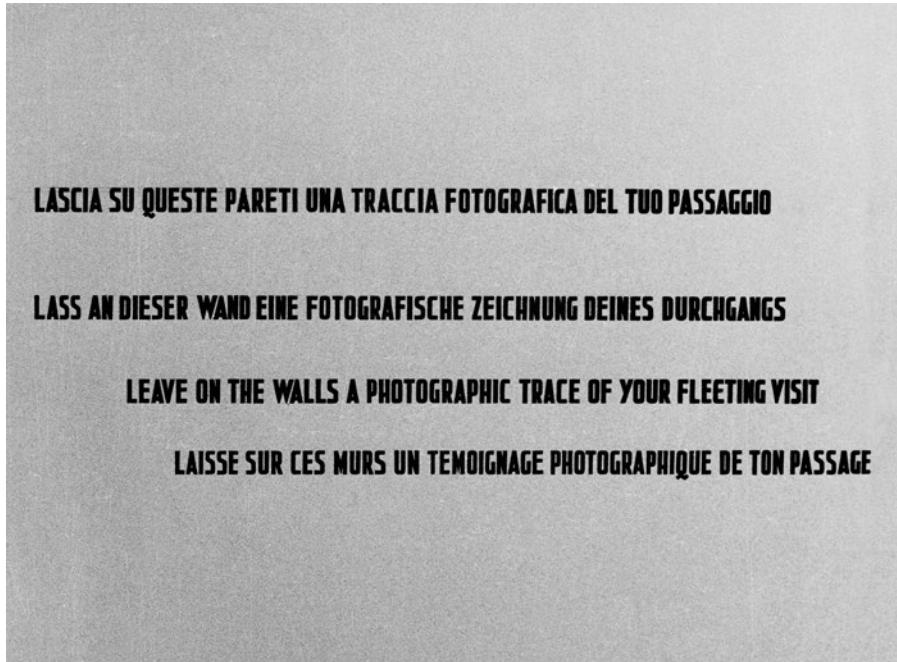


Figure 12.8 Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale n. 4*, 1972. Photograph of opening credits to exhibition. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

rather its moment of gestation, an internal space that the spectator is invited to enter. Although this primary scene can be interpreted in different ways, the interesting aspect to me is the way you enable the spectator-agent to enter into the bowels of technology, as if in the womb of a dark room.

FV: I do not emphasize the tools, though, and the invitation to enter comes about in a gentle way, so that often visitors believe themselves to be in another situation. For example, in *Bar Code-Code Bar* many people didn't immediately get the fact that they were in a space that worked like a bar without being one. On that occasion, too, I gave the visitor something in exchange for his or her attention: the possibility to sit down and have a good coffee. In short, I build honey traps where an exchange between author and visitor happens.

GM: Walter Benjamin talks about the necessity of educating people to interact with technology and refers to the importance of play as a fundamental modality to get acquainted with the machine. Your exhibits are a sort of a game to educate the spectator to the technology implied in his or her act of looking.



Figure 12.9 Franco Vaccari, *Bar Code-Code Bar*, Venice Biennale, 1993. Gelatin silver print installation view with colour added. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

FV: Absolutely. You learn by playing. When I told you that I was preparing honey traps, I meant that this was a way to get the spectator involved in certain situations without scaring him or her – that is, without revealing too much about the functioning of the mechanism. When they are calm and put at ease, people are willing to grasp things, to allow thoughts or appreciations to surface.

GM: Following up on a previous observation, could we say that in photography you are more interested in the mechanism of its making, the physical object?

FV: Yes, the process of its making. Its making and the possible layers of interpretations. It is difficult to define precisely what a photograph is, for many different souls are

manifested in it. Some of them surely belong to the realm of the sacred (photography as a witness, as a manifestation, as an appearance, as a relic). It is for this reason that, in magic shows, one of the most commonly used tools is indeed the photograph, for its effectiveness, as well as for its status as an incontrovertible manifestation of a bond. It seems that digital pictures are inadequate to this task because they are obtained without that physical passage of light, which guarantees the direct contact between the subject of photography and the image. It is a philosophical object, but it has also many other facets. To obtain an image of the world through a technological means is equivalent to a great anthropological transformation.

GM: Do you believe then that there is an incontrovertible gap separating analogue and digital photography?

FV: No, to me digital photography is the continuation of analogue photography. Photography is like the book: it was born adult. The Gutenberg Bible is already a perfect book. All the potential – as well as the future developments of photography – was already there from the beginning.

GM: This is one the most fascinating aspects of the relationship between humans and technology: while photography through a remarkable jump ahead was born adult, we instead – still nowadays, more than a century and a half after its invention – are still in the process of growing up with this object, of understanding both what happened to the world and to our experience of it since we first fell under the photographic eye.

FV: My only concern is that the excess of technological images not anaesthetize us.

GM: Let's shift our focus now to the specific situation of photography of the Italian context. Luther said that the ears are the most important sensory organ for a Christian. For the Counter-Reformation, and before that for the Italian Renaissance, the privileged organ was instead the eye. How do you think the culture of the image that has such deep roots influenced the reception and development of photography in Italy?

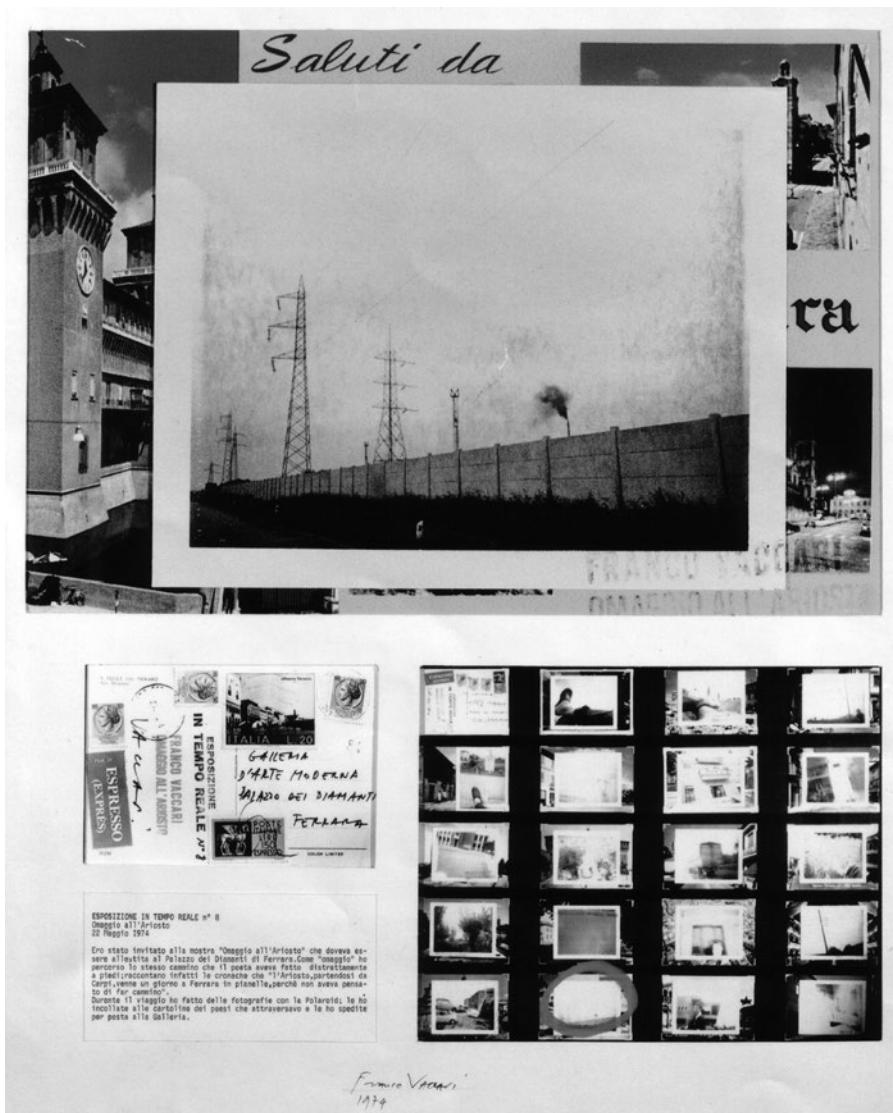
FV: First of all, we can observe that the enormous importance of the pictorial dimension and its long tradition in Italian culture ended up provoking a form of rejection of technological images. Those who do not have this tradition on their shoulders are freer to grasp and take advantage of the extraordinary novelty of this invention.

GM: In this volume, we propose the hypothesis that photography is a sort of “not-thought” in Italian culture, which resists critically addressing the photographic image. It is a culture in which there are many examples of suspicion towards technology, such as Pirandello’s critique of cinema in *Serafino Gubbio* or the Futurists’ praise of the new and of technology, and yet their hostility against photography.

FV: Boccioni couldn’t stand the Bragaglia brothers because he was of the opinion that their work with photography trivialized and diminished the achievements of futurist painting. Basically he thought they were dangerous amateurs.

GM: True. Nevertheless the same Bragaglia, in his essay on photodynamism, declared himself a photographer, while at the same time denouncing photography as an “arte di salumai” [sausage makers’ art]. Bragaglia himself was hence making photography against photography. Can you tell me or can you imagine reasons why in Italy we didn’t have a Eugène Atget?

FV: Italy is too long and too narrow a country. It looks like a *tagliatella* [noodle]. We have little land at our backs, and we very soon run out of potential ground for our investigations.



**Figure 12.10** Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale n. 8: Omaggio all'Ariosto*, 1974. Colour photograph. © Franco Vaccari. Courtesy of the artist.

In the more “square” countries, instead, like France, Germany, or the United States, with a territory that spreads out in all directions, photography’s overflow space is bigger. In Italy, artistic experimentation becomes a very limited experience: there are few possibilities for dialogue, few occasions for exchange, but above all, there is a lack of great institutions able to provide adequate attention and support.

GM: So, there is a Franco Vaccari because at his back there is the Po valley. Is the fact that you are from Emilia Romagna important?

FV: It emerges a little bit also from the relationship to cinema, to cinema in Emilia. Emilia has probably been the Italian region that gave the greatest contribution to cinema, the greatest number of authors, directors. Perhaps this territory spreads in an unusual way for Italy. However, I see the impact of cinematographic images as a very important aspect. You know, here is where the film that initiated neo-realism was born, Visconti's *Ossessione*, with its gaze extending over the plain.

GM: Your work seems to me, at the same time, deeply "Italian," or better Emilian – I think of Zavattini here, his mystic and secular vein, his pursuit of a dreaming dimension of reality, the trivial which becomes spectacle – and yet anti- or non-Italian, especially in your attention to the materiality of artistic production, to technology, your interest in the demystification of the artist and of the work of art, in your iconoclast tendency, in your interest in the unconscious. What do think?

FV: From the photographic standpoint, the first strong influence that I can identify comes from a book published in Italy during the 1940s: an anthology of American short texts edited by Vittorini, entitled *Americana*. There I found pictures that fascinated me, even if the book didn't mention the names of their photographers. I discovered later they were Walker Evans, Eugene Smith, Russel Lee, et cetera.

GM: Are there any Italian photographers who influenced you?

FV: We can say that in Italy there were only amateurs, those people whose greatest aspiration was to attend photographic contests, which were actually very sad occasions: repetitive, full of pictures of fishing nets in the sun, children, and mostly elderly people. There were also the rare journalistic reportages, which I found in the weekly magazine *Tempo* [an Italian equivalent of *Life*]. Another important book for me has been *Un paese*, by Paul Strand and Zavattini. By chance, just after I bought it, I brought it with me on my first visit to a photographic club. The welcome I received there – which I can sum up in their judgment (of the book): "anyone can make pictures like those ones" – luckily dissuaded me from spending more time in such places.

GM: Did Zavattini himself influence you? Did you meet him?

FV: No, I never met him in person but only through movies and books. I collected almost all his books in their first editions.

GM: The essays that Zavattini wrote on cinema in the 1940s, before neo-realism began, speak about the image in great depth, of his idea of an image which is formed halfway between reality and dream, of his desire to slow down cinema, to return to the photographic still.

FV: He was the only one around saying these things, hence they stood out. I like slowed-down images. In 1970 I made a video titled *Cani lenti* [Slow dogs]. I cannot stand acceleration and particularly the ever-increasing acceleration of television, which does not even allow you the time to assimilate. As soon as you see, you forget.

GM: You wrote in *Concerto cosmico* [Cosmic concert]: "No place is privileged, a place is only an inessential point of passage." Someone else wrote about your work that "the object of marvel is not the landscape, but the traveler." Here in Modena a school of

Italian landscape developed around the figure of Luigi Ghirri. What is your relationship to Ghirri and his conception of photography? Or, in other words, what is your relationship to landscape, to the project of travelling around Italy – a project that was originally Zavattini's cherished idea and was then taken up by Ghirri and the Italian landscape photography of the 1980s?

FV: The year in which photography finally achieved its status as an object of art can be traced back to 1972. There were two exhibits then – one was the Biennale in Venice and the other the Quadriennale of Kassel – in which for the very first time photography had been presented without any inferiority complex towards the other traditional forms of art. For example, in the 1972 Biennale, in addition to myself, there were Jan Dibbets for Holland,<sup>6</sup> Gerhard Richter for Germany, Dianne Arbus in the American pavilion, and Germano Olivotto, another Italian.<sup>7</sup> Before then, there was the phenomenon of conceptual photography, but in Italy it had almost no followers. These two exhibits legitimized the presence of photography in the world of art. At that point, many photographers, who had been trapped in the old world of Italian photography, accepted the challenge, even though they were still poorly represented in art galleries. Then, towards the end of the seventies, there was a rejection of conceptual art, and photographers, who had arrived late, found themselves locked out of the galleries and obliged to be their own managers. Ghirri's solution was to turn to the local cultural departments, which were starting to get interested in photography for promotional and economic reasons, since photography exhibitions were less expensive and less difficult to handle than the usual art shows. Undoubtedly there were some precedents in the American topographers, but the actual interest in landscape in Italy is related to the fact that the patrons were the local departments of culture.

On the subject of travel, one must say that some conceptual artists, me included – and cinema directors, too [for example Wim Wenders's *Alice in the Cities* (1974), or Spielberg's *Duel* (1971)] – already dealt with this idea. How was this concept of travelling different? For those artists, travelling provided a structure to something that lacked it. Travelling provided the framework for a still unformed way of thinking or experiencing the world. In *Alice in the Cities*, indeed, there is not a story, in the classical sense, but rather the travelling, which allows for the construction of the story itself. As far as I'm concerned, in 1972, in putting together an exhibition for the Austrian city of Graz, I completed my work during the travelling, by photographing all the trucks that were moving along in the same direction as me (Colour Plate 8). Once I arrived at my destination, my work was completed.

GM: Taking pictures of trucks travelling ahead of us, obstructing any vision, is equivalent to a sort of negation of landscape, to the denial of a vision running the risk of self-organization according to a pictorial [picturesque] code.

FV: I was not interested in landscape then.

GM: Nonetheless, in *Radici*, you are interested in people within a landscape. Perhaps the human presence is more attractive to you.

FV: My heightened interest in the human presence is something I derive from neo-realism. Yes, I believe it is exactly so. It is a constant in my work.

GM: For example, at a certain point, you said that, while a myth of the American landscape [not actually seen but rather created by our own vision] exists, a myth of landscape does not exist in Italy.

FV: I always had an admiration for Longanesi<sup>8</sup> and his extraordinary wit. He said: "I'm looking over the roofs of Rome. I clearly see how Corot ... would paint them. I really cannot see how I would paint them." Cinema educated us to see the American landscape. Now, a contribution that our Italian landscapists – like Ghirri – may have given is that of having shown a little bit of our landscape that, on the contrary, does not lend itself as a mythical space. If there is a difference between the Americans and us, it is in the fact that we have already annihilated and consumed the myths that give meaning to the space in which we live, whereas they are still able to perceive them. Do you agree?

GM: I'm not sure I do, but I would like to know if you think the myth of photography itself has been radically reframed by the newest digital developments. The history of photography is a story of constant overtaking, by cinema, by video, by television, and now by digital photography. And yet what you called the humble referentiality of a photograph is something that endures, like a fire's embers that still warm us, because we have not yet exhausted the mystery of the photogram. Benjamin comes to mind again, as he – in citing Moholy Nagy – stated that the analphabetism of the future will not be that of reading and writing but rather that of the photographic image. What is your take on this statement? Is it still a valid theory? Is a photographic education possible?

FV: Look at what is going on with cellular phones. You see people, whom you would never expect, crazily taking pictures at any moment. Once upon a time, as Pierre Bourdieu states, photography was used only in the most solemn moments of life: weddings, deaths, the last ploughing of the field, et cetera. First of all, there are clearly new trends in seeing. What modifies our own experience, more than the new digital technology, is the habit of being intimately familiar with hyperfast recording media. It is as if we were endowed with a supplementary sense, in addition to the five senses that have accompanied us since prehistory. These new technologies are certainly shapers of experience, but I don't believe that, with the development of these experiences, the old ways of experiencing reality will fade away. Probably the available energy remains constant: what changes is only the way in which we distribute it. If you are in jail, the mouse in your cell assumes an extraordinary importance, as you emotionally invest in it. If instead you are a zookeeper, to you elephants are no more strange than dogs. The important thing is that what we do could have a symbolic meaning. Things become invisible when they lose their symbolic charge. Single-point perspective became obsolete because its gaze, which organizes reality from one point of observation only, no longer made sense.

Nowadays, with smartphones, one can read the new generation barcodes – the Quik Response Code – which resemble mazes. This is a symptom for me of our moving away from the analogical, as well as of our getting acquainted with logical abstraction.

GM: Maybe this is a development that could lead us to radically reconfigure what we understand as photography.

FV: I don't know. All I can say is that it is a fact.

## NOTES

- 1 The essay was originally self-published as “Duchamp e l’occultamento del lavoro,” Modena, 1978, and as “Dream Idea; Ready-Made,” Modena, 1988. Translated by Sarah Patricia Hill and Giuliana Minghelli.
- 2 Originally published in *Giornale di Fotologia. Speciale Biennale 2* (June 1995). Translated by Sarah Patricia Hill and Giuliana Minghelli.
- 3 Translated by Sarah Patricia Hill and Giuliana Minghelli.
- 4 Christopher Burden began to work in performance art in the early 1970s, carrying out a series of controversial performances in which the idea of personal danger as artistic expression was central. One of his most well-known acts is the 1971 performance piece *Shoot*, in which he was shot in his left arm by an assistant from a distance of about five meters.
- 5 Vito Acconci is an American performance and installation artist who used his own body as a subject for photography, film, and video as well as heavily confrontational performances. We might mention here his installation/performance *Seedbed* (15–29 January 1971). In *Seedbed*, Acconci lay hidden underneath a gallery-wide ramp installed at the Sonnabend Gallery, masturbating while voicing into a loudspeaker his fantasies about the visitors walking above him on the ramp.
- 6 Jan Dibbets is a Dutch conceptual artist. In 1994, he was commissioned by the Arago Association to create a memorial to the French astronomer François Arago. For his *Hommage à Arago*, Dibbets set 135 bronze medallions into the ground along the Paris Meridian between the north and south limits of Paris.
- 7 Germano Olivotto (1935–74) was a conceptual artist who made extensive use of photography. His work for the 1972 Biennale reflected his interest in exploring artistic affinities and analogies with science.
- 8 Leo Longanesi (1905–57) was a journalist, humorist, and editor and founder of many influential magazines like *L’Italiano* and *Omnibus* under Fascism and in the post-war period.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Bibliography

---

- Abruzzese, Alberto, and Carlo Grassi. “La fotografia.” In *Letteratura italiana: L’età contemporanea*, ed. Alberto Asor Rosa. Turin: Einaudi, 1989. 1177–222.
- Agnew, John A. *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Ajello, Epifanio. *Il racconto delle immagini: la fotografia nella modernità letteraria italiana*. Pisa: ETS, 2008.
- Albertazzi, Silvia, and Ferdinando Amigoni. *Guardare oltre. Letteratura, fotografia e altri territori*. Rome: Meltemi, 2008.
- Albonetti, Pietro. “Una linea per dieci testate. Appunti in margine ai giornali di Leo Longanesi (1920–1957).” *Longanesi e italiani*. Ed. Pietro Albonetti and Corrado Fanti. Faenza: Edit, 1997. 7–61.
- Alicata, Mario and Giuseppe De Santis. “Verità e poesia. Verga e il cinema italiano.” *Cinema* VI.127 (1941): 216–17.
- Alinari, Vittorio. *Il paesaggio italico nella “Divina Commedia.”* Florence: Giorgio e Piero Alinari, 1921.
- Allen, Beverly, and Mary Russo. “Introduction.” In *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*, ed. Beverly Allen and Mary Russo. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 1–19.
- Alù, Giorgia. “Uncanny Exposures: Mobility, Repetition and Desire in Front of a Camera.” *Cultural Studies Review* 19.2 (September 2013): 19–41.
- Alù, Giorgia, and Nancy Pedri, eds. *Enlightening Encounters: Interactions between Italian Narrative and Photography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.
- Alvaro, Corrado. *Vent’anni. Romanzo*. Milan: Bompiani, 1953.
- Amé, Francesca. “Le ultime due settimane di vita di Pasolini. In fotografia.” *Il Giornale*. 7 March 2011.
- Amiel, Vincent. *Estétique du montage*. Paris: Arman Colin, 2005.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Appadurai, Arjun, ed. *The Social Life of Things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Appunti di un cineasta. Fotografie di Luigi Comencini 1945–1948*. Milan: Fondazione Cineteca Italiana, 2008.
- Arrighi, Cletto. *Gli ultimi coriandoli*. Milan: Lampi di stampa, 2004.

- Ashplant, T.G., Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, eds. *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Asor Rosa, Alberto. *Genius italicum. Saggi sulla identità letteraria italiana nel corso del tempo*. Turin: Einaudi, 1997.
- “L’assassinio di Parigi.” *Tempo* 149 (1942): 19.
- Augugliaro, Fabio, Daniela Giudi, Andrea Jemolo, and Armando Manni. *Mettiamo tutto a fuoco! Manuale eversivo di fotografia*. Rome: Savelli, 1978.
- Aumont, Jaques. *L’oeil interminable. Cinéma et peinture*. Paris: Séguier, 1989.
- Azoury, Philippe. “Sur ‘certaines radiations encore loin d’être claires.’” *Trafic* 38 (Summer 2001): 50–62.
- Baetens, Jan. “Conceptual Limitations of our Reflection on Photography: The Question of Interdisciplinarity.” In *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins. London: Routledge, 2007. 53–73.
- Baily, Samuel L. *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870 to 1914*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Bal, Mieke. *Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- “Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture.” *Journal of Visual Culture* 2.1 (2003): 5–32.
- Barthes, Roland. “The Photographic Message.” In *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag. London: Random House, [1982] 1993. 194–210.
- *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982.
  - *Camera Lucida*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1985.
- Bartoletti, Maria. “Memorialistica di guerra.” In *Storia letteraria d’Italia, Il Novecento*, vol. 1, ed. A. Balduino. Florence: Vallardi, 1981. 623–53.
- Basilico, Gabriele. *Architetture, città, visioni. Riflessioni sulla fotografia*. Ed. Andrea Lissoni. Milan: Mondadori, 2007.
- Basso Fossali, Pierluigi, and Maria Grazia Dondero. *Semiotica della fotografia. Investigazioni teoriche e pratiche d’analisi*. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2008.
- Batchen, Geoffrey. *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.
- Bazin, André. *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* Vol. 4. Paris: Les Édition du Cerf, 1962.
- *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 2. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
  - “The Ontology of the Photographic Image.” In *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg. New Haven, CT: Leete’s Island Books, 1980. 237–44.
- Bazzocchi, Marco. “Pasolini ritratto da Dino Pedriali.” *Doppiozero*. 14 June 2011.
- Beckman, Karen, and Jean Ma, eds. *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Bellezza, Dario. *Morte di Pasolini*. Milan: Mondadori, 1981.
- Belli, Gabriella, ed. *Depero Futurista, 1914–1948*. Rovereto: Litografia Stella, 2004.
- Bellour, Raymond. “Il retromondo/Retromondo.” In *Cinema Anni Vita. Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi*, ed. Paolo Mereghetti and Enrico Nosei. Milan: Il Castoro, 2000. 75–83.

- Belotti, Elena Gianini. *Pane amaro. Un immigrato italiano in America*. Milan: Rizzoli, 2006.
- Belpoliti, Marco. *L'occhio di Calvino*. Turin: Einaudi, 1996.
- *La foto di Moro*. Rome: Nottetempo, 2008.
  - *Pasolini in salsa piccante*. Parma: Guanda, 2010.
  - *Da quella prigione. Moro, Warhol e le Brigate Rosse*. Parma: Guanda, 2012.
- Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. “Preface.” In *Entering the Frame: Cinema and History in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi*, ed. Robert Lumley. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011. xv–xix.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Trans. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Tiedemann, 1999.
  - “A Short History of Photography” [1931]. *Screen* 13.5 (1972): 5–26.
  - *Opere di Walter Benjamin*. Ed. Giorgio Agamben. Turin: Einaudi, 1982–93.
  - *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*. 4 Vols. Ed. Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1996–2003.
  - “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version.” In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Vol. 3: 1935–8, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002. 101–33.
  - “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version.” In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Vol. 4: 1938–40, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003. 251–83.
  - “Little History of Photography.” In *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility*, ed. Michael Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Levin. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008. 274–98.
- Bentivoglio, Mirella, and Franca Zoccoli. *The Women Artists of Italian Futurism: Almost Lost to History*. New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1997.
- Berengo Gardin, Piero. “Intervista a Alberto Lattuada.” *Progresso Fotografico* (July–August 1980): 52.
- Berger, John. *About Looking*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- Bernardi, Sandro. “Prigionieri del paesaggio: sfondi e volti di Ossessione.” *Bianco & Nero* (March–April 1999): 40–57.
- Bertelli, Carlo. “La fedeltà incostante.” In *Storia d'Italia. Annali 2. L'immagine fotografica 1845–1945*, ed. Carlo Bertelli and Giulio Bollati. Turin: Einaudi, 1979: 57–198.
- Bertone, Giorgio. *Lo sguardo escluso. L'idea di paesaggio nella letteratura occidentale*. Novara: Interlinea, 2000.
- Bindi, Letizia. *Bandiere, antenne, campanili: comunità immaginate nello specchio dei media*. Rome: Meltemi, 2005.
- Boccioni, Umberto. *Gli scritti editi e inediti*. Ed. Zeno Birolli. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971.
- Boito, Camillo. *Storielle vane*. Ed. Marziano Guglielminetti. Rome: Silva, 1971.
- *Gite di un artista*. Rome: De Luca edizioni d'arte, 1990.
- Bollati, Giulio. “Note su Storia e Fotografia.” In *Storia d'Italia. Annali 2. L'immagine Fotografica*, vol. 1, ed. Carlo Bertelli and Giulio Bollati. Turin: Einaudi, 1979. 5–55.
- “L'italiano.” *L'italiano. Il carattere nazionale come storia e come invenzione*. Turin:

- Einaudi, 1983 [first edition of the text in *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 1. Turin: Einaudi, 1972]. 34–123.
- “Premessa.” *L’italiano. Il carattere nazionale come storia e come invenzione*. Turin: Einaudi, 1983. vii–xxii.
  - “La prosa morale e civile.” In *Manuale di letteratura italiana*, vol. 3, ed. Costanzo di Girolamo and Franco Brioschi. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1993. 650–708.
  - *Giacomo Leopardi e la letteratura italiana*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1996 [originally published as the introduction to Giacomo Leopardi, *Crestomazia. La prosa*. Turin: Einaudi, 1968].
- Bolognesi, Kitti, and Giovanna Calvenzi, eds. *Federico Patellani. Fotografie per i Giornali*. Udine: Art&, 1995.
- Bondavalli, Simona. “Charming the Cobra with a Ballpoint Pen: Liminality and Spectacular Authorship in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s Interviews.” *MLN* 122.1 (2007): 24–45.
- Bonerandi, Enrico. “Sì, quel giorno era in via De Amicis ma la sua condanna fu spropositata.” *La Repubblica* (27 August 2007): 14–15.
- Bonesio, Luisa. *Paesaggio, identità e comunità tra locale e globale*. Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2007.
- Bonetti, Maria Francesca, and Monica Maffioli. *L’Italia d’argento, 1839–1859: Storia del dagherrotipo in Italia*. Florence: Alinari, 2003.
- Boni, Gessica, Loretta Righetti, and Daniela Savoia, eds. *Immagini e Documenti della Grande Guerra*. Cesena: Società editrice “il Ponte Vecchio,” 2000.
- Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*. Cambridge: Polity Press, [1965] 1990.
- *Un art moyen: Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1967.
- Bracco, Barbara. *Memoria e identità dell’Italia della Grande Guerra: L’Ufficio Storiografico della Mobilizzazione (1916–1926)*. Milan: Unicopli, 2002.
- Brady, Emily. *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003.
- Bragaglia, Anton Giulio. *Fotodinamismo Futurista*. Turin: Einaudi, 1970.
- Braun, Marta. *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992.
- Breton, André. “As in a Wood.” In *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*, ed. Paul Hammond. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991. 80–5.
- Brilli, Attilio. *Il Viaggio in Italia: Storia di una grande tradizione culturale dal XVI al XIX secolo*. Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 1987.
- *Quando viaggiare era un’arte. Il romanzo del Grand Tour*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995.
- Bronzini, Giovanni Battista. *I “Canti popolari toscani” di N. Tommaseo*. Lecce: Milella, 1985.
- *Intellettuali e poesia popolare nella Sicilia dell’Ottocento*. Palermo: Sellerio, 1991.
- Brunetta, Gian Piero. “La Guerra Vicina.” In *Il Cinematografo al Campo: L’Arma Nuova nel Primo Conflitto Mondiale*, ed. Renzo Renzi. Ancona: Transeuropa, 1993. 11–24.
- Bryant, Martha, ed. *Photo-Textualities: Reading Photographs and Literature*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996.

- Burgin, Viktor. *Thinking Photography*. London: Macmillan, 1982.
- Burke, Frank. "Federico Fellini: Realism/Representation/Signification." In *Federico Fellini: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Marguerite R. Waller and Frank Burke. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. 26–46.
- Burke, Peter. *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. London: Reaktion, 2001.
- Buzard, James. *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Caffarena, Fabio. *Lettere dalla Grande Guerra. Scritture del quotidiano, monumenti della memoria, fonti per la storia. Il caso italiano*. Milan: Unicopli, 2005.
- Callegari, Giuliana and Nuccio Lodato, eds. *Leggere Visconti*. Pavia: Amministrazione Provinciale, 1976.
- Calvenzi, Giovanna. "Il paesaggio come necessità." *Modena per la fotografia. L'idea di paesaggio nella fotografia italiana dal 1850 ad oggi*. Milan: Silvana editore, 2003. 118–19.
- ed. *ITALIA. Ritratto di un paese in sessant'anni di fotografia*. Rome: Contrasto, 2003.
- Calvenzi, Giovanna, and Maddalena d'Alfonso, eds. *Ereditare il paesaggio*. Milan: Electa, 2008. 14–22.
- Calvino, Italo. *Marcovaldo; ovvero, Le stagioni in città*. Turin: Einaudi, 1963.
- "The Adventure of a Photographer." *Difficult Loves*. Trans. William Weaver, Archibald Colquhoun, and Peggy Wright. London: Harcourt Brace, 1984. 220–35.
- "L'avventura di un fotografo." In *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2, ed. Claudio Milanini and Bruno Falchetto. Milan: Mondadori, 1991. 1097–109.
- *Palomar*. Milan: Mondadori, 1992.
- "La follia del mirino." In *Saggi: 1945–1985*, 1st ed., ed. M. Barenghi. Milan: Mondadori, 1995. 2217–20.
- Campany, David. *Photography and Cinema*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008.
- Campbell, Neil, and Alfredo Cramerotti, eds. *Photocinema: The Creative Edges of Photography and Film*. Chicago: Intellect, 2013.
- Campbell, Timothy. "Marinetti, Marconista: The Futurist Manifestos and the Emergence of Wireless Writing." In *Broadcasting Modernism*, ed. Debra Rae Cohen, Michael Coyle, and Jane Lewty. Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 2009. 111–36.
- Cangini, Ottorino. *Album fotografico del fronte*. Courtesy of Alberto Pedroli.
- Capuana, Luigi. *La Sicilia e il brigantaggio*. Rome: L. Perelli, 1892. Harvard Risorgimento Preservation Microfilm Project. Project 2b; 29126.
- *Gli "ismi" contemporanei (verismo, simbolismo, idealismo, cosmopolitismo) ed altri saggi di critica letteraria ed artistica*. Catania: N. Giannotta, 1898.
- *Scritti critici*. Ed. Ermanno Scuderi. Catania, N. Giannotta, 1972.
- Carpi, Umberto. *Letteratura e società nella Toscana del Risorgimento. Gli intellettuali dell'Antologia*. Bari: De Donato, 1974.
- Cartier-Bresson, Henri. *The Decisive Moment*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952.
- Cattaneo, Carlo. "Sulle scoperte lucigrafiche di Daguerre e Niepce; estratto del Rapporto del sig. Arago." *Il Politecnico*. Milan. June 1839.
- "Vita di Dante" di Cesare Balbo." *Politecnico*. April 1839.

- Ceccarelli, Filippo. "Dentro l'immaginario del perfetto terrorista." *Diario di Repubblica*. 5 October 2007.
- Celant, Germano. "Futurism and the Occult." *Artforum* 19.5 (1981): 36–42.
- Celati, Gianni. "Verso la foce (Reportage per un amico fotografo)." In *Viaggio in Italia*, ed. Luigi Ghirri et al. Alessandria: Il Quadrante, 1984. 20–35.
- "Viaggio in Italia con venti fotografi, vent'anni dopo." In *Racconti dal paesaggio, 1984–2004: a vent'anni da 'Viaggio in Italia'*, ed. Roberta Valtorta. Milan: Lupetti, 2004. 74–86.
- Cesaretti, Enrico. "Back to the Future: Temporal Ambivalences in F.T. Marinetti's Writings." In *Italian Modernism: Italian Culture between Decadentism and Avant-Garde*, ed. Luca Somigli and Mario Moroni. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. 243–66.
- Ceserani, Remo. "L'impatto della tecnica fotografica su alcuni procedimenti dell'immaginario letterario contemporaneo." *L'Asino d'oro. Letteratura e fotografia* 5.9 (1994): 53–64.
- *L'occhio della Medusa. Letteratura e fotografia*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2011.
- Cherchi Usai, Paolo. *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Chiarini, Luigi. "Il Tissé italiano." *Cinema Nuovo* (15 December 1953): 376–8.
- Choate, Mark I. *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Cigliana, Simona. *Futurismo esoterico: contributi per una storia dell'irrazionalismo italiano tra Otto e Novecento*. Rome: La Fenice, 1996.
- Civirani, Osvaldo. *Un fotografo a Cinecittà*. Milan: Gremese, 1995.
- Clarke, Graham. "Introduction." In *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke. London: Reaktion Books, 1992. 1–5.
- "Public Faces, Private Lives: August Sander and the Social Typology of the Portrait Photograph." In *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke. London: Reaktion Books, 1992. 71–93.
- *The Photograph*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Cocchiali, Giuseppe. *Popolo e letteratura in Italia*. Turin: Einaudi, 1959.
- Colombo, Andrea. "La fine della Prima Repubblica e la profezia di Aldo Moro." *Liberazione*. 9 May 2008.
- Comando Supremo dell'Esercito Italiano. "Norme del Comando Supremo Italiano per i corrispondenti di guerra." In *Il Cinematografo al campo. L'arma nuova nel primo conflitto mondiale*, ed. Renzo Renzi. Ancona: Transeuropa, 1993. 142–8.
- Cortellessa, Andrea. "La Guerra Lontana." In *Le notti chiare erano tutte un'alba. Antologia dei poeti italiani nella prima guerra mondiale*, ed. Andrea Cortellessa. Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 1998. 9–60.
- Corti, Paola. *Emigranti e immigrati nelle rappresentazioni di fotografi e fotogiornalisti*. Foligno: Editoriale Umbra, 2010.
- Costantini, Paolo, and Italo Zannier, eds. *Cultura fotografica in Italia: Antologia di testi sulla fotografia, 1839–1949*. Milan: F. Angeli, 1985.
- Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990.

- Crispolti, Enrico, and Maurizio Scudiero, eds. *Balla Depero. Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo*. Modena: Fonte d'Abisso, [1915] 1989.
- Curcio, Renato. *A viso aperto: Interview by Mario Scialoja*. Milan: Mondadori, 1993.
- Curtis, David. *Experimental Cinema: A Fifty-Year Evolution*. New York: Delta Book, 1971.
- D'Amico De Carvalho, Caterina, ed. *Album Visconti*. Milan: Sonzogno, 1978.
- D'Angelo, Paolo. "Estetica ambientale." *Dizionario dell'ambiente*. Ed. Giuseppe Gamba and Giuliano Martignetti. Milan: Isedi, 1995. 308–11.
- *L'estetica italiana del Novecento*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1997.
  - *Estetica della natura. Bellezza naturale, paesaggio, arte ambientale*. Rome: Laterza, 2001.
  - "Introduzione." In *Estetica e paesaggio*, ed. Paolo D'Angelo. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009. 7–38.
- D'Autilia, Gabriele, ed. *Dizionario della fotografia*. Turin: Einaudi, 2008.
- Daguerre, Louis Jacques Mandé. *An Historical & Descriptive Account of the Various Processes of the Daguerreotype & the Diorama*. Ed. Beaumont Newhall. New York: Winter House, 1971.
- Dal Pane, Eugenio, ed. *Tapum! Immagini della Grande Guerra tra mito e realtà (Fondo Fotografico Orsini)*. Faenza: Edit Faenza, 1991.
- Daney, Serge. "The Screen of Fantasy (Bazin and Animals)." In *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Film*, trans. Mark A. Cohen, ed. Ivone Margulies. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. 33–40.
- Darwin, Charles. *L'espressione dei sentimenti nell'uomo e negli animali*. Turin: Unione Tipografico Editrice, 1878.
- Davenport, Alma. *The History of Photography: An Overview*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1999.
- De Amicis, Edmondo. *Costantinopoli*. 2 Vols. Milan: Treves, [1877] 1921.
- *Cuore*. Milan: Treves, 1886.
- De Berti, Raffaele, and Irene Piazzoni, eds. *Forme e modelli del rotocalco italiano fra fascismo e guerra*. Milan: Istituto Editoriale Universitario, 2009.
- De Gubernatis, Angelo. *Rivista delle tradizioni popolari italiane*. Rome: Forzani, 1893.
- De Maria, Luciano, ed. *Teoria e invenzione futurista*. Milan: Mondadori, 1968.
- De Roberto, Federico. *Romanzi, novelle e saggi*. Ed. Carlo A. Madrignani. Milano: A. Mondadori, 1984.
- De Santi, Gualtiero. *Vittorio De Sica*. Milan: Il Castoro, 2008.
- Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Red and Black, 1977.
- Del Buono, Oreste. "Alberto Mondadori inseagna: chi ha Tempo non aspetti Life." *Tuttolibri*. 26 August 1995.
- Delbello, Piero. "La cartolina nella Prima Guerra Mondiale." In *L'Arma della Persuasione, Parole ed Immagini di Propaganda nella Grande Guerra*, ed. Maria Masau Dan and Donatella Porcedda. Gorizia: Edizioni della Laguna, 1991. 289–303.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *L'Image-Temps*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985.
- *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- Depero, Fortunato. "Note autobiografiche ed elogio a Rosetta." *Fortunato Depero Pittore*. Trento: Edizioni Saturnia, 1953. 9–23.

- “Nozze clandestine.” *Pestavo anch’io sul palcoscenico dei ribelli. Antologia degli scritti letterari*. Cucilibri edizioni: Parma, 1992. 313–14.
- Di Bello, Patrizia, Colette Wilson, and Shamoona Zamir, eds. *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond*. London: Tauris, 2012.
- Di Marino, Bruno. *Pose in movimento: Fotografia e cinema*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2009.
- Di Monte, Michele. “Del paesaggio.” *Rivista di estetica* 29.2 (2005): 3–6.
- Di Stefano, John. “Picturing Pasolini: Notes from a Filmmaker’s Scrapbook.” *Art Journal* 56.2 (1997): 18–23.
- Disdéri, André A.E. *L’Art de la Photographie*. Paris: Disdéri, 1862.
- Dolci, Fabrizio, and Olivier Janz, eds. *Non omnis moriar. Gli opuscoli di necrologio per i nella Grande Guerra*. Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2003.
- Dolfi, Anna, ed. *Letteratura e fotografia II*. Rome: Bulzoni, 2005.
- Doumanis, Nicholas. *Inventing the Nation: Italy*. London: Arnold, 2001.
- Dubois, Philippe. *L’atto fotografico*. Ed. Bernardo Valli. Urbino: Quattro venti, [1983; 1990] 1996.
- Eco, Umberto. *Apocalittici e integrati*. Milan: Bompiani, 1973.
- *Faith in Fakes: Essays*. Trans. William Weaver. London: Secker and Warburg, 1986.
- “A Photograph.” In *Faith in Fakes: Essays*, trans. William Weaver. London: Secker and Warburg, 1986. 213–17
- *Sette anni di desiderio*. Milan: Bompiani, 2000.
- Eliot, T.S. “The Waste Land.” *The Waste Land and Other Poems*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962.
- Ellero, Umberto. *La fotografia nelle funzioni di polizia e processuali*. Milan: Società Editrice Libraria, 1908.
- Ellero, Roberto, Michele Gottardi, A. Marzo and Norma Dalla Chiara. *Aldó. Tra cinema e fotografia*. Venice: Comune di Venezia, 1987.
- Evans, Walker, and James Agee. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941.
- Fabbri, Paolo, and Tiziana Migliore. “La sovversione nel mirino.” *Storia di una foto. Milano, via De Amicis, 14 maggio 1977*. Ed. Sergio Bianchi. Rome: DeriveApprodi, 2011. 136–41.
- Fabi, Lucio. “La guerra nel mirino.” *Storia e dossier*. May 1992: 56–60.
- *La guerra in salotto: miti monumenti memoria quotidiano della Grande Guerra*. Ed. Lucio Fabi. Udine: Gaspari, 1999.
- “La fotografia nel conflitto.” *Provincia Treviso*. n.d. <http://fast.provincia.treviso.it/Engine/RAServePG.php/P/264710230300/M/251110230300/T/Numer-21-22-Dicembre-2002-Dossier-Per-una-tutela-del-patrimonio-fotografico-sulla-Grande-Guerra>. Accessed 23 May 2014.
- Fabiani, Francesca, ed. *Atlante italiano 007. Rischio paesaggio. Ritratto dell’Italia che cambia*. Milan: Electa, 2007.
- Faenza, Roberto, ed. *Senza chiedere permesso. Come rivoluzionare l’informazione*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1973.
- Faeta, Francesco. *Strategie dell’occhio: saggi di etnografia visiva*. Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2003.

- Fagiolo dell'Arco, Maurizio. *Omaggio a Balla*. Rome: Bulzoni, 1967.
- “Moderna magia.” *Fotodinamismo Futurista. Anton Giulio Bragaglia*. Turin: Einaudi, 1970. 195–205.
  - *Depero*. Milan: Electa, 1988.
  - *Giacomo Balla 1895–1911 Verso il futurismo*. Venice: Marsilio, 1998.
- Fano, Giulio. *Un fisiologo intorno al mondo; Impressioni di viaggio*. Milan: F. Treves, 1899.
- “Fanterie della risaia.” *Tempo* 8 (1939): 12.
- Farassino, Alberto, ed. *Neorealismo. Cinema Italiano 1945–1949*. Turin: E.D.T., 1989.
- “Cataloghi e profumi.” In *Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi*, ed. Sergio Toffetti. Turin: hopefulmonster, 1992. 25–27.
- Farinotti, Luisella. “Memoria di copertura. Il cinema di Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi come catalogo dell’orrore della storia.” In *Memoria e immagini*, ed. Barbara Grespi. Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2009. 49–66.
- Favari, Dottor “L’illustrazione fotografica dell’Italia pel T.C.C.I.” *Il dilettante di fotografia*. Milan. July 1899.
- Favarro, Adriano. “La Fotoceramica.” *Provincia Treviso*. 14 June 2011. <http://fast.provincia.treviso.it/Engine/RAServePG.php/P/264710230300/M/251110230300/T/Numero-21-22-Dicembre-2002-Dossier-Per-una-tutela-del-patrimonio-fotografico-sulla-Grande-Guerra>. Accessed 24 May 2014.
- Ferrarotti, Franco. *Dal documento alla testimonianza. La fotografia nelle scienze sociali*. Naples: Liguori, 1974.
- Fiasco, Maurizio. “La simbiosi ambigua. Il neofascismo, i movimenti e la strategia delle stragi.” In *Ideologie, movimenti, terrorismo*, ed. Raimondo Catanzaro. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990. 153–89.
- Finnegan, Cara A. *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003. 168–219.
- Fiorentino, Giovanni. *L’occhio che uccide. La fotografia e la guerra: immaginario, tortura, orrori*. Rome: Meltemi, 2004.
- Flaiano, Ennio. *The Via Veneto Papers*. Trans. John Satriano. Malboro, VT: Marlboro Press, 1992.
- Flores, Marcello. “La grande guerra dei contadini.” *L’Unità*. 4 December 1995. 5.
- Fogazzaro, Antonio. *Dell’avvenire del romanzo in Italia; discorso*. Venice: G. Burato, 1872.
- Fogu, Claudio. *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Foot, John. *Italy’s Divided Memory*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Ford, Colin, and Karl Steinhort, eds. *You Press the Button We Do the Rest: The Bird of Snapshot Photography*. London: Dirk Nbishen Publishing, 1988.
- Forgacs, David. “The Making and Unmaking of Neorealism in Post-War Italy.” In *The Culture of Reconstruction*, ed. Nicholas Hewitt. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989. 51–66.
- *Rome Open City*. London: BFI, 2000.
  - “Photography and the Denarrativization of Cinematic Practice.” In *Between Still and Moving Images: Photography and Cinema in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Laurent Guido and Olivier Lugon. New Barnet, Herts: John Libbey Publishing, 2012. 245–60.
- Forgacs, David, and Peter Gundel. *Cultura di massa e società italiana 1936–1954*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007.

- Fornet-Betancourt, Raul, et al. "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984." Trans. J.D. Gauthier. *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 12.2–3 (1987): 112–31.
- Fortier, Anne-Marie. *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*. Oxford: Berg, 2000.
- Fossati, Vittore. "Due foto di viaggio." In *Racconti dal paesaggio, 1984–2004: A vent'anni da 'Viaggio in Italia'*, ed. Roberta Valtorta. Milan: Lupetti, 2004. 150–1.
- Fossati, Vittore, and Giorgio Messori. *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre*. Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2007.
- Franceschini, Alberto (with Pier Vittorio Buffa and Franco Giustolisi). *Mara, Renato e io. Storia dei fondatori delle BR*. Milan: Mondadori, 1988.
- Franchetti, Leopoldo. *Condizioni economiche ed amministrative delle province napoletane: Abruzzi e Molise – Calabrie e Basilicata / appunti di viaggio di Leopoldo Franchetti. La mezzeria in Toscana / per Sidney Sonnino*. Florence: Gazzetta d'Italia, 1875.
- Franchetti, Leopoldo, and Sidney Sonnino. *La Sicilia nel 1876*. Florence: G. Barbera, 1877.
- Franzina, Emilio. "Il tempo libero della guerra. Case del soldato e postriboli militari." In *La Grande Guerra, esperienza, memoria, immagini*, ed. Camillo Leoni and Diego Zadra. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986. 161–230.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. Trans. James Strachey. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.
- Friedrich, Ernst. *Krieg dem Kriege War against War Guerre à la Guerre Oorlog aan den Oorlog*. Berlin: Internationales haus, 1924.
- Frongia, Antonello. "Il piombo e l'argento." *Exibart.onpaper* 44 (November/December 2007): 35.
- Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Futurismo 1909–2009: Velocità+Arte+Azione*. Milan: Skira, 2009.
- Gabaccia, Donna R. *Italy's Many Diasporas*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Galbiati, Marisa, Piero Pozzi, and Roberto Signorini, eds. *Fotografia e paesaggio*. Milan: Guerini, 1996.
- Garra Agosta, Giovanni. *Verga fotografo*. Catania: Giuseppe Maimone Editore, 1991.
- Gasparini, Laura. "Note sulle tecniche." In *Luigi Ghirri*, ed. Massimo Mussini. Milan: Motta, 2001. 70–2.
- "Profilo biografico." In *Luigi Ghirri*, ed. Massimo Mussini. Milan: Motta, 2001. 50–67.
- Gentile, Dino, and Peppino Ortoleva. "Album di gruppo." In *Sapere la strada. Percorsi e mestieri dei biellesi nel mondo*, ed. Peppino Ortoleva. Milan: Electa, 1986. 35–48.
- Ghirri, Luigi. *Atlante*. Milan: Charta, [1973] 1999.
- *Kodachrome*. Modena: Punto e Virgola, 1978.
  - *Lezioni di fotografia*. Ed. Giulio Bizzarri and Paolo Barbaro. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2010.
  - *Niente di antico sotto il sole. Scritti e immagini per un'autobiografia*. Ed. Paolo Costantini and Giovanni Chiaramonte. Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1997.
  - *Paesaggio italiano, Quaderni di Lotus*. Milan: Electa, 1989.
  - "Postfazione." *Prospettiva. Fotografie di architettura in Europa*. Reggio Emilia: Comune di Reggio Emilia, 1990. 33–9.

- “Voyages en Russie. Autour des avant-gardes.” *Trafic* 33 (Spring 2005): 39–49.
- Ghirri, Luigi, Gianni Leone, and Enzo Velati, eds. *Viaggio in Italia*. Alessandria: Il Quadrante, 1984.
- Gianikian, Yervant, and Angela Ricci Lucchi. “*La nostra camera analitica/Our Analytical Camera*.” In *Cinema anni vita: Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi*, ed. Paolo Mereghetti and Enrico Nosei. Milan: Il Castoro, 2000. 32–58.
- *Karagoez – Catalogo 9.5*. Ed. Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi, and Sergio Toffetti. Turin: hopefulmonster, 1992.
- Gibelli, Antonio. “‘Fatemi un po’ sapere …’ Scrittura e fotografia nella corrispondenza degli emigranti liguri.” In *La via delle Americhe: L’emigrazione ligure tra evento e racconto*, ed. Luca Borzani and Antonio Gibelli. Genoa: Sagep, 1989. 87–94.
- “Nefaste meraviglie. Grande Guerra e apoteosi della modernità.” In *Storia d’Italia. Annali 18. Guerra e pace*. Turin: Einaudi, 2002. 549–89.
- *Il popolo bambino: Infanzia e nazione dalla Grande Guerra a Salò*. Turin: Einaudi, 2005.
- Gilardi, Ando. *Wanted! Storia, tecnica ed estetica della fotografia criminale, segnaletica e giudiziaria*. Milan: Mazzotta, 1978.
- “Creatività e informazione fotografica.” *Storia dell’arte italiana* III, vol. 2. II. Illustrazione fotografica. Turin: Einaudi, 1981. 547–86.
- Gioberti, Vincenzo. *Del Primato morale e civile degli italiani*. [1843] Vol. 1. Capolago: Tipografia Elvetica, 1946.
- Giusa, Antonio, and Manuela Astore. *Oltre l’oceano una nuova frontiera*. Udine: Forum, 2008.
- Gobetti, Piero. “Il futurismo e la meccanica.” *Energie nuove* (15–31 January 1919): 86–9.
- Goffman, Erving. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New Brunswick: Transaction, [1967] 2005.
- Goglia, Luigi. *Storia fotografica dell’Impero fascista*. Bari: Laterza, 1985.
- Gold, David L. “English paparazzo < Italian paparazzo = Commonization of the Charactonym Paparazzo (in Federico Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita*)?” *Neophilologus* 85.1 (2011): 111–19.
- Gotor, Miguel. *Il memoriale della Repubblica. Gli scritti di Aldo Moro dalla prigione e l’anatomia del potere italiano*. Turin: Einaudi, 2011.
- Grandi, Aldo. *La generazione degli anni perduti. Storie di Potere Operaio*. Turin: Einaudi, 2003.
- Grespi, Barbara. “L’influenza della fotografia americana sul neorealismo cinematografico italiano.” In *The Modern Image: Intersections of Photography, Cinema and Literature in Italian Culture, Cinema*, ed. Giuliana Minghelli. Special issue, *L’anello che non tiene* 20–1.1–2 (Spring–Fall 2008–9): 87–117.
- Grifero, Tonino. “Paesaggi e atmosfere. Ontologia ed esperienza estetica della natura.” *Rivista di estetica* 29.2 (2005): 7–40.
- Guadagnini, Walter, and Filippo Maggia, eds. *Fotografia e arte in Italia 1968–1998*. Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1998.
- Gualtieri, Elena, ed. *Paul Strand Cesare Zavattini. Lettere e immagini*. Bologna: Bora, 2005.
- Guerrieri, Walter. “Opere incongrue e fotografia: note a margine di una ricerca.” *Paesaggi dissonanti. Fotografia e opere incongrue: una ricerca per la Legge Regionale 16/2002*. Ed. Piero Orlandi. Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2003. 21–2.

- Guidelli, Giorgio. *Operazione Peci. Storia di un sequestro mediatico*. Urbino: Quattroventi, 2005.
- Guido, Laurent, and Olivier Lugon, eds. *Between Still and Moving Images: Photography and Cinema in the Twentieth Century*. New Barnet, Herts: John Libbey Publishing, 2012.
- Gunning, Tom. "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator." In *Viewing Positions*, ed. Linda Williams. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995. 114–33.
- Hall, Stuart. "Reconstruction Work: Images of Post-war Black Settlement." In *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography*, ed. Jo Spence and Patricia Holland. London: Virago, 1991. 152–64.
- . "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Diaspora and Visual Culture. Representing Africans and Jews*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff. London: Routledge, 2000. 21–33.
- Hannavy, John, ed. *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*. Vol. 1. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Hansen, Bratu Miriam. *Cinema and Experience: Sigmund Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.
- Hatton, Timothy J., and Jeffrey G. Williamson, eds. *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Henisch, Heinz K., and Bridget A. Henisch. *The Photographic Experience 1839–1914: Images and Attitudes*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- Hill, Sarah Patricia. "Family Photography, Filial Texts: Re-Writing the Family Album in Works by Lalla Romano and Dacia Maraini." In *The Modern Image: Intersections of Photography, Cinema and Literature in Italian Culture*, Cinema, ed. Giuliana Minghelli. Special issue, *L'anello che non tiene* 20–1.1–2 (Spring–Fall 2008–9): 87–117.
- . "Landscape, Writing, and Photography." *Deep South* 2.1 (1996). <http://www.otago.ac.nz/DeepSouth/vol2no1/sally.html>. Accessed 19 July 2011.
- . "Texts as Photographs, Photographs as Texts: Lalla Romano and the Photographic Image." *Italian Culture* 24–5 (2006–7): 45–62.
- . "La morte e la memoria: Pasolini e la fotografia." *Locus Solus* (2009): 119–49.
- Hill, Sarah Patricia, and Dino Pedriali. Unpublished Interview. Rome. 28 May 2008.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Hoerder, Dirk. *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Holland, Patricia. "'Sweet it is to Scan ...': Personal Photographs and Popular Photography." In *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Liz Wells. London: Routledge, 2004. 114–58.
- Homberger, Eric. "Immigration: Saying the Unsayable." *History in Focus* 11. <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/homberger.html#22>. Accessed 19 March 2010.
- hooks, bell. "The Oppositional Gaze." In *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones London: Routledge, 2003. 94–105.
- Horstkotte, Silke, and Nancy Pedri, eds. "Photography in Fiction." *Poetics Today* 29.1 (2008): 1–29.
- Hunter, Jefferson. *Image and Word: The Interaction of Twentieth-Century Photographs and Texts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1989.

- Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Insolera, Italo. *Roma fascista nelle fotografie dell'Istituto Luce*. 1st ed. Rome: Editori riuniti; Istituto Luce, 2001.
- Isnenghi, Mario. *Il mito della Grande Guerra*. Bari: Laterza, 1970.
- Jussim, Estelle. "From the Studio to the Snapshot: An Immigrant Photographer of the 1920s." *History of Photography* 1.3 (1977): 183–99.
- Kapor, Vladimir. *Local Colour: A Travelling Concept*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009.
- Kezich, Tullio. *Federico Fellini: His Life and Work*. London: Macmillan, 2007.
- Koestenbaum, Wayne. "Shooting Stars." *Artforum International* 36.3 (1997): 9.
- Kotz, Liz. *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.
- Kozloff, Max. *The Theatre of the Face: Portrait Photography since 1900*. London: Phaidon, 2007.
- Krauss, Rosalind. "Notes on the Index." 3–4 October 1977: 8.
- Kroes, Rob. *Them and Us: Questions of Citizenship in a Globalizing World*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
- Laboratorio di Comunicazione Militante. *L'arma dell'immagine. Esperimenti di animazione sulla comunicazione visiva*. Milan: Mazzotta, 1977.
- Lacaille, Frédéric, and Anthony Petiteau, eds. *Photographies de Poilus. Soldats Photographés au cœur de la Grande Guerre, Collections Photographiques du Musée de l'Armée*. Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2004.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious." In *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Routledge, 1989. 323–61.
- Lalvani, Suren. "Photography, Epistemology and the Body." *Cultural Studies* 7.3 (1993): 439–64.
- Landy, Marcia. *Stardom, Italian Style: Screen Performance and Personality in Italian Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.
- Lares: Società di etnografia italiana*. Rome: Ermanno Loescher, 1912–1915.
- Lazzaro, Claudia and Roger J. Crum. *Donatello among The Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Le Maitre, Barbara. *Entre film et photographie. Essai sur l'empreinte*. Saint Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2004.
- Lenman, Robin. *Oxford Companion to the Photograph*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Leonardi, Nicoletta, ed. *Feedback: scritti su e di Franco Vaccari*. Milan: Postmedia Books, 2007.
- . *Fotografia e materialità in Italia. Franco Vaccari, Mario Cresci, Guido Guidi, Luigi Ghirri*. Milan: Postmedia Books, 2013.
- Leonelli, Laura. "Il ritrovamento di Aldo Moro nelle foto inedite di Gianni Giansanti." *Il Sole 24 ore*. 1 March 2008.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. "Time and the Other." In *The Lévinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989. 37–58.

- Linkman, Audrey. *The Victorians: Photographic Portraits*. London: Tauris Parke Books, 1993.
- Lischi, Sandra. *Visioni elettroniche. L'oltre del cinema e l'arte del video*. Rome: Fondazione Scuola Nazionale di Cinema, 2001.
- Lista, Giovanni. *I futuristi e la fotografia. Creazione fotografica e immagine quotidiana*. Modena: Edizioni Panini, 1986.
- . *Futurism and Photography*. London: Merrel Publishers, 2001.
- . *Balla. La modernità futurista*. Milan: Skira, 2008.
- Lolla, Maria Grazia. "The Modern Image of Antiquity: Archeological Photography and the Evacuation of the Past." In *The Modern Image: Intersections of Photography, Cinema and Literature in Italian Culture, Cinema*, ed. Giuliana Minghelli. Special issue, *L'anello che non tiene* 20–1.1–2 (Spring–Fall 2008–9): 32–58.
- Lombroso, Cesare. *L'uomo delinquente*. Milan: Hoepli, 1876.
- Loria, Lamberto. *Caltagirone; cenni etnografici, preceduti da uno scritto di Pasquale Villari*. Florence: Tipografia Galileiana, 1907.
- Lucas, Uliano, ed. *Storia d'Italia. Annali 20. L'immagine fotografica 1945–2000*. Turin: Einaudi, 2004.
- Lucas, Uliano, and Agliani, Tatiana. "L'Immagine Fotografica 1945–2000." In *Storia d'Italia. Annali 20*, ed. Uliano Lucas. Turin: Einaudi, 2004. 3–53.
- Luginbühl, Sirio, ed. *Cinema Underground Oggi*. Padua: Editore Images 70 Padova, 1973.
- Lugon, Olivier. *Le style documentaire. D'August Sander à Walker Evans 1920–1945*. Paris: Éditions Macula, 2001.
- Lumley, Robert. *Entering the Frame: Cinema and History in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011.
- . *Dentro al fotogramma. Il cinema di Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi*. Milan: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 2013.
- Luzi, Mario. "Acciambellato in quella sconcia stiva." In *Per Aldo Moro*, ed. Italo Mancini. Vicenza: La Locusta, 1996. 5.
- Luzzatto, Sergio. *L'immagine del duce: Mussolini nelle fotografie dell'Istituto Luce*. Rome: Editori riuniti; Istituto Luce, 2001.
- Luzzi, Joseph. *Romantic Europe and the Ghost of Italy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Macdonald, Scott. "Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi (su *Dal Polo all'equatore*)/Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi (on *From the Pole to the Equator*).” In *Cinema anni vita: Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi*, ed. Paolo Mereghetti and Enrico Nosei. Milan: Il Castoro, 2000. 13–31.
- MacDougall, David. *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Maffioli, Monica. *Storia del dagherrotipo in Italia*. Florence: Fratelli Alinari, 2003.
- Maggiori, Roberto. "Sguardi d'artista sul pianeta terra." *Il Manifesto*. 28 July 2008.
- Magnetti, Daniela, and Maurizio Scudiero, eds. *Depero Futurista*. Milan: Electra Editore, 2004.
- Magri, Maurizio. *Viaggio in Italia. I fotografi vent'anni dopo*. Milan: Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea/Lupetti Editori di Comunicazione, DVD, 2004.
- Malaparte, Curzio. *Viva Caporetto! La rivolta dei santi maledetti*. Florence: Vallecchi, 1995.

- Mancini, Onofrio. *Uomo soldato nella Grande Guerra*. Exhibit in Ravenna, Palazzo del Municipio, 28 October–5 November 2000. Ravenna: Tipografia moderna, 2000.
- Manning, Samuel. *Italian Pictures 1878*. London: Religious Tracts Society, 1878.
- Mantegazza, Paolo. *Un viaggio in Lapponia. Coll'amico Stephen Sommier*. Milan: G. Brigola, 1881.
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *Monoplane du Pape: Roman Politique en vers libres*. Paris: Sansot, 1912.
- “Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo.” In *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano de Maria. Milan: Mondadori, [1909] 1968. 7–13.
  - “Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista.” In *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano de Maria. Milan: Mondadori, [1912] 1968. 40–8.
  - “Distruzione della sintassi. Immaginazione senza fili. Parole in libertà.” In *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano de Maria. Milan: Mondadori, [1913] 1968. 57–70.
  - “La nuova religione-morale della velocità.” In *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano de Maria. Milan: Mondadori, [1916] 1968. 111–18.
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso, and Tato. “La fotografia futurista.” In *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano de Maria. Milan: Mondadori, [1930] 1968. 167–9.
- Marini, Giovanna. “La musica/Music” In *Cinema anni vita: Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi*, ed. Paolo Mereghetti and Enrico Nosei. Milan: Il Castoro, 2000. 115–18.
- Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Marra, Claudio. *Fotografia e pittura nel Novecento. Una storia “senza combattimento.”* Milan: Mondadori, 1999.
- *Forse in una fotografia. Teorie e poetiche fino al digitale*. Bologna, CLUEB, 2002.
  - *Le idee della fotografia. La riflessione teorica dagli anni 60 a oggi*. Milan: Mondadori, 2001.
  - *Pensare la fotografia: teorie dominanti dagli anni sessanta ad oggi*. Bologna: Zanichelli, 1992.
- Marsh, Anne. *The Darkroom: Photography and the Theatre of Desire*. Melbourne: Macmillan, 2003.
- Matitti, Flavia. “Balla e la teosofia.” *Giacomo Balla 1895–1911 Verso il futurismo*. Venice: Marsilio, 1998. 41–45.
- Mazzoni, Cristina. “Capital City: Rome (1870–2010).” Special issue of *Annali d’Italianistica* (2010) 28.
- Mazzucco, Melania. “La camera oscura della fantasia.” In *Letteratura e fotografia*, ed. Anna Dolfi. Bulzoni: Rome, 2005. 21–32.
- McQuire, Scott. *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998.
- Melloni, Macedonio. “Relazione intorno al dagherrotipo.” Read to the Regia Accademia delle Scienze di Napoli on 12 November 1839.
- Meregalli, Carlo. *Grande Guerra 15–18. Dal crollo alla gloria*. Bassano del Grappa: Ghedina & Tassotti, 1996.
- Mereghetti, Paolo, and Enrico Nosei, eds. *Cinema anni vita. Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi*. Milan: Il Castoro, 2000.

- Mereghetti, Paolo, and Federico Rossin. "Il magazzino della Storia. Incontro con Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi." *Lo straniero* 110–11 (August–September 2009): 119–27.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge, 1962.
- Messori, Giorgio. "Il mio incontro con Viaggio in Italia." In *Racconti dal paesaggio, 1984–2004: A vent'anni da 'Viaggio in Italia'*, ed. Roberta Valtorta. Milan: Lupetti, 2004. 102–5.
- Micciché, Lino. *Visconti e il Neorealismo*. Venice: Marsilio, 1990.
- ed. *Sciuscià di Vittorio De Sica. Letture, documenti, testimonianze*. Turin: Lindau, 1994
- ed. *La Terra Trema. Analisi di un capolavoro*. Turin: Lindau, 1996.
- Migliore, Tiziana. "Sono, si dice, un altro." In *Le polaroid di Moro*, ed. Sergio Bianchi and Raffaella Perna. Rome: deriveApprodi, 2012. 126–36.
- Mignemi, Adolfo, ed. *L'Italia s'è desta. Propaganda politica e mezzi di comunicazione di massa fra fascismo e democrazia*. Turin: Gruppo Abele, 1995.
- *Lo sguardo e l'immagine. La fotografia come documento storico*. Turin: Bollati e Boringhieri, 2003.
- Milan, Mariella. "Ma lei, scusi, come farà a bordo? Arnaldo Ferraguti illustrator per casa Treves." *Arnaldo Ferraguti, 1862–1925: Tra pittura e letteratura alla fine di un secolo*. Ed. Sergio Rebora. Cinisello Balsamo. Milan: Silvana, 2006. 45–66.
- "Minatori di Carbonia." *Tempo* 1 (1939) 14–15.
- Minghelli, Giuliana. "Introduction." In *The Modern Image: Intersections of Photography, Cinema and Literature in Italian Culture, Cinema*, ed. Giuliana Minghelli. Special issue, *L'anello che non tiene* 20–1.1–2 (Spring–Fall 2008–9): 9–29.
- "L'occhio di Verga. La pratica fotografica nel Verismo italiano." In *The Modern Image: Intersections of Photography, Cinema and Literature in Italian Culture, Cinema*, ed. Giuliana Minghelli. Special issue, *L'anello che non tiene* 20–1.1–2 (Spring–Fall 2008–9): 59–81.
- Miraglia, Marina. *Culture fotografiche e società a Torino 1839–1911*. Turin: Allemandi, 1990.
- "Giorgio Sommer's Italian Journey. Between Tradition and the Popular Image." *History of Photography* 20.1 (Spring 1996): 41–8.
- "Note per una storia della fotografia italiana (1839–1911)." *Storia dell'arte italiana* III, vol. 2. II Illustrazione fotografica. Turin: Einaudi, 1981.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Misasi, Nicola. *Racconti calabresi*. Naples: Morano, 1881.
- Mitchell, J.T. "What Do Pictures Really Want?" *October* 77 (1996): 71–82.
- Mochi, Aldobrandino. "Il primo congresso di etnografia italiana." *Lares* 1 (1912): 25–38.
- Mollino, Carlo. *Il messaggio della camera oscura*. Turin: Chiantore, 1949.
- Monelli, Paolo. *Le scarpe al sole*. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1955.
- Moneti, Guglielmo. "Visconti dalla Resistenza a *La terra trema*: Lo spettacolo della realtà." *Storia del cinema italiano* 7 [1945/1948], ed. Callisto Cosulich. Venice: Marsilio, 2003. 128–42.
- Montandon, Alan, ed. *Iconotextes*. Paris: CRCD Clermont-Ferrand, Ophrys, [1990] 2002.

- Moore, Rachel. *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Mormorio, Diego. *Il Risorgimento 1848–1870*. Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1998.
- Mosino, Franco. “Preistoria di paparazzo.” *Lingua nostra* 29 (1968): 90.
- Mozzi, Giulio, and Dario Voltolini. *Sotto i cieli d’Italia*. Milan: Sironi, 2004.
- Mulvey, Laura. *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*. London: Reaktion Books, 2006.
- Musée d’Orsay. *Voir l’Italie et mourir: Photographie et peinture dans l’Italie du XIX siècle*. Paris: Musée d’Orsay/Skira Flammarion, 2009.
- Mussini, Massimo. “Luigi Ghirri. Attraverso la fotografia.” In *Luigi Ghirri*, ed. Massimo Mussini. Milan: Motta, 2001. 9–49.
- “Luigi Ghirri. Fotografie 1970–1992.” [http://www.frameonline.it.Fuoricampo\\_Ghirri.htm](http://www.frameonline.it.Fuoricampo_Ghirri.htm). Accessed June 2012.
- Mutti, Roberto. *Giovanni Verga: Scrittore fotografo*. Milan: De Agostini, 2004.
- Myers, F.R. “Introduction: the Empire of Things.” In *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, ed. F.R. Myers. Oxford: James Currey, 2001. 3–61.
- Nardelli, Matilde. “Blow-Up and the Plurality of Photography.” In *Antonioni: Centenary Essays*, ed. John David Rhodes and Laura Rascaroli. London, BFI, 2011. 185–205.
- Neera. *Lydia*. Ed. Paola Azzolini and Gian Luca Baio. Lecco: Periplo, 1997.
- Negri, Ada. *Le solitarie*. Milan: Treves, 1917.
- Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli, 1980.
- Oksiloff, Assenka. *Picturing the Primitive: Visual Culture, Ethnography, and Early German Cinema*. London, Palgrave, 2001.
- Ortoleva, Peppino. “Il mito del documentario. Ideologia e pratica della fotografia ‘sociale’ nella cultura americana degli anni Trenta.” *Movimento operaio e socialista* 9.3 (September–December) 1986: 395–408
- “Una fonte difficile. La fotografia e la storia dell’emigrazione.” *Altreitalie* 5 (1991): 120–31.
- “Una strana avanguardia.” In *Incontro al neorealismo*, ed. Luca Venzi. Rome: Edizioni Fondazione Ente dello Spettacolo, 2008. 177–88.
- Osborne, Peter D. *Travelling Light: Photography, Travel and Visual Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Ostuni, Maria Rosaria. “Belle foto!” In *C’era una volta la Merica: Immigrati piemontesi in Argentina*, ed. Maria J. Cerutti et al. Cuneo: L’arciere, 1990. 215–19.
- “Il paese dei Malavoglia.” *Tempo* 149 (1942): 25–7.
- Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Païni, Dominique, and Hibon, Danièle. “Marcher, monter.” *Trafic* 38 (Summer 2001): 66–7.
- Palazzeschi, Aldo. *Due Imperi Mancati*. Milan: Mondadori, 2000.
- Panvini, Guido. *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa. La violenza politica nell’Italia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta (1966–1975)*. Turin: Einaudi, 2009.
- Paoli, Silvia, ed. *Lamberto Vitali e la fotografia. Collezionismo, studi e ricerche*. Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2004.
- Parr, Martin, and Gerry Badger. *The Photobook: A History*. 2 Vols. London: Phaidon Press, 2004–6.

- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *La divina mimesis*. Turin: Einaudi, 1975.
- *Lettere luterane*. Turin: Einaudi, 1977.
  - *Romanzi e racconti*. Milan: Mondadori, 1998.
- Patellani, Federico. “Il giornalista nuova formula.” In *Fotografia. Prima rassegna dell’attività fotografica in Italia*, ed. Ermanno Scopinich. Milan: Domus, 1943. 134.
- Patriarca, Silvana. “Indolence and Regeneration: Tropes and Tensions of Risorgimento Patriotism.” *The American Historical Review* 110.2 (2005). <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/110.2/patriarca.html>. Accessed 7 September 2012.
- *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Pavese, Cesare. “L’influsso degli eventi.” *La letteratura americana e altri saggi*. Turin: Einaudi, 1965. 223.
- Pedriali, Dino. *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Foto di Dino Pedriali*. Milan: Johan e Levi, 2011.
- Pelizzari, Maria Antonella. *Photography and Italy*. London: Reaktion Books, 2010.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *The Futurist Moment: Avant-garde, Avant-Guerre and the Language of Rupture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Persegati, Nicola. *Il volto della medusa*. Udine: Gaspari, 2005.
- Petrarca, Francesco. *Canzoniere*. Turin: Einaudi, 1964.
- *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*. Trans. Robert M. Durling. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Phillips, Christopher. *Photography in the Modern Era: European documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989.
- Pinkus, Karen. *The Montesi Scandal: The Death of Wilma Montesi and the Birth of the Paparazzi in Fellini’s Rome*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Pirandello, Luigi. *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*. Florence: Giunti Editore, 1994.
- *Shoot! The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, Cinematograph Operator*. Trans. Charles Kenneth Scott-Moncrieff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Poggi, Christine. *Inventing Futurism: Art and the Politics of Artificial Optimism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Poole, Deborah. *Vision, Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Portelli, Alessandro. *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*. Madison: Univeristy of Wisconsin Press, 1997.
- Prando, Riccardo. *Varese in Grigioverde: Cronache della Grande Guerra 1915–1918*. Varese: Macchione, 1998.
- Puccini, Sandra. *L’Uomo e gli uomini: Scritti di antropologi italiani dell’Ottocento*. Rome: CISU, 1991.
- *L’itala gente dalle molte vite: Lamberto Loria e la mostra di etnografia italiana del 1911*. Rome: Meltemi, 2005.
- Puorto, Elvira. *Fotografia tra arte e storia: Il “Bollettino della società fotografica italiana 1899–1914”*. Naples: Guida, 1996.
- Quaglio, Antonio Enzo. “Ancora Paparazzo.” *Lingua nostra* 24 (1963): 90.
- Quaresima, Leonardo. “Ossessione. Il Teatro dei Rapporti.” In *Il Cinema di Luchino Visconti*, ed. Veronica Pravadelli. Bianco & Nero: Rome, 2000. 41.

- Quintavalle, Arturo Carlo. *Messa a fuoco: Studi sulla fotografia*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1983.
- *Muri di carta: Fotografia e paesaggio dopo le avanguardie*. Milan: Electa, 1993.
  - “Viaggio dentro le parole: conversazione con Luigi Ghirri.” *Muri di carta. Fotografia e paesaggio dopo le avanguardie*. Milan: Electa, 1993. 129–36.
  - “Viaggio in Italia, appunti.” In *Viaggio in Italia*, ed. Luigi Ghirri et al. Alessandria: Il Quadrante, 1984. 7–14.
  - *Viaggio dentro un antico labirinto*. Bergamo: D’Adamo, 1991.
- Quintavalle, Arturo Carlo, and Monica Maffioli, eds. *Fratelli Alinari fotografi in Firenze: 150 anni che illustrarono il mondo*. Florence: Alinari, 2003.
- Rabb, Jane M. *Literature and Photography: Interactions 1840–1990*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995.
- Raeburn, John. *A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- Raffaelli, Sergio. “Paparazzo da cognome a nome comune.” *Lingua Nostra* 22 (1961): 26–7.
- Rathbone, Belinda, and Walker Evans. *A Biography*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- Re, Lucia. “Futurist and the Feminine: New Perspectives.” *European Legacy: Toward New Perspectives*. 14 December 2009: 799–819.
- Rebora, Clemente, Gianni Mussini, and Vanni Scheiwiller, eds. *Le poesie*. Milan: Garzanti, 1994.
- Reeder, Warwick. “The Stereograph and the Album Portrait in Colonial Sydney 1859–62.” *History of Photography* 23.2 (1999): 181–91.
- Rees, A.L. *A History of Experimental Film and Video*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.
- “Regio Decreto concernente la formazione del catalogo delle cose d’interesse storico, archeologico e artistico,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia*, Rome, November 1907.
- Regnani, Gerardo. “Futurism and Photography: Between Scientific Inquiry and Aesthetic Imagination.” In *Futurism and the Technological Imagination*, ed. Günter Berghaus. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 177–200.
- Renan, Sheldon. *The Underground Film: An Introduction to Its Development in America*. London: Studio Vista, 1967.
- Renzi, Renzo, ed. *Il Neorealismo nel Fascismo*. Bologna: Compositori, 1984.
- *Visconti segreto*. Bari: Laterza, 1994
- Restivo, Angelo. *The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Ricciardi, Alessia. “The Spleen of Rome: Modernism in Fellini’s *La dolce vita*.” *Modernism/Modernity* 7.2 (2000): 201–19.
- Ricordi di Guerra. *Diario fotografico di un soldato al fronte*. Gorizia: Edizioni della Laguna, 1988 (album di un ignoto).
- Rigoli, Aurelio, and Annamaria Amitrano Savarese. *Costumi e popolo nel regno italico: Il “Thesaurus Bertarelli”*. Rome: Bulzoni editore, 1989.
- Rinaldi, Rinaldo. *L’irriconoscibile Pasolini*. Rovito: Marra, 1990.
- Riviello, Raffaele. *Ricordi e note su costumanze, vita e pregiudizi del popolo potentino*. Potenza: Garramone e Marchesiello, 1893.
- Rivoir, Silvana. “Il soldato fotografato e fotografo.” “La guerra rappresentata.” *Rivista di storia e critica della fotografia* 1.1 (October 1980): 10–31.

- Rizzante, Massimo. *Il geografo e il viaggiatore. Variazioni su Italo Calvino e Gianni Celati*. Fossombrone: Tipografia Metauro, 1993.
- Rodowick, D.N. *The Virtual Life of Film*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Rohdie, Sam. *Montage*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.
- . *The Passion of Pier Paolo Pasolini*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Roma Antologia Illustrata. Cronaca Artistica, Scientifica, Letteraria ed Industriale*. Rome. Anno 1. 1 May 1873.
- Rondolino, Gianni. “Cinema del dopoguerra: Uno sguardo d’insieme.” *Storia del Cinema Italiano* 7 [1945/1948], ed. Callisto Cosulich. Venice: Marsilio, 2003. 58–72.
- . *Luchino Visconti*. Turin: Utet, 2003.
- Rosoli, Gianfausto, ed. *Un secolo di emigrazione italiana 1876–1976*. Rome: Centro Studi Emigrazione, 1978.
- Rossaak, Eivind, ed. *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorhythms*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012.
- Rouillé, André. *L’Empire de la photographie: Photographie et pouvoir bourgeois, 1839–1870*. Paris: Le Sycomore, 1982.
- Russell, Catherine. *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Russo, Antonella. *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana*. Turin: Einaudi, 2011.
- Salomone-Marino, Salvatore. *Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari*. Vol. 1. 1882. <http://books.google.com/books?vid=HARVARD:32044058279902&printsec=titlepage#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Accessed 23 May 2014.
- . *Costumi e usanze dei contadini in Sicilia*. Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, [1897] 1984.
- Salsa, Carlo. *Trincee. Confidenze di un sante*. Milan: Mursia, 1982.
- Sartini Blum, Cinzia. *The Other Modernism: F.T. Marinetti Futurist Fiction of Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Sayad, Abdelmalek. *The Suffering of the Immigrant*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.
- Sbarbaro, Camillo. *Trucioli*. Florence: Vallecchi, 1920.
- “Scatti di vita quotidiana.” *L’Espresso* (24 February 2011): 64.
- Schaeffer, Jean-Marie. *L’immagine precaria: Sul dispositivo fotografico*. Trans. Marco Andreani and Roberto Signorini. Bologna: Clueb, 2006.
- Schnapps, Jeffrey. “Propeller Talk.” *Modernism/Modernity* 1.3 (1994): 153–78.
- Schwabsky, Barry. “A Million Little Pictures.” *The Nation* (1 June 2009): 27–30.
- Schwartz, Joan M., and James R. Ryan, eds. *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2003.
- Schwarz, Angelo. “La retorica del realismo fotografico.” “La guerra rappresentata.” *Rivista di storia e critica della fotografia* 1.1 (October 1980): 3–9.
- Scopinich, Ermanno, ed. *Fotografia. Prima Rassegna dell’Attività Fotografica in Italia*. Milan: Domus, 1943.
- Scudiero, Maurizio. *Depero istruzioni per l’uso*. Trento: L’editore, 1992.
- . *Fortunato Depero Opere*. Trento: Luigi Reverdito Editore, 1987.
- . *Futurismi postali*. Ravenna: Longo, 1986.
- Scudiero, Maurizio, and Daniela Magnetti. *Depero futurista*. Milan: Electa, 2004.
- Secchiaroli, Tazio, and Diego Mormorio. *Dalla dolce vita ai miti del set*. Milan: F. Motta, 1998.

- Sega, Maria Teresa, and Maria Magotti. "L'immagine coloniale nella stampa illustrata del bel paese 1882–1913." *Fotografia e colonialismo/2. Rivista di storia e critica della fotografia* 4.5 (1983).
- Sekula, Allan. "The Body and the Archive." *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989. 342–88.
- Sella, Venanzio Giuseppe. *Plico del fotografo: Trattato teorico-pratico di fotografia*. Turin: Paravia, 1863.
- Sergi, Giuseppe. *Evoluzione umana individuale e sociale*. Turin: Bocca, 1904.
- Settimelli, Wladimiro. "La guerra a dispense." "La guerra rappresentata." *Rivista di storia e critica della fotografia* 1.1 (October 1980): 68–73.
- Shaviro, Stephen. *The Cinematic Body*. Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 2006.
- Signorini, Roberto. *Arte del fotografico. I confini della fotografia e la riflessione teorica degli ultimi vent'anni*. Pistoia: Editrice C.R.T. (Coscienza Realtà testimonianza), 2001.
- "Fotografia come arte visiva; alcuni temi della riflessione teorica." In *Fotografia e arte in Italia 1968–1998*, ed. Walter Guadagnini and Filippo Maggia. Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1998. 145–57.
  - "Nuovo paesaggio italiano: un clima culturale." In *Fotografia e paesaggio*, ed. Marisa Galbiati, Piero Pozzi, and Roberto Signorini. Milan: Guerini, 1996. 11–33.
- Simmel, Georg. "Metropolis and Mental Life." In *On Individuality and Social Forms; Selected Writings*, ed. Donald Levine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971. 324–38.
- Siti, Walter. "Pasolini's 'Second Victory.'" *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Patrick Allen Rumble and Bart Testa. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. 56–77.
- Skoller, Jeffrey. *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Sobchack, Vivian. *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Società Fotografica Italiana. "Relazione sulla proposta pubblicazione fotografica. Tipi, usi e costumi del popolo italiano." *Bullettino mensile della Società Fotografica Italiana* 12.1. Florence, January 1900.
- Sontag, Susan. "Introduction." In *Walter Benjamin: One Way Street and Other Writings*. New York: Verso, 1985.
- *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977; Picador, 1977; Delta, 1978; Anchor Books Doubleday, 1990
  - *Regarding the Pain of Others*. London: Penguin Books, 2003.
  - *Under the Sign of Saturn*. New York: Vintage Books, [1972] 1980.
- Spunta, Marina. "Esplorazioni sulla via Emilia e dintorni – la fotografia italiana degli anni '80 in dialogo con la scrittura di paesaggio." In *The Modern Image: Intersections of Photography, Cinema and Literature in Italian Culture, Cinema*, ed. Giuliana Minghelli. Special issue, *L'anello che non tiene* 20–1.1–2 (Spring–Fall 2008–9): 157–87.
- "Fossati's and Messori's *Viaggio in un paesaggio terrestre*: An Imaginative Journey through Writing, Photography, Landscape and Painting." *Italian Studies* 66.1 (March 2011): 104–22.

- “Ghirri, Celati e lo ‘spazio di affezione.’” In *Spaesamenti padani: Studi culturali sull’Emilia-Romagna*, ed. Clarissa Clò. Monographic issue, *Il lettore di provincia* 123–4 (May–December 2006): 27–39.
  - “Il profilo delle nuvole: Ghirri’s Photography and the New Italian Landscape.” *Italian Studies* 61.1 (Spring 2006): 114–36.
  - “The New Italian Landscape: Between Ghirri’s Photography and Celati’s Fiction.” In *Translation Practices: Through Language to Culture*, ed. Ashley Chantler and Carla Dente. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 223–38.
- Stabile, Alberto. “Quella tragica foto di Moro.” *La Repubblica* (23 March 1978): 1–2.
- Starke, Mariana. *Travels in Europe: For the Use of Travellers on the Continent, Including the Island of Sicily, Where the Author Had Never Been Till the Year 1834: Including an Account of the Remains of Ancient Italy, and Also of the Roads Leading to Those Remains*. London: Murray, 1837.
- Steimatsky, Noa. “Choral: Visconti’s Dramaturgy of Nature.” In *Italian Locations: Inhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 79–116.
- Stewart-Steinberg, Suzanne. *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860–1920*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Stoppani, Antonio. *Il Bel Paese. 1875. Anastatic Print of the 1876 Edition*. Ed. Tipografia e Libreria Editrice Ditta Giacomo Agnelli. Pordenone: Edizioni Studio Tesi, 1994.
- Stott, William. *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Strand, Paul, and Cesare Zavattini. *Un paese*. Florence: Alinari, 1997.
- Strassler, Karen. *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Strauven, Wanda. *Marinetti e il cinema tra attrazione esperimentazione*. Udine: Campanotto Editore, 2006.
- Svevo, Italo. *La coscienza di Zeno, in Romanzi e “Continuazioni.”* Milan: Mondadori, 2004.
- Swinnen, Johan. “Signs that Trigger a Philosophical Response.” In *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins. London: Routledge, 2007. 286–99.
- Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Taramelli, Ennery. *Viaggio nell’Italia del Neorealismo*. Turin: SEI, 1995.
- Tellini, Gino. *L’invenzione della realtà: studi verghiani*. Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1993.
- Tentori, Tullio. *Per una storia del bisogno antropologico*. Rome: Ianua, 1983.
- Thomas, Jean-Jacques. “Collage/Space/Montage.” In *Collage*, ed. Jeanine Parisier Plotter. New York: New York Literary Forum, 1983. 79–102.
- Tisdall, Caroline. *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*. Ed. Christopher Phillips. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.
- Tobia, Bruno. “*Salve o popolo d’eroi –*: La monumentalità fascista nelle fotografie dell’Istituto Luce. Rome: Editori riuniti; Istituto Luce, 2002.
- Tobing Rony, Fatimah. *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and the Ethnographic Spectacle*. Durham, NJ: Duke University Press, 1996.

- Toffetti, Sergio, ed. *Yervant Gianikian, Angela Ricci Lucchi*. Turin: hopefulmonster, 1992.
- Tomassini, Luigi. "Gli Alinari e l'editoria fotografica in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento. Primi appunti per una ricerca." Part I, *AFT Rivista di storia e fotografia* 5 (1987): 59–71; Part II, *AFT* 6 (1987): 62–71.
- "Immagini della Grande Guerra tra pubblico e privato." Part I, *AFT Rivista di storia e fotografia* 22 (1995): 35–47; Part II, *AFT* 23 (1996): 39–49.
- Tonti, Aldo. *Odore di cinema*. Florence: Vallecchi, 1964.
- Tosco, Carlo. *Il paesaggio come storia*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007.
- Touring Club Italiano. *Attraverso l'Italia. Raccolta di 2000 fotografie di vedute, tesori d'arte e tipi popolari*. Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1902.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1990.
- Ungaretti, Giuseppe, and Leone Piccioni, eds. *Vita d'un uomo. Tutte le poesie*. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1992.
- Uva, Christian. *Il terrore corre sul video. Estetica della violenza dalle BR ad Al Qaeda*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2008.
- Vaccari, Franco. *Duchamp messo a nudo. Dal ready made alla finanza creativa*. Pistoia: Gli Ori, 2009.
- *Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico*. Turin: Einaudi, 2011.
  - *Le tracce*. Bologna: Sampietro Editore, 1966.
- Valtorta, Roberta. "Dilatazioni del paesaggio dilatazioni della fotografia." In *Fotografia e paesaggio*, ed. Marisa Galbiati, Piero Pozzi, and Roberto Signorini. Milan: Guerini, 1996. 97–104.
- "L'esperienza del paesaggio." In *ITALIA. Ritratto di un paese in sessant'anni di fotografia*, ed. Giovanna Calvenzi. Rome: Contrasto, 2003. 192–7.
  - "La fotografia dei luoghi come fotografia." *Volti della fotografia*. Milan: Skira, 2005. 127.
  - "Fotografia paesaggio istituzioni." In *Atlante italiano 007. Rischio paesaggio. Ritratto dell'Italia che cambia*, ed. F. Fabiani. Milan: Electa, 2007. 30–3.
  - *Pagine di fotografia italiana, 1900–1998*. Milan: Charta, 1998.
  - *Il pensiero dei fotografi. Un percorso nella storia della fotografia dalle origini a oggi*. Milan: Mondadori, 2008.
  - ed. *Racconti dal paesaggio, 1984–2004: A vent'anni da 'Viaggio in Italia'*. Milan: Lupetti, 2004.
  - "Sette domande sulla fotografia di paesaggio italiana." In *Ereditare il paesaggio*, ed. Giovanna Calvenzi and Maddalena d'Alfonso. Milan: Electa, 2008. 14–22.
  - *Volti della fotografia: scritti sulla trasformazione di un'arte contemporanea*. Milan: Skira, 2005.
- Valtorta, Roberta, Andrea Abati, and Achille Sacconi, eds. *Archivio dello spazio. Dieci anni di fotografia italiana sul territorio della Provincia di Milano*. Tavagnacco: Art&, 1987–97.
- Vangi, Michele. *Letteratura e fotografia*. Pasian di Prato: Campanotto Editore, 2005.
- Verdicchio, Pasquale. *Looters, Photographers, and Thieves: Aspects of Italian Photographic Culture in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011.
- Verga, Giovanni. *Carteggio Verga-Rod*. Ed. Giorgio Longo. Catania: Fondazione Verga, 2004.

- Veronesi, Giulia. "Walker Evans, American Photographs." *Corrente* (31 October 1939): 2.
- Viganò, Enrica, ed. *Neorealismo. La nuova immagine in Italia*. Milan: Admira Edizioni, 2006.
- Viganò, Lorenzo. "Fotografami qui, sarà uno scandalo. Pasolini tre giorni prima di morire." *Corriere della sera. Cultura* (13 March 2011): 41.
- Vitali, Lamberto. *Il Risorgimento nella fotografia*. Turin: Einaudi, 1979.
- Vittorini, Elio. *Americana*. Milan: Bompiani, 1941.
- . *I libri, la città, il mondo. Lettere (1933–1943)*. Turin: Einaudi, 1985.
- Wagner, Peter, ed. *Icons – Texts – Iconotext: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996.
- Wainwright, Loudon. *The Great American Magazine: An Insider History of Life*. New York: Knopf, 1986.
- Weber, Susanna, and Ferruccio Malandrini. "Fratelli Alinari in Florence." *History of Photography* 20.1 (Spring 1996): 49–56.
- Wells, Liz, ed. *The Photography Reader*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- . *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Wichard, Robin and Carol. *Victorian Cartes-de-Visite*. Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications, 1999.
- Williams, Linda. "Film Body: An Implantation of Perversions." In *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. 507–34.
- Winter, Jay. *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Wollen, Peter. "Fire and Ice." In *Cinematic*, ed. David Company. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.
- Zannier, Italo. "Cento anni di fotografia Touring." In *Fotografi del Touring Club Italiano*, ed. Elisabetta Porro. Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1991. 1–5.
- . *Fascismo 1922–1943: modi e tecniche di utilizzazione della fotografia al servizio dell'ideologia fascista*. Pordenone: Centro iniziative culturali Pordenone, Cataloghi Serie Saggistica, 1975.
- . *Storia della fotografia italiana*. Bari-Rome: Laterza, 1986.
- Zannier, Italo, et al., eds. *The Self and Its Double: A Century of Photographic Portraiture in Italy, 1895–1995*. Florence: Alinari, 2007.
- Zavattini, Cesare. "Quadernetto di Note." *Cinema* (25 March 1940): 172.
- . *Cultura fotografica in Italia: Antologia di testi sulla fotografia, 1839–1949*. Milan: F. Angeli, 1985.
- . "Prima durante dopo (soggetto cinematografico sul 'caso Moro')." In *Strane storie: Il cinema e i misteri d'Italia*, ed. Christian Uva. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011.