Ex Novo Journal of Archaeology

Volume 5, December 2020

Editorial Panel

Front and Back Cover Images
"Occasione mancata" (front) and "La torre" (back) courtesy of ©Daniele Simoni 2020.

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━━━━━━━━ CONTENTS ━━━━━━━━

Foreword

Editorial Board

Ex Novo Journal of Archaeology

The fifth volume of Ex Novo has the pleasure to host Flaminia Bartolini as guest editor for the special issue titled *Heritage in the Making. Dealing with Legacies of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*. This collection of peer-reviewed papers stems in part from the successful workshop held at McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge in December 2018 under the aegis of the DAAD-Cambridge Hub. The event gathered several international heritage experts and professionals from both Germany and Italy to explore the complexities of handling Heritage related to Fascism and National Socialism.

The selection of papers edited by Flaminia Bartolini contribute much to the debate on the shifting conditions of the reception of dictatorial regimes, and more specifically the fate of fascist material legacies from the aftermath of WWII to the present day. Over the last decade, critical heritage studies have highlighted the role of dictatorship in different historical and social realms. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and broadly military regimes of the twentieth century, have often been pivotal in the creation of consensus through propagandistic reinterpretation of the past. As Bartolini argues in her introduction to this special issue

"*the Fascist reuse of romanitas and Nazi Philo-Hellenism were not only a sign of cultural reception of the antiquities but were a key political tool to shape and glue together contemporary societies*".

Once the Nazi and Fascist regimes fell, their material legacies became subject to destruction, reinterpretation and memory re-work. Thus, heritage taint by regimes and produced by them has not only paid the consequences of the *damnatio memoriae* that usually follows a major political upheaval but keeps feeding an ongoing public debate. The case studies lined up in the following pages do testify to the relevance of such discussion across Italy and Germany.

The second part of this volume includes an additional contribution by Aydin Abar which keeps in with the broad theme of political reappropriation of the past lying at the core of Bartolini's collection of papers but strays away from their geographical focus by extending the analysis to the exploitation of Achaemenian material legacies in reinforcing nationalist narratives in nineteenth and twentieth century Iran.

Figure 1. Original artwork proposed by Agostino Sotgia for the cover of Ex Novo 2020.

The final section of this issue features an in-depth analysis by Enrico Giannichedda on the relationship between craft production and the development of language and storytelling skills. The recent book by historian Michele Cometa *Perchè le storie ci aiutano a vivere* provides the starting point for Giannichedda's insightful reflections.

Martina Revello Lami's conversation with the author of the front and back cover closes the 2020 issue. It is now an established tradition for Ex Novo to host great artworks, but this year we launched an open call to select original creations inspired to the theme of the volume. The visionary reinterpretation of rationalist architecture proposed by Daniele Simoni beat off the competition, and his paintings *Occasione mancata* and *La torre* became the impactful front and back-cover of Ex Novo 2020. Alongside walking us through his career path in the interview Daniele explains us how the works created for our journal paved the way to a new cycle in his artistic production targeted to the deconstruction of scale, style and symmetry, the three pillars underlying the modernist language pursued by Italian architects from the 1920s to the 1940s. In doing so, Simoni's work perfectly exemplifies the relevance of dealing with Fascist legacies also in contemporary aesthetics.

Part I

Heritage in the Making.
Dealing with the Legacies of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany

Guest Editor

Flaminia Bartolini

Introduction. Difficult Heritage and Its Making

Flaminia Bartolini

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Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, along with other twentieth-century authoritarian regimes, have often attempted to create consensus through propagandistic reinterpretations of the classical past. As recent scholarship has shown, the Fascist appropriation of *romanità* and Nazi philhellenism were not only conditioned by earlier cultural conceptions but were also a key political tool in motivating and mobilising citizens to fulfil the aims of the fascist state (Roche, Bartolini & Schmaltz 2019). Once Fascism and Nazism had fallen, the material legacies of both regimes then became objects of destruction, reinterpretation and memory work. Thus, the archaeological and architectural heritage of these regimes, now tainted by their ideology, has not only suffered the consequences of *damnatio memoriae* in the aftermath of regime change, but continues even today to inflame contemporary public debate.

This special issue represents the product of the second of two interdisciplinary workshops exploring these themes which was held at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, on 3 December 2019, organised by Flaminia Bartolini, the guest editor of the present issue of Ex Novo Journal of Archaeology, and generously funded by the Research Hub for German Studies/Forschungszentrum für Deutschland-Studien of Cambridge (DAAD-Cambridge Hub). The workshop brought together a group of international experts, including historians of Germany and Italy, classicists, archaeologists, and art historians, to explore the complex relationships between antiquity and materiality, both during and after Fascism and National Socialism.

Among the core issues raised by both the presentations and round-table debate, and the ensuing open discussion, is the effect that fascist material culture still has on societies, and the fact that the reuse of these legacies has been central in the construction of both post-Nazi and post-Fascist national identities. This contrasts with previous scholarship, which in the Italian case focused almost exclusively on the avant-garde, modernist dimensions of Fascist culture, while scholarship on National Socialism tended to emphasise the importance of the myth of the origin ideology. The crucial role played by the heritage professionals, heritage scholars and functionaries who drove much of this discourse has clearly formed a fruitful new sphere of enquiry; all in all, the complexities of the renegotiation of the legacies of both regimes were illuminated afresh. The presentations also successfully applied many of the tools of heritage theory – including critical theory, archaeological, artistic and architectural analysis – to the modern history context.

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The articles in this special issue examine the topics from a number of perspectives. Two paper focus on the complex reception of the after-life of material legacies of Fascism in Italy, with a synoptic paper by Flaminia Bartolini on 'Dealing with Heritage of the Dictatorship in Italy', and Susanna Arangio's work on Mussolini's iconography and the Susmel-Bargellini collection. More specific case studies on Fascist New Cities and Fascist concentration camps feature a paper by Davide Brugnatti and Giuseppe Muroni entitled 'Edmondo Rossoni and Tresigallo, an atypical case of a regime town', as well as a report from Marzia Luppi and Francesca Schintu on 'A difficult heritage. The experience of Fossoli Camp Foundation'.

The debate includes the material legacies of Nazism in Europe with a paper on 'The Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg – difficult heritage and open space' by Alexander Schmidt, followed by a case study from Dagmar Zadrazilova on 'Berlin Tempelhof: From multifaceted heritage site to creative industry hub?'.

From the special issue it emerged that heritage-making in post-dictatorial societies has been influenced by reactions to political and social change and has contributed to a discursive politicisation of previous regimes. Moreover, heritage sites (memorials, detention centres, sacred sites, or dictators' own properties) and museums connected to regime-change in Italy and in Germany were in dialogue with broader research in Europe and transnationally, the papers testifying to how challenged heritage professionals are when facing uncertainty and curating changes, and how little they have been trained to do so.

It also emerged how, in places of recent and past conflicts, the practice of *heritagization* has proven to be a contentious subject, with contrasting collective memories, often shifting, following a change of regime. As heritage sites have a central role in inscribing collective and individual memory in the construction of a coherent historical narrative about the past, when the prevailing political and social situations of divided societies tend to be unresolved due to the lack of a unifying narrative about the past, heritage becomes a political tool: they risk representing a 'favoured' narrative, watering down past violence with long-lasting consequences in contemporary societies.

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Collecting Mussolini: The Case of the Susmel–Bargellini Collection

Susanna Arangio

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Abstract

Heritage Studies has dealt with Italian Fascism in different ways but paying little attention to the movable items linked to the regime, such as paintings, sculptures and memorabilia. Over the last decade, private collections linked to the Mussolini iconography have emerged, owing to a renewed social acceptance of it and more items of *Mussoliniana* being readily available. Due to the reluctance of experts to confront this issue and the expansion of private museums in Italy, spontaneous initiatives have sprung up including a permanent exhibition of Mussolini iconography as part of the MAGI'900 Museum in Pieve di Cento, which consists of approximately 250 portraits of the Duce in different media. The nucleus of the original collection once belonged to the historian Duilio Susmel and was part of a large documentary collection put together during the 1960s and 1970s. Susmel hoped it would become a museum or a centre for Fascist studies, but ultimately it remained in his private villa near Florence until the 1990s. The archive is now split between Rome and Salò, and the *Mussoliniana* was purchased by Bargellini, who added busts, paintings and knick-knacks. Since 2009 it has been on display in a section of Bargellini's museum entitled *Arte del Ventennio*. Therefore, the Italian State tolerates its existence but sadly it is ignored by most experts, despite the study opportunities it offers.

Keywords: Mussolini, Susmel, Bargellini Collection, Museum

Introduction

For several years, Heritage Studies scholars have been considering the problematic heritage of Fascist-era architecture, its external and internal decorations – and the state of abandonment in which many of these find themselves – as well as the way they have been reused since the fall of the regime. While some restoration or enhancement work has been conducted (Billi & D'Agostino 2017; Carter & Martin 2017; Hökerberg 2017; Marcello 2019), the debate remains rather heated (Arthurs 2010, 2019; Bartolini 2019; Ben-Ghiat 2017; Carter & Martin 2019; Malone 2017; Storchi 2019).

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There has been much less attention paid to mobile artefacts pertaining to the Fascist era, such as the memorabilia, paintings and sculptures strictly linked to the regime's propaganda (Pieri 2015). The recent social acceptance of these works, and the easy availability of *Mussoliniana* online, has revived a type of collecting that is largely characterized by a strong devotional character, which many art historians and museum curators do not want to address. Therefore spontaneous, private initiatives readily available to the public, in which sugar-coated narratives of the former regime are perpetuated, can sometimes lead to genuine acts of exaltation: the extreme example of this is the *Casa dei ricordi* set up inside Villa Carpena, one of the Mussolini's residences not far from Predappio, where objects and documents are displayed in a way to rehabilitate the cult of the Duce (Casa dei ricordi 2019). In fact, the absence of a national documentation centre for the history of Fascism and a great expansion of private museums in Italy, often managed by non-professionals, involves the risks of private collectors renarrating national public histories through hagiographies based on personal opinions.

In this context, the Susmel–Bargellini collection has been part of the permanent exhibition at the MAGI'900 in Pieve di Cento since 2009 (Arangio 2018a, 2019; Petacco 2009). The MAGI'900 is a private museum founded by the entrepreneur Giulio Bargellini, housed in an old grain silo dating back to the 1930s. The building has enormous symbolic value for the local community and the agrarian history of the province of Bologna and was opened in 1999 under the name of *Museo d'arte delle generazioni italiane del '900*, hence the acronym "MAGI'900".

The Susmel–Bargellini collection is on the top floor of the museum and is given the generic name *Arte del Ventennio* on its website (MAGI'900 2019). It is a collection of 250 portraits of Mussolini in different media including sculpture, painting, drawing, mosaic, photography, printing and ceramic, as well as objects made in series such as coins, plaques and ashtrays, and other relics related to Fascist propaganda. The works reflect both 'mass' and 'high' culture and produced by both well- and lesser-known artists, such as artisans or amateurs who depicted the dictator's likeness during and after the Fascist period.
This paper offers a number of key points on the history of this collection and some reflections on its current exhibition.

Duilio Susmel and the Museum of Fascism project
The Susmel-Bargellini collection was born from the purchase of part of the collection that once belonged to Duilio Susmel, a journalist and historian of Fascism whose work had almost been forgotten. He was also a collector of books, documents, posters, memorabilia and artworks related to the history of Fascism and the Italian Social Republic – but above all to Mussolini. The collection was destined to give birth to a museum and a centre for the study of Fascism, but ultimately remained in the historian's house, constituting a de facto private archive available to anyone who requested it.

The iconographic material is therefore the corollary of a much larger documentary project, corresponding more or less to what an official referred to as a "Museum of Fascism", in

a report drafted by the Archival Office of Tuscany in 1984 (Borgia 1984). At the time, the collection was composed of 204 pieces stored in a special compartment on the ground floor of Susmel's home, which featured 81 artworks, 58 autographed photographs and 65 other documents. The works of art included

"oil or pastel paintings, drawings on paper and glass, mosaics, carved wooden tondi, ceramic tiles, woodcuts, watercolors, metal reliefs, tapestries, bronze medallions, lithographs, wooden and marble sculptures, wooden and marble busts, bronze tables as well as plaster casts, medals and coins, ornate casings, daggers, decorations, etc." (Borgia 1984).

Examining Susmel's personal correspondence, it was possible to partly retrace the history of the acquisitions that enabled the collection to come together, which cannot be separated from the events of Susmel's professional life as a historian and journalist. Duilio worked with his father Edoardo on the drafting of the *Opera Omnia*, a monumental collection of Mussolini's speeches, which he continued after his father's death in 1948 and subsequently published in 44 volumes, over the course of several years (Susmel & Susmel 1951–1980). The history of the collection is intimately bound up with the writing of these books: the extensive correspondence of the late 1940s and early 1950s shows that Duilio was constantly looking for documents to examine and possibly publish. He had already become relatively proficient at recognizing original documents signed by Mussolini and developed a familiarity with the market for this type of material. However, it seems that he did not yet have the economic means to expand his collection significantly, and it initially had to be composed primarily of what his father had collected during his lifetime. Thanks to the publication of a four-volume biography of Mussolini (Susmel & Pini 1953, 1954, 1955), Susmel greatly increased the quantity of documents purchased, adding magazines and photographs to the collection. His work as historian and journalist intensified and by the mid-1960s references to a "Fascist archive" housed in the Susmel home became increasingly frequent in his correspondence. The first trace of an effective desire to create a museum and centre for Fascist studies dates back to November 1964, from a dense correspondence with Don Giovanni Antonietti, who possessed a large archive of Fascist figures. Susmel spoke of a "Centre for the study of Fascism and Mussolini", for which he had "a project and very clear ideas" (Susmel to Antonietti, 12 November 1964, in BNCR: A.R.C. 20.71/3.10) in mind:

"With regard to my hopes for a "Study Centre", I must tell you first of all that founding it as an association (which is precisely what should be done), requires no authorization. Secondly, the "Centre" could initially be based here, with me, before moving elsewhere, possibly to Florence. As far as funding is concerned it seems to me that the problem relates to my library, my archives, my subsequent work and future commitments; my idea is as follows. The entirety of my stuff is now worth about 18 million, all of which should make up the constitutive nucleus, as it were – the core – that I would be willing to sell entirely to the "Centre", on the condition that I would be entitled to at least half the proceeds from the sale. I express myself thus not out of greed, but out of necessity and to ensure a minimum level of future security, because once the "Centre" is founded my work would be almost exclusively devoted to it, leaving me with limited opportunities to earn money. Naturally my work would always be free of charge. It would also be understood that thanks to the amount earned from the sale I would cover the initial costs. Of course, once

the Centre was founded I would approach certain Fascist friends who were able to donate – and with a fair chance of success, given that the "Centre" would already exist; it would be a fait accompli, *in other words. However, I think these friends could well donate even now, if they could identify an initial source of funds.*" (Susmel to Antonietti, 20 November 1964, in BNCR: A.R.C. 20.71/3.12).

This collaborative project fell through due to a disagreement over the legal form the museum should take, and Duilio decided to keep the archive at home, enriching it with drawings and prints depicting Mussolini. This new approach was connected to a book he was working on, *Un uomo chiamato Mussolini* (Susmel 1973), which was intended as a collector's item with a limited print run and two separate editions – both "luxury" and "extra luxury" – as well as several *ad personam* editions. He looked for artists to create appropriate illustrations,[1] but ultimately he used reproductions of artworks from the Fascist period,[2] including a woodcut by Carlo Guarnieri donated by the artist and now on show at the MAGI'900 (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Carlo Guarnieri, *Il Capo*, woodcut, 1925, cm 57x86, Museo MAGI'900, Pieve di Cento (image credits courtesy of Museo MAGI'900).

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[1] Susmel had also published another piece entitled *Dux* for the same publisher around the same time, which is now unobtainable. In the inventory of Susmel's personal archive (ASAT), the text "*Mussolini, profili, figure, ritratti*" is mentioned among his unpublished works (no publishing house is specified); it is likely that the requests for collaboration sent to certain artists by Susmel also refer to these two texts.

[2] It was not possible to trace the extra luxury and *ad personam* editions, so we do not know at the moment how they were illustrated.

It is a portrait of the Duce commissioned by the Fascist group "Edoardo Crespi" at the end of 1924 in 1000 copies of which the artist at the time kept 200, while most of them were destroyed (Guarnieri to Susmel, 8 November 1973, BNCR, A.R.C.20.74/15.1). It is therefore a rare work, also because Guarnieri interrupted his xylographer activity in 1928, on the death of his teacher Adolfo de Carolis. This portrait of Mussolini repeats the same pattern found in other works by the artist, who created several literary and historical figures immersed in a neo-Renaissance atmosphere, stylistically characterized by wavy and elegant features similar to those of Symbolism. The date of the March on Rome appears clearly in the book in the foreground.

A commentator of the time writes:

"*the left-hand rests on the date; the right hand clenched into a fist, commands. Bust erect under the black shirt, clear imperial face, steady penetrating eyes. Where does Man look? In front, above and beyond*" (Orsini G. 1926 quoted in Baldocchi 2009: 30),

The work was particularly appreciated by Susmel, according to whom the artist would have been able to capture the human aspect of Mussolini "*better than anyone else*" (Susmel to Guarnieri, 28 Dec 1973, BNCR A.R.C.20.74/15.), and is published in his book with the title *Il Capo* (Susmel 1973: 9).

Susmel collected documentation relating to missing works of art concerning Mussolini[3] and was also engaged in writing a piece about the Italian Social Republic of Salò, which he never published. At the same time, he was trying to sell his archive and library: he managed to sell just a small part of the archive to the State Archives in Rome in 1974, while the library, which consisted of over 9000 titles, was purchased by the Germanic Institute of Rome in 1976. However, he was never able to reach an agreement with the State Archives in Rome and the Archival Office of Tuscany regarding the sale of the whole archive. He also encountered problems with private individuals, as his main condition for the sale was that the archive should not be split into separate parts.

Although attempts to sell the archive did not go well, Susmel continued to buy memorabilia, works of art and medallions. Among the artefacts purchased at that time, it is interesting to mention a bust of Mussolini made by Pietro Canonica (Fig. 2): it is one of the seven bronze exemplars melted from a plaster bust made available by the sculptor's widow in 1980 (Susmel to Pillon, 6 July 1980, CSRSI: Archivio Susmel, 2.4, folder *Canonica*). It is a copy of the Mussolini bust displayed at the Canonica's museum from the 1991, when it was found inside a chest kept in a warehouse (Canonica Museum Library, data sheet C 515.), so at Susmel's time the bust was unknow. Its fusion in seven exemplars also suggests that there were six other buyers[4], revealing something about "*a still mostly*

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[3] The Susmel fund kept in the RSI study centre in Salò includes a series entitled *Artisti del regime fascista* which includes three folders, with a total of 246 files arranged in alphabetical order (CSRSI).
[4] According to the Susmel correspondence, one of them was Giorgio Pillon, the Susmel colleague that acted as an intermediary with the Canonica's widow.

unknown aspect of the history of collecting in Italy" (Pieri 2015: 236). This portrait of Mussolini dates back to 1926 and shows a humanized leader, close to contemporary portraits of aristocratic personalities portrayed by Canonica at that time: the Duce is in a suit and tie like any bourgeois worker, his face is concentrated and slightly contracted, while his eyes are turned towards an imaginary interlocutor.

Figure 2. Pietro Canonica, *Mussolini,* bronze, 1926, cm 43x60x33, Museo MAGI'900, Pieve di Cento (image credits courtesy of Museo MAGI'900).

Duilio Susmel died in 1984 and his archive was declared of historical interest. It was taken over by the Italian Ministry of Culture while the iconographic section was ignored by the Office of Fine Arts and sold to Giulio Bargellini, who claims to have bought the whole collection packaged in boxes, with no inventory attached[5]. Susmel's widow endeavored to

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[5] Personal conversation with Giulio Bargellini at the Museo Magi'900 in January 2015.

sell the archive throughout her life but did not want to compromise on the price; it was therefore only sold by her heirs and is now divided as follows: the archive relating to the Italian Social Republic is located in Salò, at the RSI Study Centre, while the personal archive, photographs and the Spampanato collection were purchased by the National Library of Rome (Christies 2019).

The Susmel-Bargellini Collection

After purchasing the Susmel collection, Giulio Bargellini continued to expand it but in a different way: while the historian's archival approach favoured a frenzied accumulation of testimonies concerning the former regime, Bargellini was a pure collector. The additions made by the entrepreneur are mostly identifiable by the busts portraying Mussolini, paintings and knick-knacks, while the Susmel collection was mostly composed of drawings, prints and photographs.

The number of futurist works in the collection has increased: the names of Renato Bertelli (Arangio 2018a: 151–152) and Thayaht (Arangio 2018a: 141–142) stand out both having now been re-evaluated and presented in various temporary exhibitions, as well as a rare painting made by the futurist painter Olga Biglieri, known under the name of Barbara (Petacco 2009, figs. p. 153). She was part of the Futurist movement between 1935, when she met the futurist group of Verona, and 1942, when her husband Ignazio Scurto was sent to war. Thanks to Marinetti, she exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1938 and from there she attended all the main exhibitions. The painting *Sintesi aeropittorica del Duce* was exhibited at the Venice Biennale of 1940, and it was defined by Marinetti as "plastically powerful"   (Marinetti 1940: 183). On the occasion of that biennial, a portrait competition was organized in which the representation of Mussolini was the pre-eminent subject; Barbara takes up the stylized silhouette of the 'helmeted head' of the *Dux* of Thayaht, inserting it within an aerial vision with dreamlike features.

Other paintings are of little artistic value and almost all are difficult to date; they are probably works that could be found in any type of public building, and one should not exclude the possibility that in some cases we are looking at modern creations made by non-professional artists.

Susmel also collected other 'relics' from the Fascist period, such us commemorative plaques or medals, along with a number of objects that apparently belonged to Mussolini (a microphone, inkwell and a paper stamp), to which Bargellini added a series of modern, kitsch knick-knacks such as coasters, foulards, ashtrays and small desktop busts. There are also several caricatures of Mussolini by Tono Zancagnaro in the collection, as if to compensate for the broadly devotional intent of the rest of the collection (Arangio 2018a: 146–149).

It is interesting to point out that, despite the fact that the museum contains several works made by well-known artists, as well as rare works made in series, nothing has been borrowed for the ever-increasing number of temporary exhibitions on Fascist-era art

which have been organized in Italy in recent years (Arangio 2018b). The collection is largely unknown to scholars and art curators, despite most of the works having been published in a paper catalogue (Petacco 2009) and viewable online on the museum's website (MAGI'900 12 Dec 2019). Even at the time of its opening the collection made little impact, and certainly nothing comparable to what happened on the occasion of the first exhibition of Mussolini iconography, inaugurated in the small town of Seravezza in 1997, which was the subject of a parliamentary debate (Oliviero 1997). Despite the provocative intentions of its title, the MAGI'900 'forbidden collection' (Petacco 2009) was mostly ignored and continues to be so for multiple reasons. Yet the peripheral character of the museum only partly justifies the disinterest of experts; the biggest problem is the clearly devotional scope of the collection, which comes across as a sort of private temple dedicated to the worship of the Duce, and from which scholars seek to distance themselves from.

However, this attitude precludes both the possibility of improving the museum and the opportunity to study rare works. In our opinion, several starting points for reflection and in-depth analysis are instead offered by the collection and they would be worthy of greater attention by scholars of various disciplines. In the field of historical-artistic studies, the presence of artworks that could complete the studies of some artists whose work during the regime remains vague cannot be ignored. From the point of view of the history of collecting, it reveals a hidden market that has nevertheless persisted throughout the post-war period to the present day. And besides, the devotional component opens up to multiple reflections, in particular about the marked gap between the achievements of historical researches and the collective memories, where a dangerous 'de-fascist' image of the regime and a widespread feeling of indulgence towards its leader remains. This last aspect has been politically exploited in the case of other controversial figures such as that of Stalin, who was in many ways rehabilitated in the era of Brezhnev's 'developed socialism'. Moreover,

"*around Moscow it is very easy to come across busts, statues, monuments and plaques dedicated to Lenin and the Communist leaders and it is interesting to note that there has been a policy aimed at the preservation of these symbols*" (Cucciolla 2020).

On the contrary in Italy the lack of sustained State research around the public material culture of Fascism and a popular rehabilitation of its leader encouraged by some far-right parties is favouring private initiatives such as that of Bargellini.

On the other hand, some of the MAGI'900 problems are common to those of other private cultural institutions in Italy. With this in mind, it is worth remembering the proliferation of private initiatives in the peninsula: according to an international census carried out in 2016 (Bouchara 2016), 19 private collectors decided to make their collections public and accessible by creating a museum, putting Italy in fifth place worldwide and second in Europe (Maggi 2016). Although this survey refers only to a small part of the collections currently present in Italy, focusing on those of contemporary art collected by living collectors, it is important to understand a trend that peaked between

2001 and 2011, a period in which private museums constituted a significant 69 percent of the total. This proliferation of private museums has not always been accompanied by adequate professionalism; the inherent risk of a museum founded by a living collector is that it may become an extension of their personality. This is one of the main problems of the museum in Pieve di Cento: although Giulio Bargellini has worked with art historians and curators since its foundation, there is no denying that the museum suffers from various problems that would be difficult to resolve without bypassing the will of its owner. Looking at the Mussolini iconography collection specifically, there are problems related to the lack of cataloguing of the works, in addition to museographic problems, insofar as the collection currently on display clearly reflects both the political faith of its owner and a lack of definite planning. Centered on the cult of the dictator's personality, the nature of the collection highlights important problems that only partially approach the solutions put forward by other museums that have portraits of the Duce.

At the Wolfsoniana in Genoa, for example, similar portraits are displayed in the context of other works of the period, above all in order to narrate the history of the art and culture of the time; similarly, their political and propagandistic meaning has been dealt with only in the context of temporary exhibitions organized outside the museum, or in publications (Fochessati & Franzone 2016). The breadth of the Genoese collection also allows for different exhibition formulas that would hardly be viable at the MAGI'900, which remains unique in both the Italian and international landscape.

Conclusion

When Susmel decided to keep his collection at home, he wrote:

"This sad communist Italy will never, ever recognize a "Centre for the Study of Mussolini and Fascism". To think otherwise would be to delude oneself into being able to achieve some kind of official recognition; it would mean not acknowledging the reality of things. […] What needs to be founded is a private association, a kind of private club or institute [...]. And perhaps in half a century it could be transformed into a "National Foundation": when there will be no memory of the caste that governs us today, in other words; when the hatred, resentment and passions will have entirely – or almost entirely – died away" (Susmel to Antonietti, 29 Nov1964, BNCR: A.R.C. 20.71/3.14).

Words like this have turned out to be anachronistic, and the situation is certainly different today. However, there is as yet no museum or centre for the study of Fascism in Italy, and a substantial part of the Susmel archives is hardly accessible. The National Library of Rome did not create a description of the documents but only a very long list, and the access rules to the collection of documents are very strict. In Salò the Susmel archive is described in detail but the library is only open two hours a week. Finally, the Bargellini collection is not what Susmel had hoped to achieve with his collection of Mussolini iconography: it has been decontextualized from the documentary material to which it was associated and is largely unknown or ignored.

One of the reasons for this is the generalized attitude of scholars and museum curators towards Fascist artefacts, which is often ambiguous and circumvents the problem of their difficult heritage. Both in recent modern art gallery shows and temporary exhibitions covering the period between the two world wars, the political message behind Fascist artefacts such as portraits of Mussolini is often discarded in favour of a more reassuring, formalistic reading; or, alternatively, the artworks are analyzed in the same way as any other historical document, putting aside their role in the history of art. In most cases the preference is to exhibit works that are already known or not iconic, such as those associated with the Futurist movement, while many others remain in museum depots, in ministry cellars or in private collections (Arangio 2018b). These circumstances partly reflect the Italian academic and museological situation, which is traditionally not inclined towards interdisciplinarity; as well as the tendency, still prevalent, towards a "vertical" study of twentieth century art history. This has led to the exclusion of artefacts considered to be of low quality, which are classified in a generic sub-category of 'propaganda art' and/or often dismissed as 'Fascist rubbish'.

We need to consider the Italians' controversial relationship with the Fascist legacy: although Fascism has been the subject of study by academics for decades, there is also a persistent, collective indulgence with regard to how the regime is remembered, one encouraged in particular by the Italian right-wing parties and press. Apparently, portraits of Mussolini remain a symbol for some far-right formations and we are not yet prepared to confront them dispassionately in Italy.

As a result, the Susmel-Bargellini collection currently exhibited at the Pieve di Cento museum remains tolerated by the Italian State at the same time as it is ignored by scholars. The hope would be for a reorganization of the current collection to weaken its devotional character, in favour of a more historical approach; that kind of work would make it possible to explore its potential for further study.

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Fascism on display: the afterlife of material legacies of the dictatorship

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Abstract

The year 2015 marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of World War II, a commemoration that prompted Italy to reconsider the complexity of the Fascist phenomenon and how the artistic creations and urbanism of the regime contributed to shaping city landscapes across the country. Fascist material legacies are an unequivocal presence in any Italian city, but the ways in which they have been preserved or not, reused or abandoned, provokes consideration of the complexities of the country's renegotiation of its Fascist past, shifting from iconoclasm to present-day heritage status. Heritage designation and the restoration of Fascist works of art and architecture have posed questions regarding selectivity in heritage and whether Italy has yet to come to terms with its Fascist past. This paper will look at how Italy's approach to Fascist heritage, which has recently been framed as 'difficult heritage' following Macdonald's work on Nazi Germany, is an expression of the conflicting narratives that surround any renegotiation of the Fascist past, and how some recent conservation projects and exhibition have failed to demonstrate reflexivity over Fascism. It will also deconstruct the role of restoration and the heritage practices of preservation and management and will question the link between conservation and changes of attitude regarding a 'difficult' past.

Contested legacies and heritage as a social construct: locating the field

This research focuses on the scholarly debate over Fascist heritage as 'difficult heritage' that has emerged in recent years among cultural historians and architectural and art historians which has framed the question around micro-histories of individual sites. What this article wishes to add to the debate is an analysis from the perspective of the social sciences around the material legacies of the regime, using case studies to take the discussion further. The theoretical framework used in this paper sits within the field of Heritage Studies and sees the heritage-making process as a means of exploring the socio-political construct (Sørensen & Viejo-Rose 2015). The research has two principal aims: to illustrate and analyse Fascist heritage and the contemporary shift in perception that

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followed heritage designation; and to examine how this contemporary 'rediscovery' is the end result of the process of coming to terms with a dictatorial past. Italy's lack of both a national museum providing an interpretation of the country's Fascist past, and of a War Museum debating Italy's role in World War II, makes an examination of how architecture and works of art have been transformed into heritage relevant in understanding Italy's post-Fascist identity construction.[1]

This research has developed from the author's doctoral research on the perception of Fascist heritage based on ethnographic research and participant observation. This shed light not only on how some cultural institutions have decided to remember or forget Fascism, but also on how public perception of these places has changed: analysis of Mussolini's Villa Torlonia in Rome showed how, in Italy, public condemnation of the legacies of the regime never really reached the level of public debate seen by Macdonald around Nuremberg (Macdonald 2006, 2009). In Italy, far from being places of negative emotions, sites like Villa Torlonia are today places of leisure-time activities where Mussolini is presented like any other historical figure (Bartolini 2018; see below Fig. 1). From *damnatio memoriae* in the post-war period, followed by either abandonment, neglect or reuse, to contemporary rehabilitation, it becomes clear that the dark memories once attached to Fascist heritage have been transformed, which raises questions regarding the normalisation of Fascism and revisionist instances.

This paper will be divided into three parts. Firstly, I will discuss the scholarly debate around Fascist material legacies, and how and why the field has flourished in recent years. Secondly, I will describe case studies of recent exhibitions on Fascism and how they came about and thirdly I will consider the role Fascist heritage has in the process of renegotiating Italy's Fascist past.

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[1] The city of Bolzano was the first to display a permanent exhibition on the Italian dictatorship, located in the basement of the Monument to Victory, a Fascist memorial to the annexation of South Tyrol by Italy in World War I. For details about the Fascist dictatorship exhibition, see Michielli & Obermair 2016.

Figure 1. Rome, Villa Torlonia. (Photo Flaminia Bartolini ©)

Defining Fascist material legacies, from 'heritage' to 'difficult heritage'

The two fundamental and most cited works of the debate on the afterlife of Fascist material legacies are Joshua Arthurs' work on the Foro Italico (2010, 2014) and Sharon Macdonald's 2009 publication on the renegotiation of Nazi Heritage in Nuremberg. Arthurs is the first to consider Fascist architecture around the city of Rome as contemporary heritage of the dictatorship, observing how locals have decided to protect this complex layer of history. He argues that the way this process took place was quite uncritical and suggests this might reflect the difficulties of coming to terms with the past for some people, while at the same time inspiring neo-Fascist propaganda amongst others. According to Macdonald (2009: 7), 'difficult heritage' arises when a past is recognised as worth remembering but at the same time creates difficulties in the present, as it generates conflict in dealing with contemporary identity. Similarly, in Italy the 'difficult' Fascist heritage generated a fear of perpetuating social division and fuelling divided memories in the post-war period, so a process of removing Fascist symbols from public buildings, both spontaneous and authorised, occurred (Bartolini 2018, 2019).

For other scholars there is no direct link between the lack of a critical approach to Fascist heritage, Italy's post-war identity crisis, and the recent rise in neo-Fascist groups in Italy. For some, like Carter and Martin (2017, 2019), Malone (2017, 2019), Storchi (2019) and Marcello (2019), even if Fascist legacies should be described as 'difficult heritage', there is no reading of them as a social process: Fascist legacies are viewed only in terms of their historicity, positioning the argument away from critical heritage studies and more within the perennial dispute over the field of history and memory.

This paper follows the work of both Arthurs and Macdonald on heritage and sees the transformation of places associated with the dictatorship and the way they have, or have not, been reused, as testifying to the shift in meaning attributed to these places. The creation of a museum display and exhibitions can serve both to remember or forget a difficult past, or even provide a selective narrative of the dictatorial past (Bartolini 2018: 5). As we shall see, the following case studies illustrate both state and private attempts to debate Fascist heritage and how they ultimately reveal a national difficulty in dealing with the Fascist past.

Fascist heritage and the contested monument debate

In 2017, an article by Ruth Ben-Ghiat in *The New Yorker* created a wave of discontent in Italy by asking why Fascist monumental architecture had been left unquestioned in Italy (Ben-Ghiat 2017). Ben-Ghiat was not alone in her questioning of attitudes: in Italy, the seventy-fifth commemoration of the end of WWII sparked a debate surrounding some of the most iconic monuments which saw the left-wing President of the Lower Chamber of Parliament, Laura Boldrini, asking for the removal or covering of the words *Mussolini DUX* from the obelisk at the centre of the Foro Italico complex in Rome (Malone 2017; Bartolini 2018; see below Fig. 2). In this case, as also in the response to Ben-Ghiat's article, public debate was quite unanimous in criticising any reworking or removal of such monuments (Bartolini 2018: 4).

Figure 2. Rome, Foro Italico, Palazzo H and Mussolini's obelisk (Photo: Flaminia Bartolini ©)

Public perception of Fascist heritage in contemporary Italy can be described as having been 'de-politicised': as has emerged from recent scholarly work, regardless of people's political views, Fascist monuments in contemporary Italy are seen as part of the rest of the country's vast cultural heritage legacy (Bartolini 2018: 5). Until recently, this conspicuous material legacy of the dictatorship had been left undisturbed in the landscape, very often reused for its original purpose, sometimes given a new use. Complete destruction of buildings was limited to wartime aerial bombing or dictated by the impossibility of reusing a building.

The so-called 'de-fascistization' process saw the removal of fasces and other Fascist symbols from public buildings, but was very often limited to the removal of the word Mussolini or Fascist mottos and the axes from the fasces (Bartolini 2018). Many Italian cities are still full not only with Fascist monuments, but also infrastructure such as train stations, gyms, and schools which very often feature Fascist symbols that escaped the removal. Sometimes the most interesting evidence lay in plain sight, as is the case for both the plinth of the sculpture known as the *Genius of Fascism* and Mussolini's head in the Palazzo Uffici in the E.U.R. neighbourhood of Rome (Fig. 3). The former escaped removal thanks to a timely re-naming from Virgilio Testa in 1952 as *Genius of Sport*, but surprisingly the plinth which exhibited the words *Roma Aeterna*, together with three fasces, is still in the gardens of the building, just conveniently away from the rest of the sculpture. This setting is telling of how the process of removal occurred: it happened very quickly, leaving many legacies in place or maybe just around the corner and never addressed even 75 years on.

Figure 3. Rome, Palazzo Uffici, lateral entrance with *Genius of Fascism* (Photo: Flaminia Bartolini ©)

The second example, in the Palazzo Uffici, is the relief with the history of Fascism and one of the few surviving examples of Mussolini on horseback in a public place (Fig. 4). The relief is at the entrance of the buildings which should have hosted the administrative offices of the 1942 World Fair Exhibition in Rome; these were later repurposed as various offices in the post-war period.

Figure 4. Rome, Palazzo Uffici, lateral entrance with Mussolini horse-riding (Photo: Flaminia Bartolini ©)

Figure 5. Rome, Palazzo Uffici, Press room, Mussolini head (Photo: Flaminia Bartolini ©)

The building still retains its original name, as does the entire quarter, despite having been renamed 'Europa' after the war. Mussolini's figure at the entrance has been defaced several times since 1945, as emerged from interviews with E.U.R. s.p.a. staff, but the company has always restored the damaged. In the same building, in 2003 a bust of Mussolini's head was taken back from the basement where it was stored and placed in the conference room, provoking several complaints to E.U.R. s.p.a. (Fig. 5). The company made a declaration to the press that they decided not to put Mussolini's head back in the Great Hall where it was originally, but it could be argued that while the *Salone d'Onore* is closed to the public, the conference room is where press conferences are held for Italian and foreign media, so the bust is now, in fact, highly visible to the public.

It was on 23 November 2017, during the celebrations marking the eightieth anniversary of the foundation of the *Città Universitaria*, Rome's City University La Sapienza, that there was an even more significant shift in the meaning attached to Fascist legacies: this was the re-opening of Mario Sironi's newly restored mural depicting the Arts and Sciences in the Great Hall of the university campus (Fig. 6). Attending the opening was the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, and the ceremony was introduced by the rector of La Sapienza, Eugenio Gaudio, and the rector of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Yvon Englert. The leaders of the restoration project, Marina Righetti, Director of the

Department of History of Art and Gisella Capponi, Director of the Higher Institute for Conservation and Restoration, gave a presentation illustrating their work and the results of the restoration.

The opening was described by the newspapers as 'the end of an iconoclastic era' or as 'the rebirth of the genius of Sironi' because for the first time not only had Fascist frescos been restored and presented in a major exhibition in the presence of leading political and heritage figures, but Fascist symbols had also been restored. If swastikas recently found in Germany are still being blown off with dynamite, Italy, on the contrary, is taking very good care of its Fascist symbols. What mattered at this event was that finally a work of art was given 'justice' after years of neglect.

Work on the new university, one of the three main Fascist developments in the city together with the Foro Italico and the E.U.R., began in 1933 and the complex was formally opened on 31 October 1935. The head of the project, Marcello Piacentini, called upon established architects to design the individual buildings, including Arnaldo Foschini, Giuseppe Pagano, Pietro Aschieri, Giovanni Ponti, Giovanni Michelucci, Gaetano Rapisardi and Giuseppe Capponi. In the Great Hall of the Palace of the Rectory Mario Sironi executed the mural 'Italy between the Arts and Sciences', while Arturo Martini designed the statue of Minerva, which the author always called 'Athena'.

Figure 6. Rome, La Sapienza Great Hall, Mario Sironi fresco of *The Arts and the Sciences* (Photo: Flaminia Bartolini ©).

The idea of restoring Sironi's mural was originally conceived in 1985 during research for the fiftieth anniversary of the University City. Following post-war de-fascistization, the fresco was extensively 'repainted' in 1950 and during conservation works in 1982 it was noted that a poster and several layers of glue had been stuck on top of the modified fresco. In 1982, the scientific committee in charge of the restoration believed Sironi's fresco was irretrievably lost. However, thanks to advances in conservation scanning techniques, in 2015 scientists were able to see that the original was still in good condition so the decision was taken to try and rescue it. The agreement for the contemporary restoration, which was a collaboration between the Ministry of Scientific Research, the Ministry of Culture and the Higher Institute for Conservation and Restoration, was signed on 20 April 2015. The official press release explained the decision-making behind the restoration, arguing that:

"*We have considered for a long time whether to restore the frescos: the great painting of the Great Hall is in fact a figurative document of extraordinary importance relating to the work of Mario Sironi, to the history of the University City, and Italian figurative art more generally between the two wars*" (Billi & D'Agostino 2017: 45).

What emerged from this restoration project that is most relevant to the renegotiation of Fascist legacies are the details of what was censored or modified in the post-war era. The 140m² fresco had a composition which saw Italy at the centre surrounded by personifications of Astronomy, Mineralogy, Botany, Geography, Architecture, Letters, Painting and History. The original representation of Italy depicted her as a goddess at war, with a sword leaning along her left side and a crown which symbolised the protective city wall; in 1950 the crown and the sword disappeared, leaving a more neutral image of the country. The flying victory, a recurrent image within Fascist iconography, was similarly depicted with a helmet and a sword, which again were removed. In the background, at the centre, are those compositions that were entirely covered over: 2 m high fasces with the years of the foundation of the university, a Roman eagle and *insigna*, and a triumphal arch with Mussolini riding in front of it (Fig. 7).

What this fresco stands for is a summation of all the conflicting symbols that were removed in the post-war period, but it also gives even more detail than previous analysis has allowed. The novelty which emerged from this restoration is the fact that what was removed was the idea of Italy at war, Italy as a militarised society, a country which was just embarking on the conquest of Ethiopia and had imperialist aspirations. So while Fascist symbols and Mussolini on horseback had faded into the landscape, Italy and victory were modified towards a more bucolic image, very much in line with the post-war narrative of the country as a victim of Nazi occupation and manoeuvres, rather than an aggressive entity in its own right.

Figure 7. Rome, La Sapienza Great Hall, Mario Sironi fresco of *The Arts and the Sciences*, detail of the fasces with the eagle (Photo: Flaminia Bartolini ©).

However, the way the unveiling event was perceived by the public and by the media was quite different. Framed as a means of Italy 'dealing with the Fascist past', the actual meaning of 'dealing' was more one of accepting Fascism as an historical event rather than challenging its ideology. The only ideology that was debated by the media at the event was anti-Fascism, perceived as iconoclastic ideology obscuring Fascist works of art. What was portrayed was the final end to the 'cultural hegemony' of anti-Fascism over Fascism – now seen only as an historical period in the past, with no legacies in the present day, something which cannot happen again.

MuSa museum exhibition on the Cult of the Duce: genuine collectors or devotion?
The city of Salò is a place where ties with the Social Republic are still relatively strong – in the new guise of heritage sites. The city of Salò today is a popular summer destination on Lake Garda, attracting both local and foreign tourists more for the microclimate of the region than for cultural interest. However, the city's more recent history offers an unavoidable element of interest for tourists visiting the area, as most of the historical buildings and hotels were used during the Social Republic by both the Nazi and Fascist armies and government. During the summer of 2018, when this part of the research took place, several types of heritage event were taking place in Salò relating to the history of the Social Republic and Mussolini himself.

The most interesting aspect of the heritage landscape in Salò is the exhibition at the MuSa museum run by Giordano Bruno Guerri, an individual also known for his 'revisionist' work on Bottai and D'Annunzio and through his managerial work at the Vittoriale degli Italiani, D'Annunzio's resting place. Bruno Guerri is the curator of the Mussolini exhibition at MuSa and he is considering enlarging the collection to establish a Museum of Fascism in Salò; he claims as one of his principal achievements having "fascistized the cultural heritage of Salò" (Giordano Bruno Guerri, personal interview, Salò 28/8/2018). The MuSa' collection grew out of a preliminary exhibition on the history of Fascism in Salò as seen through the eyes of a Fascist and an Anti-Fascist, with the support of a multi-

media installation. This first segment of the display starts with images of Mussolini on posters and portraits lent by private 'collectors' before moving on to try and give some sense of the iconic events of the *Ventennio*. Curiously, the exhibition starts with a description of the killing of Mussolini and the violence of the Partisans using two iconic images: Mussolini's execution in Piazzale Loreto and the one image that refers to a partisan execution of a civilian, Giuseppina Ghersi (Fig. 8). While these are powerful examples of the brutality of partisan executions, there is no counter-narrative presenting examples of Fascist violence. The display continues with a section on the film *Arte di Arrangiarsi*, followed by testimony from witnesses of the war, both Jewish and from the *Foibe*.[2] Subsequent panels, which are based on the bombing by the Allies, stress the point of view of citizens and of the terror of war. Associated with this section is a display of luggage of people escaping from bombing and war, set against a backdrop of a bunker and contemporary film footage from the war.

Figure 8. Salò, MuSa, display of the permanent collection on the history of fascism (Photo: Flaminia Bartolini ©)

The second section of the exhibition, the one which was conceived by Bruno Guerri, looks specifically at the Cult of the Duce from 1922 to 1945 (Guerri 2016; see below Fig. 9). Mussolini's iconography on display follows chronologically and gives an interesting reading of how the face of the Duce moved from a 'Giolittian' nineteenth-century neo-classical style to the Futurist examples of Corghi, Bertelli, and Barbara. Bruno Guerri's message in this exhibition is that Mussolini is inextricably linked with the Salò landscape and that there should be no shame in presenting an exhibition on him in 2018. Guerri recalled that at the time of the opening, a few members of the ANPI association protested

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[2] Massacres carried out by Yugoslav partisans (and possibly Fascists) during World War II.

in front of the museum but there have been neither nostalgic pilgrimages nor anti-fascist protests within. The exhibition, presented in a public museum with little or no historical context, gives an edited version of the historical facts and fulfils the neo-fascist paradigm of Fascist and Anti-Fascist both using violence and thus being two faces of the same coin. Part of this narrative of equating Fascism and Anti-Fascism is reflected in the institution of a Holocaust Commemoration Day in 2005 and a Day of Memory for the victims of Communist mass murders. As Robert Gordon (2006) explains in his work on the introduction of a commemoration day for the Italian Fascist mass killing by Tito's Communist supporters in Yugoslavia, there is a link between the institution of this commemoration day and the commemoration of the Holocaust in Italy. Gordon argues that the fact that Italy established the Day of Memory of the Holocaust in the same year as the commemoration day for Fascists killed by Communists is a sign of how the coalition government of Berlusconi and the far-right wanted to give them an equal sense of justice and commemoration. This process of renegotiating Fascist crimes along the same lines as Communist crimes is a deliberately apologetic strategy that can also be fostered, as we have seen, through heritage sites and exhibitions.

Figure 9. Salò, MuSa, display of the exhibition *Il Culto del Duce* (Photo: Flaminia Bartolini ©)

Concluding remarks

The heritage-making process of the Fascist legacy reflects the diverse values which Italian society has attributed to Fascism itself and which have informed heritage decisions at different times. Cultural heritage has traditionally been considered crucial in the formation of national identity and at times of social crisis such as a dictatorship or war can help in

understanding how politics and heritage mutually inform each other. Heritage is always the result of a selection of what is worth remembering or forgetting and is never a neutral selection of a 'true' past (Sørensen & Viejo-Rose 2015). What this paper has investigated is which are the narratives about Fascism that Italy has decided to remember, or not.

If the transformation of Mussolini's material legacies into heritage can be seen as part of the renegotiation of Fascism that followed the fall of communism in 1989, and which coincided with the beginning of the Berlusconi era in Italy (1993), what emerged from this research is a step forward. What has been defined as the "crisis of the anti-fascist paradigm" (Focardi 2014: 97) has now, within the Italian heritage debate, reached the level of Fascist material legacies being the victims of left-wing ideology. The perceived 'holiness' of cultural heritage in public perception has facilitated a reading of the iconoclasm that followed the fall of the regime as an act of ideology in itself, something that now should be condemned or amended for in light of the supposed apolitical role of cultural heritage.

Restoring Fascist symbols uncritically, as in the case of the Sironi fresco, just like any other work of art, has opened the way to exhibitions like the one at the MuSa with a clear apologetic intent. Behind 'preservation' and 'knowledge' can be easily hidden the political agendas of the far-right as they attempt to use cultural heritage as a political tool. The MuSa renegotiation of the narrative of the Resistance was sustained by far-right and neo-fascist groups with the intention to diminish the role of the freedom fighters in the Liberation from Nazi-Fascism and reverse the post-war new, democratic, anti-Fascist values (Ventresca 2004; Focardi 2014). In the case of the Salò exhibitions, having a display framed around a Fascist/Anti-Fascist interpretation and reconstruction of the events might suggest the museum's intention to 'resolve' conflicting memories of this problematic past by offering a 'softer' and 'better' version of Mussolini as a historical figure, stressing anti-Fascist violence. As we saw earlier, Robert Gordon (2006) explains a commemoration day for the Italian Fascist mass killing by Tito's Communist supporters in Yugoslavia as being a sign of how the coalition government of Berlusconi and the far-right wanted to give them an equal sense of justice and commemoration.

Moreover, the way legacies have been looked after or not illustrate the different ways in which Fascist Heritage has been reframed in contemporary Italy: Mussolini's iconography and restoration of Fascist symbols of the leader have remained triggers for different degrees of fascination for the leader from the post-war era to the present day. To conclude, I would argue that Fascist material legacies are still a strong source of fascination in contemporary Italy, and the fact that in the last ten years many work of art and architecture of the *Ventennio* have become heritage and have re-entered the public domain, reflects not just a national struggle in questioning and confronting the past, but possibly also a worrying sense of Fascist pride.

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Edmondo Rossoni and Tresigallo.
An Atypical Case of a Regime Town

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Abstract

In the last 30 years, the town of Tresigallo has to come to terms with the legacy of its dissonant heritage. The rediscovery of its history happened gradually. It began in 1985 with the organization of conferences that encouraged a public debate about its founder Edmondo Rossoni, a minister during the fascist era, and the buildings he commissioned in Tresigallo. The town's historical and architectural value, in that its unique identity in relationship with a denied past, had to be first recognized at a community level. Public administration's take-over has not always granted the protection of these rationalist structures: some demolitions happened even in the early 2000s. Between late 1980s and 2000s, an increasing number of architects, local historians, photographers, and artists became interested in the town's history due to its almost wholly preserved 1930s architectural and urban features. Restoration works and raising research on rationalist architecture have pointed out that the town should be considered a cultural asset to be preserved and valued. This paper examines some urban regeneration projects undertaken by the public administration, such as the former G.I.L. (*Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*) being converted into a public library and Public Baths made into an exhibition space. It also investigates the touristic and cultural development of the territory through the organization of cultural events and the use of social media.

Keywords: Heritage, Fascism, Identity, Urban Regeneration, Rationalist Architecture

Introduction

Tresigallo, a small town of five thousand inhabitants near Ferrara, has been on national historiography fringes for a long time. The fundamental essay by Riccardo Mariani (1976) titled *Fascismo e Città Nuove* (Fascism and new cities) has given it its actual place of prominence among the planned cities. The character and the story of Edmondo Rossoni, the *deus ex machina* of Tresigallo, are still unclear, making it hard to understand this atypical case of regime city. The local power dynamics, the relationship between Rossoni and the Prime Minister and leader of the National Fascist Party Benito Mussolini, the source of money poured into Tresigallo, are among the numerous topics that still today do not have

a specific answer. The absence of a biography of Rossoni, who is often addressed as one among 'converts' from revolutionary syndicalism to Fascism, makes finding these answers even more difficult.

Figure 1. Map of the site. Tresigallo after Brugnatti D. 2012. *Identità Ritrovata. Tresigallo Rossoni*. Ferrara: Italiatipolitografia

Ancient times till 1939

Tresigallo is a very ancient settlement. In *Statuti,* an ancient document written in 1287, the church of Tresigallo is mentioned. Most probably the village, which could count few houses around the church and around 500 inhabitants, was existing much before and it has not had any evolution until 1935 when the re-foundation works started. Tresigallo is a peculiar case study, a unique reality, and probably the most crucial example of rationalist architecture with no celebrative purpose. Unlike other planned cities, neither the O.N.C. (*Opera Nazionale Combattenti*) nor parastatal entities took part in the operations, nor did the corporations (*aziende*) that built planned towns during the autarchy such as A.R.S.A.

(*Anonima Carbonifera*) guided by Guido Segre or S.N.I.A. Viscosa, chaired by Franco Marinotti. Furthermore, no famous architect was involved in the planning as well.

Tresigallo was an act of authority by Edmondo Rossoni when the odds were in his favor. In September 1930 he was appointed member of the Grand Council of Fascism, in 1932 Undersecretary to the Ministers Council's Presidency and eventually, Minister of Agriculture and Forests from 1935 to 1939. The regime's economic guidelines for rural areas implied non-well-structured planning of 'new cities' and sometimes an inaccurate and improvised intervention system. At the beginning of 1934, after the foundation of Littoria (one of the significant new town founded near Rome) on 18 December 1932 - and while the construction of Sabaudia (an international renown resort in the Circeo area) was about to be completed, the place for Pontinia's foundation, one of the focal new town, was not yet decided.

Behind the propaganda facade, which was amplified by the foreign press especially in England, the first problems began to show: water issues, struggling industrial production, the physical discomfort of the population that moved there, and the rising fear of malaria.

On the contrary, Tresigallo stood out for its complexity and the social vision; this derived from Rossoni's ideas for the Italian economy and society's renaissance started a decade before 1935.

In the 1920s the former revolutionary trade unionist had tried to set up a project capable of transforming the nascent Fascism into a labor movement. Labor thus, was to play a central role.

Giuseppe Parlato stated that Rossoni's project embodied the 'global trade unionism' (*sindacalismo integrale*): that formula implied the creation of a confederation of fascist corporations and a unitary trade union where all the categories would be represented, including both employers and workers. A corporate model of collaboration between social classes that, therefore, would overcome the opposition between employers and workers.

It was a kind of social revolution that was difficult to implement: both *Confagricoltura* (confederation of the agricultural sector) and, above all, *Confindustria* (confederation of the industrial sector) rebelled against Rossoni's project and made it fail. Doubts and oppositions were seen even from fascists: Giuseppe Bottai (1940), Undersecretary to the Corporations Ministry, had his own project; Augusto Turati, secretary of the *Partito Nazionale Fascista*, wanted to incorporate the union in the party - while, for Rossoni, the union had to be outside the politics. Mussolini, on the other hand, wanted to regain the consent of *Confindustria* and other influential players. Rossoni found himself, therefore, in the crossfire and lost the game: in December 1928, with the so-called '*sbloccamento*' (unlocking), the '*Rossoniana*', the unitary confederation wanted by Rossoni and nicknamed after him, was disassembled and reorganized into different confederations according to the branch of work. It was the defeat of the future minister's political project, albeit only a momentary setback. In that period, Tresigallo was a small country village of about 500

inhabitants on the edges of the late nineteenth century's Big Claimed Land area. The ideal place to bring Rossoni's project to life, after Mussolini reinstated him.

Tresigallo was re-founded as an 'other' project: a twentieth-century ideal city, corporative, steeped in the contradictions of the regime, in which a radical political vision and personal power met.

Rossoni surrounded himself with esteemed personnel and trusted friends: Carlo Frighi, an engineer who converted in actual projects and implemented the ideas that he received as rough sketches from the Ministry of Agriculture; Livio Mariani, the butcher of the village and companion in political struggles during his early days, was the intermediary of Rossoni for the trading of assets.

The minister's long arm, the real estate company S.E.R.T.I.A. (*Società Emiliano-Romagnola Terra Industria Agricoltura*) based in Rome and registered in his uncle's name, played a role comparable to the one that the central government had in Sardinia and Pontine Marshes. Between 1933 and 1935 expropriations, demolitions, and the first housing units' foundations happened. Then began the large-scale construction of public and private buildings on one side and the other's industrial area. Rossoni made the most of his position by proposing incentives, which were hard to refuse, to private businesses.

The Genoa-based firm Belloni for example, which undertook the street paving works in Tresigallo, obtained later a large commission for roads' construction in East Africa. Or the Modena-based company Orsi, a manufacturer of agricultural machinery, that was contacted directly by the minister to base a part of the production in the new town. To reconnect all the underground activity of S.E.R.T.I.A. is complex. For sure it became the privileged interlocutor of private individuals, businesses, and public bodies. A confidential report, with photographs attached, eventually got to Mussolini in the spring of 1937. Rossoni, recalled, by the Duce, responded by defending himself and justifying his actions. The process was started and was unstoppable: alongside the new rationalist villas, squares and meeting places, houses for workers, industries, and sports and leisure facilities rose. The construction of new buildings and filling up of spaces went on with the following facilities: girls' school for embroidery, the aqueduct, the hotels Italia and the luxurious *Domus Tua*, the kindergarten (already existing and embellished with a new gate and an arcade), the house of *Balilla*, that later became the house of G.I.L. (the fascist youth association, a place for ideological and physical education), the public toilets, the dancing hall, the elementary school, the Corporate Theatre, the building of the insurance offices company *Assicurazioni Generali Venezia*. Just outside the settlement's central core, which follows the city's trapezoid shape, industries' citadel rose. It included ten agricultural factories: the C.E.L.N.A. (that produced cellulose from *canapulo* - a residue of hemp), the I.N.T.A. (*Industria Nazionale Tessili Autarchici* that turned rags into artificial wool), the MA.LI.CA. (*Manifattura Lino Canapa* - for the processing of green hemp) the Consortium of Hemp Producers (that selected white hemp), the Ca.Fioc. (for the transformation of hemp into tuft), the S.A.D.A plant (*Società Anonima Distilleria Agricola*- built for the extraction of alcohol from beets), the A.N.B. (*Associazione Nazionale Bieticoltori* - a sugar

factory for the processing of chards), the company S.I.A.R.I. (which dealt with the processing of milk and butter, textile casein and synthetic wool), the warehouse of the Provincial Agricultural Consortium (that managed grain storage), the C.A.L.E.F.O. (for the collection and selection of fruit to export), and the S.A.I.M.M. (which produced agricultural machines).

Figure 2. Republic Square, 2010. (Cultural Association "Torri di Marmo" Archive).

Figure 3. The church's porch, 2010. (Cultural Association "Torri di Marmo" Archive)

Figure 4. Stadium, 2010. (Cultural Association "Torri di Marmo" Archive)

Figure 5. E. Boeri Sanatorial, 2010. (Cultural Association "Torri di Marmo" Archive)

Figure 6. Catexil factory (processing of green hemp), 1938 (Private Archive).

Figure 7. S.I.A.R.I. factory (processing of milk and butter), 1937 (Private Archive).

Rossoni's humongous development plan was based on the processing industry supported by the surrounding fields' products and made Tresigallo become one of the largest planned cities in terms of built areas. Tresigallo soon attracted skilled labor from the local district characterized by intense emigration and widespread poverty: the population registered unprecedented growth, reaching over 7000 units. Rossoni had revolutionized the territory anthropologically, eroding the regime's secular history, changing the rhythms of life, traditions, work prospects, and dreams.

WWII to present
At the beginning of the war, the project of Tresigallo came to a standstill. It made sense during the autocratic economic regime of the fascist government and the prominent role assumed by Edmondo Rossoni. But the end of the war, hence of Fascism, destroyed the basis of that development project. The new municipal council also imposed further restrictions. Tresigallo, in the post-war market economy, went back to be a peripheral area not particularly profitable for investments.

A period of abandonment and oblivion had begun. Emigration, neglect, demolitions, and tampering hit the regime's architecture, deleting the symbols of a past that was no longer accepted. The wounds suffered by the architectural heritage are still noticeable, not just those caused by the damages of war but also those caused by incorrect restorations. Improper extensions and renovations happened under a motto of *damnation memoriae*. To cite a few examples: the Ca.Fioc.'s tower knocking down; the original 1935 street lamps -

about a hundred - were replaced; the facade of the elementary school's tampering with; so much so even the cemetery's alteration by demolishing two side chapels, and so on.

A considerable amount of time and the fall of certain ideological obstacles allowed a new era of historical and architectural studies to open, void of political positions. The rediscovery of the heritage, however, happened slowly. A conference "*TRESIGALLO il passato – il futuro*" (Ammirati & Chendi 1990) held on 13 April 1985, played a pivotal role in opening a public discussion. It brought forth the awareness that the town did have historical and architectural significance; however, this realization by the public administration did not translate to the protection of its rationalist buildings. Demolitions earlier announced continued to take place as scheduled. Ideally, urban enhancement should have been the second step, the first being acknowledging and recognizing the town's historical and architectural value and its unique identity due to its denied past at a community level. Between the end of the 1980s and the 2000s, an increasing number of architects, local historians, photographers, artists and amateurs became interested in the history of the town, starting with Flavia Faccioli, Giancarlo Martinoni, Amos Castaldini, Piergiorgio Massaretti, Antonio Pennacchi, Arrigo Marazzi (2008) and Stefano Muroni.

It was not until 2003 that Tresigallo was recognized more widely for its valuable heritage and the awareness that this must be valued and protected. Among the key initiatives in this direction, we can count the brand identity of '*Città del Novecento*' and the designation of Tresigallo in the '*Città d'arte*' circuit by the Emilia-Romagna Region. In 2005 a project of cataloging of the Rossonian buildings started. Experts teams involved produced "urban sector" cards for describing the plan blocks and 'A' cards for buildings, according to the Central Institute for Cataloging and Documentation's (ICCD) methodology. In collaboration with the Municipality of Tresigallo, the Superintendency for Architectural Heritage and Landscape of Ravenna undertook the project granted by regional funding. As an outcome of this process, it was possible to compare today's building's situation with the original ones and spot incongruous additions. Secondly, it enabled to study with greater precision, from a material point of view, the elements that characterize the local architecture of the 1930s.

An important conference, "*Identità Ritrovata. Tresigallo Rossoni*", where historians and architects talked about the restoration works carried out in Tresigallo, took place in 2008. For the first time, the process of identity recovery was the topic of the discussion, starting from the reuse of regime architecture as community spaces. In 2009, Tresigallo became part of the *Associazione Nazionale delle Città di Fondazione* and, the following year, the CE.S.A.R. (Centro Studi sull'Architettura Razionalista) in Rome, dedicated a monographic issue for the distribution in Europe area on the attractive urban-architectural model of Tresigallo.

From 2003 to 2015, 'great works' of rediscovery and restoration on endangered buildings took place within a few years. To cite a few examples: former *Casa della G.I.L.*, former public baths and *Domus Tua*, former stadium portal, kindergarten and its portal, nursery

school, former S.A.A.T., *piazza Italia* and its parvis, former *piazza della Rivoluzione*, former Carabinieri barracks.

Figure 8. Casa della G.I.L. Conservation status from the post-war period to the 2000s. (Private Archive).

The process of awareness has also been encouraged by the forward-looking (optimistic) proposals of the mayor Maurizio Barbirati. He involved private citizens with participatory projects such as '*Colora la tua città*' (2005-2010), allocating funds to rediscover the original color of historic buildings.

Public meetings dedicated to the new citizens, who now lived in the city center's historical buildings, were organized. These meetings aimed to firstly, educate them about the foundational process and the local industrial history and secondly, highlight their houses' architectonical features. Many of these people have recently settled into the town, substituting the original inhabitants who moved in Italy's major industrial cities after the end of the Second World War. The new population is now composed of a melting pot of first and second-generation immigrants from abroad, employed mainly in seasonal fields work and nearby industries, and is totally unaware of the town's history. The result of this is that valuable architectural buildings have often been considered as just old and not as something worth preserving.

Since the 1980s local administrations, cultural associations, and local history aficionados have carried out educational activities, paired with the collection of the last verbal accounts of the people who lived during the 1930s. These new lenses showed public places that were previously ignored with a new awareness. Since the local city administrations for the past eight decades have been almost entirely managed by the political Left, the attitude

towards research and renovation projects could not be nostalgic and more importance was given to how the renovated building could serve as an asset to the community. Moreover, Tresigallo is an example of a balanced and non-monumental architecture, far from the Mussolini's propaganda.

Following is one of the best outcomes of how the renovated building could serve as an asset to the community.

Figure 9. Casa della Cultura (House of Culture) after the restoration, 2003. (Cultural Association "Torri di Marmo" Archive).

The restoration of the former *Casa della G.I.L.* which is now the *Casa della Cultura* is of particular importance as it allows us to understand better the mechanism of synergistic collaboration between the administration, authorities, and the local people. The recovery intervention was incredibly complex since only the perimetrical original walls survived the abandonment. The primary step was to gather information about the building from peoples' memory of the building, coupled with careful research about the building's history and historical context of the Tresigallo's re-foundation plan. It was done by interviewing the population and encouraging its involvement. On the bases of the recovered data, operators oriented the archive research on the project from the 1930s, the planimetric study, the identification and classification of the original materials, the examination of the chromatisms and methodologies of the realization of the fixtures, the microscope surveys, the petrographic and stratigraphic analysis of the remaining plaster blocks, the design of the project, the identification of the original intended use of buildings, and the search for compatible materials and technologies. As a result, the renovated building underwent an invasive but necessary planimetric variation.

Conclusions

The restoration of modern architecture is a rather complex subject. An aspect of it that is important to discuss here is the change in the 'usage' of a public facility. A restoration project has changed a building's use: a former gym, perceived by the population as a degraded place, became a library. A peripheral, but yet very central, space transformed for the public benefit and social inclusion. By making this choice, the public administration pursued the road to accessibility and enhancement of the entire area that has now become a focal point in the urban fabric of Tresigallo. Today it is home to conferences, film forums, exhibitions, book presentations, and educational and pedagogical activities. It is a virtuous example of redevelopment that saw the participation of the local community and local businesses.

After the restoration work and growing research on rationalist architecture, it has come to light that the town should be considered as a cultural asset to be preserved and valued. The area has almost entirely preserved the 1930s architectural and urban features. The 'Rossonian Tresigallo' peculiarity is a diffused urban quality, visible in valuable architectural details: the coating in cipollino, travertine or opal glass. The way forward for the restoration of private rationalist buildings lies in the realization and adoption of a code of practice: a series of functional indications to operate related to the buildings' conscious conservation - from the details of the molding to corner solutions, from faux travertine to original fixtures. Reaching out people on a much bigger scale with the sensitivity towards any restoration work on modern buildings is a priority. This attitude must come from the core of the population conscious of the value of their heritage. Acknowledging its history and weight of the heritage, the town envisioning as a tourist place began. In 2006 Tresigallo entered the circuit of *Borghi Autentici*. In 2015 it joined the A.T.R.I.U.M. (Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes in Urban Managements) a Council of Europe cultural route involving eighteen different institutions (universities, ministries, N.G.O.s, local administrations) and 11 European countries with architectures from totalitarian regimes eras. In 2017 the *Associazione Torri di Marmo*, winner of the regional call of bids on the *Memoria del Novecento* Law, presented a new branding: *Tresigallo La Città Metafisica* (Tresigallo The Metaphysical City), including a new dynamic logo, website, brochure and map with recommended itineraries. It was a new brand identity for Tresigallo and social media channels, namely Facebook and Instagram, were used to spread the word. Moreover, the dissemination of the historical and architectural heritage of Tresigallo was once more under the spotlight with a panel discussion 'Urban history, architecture and community projects' at the first national conference of the Italian Association of Public History, held in Ravenna in 2017.

Taking cognizance of its own past, of the historical and architectural identity brought to Tresigallo, has been a long process of maturation for the entire community, a process that has had its share of hurdles. The problems connected to low birth-rates afflicts the rural territories, such as Tresigallo, reverberate on public spaces and their maintenance. Buildings that have been returned to the community for public purposes now risk going back to the oblivion, maintenance expenses and sustainability topping the list of reasons for this. Preservation of Architectural heritage plays a pivotal role in the relationship

between 'public and private' and is a crucial challenge that small towns will have to face soon.

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Difficult Heritage. The Experience of the Fossoli Camp Foundation

Marzia Luppi & Francesca Schintu

Fossoli Camp Foundation

Abstract

The historic site of Fossoli Camp is a unique stone witness which still bears the marks left by the central years of the twentieth century. During the Second World War it was a national camp for racial and political deportees, but its story extends to the 1970s when it was used to house civilian orphans and refugees. Today it is a place where history blends with experience and education.

The primary goal of the Fossoli Foundation is the protection and preservation of the Camp's heritage, together with its enhancement through activities including research, documentation, and education to promote cultural awareness.

The Foundation focuses especially on close co-operation with schools, developing targeted educational projects and pathways for both students and teachers, with organised visits to its own memorial sites and other European ones. European projects and partnerships represent an increasing part of its activities, and the Foundation is now a member of several national and international networks.

Keywords: Space of Memory, Transit Camp, Concentration Camp, Deportation, Holocaust

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the history of an Italian internment camp built during the Second World War and to follow its subsequent changes of use and explore the extent to which they reflect the changing political circumstances in both a national and international context in the post-war years. In particular, it describes how the Fossoli Foundation determines its research, documentation, and training work, starting from its principal priority of protecting and enhancing this complex historical site.

Fossoli is a significant place in terms of the relationship between history and memory, a memory that developed further when the camp structures were used to house Julian-

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Dalmatian refugees. Over time, the story of the camp evolves from that of a symbolic place of the Resistance (the typical narrative of the 1950s) to one which incorporates a multiplicity of memories arising from its subsequent history.

This paper is based on historiographical sources and testimonies as well as the direct experience of the site's management team. Since its creation in 1996, the Fossoli Camp Foundation has been committed to enhancing the history and heritage of the former Fossoli concentration and transit camp through the preservation of a complex memory space. The heritage assets of the Foundation also include an important museum dedicated to political and racial deportees, an archive, and the old synagogue of Carpi.

Figure 1. Aerial photograph of Fossoli Camp. Photographic archive of the "Primo Levi" Study and Documentation Centre - Fossoli Foundation (Csd-FF).

Fossoli Camp is located in the hamlet of Fossoli, which is situated in the countryside about six kilometres from Carpi city centre, near Modena in northern Italy. It is a site of many memories, given the many functions that the place has fulfilled over time. It is also a place with an historical significance that stretches beyond the Italian border.

Constructed during the Second World War, it has served several functions during its long history, initially as a result of the upheavals of war and later through the transition to peace and democracy. In its 28-year history, from 1942 to 1970, it has had seven different phases of use, followed by a long period of neglect and decay.

The present condition of the site reflects these multiple uses, the surviving area today being much modified compared to its appearance during the war years (1942–45) through rebuilding, restoration, and the growth of vegetation. In the space of nearly 30 years, the camp witnessed prisoners, internees, forced labourers, orphans, and refugees passing

through. A variety of people were brought to Fossoli through the events and consequences of the war, which continued to affect civilians well after it ended.

Fossoli Camp was originally composed of two areas: the Old Camp and the New Camp. The Old Camp, which was constructed three months before the New one, was demolished in 1946, so the camp seen today on Remesina Road is the New Camp.

Figure 2. View of Fossoli Camp. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Figure 3. View of Fossoli Camp. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Prisoner of War Camp – PG No.73

During the war, from spring 1942 to 8 September 1943, Fossoli was a prison camp (PG No. 73) where Allied soldiers and non-commissioned officers captured in North Africa – British, New Zealand, African and Australian – were interned. Their imprisonment was regulated by the international Geneva Convention rules for prisoners of war. When the first prisoners started to arrive in July 1942, the brick huts were not finished and a tented camp was erected in the area facing Remesina Road. Once the facility was completed (93 huts in the Old Camp on Grilli Road and 30 in the New Camp on Remesina Road), the number of prisoners reached 5000. Life in the camp seemed to be acceptable, as one testimony recalls:

"The food was fairly good, everyone contributed with a penny to buy musical instruments and play a concert, once a week the Italian guards took a hundred prisoners to the countryside for a healthy march, we would regularly receive packages from the Red Cross." (Luppi 2010: 26).

The prisoners' conditions worsened during the winter season when mud, cold, and parasites made living in the huts miserable and unbearable.

In July 1943, King Victor Emmanuel III deposed Mussolini and appointed a new government under Marshal Pietro Badoglio that was prepared to sign an armistice with the Allies. When the armistice was made public on 8 September 1943, the Germans occupied northern and central Italy, released Mussolini from imprisonment and appointed him as head of the Italian Social Republic, a puppet state in German-occupied northern Italy.

"I was in the camp when I received the good news that the British and American forces had invaded Italy [...] The thought of freedom didn't let a single prisoner sleep that night. But the good news didn't last long and the big surprise came the day after when the German tanks appeared." (Luppi 2010: 28).

This is how James Moore, a military prisoner at Fossoli, recalls 8 September. After the armistice the German army took the camp by force, disarming the Italian garrison and moving the prisoners and the Italian guards to camps located in Germany. The latter, together with over 650,000 Italian soldiers and officers captured by the German forces, were classified as Italian Military Internees (IMI) rather than prisoners of war and were interned in prison camps and forced to live and work in brutal conditions (Minardi 2016). The camp was not abandoned though, and it continued to play a key role in the persecution policy that Nazi-Fascism used against many people. Italians faced deportation on many different grounds during the final phase of the war: Jews, anti-fascists, opponents of the regime, homosexuals, gypsies, strikers were all persecuted and moved to Nazi concentration camps.

Figure 4. View of Fossoli Camp. (Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Figure 5. Map of the Fossoli Camp. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

National concentration camp for racial and political deportees

In early December 1943, the second use of the camp began: Fossoli became a special internment camp for Jews detained in Italy, in compliance with the *Manifesto of Verona*, issued on 14 November 1943 by the Republican Fascist Party, which stated at point seven: "Those belonging to the Jewish race are foreigners. During this war they belong to an enemy nation." (Luppi & Tamassia 2016: 7). This was combined with police ordinance

no. five, issued by the Italian Social Republic on 30 November 1943, which stated that all Jews who were in Italy were to be sent to provincial concentration camps and then transferred to a new national concentration camp for Jews. Fossoli was chosen to become the national concentration camp for those detained on the grounds of race.

The first group of Jews, mainly consisting of families, arrived in Fossoli in the early days of December 1943, but their number would soon rise exponentially. From February 1944, political opponents, partisans and anti-fascists also started to arrive. During this phase total segregation of internees was not enforced: builders responsible for maintenance, farmers and food suppliers also had access to the camp. Don Francesco Venturelli, the parish priest of Fossoli, regularly visited the camp to assist the prisoners and did his best to bring them help and comfort.

Figure 6. Fossoli Camp, 1943. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Primo Levi was an Italian Jewish chemist, writer, and Holocaust survivor. He was interned in Fossoli Camp in January 1944. In the first pages of his novel *If This Is a Man*, he recalls his brief detention in Fossoli before leaving for Auschwitz extermination camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. From among the 650 Italian Jews in his transport, Levi was one of only 20 who left Auschwitz alive. *Sunset at Fossoli* is the title of the poem that Primo Levi wrote when he returned to Italy. Levi was sent to Auschwitz when Fossoli camp was under Fascist control, which raises questions about Italy's role in the deportation chain.

Fossoli Camp became the main Italian transit camp for political and racial deportees. Between 26 January and 1 August 1944, over 2800 Jewish people and over 2600 political

prisoners were moved from here to Nazi concentration and extermination camps: Jews were sent to Auschwitz, Bergen Belsen, Buchenwald, and Ravensbrück, while political opponents were moved to Mauthausen, Flossenbürg, and Dachau.

It must be borne in mind that Fossoli was a well-placed, efficient link in the geography of deportation. According to the latest studies, we know that 12 train convoys for transporting Jews and three for political internees left Carpi railway station (Picciotto 2010; D'Amico et al. 2010). Primo Levi was on the one which left on 22 February 1944.

Polizei-und Durchgangslager / Camp for civilian internees

The third phase of the camp's use began on 15 March 1944: from this date onwards we must refer to two Fossoli camps, which occupied two distinct and separate areas, fulfilled different roles, and were administered by two different state agencies.

The New Camp became the *Polizei-und Durchgangslager*, a transit camp for political opponents and Jewish people, managed by the Nazi Security Police Headquarters based in Verona. The Camp was in turn divided into two sectors – the Jews' camp and the political internees' camp – separated by a mesh fence to prevent any possible contact between them.

The Old Camp, meanwhile, became a concentration camp for civilian internees which fell under the authority of the Police Headquarters in Modena and essentially fulfilled public safety purposes. The prisoners of the Old Camp (citizens of enemy nationalities, parents of national service dodgers, and common convicts) were not ordinarily destined to be deported, but various testimonies document that civilian internees who were considered dangerous were taken out of the Italian camp and added to the trains bound for the camps of the Reich. Little is known of how the Italian authorities managed this area of the Camp as it was demolished in 1946, nor how many people were confined, abused or killed (Ropa 2016).

Figure 7. Fossoli Camp, 1943. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Much remains to be investigated about the relationship between the two camps, the respective authorities – Nazi and Fascist – and their apparatuses; in part due to the lack of testimony, the memory of civilian internment has not left distinct traces in the collective memory and for a long time that period was not included in the historiography of Fossoli. The police and transit camp, one step along the extreme experience of deportation and extermination, ended up representing the entire series of events at Fossoli Camp during the war, obscuring the other steps. Likewise, for a long time historiography left Italian responsibility for the site in the shadows, or limited it, perpetuating the conventionally accepted idea of the good Italian (Focardi 2013).

During the period under Nazi control, the regime at the New Camp was marked more and more frequently by abuse and violence towards prisoners. The discipline grew stricter and stricter and the segregation was total. We know that upon entering the camp all the prisoners had to be registered and were given their distinguishing badge that they had to sew onto their clothes: a yellow band for Jews, a red triangle with a registration number for political dissidents. The ordinary maintenance work on the camp was performed by the internees, even that in the offices of the German administration. The personal files of those who were sent to Fossoli were compiled by some female internees who had to record internees' particulars, home address, and place and day of arrest. These files have never been found; as a result, reconstructing the list of those who passed through Fossoli has required a lengthy research project that is yet to be completed.[1]

On the evening of 11 July 1944, after roll call, 71 political internees – all men of different ages and political affiliations from various regions of Italy – were notified that they were to prepare to depart for Germany by order of the Verona Gestapo. At dawn on 12 July, 69 prisoners were loaded in three groups onto trucks and led to the Cibeno shooting range, a few kilometres from Fossoli, where they were shot at the edge of a mass grave that some Jewish internees had been forced to dig the previous day. Four men survived: Bernardo Carenini was left off the list and Teresio Olivelli managed to hide inside the camp, while Eugenio Jemina and Mario Fasoli escaped execution by rebelling. Before the execution, the death sentence had been pronounced in retaliation for an attack on German soldiers in Genoa. Historians have cast doubt on this motivation due to its many inconsistencies: in terms of time, because the massacre in Liguria had occurred a few days earlier; in terms of place because the distance from the attack nullifies the demonstrative purpose of the retaliation; and as a deterrent, because great lengths were taken to conceal the massacre from the population.

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[1] Reconstructing at least the names of those who travelled through the Fossoli camp between 1942 and 1944 is a long-term research project that the Fossoli Foundation began in 2008, with the research group composed of Marco Minardi, Roberta Mira, and Rossella Ropa, leading to the construction of the database 'I Nomi di Fossoli' (The Names of Fossoli): http://www.centrostudifossoli.org/i-nomi-di-fossoli.php.

On 17 and 18 May 1945, less than a month after the Liberation, the 67 victims were disinterred and identified. Solemn funeral rites for those killed were held in Milan cathedral on 24 May 1945, with large crowds of emotional citizens in attendance.

The advance of the front line, the danger of bombings, and the escalation of the partisan fight made the camp unsafe and difficult to control, so at the end of July, the German command decided to close it down and move the internees to Gries Camp, in the suburbs of Bolzano. The entire German Headquarters was transferred to Gries, along with the last remaining internees who would be deported from Bolzano over the following days. Gries Camp was active from the summer of 1944 until the end of the war (Venegoni 2004; Di Sante 2019).

Figure 8. Photograph of the watchtower located in the external perimeter of the Fossoli Camp, 1943. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Forced labourers collection camp
Nevertheless, the camp remained under the German General Plenipotentiary for Manpower: from August to November 1944, it operated as a transit site for labourers forced to work in the manufacturing plants of the Third Reich. This is the fourth phase of the camp; according to some estimates, between 5000 and 10,000 people passed through during this phase, which ended in November 1944 when the Allies bombed the camp (Mira 2016).

The camp's activities continued after the end of the war until the 1970s. It went through the difficult transition of the post-war period and some crucial historical events of those years.

Foreign refugees' collection centre
In 1946 the Old Camp was demolished, and the area returned to its former use as farmland; the New Camp was restored in the early months after the Liberation as a prison to hold Fascists, disbanded soldiers from the defeated forces, and individuals considered dangerous. From March 1946, the Allied authorities began sending stateless persons,

concentration camp survivors, refugees of various origins, and soldiers from the defeated armies to the camp. Until 1947, Fossoli was one of six collection centres for 'Undesirable Foreigners' in Italy managed by the Ministry of the Interior (Di Sante 2011). The painful and dramatic inheritance of totalitarian demographic policies and of a war that had devastated the lives of civilians was an army of refugees, of displaced persons wandering through a destroyed Europe. Many reports and requests for help document the ungovernable situation inside the fences of Fossoli. Significantly, this was the period in which a high boundary wall was built that delimited the area and isolated it, even visually, from the surrounding countryside.

The collection centre for foreigners is the final chapter of the wartime events in Fossoli. What happened from 1947 to 1970 belongs to the post-war period, even though Fossoli and Carpi continued to carry the burdensome inheritance that the war left to the town.

Nomadelfia
When the collection centre was vacated, the empty facilities were occupied by Don Zeno Saltini's 'Opera Piccoli Apostoli'. A lawyer, priest, and educator, Don Zeno Saltini (b. Fossoli di Carpi, 30 August 1900 – d. Nomadelfia, Grosseto, 15 January 1981) became parish priest in a town near Modena where he began to gather young, displaced orphans – the Piccoli Apostoli (Little Apostles). In 1947, he moved some one hundred youths belonging to the Opera Piccoli Apostoli to the Fossoli Camp; their numbers would soon exceed 800. The community, whose founding document was signed in Fossoli in February 1948, was significantly named 'Nomadelfia'; it was composed of young people and 'mothers by vocation' and would remain based in Fossoli until 1952. Over this period the brick huts were restored and the most evident signs of confinement from the war years were demolished: walls, barbed wire, watchtowers.

Nomadelfia was an extraordinary establishment, filled with excitement for its future plans, reflecting an Italian society that sought tenaciously to distance itself from a devastating war and found itself anew. This experience would soon clash with the situation in Italy, which was increasingly ideologically polarised, being part of a Europe divided by the Cold War. Nomadelfia encountered opposition on both sides of the ideological divide, as well as economic challenges which in 1952 led the community to move to the hills outside Grosseto, where it continues to this day, following the principles of communal living and working that inspired the first community (Rinaldi 2003).

St. Mark's village
The following year, 1953, the welfare institution for Julian-Dalmatian refugees rented the area to host Italian refugees from Istria. In 1954, the London Memorandum assigned Trieste to Italy and Istria to Yugoslavia to resolve the question of Italy's eastern border; no fewer than 250,000 Italian exiles fled those lands and were either housed in 20 refugee camps in Italy or migrated towards other countries (Cattaruzza 2007; Bresciani & Orlić 2011). Over 150 Istrian families arrived in Fossoli, then called Villaggio San Marco; in addition to the pain of exile, they had to face difficult integration into a community which

was mostly unaware of their vicissitudes, which often failed to understand the reasons for their migration, and which saw their presence as a threat to already uncertain work opportunities. All these factors made the integration of the two communities long and difficult. In addition, the refugees perceived their placement in a former concentration camp, (albeit partly modified by the renovations done by the Nomadelfia community), as further evidence of their marginalisation and exclusion. The story of this village, which represents the longest period of occupation of the camp, was long ignored, forgotten alongside the phenomenon of the Julian-Dalmatian exodus. The Istrians lived in the former concentration camp buildings for over 15 years, leaving a profound mark: the barracks were converted into houses, schools, workshops, and manufacturing plants; one became the parish church of the village; the open spaces became gardens, vegetable patches, football pitches. All these transformations helped to foster the integration of the Istrian families into the town's society. In 1970, the last Julian families left Villaggio San Marco and moved to Carpi city centre (Molinari 2006). The camp was then abandoned until 1984, when the Municipality of Carpi became its owner.

Between history and memory

In the years that followed the Villaggio San Marco period, the camp rapidly became derelict. The work of the Fossoli Camp Foundation, founded in 1996, managed to halt part of the deterioration and collapse, which worsened in 2012 due to earthquakes and heavy snowfall. In 2004, Hut no. 14, in the Jewish sector of the New Camp, was rebuilt and restored to its original appearance. Today, only a small portion of the original camp remains, but sufficient to allow us to catch a glimpse of 30 crucial years in Italian, war, and reconstruction history.

In 2012, the Fossoli Foundation, in partnership with the Municipality of Carpi and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage (MiBACT) and with the help of the University of Bologna, launched a project for the conservation and enhancement of the site. A large number of professionals (experts in restoration, construction practice, botany, garden maintenance, etc.) have been called in to carry out inspections, monitoring, and conservation work at regular intervals, on both the buildings and the landscape. The extremely fragile remains of what constitutes the architectural part of the camp are in fact surrounded, and in some cases overrun, by vegetation (Ugolini & Delizia 2017).

Fossoli undoubtedly remains an unusual case among Holocaust sites because it is an historical site, an archaeological site, and a place of memory, all at the same time. The project is guided by the principle of auxiliary intervention on existing structures, strengthening a structural system where attempts to repair what remains. The repair work is minimal, designed to provide the existing buildings with a level of construction quality that will lead, with future improvements, to successful protection against earthquakes and durability against the wear-and-tear of time (Ugolini & Delizia 2017).

To date, four huts have been made safe and visitors can finally enter these. The next step is to build a visitor centre with digital devices to enrich the visitor experience.

The Museum and Monument dedicated to the Political and Racial Deportee to the Nazi Death Camps

The presence of Fossoli Camp was at the root of the creation of the Museum and Monument dedicated to the Political and Racial Deportee to the Nazi Death Camps. It is the first museum of this kind in Italy.

On the tenth anniversary of the Resistance, in 1955, when deportation was still a little-discussed phenomenon not just in Italy (Lagrou 2003), the Municipality of Carpi organised an impressive event in Carpi to celebrate the Resistance in the Extermination Camps and held the first national exhibition on deportation to Nazi concentration camps. This exhibition was destined to change Italy's perception of the phenomenon of deportation. In 1961, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the unification of Italy, the exhibition returned to Carpi with new documents, contributions, and knowledge (Luppi & Ruffini 2005).

In the few years between the two exhibitions there had been a shift in both cultural and civil attitudes, with public sensitivity towards the phenomenon of deportation becoming more attentive and receptive (Gordon 2013). It was then possible to go beyond occasional moments of remembrance and periodic celebrations to begin building something more lasting: the Museum and Monument to the Political and Racial Deportee.

On 14 October 1973, after 10 years of work to restore and redesign the Castello dei Pio in the historic city centre of Carpi, the Museum-Monument was opened by the President of the Republic during an event whose ceremony evoked those of 1955 and 1961 (Luppi & Tamassia 2016).

The architects who designed the Museum-Monument (BBPR Studio), like many artists and other key figures involved in its creation, construction and decoration, were also witnesses to the events that they depicted; in their work, we sense the urgent need to provide solid, physical reminders as tools to fight against oblivion. At the end of the text by Primo Levi that forms the introduction to the first catalogue of the Museum-Monument in 1973, we read:

"*Here we touch the depths of barbarism, and it is our hope that what is documented here be seen and remembered as an aberration not to be repeated into the most distant future.*"(Steiner 1973: 4).

Thus, from the beginning, Fossoli Camp and the Museum-Monument established a relationship that connects the physical, historical site to the representation of those events to convey the knowledge of the past to present and future generations. The creation of the Museum is a major milestone in the creation of a memory system around Fossoli and it has led to the development in the Carpi area of an educational trail designed to aid visitors' understanding of history through significant places.

Figure 9. Inauguration of the Museum and Monument to the Racial and Political Deportee, 14 October 1973. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Figure 10. Detail of the Courtyard of the Stele, Museum and Monument to the Racial and Political Deportee. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Figure 11. Hall of Names in Museum and Monument to the Racial and Political Deportee. Photographic archive Csd-FF.

Fossoli Camp today

In 1996, the Fossoli Camp Foundation began an intense educational programme on memory and human rights. Among the tasks set out in its charter, the Fossoli Foundation aims to protect and increase the value of both the camp and the Museum-Monument (managed by the Foundation since 1996 and 2001 respectively); to promote historical and documentary research on Fossoli Camp; and to plan and activate initiatives of a popularising, educational, and scientific nature.

The key priority is to make guided visits effective and to underscore the multitude of memories. Today Fossoli Camp is visited by over 40,000 people every year.

The main goal is to produce, through the conservation and enhancement of a complex memory space, different reflections not only about our past but also about our contemporary society, using art and education as the primary tools.

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The Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg. A Difficult Heritage and a Public Space

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Abstract

The former Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg reflect politics and public debates in Germany between suppression, non-observance and direct reference to the National Socialist Past since 1945. Within this debate, various ways of dealing with the architectural heritage of the National Socialism exist. Those approaches are often contradictory. Since 1945 (and until today), the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds have been perceived as an important heritage. However, despite innumerable tourists visiting the area, parts of the buildings were removed and through ignoring the historic past of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, an everyday usage of the area was established. As of the public representation of the city, Nuremberg's Nazi Past was played down and hidden. Simultaneously, considerable efforts were made to maintain and renovate areas of the Party Rally Grounds, partly out of a pragmatic manner as well as to document and educate about history. The special role Nuremberg played under National Socialism, led to a particularly prominent culture of remembrance (*Erinnerungskultur*). However, this isn't the outcome of a simple success story coming from initial public suppression to a conscious examination of the National Socialist Past. It has been a rather contradictory non – linear process, continuing until today.

Keywords: Nuremberg, heritage, Nazi Party Rally Grounds

Introduction

Together with Tempelhof Airport and the Olympic Stadium, both in Berlin, as well as the unfinished *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength Through Joy) seaside resort Prora on Rügen Island, the Nuremberg Nazi Party Rally Grounds are among the most extensive architectural remains from the time of National Socialism in Germany (Doosry 2002; Schmidt & Urban 2006; Schmidt 2017a). Millions of copies of images from the annual Nuremberg Nazi Party Rallies, the biggest propaganda events of National Socialism, were made available to the public. The last Nazi Party Rally of 1938 alone lasted eight days and brought a million people to the city (Zelnhefer 2002; Urban 2007; Schmidt 2016).

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However, the architectural heritage of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds and the presence of the Party Rallies in the media in the shape of photographs by Hitler's photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, and of the film *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the Will) by Leni Riefenstahl which met with world-wide recognition, are only part of Nuremberg's difficult heritage from the time of National Socialism. Nuremberg was also the city where the anti-Semitic rabble-rouser, Julius Streicher, published his newspaper *Der Stürmer* (The Stormer). In Nuremberg, during the 1935 Party Rally, the Nuremberg Race Laws were proclaimed, establishing the legal foundation for further persecution of the Jews. In addition, the Nuremberg Trial of the main war criminals was also viewed rather negatively in the early post-war decades and was therefore perceived as a burden on the city's reputation.

Thus, Nuremberg has clearly been confronted by its heritage from the time of National Socialism and could hardly avoid the issue of its role during the Third Reich (Gregor 2008; Schmidt 2017b). All the more so since memories of National Socialism were clearly visible in the cityscape – mainly on the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds (Maconald 2009).

A Look Back – Planning and Construction on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds 1933 to 1939

It was in no way clear from the beginning that after 1933, Nuremberg's most important leisure area on Dutzendteich Lake in the south eastern district of the city, covering an area of eleven square kilometres, was going to be transformed into the Nazi Party Rally Grounds with numerous parade grounds, assembly halls and a stadium (Dietzfelbinger 2002; Weimer 2007). The project started on a relatively small scale, when the decision was taken to destroy Luitpold Grove, a park from the turn of the century, and to construct in its place the Luitpold Arena, a parade ground for the *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Troopers, SA) and *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron, SS). This was largely completed for the 1933 Party Rally, and from then on, every year a ceremony was held here, to commemorate the dead of the SS and SA and to consecrate their new standards.

But the Luitpold Arena construction project, completed in a short time and directed by the municipality, was only the beginning. Nuremberg's Lord Mayor, Willy Liebel, pushed the project for a new large hall for the Nazi Party Congress, designed by Nuremberg architect, Ludwig Ruff, and subsidised by the German Reich. In 1935, the foundation stone for the Congress Hall on Dutzendteich Lake was laid. It was only partially completed by 1939, and therefore never used during the Nazi Party Rallies. The beginning of World War II basically also signalled the end of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds construction project, so that "*the first giant among the structures of the Third Reich*", as Hitler put it at the foundation stone ceremony, remained an unfinished major structure on Dutzendteich Lake in 1945.

It was only after the Luitpold Arena construction project and after the first planning phase of the Congress Hall that Albert Speer was commissioned to develop an overall design for the Nazi Party Rally Grounds. As far as possible, he had to integrate existing construction plans (Luitpold Arena, Congress Hall) as well as the already established event

area of the Zeppelin Meadow into his overall plan. By adding a large axis (*Große Straße* – Great Road) Speer tried to create a certain degree of symmetry. Every structure and every parade ground were to be given a counterpart, so that the entire grounds would give the impression of an overall impression of a cohesive plan – an attempt which was only partially successful.

Thus, the Great Road, the central axis of the grounds, meets the existing Luitpold Arena at an angle. This necessitated a long building as a kind of separation which was to be used as an exhibition hall. The counterpart of the very large Congress Hall was also comparatively small – a hall which was to host Hitler's speeches on cultural topics. Neither this hall nor the exhibition hall proceeded beyond the construction model stage, though. The Great Road is also important for the Grounds because it runs in a north-westerly direction, immediately aligned with Nuremberg Imperial Castle, thus creating a symbolic link between mediaeval Nuremberg, the city of Albrecht Dürer and of the imperial diets, and the 'new Nuremberg' and the 'Temple City of the Movement', one of the names Nazi propaganda gave to the Party Rally Grounds. Especially Nuremberg's Lord Mayor Willy Liebel emphasized the alleged connection between the medieval Nuremberg and the city under the National Socialism. He gifted Hitler a detailed reproduction of the Imperial Sword, which is part of the Imperial Regalia – as well as the Imperial Crown and Imperial sceptre. After the *Anschluss* (annexation) of Austria into Nazi Germany, the Imperial Regalia were brought from Vienna to Nuremberg and were supposed to be displayed on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds. In the nineteenth century, Nuremberg was already perceived as a typical German city linked to a romanticised idea of a great German history. During National Socialism this was further stepped up: Nuremberg was supposedly the "*most German of all German cities*" (Schmidt 2013: 137).

In the south-easterly direction, the Great Road led to the so-called *Märzfeld* (March Field) which was to be used for the Wehrmacht's demonstration manoeuvres. Only a small part of the March Field was actually completed so the Wehrmacht events were held on the Zeppelin Field.

The German Stadium was the last and biggest construction project on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds. It was intended to be the world's biggest stadium, over 100 metres high and with room for 400,000 spectators. Although all that happened was bringing in construction site equipment and preliminary excavation work, the German Stadium project is of outstanding importance for the architectural history of National Socialism. For here, for the first time, Albert Speer had planned a building which was to be the largest of its kind worldwide. As a consequence of this boundless construction the question arose of where the large amounts of building materials were to be procured. Speer came up with a typical solution which will become typical in the subsequent years. With the aid of loans, he enabled the SS to set up the company *Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke* (German Earth and Stone Works), which ran granite quarries deploying concentration camp inmates as slave labourers. Thus, with Speer's cooperation, the concentration camps in Flossenbürg, Mauthausen, Groß-Rosen and Natzweiler were established to produce granite for Speer's monumental structures (Jaskot 2000; Jaskot 2002).

This directly links the construction project 'Party Rally Grounds' to the crimes of National Socialism. The same applies to the camp area south-east of the Party Rally Grounds, where between 1933 and 1938 the SA, SS, Hitler Youth and other groups were housed in large tented settlements. During the war, the camp infrastructure was used as a complex for prisoners of war, as a distribution centre for slave labourers and as a collecting camp for the deportation of Jews (Lessau 2020).

Apart from the Luitpold Arena, the best-known part of the Party Rally Grounds is probably the Zeppelin Field which still exists today. It was designed by Albert Speer and almost completed by 1938; comprising the parade ground and surrounding stands. As one of the few implemented projects it hosted several events: the Wehrmacht's demonstration manoeuvres, the roll-calls of the Reich Labour Service and the Political Leaders, as well as a so-called 'Day of the Community' were all held here. The area also became famous because of the 'Light Dome' formed by anti-aircraft searchlights and staged every year after 1936 during the evening event with the Political Leaders – an impressive staging of the idea of the so-called 'people's community'.

Figure 1. The architecture of the Documentations Centre Nazi Party Rally Grounds is a counterpart to the architecture of 1935 (©Documentation Centre Nazi Party Rally Grounds D-0138-01).

The Nazi Party Rally Grounds since 1945 – Ways of Dealing with a Difficult Heritage in a Public Urban Space

Today the visible built heritage consists mainly of three major remains of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds: the two kilometres long Great Road is most often used as a parking area for major events. The unfinished Congress Hall serves as a storage hall, as the rehearsal stage for Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra, and houses the Documentation Centre

Former Nazi Party Rally Grounds. And finally, the Zeppelin Field today serves as a sports ground and event space for major events such as the music festival *Rock im Park*.

Unlike memorial sites such as concentration camps, the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds are not a closed space, but part of the city and accessible to the public at any time. So, visitors, tourists, passers-by, and Nuremberg citizens alike have been confronted with these large, unmissable built remnants of National Socialism in their everyday lives. Various ways of dealing with this historic heritage developed, which since 1945 have often existed simultaneously and parallel to each other. (Dietzfelbinger 1990; Jaskot 2008; Schmidt 2015).

Visiting

As early as 1945, people made a point of visiting the Party Rally Grounds as a symbolically important heritage of National Socialism. Thus, the large swastika sculpture topping the centre of the Zeppelin Grandstand was shown on the first title page of Time Magazine after the end of the war, together with an American GI who had raised his right arm in a Hitler salute which was presumably intended as an ironic statement. The first Jewish service of worship after 1945 was also held on the Zeppelin Grandstand, conducted by an American military rabbi. A few days after the conquest of Nuremberg, after a celebration in the city centre, the US Army also held a victory parade on the Zeppelin Field. At the end of the parade, the swastika sculpture was blown up, and this was eternalised on film. In the following decades, the US Army symbolically renamed the Zeppelin Field 'Soldiers' Field' and inscribed this name in large letters on the Zeppelin Grandstand.

Not only Americans, but also German groups have come to visit the Grounds, mainly the Zeppelin Field, as a historic witness. For instance, the *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* (German Trade Union Congress) held its Labour Day event on the 1 May 1947 on the Zeppelin Grandstand. At the other end of the political spectrum, the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft* (Sudeten German Homeland Association) in the mid-1950s held a major Sudeten German Day and here of all places, at the historic location of the Party Rally Grounds, demanded the restitution of the Sudeten region. Major religious events such as a World Congress of Jehovah's Witnesses and some of Billy Graham's crusades, deliberately referenced the historic location of Zeppelin Field with the intention of countering the National Socialist past with prayer and religious ceremony.

Not only official events have attracted visitors to this location, also innumerable tourists have visited the Nazi Party Rally Grounds since 1945 (Macdonald 2009: 149–152; Schmidt 2012). In the first post-war decades they were largely left alone to wander the grounds without any information or support from guides. Today, the Zeppelin Field is one of the most visited locations in Nuremberg and the topic of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds is an established part of the city's tourism concept. The Documentation Centre Former Nazi Party Rally Grounds alone welcomes more than 300,000 visitors every year.

Removing

Parts of Nuremberg's urban society, also parts of German post-war society as a whole would have preferred to get rid of the burden of the Nazi past as fast as possible. In the

case of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds, there was the tangible hope of erasing the memory of the National Socialist past by removing the buildings. When, for example the US Army returned the Luitpold Arena which had previously served as a parking space for military vehicles to the City of Nuremberg, the city had all the structures from the time of National Socialism demolished and the area transformed back into a park. Thus the best-known venue of the film *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the Will) disappeared in the green of meadows and trees.

'Removing' could, however, also take on a completely different meaning. In 1963, a group of young Nuremberg architects demanded that the Congress Hall should be dismantled. Their idea, headlined a '*Schöneres Nürnberg*' (More Beautiful Nuremberg), considered the Congress Hall a disruptive presence, making the whole area offensive. The monumental Nazi structure should no longer stand in the urban space just like that. Instead, they planned the construction of an art gallery and a teacher training college on the flat hill consisting of the remains of the then demolished Congress Hall. The architects did not succeed with their plan: there was too much interest by the municipal administration in a possibly high-quality use of the existing building, which after all, although it was never completed, had cost eighty-two million Reichsmarks. An investment they did not want to lose. The construction of the Documentation Centre 2001 also aims to overcome the ideological message of National Socialist architecture by modern counter-architecture and partially destroying the Congress Hall (Handa 2017).

Probably the most spectacular act of destruction of a building on the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds concerned the Zeppelin Grandstand in 1967. Stating as the official reason that the rows of pillars to the right and left above the main grandstand were dilapidated, the city had them blown up. Certainly, another factor contributed to this decision: in the years before, a group of Israeli visitors had complained about mosaics on the ceiling of these arcades which were reminiscent of swastikas. The decision to blow up the pillars triggered a vehement debate in the city: many, for example taxi drivers, argued that such important tourist sites simply could not be destroyed. Others considered this demolition a gesture of helplessness, since not only the swastika mosaics, but all the buildings and the entire grounds were reminiscent of National Socialism. In addition, Nuremberg Motor Sports Club which since 1947 had used the grandstand for a major car and motorcycle race also wanted to keep the Stone Grandstand and continue using it. Quite a few of the critics of the decision to blow up the pillars came from right-wing and right-wing extremist circles, a fact which confirmed the city's intentions.

As a consequence, the pillars were then blown up in 1967 in spite of all the resistance. It was the last spectacular act of destruction as a symbolic gesture of the annihilation of the National Socialist past (an intention which however was never officially acknowledged by the City Council). But still today, here and there, remnants of the Party Rally Grounds are removed, for example when foundations of the March Field are in the way of new building projects for the Langwasser district.

Figure 2. The Zeppelin Grandstand of Albert Speer 1938 (©Documentation Centre Nazi Party Rally Grounds Ph-0423-02).
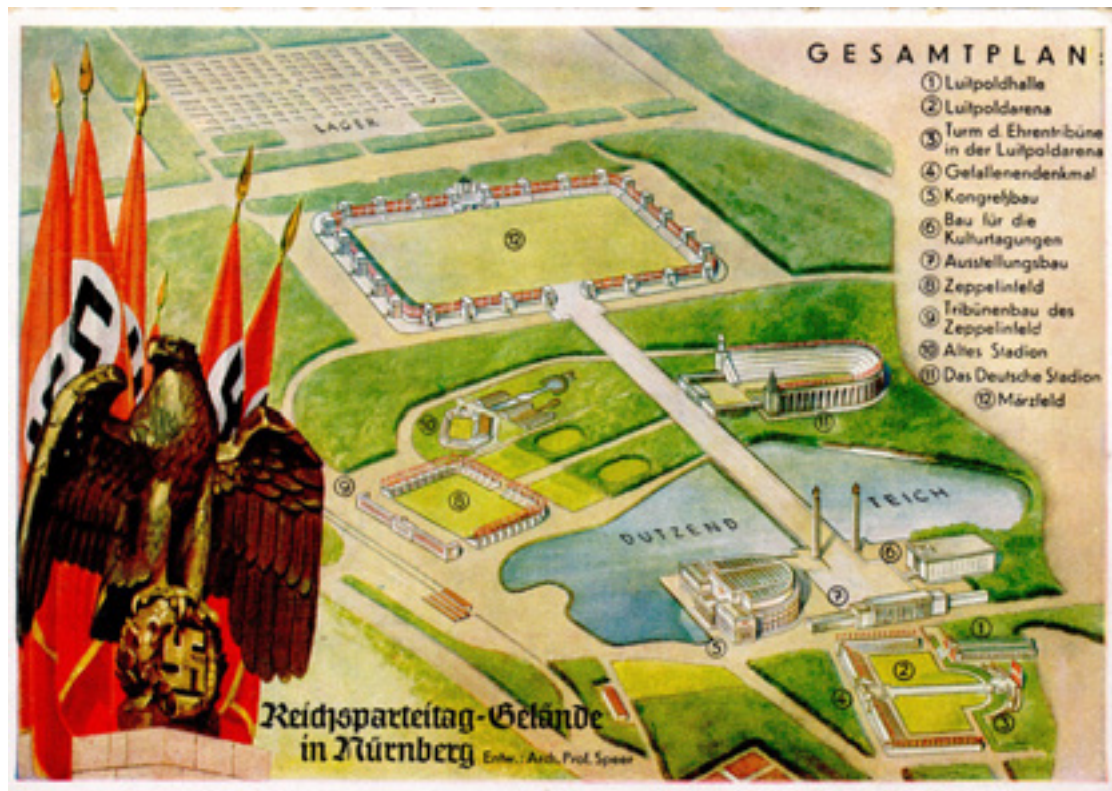
Figure 3. The overall design for the Nazi Party Rally Grounds by Albert Speer, Propaganda-Postcard in 1937 (©Documentation Centre Nazi Party Rally Grounds Ph-1167-00).

Ignoring

Many uses of the grounds since 1945 have not taken into account the historic past of the area and have used them in a completely pragmatic manner. Numerous sports and leisure events are a good example of this: joggers run around Dutzendteich Lake, alone or as part

of major running events. Thousands of breeders of German Shepherd Dogs meet on the Zeppelin Field for a central competition. These and many other events have one thing in common: they see the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds and its structures mainly as an event venue – and not as a historic location.

This (at least seemingly) ahistorical use started at a relatively early date with the 'Norisring Races' which have been held annually at the Zeppelin Grandstand since 1947. This motor sports competition started off with motorcycles and today also includes racing cars. The event organisers see the Zeppelin Grandstand merely as a grandstand, not as the location where Hitler made his speeches and where thousands of people cheered him. Correspondingly, in this context, the grandstand is not referred to as the Zeppelin Grandstand, but as the Stone Grandstand.

But the organisers of the races have not been averse to using the monumental buildings constructed for the Party Rallies for their purposes: the so-called Stone Grandstand has figured as the logo for the Norisring Races on many posters. Nuremberg Motor Sports Club used the so-called Stone Grandstand as an impressive backdrop, and was therefore a fierce opponent of blowing up the pillars in 1967.

It is probably the predominant approach to use of the grounds just to ignore the architecture and the history of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds. This applies both to major events and to some quite major building projects. So, the Nuremberg Fun Fair is held twice per year, immediately adjacent to the Congress Hall. The monumental granite facade of the Congress Hall serves as backdrop for the stalls, rides and the Ferris wheel, making it well-known to nearly every Nuremberg child – who however has no idea what use had originally been intended for this building.

Ignoring history is virtually a prerequisite for some of the projects. So, for example, a group of investors going by the name of Congress and Partners in 1987 suggested that the entire Congress Hall should be transformed into a large shopping centre, including a hotel, penthouse accommodation on the roof and many other features (Macdonald 2008: 96–99). The plan was to completely commercialise this monumental building from the Nazi era. Only the granite facade would have remained. This project finally failed, not least because sections of the public could not envisage such a use for this building without any reference to its history. This type of comprehensive and complete use, however, presupposes that history should not restrict the current desire to use the building in any way. This again requires a public process of negotiation about whether this is deemed acceptable in every individual case. When the city district of Langwasser was planned on the area of the former camps for Party Rally participants and on the area of the incompletely constructed March Field in the south-east of the Party Rally Grounds, the deliberate decision was taken that neither the architecture of the grounds nor the history of the Party Rallies should in any way influence or impair the development of the new city district, in an architectural or intellectual/spiritual way. The logical consequence was that the towers on the March Field area which had already been completed were blown up, and the stones were used for paving terraces and garden paths.

Unlike the blowing up of the pillars on the Zeppelin Grandstand which happened roughly at the same time, the demolition in Langwasser did not meet with any protest or discussion. 'Ignoring' history in this case was an official decision, so to speak, and actually an attempt to create an ahistorical space. This was not successful in the long run, though. In past years, historians, but also inhabitants of the Langwasser city district have taken a very intensive look at the history of this location, thus dealing with the camps on the Party Rally Grounds and with the March Field area. In the course of this process there was palpable regret that so many architectural traces of the former use of the areas during the Party Rallies had been so completely destroyed.

Those who use the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds for leisure sports in their everyday lives, those who live on the former grounds or those who are on their way to a football match in Nuremberg stadium will not think about the National Socialist past of this area all the time, and they don't have to do that. This everyday use, however, makes a decisive contribution to the fact that there is a mainly friendly atmosphere on the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds, which are far from being a cult site for backward right-wing extremist groups. Such everyday use, by ignoring history, does not imbue the buildings of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds with a special honour or dignity – an honour and dignity the Nazi builders of the Party Rally would probably have desired for the grounds.

Figure 4. Pragmatic use of the Zeppelin Field as "Soldiers field" for baseball (©Documentation Centre Nazi Party Rally Grounds 03-1-01).

Hiding

The early post-war decades were often characterised by attempts to hide Nuremberg's Nazi past, hence also the history of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds. No references were to be found in city guidebooks and in the public domain of the city as to where the Party Rally Grounds had been. Visitors encountered locked doors and no information was provided for them. This gap was only inadequately filled by taxi drivers for whom the tour to the Zeppelin Grandstand was a profitable business, or by the janitor of the Congress Hall and the people operating the takeaway kiosks on the grounds. The entrance hall in the Zeppelin Grandstand, a kind of foyer for VIP visitors to the Party Rallies, was only accessible after the mid-1980s when the first exhibition on the history of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds was established there.

In a very pragmatic manner, the US Army hid any unambiguous Nazi symbols they found on the grounds. A swastika mosaic in one of the stairwells of the Zeppelin Grandstand was painted over in green without further ado, and in one of the halls of the former SS barracks, they simply put a carpet over the marble floor which was also decorated with swastikas.

'Hiding' or the attempt to hide not only concerned the history of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, but Nuremberg's entire Nazi past. Thus, for decades, not only the foyer of the Zeppelin Grandstand was closed to the public, but the public was also barred from visiting Court Room 600 in the Nuremberg Palace of Justice where the Nuremberg Trial of the Main War Criminals had been held. Although again and again mainly foreign tourists wanted to visit the location of the trials, the Bavarian judiciary tried for a long time to evade this issue. Today, the building houses a permanent exhibition on the history of the Nuremberg Trials which is visited by 90,000 people from home and abroad every year.

Figure 5. The blown-up pillars of the Zeppelin Grandstand in 1967 (© Municipal Archive of the city of Nuremberg A 40 / L 706-19).

Maintaining

One would think that in view of the huge damage to Nuremberg's image caused by National Socialism, the citizens of Nuremberg might have wanted to do away with the architectural heritage of National Socialism as fast as possible. There were indeed such demolition activities, as we have already seen, but at the same time, starting in the immediate post-war years, efforts were made to maintain the buildings, insofar as they could be used. So, a significant sum was invested to make the unfinished Congress Hall building safe and useable in order to hold the Great German Construction Exhibition there in 1949. A year later, the City of Nuremberg even celebrated its nine-hundredth anniversary in the former Nazi building, with a major exhibition. Both exhibitions, however, avoided any direct reference to the Congress Hall's Nazi past. Instead, the building was referred to as *Ausstellungsrundbau* (Exhibition Rotunda) (Schmidt 2017a: 52) – although most visitors, of course, knew only too well the era in which this structure had been created.

In the following decades, large projects again and again aimed to maintain the architectural remains of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds. For example, in the 1980s, the Great Road was extensively refurbished so that it could continue to be used as a large parking space for *Nürnberg Messe* (Trade Fair and Exhibition Centre) – whose beginnings were linked to the above-mentioned exhibitions in the Congress Hall. Since 1973, the buildings on the Reich Party Rally Grounds have been listed as historical monuments, and in 2008 it was even discussed whether the buildings should be included on the UNESCO-World Heritage List (Macdonald 2018).

'Maintaining' is also an important key word for the current discussions concerning the Zeppelin Field (Lehner 2015). After a comprehensive examination of the stands in 2007 and 2008, it was obvious that the entire structure was threatened with complete dilapidation. A fundamental decision therefore became necessary: whether to maintain the entire structure or to leave it to decay in the medium term. Until today, this has remained a cause for controversy, one of the reasons being the significant cost of the refurbishment. The overall cost of refurbishing the entire structure including the grandstand and the visitors' stands is estimated to be 80 million Euros. After a long public discussion and intensive debates with experts during a symposium, the City of Nuremberg decided to maintain the Zeppelin Field as a learning location. The Zeppelin Field should be a place where to educate the public on the complex history of the Party Rally Grounds, thus on the difficulty of dealing with uncomfortable heritage, but also where to preserve the memory of WWII and understand the implications of that dramatic event in our history (Zelnhefer 2017). The Federal Republic will bear half the cost, and the Free State of Bavaria will also make a financial contribution.

The objective of the refurbishment is to keep the area accessible and to make sure that this much visited location can continue to be used as a location for historical education. The alternative would be increasing decay right through to the state of a ruin which would have to be fenced in for safety reasons. To present a ruin – then with an almost romantic atmosphere, with more and more shrubs and trees growing on it – behind a fence, to

present this ruin as Nuremberg's conclusive way of dealing with its historic heritage, does however seem difficult. Nevertheless, the plan to maintain the area, particularly in view of the cost, has not managed to convince all its critics (Knigge 2015). In part, the value of the Zeppelin Grandstand and Zeppelin Field as learning locations is questioned – and from this point of view, any maintenance of the area with its significant cost can indeed hardly be justified (Herbert 2015).

In 2015, more than 230,000 people visited the Nazi Party Rally Grounds with guided tours (Macdonald 2006). At least as many people explore the site on their own, so that at least half a million people visit the party rally grounds each year out of historical interest (Bühl-Gramer 2019). Only about a quarter of these visitors are school classes, the rest are educational travellers and tourists in groups and individually. About half of the visitors come from abroad – at least that is the figure for the Documentation Centre Party Rally Grounds (Christmeier 2009). This high number of visitors to the area as well as the successful educational work done on the grounds would very much underline the area's value as a learning location. In future this educational function is to be further improved with better development of the area and an extended list of information points. The hall inside the Zeppelin Grandstand which was hardly ever open to the public is to be made accessible and explained with commentary. As a supplement to the Documentation Centre Former Nazi Party Rallies, the Zeppelin Field area which already has a large number of visitors today will then provide a great variety of information as well as learning locations and programmes. This is also necessary to provide the historic information to tourist visitors who sometimes come to the Zeppelin Field without any preparation.

Figure 6. Zeppelin Grandstand with graffiti against war and NSU (so called "Nationalsocialist Underground) in 2018 (©Alexander Schmidt).

Conclusion: A less difficult heritage – the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in the 21st century

As far as its role during National Socialism is concerned, Nuremberg is a special case. Only a few German cities played such a prominent role in National Socialist propaganda. Because of this, Nuremberg was less able than other cities to ignore its Nazi past – although such attempts were indeed made. In addition, the architectural remains of National Socialism in Nuremberg were so extensive that their mere scale literally forced the city to deal with them in one way or another.

The entire spectrum of ways of dealing with this area, from removing to maintaining, from hiding to visiting and ignoring could be observed in Nuremberg, not in any chronological order, but simultaneously and partially contradicting each other. So there is no success story of suppression in the beginning right through to an enlightened *Erinnerungskultur* (culture of remembrance), but rather there has been a contradictory process which in parts has lasted until today – however with a clear trend towards an active and purposeful way of dealing with the buildings, including their maintenance. The exhibition 'Fascination and Terror' which opened relatively early in the mid-1980s is clear proof of this open way of dealing with the city's own Nazi past and with the built heritage of the Party Rally Grounds.

Since the 1990s at the latest, we can also no longer talk of a "burden of the past" in dealing with the buildings on the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds (Macdonald 2016) – on the contrary: now, a visit to the Party Rally Grounds has become a fixed element of Nuremberg tourism and has made a significant contribution to the increase in visitors to Nuremberg. The question of maintaining the dilapidated buildings constitutes the first challenge for the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds. An open discussion must be held as to whether this maintenance is necessary, and if so, why. Intensive discussions have been held in Nuremberg on this issue, and they will stay with us for some time to come. Even more than eighty years after construction began, the sheer size of the monumental buildings on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds continues to provoke questions about the right way to handle them, about their preservation, decay or conversion. Their monumentality did not allow them to be completely ignored. This ultimately helped Nuremberg to deal with this initially difficult legacy.

Dealing with great numbers of visitors (including tourists) is a second challenge. The topic of National Socialism does not fit in a quick checklist of supposed tourist hot-spots. How can you reach a large number of people with a low threshold programme, even one with critical content, thus going beyond a superficial sightseeing tour? Dealing with the buildings on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds today has become only one part of a comprehensive culture of remembrance in Nuremberg. This also comprises the presentation of the Nuremberg Human Rights Award, the way the city deals with the history and heritage of the Nuremberg Trials and the establishment of an 'International Nuremberg Principles Academy' dedicated to the further development of international criminal law. Both the Human Rights Award and the Nuremberg Academy refer to possible consequences and to concepts which have developed from the events during National Socialism. In view of right-wing terrorist threats such as the so-called

Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (NSU – National Socialist Underground Movement) in Germany with a series of murders during the past few years, in view of growing right-wing populist movements in Germany the way we deal with the architectural and spiritual heritage of National Socialism has become even more urgent and important. The buildings on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds also stand for the Nazi ideology of a homogeneous people, the so-called *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) created via demarcation and exclusion of other peoples and people. In Nuremberg we can show where this ideology can lead.

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Berlin Tempelhof:
From Heritage Site to Creative Industry Hub?

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Abstract

Tempelhof Airport in Berlin mirrors the political, social and cultural developments in the capital and - broadly - in the whole country. Tempelhof has witnessed the heyday of the 1920s aviation, figured in the National Socialists' power politics and acquired a reputable status in the course of the 1948/49 Berlin Airlift. During and after the Cold War, Tempelhof had been functioning as an airport, before it was closed down amidst protests in 2008. Today, the vast grassy airfield is open as a park, whilst various plans are being devised for the future usage of the former airport building.

October 2018 marked the 10th anniversary since the air traffic had been discontinued. It is, therefore, an appropriate occasion to look at the Tempelhof case anew. This paper attempts to shed light on how the manifold history and symbolic value of Tempelhof Airport is – or is not – being reflected within the current usage of the site, as well as in various proposals for its future developments, and how the latter correspond to the unique atmosphere of this place. Tempelhof's rich and unusual history re-emerges in virtually every decision about the future of the site: from the idea to turn the site into an encompassing 'creative hub,' to economic questions (making the building more accessible to the public, using the terminal hall and the apron for mass events, and the like), right to the opposition of large groups of locals to the Senate of Berlin's politics.

Keywords: Tempelhof, Airport, Berlin, Heritage, Creative Hub

The Past

The very site where the grassy airfield is located today has been unbuilt for centuries. It was used as a parade ground and, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a suitable space for amateurish aerial experiments (Ahlbrecht & Henning 2008). Regular air traffic began in 1923. In 1926, Deutsche Lufthansa was founded and Tempelhof became its home airport. When a new modern and cleanly rendered terminal building was unveiled several years later, Tempelhof was already one of the busiest airports in Europe, next to Paris and London (Meiners 2011; Ayrault & Bowdler 2000). After the National Socialists had come to power in 1933, Tempelhof became part of the plans to transform Berlin into

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Welthauptstadt Germania. Ernst Sagebiel, an NSDAP member but otherwise a man uninterested in politics, was assigned the task of designing a new building, one that would represent the ruling political discourse in a grand style (Dittrich 2005, 2006).

Figure 1. Tempelhof airport: a view from the runway (Photograph taken by author).

Figure 2. Tempelhof airport: one of the inner courtyards (Photograph taken by author).

Even though the edifice (Fig. 1) has never been finished (technically speaking), back then it was one of the biggest monolithic standing structures in the world (Figs. 2 and 3), together with the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. Although the statistics changed after Pentagon was opened in 1943, the sheer monumentality of Tempelhof has been one of its defining characteristics since the end of the 1930s and plays a key role - explicitly or otherwise - in virtually all discussions about the current and future use of the site today. Tempelhof is the biggest listed building in Europe and its intriguing materiality cannot be disregarded.

Another defining characteristic within the story of Tempelhof - next to the site being an embodiment of airmindedness (Adey 2011, 2010; Cwerner et al. 2009; Gordon 2008)[1] - is the decisive volte-face of Berlin's post-war history: the perception of Tempelhof changed completely when the site turned into the focal point of the 1948/49 Berlin Airlift, when

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[1] Adey 2011 and Adey 2010 expand on the concept of *airmindedness*, whilst Cwerner et al. 2009 deal with *aeromobilities*. For more on the phenomenon of an airport *per se*, see Gordon 2008.

inhabitants of West Berlin, sealed off by the Soviets, were being supplied by air for many months (Huschke 2008; Reese 2009). As a consequence, Tempelhof started to be seen as a 'Gate to Freedom' and gradually acquired a celebrated and deeply symbolic status, especially – and not surprisingly – amongst West Berliners. This West-East estrangement has not quite disappeared from the current discourse on the future of the site, although to draw a strict line between the two categories would be, of course, too simplistic. Thus, Tempelhof could be seen as a *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1989, 1996); an *Erinnerungsort*, or a realm of memory (François & Schulze 2001); a *palimpsest* (Hyussen 2003); a place inseparable from its 'ghosts' (Ladd 1998) as well as being flooded with memory-work (Till 2005).

Figure 3. Tempelhof airport: post-war operation (DHM, BA 97/2356)

Tempelhof operated as an airport during the Cold War era and its closure in 2008 materialized only after fiery debates, protests, and amidst accusations amongst particular opposing camps (Schoelkopf 2008). Now, more than a decade after the air traffic had been discontinued, the voices of those who campaigned for the air traffic to be preserved have not been silenced, especially given the complicated status of the unfinished Berlin Brandenburg international airport[2] (scheduled to be opened at the end of October 2020, years behind its originally planned inauguration), as well as speculations about the future of the Berlin Tegel airport[3] (planned to be shut down, although a large part of Berliners strongly opposes this proposal, see Alberts et al. 2009).

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[2] Officially 'Willy Brandt Airport, Berlin Brandenburg,' frequently referred to as 'BER'
[3] Officially 'Berlin Tegel "Otto Lilienthal" Airport.' Air traffic at Tegel is planned to be discontinued in May 2021. See Fabricius 2019.

Figure 4. Tempelhof airport: a view from the runway towards the terminal, overseeing a part of the apron (Photograph taken by author).

The use of the terminal building and the adjacent apron (Fig. 4) for temporary housing during the migrant crisis of 2015 means that a piece of legislation, prohibiting any construction on the site, might now be revoked. This illustrates the vital role of Tempelhof within the metropolitan politics and planning, all the more so that the said piece of law was introduced after the 2014 referendum in which the majority of participants had decided to keep the airfield completely unbuilt and freely accessible for good.

The Present

Opening of the vast airfield to the public in May 2010 was criticised by those who perceived jogging, kite-flying, skateboarding or quirky gardening as disrespectful given the fact that near the field used to operate a concentration camp called *Columbia Haus* (1934 – 1936), and forced labourers were assembling bombers in the underground space of the building. Despite these criticisms, the field became notably popular with locals and tourists alike. For some time after 2010, the airfield-cum-park was branded as 'Tempelhof Freedom' (*Tempelhofer Freiheit*). Associating freedom with some of the above-mentioned darker periods was perceived as controversial by some. Currently, the site is presented simply as 'Tempelhof Airport' (*Flughafen Tempelhof*).[4] What is at stake is avoiding Tempelhof turning into a *non-place* (Augé 2008) or becoming an example of *kitsch geographies*: a location devoid of meaning yet pretending to have safely kept – in an entirely artificial manner – the pleasant atmosphere of its one-time splendour (Atkinson 2007).

The voices arguing for a greater historical awareness of Tempelhof's past were finally heard, however: in 2013, the Senate of Berlin (the local government of the Land Berlin) supported archaeological excavations on the edge of the field near Columbiadamm, where the housing barracks for forced labourers once stood (Ausgrabungen-Tempelhof 2018). In addition, a number of historians and archaeologists from Germany and further afield constituted an advisory committee. This measure should ensure that the problematic aspects of Tempelhof's past will not be forgotten.

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[4] This information was obtained during focus groups that I conducted with the guides at Tempelhof in 2012 and 2013, as well as during several tours that I participated in.

However important and praiseworthy these scholarly initiatives are, they remain somewhat in the shadow of the plethora of free-time activities that the field offers and that most users relate to. This has several reasons.

Firstly, the site is located very close to the city centre. The field can be easily reached by public transport and even on foot. In an age of rapid urbanization and an increasing problem of disappearing greenery in urban areas, this can almost be considered a luxury. One only needs to look at a city map of Berlin to see how the unusual round shape of the field, embraced by the semi-circular airport building, stands out conspicuously from the surrounding sea of housing development.

Secondly, the grassy field influences the metropolitan climate markedly positively, especially during hot summers when it cools down the overall atmosphere in the city. The green area is also home to many species, and the 'sea of meadows' (*Wiesenmeer*) on the field helps to support Berlin's biodiversity.

Thirdly, it is the surreal settings of the premises. The immense green field of some 350 hectares serves as a sanctuary, the effect of which, however, differs from a typical city park or garden, the latter usually meticulously well-kept. It is the sheer space of an unbuilt piece of land, completely flat, virtually devoid of trees and stretching almost as far as the eye can see, that forms a crucial part of the attraction of the site. The field is one of the most extensive inner-city areas anywhere in the world and this fact, I argue, should seriously be taken into consideration: once re-developed (even if partially), such an exceptional and unparalleled space will be impossible to re-create.

Fourthly, the field essentially connects several neighbourhoods together, not only geographically, but also socially. Given the fact that the loyalty of citizens to their particular quarter (*Kiez*) has been traditionally strong in Berlin, the organic interconnectedness of Kreuzberg, Tempelhof and Neukölln through sharing the edges of the field could be understood as a natural topographical and community bonding agent. This has been increasingly important considering the rising tensions amongst various ethnic and religious minorities (Die Welt 2016a, 2016b; Baban 2006).

The popularity of the field was confirmed in 2014 when Berliners voted down the Senate of Berlin's proposal to redevelop the edges of the field. Possible redevelopment was, of course, only feasible on a field devoid of aerial activity: therefore, the questions of cancelled aerial traffic, redevelopment plans and the overall use of the field were related to each other. The whole process went hand in hand with a conspicuous anti-development campaign. Several groups of citizens gradually crystallized, each advocating the needs and interests of its stakeholders. Aviation enthusiasts, hobby pilots and some former employees from the airport were campaigning against the air traffic being discontinued. Their arguments included economic viability, tradition and benefits of a city airport for a leading metropolis that Berlin aspired to become. The opposing camp complained about unbearable noise levels and a lack of safety, due to the fact that the aircraft landing/taking off were passing close to blocks of flats near the field. Opponents to the city airport were

also concerned that it could turn into an airport "for the rich." There were other groups, whose ideas often overlapped, or who were agitating for/against one solution or another because of various reasons. The environmentalists wished for cleaner air and more greenery. The allotment gardeners and community-minded locals welcomed transforming the field into a social place where different kinds of people could meet. The fault lines between these opinions were not clearly cut, yet they were strong enough to resurface in debates about the current and future use of the field and, in a relation to it, of the building. Furthermore, the ongoing debate, including the tumult it has caused, has been observed from abroad, too, and commented upon (The Economist 2012).

At that time, the edifice housed several institutions, including a central police station, the German Meteorological Office, a lost property office, and several other organizations and small businesses, some of which are still located there. In addition, interested visitors can now book a tour to see several historically relevant spaces within the colossal structure. The guides are trained in the history of the site and the edifice. Most of them are true devotees, some of them are former employees, capable of conveying captivating stories from times when Tempelhof was a gate to West Berlin for all sorts of internationally renowned personalities.[5] Hiring former employees of the airport to guide tourists around was clearly an intelligent idea: not only feel these individuals valuable, but the story of the site is being transmitted essentially via oral history methods, in a completely natural way. Visitors include West Berliners (to see 'their' airport from behind the scenes), East Berliners (to see what was really the substance of the 'Tempelhof myth'), Germans from other areas of the country (to learn more about the significance of the site, closely connected to the significance of Berlin itself) and tourists from abroad (*Bildungstouristen*, 'hipsters,' curious persons or simply those who somehow found their way there, not knowing what to expect). These categories are simplistic and instructive, yet they do exemplify the breadth of appeal that Tempelhof emanates.

Nevertheless, a coherent concept for the use of the building, including the extensive apron, seems to be missing. To make the building more economically viable, it has been let out to companies organizing concerts of popular music, fashion shows, car racing and all kinds of similar activities. Whilst the former often made inhabitants from the neighbouring areas complain about unbearable noise levels (Strauss 2013) and general disruption caused by litter and some sorts of socially deplorable behaviour, fashion events provoked comments about greediness, tastelessness and a lack of decency, car racing could usually be justified thanks to its relative closeness to aviation and suitable terrain conditions that the field offers. Some members of the younger generations of Berliners or would-be Berliners might perhaps dismiss all these objections as petrified grievances of grumpy old individuals, yet this is not the case. The over-commercialisation of Tempelhof was aptly expressed by Anselm Kiefer, one of the most prominent post-war German artists. He summarised the situation thus: "...they have fashion shows at Tempelhof and all this nonsense. There's an office, an ice skating rink – it's trivialising. I wrote [to the

Berlin's cultural department] a letter, saying "In the cathedral, you don't bicycle." I spoke with Norman Foster and he said it was a pity they didn't do something dignified with the locality" (Needham 2011).

This is not to say that the building and the field should not be commercially utilised. The opposite is desirable: it is in the interest of culture, society, economy and even politics that the premises are wisely used, thus escaping the sad fate of - for example - the beach resort Prora on the island of Rügen. This is what leads us back to the decision to abandon the air traffic in favour of leisure use in the first place, and to the lengthy back-and-forth negotiations that followed. Did the Senate of Berlin (specifically its section for urban development, the *Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung*) and the Tempelhof Projekt GmbH - a body in charge of Tempelhof and, in itself, a 100% subsidiary of the Land Berlin - have a clear idea what to do with some 307,000 m² of office space, constituting 7, 250 rooms (Thf Berlin a), and 350 hectares of the unused airfield? Very probably not, and that was one of the reasons why the happenings at Tempelhof after 2008 have been less than smooth. Civil servants in charge of Tempelhof have apparently attempted to make the public a part of the decision-making process (Rechenberg 2013), which in itself is a highly commendable effort. Nonetheless, the flood of various 'ideas competitions' (*Ideenwettbewerbe*), 'city conferences' and 'public workshops' has not been used effectively enough and many of potentially valuable outcomes ended in vain, which is regrettable (Zadrazilova 2020).

Figure 5. Tempelhof airport: the steel roof of the building boldly stretching along the outer side of the semi-circular building (Photograph taken by author)

The Future

What are the formal plans and accomplishments?

One. To refurbish parts of the building, according to the principles of heritage care (*Denkmalpflege*). Lack of funding has been, unfortunately, a persisting issue, especially given the lamentable state of the metropolitan budget.

Two. To move the Allied Museum from the rather remote Clay-Allee in Dahlem to the hangar No. 7 at Tempelhof. With regard to the importance of Tempelhof for the Airlift, as well as the missing exhibition space for original aircraft on the Dahlem premises, this seems to be a reasonable step. More nostalgic visitors might point out that it was the suburban areas of West Berlin – such as Dahlem – that have been somehow conveying the spirit of thoroughly westernized freedom, and perhaps even a certain style of daily living, across other areas of post-war Berlin. The hangars at Tempelhof could hardly offer such an intimate atmosphere that the former cinema-turned-museum radiated in Dahlem. This quiet and affluent suburb, filled with many buildings that were used by the Allies, creates something of a safe, welcoming microcosm. Nonetheless, moving the museum to Tempelhof certainly seems to be a decision that is more or less understood and welcomed by the public. The aim of the authorities is to establish another history-related site in the city, attracting locals, tourists from across Germany, and from afar.

Three. To make accessible the tower that is part of the building, thus enabling visitors to enjoy the panoramic view over the city. According to the official report, this is one of the measures to integrate the edifice more tightly into the urban fabric of the surrounding district (Thf Berlin b).

Four. To open a promenade with a gallery on the roof (Fig. 5) (Thf Berlin c). The work was scheduled to be finished in 2022. The unique, 1.2 km long roof will turn into a 'history gallery', with specially designed panels enabling sightseers to 'travel in time.' The idea to use the roof, however, goes back to the late 1930s when an immense grandstand for dozens of thousands of spectators was part of the overall design. Regardless of politics, using the roof in a sensible way seems to be fitting, as long as principles of heritage care are maintained. The significance of this project is corroborated by the support of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Homeland (*Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat*): the rebuilding proposal will be financed through the Ministry's programme called National City Planning Projects (*Nationale Projekte des Städtebaus*) (Thf Berlin d).

Five. To create a new visitor centre on the *cour d'honneur* in front of the imposing entrance hall (Thf Berlin e). This goal has been announced as achieved, scheduled to function from March 2020 onwards (Thf Berlin f). How adding a new structure relates to the grade-listed status of Tempelhof is hard to ascertain. The official information is rather vague, proper visual studies of the new addition are missing. The centre, called *CHECK-IN*, is described as a multi-purpose venue for hosting exhibitions and other events. For example, an

exhibition on the history of the field, co-organised with the *Stiftung Topographie des Terrors*, was advertised as such a project.

Six. To establish "digital and innovation centre," aimed predominantly at companies based in the IT industry. The centre should be housed in the H2rund part of the edifice, just next to the *cour d'honneur* and close to the entrance hall. This is where the Deutsche Lufthansa was once headquartered, and where the US Air Force later opened the Officers' Casino (*Offizierskasino*) called *Columbia Haus*. Given the history of Tempelhof as a site of innovators and pioneers, this idea follows the tradition and esprit of the site. If carried out sensibly, successfully and with respect to heritage care guidelines, it could be a logic, viable way to make the building profitable without sacrificing its symbolic meaning (Thf Berlin g).

Seven. To establish "a centre for the creative ones." As opposed to the previously mentioned proposal, "a centre/quarter for the creative ones" (*Kreativquartier*) is presented through a number of meaningless slogans ("area full of exciting ideas," "space for… trying out/checking out," [the building being] "openly visible and visibly open," et cetera) (Thf Berlin h). The official rhetoric of the Tempelhof Projekt GmbH frequently mentions the idea of transforming the building into a "creative hub." However, not much information has been provided about the character, functioning and economic sustainability of such a hub.

Eight. The same could be said about the announced refurbishment of the *Platz der Luftbrücke*, or the circus right in front of the symmetrically laid-out entrance area of the impressive airport edifice, where the monument to the Airlift is located. Every year in May, speakers, invited guests and audiences gather to celebrate the anniversary of the Airlift. The space per se thus forms a key area of the whole complex, not only symbolically, but also architecturally. Several buildings around the circus were constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century when Berlin was perhaps still in the shadow of Vienna, yet definitely on its way to become *the* centre of modern culture in 20 years' time. Aviation, airmindedness and travel played a vital role within that *Zeitgeist*. Behind the *Platz der Luftbrücke*, there is a neighbourhood called *Neu-Tempelhof*, also known as *Fliegerviertel*, which could be translated as "Aviators' Quarter/Neighbourhood." Neatly laid-out streets with orderly blocks of flats still remind an occasional wanderer that before both wars, Berlin was a flourishing, powerful city. Not without its flaws and problems, but with a spirit that has never been re-created since then. The whole borough of what is today Tempelhof-Schöneberg was naturally a part of the story: the presence of the enormous airfield, and with it the technical achievement as well as political use and misuse, were related to it. Therefore, in terms of landscape refurbishment, I argue that drawing inspiration from this aviation esprit and its finest accomplishments, and thus honouring the glorious past of the place, would be considerably more appropriate than trying too hard to come up with something *über*modern and out-of-place.

In addition, several further steps have been taken: a new coffee house, called Café Orville's, has been opened in the former Officers' Casino (*Offizierskasino*) (Thf Berlin i); a

couple of facility management companies have been hired to look after technical matters, security, landscaping and the like (Thf Berlin l); and an official press release has addressed the current state of the edifice, seen from a heritage perspective (Thf Berlin m).

To conclude, suffice is to say that whilst the Tempelhof Projekt GmbH attempts to bring the building and its environs to life, the overall impression comes across as generally indecisive, and somewhat lacking a coherent basis. Ironically perhaps, the result of yet another *Ideensammlung*, or a "collection of ideas" on the future of Tempelhof, was presented as "recreation of the lively bustle from the era of the functioning airport" (Thf Berlin n).
To complicate matters more, since October 2015 there have been many hundreds of migrants housed in the hangars, and later in container units, the so-called TempoHomes, on the apron.

After the edifice was photographed being encircled with armoured police vans, following massive fights amongst respective groups of migrants (Portmann et al. 2015; Bachner 2016), the discrepancy between what was happening on the open field, as opposed to what was going on in the closed interior parts of the building, could hardly be greater.

Another disturbing piece of news resurfaced only recently, when local newspapers announced that the Senate of Berlin, dominated by Social Democrats, has been aiming for a circumvention of the result of the 2014 referendum: the Senate strives to force through the redevelopment of the edges of the field again (Zawatka-Gerlach 2018). Even though the referendum result has been transformed into a piece of law – the so-called *Tempelhof-Gesetz* – it could theoretically be changed in the local parliament. The Social Democrats are arguing with a lack of available housing space in the city, yet this justification is hardly plausible, given the vast brownfields in the city itself and on its edges, as well as a number of vacant lots right in the central area, these being still the consequence of World War II bombings. There is no doubt that Berlin's population keeps fluctuating, and that suitable housing possibilities are crucial. However, attempting to build on the Tempelhof field is the laziest option, utterly undermining the credibility of the current political establishment. The Governing Mayor of Berlin, Michael Müller (SPD/the Social Democratic Party of Germany), attended some of the afore-mentioned city conferences in the Tempelhof hangars in 2013. Not a Mayor yet, back then he was advocating, as a member of the Senate, the redevelopment and claimed to do everything for the benefit of the locals. Members of the audience were shouting at him in anger, and the whole 'conference' ended in a bizarre deadlock. Now, more than five years after the victory of the *vox populi* over the politicians, the local government apparently assumes that people have forgotten everything.

This is not the case, though. The most active public initiative, the *100% Tempelhofer Feld*, keeps informing on what is going on (Thf 100). Enthusiasts organize various events on the field, including music and summer festivals. In autumn 2018, there could be seen a flock of sheep peacefully grazing on the field, to the delight of passers-by. The eccentric gardeners are still there, as are kite-flyers, joggers, walkers and even the proverbial urban *flâneurs*.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, a rather uncommon but evidently thriving mixture of users of the field has gradually evolved: some would even call it a subculture *sui generis*. A tension between the members – or at least some of them - of this large, loosely defined group on the one hand, and the Senate of Berlin on the other hand, is clearly present. It is now up to the Senate to provide the next stimulus and shape the discourse, and it is up to the Tempelhof Projekt GmbH to present coherent long-term plans about the building and the field clearly enough, so that a meaningful discussion can be underpinned by well-known proposals as well as established facts. People who wanted to keep the field open to everyone have already achieved what they had been striving for. They mobilised about 740, 000 Berliners to vote the redevelopment plan down. What is at stake now is the upkeep of the liberated field, as well as ensuring a viable future use of the grade-listed building. Tempelhof is now in a state of transition, as is Berlin and arguably the whole of Germany. Let us hope for the better.

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Part II

Legacy of Teispian and Achaemenian Materiality. Reassessing the History and Role of Monuments in 19th - 21st Century Iranian Nationalism

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Abstract

This paper explores the ways in which the materiality of the Achaemenian Empire was incorporated into the narratives of different polities and political groups on the Iranian Highlands. These approaches, which have continued into the present day, have marked these sites as objects of appropriation, imposition, resistance and negotiation by various actors in different discursive arenas. The current study further deals with the question of whether there was a biographical difference between distinct sites.

Keywords: Archaeology and Society, Nation Building, Achaemenian Monuments

Introduction

Walking through an Iranian city today, one will surely pass several shops, banks and supermarkets which are either named for historical Achaemenian sites or depict visual icons related to Achaemenid materiality. Both the knowledge of these sites and their prominent role in several discourses within Iranian society would have been impossible without the socio-political and archaeological developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The research during that period was part and parcel of our modern understanding of distinct sites, their histories and architectural and iconographic repertoires, leading to knowledge beyond classical sources about the exact meaning of their monumental qualities and their semiotic resources for Teispian[1] and Achaemenian rulers, who from around 559 BCE to 333 BCE subjugated large parts of Western Asia and parts of Southeast Europe.

Without the colossal works of archaeologists from different nations we would not know enough to understand that imperial policy, which dictated the creation of a distinctly new architectural and iconographic repertoire. This was built upon stylistic elements

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[1] The term refers to a very likely dynastic break between Kanbuzia (Kambyses), the son of Kūruš, and Darayawauš. As a result, the older dynasty should not be considered part of the Achaemenian lineage and therefore renamed according to its primary dynastic reference, namely Cispis (Teispes). For further information on that matter see Quintana (2011: 178).

appropriated and recontextualised from palatial and religious architecture and associated pictorial sources from different parts of the large imperial territory, creating the narrative of a religiously pious and divinely ordained concept of worldwide monarchic rulership. These were poured into monumental structures in different parts of the empire, both in the heartland between Çūšā (Susa)[2] in the alluvial plains and Pārsa (Persepolis), and Paϑragadā (Pasargadae) in the southern part of the Iranian Highlands, as well as in the distant administrative centres of the satrapies e.g. Sardis in Western Anatolia and Qaračamirlı in the Caucasus. On the other hand, it is exactly this monumentality, paired with all its neatly interwoven semiotic resources first and foremost related to the monuments at Pārsa, which offered distinct paths of affordance for the appropriation and recontextualisation by different actors throughout the history of the Iranian Highlands, reaching the present day.

The dynamics started to change drastically in the 19th century with the advent of nationalistic, racist, anti-Arab and anti-clerical intellectuals and related political movements. For them, the material legacy from the distant, pre-Islamic past grew into focal points of individual, societal and political interest. In a close link with the nationalist circles of influential intellectuals and politicians, the rulers of the Pahlavid dynasty (1925–1979) strongly supported all efforts to form a coherent grand narrative. Its focus was to carve out Iranian nationality, territorial and cultural integrity, evidence of the benevolent influence of a superior Iranian culture on bordering regions, and a secular religious concept of monarchy reaching back more than 2,500 years. Several sites were considered central nodes of the red thread of this homogenising grand narrative, two of which were Pārsa, which even in its ruined state is still an impressive monument today, and the less monumental (regarding architecture) site of Paϑragadā, which gained its dominant role as the confirmed resting place of the mythically glorified first 'Achaemenian' ruler Kūruš (Kyros I) (Fig.1).

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[2] In the course of this paper, I employ Old Persian names as opposed to the more modern Western terms that tend to be based on Old Greek malapropisms.

Figure 1. Map of Iran with location of Paϑragadā and Pārsa north-east of Shiraz, the provincial capital of Fars. Credits: Aydin Abar 2020 (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

In both cases, but especially the more recent period, appropriation was fundamental: both sites were excavated to a great extent, thereby dismantling and washing away the materialities of the monument, which were not considered part of the original building, alongside with century-old local legends, myths and practices which were interwoven with this materiality. Most of this was not documented. In the course of the following fifty years, both sites were redressed and recontextualised as monuments and imperial memory spaces, culminating in the events of the '2,500-year celebration of the Persian Empire' in 1971.

Following the revolution in 1979, and a new political doctrine, the sites did not play any major role in the context of governmental (re-)presentation for more than ten years. The sites' role, particularly the role of Paϑragadā, changed in the wake of the Sivand dam project controversies, when activist groups were able to outmanoeuvre official state organs, eventually initiating a renewed interest in the Achaemenian legacy of Paϑragadā. This then led to an ongoing multifaceted struggle for sovereignty over discourses about the past, some of which have persisted into the present.

Why the Return to Teispian and Achaemenian Monuments?
Research on the sites, their imagery and the history of their rediscovery and appropriation in the following centuries has been extensive, though mostly focussed on Pārsa and to a much lesser extent on Paϑragadā. After the publication of the German-American

excavations by Herzfeld and Schmidt at Pārsa between 1953 and 1970, a plethora of articles have dealt with numerous aspects of the site. For example, ground-breaking work on the iconography of the site was published by Margareth Cool Root (1979). A meticulous, synoptic work on Pārsa was published by Ali Mousavi (2012), who focussed on the reception of the site throughout history, as well as the antiquarian and archaeological research dealing with it. Yet the socio-political role of the site played only a minor role. This topic was picked up by Tallin Grigor, an art historian, who meticulously analysed the history of its reception and appropriation by state authorities, especially in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The topic of the social and political dimension of the sites was not considered a topic of concern among archaeologists until recently, and Dezhamkhooy and Papoli-Yazdi published the first overview (2018).

To date, two points have been only touched upon superficially:
First, in most cases the two sites, Paϑragadā and Pārsa, are mentioned in the same breath, neglecting their very particular and different biographies throughout the Achaemenid dynasty up into recent times. Nonetheless the biographies had a tremendous impact on the manner of their appropriation.

A second less detailed aspect addressed is the shifting role of the site from the nineteenth century onwards and how the appropriation of the monuments, based on their materialities, shifted between different actors for rather different societal and political reasons. The most frequent view is a top-down perspective, which leaves little room for the dynamics emerging in the nineteenth century, as well as underestimating the role of individuals aside from state authorities, and first and foremost the role of autocratic rulers.

The Monuments of Pārsa and Paϑragadā, an Archaeological Overview

Both monuments have attracted a lot of attention, particularly when their legacy was employed to project discourses of heritage and identity: the Teispid capital of Paϑragadā (Pasargadae) and the Achaemenid[3] site of Pārsa (Persepolis). Both sites lie in the present province of Fars in the southern region of Iran, ca. 50 km north-east of the modern city of Shiraz.

The slightly older site of Paϑragadā is situated in the fertile plains of the Dašt-e Morġāb. It consists of several monumental buildings spread over a surface of ca. 100 ha, with different palaces and pavilions that were once embedded in a lustrous landscape of canals and gardens. The main outline was established under the reign of the Teispian ruler Kūruš (Cyrus II, unknown–401 BCE), who was buried in a mausoleum ca. 1 km south of the palaces (Stronach & Gopnik 2009). While the palaces disintegrated into ruins, the sepulchre has survived until today and is still a landmark with high visibility from the surrounding plain (Stronach 1978: 26). The surviving iconography associated with the buildings is scarce. What is left shows a major impact from Mesopotamian (Stronach

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[3] Here I follow the well-founded argument that Darayawauš was not a member of the direct family line of Kūraš and Kanbūǰiya (Cambyses), but part of a more distant line. For more information see Lincoln (2010: 3–16).

1978: 68–69) and Egyptian (Stronach 1978: 49) traditions. The surviving image of a winged figure is difficult to interpret, not only because of its singularity but also because of the many different elements which were brought together from Egyptian and non-Egyptian iconic traditions (see Stronach 2010). The monumental sepulchre is almost undecorated aside from a heavily eroded bas-relief below the front gable (Stronach 1971). We do not know whether depictions might have been painted on the surfaces. Paϑragadā fell out of use as a political centre after the founding of Pārsa, but stayed closely connected to the empire through its ideological role as the resting place of Kūruš and a site of continued reverence and sacrifices for the deceased ruler. Though it is not clear what the exact role was, it is clear that it was important in the context of rituals related to the Achaemenian dynasty (Henkelman 2020).

Figure 2. View from Kuh-e Rahmat over the site of Pārsa in direction of the Marvdašt-plain. Credits: Carole Raddato, Wikimedia Commons, 2019 (CC BY-SA 2.0).

The second site, Pārsa, is the epitome of a monument: situated in the Marvdašt-plain, ca. 50 km north-east of the modern city of Shiraz, the master builders chose a site located at the western feet of the mountain *Kuh-e Rahmat*, with the longitudinal section of the terrace facing westward towards the plain (Fig. 2). It is undisputed that the planning and construction of the site happened by the order and under the watchful eye of of Darayawauš (Darius I; ~550–486 BCE) after he took over the throne and established himself as the ruler of the Achaemenid dynasty. Both the architecture and the iconography pick up elements known from other parts of the realm (Canepa 2018: 295) and show how in an elaborate fashion appropriation and recontextualisation were used to form a completely new imperial iconographical repertoire. The technique did not consist of a simple reinterpretation of iconographic elements, filling them with a new meaning (Dezhamkhooy & Papoli-Yazdi 2018: 33). In fact, in most cases, a large number of

syntagmatic intact combinations were taken, e.g. the king placing his foot on top of a vanquished enemy, and modified in small but important ways.[4]

These new visual resources were, aside from written sources (Frye 1984: 101), important means in the context of imperial propaganda, and integral to forming and consolidating a coherent imperial identity and ideology. Many buildings at Pārsa are engraved with artfully worked bas-reliefs, the majority of which are found on the staircases of buildings related to audiences and official ceremonies. The main recurring theme and epicentre is the emperor (Schmidt 1953: 123), who is surrounded by his military and court officials (Schmidt 1953: 22). Where the ruler is not depicted, as in the case of the tributary emissaries from other parts of the realm, the relation with the architecture fills the void: the emissaries walk up the staircases to the audience hall of the imperial court, in other words they walk towards the epicentre of imperial power. This circumstance is underlined by the fact that the strictly symmetrical and antithetical composition is exclusively directed towards the centre. Giving a roughly sketched semiotic interpretation, the recurring overall theme is the propagandistic legitimation of a benevolent and glorious imperial power, which put an end to chaos, brought divinely ordained peace and prosperity and serves as a guarantor of the same to all by divine will.[5] Achaemenian use of the two sites ended with the premeditated destruction of Pārsa and Paϑragadā during the Alexandrian war of conquest around 331 BCE (Mousavi 2012: 61–70).

Briefly, I argue that while Paϑragadā was the centre of the empire during the time of the Teispian dynasty, at least from the view of the Iranian Highlands, its monumentality was very much limited in comparison to what was to follow with Pārsa. Building on different examples, Darayawauš and his successors understood much better the role of monumental buildings, powerful iconography and their constitutive possibilities in the general architecture of power and control. Pārsa was one of the central arenas of imperial politics, a stage on which a neatly orchestrated imperial play regarding imperial identity was staged, which placed less attention on the provenance and ethnicity of groups, and instead centred the ruler at the core of an organic 'togetherness' of different regions, obfuscating the blood and tears befalling those who dared to resist.

Reflections of the Monuments in Emerging Iranian Identities

Though my main aim lies in analysing modern appropriations and recontextualizations, I consider it important to historicise the single threads in the past and to show how narratives changed throughout the biography of the two sites. I also address the point at which the narratives changed, as over time they frayed and lost their close relationship, allowing for very different appropriations. This is also important in the light on how the later re-splicing of both made for an almost surgical operation.

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[4] This article does not have the room to go into detail here, which will be detailed in a future article.
[5] What is often omitted is the consequences for anyone who dared to step out of that 'divinely-ordered' context (see also Dezhamkhooy & Papoli-Yazdi 2018: 43–45). Achaemenid warfare and Achaemenid punishment was by no means less ruthless than in any other monarchy before or after (Rollinger 2016). Standing in the tradition of West Asian rulership, religious legitimation played an important role in Achaemenian imperial language and iconography.

Part of modern-day Iranian cultural identity is a mysterious form of connection to the glory of the past, resulting from an assumed 2,500 years of unbroken cultural continuity. These rather innocent-looking ideas are frequently entwined with paradoxical concepts about Iranian superiority over other groups, particularly the Arab world, while at the same time being suppressed by the same groups through religion, resulting in a very common fascination for Aryan myths, as well as different forms of latent and open racism (Zia-Ebrahimi 2011). The mechanisms closely resemble developments in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (Priester 2003: 166–167).

The timeless and essentialist concepts of culture and identity expressed during the nineteenth and twentieth century are highly problematic and do not hold water against the little we know about the historical reality. It is sometimes argued that similar concepts existed in the far past already, as far back as in the Achaemenian Empire. To start with, it is important to keep in mind that *Iranianness* as a political concept embraced by a majority of inhabitants of a state in the sense of "… a people belonging to a political community…" (Sharifi 2013: 3) did not exist before the twentieth century. What we know from archaeological and philological sources demonstrates that the Achaemenid Empire was inherently multi-ethnic, and people were oftentimes displaced and moved from one part of the empire to another, wherever their particular skills were needed (Henkelman 2013: 538; Zilberg 2019). There is ample evidence that group-related differences were perceived, but were considered fluid and changeable, and ethnic affiliation seems not to have been a limiting factor for success in the imperial administration (Zilberg 2019).

In 224 CE, more than 500 years after the end of the Achaemenid Empire, Ardašir I challenged and overthrew his Arsacid overlord Ardavān (Artabanos IV), establishing himself as the new 'king of kings'. This established the dynasty of the Sasanians as the ruling house over most of Western Asia for the next 400 years. Their ancestral seat was in Estakhr, a city located roughly 5 km north-east of Pārsa. Even though Sasanian rulers considered the Achaemenians their ancestors, we have ample evidence that their knowledge about their proclaimed ancestors was very limited, and it seems that already before the rise of the Sasanian dynasty comparably little was known about the Achaemenian Empire and its connection to the visible monuments.[6] Sasanian historiography heavily relied on jewish scholars and their Talmudic sources to substantiate what little they knew about Achaemenian rule from the Avestan tradition (Hämeen-Anttila 2018: 223). Nonetheless, the appropriation and recontextualization of Achaemenian monuments were fundamental to the multimodal narrative of the new state.

The salience of Pārsa's materiality attracted Sasanian rulers and high-ranking members of the political and religious elites to move architectural elements as building material for their palaces in Estakhr. The monument itself was used to celebrate festivities, as in case of the fourth century Sasanian Prince Šāhbūr Sākānšāh, governor of the eastern provinces,

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[6] This is sometimes forgotten by non-archaeologists, e.g. Mozaffari (2014: 2), which often results in the narrative that the knowledge regarding the site was forgotten following the Islamisation of the Iranian Highlands and the attribution of the sites to Solomon, who plays an important role in Islam. Stronach's (2010) thoughts on that matter are more convincing.

on which occasion graffiti artworks were incised into the walls (Huff 2008: 32–34). A related Middle Persian inscription in one of the rooms mentions the site being called 'ststwny' 'hundred pillars' (Frye 1966: 84). So, while Pārsa became central for the Sasanian elite, knowledge about Paϑragadā must have deteriorated within the last three centuries BCE (Canepa 2018: 68). There is no evidence that the site played any role whatsoever in Sasanian historiography and, while Appianus in the second century, names the site as the ancestral place of the Achaemenian rulers (Henkelman 2011: 90), there is no archaeological evidence for imperial activities associated with the site after the fall of the Achaemenid Empire. This is particularly interesting for the mausoleum of Kūruš and suggests that the belief that local villagers renamed the mausoleum in the wake of the Islamic conquest of the Sasanian Empire, assigning it to the mother of the Biblical King Solomon to protect it from destruction by the Islamic armies (Shahshahani 2014), is implausible. I believe it is more likely that its background was forgotten already.[7]

The Sasanian rulers' ambitions to appropriate Achaemenian sites were related to the attempted and eventually successive obfuscation of their direct predecessors on the one hand and to give their own political and religious innovations the authority of an earlier era (Canepa 2010) on the other. This went hand in hand with the appropriation and harmonisation of political and religious terms and concepts, as in the case of Middle Persian terms like 'ērānšahr' (Iranian state) and 'ērānwez' (Iranian expanse), or the connection of 'šāhān šāh' (king of kings) to the terms 'ērān' – 'Iran' and 'anērān' – 'Not-Iran' (McKenzie 2011; Canepa 2018: 3). Even though we do not have a good understanding of the identity concepts of the commoners within the realm, it seems that the Sasanian state endeavoured to engrain the aforementioned harmonisation and recontextualisation of the multimodal narrative of Iran and Iranian culture, as defined by political and religious authorities, into their subjects. Hints come from the role of the Mazdayesnian state religion, which permeated all areas of everyday life, particularly the judicial system but also the reformulation of publicly visual expressions, e.g. the peculiar circular shape of newly founded cities. It is therefore safe to say that Iranian culture at that time showed a political dimension when it came to questions of sovereignty and religion from the Sasanian period onwards (Gnoli 2012).

Following the disintegration of the Sasanian state after the lost war against the Muslim armies[8] in 653 CE, and the subsequent Islamization of the population, it grew relatively silent around Pārsa. There is evidence that the site played some role for the rulers of the Būyid emirate in their desire to build an Iranian narrative of local descendance; distinction from the Abbasid califs in the west played an important role for them. Several inscriptions by 'Adud ad-Dawla (936–983 CE) found at Pārsa show that the site was still visited, even though these were most likely more related to the Sasanian inscriptions.

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[7] Considering the evidence and circumstances, this seems unlikely. I would ask the question whether it might have been transformed into a sanctuary in Sasanian times, perhaps related to a female deity, similar to what Boyce (1967) presented in detail for the site of Bībī Šahrbānū.

[8] I prefer not to talk of 'Arab armies'. The evidence shows that numerous Sasanian nobles voluntarily switched sides and converted during the course of the war (see Pourshariati 2009). Speaking of 'Arab armies', one risks following the narrative of Iranian nationalists and racist intellectuals.

To my knowledge, the site of Paϑragadā is mentioned for the first time in the *Fārs-Nāmah* of ibn al-Balk̲ī from the first quarter of the twelfth century, where it is called 'the grave of the mother of Solomon', which he describes as a four-squared building made of stone, into which nobody dared to look, afraid to be turned blind by a magical spell which was considered to have been placed upon it (Balk̲ī 2016: 154–155). The first European who visited the monument in the third quarter of the 15th century and recorded the site was the Venetian merchant Giosafat Barbaro, confirming that local legends had it that the site was considered to be the grave of the mother of Solomon and that, in her honour, a shrine was constructed in its outskirts (Barbaro 1545: 47).

Pārsa, on the other hand, was presented to him as '*cilminar*' (Barbaro 1545: 46), which translates to 'forty towers', or 'forty minarets', referring to the columns visible at the site. A roughly synchronous account of the site comes from Jalāl ad-Din Davāni's chronicle *Arẓ Nāmah*, in which he recounts a large parade held by a local ruler, Soltan Khalil, close to a site he calls 'hazār sotūn', or 'thousand pillars' (Minorsky 1940). The choice of the site was not a coincidence, as Khalil's ancestry was traced back to Jamshīd, a mythical king from the Shahnameh,[9] who was considered to have similar powers to Solomon. Both were frequently juxtaposed as each wielded the power to command demons (Mousavi 2012: 84). At times the site around Pārsa was called the 'land of Solomon', the site itself was also called 'tak̲t-e Soleymān' – 'throne of Solomon or 'tak̲t-e Jamshīd' – 'throne of Jamshīd' (Shahbazi 1977: 205).

To this point, I have tried to show how Pārsa and Paϑragadā, two sites which at their founding were closely related, drifted apart within a short amount of time after the fall of the Achaemenian Empire. This does not come as a surprise and is most likely linked to Pārsa's monumentality and durability. The major aspect might have been related to the powerful iconographies of larger-than-life-sized rulers, the sheer monumentality and the general *mise-en-scène*. As a result, the site was recurrently visited by nobles, princes and rulers in attempts to connect themselves with a distant, but local, past glory, using it for staged self-presentations within propagandistic schemes, including the creation of invented heritage and narratives of ancestry and inheritance. I argue that the reasons for the appropriation of Pārsa remained within the general framework of its principal authorities' intent until the mid-nineteenth century, namely the overall glorification of an absolutist monarchic rulership.

The situation at Paϑragadā changed drastically. After the end of the Achaemenian Empire, it no longer played any important role, and the site's original background, as well as the name of the grave's eternal resident, fell into oblivion. What might have remained in the memory of following generations was the fact that it used to play a role in cultic activities. This reasoning lies in the fact that the palaces did not depict the same monumental and

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[9] The 'book of kings' is an epic poem written between 977 and 1010 CE by Abul-Qāsem Ferdowsi Tūsī. The poet's sources seem to have been both oral and written sources in Iranian and Arabian languages (Hämeen-Anttila 2018: 2–6). The poet describes both mythical and historical times, naming rulers, their champions, nobles, and so on. There is no clear evidence of the Achaemenian dynasty, while the Sasanian dynasty is depicted in detail. Nonetheless, he mentions the palace of 'sad sotūn'– 'hundred pillars' as the palace of Jamshīd (Shahbazi 1977: 202–203).

iconographic qualities known from Pārsa. Walking up the majestic platform of Pārsa, particularly between the colossal columns of the Apadana below the imperial iconographies, was certainly, and in fact still is, awe-inspiring. The site allows long walks inside the monument, which makes a phenomenological difference.

Paϑragadā did not have the same qualities: the palaces were not built on a terrace and were smaller in dimension, probably 'hidden' within large gardens. Most importantly, neither the palaces nor the graves displayed the impressive iconography we know from Pārsa. It does not come as a surprise that the site was soon recontextualised as a sanctuary and, within the folklore related to the Achaemenian monuments to Solomon's abilities (Stronach 2010), the grave might have been recontextualised as 'the grave of the mother of Solomon'. Over time, the majority of the older monuments of Paϑragadā fell into obscurity and only the grave of Kūruš (Kyros II) was appropriated, recontextualised and transformed into a local shrine. Pārsa, on the other hand, remained in the attention of local rulers and was constantly tied into discourses about tradition, superiority and the inherited right to exert power.

Re-splicing the Monuments in the Wake of Nationalism
During the Safavid period (1501–1736), the monuments of Pārsa were not forgotten, but for the new dynasty they had no deeper identificatory meaning. Stemming from the Azerbaijan region in the North-West it seems that the rulers' orientation was much more towards Central and North-Western Iran than to the South. Nevertheless, concepts of Iranian cultural identity paired with Shi'a sectarianism were propagated to underline opposition to the Ottoman Empire. Geopolitically, it was at the time of their rule that Iran became an interregional super-power and major player in West Asia. Nonetheless, by the end of the sixteenth century, the power of the Safavid rulers started to wither. After a short period of stabilisation, the subsequent Qajar dynasty (1779–1925) oversaw a period of political demise from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

The appropriation of pre-Islamic art and architecture came to play a bigger role from the early years of the Qajar period (Grigor 2010: 60), though in two very different contexts. From Fath Ali Shah onwards, Qajar rulers found interest in pre-Islamic monuments. Unlike in the aforementioned periods, they did not use Pārsa to stage their authority and claim an invented inheritance, though Fath Ali Shah knew the site from his visits as the governor of the province of Fars (Dezhamkhooy & Papoli-Yazdi 2018: 78). Instead they were largely focussing on sites located in the North and West, ordering the application of bas-reliefs next to pre-Islamic, mostly Sasanian monuments.

The Achaemenian monuments and their figurative and ornamental vocabulary, on the other hand, served as blueprints for decorative elements in the context of palace architectures. It is rather loosely, if at all, connected to the socio-political dimension of *Iranianness*, and much more closely associated with traditions of a *translatio imperii*, in which the following dynasts would always be in the process of appropriating former monuments

in search of legitimacy and the connection to the long tradition of 'indigenous' Iranian rulership (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 100; Grigor 2015: 223), thus confirming their righteous claim to absolute power.

The arena of appropriating and recontextualising the past was dominated by rulers and their associates through the ages. It was in the 19th century that new actors, namely intellectuals, oftentimes coming from the urban elites, entered the discursive arena. To understand their motivations, it is important to keep in mind that, unlike most countries in West and South Asia, Iran did not have a colonial history in the proper sense. Nonetheless, diplomatic and military conflicts with both Czarist Russia and the British Empire led to major territorial losses (Kazemzadeh 1991: 337) and heavy political and economic interference by all major European powers (Greaves 1991: 395). The relationship between the Qajar states and European states can be best described as a form of crypto-colonialism; officially the state kept its political independence, but steadily slipped into massive cultural and economic dependence (Herzfeld 2002: 900–901).

Concessions and monopolies granted by Qajar rulers to foreign states and companies were meant to fill the cash-strapped state treasury and to help modernise the country institutionally and infrastructurally (Amanat 1997: 127), but ironically played a detrimental role in this process. A concession granted to the Russian state, for example, allowed them to form a Cossack brigade to serve as household troops of the ruler, though naturally the brigade was under the command of Russian senior officers (Ettehadieh 2011). Naser ad-Din shah went so far to grant a concession to Paul Julius Reuter to, among other things, a monopoly over the extraction of literally all available natural resources, as well as the construction and operation of telegraphic and railroad infrastructure. However, in this case, the massive pressure of the administrative, economic and religious elite soon led to the nullification of the concession (Lambton 1987: 223). The Belgian state was granted a concession to take over the customs affairs of the country (Stebbins 2016: 107). In a similar context, the concession to excavate archaeologically relevant sites was granted to the French in 1895 for an unlimited time period (Mousavi 2012: 155; Grigor 2015: 247, n. 5).

At the same time, sons of the societal elite were sent overseas to be educated at European universities, where they eventually became familiar with political concepts such as constitutionalism and nationalism, alongside their education in the sciences and humanities, e.g. anthropology, archaeology and philology (Abdi 2001: 53), which were themselves heavily involved in European imperialist and colonialist endeavours and therefore infused with social Darwinist, chauvinist and racist concepts (Marchand 2009: 292–386, see also Lorcin 2014: 118-166). It is no coincidence that this was the same period in which European scholars' interests in pre-Islamic archaeological and linguistic remains from Iran played an important role in the context of the European romantic project of Aryanism (Poliakov 1993; Arvidsson 2000: 122–126).

A plethora of texts written from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards by intellectuals, often times referred to as '*rowšanfekr*' – 'enlightened thinkers' (Zia-Ebrahimi

2016: 63) – dealt with the actual social, economic and political problems (Tabari 1983: 53). Oftentimes, the open mystification of pre-Islamic Iran in the texts went hand in hand with anti-clerical and strong anti-Arab sentiments.[10] Very influential writings came from Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh (1812–1878) and Mirza Agha Khan Kermani (1854–1896/97). The works of both are heavily infused with glorifications of the pre-Islamic past, openly racist dichotomies between putatively pure, Aryan Iranians and the dirty, Semitic Arabs, explaining the political situation under the Qajar with the hegemony of the latter over the former (Algar 2011). It is rather interesting to note that obviously the site of Pārsa was well known to Akhundzadeh, who considered it of such importance to propose its depiction as the iconic symbol of a newly founded, reformist newspaper in 1866 (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 101). This suggests that not only written sources, but also monumental sites, must have been part of internal discourses by this time. It seems likely that, as the rulers' interests in these monuments dwindled, 'enlightened' intellectuals started to discover and appropriate them; their ideas fell on fertile soil among those searching for easy explanations for the apparent political, cultural and societal misery at the time (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 102).[11]

Figure 3. Lithograph from Forsat ad-Dowla's *Asār-e Ajam*, showing the Gate of All Nations around 1881/95. With friendly permission of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

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[10] As early as the mid-19th century, letters and books appeared that criticised the Qajar rulers and proposed how to ameliorate problems (Kashani-Sabet 1999: 80). Amanat (2017: 317–323) elaborates on the role and heterogeneity of intellectuals and administrative employees and their discursive arenas, in which the constant contrast between Qajar Iran, European states and pre-Islamic Iran played an important role.

[11] From personal experience, I can verify that unfortunately such ideas still serve as the basis for ultra-nationalists' racist narratives both within the country and within the exile communities worldwide.

A third, and less known, line of influence came with the personal and literary contacts of Iranians to the Parsi communities in the British Raj. Within this group, ideas related to Aryanism and concepts of cultural and racial purity and superiority played an important role (Luhrmann 1994). These multiple contacts stirred revivalism within literate circles (Marashi 2008: 61). This also led to ideational and financial support by Parsi patrons, namely Maneckji Limji Hataria, for Mohammad Naser Forsat ad-Dowla's endeavour to compile his work *Āsār-e Ajam* in the years between 1881 and 1895, which was ultimately published in Bombay in 1896 (Grigor 2016). This book is another clear indication of a revived interest to appropriate the monumental sites, as it provides detailed descriptions and lithographic depictions of Pārsa, among other locales (Fig. 3).

All these elements played a major part in forming the different modes in which nationalism moulded and was shaped by different individuals. In this view, the pre-Islamic and particularly Achaemenian monuments[12] were referred to as icons of a glorious past (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 101), which, according to the narrative, was abruptly ended by Arabian invaders. It is this melting pot from which the concept of political Iranianness (Sharifi 2013: 83) arose, mostly within elite circles. A major transformation was happening: while Qajar rulers still saw their subjects in the traditional relationship, consisting of the '*malek*' (the ruler) and his '*bandegān*' (servants), their servants started to see themselves and the country with different eyes (Sharifi 2013: 31).

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the rise of political movements in Iran, struggling with each other and against the arbitrary rule of the Shah, eventually culminating in the *Constitutional Revolution* of 1905–1906, in which a plethora of diverse groups operated partly together and partly against each other (Foran 1991: 795–796). The Revolution led to the expression of formerly hidden political views and profound changes within the societal and political structures of the country. The political system was, for a short period of time, turned into a constitutional monarchy with the legislative power placed in the hands of the newly formed Majles (parliament).

The enterprise of nation building, which its proponents considered an 'awakening of Iranianness', was rooted within the already mentioned elite circles of intellectuals, academics and state officials, who pushed to speed up the consciousness of a pre-Islamic past. This is particularly traceable from around the Constitutional Revolution onwards, indicated by the establishment of the Antiquities Service (Nasiri-Moghaddam 2014: 124) and the National Museum of Iran in Tehran in 1910 (Abdi 2001: 54). What was taking shape in the wake of the revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century is the beginning of a change in the way *Iranianness* and an ever-growing influence of the material legacy of the Achaemenian period are understood. These appear and reappear in the writings of the small groups of the elite in the nineteenth century, who launched secret societies, oftentimes in close relationship to European freemason lodges. Here they openly discussed the past and future of the country. One of these was the 'Lož-e bīdārī-e

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[12] Very influential was the famous Shahnameh (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 98), which ironically knows little of the Achaemenian dynasty (Kashani-Sabet 1999: 165).

Īrānīān' which can be translated as 'Lodge of the awakening of the Iranian populace' (Grigor 2010: 58); it was founded during the Constitutional Revolution (Algar 2012). What was going hand in hand within these groups was the veneration of the pre-Islamic rulers alongside the veneration for places connected with them.

The ongoing weakness of the state internally and externally (Ghani 1998: 15) led to a coup d'état in 1921 by a small group of powerful men, including the commander of the Cossack brigade Reza Khan (Ghani 1998: 161-163). His influence, power and standing grew in the course of subsequent events, leading to his usurpation of the Peacock throne in 1926. Though Reza Shah was the iconic figurehead of nation building, he was not necessarily the main strategist. It was no coincidence that in 1922 several influential statesmen founded the Anjoman-e Āsār-e Melli (AAM), the 'Society of National Heritage' (Nasiri-Moghaddam 2014: 129–130), some of whom knew each other previously from the 'Lož-e bīdārī-e Īrānīān'. The main aim of the society and its members was to create a homogenised, coherent and polished narrative of the past[13] that created a seamless line to the present, an enterprise which they understood as a civilising mission to 'awaken Iranianness'.

The story would be only half told without mentioning another important figure: a foreigner who came to Iran and came to serve as the nexus between the narratives of the pre-Islamic past and their monumental remains. From 1905 to 1906, Ernst Herzfeld, a young German archaeologist writing his doctoral thesis on the topic Paϑragadā, came to the province of Fars to study the visible Teispian and Achaemenian remains (Herzfeld 1908). His thesis was a meticulous source-critical work, convincingly weaving together observations drawn from archaeological and philological work. His work made him an excellent candidate to start research on one of the sites which must have been on the radar of the lodge members as an anchor point to connect their conception of the past with the present. Indeed, according to Herzfeld's own notes, it was Prince Farman Farma who approached him in 1923 with the plan to excavate and restore the sites of Paϑragadā and Pārsa, indicating that the idea must have been circulating before that time (Jenkins 2012: 11).

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[13] Along with this revival of past monumental glory came the attempt at linguistic purification. In 1935, Reza Shah ordered the establishment of the Farhangestān, the Iranian Academy of Language (Paul 2010: 78–81), with the mission to replace words with Turkish or Arabian etymology with those of Iranian origin (Gheissari 1998: 46).

Figure 4. Front façade of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; pay attention to the details on the façade of the staircase. Credits: siposoft 2010, Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 2.0).

In 1925, Herzfeld was invited by the AAM to give an open lecture at the Ministry of Culture and Art, accompanied by a talk given by Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, in which he praised Iran's history over Greek and Roman history, and underlined the value of the monuments in the context of nation building (Grigor 2007: 572; Mousavi 2010: 450–458). The following year it was one of the members of the AAM, Firuz Mirza Nosrat ad-Dawla, who in 1926 supported Herzfeld[14] in his ambitions to start scientific excavations at Pārsa (Grigor 2004: 21). Though hypothetical, it does not seem unlikely that a plan to topple the very problematic monopole of the French was at hand before, as Herzfeld was directly involved in the act of outlining which monuments should be incorporated in a canon of national heritage and thus was directly involved in the appropriation of monuments (Grigor 2004: 29–30; Mousavi 2010: 450). Even if Herzfeld himself was not involved in the abolition of the French monopoly, his work and presence in the country helped Iranian officials to come to terms with the French government in this matter (Mousavi 2010: 456). After diverse initial problems, Herzfeld initiated his work at Pārsa in 1931. In 1933, Reza Shah and the crown prince visited the monuments and were visibly impressed by the outcomes of Herzfeld's work (Mousavi 2010: 465). Beyond the excavations at the site itself, it seems that Reza Shah and the court were seeking to continue the Qajar idea to bring Pārsa to Tehran, and to merge past and future.

The 1930s saw the emergence of an architectural style that was meant to obscure the former Qajar traditions. Stylistic elements known from Pārsa were merged with modern

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[14] In the meantime, Herzfeld became an archaeological consultant to the Iranian government (Mousavi 2010: 454).

traits in a sort of neo-Achaemenian style. Monuments in their own right, the constructions included several monumental buildings in Tehran, including the police headquarters in the National Gardens built in 1933 (today the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Fig. 4), a police station in Darband, north of Tehran, built in 1935, the National Bank of Iran, built in 1935 and the courthouse and Ministry of Justice, built between 1936 and 1948 (Grigor 2017: 1097). All buildings borrow salient elements known from Achaemenid monuments, including distinctive porticoes, the shape of columns, the particular multiple volutes, bull-headed capitals, the frequent depiction of a *fravaši* centrally placed over the entrances, reliefs of guardian soldiers and typical stepped crenelations on stairways and along the roof of the building.

From the nineteenth to the twentieth century, we can therefore mark the following change in the appropriation of Achaemenian and, to a lesser extent, Sasanian monumental materiality: in the Qajar period we see a very common appropriation in the sense that, from the rulers' view, it was mostly in the context of a *translatio imperii* and annexed the connection to former imperial magnitude. At the same time, the political reality in combination with influences from Europe and the British Raj, and particularly the Parsi communities there, led to the emergence of a class of educated men voicing their dissatisfaction with the political and social situation inside the country. One way to deal with that was the adoption of the Zoroastrian narrative of the cultural destruction brought to the country of Iran as a result of the Arab invasion. The logical consequence was the projection of their own dreams of a better future on the past, which included the veneration of the visible traces of this past, still in the memory of the society. This explains why Pārsa came into their field of vision so quickly, while Paϑragadā with its local tradition as an Islamic sanctuary took longer to play an important role.

If we reduce the picture to a view of two discursive fields, these seem to have stayed relatively separate from each other. The situation changed after the seizure of power by Reza Khan, the founder of the short-lived Pahlavid dynasty. Reza Khan was surrounded by the same men and, in an act to separate himself from the traditions of the foregoing Qajars, we can see a negotiation process between the discursive field of the ruler and those attempting to influence him. Reza Pahlavi understood the twofold benefit of the connection to pre-Islamic traditions: internally it would help to cut any formerly close linkage to the influence of the ulama and imagined un-Iranian and Arabic traditions, allowing for the homogenisation of regional identities subsumed under one Iranian identity. The second direction was to foreign countries, to illustrate the newly gained phoenix-like rise of a neo-Achaemenid Iranian – and therefore European – nation, symbolising a rejuvenation and resurgence of Iranian regional power on the international stage.

As already mentioned, Paϑragadā slowly grew as a subject of interest to Iranian scholars. It was then Ali Sami, who destroyed the traces of the later sanctuary, imposing his idea of a pure Achaemenian architecture onto the site, as well as the people annually visiting the

shrine. All traces of the shrine were smoothed away with very little documentation, and access to the monument was limited by a wall surrounding the area (Sami 1956: 41–42). The climax of appropriation was reached under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, to whom the Majles had granted the illustrious yet freshly invented title 'Āryāmehr' – 'Light of the Aryans'.[15] He was one of the major propagators of the celebrations of '2,500 years of Persian monarchy' in which a distant past, present and future were juxtaposed (Grigor 2018: 131). According to Afkhami (2009: 404), plans for the celebrations went back to a proposal by then cultural counsel to the imperial throne, Shoja'addin Shafa, and were originally scheduled for 1961 but not finally realised in 1971.

In preparation for the celebrations, the two monuments and areas close by were restored and heavily reshaped, at least in part: villagers were resettled to make space for asphalt roads and parade grounds (Fig. 5).[16] A total number of sixty state guests, including several rulers of monarchic countries as well as presidents and prime ministers, were invited to attend the show, which lasted several days (Abdi 2001: 68). Similar to what was assumed to have taken place during the Achaemenian period in the case of emissaries of the different satrapies and affiliated territories, the guests camped in front of the main terrace of Pārsa. The choreography followed the chronology of sites, beginning at Paϑragadā with Mohammad Reza Shah's speech in front of the mausoleum of Kūruš, then moving to the site of Pārsa, the illustrious guests took up quarters in a luxurious tent city in front of the terrace of Pārsa (Grigor 2018). Following an event on the terrace itself in the evening, the guests were invited to watch a parade of military history, and on the next day the illustrious spectators sat on grandstand seats to watch a long parade of amateur actors recruited from the armed forces mimicking armies from 2,500 years prior.

Figure 5. The photo was taken from west to east and gives a good view on the levelling works carried out in the closer surrounding of the mausoleum, on the occasion of the '2,500 years of Persian monarchy' celebrations. Credits: Abbas 1971/ Magnum Photos/ Agentur Focus.

[15] The exact roles of Rezazadeh Shafagh, a philologist, and Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi in the course of name-finding remain obscure, although Amanat (2017) assumes that it was due to the instigation of the ruler himself.
[16] See Taylor (2014: 95) for a drawing of what Herzfeld still could see at the beginning of the 20th century.

Most likely it was the first time that both Paϑragadā and Pārsa were turned into stages of official self-representation, though with a completely different concept of the state itself. As opposed to the heterogeneous Teispian-Achaemenian state, which did not care greatly about ethnic differences, the modern Pahlavid state followed the tradition of the AAM with an elitist and chauvinist top-down policy focussed on the homogenisation of the inhabitants. In this case, the state made great use of radio and television to broadcast the propagandistic staging to each and every household who could afford radio or television. The festivities of 1971 were therefore meant to show both the inhabitants of Iran and the world that despite the losses of recent centuries, the old grandeur had survived and found its reawakening in the present, furthermore promising completion in the near future (Grigor 2018: 137).

Post-Revolution Iran

The final outcome of the revolution of 1978 put an end to the centuries' old tradition of monarchy, quite ironically turning the monarchy into a theocracy. This meant also a change in the way monuments were considered focal points of the state's memory spaces. During this period, their materiality was rearranged into a type of negative memory spaces symbolising governmental imposition and oppression, onto which dissidents and members of different social movements, as well as religious fundamentalists, projected their hatred. Dezhamkhooy and Papoli discuss the accounts of eyewitnesses to the bulldozers lined up by revolutionary fanatics ready to destroy the site of Pārsa (2018: 88). Allegedly it was the intervention by locals that prevented their destruction. In the following decade, the site was ignored and did not play a major role in the context of the war years of the 1980s.

Pārsa was brought back into the political discourse in an attempt to revive national sentiments by President Hashemi Rafsanjani, who, while visiting the site in 1997, called it a site provoking 'considerable national pride in every individual' (Abdi 2001). It was also at this time that national revivalism reintegrated the Achaemenian monument of Pārsa as a political stage for discourses about the nation and politics. The political processes visible within Iranian society within the last 30 years have been fundamental. Several authors describe how, from the 1990s onwards, the political landscape among elites in Iran, as well as participation in political affairs, has been drastically changing, which was further fostered by moderate politicians and decision makers during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (Michaelsen 2013: 16). This culminated in the appearance of a vital civil society, e.g. the re-emergence of women's right movements, ecological movements and many more (Dabashi 2016: 14). In fact, Khatami paid a media-staged visit to the site in 2001. At the same time, Paϑragadā stayed in the shadow of its more impressive sister. In the aftermath, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad seems to have attempted to capitalise on these events, trying to merge Iranian nationalism and political Islam (Dezhamkhooy & Papoli-Yazdi 2018: 91), most likely in an attempt to minimise the power of the theocrats in favour of a reinterpretation of the state's political foundations. As early as April 2007, Ahmadinejad visited the monuments of Pārsa (Milani 2011), and photos in newspapers

showed him in between the colossal lamassu of the Gate of All Nations. This was by no means a coincidence.

The same year, after a state visit of the Russian President Vladimir Putin in Tehran, the departing ceremony was held in front of the building of the Foreign Ministry, residing in the formerly mentioned building of the building of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the National Garden, built in neo-Achaemenian style in 1933 (Fig. 6). The spectacle was staged in a way that cameras could easily follow the scene: both presidents would approach from left to right, walking the red carpet, approaching a set stage: in front of the main entrance the staircase shows five soldiers from the left and another five soldiers from the right, positioned antithetically, recreating the staircase of the back part of the Apadana. In front of the relief, the stage consisted of a two-stepped carpet-covered dais. The dais itself was covered with a baldachin in the colours green and yellow, colours intimately connected to different political, militant and terrorist Shi'a groups from Lebanon to Iraq,[17] and the frontal part displaying the emblem of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the commander of the Presidential Ceremonial Guard standing behind the scene. A red carpet led from the left towards the dais, and a second red carpet then led from the dais into the direction of the soldiers of the Presidential Ceremonial Guard[18] passing in front of them (AP Archive 2015). The event with its multiple dependences to the Achaemenian iconography known by many from travels to Pārsa, from books, and reliefs on display in the National Museum in Tehran did not aim towards the international press. It was orchestrated and projected towards the national audience in an attempt to generate sympathies for the government of Ahmadinejad, who was known to have a preference for such allegories.

As opposed to the events around Pārsa, Paϑragadā did not play any role in the new regime's media staging, and instead was and still is a focal point of civil societal opposition of official institutions and their dominant discourses. Around 2007, the site was at the centre of a controversy involving heritage activists and different institutions of the state. Contemporaneous with the endeavours of the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation (ICHTTO) to grant the site UNESCO World Heritage status (UNESCO 2020), the Ministry of Energy planned to finalise work at the Bolaghi gorge to dam the Sivand River, ca. 11 km south-west of Paϑragadā (Shahmoradi & Abdollahzadeh 2014: 231).[19] Rumours[20] that this project would actually pose a direct and serious threat to both Pārsa and Paϑragadā (Shahmoradi and Abdollahzadeh 2014: 235–236) mobilised a mass of people and led to a revival of Achaemenian fanhood. The appropriation of the sites meant to resist the state and its different institutions.

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[17] Militias, parties and other groups using these colours include Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in some of their flags.

[18] The honorary guard was called the *Immortal Guard of the Iranian Empire*, with reference to the Achaemenian Imperial Court Guard 'Gārd-e Jāvedān-e Shāhānshāhi-e Irān', again re-enacting an assumed pre-Islamic *topos*.

[19] Work commenced as early as 1992 during the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani, with resistance beginning around 2005, when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was voted into the presidential office (Shahmoradi & Abdollahzadeh 2014: 232).

[20] In some cases, activists were at the fringe and propagating fake news stories to dramatize the situation further and stir emotions in their audience in the www, as in the case of processed images showing the site of Paϑragadā drowning in a lake (Unknown 2009; Ashkan 2011; Shahmoradi & Abdollahzadeh 2014: 250).

Figure 6. President Mahmud Ahmadinejad and President Vladimir Putin standing on the dais in front of the staircase of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Credits: Mohammad Kheyrkhah, 2007, UPI Alamy Stock.

In their meticulous analysis of the events, Jones, Mozaffari and Jasper (2017) show how many diverse groups were interacting in the context of the events, including different individuals, associations and institutions. They demonstrate that a project remotely connected to the two sites would eventually lead to the self-organisation of social movements. The site, so far only used by the state as a stage for self-representation, was appropriated and turned into something similar to a pilgrimage site (Shahmoradi & Abdollahzadeh 2014: 240) in a move to resist the official narrative of government authorities, which also lead to a subsequent revival of romantic and glorified ideas of monarchy, reverence for the pre-Islamic past and renewed discussions about Aryanism (Shahmoradi & Abdollahzadeh 2014: 248). Yet again, these political and cultural movements show the receptivity for sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant racist and anti-Arab tendencies.

In recent years, the monument at Paθragadā saw the emergence of an unofficial festival on 29 October under the name of 'rūz-e Kūroš-e bozorg' – 'Cyrus the Great Day'. The date is thought to commemorate the day on which Kūruš captured the city of Babylon in 539 BCE. Merhavy (2017) describes how the day is used by young Iranians to voice their dissent with the current political system. The case shows how the evocation of dissent against the ruling elite in Iran at the feet of the monument happens within the old paths of nationalism and related concepts of antagonism to Islam and connected anti-Arab sentiments, picking up the threads coming from nineteenth century nationalism. The reasons are at least twofold: first and foremost, it is the identification of the site with a ruler from a pre-Islamic past, who on many occasions had been mystified. The second

aspect might be related to its spatial effect and the pronounced visibility the monument has from all over the surrounding plain (Fig. 7).[21]

Figure 7. View from south-east in direction of the mausoleum on the evening of the 7 Aban/29 October. Credits: Varaste900, 2015, Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Conclusion

Coming full circle, it should by now be clear that the role of Pārsa and Pathragada today are not comparable to their meaning 2,500 years ago. Their meaning today would have been impossible without two interrelated events: the advent of archaeology as a research project going beyond the antiquarian interest for a single artistic find and, second, the advent of a politically conceptualised Iranianness, which was developed largely in opposition to Turkish and Arabian language and culture. Nevertheless, I would find it inappropriate to speak of an 'illegitimate' political instrumentalisation imposed on 'politically innocent' sites. Both sites were built as expressions of Teispian and Achaemenian imperial power and strength and meant to be stages in political plays from the moment of their inception onwards.

While the monumentality of Pārsa was constantly related to royal legitimation through the connection to (supposed) ancestors, and self-representation in the context of ceremonies, parades and feasting events, the relative modesty of the (surviving parts) mausoleum of Kūruš led to its use as a site of veneration, most likely from pre-Islamic times, by local people and seasonally passing groups. The situation of both sites changed with the emergence of modern nationalism, which in its many facets came to influence the

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[21] I wonder if any modern civic movement should build on the mystification of an absolutist monarch, who ultimately saw war and deportation as an appropriate mode to gain power, thus considering the death, crippling, pain and suffering of others as an inevitable evil. From a scientific point of view, another problem emerges in the wake of the ongoing reassessment of processes and events as a result of new information regarding the past.

perception of such sites, especially with the emergence of modern archaeology in the wake of Herzfeld's work, very similar to what was happening in Europe around the same time. The sites were now focal points of socio-political interest, appropriation and recontextualisation, which changed the view on both profoundly.

Therefore, what happened in the Pahlawid period is very much different than what happened before, even though self-glorification was still an important element: the realm of the ruler was bound to the country and the inhabitants in a politically new fashion. Connected to the mission to civilise the inhabitants of the country, and in the context of a nation building approach, both sites have so far been palimpsests of 2,500 of ongoing usage. They were then, in the context of modern appropriation and recontextualisation, stripped of any trace that was thought to be non-Achaemenian, and turned into 'clean' monuments: focal points of national attention and prowess. Both were used as political stages again. The Paϑragadā is yet again a site of veneration of the mystified first ruler of the Teispid dynasty.

Following the revolution, the sites disappeared from the radar of political utilisation due to their identification as negative heritage sites. The utilisation of Pārsa as an official stage almost ten years later was connected to a reanimation and possibly a harmonisation of the revolutionary period with the period before, in a time of smaller and larger changes within Iranian society, including the emergence of elements of a civil society. The reason that focus was recentred on Pārsa must be sought in the particular affordances the architecture and the rich iconography offer to visual media-makers. On the other hand, Paϑragadā's ideal affordance, being the resting place of a mythologised pre-Islamic ruler, combined with its physical affordances, namely its visibility from afar and the large open space around the mausoleum, played an important role for groups rallying against the dominant discourses of the state.

The developments in the recent past show how, in a relatively short time, the image and perception of monuments could change, with a shifting of a site's meaning between positive and negative heritage. It also shows how traditions that are seemingly age-old can in fact be very young recontextualisations following recent appropriations.

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Costruire storie e raccontare produzioni.
Riflessioni a partire da un libro recente

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Abstract

Prendendo le mosse dalle recenti acquisizioni dell'archeologia cognitiva, Michele Cometa, uno specialista di storia e teoria della letteratura, affronta in un corposo volume una questione fondamentale: la relazione fra produzione di utensili (i cicli produttivi), evoluzione del linguaggio, sviluppo di capacità narrative finalizzate a raccontare 'storie' utili. Una questione che, a mio avviso, non può riguardare soltanto gli specialisti della preistoria antica e dei processi di ominazione, perché ha molto a che vedere, in qualsiasi contesto preindustriale e prescientifico, con la trasmissione dei saperi tecnici (e, difatti, Cometa rinvia alle opere di A. Leroi-Gourhan), l'archeologia della produzione, la capacità di leggere in un manufatto la commistione di 'funzione' e 'bellezza' (o stile). Scopo del presente lavoro, oltre ad invitare a riflettere sulle tesi di Cometa a partire ovviamente dal libro, vi è ribadire, indipendentemente dai termini utilizzati e dalle partizioni disciplinari, l'utilità di studi archeologici in cui si fa storia della cultura materiale tenendo insieme la ricostruzione dei comportamenti (tecnici) e quella dei significati (sociali) anche grazie allo studio delle scelte 'narrative' adottate dagli antichi.

Keywords: Archeologia cognitiva, Archeologia della produzione, Archeologia teorica, Cicli produttivi, Narrazione, comportamenti e significati

Raccontare storie

Quanto sia importante per le persone e le comunità il raccontare storie è sotto gli occhi di tutti. La società moderna è, difatti, una società che si basa sulla narrazione. Narrazione di fatti minuti che vengono condivisi nel momento stesso in cui avvengono, narrazione di eventi organizzati solo per poterli raccontare, narrazione per acquisire e stabilizzare sistemi di potere (in politica ed economia, ad esempio, ma anche in ambito culturale e, quindi, storico, archeologico, artistico). Ovviamente, anche narrazione storica, con lo sguardo rivolto al passato, e narrazione per modellare il futuro. Narrazione che sfrutta un'infinità di mezzi, con gli stessi che talvolta divengono più importanti del messaggio e dei fini solo perché, in molti casi, sono presentati come innovativi, coinvolgenti, interattivi e via dicendo. Mentre i fini se solo proviamo a riassumerli risultano spesso banali, ripetitivi, ovvi (pensiamo a tante affermazioni che potremmo definire moraleggianti, ecumeniche, buoniste o, di segno opposto ma parimenti scontate, alle tante affermazioni razziste, sessiste, intolleranti o violente).

In ambito archeologico da qualche tempo sono di moda due termini inglesi che hanno a che fare con la condivisione, e quindi la narrazione, di quanto è oggetto di ricerca: *storytelling* e *public archaeology*. Due termini che tardivamente sono proposti come centrali nel dibattito italiano e che spesso coprono pudicamente operazioni tradizionali, o già viste. Operazioni, e non è questo un difetto, sostanzialmente divulgative, caratterizzate dall'uso di sempre nuovi media, talvolta però anche autoreferenziali, banalizzanti la complessità dell'evidenza archeologica, ingenue ogniqualvolta richiamano ad esempio concetti quali l'identità o la coscienza storica. Non è questa la sede per approfondire, ma forse è utile ricordare due fatti. La *public archaeology*, come noto, nacque nel mondo anglosassone in situazioni che frequentemente vedevano gli archeologi occidentali, o di formazione occidentale, in contrapposizione con le popolazioni locali che iniziavano a dire la loro su concessioni di scavo, distruzioni e/o musealizzazioni, interpretazioni storiche. In particolare, in Australia e nelle Americhe. Molto meno, per opposte ragioni storiche, in Asia, con alcuni grandi paesi che sviluppano un'archeologia di stato, e in Africa con i retaggi coloniali tutt'oggi forti e in grado di sopire proteste e riflessioni.

La seconda questione ha a che fare con la memoria storica e disciplinare e con una diversa situazione in cui l'archeologia opera. In tutta Europa, almeno dall'Ottocento, gli archeologi non sono un corpo estraneo alla società. Prima costituiscono parte di un'élite, con archeologi di nobili origini, grandi ricchezze e talvolta senatori del Regno, poi divengono ceto medio. In ogni caso, sono dentro la società e se si scontrano con parti di essa lo fanno spesso per ragioni economiche, non culturali o di alterità di pensiero. E, quindi, anche solo guardando all'Italia, è facile ammettere che, operazioni oggi tipicamente proposte come *public archaeology,* si ebbero già negli anni Settanta e Ottanta. All'epoca si parlava più semplicemente di coinvolgimento e, senza neppure citare casi specifici, si organizzavano, spesso a margine di scavi in corso, lezioni e seminari di introduzione all'archeologia, laboratori aperti, didattica museale, occasioni di incontro e, frequentissime, pubblicazioni destinate alle scuole. Da non dimenticare, nei decenni finali del secolo scorso, la nascita di parchi a tema, in cui spesso si svolgevano attività archeosperimentali importanti anche per il progresso della ricerca. Nascevano inoltre centri di ricerca, indipendenti dalle istituzioni di tutela e universitarie, dove confluivano, insieme con gli archeologi, altre persone portatrici di saperi e interessi complementari. Ceramologi, storici dell'architettura, naturalisti per formazione scientifica, ambientalisti per scelta culturale, storici locali e molti altri. L'archeologia, per molti, fu quindi anche impegno civico e, forse, all'epoca parlare di archeologia pubblica avrebbe fatto sorridere perché un'archeologia 'privata' non è opzione praticabile in una società moderna. Che si tratti di una tautologia, utile per ribadire un qualcosa che dovrebbe essere noto, ineludibile, condiviso? Dove tautologia significa

"*affermazione vera per definizione, quindi fondamentalmente priva di valore informativo. Le tautologie logiche ragionano circolarmente attorno agli argomenti o alle affermazioni. In linguistica, la tautologia è una figura retorica che consiste nell'aggiunta di contenuto ridondante e dal significato ripetitivo all'interno di un dato discorso al fine di porre maggiore enfasi*" (fonte volutamente *Wikipedia.*).

Public archaeology, quindi come *archeologia stratigrafica,* anche se quella ridondanza sull'aspetto di metodo servì, negli anni Settanta, di fronte ai tanti che stratigrafici non volevano essere, mentre oggi il rischio, a mio avviso, è nell'autocelebrazione in assenza di una riflessione critica adeguata.

Il tema, su cui non ho intenzione di dilungarmi oltre, ha ovviamente molto a che fare con l'idea che ognuno di noi ha di archeologia e di società (penso alle polemiche sui 'volontari') e non è questa la sede idonea, ma certamente *public archaeology* e *storytelling* sono termini che, se proprio si vogliono adottare, dovrebbero tenere conto di quanto fatto in passato, per farlo meglio, ad un livello più alto, e non solo con quei mezzi che la tecnologia mette oggi a disposizione.

Il quadro generale appena accennato, credo renda evidente quanto il tema del 'raccontare' sia importante. E, quindi, proviamo ad andare oltre i limiti di tentativi, passati e in corso, che vanno comunque in giuste direzioni. Proviamo, nelle pagine che seguono, a ragionare di narrazione a partire da un libro che la pone come pilastro del processo evolutivo e della capacità degli uomini di vivere in società stabili, o stabili per tempi talvolta molto lunghi. Società che necessitano, per funzionare, di sviluppate capacità cognitive, di saperi trasmessi fra più generazioni, di una memoria condivisa e, quindi, almeno in parte stabilizzata.

Il libro che ci farà da guida in questa riflessione, certamente immatura e provvisoria, si intitola *Perché le storie ci aiutano a vivere. La letteratura necessaria* (Cometa 2017) e l'autore è Michele Cometa, già noto per studi importanti dedicati a letteratura e cultura visuale. Studi in cui, ovviamente, compaiono esempi concernenti reperti e contesti archeologici alcuni dei quali li riprenderemo più avanti (questione già brevemente discussa in Giannichedda 2019).

L'archeologia, come noto, è una disciplina 'visiva', dove molto conta l'osservazione, con tutti i suoi strumenti, e dove ormai si è consapevoli che i punti di vista possono essere molteplici e dipendenti da ciò che gli archeologi pensano (di sé stessi, del vivere in società, del passato, del futuro eccetera). Nell'organizzare il testo che segue ho perciò tentato di procedere in due maniere distinte. Da un lato presentare, il più fedelmente possibile, il libro e il pensiero di Michele Cometa perché è importante. Dall'altro, associarvi riflessioni personali, spesso già accennate in lavori precedenti e qui proposte, dove possibile, proprio con l'ausilio di figure. Figure di reperti, figure di artigiani antichi al lavoro, ma anche tabelle e schemi che spero rendano ancora più evidente quanto sia importante un approccio globale (e tecnoantropologico) alla storia della cultura materiale (Giannichedda 2014). E come lo studio di situazioni storiche possa essere informativo del modo in cui, in epoche remote, furono organizzate le prime catene operative, nacque il linguaggio, si scoprì l'importanza di raccontare storie utili non a fare in senso tecnico, ma a fare in senso sociotecnico, o tecnoantropologico.

Storie, narrazioni, oggetti

Il libro di Michele Cometa affronta la storia della letteratura e della *fiction* nel contesto della teoria dell'evoluzione prendendo le mosse dai recenti sviluppi dell'archeologia cognitiva. Fin dalla quarta di copertina, che costituisce il biglietto da visita del libro, si presenta al lettore un tema intrigante. Tanto più intrigante, per ogni archeologo che, come spesso si sostiene, voglia fare storia a partire dallo studio di testimonianze materiali. Il presente testo, come detto più sopra, non deve quindi essere considerato una recensione, ma una riflessione a partire da

quanto letto. Con l'ovvio richiamare, con esempi e figure, soprattutto quanto ha una diretta attinenza con le problematiche tipiche dell'archeologia.

Fin dalla *Premessa*, il lettore di Cometa è messo di fronte a una storia. Quella narrata da una bambina di tre anni ai propri familiari. Storia, avente come protagonista un orsetto, che discende da fatti veri (li *imita*), è strutturata come una *fiction* (*fare finta che*) ed ha quindi proprie regole e una struttura. Una storia che ha un valore sociale e che genera piacere. Una storia in cui gli adulti si perdono, sospendono l'incredulità, la realtà, il fluire del tempo. "Anche l'orsetto si anima, ed entra a far parte della tribù, quasi fosse una persona. Le storie hanno questo potere: animano l'inanimato" (Cometa 2017: 19).

Narrazione ed oggetti e, quindi, in chiave storica, narrazione e reperti. Ecco il nostro tema o, meglio, ciò che siamo andati a cercare nel libro scoprendo, però, anche altro. Ed è anche bene chiarire da subito che il lavoro di Cometa è un libro difficile. In molti passaggi molto difficile. Per il gran numero di riferimenti ad autori che non conosco e a discipline in cui mi avventuro con curiosità e poche competenze. Un libro, come spesso accade con le cose difficili, però di grande interesse e in grado di suggerire spazi di riflessione che, altrimenti neppure saprei immaginare. Un libro che in un eventuale indice analitico, che manca, ospiterebbe parole come biopoetica, cognitivismi, evoluzionismo, *fiction,* filosofia, filosofia antropologica, *Literary Darwinism* e *Literary Cognitivism,* narratologia dell'ansia, neuroscienze, psicanalisi, psicologia evoluzionista, teoria della letteratura e della narrazione, qualità terapeutiche della narrazione. Ma anche, e per fortuna, archeologia, archeologia cognitiva, memoria, manufatti, catene operative.

Un libro, che per quanto possa contare il mio parere, è certamente da leggere. E se Cometa non ha, con tutta evidenza, il dono della sintesi, molti passaggi sono incisivi e chiarificatori di ragionamenti complessi. Ed il libro, e qui mi ripeto, da leggere e rileggere, credo apra davvero nuovi orizzonti e rinvii ad altre proficue letture di autori non sempre noti in Italia.

Raccontare è utile

Il primo paragrafo del primo capitolo (*Elementi di biopoetica*) si intitola *Homo narrans* e si apre con un'affermazione 'ragionevole'.

"*Non sappiamo perché e come l'Homo sapiens abbia sviluppato la capacità di costruire storie, sequenze narrative, finzioni. Possiamo però ragionevolmente ipotizzare, aiutati da discipline come la psicologia evoluzionista, la paleontologia, l'archeologia cognitiva, come possono essere andate le cose. Cioè come un unico ominide possa avere sviluppato la facoltà di narrare storie e come queste possano averlo avvantaggiato fra tutte le specie, fino a farne l'indiscusso signore del pianeta*" (Cometa 2017: 21).

Come possono essere andate le cose?
Premesso che la narrazione è un fenomeno universale, per rispondere è possibile riprendere vari esempi utilizzati da Cometa: le pitture rupestri paleolitiche, l'uomo-leone di Hohlenstein-Stadel, lo sciamano teriomorfo di Trois-Frères (Fig. 1). Esempi, diremmo prove, che si aggiungono a quanto prodotto dalle ricerche etnografiche sulla creazione artistica e che

consentono di ragionare dell'*esplosione cognitiva* paleolitica e perfino di testimonianze archeologiche riferibili a periodi precedenti.

Figura 1. Il cosiddetto "stregone" di Trois-Fréres (ca. 13000 BP) nel rilievo di Henri Breuil. Da Cometa 2017, 27.

Nello specifico, i casi controversi di ciottoli selezionati per una qualche valenza estetica da austrolopitecine o i più diffusi ornamenti personali preistorici. Le collane, in particolare. Una categoria di manufatti che, non a caso, accompagna, tutta la storia del genere umano.

"*Gli ornamenti personali, come le collane di conchiglie trovate a Blombos, presuppongono la considerazione dell'effetto che esse fanno sugli "altri" e dunque la capacità di meta-rappresentazioni del Sé nel contesto di un mind reading ormai compiutamente sviluppato*" (Cometa 2017: 28).

Collane quelle di Blombos, databili grossomodo a 75000 anni fa, su cui non esiste unanimità di pareri per quanto attiene al loro significato simbolico (è stato detto che potevano funzionare anche soltanto da *post-it* identitari), ma che certamente furono forate intenzionalmente e usate come ornamento. Siano o non siano, quelle, le prime e più antiche collane, quel che è importante è che identico discorso vale per tutte le successive: fanno parte di un sistema comunicativo (e narrativo), ognuna ha una almeno potenziale durata trans generazionale, necessitano di più materiali e quindi di elaborate sequenze produttive (conchiglie di diversi tipi, ma anche fibre vegetali opportunamente trattate, strumenti di foratura, coloranti applicati, fra cui l'ocra).

Il tutto per costruire "*messaggi* che per essere compresi devono fare parte di un *linguaggio simbolico condiviso*" (Cometa 2017: 28). Le collane, perciò, raccontano storie e, quindi, le collane sono 'utili'. Utili nel senso pieno del termine come sottolinea Cometa nel paragrafo *Apologia dell'utile* dove deprecava anche il fatto che, per secoli, "l'estetica tutta ha evitato categorie come l'*utilità*, la *finalità*, la *funzione*, la stessa *necessità* dell'arte" (Cometa 2017: 35).

Parole che, pari pari, potremmo usare per certi modi di fare archeologia come succursale della storia dell'arte, come classicismo imperante e asfittico, come separazione di campi fra un alto e nobile studio delle testimonianze artistiche (spesso più correttamente riconducibili alla categoria dell'artigianato 'artistico') e un basso, e volgare, studio delle testimonianze della vita quotidiana, dei mestieri, del vivere comune. Invece l'estetica e la narrazione stessa (e tutte le ipotesi sul loro divenire e diversificarsi storico), non possono esistere senza ipotesi circa la funzione che avevano. Sia per i *sapiens* e anche per alcuni *pre-sapiens*, almeno fino all'*Homo ergaster*, e sia per le generazioni di età pienamente storica e per noi stessi. Fondamentale, quindi un passaggio del libro di Cometa: "le arti sono un effetto collaterale (*by-product*) di comportamenti selezionati ad altri fini" (Cometa 2017: 41) e le storie servono per trasferire conoscenze, costruire comunità, attrarre partner eccetera.

Sbaglio se traduco quel *by-product* come sottoprodotto? Io credo di no, perché credo che lo studio dei manufatti sia studio dei loro caratteri materiali (e del contesto), studio della loro funzione pratica, utilitaristica, e quindi dei comportamenti connessi, studio dei significati, delle idee associate, delle informazioni trasmesse. Senza compartimenti stagni e con continui *feedback* come dimostra uno schema (Fig. 2), già usato altrove, e dove il punto di partenza coincide con i manufatti. Sia se si opera da archeologi sia per chi, in passato, li adoperava tecnicamente e socialmente.
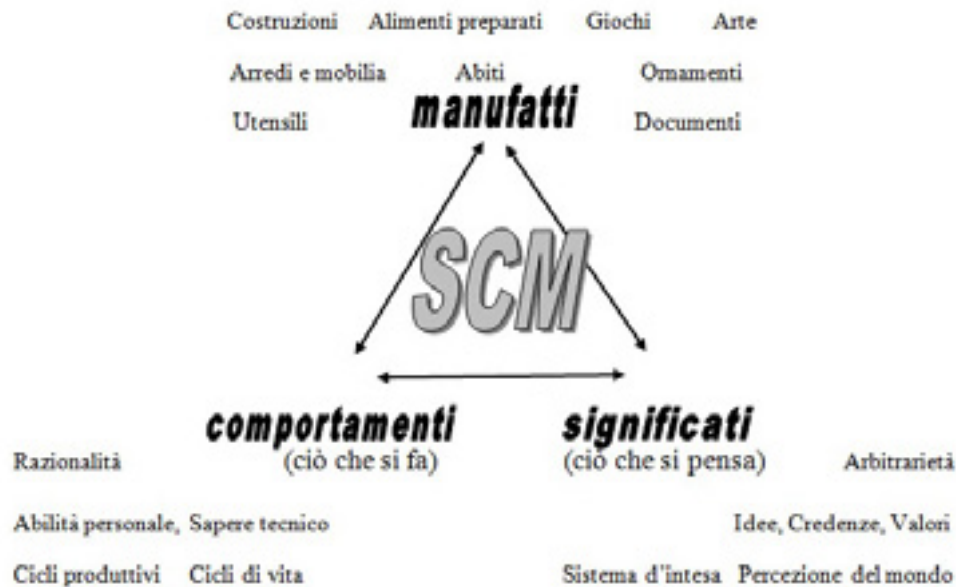
Figura 2. Nel triangolo della cultura materiale tutte le parti sono collegate e muovendo dallo studio dei manufatti (di cui si è sempre occupata l'archeologia storico culturale) è possibile ricostruire i comportamenti (aventi natura antropologico processuale) e i significati (aventi natura postprocessuale o contestuale). SCM = storia della cultura materiale. Da Giannichedda 2016: 130.

Ciò che resta

Per essere chiari, a costo di sovrabbondare nelle citazioni, Cometa sostiene che la letteratura, ma più in generale tutto quanto appare non immediatamente funzionale, in realtà soddisfa una "*necessità* biologica" ed è quindi *indispensabile* per l'evoluzione della specie. Non solo nei tempi lunghi, ma anche in quelli brevi dove "aiuta un organismo a passare i propri geni a un altro organismo" (Cometa 2017: 50). E quindi a perpetuare famiglie, stirpi, culture, società o qualsiasi altro termine si voglia adottare per segnalare un fenomeno storico che, lo sapevamo da tempo, ha a che fare con manufatti, memoria, linguaggio. E che ora, grazie a questo libro, sappiamo anche con la narrazione, dalla più primitiva alla letteratura attuale.

E, guarda caso, a raccontarci che la narrazione, già prima delle religioni organizzate, era universale, favoriva la cooperazione, cementava legami fra persone altrimenti distanti, è giunto recentemente un articolo di *Le Scienze* (che riprende uno studio più ampio su *Nature Communications* a firma di Smith et al. 2017) in cui si afferma che le società con bravi narratori funzionano meglio di altre e che questi godono addirittura di un maggiore successo riproduttivo con 0,53 figli in più dei non narratori. Il tutto documentato da un lavoro sul campo a carattere antropologico (interviste e osservazioni in loco) condotto fra gli Agta delle Filippine, una popolazione di cacciatori raccoglitori attuali.

Se quanto sopra, per quanto interessante, può forse riduttivamente leggersi come ovvio, se non banale, un passo decisivo è compiuto nel libro di Cometa quando, anziché guardare all'antropologia (i racconti e le capacità dei primitivi attuali), rivolge l'attenzione all'archeologia (le prove materiali di narrazioni 'utili' e antichissime). In apertura del capitolo *Archeologia del Sé*, Michele Cometa riporta difatti due citazioni, definite elegie, che più avanti dimostrerà, però, vere solo in parte (Cometa 2017: 61 e segg.).

"*Il problema è che pensieri e parole non lasciano fossili. Sono persi per sempre come lacrime nella pioggia*" (Pievani 2014) e, seconda citazione, "*Parole come 'me' e 'io' non producono fossili, né lasciano alcuna traccia materiale immediatamente identificabile e universale*" (Malafouris 2008).

Poi, nonostante ritenga le opere di Pievani e Malafouris, archeologo cognitivista di scuola Renfrew, fondamentali, Cometa dimostra che qualcosa è sopravvissuto e, retoricamente, si chiede: "*È proprio vero che non ci sono giunti i fossili del comportamento narrativo?*" (Cometa 2017: 62).

La risposta sono i *miti*, ma soprattutto una molteplicità di prove concrete, archeologiche. "*Per non parlare del fatto che intere discipline lavorano oggi sulla convergenza tra gesti, utensili, linguaggio e narrazione (nel solco profondo scavato da André Leroi-Gourhan), facendo emergere dagli "utensili" (tools) tutta una serie di indicazioni sulle origini delle narrazioni e della letteratura*" (Cometa 2017: 63).

La letteratura, e le sue origini a partire dall'emergere del linguaggio come adattamento evolutivo, è difatti ciò che interessa a Cometa che lavora per accendere un riflettore sul rapporto tra sequenza operativa (*chaíne opératoire*) e narrazione: "*Un racconto è una sequenza ordinata di azioni*" (Cometa 2017: 63).

E proprio la 'ricorsività', la frequenza delle ripetizioni, è una caratteristica sia delle narrazioni sia, ad esempio delle tecniche di scheggiature immutabili, o quasi immutabili, per millenni.

Linguaggio, gesti, produzioni

Tre le vie indicate per un'archeologia cognitiva che voglia attingere all'origine del linguaggio, come dice Cometa, o più in generale alla natura stessa del vivere sociale: studio del *linguaggio*, del *gesto*, della *produzione materiale* (di utensili) (Cometa 2017: 64). Senza dimenticare quanto si deve alle neuroscienze che studiano i neuroni specchio e le diverse attività cerebrali che si attivano per parlare e per fare. Cometa, al proposito è lapidario.

"*Il compito dell'archeologia cognitiva sta nel comprendere l'architettura mentale dell'Homo sapiens, non dal punto di vista dello studio del cervello, ma dal punto di vista della sua cultura materiale*" (Cometa 2017: 70).

Per inciso, alla stessa p. 70, Cometa poi amplierà l'osservazione alla comprensione dei non *sapiens* e dei Neanderthal in particolare (vedi avanti), mentre nel mio *Archeologia teorica* (Giannichedda 2016) rilevo che l'archeologia cognitiva è quella sub disciplina che deve saper scegliere fra domande impossibili e domande possibili e storicamente rilevanti. Fra queste, importantissime, quelle relative proprio all'organizzazione dei cicli produttivi e alla trasmissione del sapere tecnico nelle società preindustriali. Un sapere in gran parte non verbale e basato sull'esempio pratico, ma che proprio nelle narrazioni poteva trovare forza e autorevolezza.

Chi mi conosce sa che per me leggere di Leroi-Gourhan è una dolce melodia e ricordo che Tiziano Mannoni, il mio indimenticato maestro, anni fa rimase assolutamente affascinato quando lesse dei neuroni specchio e della possibilità di giungere a scardinare la scatola nera che l'antropologo francese aveva iniziato a scalfire già a metà Novecento. Esemplare, per

l'epoca, il porre anche graficamente in relazione sviluppo cerebrale, valutato in centimetri cubi, e capacità di impiego ottimale delle lame in selce (Fig. 3).
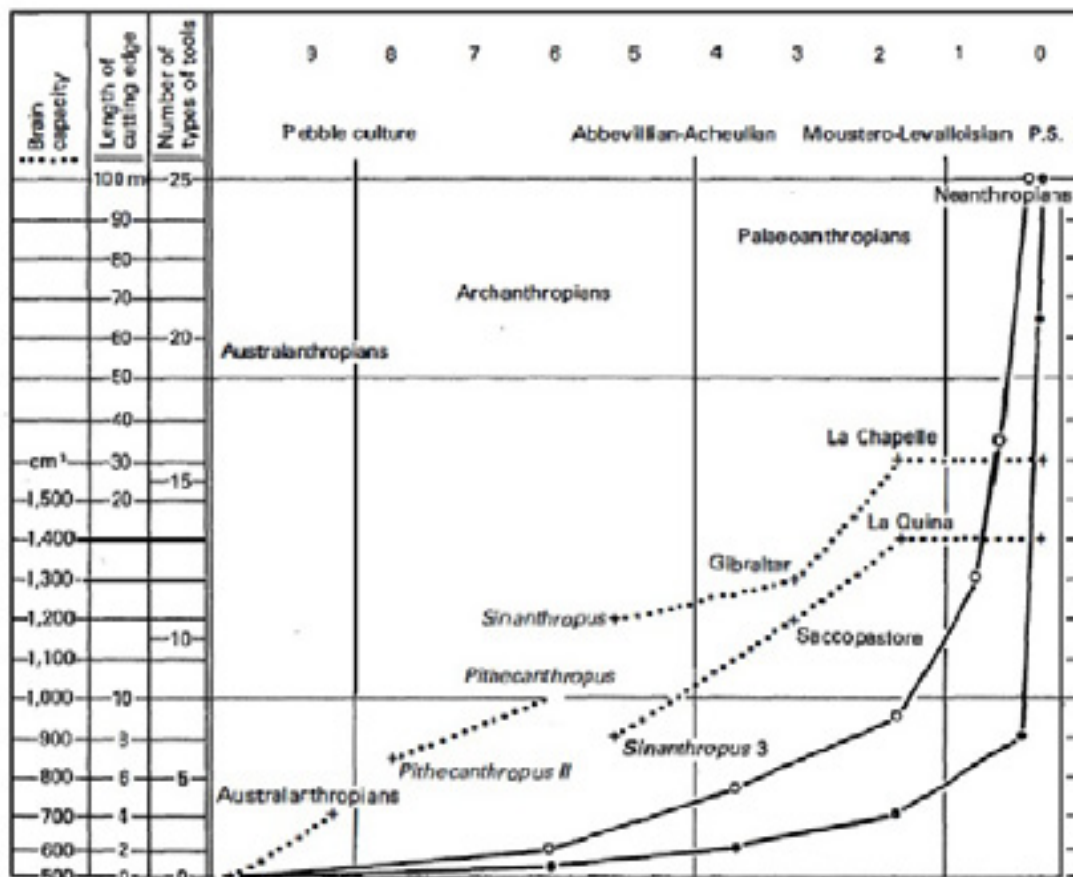

Figura 3. Tavola che pone in relazione lo sviluppo cerebrale, la capacità di ottimizzare, e variare, la lavorazione di lame in selce. Da Leroi-Gourhan 1993:138.

Il tempo, però, non è passato invano e Cometa, definendo la mente come la più perfetta macchina narrativa, ne elenca gli elementi caratteristici: la memoria, le catene operative, il Sé. E, fatto importante, tutto questo si tiene, è legato, sia negli utensili sia nelle raffigurazioni mobiliari. Anche se bisogna convenire, con Cometa, che gli archeologi, impegnatissimi nello studio dei manufatti (oggetti, cose, utensili), troppo poco sono propensi a ragionare di 'narratologia' come possibilità di studiare, da un diverso punto di vista, i fenomeni storici prediligendo invece, aggiungo io, lo *storytelling* come pratica divulgativa a cui abbiamo già accennato.

Ripetutamente, nel proprio libro, Cometa spiega cosa significhi interessarsi allo studio, insieme, di *tool-making* e *simboli reference*. Significa, indagare "la connessione tra linguaggio e uso degli utensili sul piano dell'attivazione di determinate e concomitanti aree del cervello" (Cometa 2017: 67). E qui mi viene in mente una figura che ho proposto, in realtà senza la giusta enfasi, nel mio *Uomini e cose. Appunti di archeologia* (Giannichedda 2006: 36) ad integrazione dello schema relativo alla Storia della cultura materiale qui già discusso. Oltre a *Manufatti, Comportamenti* e *Significati*, e alle interazioni fra i medesimi, vi compaiono (Fig. 4) l'*Ambiente* e, ecco il punto di contatto, i *Nomi delle cose*, quasi certamente una delle prime e più stringenti occasioni di impiego del linguaggio per comunicare ogni qualvolta gli uomini

decisero di 'trasformare' tecnicamente un materiale (minerale, animale, vegetale, sia esso una pietra, una preda viva o morta, il corpo, proprio o altrui, o quanto resta di un altro essere umano, fino al paesaggio come sommatoria di materiali e azioni).
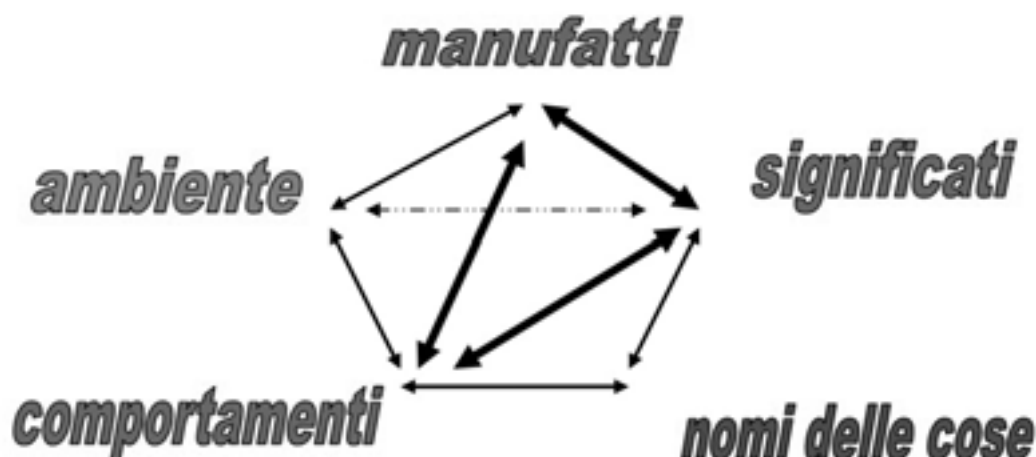

Figura 4. Il 'triangolo' della Cultura materiale deformato per comprendervi. nel sistema di azioni e retroazioni, da un lato l'ambiente non alterato ancora dall'uomo (ad esempio, la geologia o il clima), dall'altro il nome che l'uomo impone alle cose (il linguaggio, la narrazione e, quindi, anche le fonti scritte). Da Giannichedda 2006: 36.

In volgare, e con parole mie, l'attivazione di concomitanti aree del cervello (tra parole, cose e azioni) è quello che ognuno può personalmente sperimentare se pensa ad esempio 'martello' (o 'martellare') e avverte una determinata pulsione muscolare pertinente e diversa da quella che avrebbe se pensasse 'spiedo' o 'penna'. Sapendo, come è ovvio, che si tratta di un esempio 'grezzo', di quelli che, talvolta, uso a lezione per tentare di farmi capire, ma che mi sembra pertinente e mi spinge ad una considerazione sul libro di Cometa: non è un libro facile, è un libro dove molto forse mi sfugge, ma è un libro che ti fa sentire meglio. Ti fa capire che fare archeologia è importante e che l'archeologo, se vuole, non è solo. Al proprio fianco, insieme ad antropologi e storici, ha anche gli studiosi della letteratura, i neuro scienziati, i fisici e tutti quelli che guardano all'uomo consapevoli dell'importanza dei processi di evoluzione nel tempo.

Ma torniamo al libro. Stabilita l'ovvia relazione linguaggio – narrazione, meno evidente ma fortissima è la relazione utensili – narrazione e su questa nel libro si insiste a lungo. La catena operativa "è l'applicazione di una sequenza temporale e operativa – un prima, un durante e un dopo – ma presuppone nel contempo una narrazione perché chi realizza un ciottolo olduvaiano, un bifacciale o una lama, deve saper prevedere (immaginare) che da una determinata pietra potrà venir fuori un determinato oggetto e dunque deve avere una seppur rudimentale idea del tempo e la possibilità di immaginare se non altro quello che non si vede (il prodotto finito, ma anche semplicemente l'altra faccia di un bifacciale mentre lo si lavora). Non parliamo delle capacità narrative che deve avere chi insegna ad altri (anche solo con gesti e vocalizzazioni come è stato ipotizzato) la giusta sequenza e il giusto colpo" (Cometa 2017: 69).

Una citazione, la precedente, un po' lunga ma da tenere bene a mente e che, personalmente, credo possa essere perfettamente resa da tre differenti figure che certamente semplificano e schematizzano i concetti, ma che vanno nella direzione che Cometa affronta.

La prima figura è tratta da quell'*Archeologia analitica* di David Clarke (1998, ed. or. 1968) che, a mio avviso inspiegabilmente, è libro troppo poco letto e considerato (e perfino Cometa, in una bibliografia di oltre sessanta pagine, non lo menziona). Una figura che, con Tiziano Mannoni, abbiamo ripreso in *Archeologia della produzione* (Mannoni & Giannichedda 1996) e dove il produrre, e quindi la catena operativa, è visto come gesto e sequenza ideativa, tecnica, sociale. Nel tempo e nell'ambiente (Fig. 5).
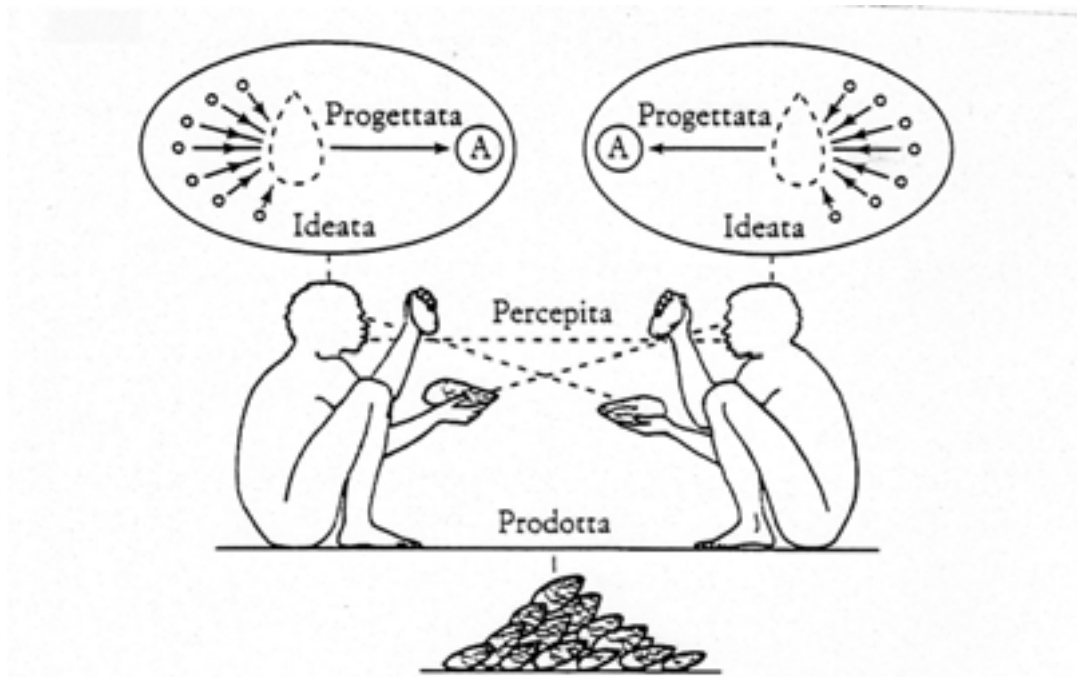

Figura 5. La produzione di manufatti come attività che, in tutte le sue fasi (dall'ideazione, alla progettazione, alla realizzazione) unisce considerazioni materiali e sociali. Da Clarke 1998; figura già utilizzata in Giannichedda 2016.

La seconda figura che ha a che fare con la creazione di manufatti, in realtà avrei potuto utilizzarla anche più sopra e anch'essa è ripresa da *Archeologia della produzione*, ma deriva da una raffigurazione *monstre* di Alberto Maria Cirese (1984) che nell'occasione avevamo ridotto all'osso (Fig. 6). Ridotta per evidenziare che al centro vi è *MCE - memoria controllo, elaborazione* -, mentre l'intero diagramma di flusso ha a che fare con la costruzione del sapere tecnico e la sua messa in comune (individuali sono soltanto le capacità psicosomatiche delle singole persone, pensiamo ad artisti e grandi 'maestri', con l'impossibilità di tramandarle nonostante siano perfettamente leggibili nelle loro opere laddove se ne coglie la 'mano' e un 'sapere' non comune). E, in tal senso, questo schema non è poi molto dissimile da quello, molto meno approfondito, che Cometa propone, derivandolo da un lavoro di Marie-Laure Ryan e in cui

la narrazione, che è una forma di insegnamento, contribuisce alle esperienze di vita e, quindi, alle capacità mentali (Cometa 2017: 211).

I - Informazioni
E - Energia
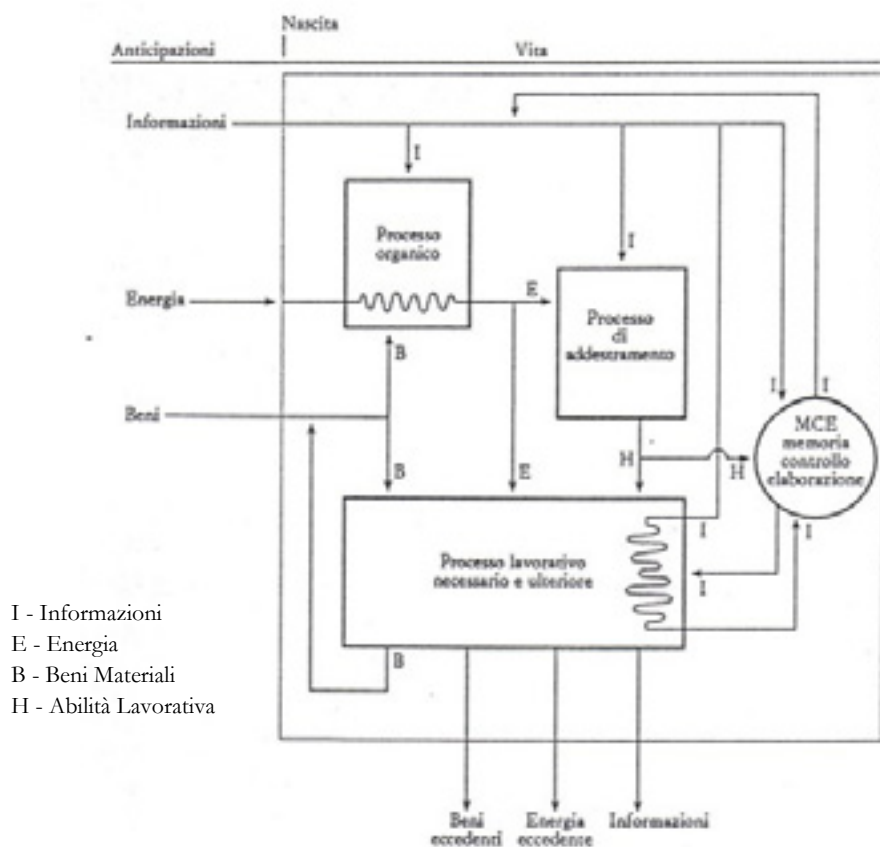B - Beni Materiali
H - Abilità Lavorativa

Figura 6. Il diagramma di flusso (estremamente semplificato da Cirese 1984) simula i processi che avvengono nella vita di ogni singolo individuo. Dal momento della nascita egli riceve informazioni I, energia E, beni di sussistenza B, che consentono i processi di sviluppo organico e di apprendimento. In seguito, riceve anche beni materiali necessari al lavoro e giunge a produrre nuovi beni, informazioni ed energia da destinare ad altri (ad esempio, alla prole). Solo l'abilità lavorativa H non entra e non esce dal circuito essendo una capacità individuale psicosomatica. La complessità del circuito informativo, con azioni e retroazioni, è regolata dal cervello MCE. Da Mannoni & Giannichedda 1996.

Terza figura è uno scatto del paleontologo, antropologo e archeologo Giancarlo Ligabue che ho già usato e commentato in due lavori (Giannichedda 2006, 2016). Qui, padre e figlio sono uniti dal processo tecnico, dal passaggio di competenze 'globali' (aldilà della tecnica, competenze sociali, memoria di ciò che è stato, ipotesi su cosa sarà), certamente da commenti verbali e, forse, da storie e miti sul fare asce in pietra al modo degli antenati. Immagine a mio avviso forte, esplicativa, bellissima (Fig. 7). E immagine perfino commovente se si pensa a come avveniva il passaggio delle sopra menzionate competenze globali fra un aborigeno e il figlio in epoca precedente la colonizzazione europea e, invece, la situazione esistente nei decenni da poco trascorsi quando la foto è stata scattata. Con il padre della fotografia che, certamente, vede se stesso e il figlio ormai 'circondati' da materiali importati da oltreoceano e ha la consapevolezza di un sapere destinato a svanire (a meno che gli archeologi se ne facciano carico andando oltre le repliche sperimentali dei gesti tecnici per ricostruire la storia che la foto suggerisce).

Figura 7. I comportamenti non possono essere disgiunti dai significati ed entrambi sono inglobati nei manufatti e, per questo, restano a portata di mano degli archeologi. Nella fotografia è evidente il passaggio di competenze tecniche e di valori culturali, affettivi, simbolici ben resi dalle teste che si toccano (Missione del C.S.R.L., Irian Jaya, Nuova Guinea, 1990, da Ligabue Magazine n. 18, 1991 grazie alla cortesia di Giancarlo Ligabue). Figura già utilizzata in Giannichedda 2016: 158.

Archeologia del Sè

A p. 70 del libro di Cometa, il *Sé*, finora menzionato ma non spiegato, irrompe sulla scena. Le sepolture, anche quelle dei Neanderthal, dimostrano difatti abilità e volontà narrative e simboliche, coscienza che nei manufatti, ma anche nei luoghi, si fissa la memoria del corpo:

"*Il compito dell'archeologia cognitiva sta nel comprendere l'architettura mentale dell'Homo sapiens, non dal punto di vista dello studio del cervello, ma dal punto di vista della sua cultura materiale. Delle chaíne opératoire, della memoria e del Sé non ci restano evidenze archeologiche, se non quelle che rimangono iscritte sugli utensili (e sui media)*".

Più avanti, esplicativo è, alle pp. 75-76, un esempio relativo ai bifacciali; memoria *episodica*, a breve termine è quella relativa al ricordare come sono stati fatti in precedenti occasioni; memoria *mimetica* che fa tesoro dell'esperienza per scegliere in futuro quali pietre usare. E, conseguentemente, memoria che si fissa in quelle pietre trasformate in manufatti. Consentendo, così, di ordinare una "esplosione creativa" che si fa narrazione. Narrazione, quindi, come attività adattiva che comprende il *gioco*, il *pretend play*, il *make-believe*, l'*illusione/inganno* (Cometa 2017: 90).

Il tutto ha ovviamente a che fare o, meglio, personalmente credo abbia origine, proprio dalle necessità delle catene operative. Ed è questo, difatti, il titolo di un intero paragrafo del libro di Cometa da cui traggo una citazionea mio avviso importante.

Paragrafo *Chaíne Opératoire* (Cometa 2017: 99):

"*La più recente ricerca archeologica e antropologica – rappresentata soprattutto da Tim Ingold (1999) – ha rivalutato a pieno le intuizioni di André Leroi-Gourhan in* Il gesto e la parola *(1964), uno dei capolavori sommi del Novecento il cui significato profondo è ancora tutto da scoprire e che contiene in nuce ogni grande tesi che oggi l'archeologia cognitiva va riprendendo e sustanziando di prove archeologiche, paleontologiche e neuro scientifiche*".

Ripeto: con riferimento alle opere di Leroi-Gourhan, Cometa scrive "uno dei capolavori sommi del Novecento". Punto. Forse al riguardo si poteva citare altro e non solo quello che resta il migliore lavoro di Ingold, ma il paragrafo è assolutamente da leggere. Anche soffermandosi sulla tabella in cui Cometa compara 'fossili' linguistici e sviluppo degli utensili (Fig. 8).

I fossili di Jackendoff (1999, 2002)	Archeologia (Davidson, 2006)	Evidenze paleontologiche
Parole di esclamazione con forte emozione.	Uso istintivo limitato di materiali (immodificati?).	Uso degli utensili nei pre-ominidi (vedi gli scimpanzé) (Whiten et al., 1999).
Classe aperta di simboli.	Aggiunta di varietà negli utensili.	Utensili bifacciali di 2 milioni di anni fa (Wynn, McGrew, 1989).
Moduli discreti senza significato.	Azioni combinate prima della realizzazione degli utensili.	Bifacciali acheuleani (Davidson, 2002).
Regole sulle combinazioni di moduli.	Imposizione di pattern alla combinazione di azioni.	Tecnica Levallois (Boëda, 1988; Foley, Lahr, 1997).
Ordine delle parole.	"Un utensile per fare un utensile".	Percussione indiretta (Bar-Yosef, Kuhn, 1999; Davidson. 2003).
I modificatori modificano la parola vicina.	Utensili con specifiche sequenze d'uso.	Utensili d'osso (Henshilwood, D'Errico et al., 2001; Hensilwood, Sealy et al., 2001).
Nomi composti.	Componenti multiple.	Impugnature (Boëda et al., 1999).

Figura 8. Comparazione tra i "fossili" linguistici come sono stati definiti da Jackendoff (1999 e 2002) e lo sviluppo degli utensili in Davidson 2010,194. Da Cometa 2017: 103.

Ma torniamo al *Sé* (Cometa 2017: 107, anche se più avanti a p. 115 l'autore si chiede se esiste davvero): "non è possibile distinguere nella costruzione del *Sé* tra ciò che è *nel* cervello, ciò che è *nei* corpi (*embodiment*) e ciò che è *nelle* cose".

E qui il riferimento è ancora ad alcuni lavori di Lambros Malafouris in cui si portano ad esempio le tecniche di scheggiatura in epoche che precedono l'invenzione del linguaggio, come lo conosciamo, di centinaia di millenni (Fig. 9). Ma altri esempi sono possibili (Cometa 2017: 112 e segg.): gli ornamenti personali, le figurine antropomorfe (talvolta con la decisione di romperle intenzionalmente per esigenze 'sociali'), fino alla considerazione generale, ripresa ancora da Ingold (2007: 14), per cui "la *materia* non è qualcosa che esiste, ma qualcosa che *accade*" e i caratteri delle cose, lucentezza, durezza eccetera, "non sono determinati oggettivamente, né immaginati soggettivamente, sono esperiti praticamente. In questo senso ogni proprietà è una storia condensata".
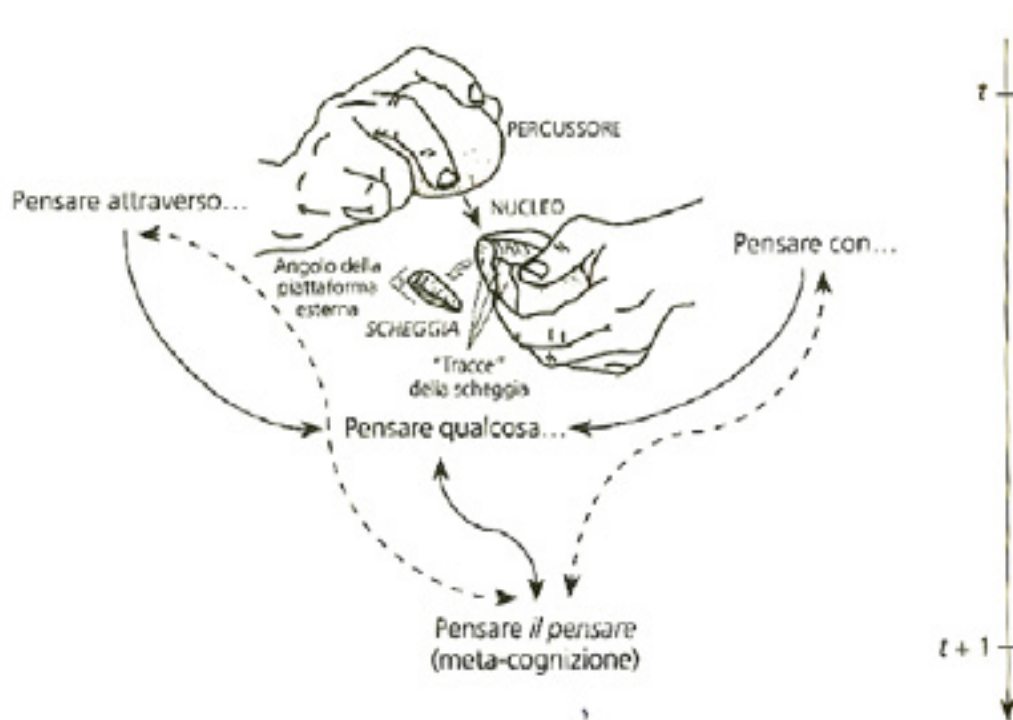

Figura 9. La scheggiatura come protesi enattivo-cognitiva. Da Malafouris 2013 e riprodotta in Cometa 2017: 110.

Citazioni, queste ultime, che valgono anche per periodi di molto successivi alla preistoria e in cui personalmente leggo anche la necessità di andare oltre la bruta oggettività (che resta il nostro punto di partenza processuale) evitando gli eccessi immaginativi postprocessuali, per insistere sul fatto che «mente, azione e materia vanno tenute insieme» (Cometa 2017: 114). Con tutti i rischi che ciò comporta e che sono ben resi proprio da un lavoro, a mio avviso inconcludente ed inutile, di Tim Ingold (2013 per cui si veda Giannichedda c.s.) che Cometa non cita forse per quanto è recente.

A seguire nel libro di Cometa troviamo una lunga riflessione incentrata ancora sul Sè, quasi sessanta pagine, che è detta di capitale importanza per la teoria letteraria, ma lo sembra molto meno per la ricostruzione storica e in cui si discutono le tesi di molti autori riconducibili a scuole diverse. Sinceramente, e per ignoranza, in tali tesi mi sono perso più volte. Poi, però, a p. 180 ricompare Leroi-Gourhan, con una lunga citazione tratta da *Il gesto e la parola*. E, di nuovo, con riferimento alle tecniche di scheggiatura, ma ogni altra catena operativa potrebbe essere usata con pari efficacia: antenati che tengono 'a mente', che pianificano, che conoscono i materiali (non con i modi tipici del sapere scientifico ma con quelli, meno rigidi del sapere

tecnico e sociale). E, conseguentemente, il mio pensiero non può non andare alla tabella che compare in *Evoluzione e tecniche*, vol. 1, *L'uomo e la materia* da me già ripresa in *Uomini e cose. Appunti di archeologia* (Fig. 10). Una tabella che dà una classificazione assoluta e definitiva dei gesti tecnici, vero capolavoro del Novecento, per cui, grazie a Cometa, possiamo sostenere che a costituire il Sé contribuiscono proprio gli infiniti modi di compiere quelle 'operazioni elementari' che Leroi-Gourhan ha dimostrato riconducibili ad alcuni 'gesti elementari' e, in definitiva, a un limitato numero di 'tendenze' materiali.
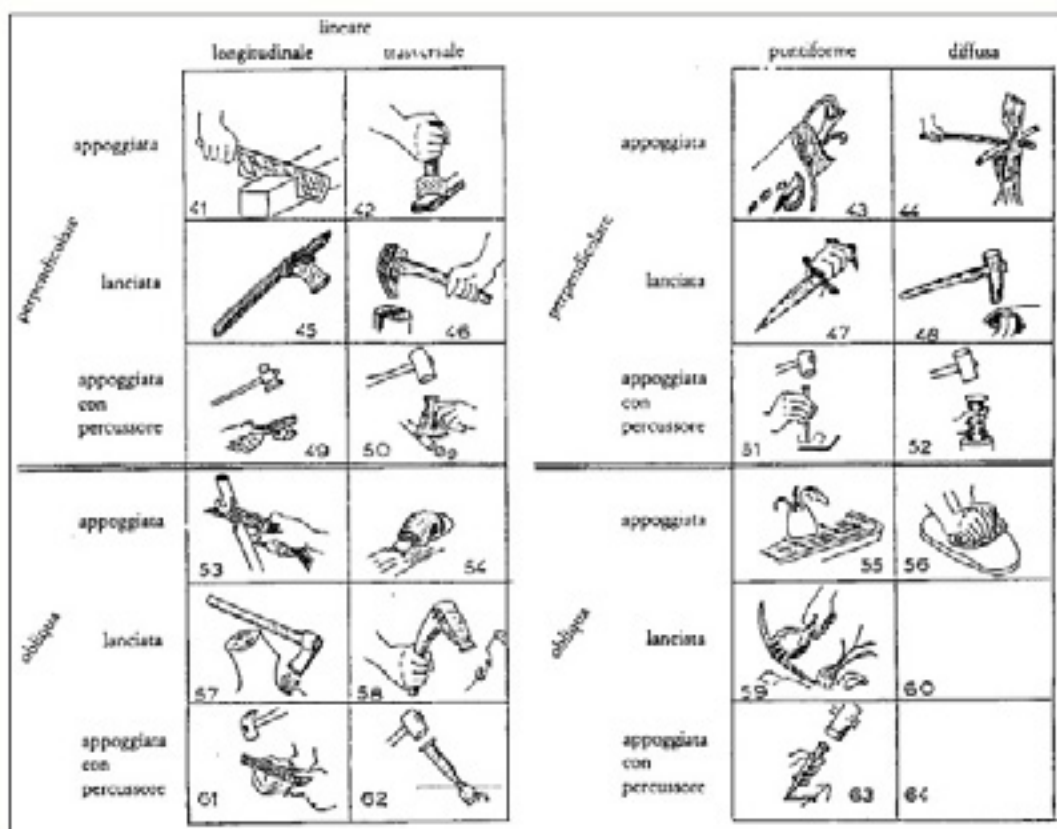

Figura 10. I mezzi elementari di azione sulla materia. Da Leroi-Gourhan 1993. Figura già utilizzata in Giannichedda 2006: 21.

In tal senso, quando si fanno osservazioni etnoarcheologiche, ad esempio osservare un vasaio al lavoro che anziché spiegare ci mostra il proprio lavoro, occorre sapere che si sta assistendo a una narrazione pratica. Un passaggio di competenze, per quanto parcellizzato, che è un abbozzo di trasmissione di saperi tecnici che, per alcune parti, è altrimenti facile dimostrare non trasmissibili a parole. Un tema discusso nello specifico da Malafouris (2008a) proprio con riferimento all'attività del vasaio, che è ben evidente, fra l'altro, nella documentazione video sulla produzione di testelli ad Agnola, in Liguria (Giannichedda & Zanini 2011) dove i contadini – artigiani, nel 1965, erano pienamente consapevoli di raccontare agli archeologi una storia di durata secolare in cui è però possibile cogliere aspetti particolari e momentanei: la produzione rurale accessoria ormai marginalizzata e soppiantata dalle produzioni industriali; la consapevolezza di essere una nicchia di resistenti al progresso, non per scelta ma per storia; il diverso ruolo delle persone in relazione a genere e età (Fig. 11).

Figura 11. Fermi immagine dal video realizzato nel 1965 da Tiziano Mannoni ad Agnola (SP) con, nell'ordine, le operazioni di battitura, foggiatura a stampo, distacco e finitura degli orli di un testello in ceramica d'impasto. Notare l'intervento di persone diverse e il ciclo come sequenza. Da Giannichedda & Zanini 2011.

Blending: il bello e la funzione

Tornando al libro di Michele Cometa, nel capitolo *Poetiche della mente*, per lunghe e densissime pagine l'autore affronta questioni che offrono minori spunti a un povero archeologo materialista, processualista convinto ma non irragionevole. Finché a p. 211 si apre il paragrafo *Blending*, un termine che verrà spiegato più avanti e si rivelerà di notevole utilità. Come spiegarlo da archeologi? O, meglio, cosa ho capito? Credo che il modo migliore per rispondere sia una citazione relativa a un manufatto antico e alle storie che racconta: "Utensili che danno già ampie prove delle capacità di *blending* dell'*Homo sapiens* se si pensa che nei manufatti più antichi, come nelle amigdale (o bifacciali a mandorla), emerge con chiarezza la capacità di 'fondere' spazi mentali diversi: per esempio il bello e la funzione, come nel caso del celebre bifacciale studiato da Kenneth P. Oakley (1981) nel cui centro era stata selezionata / lasciata una conchiglia con evidenti funzioni decorative" (p. 214).
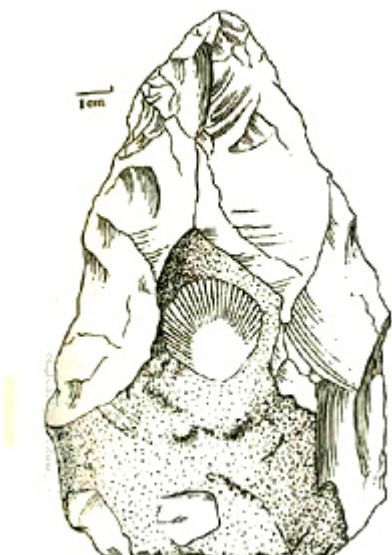
Figura 12. Bifacciale acheuleano con al centro la conchiglia di uno *Spondylus spinosus*. Da Oakley 1981, p. 208 e riprodotta in Cometa 2017: 215.

Blending, quindi significa fondere il 'bello e la funzione', attrezzandosi per un'archeologia cognitiva che, come sostiene Cometa, non vuole essere solo speculativa, ma attenta a cercare conferme nei manufatti (Fig. 12). E, aggiungo io, *blending* è ragionare, nell'ordine, da processuali e postprocessuali (o al contrario, se qualcuno dovesse mai riuscirci con pari efficacia).

"*Il nostro lontano precursore sembrava applicare un criterio estetico, mentre si preoccupava di creare un utensile perfettamente funzionante*" (Cometa 2017: 214).

Quindi, prima la funzione poi l'estetica, o se si vuole la funzione prima e nel mentre l'estetica. Difficilmente l'opposto. Esattamente quel che, da archeologo materialista, volevo leggere (e per l'idea che occorra essere bravi processuali per, poi, essere postprocessuali meno incerti, rinvio alle pagine conclusive del mio *Archeologia teorica*).

Ovviamente, però, ciò non vale solo per gli archeologi preistorici, perché *blending* è un concetto che si incarna anche in altre infinite categorie di manufatti. Ad esempio, vasellame decorato di età romana, fibbie altomedievali, abiti bassomedievali, arredi postmedievali (e mi ha sempre stupito quanta poca "bellezza" o senso "estetico" esplicito, si trovi nei musei etnografici europei, dove diversamente da altre aree, i manufatti raccontano soprattutto di 'funzioni'. Per quale motivo? Nelle società di antico regime, l'`estetica' era mascherata nella 'funzione? E perché così bene? Una questione complessa su cui conto di tornare in altra occasione anche facendo tesoro della lezione di Cometa.

Mi dilungo, invece, ancora sul tema *blending*, per quello che mi sembra essere un ampliamento di orizzonte necessario. Cometa, difatti, rileva giustamente che esistono casi particolarmente informativi e complessi e fa l'esempio di quelli che definisce 'ibridi': «La scoperta di ibridi sempre più complessi – un tema classico della paleontologia sin dai tempi di Henry Breuil (Cometa 2015, 2106) come il celeberrimo uomo - leone di Hohlenstein-Stadel» ha fatto comprendere l'importanza del *blending* nella ricostruzione dei processi cognitivi a partire dai manufatti (Cometa 2017: 214, Fig. 13).
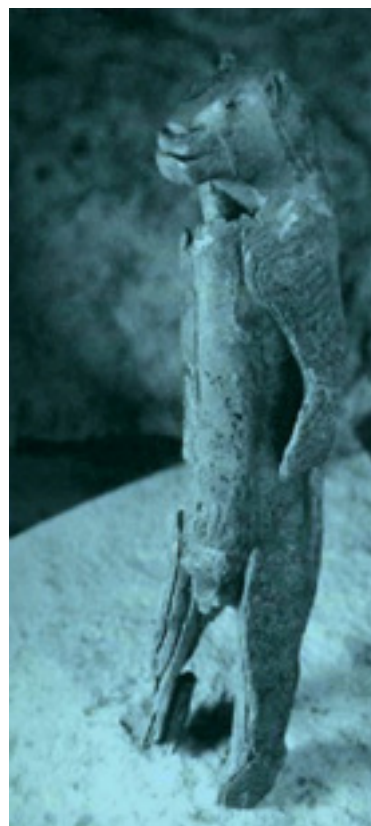

Figura 13. L'uomo-leone di Hohlenstein-Stadel (ca. 32000-35000 BP). Da Cometa 2017, 27.

In realtà, proprio tali casi sembrano in prima istanza più semplici di altri. Banalmente, a mio avviso, la statuetta dell'uomo-leone è da ritenere meno complessa di un generico coltello o di una brocca perché nella prima è maggiormente evidente - uso parole tratte da Cometa e dalle citazioni che riporta - la 'compressione' nella statuetta di funzione ed estetica. E il *blending* è quindi evidente e in grado di condurre verso nuove idee (appunto l'uomo – leone) che potevano essere padroneggiate mentalmente in un universo cognitivo più ampio dei precedenti.

Per l'archeologo, mi sembra che i casi più difficili non siano né gli oggetti (quasi) esclusivamente funzionali (ed evito di ribadire che nel caso dei *sapiens* la funzionalità da sola non esiste) né quelli che senza dubbio definiamo artistici (e solo funzionalmente "inutili", fra cui normalmente classificheremmo anche l'uomo-leone di cui Cometa ha comunque mostrato esistere una funzione). Difficili sono quelli misti, compressi, che uniscono funzione e bellezza anche per raccontare chi siamo e che storia mettiamo in essere per relazionarci con altri (il coltello con il manico ageminato ma anche quello diritto e lineare, la brocca dipinta e quella soltanto panciuta, lo scudo decorato e quello monocromo, l'acconciatura costata ore di lavoro e il corpo esibito nudo).

Tornando però a Cometa, nel capitolo *Poetiche della mente*, si chiarisce meglio il concetto di *blending* in relazione alla nascita del linguaggio, dell'arte, della tecnologia e della religione. E si suggerisce, le certezze sono poche ma il ragionamento fila, che le 'cose', in quanto media materiali, abbiano anticipato, direi ovviamente, linguaggio, narrazione, arte e religione. Per essere chiari, l'uomo- leone è prima un *manufatto*, poi eventualmente un'*opera d'arte* e un mezzo di comunicazione sociale.

Da un breve articolo dedicato a *conceptual blending* (Fauconnier & Turner 2002), Cometa richiama vari esempi, alcuni originali e altri noti per essere stati discussi in altri testi di archeologia cognitiva e non solo: l'orologio, da polso e non, incarnazione del tempo per il quale sarebbe stato utile richiamare gli scritti di Carlo Maria Cipolla sugli orologi medievali; la tomba come *blending* che permette di "vivere con i morti"; la cattedrale gotica "sublime *blending* prodotto da secoli di teologia e architettura (intesa come arte della memoria: i *loci* della mnemotecnica) che mettono in relazione con il sacro e con la trascendenza" (Cipolla 1989: 220–221).

Proprio in relazione alle sepolture, vale la pena ricordare che i corredi, e la disposizione del corpo o la struttura, servono a dare vita all'*agency* del defunto (un'*agency* modulata dai vivi a seconda della propria 'cultura') così da restituirgli la capacità di suggerire pensieri e azioni. Quindi, morti che divengono un po' meno morti e, da qui, l'idea universale di non-luoghi dove ancora si trovano con tutto quanto ne consegue (Cipolla1989: 247).

Archeologia, ansia e incertezza
Il capitolo *Antropologia dell'ansia*, oltre a portare ulteriori argomenti alla discussione sul ruolo adattivo, e conveniente, della narrazione come legante sociale, introduce una nuova prospettiva. "*L'incertezza, invece, caratterizza l'Homo* sapiens *come essere storico. L'uomo è l'unico*

animale che possiede una storia e ne è consapevole, e dunque è costantemente sospeso tra passato e futuro, entrambi forieri di incertezza e instabilità esistenziali" (Cometa 2017: 280).

Da ciò, l'ansia derivante dall'essere esposti a effetti che sembrano non avere una causa. Ansia che mette in guardia, vantaggio adattivo, da pericoli ed è forse alla base dei vari animismi. Dare vita alle cose è difatti un modo per prepararsi al peggio e per porvi rimedio. Cometa ricorda che la teoria evoluzionista designa ciò con il motto *better safe than sorry* (Cometa 2017: 298-299). Il tema sembra effettivamente lontano dalle piste seguite dagli archeologi e, un po' dobbiamo ammetterlo, forse rischia di esserlo fin quando Cometa non propone un caso concreto.

Nell'800 a.C. in seguito a un peggioramento climatico, con conseguente stress ambientale, e nel 1300 d.C. causa i pericoli portati da altre popolazioni, gli esquimesi Dorset incrementarono, rispetto ad altri periodi, la

"*produzione di artefatti destinati a pratiche sciamaniche (cioè parafernalia a uso degli sciamani) e sciamanistiche (cioè amuleti e oggetti magici usati dalla gente comune)*" (Cometa 2017: 301).

Oggetti destinati a scongiurare magicamente i pericoli (uno di carattere ambientale, uno dovuto a diseguali rapporti 'politici') a cui Cometa ipotizza dovessero associarsi narrazioni mitiche anch'esse con funzione antistress. E tutto questo mi ricorda un caso ligure, non notissimo ma importante, di sepolture mesolitiche, indagate nella grotta delle Arene Candide, in cui gli inumati furono sepolti con parti di uccelli. In una tomba di adulto, becchi e ali di *Crex* e *Fistone*, specie che in Liguria arrivano in estate; in quella di un bambino resti di smerlo e gabbiano, uccelli che in prossimità delle Arene Candide arrivavano per svernare. È possibile che tale uso, insieme ad altri volesse dare valore anche ad elementi di stagionalità connessi alla stagione del decesso? E, quindi, anche ai cambiamenti climatici in atto? Non ovviamente i cambiamenti di breve periodo ma cambiamenti già entrati a fare parte di narrazioni 'mitiche' che obbligavano, per governare l'ansia derivante da fenomeni inspiegati, a prestare attenzione al cielo, alle stagioni, al coincidere di eventi naturali con la morte di individui socialmente importanti. Per ora, con tutta evidenza, siamo di fronte soltanto a una suggestione che, comunque, non può essere esclusa dal campo delle ipotesi.

Meno ipotetica è però l'osservazione che persone in condizioni di costrizione (ad esempio, perché chiuse nei *castra* romani al confine dell'Impero, nei monasteri medievali o nelle carceri sabaude) in molte occasioni usarono i pochi manufatti di cui disponevano, ed in particolare il vasellame, per manifestare la propria individualità, dare sfogo all'ansia, stabilire dei confini e dei rapporti con gli altri (Fig. 14).

In un caso, nel monastero femminile di Santa Maria di Bano, a Tagliolo Monferrato (AL), i segni identificativi con cui venivano 'segnate' quasi tutte le scodelle e i piatti sono stati ritenuti 'necessari' proprio per definire spazi individuali che la regola monastica altrimenti avrebbe compresso fino alla perdita delle storie personali (Giannichedda 2012, 2016). Questo in un luogo, che non si poteva arredare a proprio gusto e in cui non ci si poteva differenziare con vesti particolari. Personalizzare i pochi oggetti a propria disposizione è non soltanto, come abbiamo scritto in passato, solo la prova di una cultura materiale della speranza, ma ora

potremmo dire, con le parole di Cometa, che in quella attività si esprimeva la residua capacità di fare *effetto*, raccontando la propria storia agli 'altri' e, quindi, anche la capacità di meta-rappresentazione del Sé.

Figura 14. Vasellame con 'segni di proprietà' rinvenuto in un monastero medievale e comprovante operazioni 'tecniche' di difesa dell'identità personale, delimitazione 'spazi', gestione del sé. Da Giannichedda 2012.

Più in generale, e in altre pagine, nel libro di Cometa, si tratta difatti dell'impotenza degli esseri umani di fronte a eventi incontrollati a cui non possono sfuggire e che 'obbligano' a rifugiarsi in riti di passaggio, cerimonie, comportamenti artistici e ritualizzati. Un 'fare qualcosa' (Cometa 2017: 305) che, secondo Cometa, cura, costruendo e ricostruendo il Sé, grazie a storie archetipiche e mitiche (Cometa 2017: 327-328). Storie che, immagino io, sono quelle che si raccontavano al villaggio per motivare ad andare in montagna a incidere le rocce o nell'occasione di una sepoltura volutamente elaborata. Oppure, a posteriori, raccogliendosi ai piedi di una parete istoriata o al passaggio di una processione votiva. Narrazioni di cui resta traccia archeologica grazie ad un'infinità di oggetti: dalle iscrizioni preistoriche, alle navicelle nuragiche in bronzo, al vasellame di tutti i periodi fino, in modo più esplicito, a statue, altari, monumenti.

Conclusioni provvisorie

A chiudere il libro di Michele Cometa l'*Epilogo* ha come titolo *Il gesto e la parola.* Un titolo ovviamente che è tutto meno che casuale. Ma che, abbastanza inaspettatamente, non è usato per rinviare in modo esplicito a Leroi-Gourhan perché va oltre. L'attenzione è difatti alla qualità terapeutica di narrazioni prive di parole, come quelle fra una madre e il figlio malato. Storie mute, che portano Cometa a chiudere il cerchio tornando a narrazioni prelinguistiche, fatte di gesti, anche tecnici, e pochi suoni. Nel complesso, un ripartire da capo, l'indicazione che il lavoro fatto non è terminato, la lezione che, da archeologi, si può tornare sui propri passi a rileggere materiali e contesti. Ad esempio, l'organizzazione spaziale che all'interno delle abitazioni ha molto a che fare con relazioni e storie. E, il tutto, anche con idee nuove, sapendo che indagare manufatti, comportamenti e significati (e qui si rinvia alla Fig. 1), vuol dire indagare anche passaggi di competenze tecniche, e tecnico sociali, utili alla coesione di ogni comunità, al suo successo adattivo e al modificarsi nel segno della tradizione.

Figura 15. Copertina del libro di Michele Cometa.

Per finire, della complessa lezione di Michele Cometa personalmente cosa mi resterà? Certamente la soddisfazione di sapere che alcune delle tematiche che ritengo archeologicamente interessanti possono essere 'lette' anche da osservatori che dispongono di altri strumenti di conoscenza. In primis, la teoria letteraria e la ricerca sulla narrazione come fenomeno tipicamente umano.

Lo scopo del presente lavoro è perciò invitare a riflettere sulle tesi di Cometa a partire ovviamente dai dati archeologici (si veda quel che scrive alle pp. 65-66 con i manufatti considerati come *protesi* di processi mentali e con l'obbligatorietà per gli archeologi di partire dallo studio degli utensili).

La relazione manufatti (cicli), funzioni, significati, e quindi anche narrazioni (richiamate da ultime solo per praticità espressiva), è una relazione tipica del vivere in società fino almeno alla rivoluzione industriale e scientifica. Solo a seguire, con l'affermarsi del pensiero scientifico, si inizierà a pensare in modo differente da quanto era caratteristico di tutte le epoche precedenti e, perciò, mettere in relazione la produzione di manufatti e quella di significati, le narrazioni, è

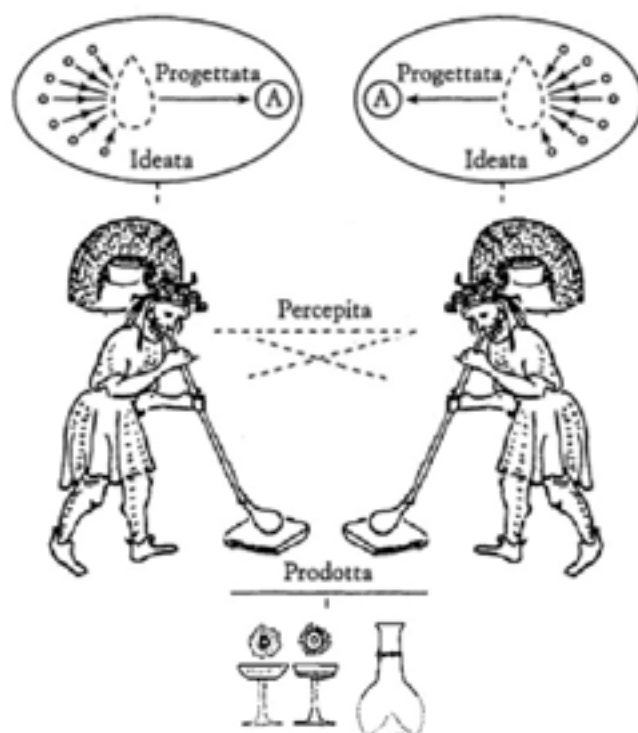importante tanto per uno studioso di preistoria quanto per un archeologo classico o medievista (Fig. 16).

Figura 16. L'immagine ispirata da Clarke 1998 (vedi fig. 5) è qui riproposta modificandola, con l'inserimento di vetrai ripresi dall'iconografia basso medievale, a suggerire che i medesimi processi ideativi, progettuali, tecnici, sociali (e narrativi) sono 'inglobati' anche nei manufatti di età storica.

E, l'obiettivo globale è lo studio non parcellizzato, uso parole mie, dei cicli produttivi, della trasmissione dei saperi tecnici, della nascita ed evoluzione del linguaggio, della narrazione. E, quindi, anche di mitologia e religioni. Perché, da sempre, homo *sapiens* è homo *faber* e, ora l'ho più chiaro, è anche homo *narrans*. Con la consapevolezza che il bello e la funzione, si vedano le pagine di Cometa sul *blending*, erano e ancora sono incorporati e 'fusi' in ogni manufatto. Certamente in dosi diverse a seconda dei tipi, delle funzioni, e perfino dei contesti e degli individui, ma sempre insieme e non gli uni contro gli altri. Così come non possono essere, ma è una vecchia questione, l'uno contro l'altro armati gli archeologi e gli storici dell'arte. Parafrasando il titolo del libro di Cometa, le storie che necessitavano, se ricostruite, possono davvero aiutare a fare meglio ricerca in ambiti, l'archeologia della produzione, teorica e cognitiva, che hanno il medesimo obiettivo. Quell'obiettivo 'globale' che Tiziano Mannoni (2008) distinse in cultura materiale più cultura esistenziale e che André Leroi-Gourhan (1982.: 13) aveva riassunto con "semplicemente l'uomo". Dove semplicemente significa in tutta la sua complessità (cfr. al proposito i saggi in Soulier 2015, ma anche Lenay 2017).

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Part II

Interviews & Reviews

La complessitá del reale e la sua immagine.
Conversazione con Daniele Simoni

Martina Revello Lami - Leiden University

"Costruisco combinazioni di linee e di colori su una superficie piatta, in modo di esprimere una bellezza generale con una somma coscienza"
(Piet Mondrian)

Introduzione

Nato a Lucca nel 1981, Daniele si appassiona al disegno e all'arte già da bambino. Interrotto il cammino scolastico affascinato dalle sottoculture giovanili e dai codici suburbani si é dedicato allo studio ed alla pratica del tatuaggio, mestiere che ha praticato per 20 anni e che gli ha dato l'opportunitá di viaggiare in Europa e nel mondo per assorbire tutti gli stimoli e le ispirazioni possibili. La necessità di ampliare il suo raggio d'azione, esprimere concetti complessi attraverso la sua arte, trovare la strada della descrizione della realtà e dare vita ad un percorso artistico piú completo portano Daniele a calarsi sempre più spesso nei panni del pittore. Partendo dagli acquerelli, dal paesaggio al ritratto, ed approdato infine all'olio, la sua arte è una personale lettura della complessità del mondo.


Non chiedere parola o La bellezza ammutolita", acquerello su carta (2017)

La serie di opere raccolte in *Aquerelli* e *Olio su tela* raccontano questo cammino stilistico e forniscono un'immagine composita dei soggetti che piú spesso attraggono l'attenzione dell'autore. In *Aquerelli* (2017) accanto ai paesaggi urbani, punto focale dell'opera di Daniele, appare un suggestivo volto di donna imbavagliato che sembra anticipare negli aspetti formali i volti dei marinai raffigurati in *Eroi del mare* (2017). L'estemporanea *Olio su Tela* riassume invece la sua cifra estetica attuale fatta di "*pennellate rigorosamente verticali ed orizzontali, miriadi di croci, di scontri gaussiani [che] danno origine all'immagine, alla forma estetica, unica via di conoscenza del mondo ad uso dell'uomo*". In questa raccolta fanno la loro comparsa due

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componenti aggiuntive nella narrazione di Daniele della realtá, la natura e la mitologia classica, che poi troveranno diversa formulazione nella serie *Assenze*, dove il centro dell'attenzione si sposta dalle presenze ai vuoti creati da spazi umani logorati e crisrallizzati nel tempo. In forma ed essenza questo ultimo ciclo è il piú vicino alle opere originali create da Daniele per questo numero di Ex Novo dedicato all'ereditá nazi-fascista nel patrimonio urbano e architettonico di Italia e Germania. Seppure in *Assenze* protagoniste sono architetture e sculture legate alla classicitá mediterranea, la ricerca della rappresentazione di strutture scarne che riflettano l'opera dell'uomo nella sua essenzialitá è la medesima riscontrabile nelle nuove creazioni ideate per Ex Novo. Isolati e ripuliti dell'elemento vivo, il profilo dalla mascella scolpita (Occasione mancata) e l'edificio razionalista (La torre) presentati rispettivamente su copertina e retrocopertina sono blocchi granitici monocromi che si stagliano su sfondi di colori dirompenti e vibranti. Immagini contrastanti sospese tra clamore e silenzio che rappresentano perfettamente la dicotomia tra imponenza delle sopravvivenze architettoniche e stilistiche del periodo nazi-fascista e i meccanismi di rimozione del loro significato storico.
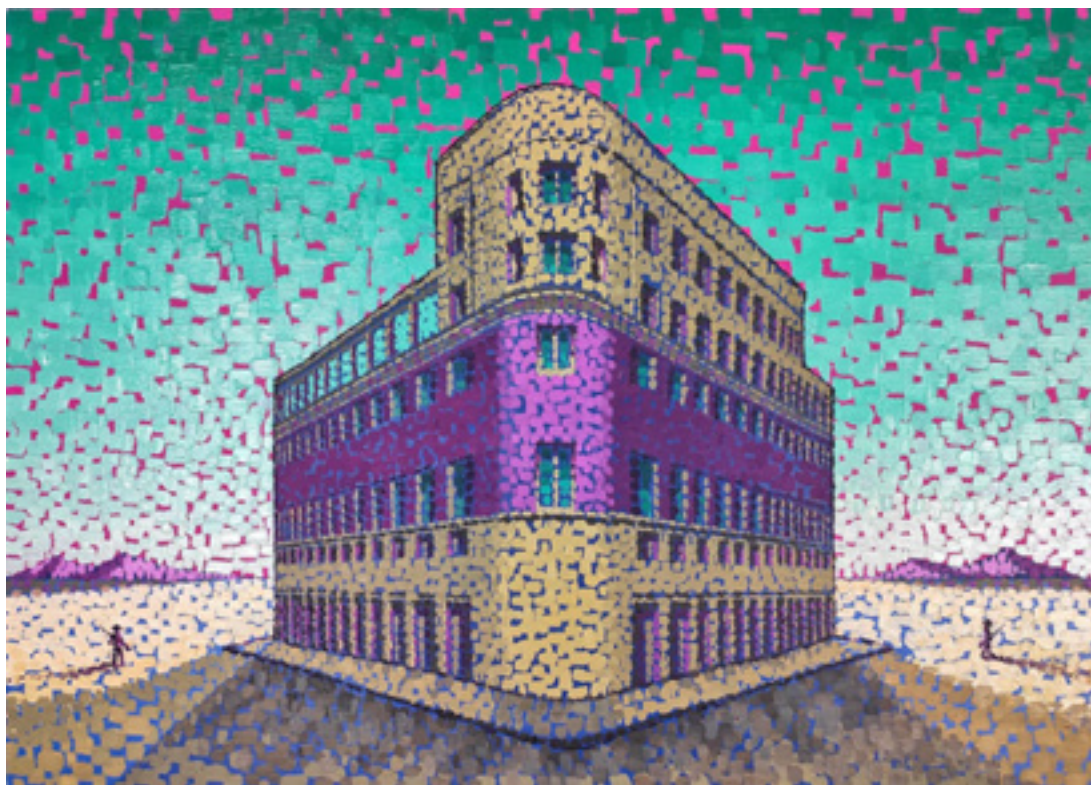
La torre, olio su tela (Ex Novo 2020 backcover)

Martina Revello Lami: Ciao Daniele e grazie ancora per aver non solo deciso di condividere la tua arte sul nostro giornale, ma soprattutto di aver creato due immagini *ex novo* (non potevo evitare il gioco di parole) per la nostra copertina. Appena uscita la "Call for Art" hai subito risposto dicendo che il tema di questo numero era particolarmente vicino alla tua ricerca artistica e narrativa. Puoi spiegarci in che modo?

Daniele Simoni: Sono nato e cresciuto a Lucca e fin da bambino mi capitava di passare da Tirrenia, una delle località più iconiche del razionalismo, dove sorsero gli edifici dei

nuovi teatri cinematografici, e dove sullo sfondo del mare si stagliavano le rovine degli edifici delle colonie. Quegli stabili "arenati", come direbbe un noto gruppo musicale pisano, erano davvero come navi approdate e abbandonate, ricche di una storia che avevo sentito raccontare dai nonni. Mi sembrava di respirare l'aria assolata che respiravano i bambini/balilla che giocavano fra il mare e il marmo degli edifici. L'armonia di quelle costruzioni, così placide sull'arenile mi dava una sensazione di nostalgia per tempi che mai avevo vissuto. Una specie di fumosa fascinazione cinematografica. Bene quelle sono le sensazioni che il razionalismo, con le sue linee auliche continua a darmi tutt'oggi. Dalla sensazione alla tela il passo è breve...


"Alain Bombard", acquerello su carta (2017)

MRL: Nella tua produzione le raffigurazioni dell'uomo sono meno numerose rispetto ai paesaggi e all'architettura. Le serie *Eroi del mare* dove ritrai grandi marinai e velisti del passato e *Lust* dove compaiono i protagonistiu dell'eccentrica vita notturna berlinese sembrano costituire un'eccezione. Ma osservando piú attentamente le opere, l'impressione è che al centro della narrazione non siano gli uomini bensí i luoghi e gli spazi a loro legati: il mare e la sua forza nel primo caso, la cittá di Berlino e le sue notti infinite nel secondo. Nella tua arte che ruolo ha l'uomo rispetto ai luoghi e viceversa?

DS: Il luogo nelle mie rappresentazioni è sempre un luogo dell'anima. Per quanto forse banale come definizione di un paesaggio non esiste tuttavia una luce riflessa da un panorama che non generi una particolare sensazione nel nostro profondo. In questa specularità il mio tentativo è proprio quello di affidare al paesaggio la descrizione degli stati d'animo o ancor più dell'essenza dell'elemento umano ivi rappresentato. Il paesaggio è l'anima stessa.

Nei ritratti invece sempre per quel gioco di specchi di cui parlavo prima cerco di dipingere l'ambiente che ha forgiato quelle persone: l'oceano per i miei naviganti o le luci dei club per i nottambuli berlinesi. A proposito della serie LUST, il progetto è in corso d'opera e mancano molti tasselli ancora, il più importante di questi saranno le foto. Si stratta infatti di una collaborazione, un dialogo fra pittura e fotografia che stiamo realizzando con un caro amico fotografo, Toni Federico, residente nella capitale tedesca.
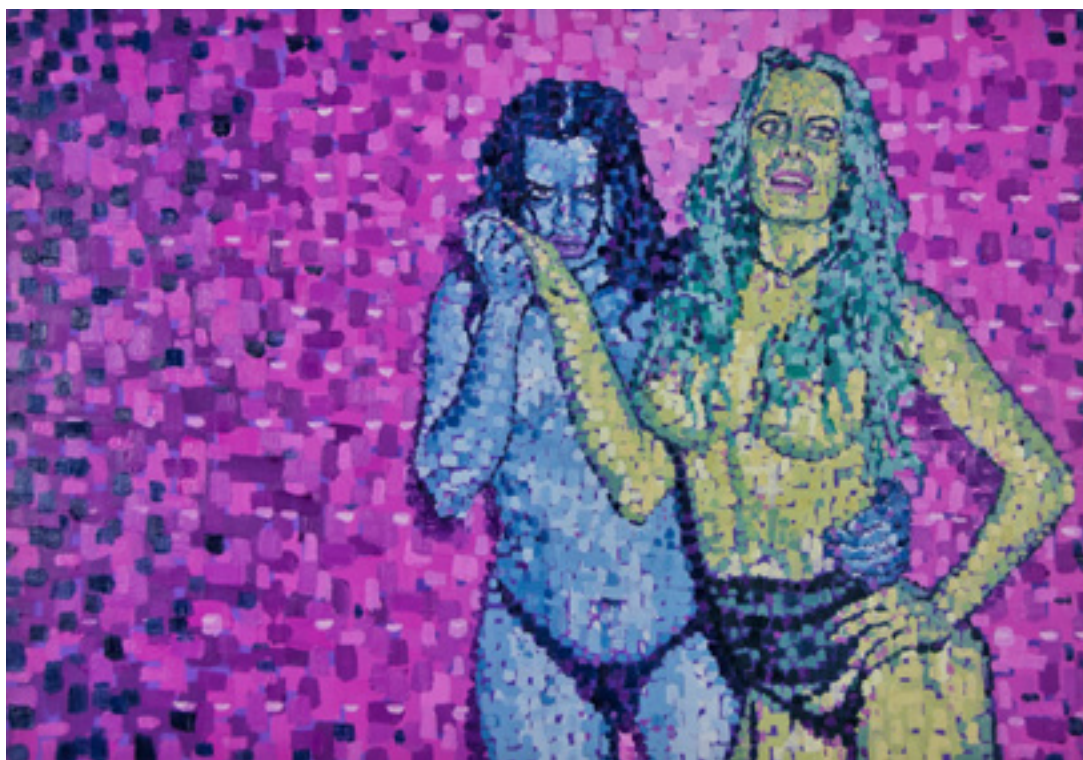
"LUST II", olio su tela (2019)

MRL: Rispetto agli esordi con acquerelli, la transizione all'olio su tela ha comportato un evidente cambiamento nel tuo stile pittorico che è stato argutmente battezzato da qualcuno "razionalismo macchiaiolo". So che attribuire definizioni è sempre riduttivo, ma magari puoi spiegarci da dove nasce questo modo di raffigurare la realtà cosí caratteristico.

DS: In effetti trovare delle etichette è sempre un'operazione difficile, passata la stagione degli ismi del 900, non mi sono soffermato sulla definizione del mio stile. Di ispirazioni e citazioni nei miei quadri ce ne sono tante, da Van Gogh per alcune soluzioni grafiche, al fauvismo per le scelte cromatiche, fino ad arrivare al bombardamento di immagini e fotografie su Instragram cui siamo tutti constantemente esposti. Cercando di ridurre all'essenza, direi che alla radice di tutto rimane comunque l'incontro tra una linea verticale ed una orizzontale che come spirito e materia si interseacano dando origine alla realtà. Sulla tela traduco questa trama e ordito con pennellate orizzontali e verticali, miriadi di croci, di scontri gaussiani che danno orgine alla mia forma estetica.

MRL: Torniamo ai soggetti delle tue opere. Viaggiare, muoverti, vivere in luoghi "altri" rispetto a quelli familiari è stata una tappa fondamentale nella tua formazione. Angoli urbani (Palermo, Berlino, il Mediterraeno e le sue radici greco-romane in *Assenze*, Roma per il ciclo ideato per Ex Novo) e scorci paesaggistici sospesi figurano spesso nelle tue opere e nonostante le differenze hanno tutti in comune un fattore: l'isolamento e l'immobilitá, in qualche modo in contrasto con la tua innata tendenza al movimento. Come mai?

DS: Non avevo mai preso in considerazione questo contrasto. In effetti la stasi è un cifra comune nei miei quadri. Non so forse nasce dall'esigenza di rappresentare precisamente un attimo, fissare il momento e dare forma al profondo in contrasto con ciò che di superficiale ed usa e getta ci offre il mondo contemporaneo. Dalla necessità di creare immagini non deperibili. Ritengo che il *senso della storia*, sia qualcosa che l'attualità non è in grado di rendere, fare opere perchè rimangano è un obiettivo per me in controtendenza rispetto all'infinita contingenza nella quale viviamo. In questo senso il fascino che l'architettura razionalista esercita su di me è forse proprio dovuta a questo senso di eternitá e immanenza che trasmette. Il condivisibile rifiuto delle dottrine politiche che hanno favorito il successo di tale concezione dell'architettura e dell'urbanistica non deve certo farci pensare che non sia necassario proiettare in modo positivista e non sempre relativistico la nostra società cercando di generare immagini di mondo auspicabili e definite. Siamo in qualche modo rimasti traumatizzati come popolo da un tentativo sbagliato fatto di arbitrarietà, esclusione ed autoritarismo finito nel dramma della seconda guerra mondiale, ma ciò non vuol dire che l'aspirazione alla grandezza e fare i conti con la storia passata e futura sia un male, anzi penso sia una necessità.

"Verticali e molteplici", olio su tela (2020)

MRL: Nel descrivere il tuo ciclo *Assenze* ti soffermi sul concetto di isolamento forzato, vuoto di attivitá e silenzio riflessi nelle architetture abbandonate e logorate dal tempo (il Mediterraneo). Impossibile non leggervi un riferimento ai mesi surreali che stiamo vivendo da quando l'emergenza Covid-19 ha costretto l'intero mondo a fermarsi. Come hai vissuto questa esperienza? Quali tracce lascerá nei tuoi lavori attuali e futuri? Il lungo confinamento ci permette davvero "*un tuffo nelle percezioni più profonde e delicate […] ed un'aderenza maggiore al reale e alla sua percezione*"?

DS: Si lo può permettere... a tratti. E' ovvio che generi anche frustrazione e sofferenza. Puo' addirittura sfociare nella depressione. Personalmente ho cercato di non ascoltare le sirene dell'accidia. Cercando lentamente di riversare l'effetto della bolla e le riflessioni che da questa sono scaturite sulla tela. Abitando in campagna ho avuto la fortuna di poter accedere a paesaggi distensivi e non claustrofobici ma non è lì che ho trovato la fonte di ispirazione per le mie opere. Il ciclo di opere *Assenze* è nato ancora una volta da un'ispirazione fotografica. Ho cercato luoghi dell'antichità di cui non avessi una memoria recente o che addirittura non avessi mai visto. Usando la fotografia come base e ricercando addirittura in rete queste foto ho cercato di rimanere ancor più distaccato dal soggetto, alieno, in

"Vuoto", olio su tela (2020)

modo che si percepisse sì la traccia dell'uomo, creatore di quegli spazi, monumenti o sculture, ma solo come uno dei tanti agenti che abbiano lasciato un segno su quella materia dall'inizio dei tempi. In questo senso questi spazi, questi oggetti, vengono deumanizzati come un inizio di deumanizzazione sta subendo il mondo intorno a noi durante la chiusura forzata a cui siamo stati e siamo sottoposti. In quell'assenza di umanità, di rumore, di luci di artificialità si può forse percerpire il fruscio della storia, non del mondo umano di cui rimangono solo le vestigia ma della realtà nella sua essenza.

MRL: Monumenti costruiti dall'uomo ma privi della componente umana diventano luoghi silenziosi dove percepire il fruscio della storia. E per percepire il fruscio del futuro quali risorse possiamo utilizzare?

DS: La domada che non volevo! E' molto difficile rispondere, credo che come societá l'unico modo per affrontare le sfide del presente e del futuro sia tentare di non perdere di vista la complessitá della realtà, studiare e non lasciarsi trascinare dal contigente, non farsi piegare dall'attualitá. La scienza pura affronta in maniera dialettica la realtá, il mondo e la sua continua trasformazione. Se ci fermiamo un attimo e scorriamo le opere di grandi filosofi e artisti del passato possiamo vedere come riuscissero ad anticipare le direzioni da prendere, proprio perché erano in grado di staccarsi dal contigente. Problemi complessi richiedono riflessioni complesse e che non sempre producono risposte semplici.

MRL: Grazie Daniele, credo che il tuo appello a non dimenticare la complessitá del reale riassuma molto bene anche gli scopi della nostro lavoro a Ex Novo e fornisca quindi la conclusione perfetta per la nostra conversazione.
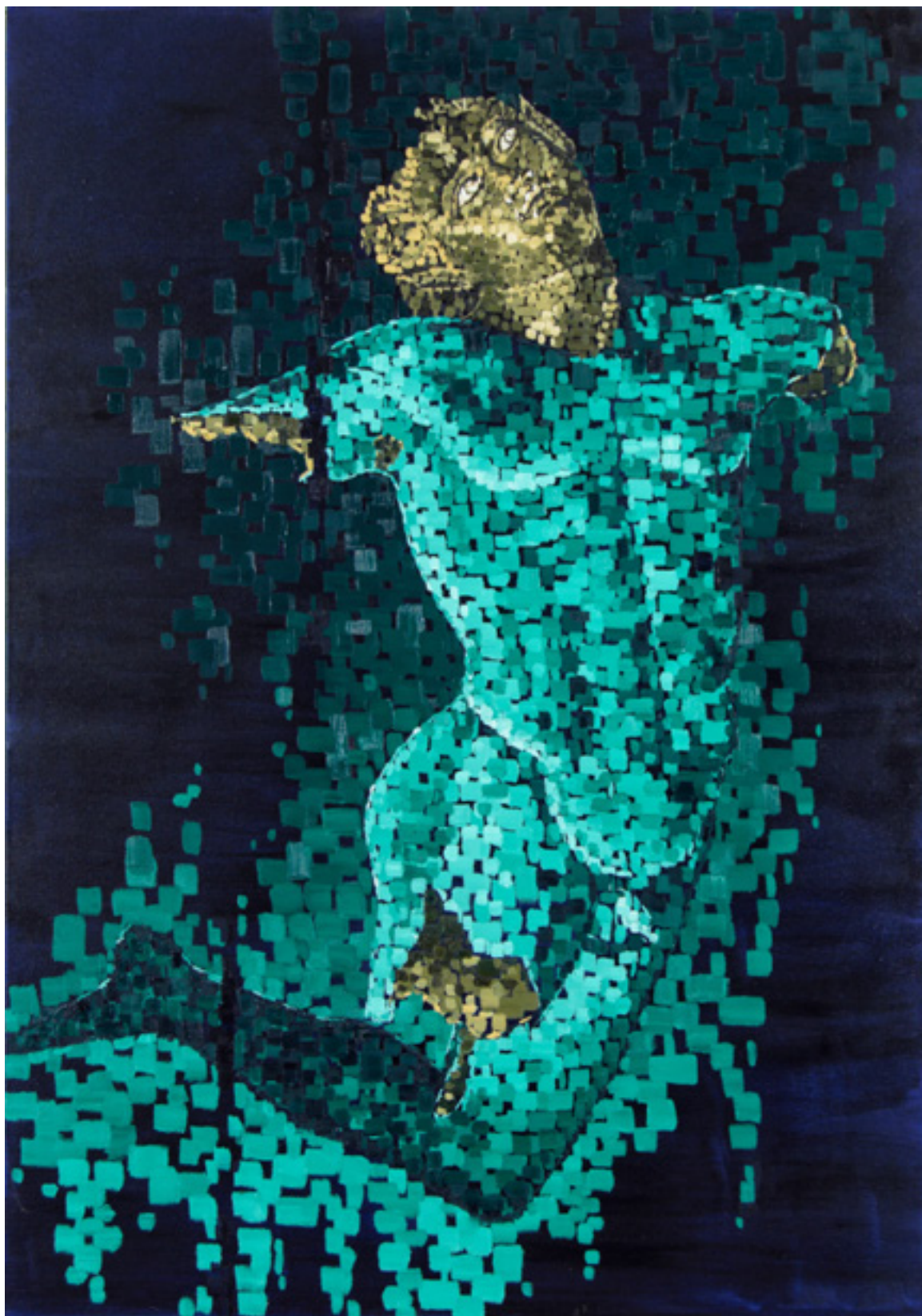
"Il satiro", olio su tela (2020)

Occasione mancata, olio su tela (2020)