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Contaminating Conversions: Narrating Censorship, Translation, Fascism

By

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requirements for the degree of

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

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## Abstract

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In an idealized formulation, translation and censorship mark opposite points on the spectrum of signification: if translation works to raze boundaries between text and reader, censorship strives to raise them. In scholarship on fascist Italy, this polarized definition was particularly widespread: censorship was cast exclusively as the tool of the powerful, and translation, as a way for intellectuals to smuggle subversive ideas into a xenophobic society. However, despite their apparently antithetical aims, literary historians have found archival evidence to support a more nuanced view of censorship and translation under fascism, and seminal theoretical contributions by Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have led to wide recognition of a chiasmic relationship between “repressive” censorship and “productive” translation. If, today, in light of the numerous fields which take translation and censorship as their objects of study (literature, history, psychoanalysis, cultural studies), it were possible to make a single claim about these processes, it would speak to their ability to destabilize notions of discipline, author and text.

This dissertation uses these transgressive, polyvalent phenomena to unsettle a rather stubborn boundary in the postwar Italian literary panorama: “fascist” and “antifascist” literature, specifically as it relates to fictionalized wartime narratives by Curzio Malaparte (1898-1957), Elio Vittorini (1908-1966) and Beppe Fenoglio (1922-1963), intellectuals who are key for different yet convergent reasons: Malaparte, who abandoned fascism in 1931, has been depicted as an unscrupulous chameleon; Vittorini, who became antifascist in 1936, has become a symbol of redemptive conversion; Fenoglio, a partisan in the Resistance, has become synonymous with antifascist literature. In bringing together these texts, traditionally understood as reflections of their authors’ politics, my dissertation examines how the rise and fall of fascism is narrativized and suggests that these political conversions—never before considered comparatively—share common anxieties as they attempt to renegotiate boundaries not just between “fascist” and “antifascist” but also between other categories of identity, including race and gender.

While my dissertation locates such overlaps in “fascist” and “antifascist” texts, it also identifies a preoccupation with renegotiating boundaries shared by these fascist era texts and their postwar criticism. Perceived as a site for struggle between intellectuals and the regime, censorship and translation maintain their tantamount importance today, as their oppositional

definitions—still widely held in the scholarship on Malaparte, Vittorini and Fenoglio—contribute to the reification of the emblematic positions of these intellectuals and their texts. My readings explore the ways in which censorship and translation have shaped perceptions of the texts’ production and afterlife, but also how they inform narrative dynamics. After an introduction to my theoretical methods in Chapter One, in Chapter Two, I look at how categories of sexual and political “integrity” and “violation” intertwine in the plots of two novels by Vittorini, *Garofano rosso* [*The Red Carnation*], a famously censored fascist *bildungsroman*, and *Conversazione in Sicilia* [*Conversation in Sicily*], a story of an antifascist awakening, whose stylistic innovations were held to be the result of his experience translating Anglophone literature. As I offer new readings of previously marginalized scenes, I show how the critics’ rhetorical emphasis on the censor’s “violation” of *Garofano* and the “integrity” of *Conversazione* has helped construct Vittorini’s emblematic position as a redemptive antifascist convert, obscuring the representations of sexual violence on which the protagonists’ conversion depends. In Chapter Three, I focus on Fenoglio’s *Partigiano Johnny* [*Johnny The Partisan*], purportedly born through self-translation from English to Italian, and show how its status as a literary monument to antifascism is predicated upon philological “conversion” efforts to restore the text to its uncensored form and thus tell the “complete” story of the Resistance. I argue that these efforts paradoxically censor a number of suggestive tensions that speak to the trauma of Italy’s civil war. In Chapter Four, I turn to Malaparte’s *La pelle* [*The Skin*], a polemical novel still caught in a debate on whether it deserves to be freed of its “cultural censorship.” While the critics debate its “fidelity” to the “truth” of the war, I explore the text’s construction of its own truth claims, as it represents moments of “translation” between the Allies and the Italians.

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## Chapter One.

### Those “Mysterious Objects That Flee Capture”: Censorship, Translation, Fascism

#### 1.1 An “Unsettling filiation”

In an idealized formulation, translation and censorship mark opposite points on the spectrum of signification: if translation works to raze boundaries between text and reader, censorship strives to raise them. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the translator “renders from one language into another,” thereby enabling textual access. In contrast, the censor impedes it by “inspect[ing] all books, journals, dramatic pieces, etc., before publication, to secure that they shall contain nothing immoral, heretical, or offensive to the government.”<sup>1</sup> However, to focus on these overtly antithetical aims necessitates glossing over important theoretical developments on censorship and on translation, and, moreover, precludes an in-depth examination of the “unsettling filiation” that binds the two, as Michael Holquist has described it, calling them “both strategies to control meaning that are unavoidably insufficient” (18). In fact, such a “filiation” emerges as the repressive censor and the permissive translator slip into one another’s roles in even the most basic characterizations. For whether we speak of a translator, who exchanges the familiar and the foreign, or of a censor, who substitutes the “immoral” with the “inoffensive,” the stories we tell about them contain significant structural parallels: during these textual conversions, meaning is produced as it is destroyed, destroyed as it is produced.

Individually, as translation and censorship negotiate linguistic, political and social norms, they create boundaries only to traverse them. Barbara Johnson has called translation a “bridge that creates out of itself the two fields of battle it separates” (147), and Michael Levine has asserted that “censorship inevitably raises questions about discursive boundaries and their transgression.” Building on Levine’s claim that “in order to address this issue [of censorship] it may in turn be necessary to work at the intersection of a number of discursive and disciplinary fields, reading the language of one through the filter of another” (6), my dissertation positions itself at the intersections of censorship and translation. This entails adopting a dual focus, as I analyze the way these phenomena are operative in and operate on specific literary texts, and how this intersects with their narrativization in scholarly discourses—literary-historical, philological and theoretical. In so doing, my dissertation not only draws from several disciplines; it also suggests ways in which these disciplines may speak to and through one another.

In addition to unsettling conventional disciplinary boundaries, this dissertation will take advantage of the interdisciplinary status of censorship and translation in order to complicate their long-standing definitions. Indeed, if translation and censorship make such compelling objects of study individually—and, I will argue, interrelatedly—it is because they are fundamentally riven. As objects of study for scholars in numerous fields, censorship and translation must be studied from a disciplinary standpoint, be it feminist, post-colonial, philological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, historical, sociological or anthropological. Yet, these efforts to apply neat categories appear at once necessary and tenuous. For instance, to speak of censorship requires

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<sup>1</sup> Chloë Stephenson has noted the “conflicting objectives” of censorship and translation, inasmuch as the translator “facilitates access,” and the censor “denies” it (235).

specifying agents, objects, timeframes, and methods—from self-censorship to preemptive, from blacked out passages to book bannings to burnings, from ostracizing the author to ordering a death sentence—but these categories often complicate more than clarify.

To *define* translation is to divide it, a point evinced by Roman Jakobson's tripartite categorization of intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translation—respectively translation within a single language, translation between two different languages, and translation between various media (114). This division, too, is structured hierarchically: interlingual translation is commonly known as literal or “proper” and, accordingly, translation scholars have dedicated most of their attention in that direction. However, despite its widespread acceptance, this hierarchy brings with it its own undoing. Indeed, long before Jakobson, Friedrich Schleiermacher, in his treatise “On the Different Methods of Translation” (1813) acknowledged the porosity of boundaries between intra- and interlingual translation (141), and, more recently, Jacques Derrida explicitly critiqued Jakobson's categories, by demonstrating their dependence on the (fictive) idea of wholly distinct languages. Derrida writes, “Each of these three concepts (intralingual translation, interlingual or translation ‘properly speaking’ and intersemiotic translation) presumes the existence of one language and of one translation in the literal sense, that is, as the passage from one language into another.” However, he argues, “There is impurity in every language. This fact would in some way have to threaten every linguistic system's integrity, which is presumed by each of Jakobson's concepts” (*Ear* 100). Edwin Gentzler elaborates on the impact of this conclusion for translation studies: “Translation, accordingly, ceases to be viewed as merely an operation carried out between two separate languages, but instead is seen as a process constantly in operation in single languages as well” (*Theories* 167).<sup>2</sup>

In addition to critiquing the foundational assumption of distinct, coherent languages, contemporary translation theory employs contributions by Derrida and by Michel Foucault to “challenge the privileged concepts of the sanctity of the source text and the originality of the author” (Gentzler “Translation” 195), concepts which censorship theorists, too, using many of the same theoretical tools, have worked to unsettle. Derrida has shown that by acknowledging translation as a part of language itself rather than solely a localizable “operation,” we come “in contact not with some sort of original meaning, but with the plurality of languages and meanings... Originary intactness dissolves as the translator augments and modifies the original. Gray areas between languages—the borderlines—begin to appear” (Gentzler *Theories* 166).<sup>3</sup> In much the same vein, Holquist has asserted that censorship forecloses the very possibility of textual integrity, by arguing that “censorship is a necessary moment in all perception... And it is an ineluctable feature of the grammatical aspect of language (to say “cat” in the noun slot of an English sentence is to exclude “dog,” “zebra,” “heffalump,” etc.).” Although such a claim carries the risk of “over-abstract[ing]” the concept of censorship, it nonetheless undermines the possibility of a complete, “original,” uncensored text:

In some measure, then, all texts are censored. Imposed censorship occupies a small segment in the arc of prohibition, much as murder and suicide are special cases of the general truth that all human beings die. At this over-abstracted level, the concept begins to lose its usefulness but not, perhaps, before demonstrating

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<sup>2</sup> While agreeing with Derrida's critique, I will use the term “interlingual translation” in order to distinguish among the various kinds of translation addressed in this dissertation, acknowledging it as a necessary solution, though imperfect for its longstanding associations with “literal” translation or translation “proper.”

<sup>3</sup> I will return to Foucault's contribution to contemporary censorship studies shortly.

that all experience is a reading between the lines—or, in other words, that all originals are indeed corrupt (23n.2).

With textual integrity thus threatened, censorship and translation both contaminate the author's singular status. Just as Lori Chamberlain argues that translation “threatens to erase the difference between production and reproduction which is essential to the establishment of power” (322), Levine acknowledges censorship's similar potential threat to a monolithic conception of the author. For although convention holds censorship to be solely repressive, contemporary scholars have argued for a concomitant productive dimension, particularly in terms of self-censorship. Nonetheless, Levine attributes a widespread scholarly reticence to embrace such “a doubled-edged notion of self-censorship” to the fact that “such a conception forces one to raise more basic questions about the very definition of authorship and the limits of textual integrity” (3). In other words, if the author internalizes (or “is”) the censor, whose text is it? Here, then, this shared ability to destabilize such fundamental categories as language, author, text and discipline serves to ground my proposed interrelating of censorship and translation—an ability, I assert, which is sharpened when the two phenomena are brought into dialogue.

A further basis for this interrelationship draws from another central aspect of censorship and translation: their link with politics. This link has been treated in vastly different ways, as symptomized in the OED definitions cited above, which characterizes censorship as a governmental matter and translation as a linguistic issue. Accordingly, while censorship historically was tethered to narrowly defined political issues, the politics of translation were long ignored. In response to conceptions of censorship as a battleground for opposing ideologies, Robert C. Post and the collaborators in his seminal volume *Censorship and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulation*, have expanded studies of censorship beyond a schematic left-right opposition, thus leaving room for a more nuanced exploration of the politics of censorship. In contrast, political concerns were long repressed by the conventional or “common sense” definition of translation, “the transfer of meaning or a truth from one language to another without any essential harm being done” (Derrida *Ear* 120). However, by deconstructing the terms that underwrite such a definition—namely, the notion of “fidelity” to an “original”—Derrida has opened up numerous possibilities for bringing the politics of translation to the forefront. For instance, as post-colonialist translation scholar Tejaswini Niranjana demonstrates, “The notion of fidelity to the ‘original’ holds back translation theory from thinking the *force* of translation. The intimate links between, for example, the translations from non-Western languages into English and the colonial hegemony they create are seldom examined” (58). Feminist translation scholars, too, have used Derridian insights to ask why translation has, so often, been grounded in traditional, sexist language that “relegates both ‘woman’ and ‘translator’ to the same position of discursive inferiority” (Simon 1), and, as a corollary, “if there is no primary meaning to be discovered, if translation is not in thrall to a deep and distant truth, where is fidelity to be grounded?” (Simon 11). Here, then, in much the same way that censorship and translation destabilize traditional categories of literary analysis—language, text, author and discipline—so, too, do they force a careful, theoretical reconsideration of the hierarchies—colonizer/colonized, male/female—they have been called upon to underwrite.

The politics of censorship and translation—and how they are politicized and depoliticized—will be analyzed throughout this dissertation, which examines a specific moment in Italian literary history: the fascist and immediate post-war period, a time when censorship and translation served as sites of negotiation between Mussolini's regime and intellectuals.

Specifically, my objects of study are wartime “conversions,” that is, narratives that attempt to represent their protagonist’s transformation—political and otherwise—at key moments in the history of fascism. Following this theoretical and historical introduction, Chapter Two focuses on two novels by Elio Vittorini (1908-1966): *Garofano rosso* (1934-1936, 1948) [*The Red Carnation*] which tells the coming of age of a young Sicilian fascist, Alessio Mainardi, seized with political fervor after the 1924 assassination of socialist Giacomo Matteotti; the chapter also takes up *Conversazione in Sicilia* (1938) [*Conversations in Sicily*], which narrates the antifascist awakening of the protagonist, Silvestro, following Mussolini’s intervention on behalf of General Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War (1936).<sup>4</sup> Chapter Three looks at several posthumously published manuscripts by Beppe Fenoglio (1922-1963), commonly referred to as *Partigiano Johnny* (1968, 1978, 1992) [*Johnny The Partisan*], which tell the story of a partisan named Johnny during the *Resistenza* [Resistance] in Piedmont, from the aftermath of Italy’s Armistice with the Allies in September, 1943, through the final days of the war in the spring of 1945. Finally, Chapter Four centers around Curzio Malaparte (1898-1957) and his polemical novel, *La pelle* (1949) [*The Skin*], narrated by Liaison Officer Captain Curzio Malaparte, and set in post-Liberation Naples (October 1944), where political changes are accompanied by the often surreal destabilization of other categories of identity, including gender and species.

My analyses of political conversions *in* the texts will engage with analyses of conversions *of* the texts—that is, how their various involvements with censorship and translation have informed their reception. Specifically, I will underscore how understandings of “repressive” censorship and “resistant” translation have worked to reinforce the categories of “fascist” and “antifascist” in regards to *literature*, even as Alberto Asor Rosa’s 1965 *Scrittori e popolo* blurred their *ideological* distinctions when he “convincingly argued against the distorting perspective of dichotomies such as Fascist/anti-Fascist and prewar/postwar culture, pointing instead at the complexity and the degree of permeability of such opposing blocks” (Bonsaver *Censorship* 3). Here, a word needs to be said about literature as it concerns “the topic of fascism,” which, Barbara Spackman has shown, presents a particular challenge, in that it “seems to cause even the most sophisticated of critics to fall back on a critical assumption – a resuscitation of the author function, a reclaiming of the intentional fallacy – that they would find untenable in a different case” (*Virilities* 51).<sup>5</sup> A symptom of this type of criticism, Spackman identifies, is a “metonymical blurring” whereby “at one moment the proper name may function as a metonym for the work, at the next it may refer properly to the biographical individual.” However, this is not simply an innocent form of shorthand. Rather, “such blurring often results in slurring: slurring over the complexities of reading texts, passing lightly over the sort of theorization that would be necessary to establish a causal relation between life and work, and hence slurring, in the sense of disparaging, the literary or critical production of the guilty author” (51). This approach directly informs the scholarship of Malaparte and *La pelle*, insofar as the novel’s ambiguous morality is associated with its author’s numerous political transformations, which

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<sup>4</sup> Although the setting of *Conversazione* is never explicitly specified, critics unanimously have accepted this interpretation, confirmed by the author elsewhere. See Chapter Two.

<sup>5</sup> In formulating a new approach to reading texts by authors whose political biography has heavily conditioned subsequent analyses I am indebted to Spackman’s re-reading of texts by F.T. Marinetti in *Fascist Virilities*, Elizabeth Leake’s *Reinvention of Ignazio Silone* and studies on Paul de Man by Shoshana Felman in *Testimony* and by Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Narratives*.

range from socialist to fascist to antifascist to communist to anticommunist.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in the case of Vittorini, the political engagement of the characters and the texts has been made synonymous with the author's.<sup>7</sup> However, the end result here is one of absolutism: critics dismiss the "fascist" *Garofano* and embrace the "antifascist" *Conversazione*.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in Chapters Two and Four, I detail the implications of an author's fascist contamination for textual analysis, showing how it either skews interpretation—producing a reading that redeems (by extracting the antifascist or apolitical subtext) or reduces (by casting it as an example of "bad" literature)—or precludes interpretation altogether. In Chapter Three, as I consider how Fenoglio's experience in the *Resistenza* becomes the key by which *Partigiano*'s politics are read, I expand Spackman's definition to include an equally problematic "blurring" phenomenon in the case of authors with "antifascist" credentials—one which leads to laudatory rather than disparaging ends.<sup>9</sup> At a time when archival discoveries have led to the dramatic fall from grace of an icon of "resistance" such as Ignazio Silone,<sup>10</sup> and when studies like Ruth Ben-Ghiat's *Fascist Modernities* have illustrated the widespread "entangle[ment]" of intellectuals "in fascist cultural enterprises and institutions" (10), Fenoglio continues to serve as a reliable historical source and a celebrated literary figure,<sup>11</sup> widely recognized for his fictionalized accounts of his experience fighting in the *Resistenza*: *Partigiano* and *Una questione privata* (1963) [*A Private Affair* (2007)]. In bringing together analyses of Malaparte, Vittorini and Fenoglio, then, I critique a structural similarity in reading practices of fascist and antifascist literature, to show how the predetermined conclusion that the text is 'good'/'true' creates critical blind-spots is potentially as problematic as one produced by the notion that a fascist author's text is 'bad'/'false.' While pointing to the mutual interdependence of the categories fascist/antifascist in Italian literary criticism today, I argue that perceptions of an author's political biography condition not only what is read, but *how*.

In order to confront the "metonymic blurring" between text and author that has worked to obfuscate any number of productive lines of dialogue across political and disciplinary

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<sup>6</sup> Kurt Erich Suckert, who took the pseudonym Curzio Malaparte in 1925, was a member of the fascist party from 1922-1931. For a thorough political biography, see Pardini. For more on Malaparte's biography and how it has influenced interpretations of his oeuvre, see Chapter Four.

<sup>7</sup> Francesco De Nicola astutely notes that as characters, Alessio and Silvestro are autobiographical but revisionist (*Vittorini* 50, 66).

<sup>8</sup> Vittorini began his political and literary career "as a radical or 'left-wing' Fascist, following the lead of Curzio Malaparte (to whom he owed his introduction to literary circles), urging the regime to adopt a more anti-bourgeois, anti-capitalist stance" (Bonsaver "Fascist" 172). Bonsaver describes his political transformation: "Vittorini continued to be a journalist for the Fascist *Il Bargello* and a supporter of the regime throughout the mid-1930s. In five articles published between September 1935 and July 1936, he hailed the invasion of Ethiopia as a perfect occasion for the organization of the colonies along corporatist lines and the exclusion of private capital. The turning point for him came in the summer of 1936, with the Fascist intervention in the Spanish Civil War" ("Fascism" 174). However, Bonsaver notes that, "It was only after the collapse of the regime that Vittorini's political activities drastically interfered with his literary career. On the first day of the Badoglio government, July 26, 1943, he was arrested in Milan together with other communist activists" (*Censorship* 266). See Chapter Two.

<sup>9</sup> In January of 1944, Fenoglio joined one of the first partisan brigades, a communist formation (known as "Red" or "Garibaldi"), with whom he fought until the devastating battle of Carrù on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. After returning to his family, in September he joined a "Blue" or "Badoglian" brigade, with whom he liberated his hometown of Alba on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1944, which they held from the fascists until November 2<sup>nd</sup>. From March to May of 1945 he served as a liaison officer for the Allies, with whom he fought (Isella liii-iv). See also Scaglione 58-106. See Chapter Three. As we will see in Chapter Three, the plot of *Partigiano Johnny* moves through these historical moments.

<sup>10</sup> See Leake; Biocca and Canali; Pugliese.

<sup>11</sup> In Claudio Pavone's *Una guerra civile*, Fenoglio is considered so well established as to necessitate no introduction (nor even a first name). Pavone cites his literary texts frequently, using them to confirm his various hypotheses (esp. 30, 126, 139, 230). See also Ginsborg and Gobbi.

boundaries, I turn to censorship and translation and the destabilization of a monolithic notion of languages, disciplines, authors and texts that they—when carefully theorized—not only enable, but require. Indeed, working in terms of Foucault’s “author-function,” Matthew Philpotts outlines the shared threat posed by “censored and translated texts” in that they “offend the prevailing concept of authorship. They are both texts where the author-function has been surrendered; they are both, to a certain degree, non-authored forms of literary production” (258). Thus, if “fascist” and “antifascist” connections *resuscitate* the author-function, censorship and translation—as Derrida, Levine, Gentzler, Chamberlain, Philpotts and others have shown—dismantle it. What they (potentially) leave in its place will be discussed throughout the dissertation. I begin with an introduction to Malaparte, Vittorini and Fenoglio in terms of how their biographies have influenced the ways they have been brought together in literary history. This is followed by a brief overview of how censorship and translation have been brought into dialogue, first in scholarship on Italy and the fascist period and then in a broader North American and European context. Finally, in the last two sections I will lay out the theoretical groundwork for my own reading practice and suggest how it might contribute to new readings of texts conventionally understood within the fascist/antifascist binary.

## **1.2 Narrating the Break: Malaparte, Vittorini, Fenoglio and the Conversion to the *Resistenza***

This dissertation works to demonstrate, explore and critique the many effects of the fascist/antifascist opposition, the most basic of which is evinced in the choice of authors whom, despite a number of shared literary interests, are being brought together here, in-depth, for the first time. Certainly, there have been brief accounts of the formational professional relationship between Malaparte and Vittorini on the one hand, and Vittorini and Fenoglio on the other, which, however, only further symptomatize the impact of the fascist/antifascist opposition. In this overview, I will underline a recurrent tendency to emphasize a personal and professional “break” between the authors, to delineate a clear boundary between them—and, I will suggest why that boundary’s defense is of tantamount importance.

The relationship between Vittorini and Malaparte, two left-wing fascists, began with a letter from the young, unknown Sicilian, in enthusiastic response to Malaparte’s political treatise, *L’Italia Barbara* (1925).<sup>12</sup> They soon met in Rome and, about a year later, Vittorini’s piece, “L’ordine nostro” saw its way into print in Malaparte’s fascist weekly, “La conquista dello stato.”<sup>13</sup> The contents of the article—written as a letter to Malaparte and signed “vostro fedelissimo” [“most faithfully”] (6)—were very much in keeping with the devotion of its signature (Panicali “Esordio” 423-4).<sup>14</sup> Although by 1929 they had already parted professional

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<sup>12</sup> For details on the correspondence, including a personal account from Vittorini’s sister, see Rodondi *LAS* 6n. She notes that the oldest letter is dated November 22, 1926 and that the letters are available in “Lettere di Vittorini a Malaparte.” Ed. Quarantotto. *Destra* a.II.7. (July 1972): 78-84. For more on the Malaparte-Vittorini relationship see De Nicola *Vittorini*, esp. pp 12-14, 16-17, 20-27; Corti “Prefazione” xiv-xix; Crovi 145-190; Bonsaver *Vittorini* 9-15.

<sup>13</sup> Malaparte founded “La conquista dello stato” in 1924, conceived as an “imitation” of Piero Gobetti’s cultural magazine “Rivoluzione liberale” (1922-25), to which Malaparte contributed five times from 1922-1924 (*Opere scelte* lxxxvii). For a searchable archive of “Rivoluzione” see <http://www.erasmo.it/liberale/default.asp>.

<sup>14</sup> All translations mine, except where noted.

ways, Malaparte's tutelage offered Vittorini access to the Florentine literary milieu;<sup>15</sup> the connection was so valuable to Vittorini that—it is now widely believed—he repaid it by ghost-writing the biography of fascist official Italo Balbo, *Vita di pizzo di ferro detto Italo Balbo* [1931], publicly credited to Malaparte and Enrico Falqui (Greco 145-190).<sup>16</sup>

Even after their friendship ended, Malaparte and Vittorini remained on similar political paths: both distanced themselves from fascism in the 1930s, were jailed by the regime, and later joined the Italian Communist Party [PCI].<sup>17</sup> Still, despite the fact that they both underwent numerous political transformations, their individual reputations could not be more divergent.<sup>18</sup> To wit, in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Giulio Ferroni casts Vittorini's political transformations in the vein of self-improvement, describing him as “sempre pronto a sbagliare, a correggersi, a ribaltare giudizi e orientamenti” (*Storia* 391) [“always ready to make mistakes, to correct himself, to overturn judgments and orientations”], but leaves Malaparte stuck in his fascist youth, remembering him simply as “un tipico rappresentante del fascismo aggressivo e rivoluzionario” (209) [“a typical representative of aggressive, revolutionary fascism”] and forgetting his political transformations. Furthermore, when the Malaparte-Vittorini relationship is narrativized, Malaparte is cast in the role of straw-man, the (fascist) obstacle to be overcome in Vittorini's political and literary coming-of-age, an attitude most apparent in Guido Bonsaver's *Elio Vittorini: The Writer and The Written*. In one chapter, “Under The Shadow of Malaparte,” Bonsaver describes Malaparte as a “flamboyant” artist (9) whose “exhibitionistic performances in the cultural arena must have bedazzled the young Vittorini” (12), and uses this awestruck state to justify Vittorini's “over-vulgar and over-histrionic” story, *Brigantino*, blaming it on his “intent to emulate, if not surpass, Malaparte's style.”<sup>19</sup> However, Bonsaver reassures us, that shadow was eventually lifted: “By 1929, Vittorini himself had already recognized that such an approach was fast resembling an artistic *cul de sac*” (15), a reiteration of a point made more than thirty years earlier, by Sergio Pautasso.<sup>20</sup> This longstanding narrative, however, is problematic on

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<sup>15</sup> Bonsaver recounts, “In a letter to Carocci dated novembre 1929, Vittorini was already speaking of Malaparte as an ex-friend and concluded his sarcastic remarks with a laconic ‘ora non mi risponde più’” (*Lettere a Solaria*, 179) (*Vittorini* 26). By that time, Vittorini was already a contributor to *Solaria* (*Opere narrative* lxiv), and in 1931 he began a collaboration with *Bargello* (lxv).

<sup>16</sup> Many scholars now accept philologist Lorenzo Greco's claim that Vittorini was the ghost-writer of the biography. De Nicola calls the deed, “il pagamento di un debito morale nei confronti di Malaparte che, con la sua autorità lo aveva aiutato ad uscire allo scoperto nel mondo delle lettere e anche a guadagnare qualcosa nel giornalismo” (*Vittorini* 23) [“the payment of a moral debt towards Malaparte who, with his authority had helped him come out into the literary world and also to benefit in some way as a journalist”]. See also Rappazzo 15.

<sup>17</sup> Malaparte left the PNF in January, 1931 before moving to France. Upon his return to Italy in October 1931, he was expelled from the party (despite having already left it) and sentenced to five years in political exile on Lipari, of which he served less than two (*Opere scelte* xcii-xciv). After a varied political career, on his deathbed he was granted membership in the PCI from Palmiro Togliatti himself (*Opere scelte* cii). According to his own account (which, at times has proved less than accurate), Vittorini was expelled from the PNF in 1936, because of an article published in *Bargello*, in support of the Republicans against Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War (*Opere narrative* lxvi). Subsequently, Vittorini joined the communists, conducting clandestine activities with them during the war, leading to his incarceration in the summer of 1943. This affiliation continued and deepened until 1947, when he began distancing himself from the party, which he ultimately left in 1951 (Ferroni *Storia* 393).

<sup>18</sup> The *Cambridge Companion to Italian Culture* makes no mention of Malaparte, and Vittorini is introduced as a “communist intellectual and writer” (Ward “Intellectuals” 89).

<sup>19</sup> This relationship—which had more significant professional consequences for Vittorini—is recounted by Vittorini scholars, while Malaparte scholars tend not to mention it.

<sup>20</sup> Pautasso writes, “Ma non poteva certo bastare una collaborazione di prestigio, né, tanto meno, una vicinanza al provincialismo ‘strapaesano’ di Malaparte, ad appagare le aspirazioni di Vittorini che già fin d'allora lo portavano a cercare qualcosa di diverso e di più concreto” (225-6) [“But certainly neither such a prestigious collaboration nor the

several counts; foremost among them, it echoes a claim Vittorini himself made, almost twenty years prior (Panicali “Esordio” 422-3).<sup>21</sup> In Chapter Two, I outline the ways in which Vittorini’s “conversion” has been discursively constructed, by subsuming his ambiguous political transformation into his widely celebrated literary transformation: the surpassing of the vulgar, fascist realism of *Garofano rosso* by the antifascist symbolic lyricism of *Conversazione in Sicilia*.<sup>22</sup> By way of introduction, then, I underline the significant role played by Malaparte and his texts in that conversion: indeed, by treating Malaparte as a static embodiment of the fascist, *Strapaese* movement, scholars neglect his transformations in order to narrate Vittorini’s.

When following Vittorini’s career to its conclusion, however, one finds a distinctly less forgiving thread running through critical judgments. From one perspective, what began thanks to a subservient relationship to established fascist intellectuals, ended in a diametrically opposite place—as a renowned mentor of a new generation of partisan writers, among them Beppe Fenoglio and Italo Calvino. To this end, Bonsaver touts Vittorini as the brilliant editor of the *Gettoni* series: “In reading the index of the books published, one is immediately struck by the fine intuition shown by Vittorini in selecting his authors. The names of many great Italian writers-to-be appear” (*Vittorini* 148). Nonetheless, Vittorini’s stature is not nearly so elevated when the context is shifted: if Vittorini scholars emphasize Vittorini’s progress in abandoning Malaparte’s “restrictive” literary tenets, Fenoglio scholars draw attention to Vittorini’s subsequent failures, particularly in terms of his efforts to write Resistance literature.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, whereas Vittorini scholars like Bonsaver tout Vittorini’s editorial instincts,

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proximity to Malaparte’s provincial ‘super-country’ ideals, could be enough to satisfy the aspirations of Vittorini, which, from that time brought him to search for something different and more concrete”]. *Strapaese* is based on a “concezione del Risorgimento come fenomeno rivoluzionario ‘tradito’; necessità del recupero dei valori antimoderni e tipicamente italiani ...; lotta frontale al liberalismo, alla democrazia, al socialismo; ripudio della politica come arte di compromesso e di trasformismo” [“conception of the Risorgimento as a ‘betrayed’ revolutionary phenomenon; a need to recuperate antimodern and typically Italian values...; frontal fight against liberalism, democracy, socialism; repudiation of politics as an art of compromise and *transformationalism*”] (Pardini 183). For the influence of *Strapaese* on Vittorini, see De Nicola *Vittorini* 13.

<sup>21</sup> “La tendenza letteraria cosiddetta barbara o strapaesana che lui [Malaparte] sosteneva e che lo faceva passare agli occhi dei superficiali per ultra-fascista mi riusciva angusta.” Così scriveva Elio Vittorini nel 1949 [“The so-called barbaric or Super-country literary tendency that Malaparte supported and that made him seem ultra-fascist to superficial observers seemed restrictive to me.” So wrote Elio Vittorini in 1949.”] Anna Panicali reevaluates Vittorini’s autobiographical claims, noting some inaccuracies. She makes an important point for a study of these authors in general, agreeing that while Malaparte’s *literary* influence was “restrictive” for Vittorini, “non gli riuscì angusta però la tendenza *politica* del Malaparte” (“Esordio” 422-3) [“however, Malaparte’s *political* tendencies did not seem restrictive to him”]. Maria Corti echoes Panicali’s assertion: “In effetti, dal ’29 la *tendenza letteraria* malapartiana non influenza più gli scritti creativi di Vittorini, anche se in ambito ideologico il mentore di Strapaese non viene meno alla sua plumbea funzione” (“Prefazione” xx) [“Effectively, from 1929, Malaparte’s literary tendencies no longer influenced Vittorini’s creative writing, even if in an ideological sense his super-country mentor did not fail in his leaden capacity”].

<sup>22</sup> Bonsaver’s critique of the *Solaria* version of *Garofano* implicitly refers to Malaparte: “The first version of the novel presents a prose style that bears some marks of the gratuitous vulgarities of the *selvaggio* style” (*Vittorini* 56). (*Selvaggio* was one of the main journals of the Malapartian *Strapaese* movement.)

<sup>23</sup> Philip Cooke prefaces his discussion of *Partigiano* with a reading of Vittorini’s partisan novel, *Uomini e no*, describing it as a generally recognized failure (26). Ferroni, too, sharpens his praise of Fenoglio’s representation of the *Resistenza* by comparing it to the countless failures of the genre, and specifies that among them, “(il fallimento più netto appare oggi quello di un libro davvero illeggibile di Elio Vittorini, *Uomini e no*)” (10) [“(the clearest of those failures today is a truly illegible book by Elio Vittorini, *Men and Not*.”] A similar reading is provided by Pavone, who praises Fenoglio (30), but dismisses *Uomini e no* (222). De Nicola, too, disregards it, along with Cesare Pavese’s *Casa in collina* (*Come leggere* 11).



Fenoglio scholars cast him less as a facilitator of young talent and more as a censor. According to Maria Corti, Vittorini changed the course of Fenoglio's literary career, indirectly pushing him to abandon an advanced manuscript version of *Partigiano* for the linguistically less innovative *Primavera di Bellezza*.<sup>24</sup> Corti cites the following passage from Fenoglio's diary, dated to 1954, "Eppure la constatazione di non essere riuscito buono scrittore è elemento così decisivo, così disperante, che dovrebbe consentirmi, da solo, di scrivere un libro per cui possa ritenermi buono scrittore" ["And yet, the realization of not managing to be a good writer is so decisive, so devastating, that it should allow me, by myself, to write a book for which I can consider myself a good writer"], and she comments, "Dunque la ferita è stata profonda, troppo in verità: isolato in provincia e introverso, Fenoglio diede eccessiva importanza e splendore al giudizio di Vittorini" (*SCN* 68) ["Thus the wound was deep, too deep, in all honesty: isolated in the countryside and introverted, Fenoglio gave excessive importance and resplendence to Vittorini's judgment"].<sup>25</sup>

Such cursory discussions of the (severed) personal connections between Malaparte, Vittorini and Fenoglio effectively have supplanted any in-depth consideration of the resonances between their narratives of the rise and fall of fascism. Moreover, they are marked by two rhetorical trends: the "dazzling" power of the older writer over the younger and the subsequent break between them, be it in terms of Vittorini's escape from Malaparte's "restrictive" influence, or the "deep wound" Fenoglio suffered at Vittorini's hand. This emphasis on the *rupture* is not incidental but participates in a recurrent discourse in Italian literary criticism—the conversion. David Ward has critiqued the "recurrent" use of the conversion narrative structure in postwar Italian literature and film, arguing that it

mirrors Croce's contention that fascism was a parenthetical experience out of which Italy emerged unscathed. According to such a structure, which I call a narrative of conversion, two distinct phases can be discerned: a before, constituted by the path of errancy which Italy and Italians had been treading (Fascism); and an after, constituted either by a new productive path leading to the promise of a positive future or, more commonly, the return to an original path that had been lost (antifascism) (*Antifascisms* 84).

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<sup>24</sup> According to Corti, the catalyst was the critique Vittorini lobbed against Fenoglio's *La malora*, printed on the jacket of the book itself and signed by Vittorini, in his capacity as publisher. After some thin compliments, Vittorini writes, "Ma ci conferma in un timore che abbiamo sul conto proprio dei più dotati tra questi giovani scrittori dal piglio moderno e dalla lingua facile. Il timore che, appena non trattino più di cose sperimentate personalmente, essi corrano il rischio di trovarsi al punto in cui erano, verso la fine dell'ottocento, i provinciali del naturalismo" (as cited in Isella 1563) ["But it confirms a fear we have about the most talented of these young writers with their modern air and easy language. The fear that, as soon as they write about things they did not experience personally, they run the risk of finding themselves at the point where the provincial naturalists were, towards the end of the 1900s"]. Dante Isella offers a scathingly sarcastic description of Vittorini's lack of editorial skill referring to him as "sordo," "incapace di un rapporto con qualsiasi testo che non fosse essenzialmente finalizzato a una rapace appropriazione autobiografica" ["deaf, incapable of a relationship with any text whatsoever that was not essentially aimed at a rapacious autobiographical appropriation"] and referring to his "crisi d'identità" (1564) ["identity crisis"]. Isella gives a full account of *Malora*'s publication (1563-7) and notes that Fenoglio later confessed to Calvino that he thought that he had taken his resentment for Vittorini too far (1566). Lorenzo Mondo also mentions the episode in his introduction to *Partigiano Johnny* (xi); see also Scaglione 170-2. See *Lettere* 66-78 for related correspondence.

<sup>25</sup> The wound metaphor fits into the account of Fenoglio's reaction to Vittorini's comments given by his biographer: "Fenoglio la prende come 'una frustata in faccia,' come ricorderà Felice Campanello" (Scaglione 172) ["Fenoglio takes it as 'a lash in the face,' as Felice Campanello will recall"].

Each chapter will, in fact, provide analyses of specific conversions narrated *in literature*; this introduction, instead, gestures towards the prevalence of the rhetoric and structure of the conversion in literary *criticism*: in Vittorini scholarship, Malaparte serves as the unscrupulous fascist “before” to Vittorini’s sincere antifascist “after”; in Fenoglio scholarship, Vittorini takes on the role of the failed partisan writer, a censorial editor who ultimately could not restrict Fenoglio’s ability to recount the *Resistenza*. The significance of these conversions increases in light of the metonymic roles each author has been made to play: calling Malaparte “un tipico rappresentante del fascismo aggressivo e rivoluzionario” [“a typical representative of aggressive, revolutionary fascism”], Ferroni locates in him the expression of a more widespread “degradazione estrema del protagonismo intellettuale e del vitalismo dell’inizio del secolo” (*Storia* 209) [“extreme degradation of the intellectual exhibitionism and vitalism of the beginning of the century”]; Bonsaver describes Vittorini’s antifascist conversion as “symbolic of...the choices of an entire generation of young intellectuals” (*Vittorini* 1), and Sergio Pautasso considers him, “un emblema, quasi, della storia della letteratura stessa” (“Ricerca” 223) [“an emblem, almost, of the history of literature itself”]; Calvino calls Fenoglio’s *Una questione privata* (1963) [*A Private Affair* (2007)] “Il libro che la nostra generazione voleva fare” (xxiii) [“the book our generation wanted to write”], and, along these lines, Gian Paolo Biasin deems Fenoglio “perhaps the most representative of the Italian authors who have dealt with the traumatic events of the Resistance” (165). Thus, a literary macro-conversion takes shape, moving symbolically from fascism to antifascism to the *Resistenza*.

Furthermore, the utility of casting literary figures as points on a trajectory of national conversion becomes more apparent in light of the widely acknowledged difficulty of narrating the rise and fall of fascism. Historians have underscored the challenge in defining fascism, including Emilio Gentile, who calls it an “oggetto misterioso che sfugge alla cattura di una chiara e razionale definizione storica” (v) [“mysterious object that flees the capture of a clear and rational historical definition”],<sup>26</sup> a difficulty which extends to efforts to delineate fascism’s various phases. After declaring the foundational necessity of establishing “l’arco cronologico in cui sorse, si sviluppò e prese forma più o meno definitiva il fascismo in Italia” [“the chronological arc in which fascism rose, developed and took a more or less definitive shape in Italy”], Renzo De Felice spends a chapter chasing after the “vera rottura” [“true break”] that indicates the passage between each of the three phases of fascism. Individuating World War I as the (generally accepted) origin of fascism, he immediately acknowledges a split in the consensus: “nella guerra ognuno sceglie un momento particolare di rottura” (157) [“in the war, everyone picks a specific breaking point”]. The task of identifying “il momento di trapasso” [“the moment of passage”] from the origins of the movement to the solidification of the regime only proves more complicated. Admitting that, according to L. Paladin “in realtà ‘la gradualità estrema con la quale il fascismo costruisce il proprio edificio giuridico’ rende difficile stabilire quando si produsse veramente tale interruzione” (163) [“in reality, ‘the extreme gradualness with which fascism built its own juridical structure,’ makes it difficult to establish when that interruption really is produced”], De Felice locates 1925 as the moment of “rottura vera e propria” [“out and out break”] only to qualify it further, distending it over four more years.<sup>27</sup> Claudio Pavone has

<sup>26</sup> Fascist ideology is no easier to pin down, as Spackman notes: “the question of the relation between Italian fascism and ideology has been answered in two contradictory ways: on the one hand, fascism is said to have no ideology, and, on the other, fascism is said to be synonymous with ideology” (*Virilities* ix).

<sup>27</sup> “Pur essendo nostra convinzione che dal punto di vista costituzionale questo discorso non costituì per il regime liberale italiano una rottura vera e propria e che il *regime fascista* nacque sul piano costituzionale solo tra il

identified similar difficulties in narrativizing the end of fascism and the *Resistenza*: “La mancata coincidenza fra l’abbattimento di Mussolini e l’armistizio creava la sensazione che, se non era finito la guerra, non era davvero finito nemmeno il fascismo” (7) [“The lack of concurrence between the fall of Mussolini and the Armistice created the sensation that, if the war was not over, fascism was not over either”].

In this light, it appears comparatively less problematic to locate moments of rupture between authors and between texts, or, indeed, within the texts themselves, which invite a reading in terms of the conversion trajectory identified by Ward.<sup>28</sup> As mentioned earlier, each novel centers around a political transformation of sorts: in *Garofano*, Alessio wants to become a fascist; in *Conversazione*, Silvestro, works to join a community of antifascists; in *Partigiano*, Johnny struggles to concretize his partisan identity; in *La pelle*, a transformation takes place on a national level, as Italy strives to transition from wartime to peace. And in the criticism of each of these texts, we will witness the “metonymic blurring” endemic to studies of texts by authors with “fascist” and/or “antifascist” connections, which makes Vittorini’s journey stand in for Silvestro’s, Fenoglio’s for Johnny’s, or Malaparte’s for Captain Malaparte’s—a substitution which results in the misreading of the transformations of both author and text. In fact, as I will show in each chapter, these literary narratives—much like the historical narratives cited above—are rather ambivalent conversions, at once insisting on the transformative nature of the protagonist’s journey and lacking the genre’s requisite moment of “radical discontinuity” (Freccero 265). Thus, when critics label texts “fascist” or “antifascist” or ask literature to stand in for history, I contend that they lose the ability to perceive and analyze the texts’ shared ambivalence towards a traditional conversion structure, which, as it traverses authorial politics and academic disciplines, is symptomatic of fascism’s slippery narrativity.

### 1.3 The Paradox of the Censorship of Translation under Fascism

When taking into account the difficulty of defining fascist ideology or individuating the precise stages of Italian fascism, it is perhaps no surprise that in Mussolini’s regime, censorship—an important tool in any totalitarian government—was not straightforward in its objectives or implementation.<sup>29</sup> In *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*, Bonsaver uses

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dicembre '25 e il gennaio '26 e si perfezionò alla fine del '26, sembra però indubbio che sotto il profilo politico il 3 gennaio fu il momento di vera rottura. Perché questa rottura diventasse completa si sarebbe dovuti giungere al '26 (costituzionalmente) e al '29 (politicamente)” (166) [“Although it is our belief that, from a constitutional perspective, for the liberal Italian regime this speech did not constitute a true break and that the *fascist regime* was not born constitutionally until December 1925 and January 1926 and completed itself at the end of 1926, it still seems certain that from a political perspective, January 3<sup>rd</sup> was the true breaking point. For this break to become complete, it is necessary to reach 1926 (constitutionally) and 1929 (politically)”].

<sup>28</sup> For instance, although Jane Dunnett has asserted the difficulty of dating Vittorini’s “conversion from Fascism to anti-Fascism with any precision” (“Vittorini” 118n.19), critics have mapped his break with fascism onto his literary “journey” from the “fascist” *Garofano* to the “antifascist” *Conversazione* as discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>29</sup> Literary censorship in fascist Italy has received increased scholarly attention in recent years, particularly from Anglophone literary historians, including Ruth Ben-Ghiat, Bonsaver and Dunnett. In “Fascist Censorship on Literature and The Case of Elio Vittorini,” Bonsaver notes a handful of earlier studies on the topic: in *Scrittura e censura* (1983), Lorenzo Greco examines particular cases; in *La censura nell’Italia fascista* (1978) Maurizio Cesari looks at censorship in general; *L’elenco: censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei* (1998) by Giorgio Fabre focuses on Jewish authors. Bonsaver’s contributions to the field have done much to redress this lack; in addition to authoring

extensive archival research to illustrate how “Fascist censorship was not a monolithic and tightly coordinated machine of repression. It had many faces and it went through different phases. The many officials involved in the censorship process – prefects, ministers, Mussolini himself – neither shared precisely the same perspective nor imposed their beliefs with complete consistency” (5).<sup>30</sup> However, Jane Dunnett explains, despite the lack of “official guidelines” for publication during the 1920s, “editors certainly knew which subjects to steer clear of,” including: pacifism, socialism, abortion, incest and suicide—topics which were also to be excluded from the press. The list of “obvious impediments to publication” extended to negative portrayals of Italian literary characters, “insult[s] to the dignity of the Italian nation,” “criticism of Mussolini or of Fascism,” or “anything contrary to what was referred to generically as ‘Fascist morality.’” This included “the defence of Catholic morality” and therefore meant that “sexual behaviour that might be regarded as inappropriate could attract the attention of the censors, as could the depiction of emancipated women which, it was feared, might undermine the received view of male superiority or challenge the centrality of the family to Fascist society” (101-2).

Intolerance towards “inappropriate” sexual behavior was, in fact, precisely what “promoted a dramatic acceleration of the organization and centralization of censorship.” However, Bonsaver’s account of that catalytic 1934 event signals how it actually evinces the very “unpredictab[ility]” of Mussolini’s monitoring system:

the single most important act of censorship during the Fascist regime... was the result of Mussolini’s incensed reaction to the cover of a sentimental novel... The culprit was *Sambadù amore negro*, a novel written by Mura (pseudonym of Maria Volpi), an author and journalist who was particularly popular among female readers... Its colorful cover illustration showed the photograph of a black man in elegant Western clothes holding an enraptured young white woman in his arms (*Censorship* 95).

The event’s impact was concrete and immediate, as Mussolini established “the definitive procedures that from that day onward all publishers had to follow.”<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, Bonsaver underscores the continued “ambiguity” of literary censorship, as well as its piecemeal implementation: “This type of partially preventive form of censorship was not turned into full-fledged legislation until 1939 and even then... it was done in an ambiguous way” (101).

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*Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*, Bonsaver introduces new archival evidence about Vittorini’s rather famous encounters with fascist censorship in “Fascist Censorship on Literature and the Case of Elio Vittorini” (2003) and *Elio Vittorini: The Writer and the Written*. He also co-edited *Culture, Censorship and the State in Twentieth-Century Italy* with Robert S.C. Gordon. George Talbot’s *Censorship* (2007) is the sole Anglophone monograph dedicated to the history of censorship under fascism, focusing more broadly on the different forms of censorship. His bibliography lists the several Italian studies, many of which date from 2001-2005.

<sup>30</sup> The study of fascist censorship is further complicated by the government’s discrepant treatment of the various industries, as Dunnett notes: “Whilst the press and the film industry were closely monitored by the State, the publishing industry was allowed a far greater margin of movement. Essentially, it was required to regulate itself. Until 1934, there was no preventive censorship, although books were liable to sequestration after publication” (“Foreign” 101).

<sup>31</sup> “Mussolini’s circular ordered that publishers submit three copies of each publication. All three had to be sent to the local prefecture. The prefecture would keep one and forward the other two to Rome, one to the General Directorate of Public Security (DGPS), the other to the Press Office at the head of the Government” (Bonsaver *Censorship* 99-100).

In his effort to paint a more nuanced picture of literary censorship in fascist Italy through the analysis of new archival sources, Bonsaver claims to be guided by a desire to avoid the moralistic binaries intrinsic to the conventional definition of censorship, which “discourage the exploration of the so-called grey zone occupying the vast space between vocal opposition and full collaboration” (*Censorship* 3). In this, he is following one of the many threads of Ben-Ghiat’s *Fascist Modernities*, which addresses censorship and self-censorship through analyses of “the dynamic between cultural policy and cultural production: how intellectuals responded to and interpreted official goals and ideologies and how, in turn, the regime reacted to their efforts.” Describing the “complex networks of influence and patronage” that characterized cultural production under fascism, Ben-Ghiat contends that “after two decades of dictatorship, few intellectuals had not become entangled in fascist cultural enterprises and institutions” (10). As Ben-Ghiat articulates a more complex vision of cultural production under fascism, she also demonstrates how it “functioned less through heavy-handed repression than through collaboration with authors who negotiated with authorities over a questionable tone or turn of phrase” (47-8). Similarly, Bonsaver contends that “censorship implied much more than just deleting sentences in red ink” (*Censorship* 10).

This new understanding about literary censorship in Italy also has informed studies on the censorship of translation, a phenomenon which, more than ambiguous, was wholly paradoxical. Since one of the tenets of Mussolini’s nationalistic regime was cultural and economic autarky, underwritten by a healthy dose of xenophobia, it would not have been surprising to hear of a blanket prohibition on translated texts, or at least, of individual translations being singled out for special attention by the censors. However, Dunnett shows that precisely the opposite appears to have been the case:

A striking feature of the cultural life of Italy in the 1920s and 1930s was the publication and widespread distribution of novels in translation. The ability to disseminate foreign literature under Fascism might seem surprising given the regime’s strong nationalist agenda, with its rhetoric of self-aggrandizement and its emphasis on the state’s achievements at home and, increasingly, abroad. Italy’s much-vaunted political independence—its freedom from foreign influence—was highlighted in official documents and speeches which pointed to the new sense of pride that its people now enjoyed. On the face of it, importing cultural goods was as alien to the spirit of economic autarky that the regime would promote in the second decade of its rule as was the importing of other goods. It certainly clashed with the aim of promoting *italianità*, or “Italianness,” that was so loudly trumpeted by Fascist leaders (“Foreign” 97).<sup>32</sup>

In “Fascism, Censorship and Translation,” Giorgio Fabre offers several explanations as to why a “typically nationalist, if not xenophobic, totalitarian regime... nonetheless waited sixteen years to impose systematic controls on translation” (48), factors related to Mussolini’s personal life and to his politics: in addition to having been a translator of French and German himself (45), Mussolini did not want to alienate foreign nations through these prohibitions, nor hurt Italy’s

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<sup>32</sup> Valerio Ferme’s research concurs with Dunnett’s (42). He notes a further paradox: “Nel quinquennio successivo 1921-1925), le traduzioni dall’americano raddoppiarono, proprio quando Mussolini assumeva il potere come Primo Ministro” (44) [“In the following half-decade (1921-1925), translations from English doubled, precisely when Mussolini assumed power as Prime Minister”].

own publishing industry which was benefiting economically from the popularity of translations (27). In fact, foreign literature, “mainly from the French, English, German and Hungarian,” was quite popular amongst the reading public: “American novels, especially, enjoyed considerable commercial success. There is no denying that readers frequently gave preference to foreign literature over domestic literature; their desire to look beyond the narrow confines of their own country found an outlet in the consumption of such fiction and was fueled by publishers who willingly supplied and stimulated demand” (Dunnett “Foreign” 97).

Still, specific restrictions were eventually imposed on translations in March, 1938. According to Fabre, the regime’s implementation of official procedures governing the censorship of translations echoed its approach to literary censorship in general, both in terms of its racist aims and its somewhat arbitrary, piecemeal implementation.<sup>33</sup> Just as the preventative censorship policies of 1934 were triggered by racist concerns, “the regulation of translations”—adopted contemporaneously with the anti-Semitic race laws—also “hid a more specific and more violent intention: the elimination from the national literary scene of books by foreign Jewish authors, in line with the developing racial campaign” (31). As was the case with literary censorship in general, the censorship of translations occurred in stages, intensifying after the start of World War II, and, furthermore, although the preventative censorship of translations was “more centralized than that which had applied to Italian books after 1934,” there were still notable exceptions for “‘purely scientific treatises’ and recognized classics” (32).<sup>34</sup>

In demonstrating the paradoxically permissive position of the regime, Dunnett and Fabre have helped reconceptualize a belief long held about the politics of the censorship of translation, not just in Italian studies but more generally. In fact, in her essay “Censorship and self-censorship in translation,” translation scholar Maria Tymoczko warns that:

In looking at the role of censorship in translation, we want to avoid buying into simplistic binary notions of victims and heroes in the translation processes. Such a binary ignores the complexity of ideology in translation processes and products. It also constructs a dichotomy between good translators who are passive victims of evil censors...on the one hand, and on the other hand heroic translators who fight the evil empire (30).

In upending characterizations of the translator/censor, good/evil opposition, Dunnett and Fabre provide a valuable contribution to understandings of the censorship of translation under fascism.<sup>35</sup> However, one of the primary elements they exclude is an analysis of specific translation practices—not just which texts were translated, but *how*—and their exclusively historical approach is at odds with the claims established in Francesca Billiani’s introduction to

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<sup>33</sup> Fabre notes that “some foreign books had...already been banned in an unsystematic fashion, some of them much earlier even than this (1924).” He points to a rise in 1929 “of a more systematic and generalized censorial activity which was not merely concerned with antifascist books” and included “anti-militarist books” (48).

<sup>34</sup> Fabre recounts two further steps in the institutionalization of the censorship of translation “On 26 July 1940, the Minculpop revoked all translation permissions issued before the war, subjecting even authorized translations to further scrutiny. Then, at the end of 1940, it tried to impose a quota (Rundle 2001: 133-40), but it was only in late January that a formal quota was applied which allowed foreign titles to constitute a maximum of 25% of any publisher’s output (Fabre 1998: 294-95, Rundle 2001: 140-42)”; “A further significant turn of the censorial screw on books occurred in May 1942, with the (albeit limited) distribution of a list of undesirable authors featuring both Italian and foreign Jewish and anti-fascist writers (Fabre 1998: 360-374)” (43, 44).

<sup>35</sup> For more on Dunnett’s contribution, see Chapter Two.

the volume, *Modes of Censorship and Translation*, which contains Fabre's essay.<sup>36</sup> Billiani asserts that by analyzing "the multifaceted nature of censorship," the scholars in her volume "demonstrat[e] the polymorphous nature of censorship and its slipperiness when applied to translations" (3), and, in so doing, are able to "bridg[e] the gap between linguistic analysis and cultural history and theory" (2). Nonetheless, I maintain that it is not enough to recognize censorship's "polymorphous nature" in order to bridge these disciplinary gaps; instead, in each case, it is important to theorize the various terms in play.

A carefully theorized, interdisciplinary perspective is particularly pertinent in light of Fabre's claim that Mussolini's leniency towards translation depended on his "racist ideologies" which in turn "relied heavily on the alleged Italian capacity for cultural assimilation": "Mussolini believed that Italians derived their strength also from their ability to absorb foreign cultures, with the exception of Jewish culture" ("Fascism" 33-4). To wit, an exploration of this seemingly paradoxical attitude is helped by insights from post-colonial theorists who have critiqued the use of translation as an imperialist tool used by the Romans, seeking to "appropriate Greek culture" (Robinson 51), and by Western colonialists, aiming to translate "the 'other' into the terms of the empire" (Cheyfitz 112). Lawrence Venuti, too, has shown how the predominant trend in Anglophone translation to "domesticate" foreign texts (and thereby render the translators' intervention "invisible") "is symptomatic of a complacency in British and American relations with cultural others, a complacency that can be described—without too much exaggeration—as imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home" (13). The "invisibility" of Venuti's translator is revisited by Valerio Ferme in order to underscore the assimilationist tendencies of Italian translation practices under fascism: "i censori e quei letterati che erano in linea col regime, erano chiaramente al corrente della necessità di promuovere il dogma implicito della traduzione trasparente" ["The censors and those intellectuals who were in step with the regime were clearly aware of the necessity of promoting the implicit dogma of transparent translation"]. Although translation was attacked in general as unpatriotic, Ferme continues, there were also attacks against "le traduzioni che non si leggessero con facilità in italiano" (64) ["translations that were not easily readable in Italian"]. Here, then, when arguing for the permissive nature of the censorship of translation, Dunnett's and Fabre's statistics of publications of translation under the regime tell only part of the story. For although a given translation might not have been censored by a fascist prefect, thus giving the impression of cultural openness, it is important to consider how and what that translation itself *censors*, how it "enlists the foreign text in the maintenance or revision of dominant cultural paradigms" and how it enacts against that text an "ethnocentric violence" (Venuti 15, 16). Working with this assertion, Ferme's study usefully transforms particular theoretical concepts to fit the specific context of fascist Italy. Indeed, while Venuti is wholly critical of the translator's "invisibility"—casting it as the precise thing that must be resisted—Ferme shows that it need not always be symptomatic of (fascist) repression. Instead, looking at a specific translation by Vittorini, in which he "cerca di eliminare le varianti culturali per far sì che il messaggio rimanga facilmente accessibile o venga addirittura accentuato dalla traduzione" ["tries to eliminate cultural variants in order to make the message easily accessible or even emphasized in the translation"] Ferme advocates that such an apparently "assimilationist" approach actually be taken as a sign of antifascist resistance:

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<sup>36</sup> Dunnett's essay—which also takes an exclusively historical approach—belongs to another volume discussed shortly, *Translation and Censorship*, whose editors tout a similar commitment to interdisciplinarity.

Questa appropriazione e trasformazione dell'originale, se anche sembra adeguarsi alle regole della 'familiarizzazione' e della trasparenza, che sono invocate in negativo da teorici della traduzione come Venuti per criticarne le tendenze assimilazioniste, rende invece il testo italiano ben più ricco di connotati simbolici e contiene un messaggio sociale e civico di maggior rilievo quando è paragonata all'originale (185-6)

[This appropriation and transformation of the original, even if it seems in line with the rules of 'domestication' and invisibility, that are negatively invoked by translation theorists like Venuti in order to criticize its assimilationist tendencies, works instead to make the Italian text much richer in symbolic connotations and contains a more important social and civic message when compared to the original].

In this sense, Ferme's view of the translator is in concert with Tymoczko who contends that although translators might, at times, be "victims of censorship," so too is it "possible to chart ways that translators have used translation to circumvent and challenge oppressive cultural norms" (25, 26).

There is much merit to Ferme's method, which brings together literary history and translation theory with close, comparative readings. Nonetheless my specific problems with Ferme's conclusion ultimately speak to a larger critique of his project. In Chapter Two, I will analyze the way critics have used Vittorini's "abstracting" tendencies to construct his antifascist literary identity, which, in turn, works to obfuscate important textual dynamics. For now, I note that despite the theoretical attention he pays to translators, Ferme does not have the same theoretical rigor in regards to the censors, whom he describes as simply adversarial: "attaccarono con vigore la pratica della traduzione in se stessa" (64) ["they vigorously attacked the practice of translation itself"]. In this example, Ferme effectively reproduces Tymoczko's simplistic moral dichotomy, whereby Vittorini's "heroic" translation practices are "'indubbiamente' sovversiva" (23) ["'undoubtedly' subversive"] and his "evil" opponents are reduced to "i censori e quei letterati che erano in linea col regime" (64) ["the censors and intellectuals who were in step with the regime"]. Moreover, Ferme exclusively focuses on interlingual translation, which, in some cases can be seen as a necessary corrective of a scholarly tendency to privilege "original" writing.<sup>37</sup> However—as I maintain throughout this dissertation—understanding translation exclusively according to one definition often results in a partial story. Specifically, in Chapter Two I insist that Vittorini's "subversive," "abstracting" Anglophone translations need to be read alongside the *representation* of "translation" in *Conversazione in Sicilia*, a translation which I will claim works by abstracting and marginalizing a representation of the female body and reinforcing a misogynist logic.

This brief example foregrounds several intersections between different kinds of censorship and translation, showing that these phenomena are not in stark opposition, but instead collaborate in ways that unsettle conventional understandings of both. In addition, this example suggests the importance of recognizing that censorship and translation are not simply *performed* on texts, imposed on them externally, but instead are also operative within them. My critique of Ferme's approach extends to Bonsaver and Ben-Ghiat's analyses: while they make an important

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<sup>37</sup> For example, Corti's decision—discussed in Chapter Three—to exclude Beppe Fenoglio's translations from his *Complete Works*.



contribution in arguing for a dynamic understanding of censorship, their focus is limited to how that dynamic works *on* a given text, in terms of negotiations between editors, publishers, writers and government officials, and, as a result, while they provide nuance in regards to the context, they reproduce the same, generally accepted analysis of the censored texts. As I explore in Chapter Two, however, it is precisely when dealing with texts conventionally understood as censored, that it becomes most vital to keep in mind that “in some measure...all texts are censored” (Holquist 23n.2).<sup>38</sup> Now, as I turn to recent developments in scholarship on the censorship of translation in various national contexts, this critique will be sharpened: for while Bonsaver and Ben-Ghiat position themselves as literary historians, these other scholars explicitly signal their interdisciplinary intentions, which makes it all the more surprising that their theoretical considerations on censorship and translation effectively exclude major contributions, namely those post-structuralist in nature.

#### 1.4 “What is a Censor?” – Foucault, Bourdieu and The Censorship of Translation

As Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin and David Parris write in the introduction to *Translation and Censorship: Patterns of Communication and Interference*, “censorship in translation” is now a nascent “sub-discipline” with a “bright future” (13).<sup>39</sup> However, unlike the largely archive-centric scholarship that prevails in Italian studies, the recent anthologies that have established this sub-discipline are also very much informed by theoretical contributions, specifically by Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. More than a decade ago, scholars such as Robert Post and Judith Butler turned to Foucault’s understanding of power and the productivity of repression in order to shift the focus of censorship studies away from its “predictable and venerable divisions separating liberals from conservatives” and towards a “new scholarship” (Post 1).<sup>40</sup> Post, crediting Foucault with underwriting this “new scholarship” on censorship, writes:<sup>41</sup>

Foucault had himself always seen power as productive, as constructing knowledge and social practices. He had consequently rejected any simple opposition between power and person, concluding instead that power ‘makes

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<sup>38</sup> Georges Van den Abbeele makes a similar point from a Lacanian perspective, that “censorship can be construed as the foundational condition of meaning and of subjectivity itself” (11).

<sup>39</sup> This introductory essay is invaluable for its bibliography on censorship and translation, across a range of national traditions, including the Billiani anthology discussed subsequently, as well as a dedicated issue of the journal *TTR: traduction, terminologie, redaction* edited by Denise Merkle from 2002, and an anthology devoted to Spain and Portugal, *Translation and Censorship in Different Times and Landscapes*, edited by Teresa Seruyva and Maria Lin Moniz from 2008. For the most up-to-date information on translation studies, they recommend St. Jerome Publishing’s online database of Translation Studies Abstracts, at <http://www.stjerome.co.uk>.

<sup>40</sup> In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, Foucault famously demonstrates that the apparent censorship of sexuality in the Victorian era was not, as had been generally held, repressive: “A censorship of sex? There was installed rather an apparatus for producing an ever greater quantity of discourse about sex, capable of functioning and taking effect in its very economy” (23).

<sup>41</sup> For more on the “new scholarship” see Post’s volume—which includes contributions by Richard Burt, E.S. Burt and Judith Butler. Other scholars working in this vein, not included in the volume, but singled out in his footnotes include Holquist, Francis Couvares, Sue Curry Jansen and Zamir Niazi.

individuals subjects.<sup>42</sup> In the new scholarship, censorship is analogously characterized as productive, ‘not as one or more discrete acts of repressive control over free expression, but as a ‘normal’ and ‘constitutive’ part, indeed, a very condition of free expression’<sup>43</sup> (2-4).

Along with Foucault’s notion of power, Bourdieu’s theories of cultural production—in particular, the notion of *habitus*—have helped scholars push censorship studies beyond the centralized figure of the repressive censor.<sup>44</sup> In fact, although Bourdieu works with the term “censorship” in his essay, “Censorship and the Imposition of Form,” he deliberately distances his notion of “structural censorship” from traditional, authoritarian notions. Structural censorship differs from the localized, repressive definition insofar as its need to “manifest itself in the form of explicit prohibitions, imposed and sanctioned by an institutionalized authority, diminishes” as social norms become increasingly “obvious”—a claim whose relevance to theories of self-censorship has been demonstrated by Butler’s Althusserian redefinition of *habitus*, “those embodied rituals of everydayness by which a given culture produces and sustains belief in its own ‘obviousness’” (152 and note).<sup>45</sup> Here, then, Foucault’s and Bourdieu’s theories have allowed Butler, Post and others to demonstrate that censorship is not simply a single, oppressive operation but rather functions through a network of power relations, whose diffuse effects are at once productive *and* repressive.

These insights have changed not only conceptualizations of censorship but also of translation.<sup>46</sup> In the introduction to *Modes of Censorship and Translation*, Billiani credits Foucault and Bourdieu with catalyzing a major “paradigmatic shift” in translation studies and provides a cogent summary of their “complementary” contributions.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, while helping to push aside the “repressive censor,” Foucault and Bourdieu also have been used by scholars like Billiani, Katja Krebs and Elisabeth Gibbels to theorize the “repressed” translator, as they posit translation as a normativizing process in which translators are themselves complicit (Billiani 8-

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<sup>42</sup> “Foucault, Michel. “The Subject and Power,” *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1983. 212” (Post 11n.21).

<sup>43</sup> Couvares, Francis G. “Introduction.” *Movie Censorship and American Culture*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996. 10. See Curry Jansen, Sue. *Censorship: The Knot That Binds Power and Knowledge*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988. 7-8; Barker, Francis. *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection*. New York: Methuen, 1984. 51-2” (Post 11n. 22).

<sup>44</sup> As Katja Krebs notes, Post is “taking his cue from Foucault and Bourdieu” (169) when he declares, “If censorship is a technique by which discursive practices are maintained, and if social life largely consists of such practices, it follows that censorship is the norm rather than the exception” (Post 2).

<sup>45</sup> Bourdieu writes: “Censorship is never quite as perfect or as invisible as when each agent has nothing to say apart from what he is objectively authorized to say: in this case he does not even have to be his own censor because he is, in a way, censored once and for all, through the forms of perception and expression that he has internalized and which impose their form on all his expressions” (138).

<sup>46</sup> For instance, André Lefevere has used Foucault’s and Bourdieu’s theories “to explain ideological factors inherent in the decision making of processes of practicing translators” (Gentzler “Translation” 196).

<sup>47</sup> Billiani writes, “Both individual and institutional censorship rely on the existence of a power structure which Bourdieu explains in terms of the construction of a social critique of taste and judgment. The symbolic order of things as well as the social articulation of power structures are fundamental in the censorial process and recall Foucault’s foundational account of how power and knowledge shape aesthetic, cultural and ideological discourses. By suggesting that censorship is a discourse which uses its power not only in order to withdraw but also to produce knowledge, Foucault complements Bourdieu’s model of cultural production and consumption and sets it against codified institutional practices” (11).

11).<sup>48</sup> For instance, in her essay, “Translators, The Tacit Censors,” Gibbels uses Butler’s definition of Bourdieu’s *habitus* to explain a translator’s tendency “to produce a submissive, intelligible translation that is at no risk of being cast out from the domain of the speakable. Their *habitus* inclines translators to be submissive to the norms and conventions of intelligible discourse” (72).<sup>49</sup> Gibbels, whose framework is explicitly Bourdesian, claims that the translators’ censorial domestication is “no conscious choice but an effect of their position in the system of symbolic production” (75).

Rather than review these two major volumes, I point to a recurrent theoretical apparatus in order to draw attention to the way it brings censorship and translation together, in terms of “censorship in translation” (Ní Chuilleanáin, Ó Cuilleanáin and Parris 13). Billiani, too, expresses her volume’s basic question as such: “to what extent does censorship, when applied to translation, succeed in producing new textual spaces and generating new sites of meaning?” (3), a question which, inarguably, opens the possibility to new insights into their chosen texts and the processes of censorship and translation more generally. However, in the formative years of this “sub-discipline,” it is particularly important to theorize the interrelationship being forged between these terms, specifically in light of Billiani’s advocacy of *applying* censorship to translation, that is, using censorship—and censorship theory—to help better understand translation. The result of this approach, I claim, is the enactment of a hierarchy between the two terms. In fact, I suggest that the syntax of “censorship of translation” or “censorship *in* translation” implies the exclusion of any number of the “new textual spaces” and the “new sites of meaning” that Billiani suggests it can produce. My symptomatic reading of these prepositions is drawn from Shoshana Felman, who addresses disciplinary relationships—specifically as related to the practice of applying psychoanalytic theory to literature. In so doing, she draws attention to the “apparently neutral connective word, the misleadingly innocent, colorless, meaningless copulative conjunction: *and*, in the title: ‘Literature and Psychoanalysis,’” and contends that “although ‘and’ is grammatically defined as a ‘coordinate conjunction,’ in the context of the relationship between ‘literature and psychoanalysis’ it is usually interpreted, paradoxically enough, as implying not so much a relation of coordination as one of *subordination*, a relation in which literature is submitted to the authority, to the prestige of psychoanalysis” (“To Open the Question” 5). In making this point about the perils of applying (psychoanalytic) theory to literature, Felman rejects the conflictual “notion of *application*” and instead endorses “the radically different notion of *implication*: bringing analytical questions to bear upon literary questions, *involving* psychoanalysis in the scene of literary analysis, the interpreter’s role would here be, not to *apply* to the text the acquired science, a preconceived knowledge, but to act as a go-between, to *generate implications* between literature and psychoanalysis” (8-9). Although I would not put censorship and translation into a position analogous to psychoanalysis and literature, thus far, the theoretical work that has linked the two

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<sup>48</sup> In terms of Bourdieu’s contribution, Billiani claims that his notions of “field, habitus, structure and agent prove central to the analysis of the phenomenology of censorship and translation” insofar as they allow scholars to “move beyond the linguistic analysis of textual manipulations” and to take into account both the “national specificity” of censorship and translation and “a repertoire of universal themes...shared by different communities at different times in their history” (8-9). For more on Bourdieu’s relevance to translation studies, Billiani points to a special issue of *The Translator* (2005), edited by Moira Inghilleri (6n.2). In terms of Foucault’s contribution, Billiani writes, “Foucault’s statement on the loss of the authority of the author” underwrites the connection between the operations of translation and self-censorship: “the idea of the originality of a text, which each translation essentially places under scrutiny, is also further challenged by any form of censorship, especially of authorial self-censorship” (12).

<sup>49</sup> In the same vein, she also cites D. Simeoni’s work in *Target*, 10 (1998).

has submitted translation to censorship, and, as such I follow Felman's work insofar as I aim to "generate implications" between the discourses of censorship and of translation—and between the competing discourses with each field—rather than subordinate one to another.

The explicit focus of Felman's work is not censorship *per se*. However, in her analysis of the asymmetrical disciplinary dynamic between literature and psychoanalysis, she illustrates a subtle but tenacious form of obfuscation at work insofar as the conventional approach holds that psychoanalysis has something to say about literature, while ignoring the ways in which literature, too, informs psychoanalysis.<sup>50</sup> This point speaks aptly to the relationship being forged between censorship and translation by translation scholars and literary historians who tout the importance of bringing together cases of censorship across genres, historical periods and national contexts (Billiani 4-5) and "blurring the boundaries" between traditional definitions of censorship and of self-censorship (Tymoczko 39). Declared intentions notwithstanding, their purported union of censorship and translation evinces a theoretical chasm, one that is as problematic as it is blatant: these scholars make use of schematic understandings of Foucault's and Bourdieu's theories on censorship and, furthermore, establish no dialogue with any of the psychoanalytic, post-structuralist contributions to translation and censorship studies—nor even acknowledge or dismiss them. In an effort to start such a conversation, I now provide some brief comments about Freud's seminal contributions to understandings of censorship and of translation, informed by subsequent poststructuralist interpretations, specifically focusing on the ways in which they suggest possibilities for enacting a dynamic interrelationship between the two.

### 1.5 Narrating Translation and Censorship, Proper and Improper

If, at first glance, Freud's foundational psychoanalytic contributions seem extraneous to a consideration of literary censorship and translation, Derrida and Levine have done much to prove otherwise: in order to conceptualize the psyche, Freud makes frequent recourse to writing metaphors, often specifically in terms of censorship and translation. For instance, to illustrate the difference between dream-thoughts and dream-content, Freud compares them to "two versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages" (*S.E.* IV, 277), and to explain the dreamwork—as it alters a preconscious wish, thus enabling it to bypass an internal censor and manifest itself in a dream—Freud evokes "the political writer who has disagreeable truths to tell to those in authority...[who] must soften and distort the expression of his opinion" (*S.E.* IV, 142 as cited in Levine 27). Freud's use of writing metaphors in his theories of the psyche is in concert with the link he forges between the dreamer and the (struggling) writer, a "chiasmatic coupling of text and dream—of text-as-dream and dream-as text" explored by Derrida in "Freud and the Scene of Writing," which speaks to the relevance of psychic repression for a discussion of literary censorship (Levine 22). However, as Levine has demonstrated, while using the

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<sup>50</sup> Felman writes, "From the very beginning, indeed, literature has been for psychoanalysis not only a contiguous field of external verification in which to test its hypotheses and to confirm its findings, but also the constitutive texture of its *conceptual* framework, of its theoretical body. The key concepts of psychoanalysis are references to literature, using literary '*proper*' names—names of fictional characters (Oedipal complex, Narcissism) or of historical authors (masochism, sadism). Literature, in other words, is the language which psychoanalysis uses in order to *speak of itself*, in order to *name itself*. Literature is therefore not simply *outside* psychoanalysis, since it motivates and *inhabits* the very names of its concepts, since it is the *inherent reference* by which psychoanalysis names its findings" ("To Open the Question" 9).

familiar rhetoric of literary censorship makes psychic processes more readily accessible, it also risks oversimplifying them. In fact, Freud's dependence on the metaphor of press/literary censorship initially led him to describe the psychic struggle to manifest desires in dreams in terms of "two separate and opposed forces or systems, one of which creatively 'constructs the wish,' while the other 'forcibly brings about a distortion in the expression of it'" (Levine 27).

In this early formulation, Freud understood psychic repression in terms of literary/press censorship, and he appears to have conceptualized translation as its opposite, as evinced in his description of "repression as a 'failure of translation,'" (Levine 12). Calling Freud one of "the principal theorists and innovators of translation" (387), Patrick Mahoney has shown how Freud used translation metaphorically to explain the healing, revelatory work of the analyst who defeats the repressive dreamwork, and, along these lines, his characterization stands diametrically opposed to the post-colonialists' understanding of translation in terms of "intercultural relations" (Evans 152) which require and obfuscate "the asymmetrical relations of power that inform the relations between languages" (Niranjana 60).<sup>51</sup> Specifically, Niranjana has argued that the view of translation as an "empirical science" works to repress "the asymmetrical relations of power that inform the relations between languages" (60).<sup>52</sup> Far from describing translation as "healing," these scholars rather understand it as "linguistic transfer in service of empire" (Evans 149), and thus locate a specific violence against the colonized enacted through translation that goes hand-in-hand with the colonial endeavor: "The processes of translation involved in making another culture comprehensible entail varying degrees of violence, especially when the culture being translated is constituted as that of the 'other'" (Dingwaney 4).<sup>53</sup>

The idea of translation as a power struggle has offered a point of encounter between post-colonial and feminist scholars, in their recognition that the colonizer-colonized dynamic also has a gendered dimension which manifests itself rhetorically. In "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," Chamberlain considers the violence implicit in Thomas Drant's preface of his translation of Horace from the sixteenth-century, and demonstrates how "the politics of colonialism overlap significantly with the politics of gender" when Drant "boldly announces: 'First I have now done as the people of God were commanded to do with their captive women that were handsome and beautiful: I have shaved off his hair and pared off his nails, that is, I have wiped away all his vanity and superfluity in the matter'" (318).<sup>54</sup> The gendered rhetoric of translation—whether explicitly or implicitly violent—has been "a founding insight of feminist translation theory," as Naomi Seidman has noted (37). One such theorist, Sherry Simon, describes the situation in this way:

Whether affirmed or denounced, the femininity of translation is a persistent historical trope. 'Woman' and 'translator' have been relegated to the same position of discursive inferiority. The hierarchical authority of the original over

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<sup>51</sup> "In sum, if the patient may be psychically conceived as an accumulation of translations—as when the hysteric turns into an obsessional and thus becomes a bilingual document (Freud 1913, 319)—the analyst assumes the complementary role of a translator. By means of translations the analyst effects a transposition of what is unconscious into consciousness (Freud 1915, 166; 1916-17, 435; 1940, 159, 186)" (Mahoney 837-8).

<sup>52</sup> Douglas Robinson, too, has spoken to the obfuscations that result from "thinking of translation as purely a linguistic process for transferring meanings intact from one language to another" (47).

<sup>53</sup> Major contributions to post-colonial translation scholarship include: Niranjana, Robinson, Gayatri Spivak and Eric Cheyfitz. Other important essays are contained in anthologies edited by Tymoczko and Gentzler, and Bassnett and Trivedi.

<sup>54</sup> See Robinson's reading of Chamberlain (58).

the reproduction is linked with imagery of masculine and feminine; the original is considered the strong generative male, the translation the weaker and derivative female (1).

Translation has been used not only as a tool for reinforcing and repressing asymmetries between languages, genders, and cultures, but also as a metaphor for these relations. As Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi illustrate, the hierarchical relationship of Europe/colony was reproduced in terms of original/translation: “Europe was regarded as the great Original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies, or ‘translations’ of Europe, which they were supposed to duplicate” (4). In addition to critiquing the linguistic and cultural hierarchies that are an explicit part of imperialist translation practices, Douglas Robinson canvases the history of translation theory in order to signal the importance of “references to imperial themes in passing metaphors, which can be (and frequently have been) discounted as ‘not really about empire’” (55). In particular, he focuses on “the metaphor of the translator as a conqueror” (55) which “encourages us to see the source culture as ‘inadequate’ but also allows us “to think about translation in terms of a power struggle: it is not a simple technical process for achieving equivalence but a conflict or contest” (56).

Robinson and Niranjana both highlight and confront what I believe to be a central challenge in studying translation—and censorship: for even as one acknowledges and touts their polyvalence, it takes careful theorization to keep multiple definitions in play without letting one supplant the other. In fact, according to Mahoney’s exhaustive inventory, Freud used the word translation (*Übersetzung*) to describe a panoply of phenomena, including “dreams; generalized hysterical, obsessive, and phobic symptomatology; parapraxes; fetishes; the choice of suicidal means; and the analyst’s interpretations” (837). That notwithstanding, when Mahoney reiterates this point as part of a “Roundtable on Translation” with Derrida (*Ear* 96-97), Derrida replies that Freud’s point of reference for discussing translation was, nonetheless, its “everyday” usage:

everything Freud tells us about translation, all the uses he makes of translation, may in part appear to be metaphorical as regards the common concept of translation, which is what Jakobsen calls interlinguistic translation or translation in the everyday sense. Freud, on the other hand, very often, as in the examples you gave, also speaks of translation as the passage from one semiotic system to another. When one speaks of hysteria, of oneiric or hysterical translation, one is speaking of translation in Jakobsen’s third sense, the passage from one semiotic system to another: words—gestures, words-images, acoustic-visual, and so forth, but to the extent that Freud seems to want to use the word ‘translation’ in a metaphorical sense, he constantly looks as if he is taking the literal sense (that is, interlinguistic translation) as the model referent for all possible translation (*Ear* 108).

Freud’s attachment to “literal” or—to use Jakobsen’s terminology—“proper” translation can be considered symptomatic of a larger trend in translation studies that Derrida incisively critiques. The influence of this critique is apparent in Ruth Evans’ description of the project of postcolonial translation scholars, which, in turn, speaks precisely to one of the tenets of my dissertation:

Paradoxically – the literal activity of translation is seen as natural and proper, whereas its figurative uses, despite its affinity with the literal sense, are seen as unnatural and improper. While there are important reasons for questioning indiscriminate metaphorical uses of the term ‘translation,’ not least the fact that relations are often left unspecified, it is crucial to challenge the assumptions that underwrite the present moment’s hierarchy of signification (150).

Thus, although conventionally understood notions of translation very much figure into my analysis, it is not to the exclusion of additional—at times, contradictory—understandings, as I will enumerate shortly.

At the same time that my dissertation brings together polyvalent forms of translation, it also establishes a dialogue with multiple definitions of censorship—and to establish my theoretical parameters, I turn again to Freud who, despite having initially relied on the metaphor of press censorship in order to conceptualize the psyche, ultimately was able to extend his understanding of censorship beyond conventional definitions. In fact, despite having once characterized the psychic struggle to manifest desire in dreams in terms of “two separate and opposed forces” (Levine 27), Freud later came to revise this belief in “Note on the Mystic Writing Pad,” where instead of defining the psyche in terms of oppositional forces, he postulates an ambidextrous ‘writing apparatus’ [*Wunderblock*] as a “metaphor for representing the working of the psyche” (Derrida *Writing* 199): “If we imagine one hand writing upon the surface of the Mystic Writing-Pad while another periodically raises its covering sheet from the wax slab, we shall have a concrete representation of the way in which I tried to picture the functioning of the perceptual apparatus of our mind” (*S.E.* XIX, 232 as cited in Derrida *Writing* 226).<sup>55</sup> From this metaphor—where one ‘hand’ of the psyche writes, while the other destroys—Derrida posits a fundamental link between writing and repression, concluding: “Writing is unthinkable without repression. The condition of writing is that there be neither a permanent contact nor an absolute break between strata: the vigilance and the failure of censorship” (226). Thus, much in the same way that Derrida shows that translation is not something that happens *to* a text but is, itself, “a productive writing” (*Ear* 153), here he argues that neither is censorship an external event *imposed* upon a text but is coterminous with its production.

Capitalizing on Derrida’s insights, Levine—who focuses explicitly on censorship and metaphor—asks: “what kind of interaction joins these two hands [of writing and repression]? What does it mean to view censorship as a condition of writing that is at once crippling and enabling?” (2). With these questions in mind, Levine undertakes close readings from Freud’s corpus—specifically *The Interpretation of Dreams*—to demonstrate how dream censorship “can also involve the creation of new values” (30).<sup>56</sup> Showing the “volatility of the metaphor of [political and literary] censorship in Freud’s text,” Levine insists that readers do not simply “tak[e] its illustrative, didactic value” (41). Instead, he advocates a more comprehensive, even contradictory, understanding:

Censorship does not so much denote a particular psychical frontier or stable psychoanalytic concept. Instead, it functions more like a covering figure whose single name serves to cloak an entire complex of incompatible pressures and

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<sup>55</sup> My understanding of Derrida’s reading of Freud is very much informed by Levine.

<sup>56</sup> Levine specifically makes this claim about dream displacement, which “Freud considered... to be the essential portion of the dreamwork” (29).

opposing tendencies. At times, it is said to be as crude as the state censor who excises passages without covering his tracks; at other times, it seems to simply tone down reprehensible material or to replace it with circumlocutions; at still other times, it is said to distort the dream by filling in extraneous material and by creating a semblance of intelligibility. These competing accounts of censorship indeed seem difficult to reconcile. Moreover, it appears likely that any attempt to overlook the obvious differences between these versions, to privilege one version over another in order to view censorship as a localizable and stable instance modeled either simply on self- or on state censorship would be to distort it in exactly the same way that secondary revision is said to distort dream material (39-40).

As such, one of the primary goals of this dissertation is to take into consideration many of these “competing accounts of censorship,” particularly in cases where a “localizable and stable instance” appears to have taken hold in the criticism, thus, working to “cloak an entire complete of incompatible pressures and opposing tendencies.”

## 1.6 Narrating Censorship, Translation, Fascism

As each chapter will show in more depth, translation and censorship, narrowly defined, have helped reify the emblematic, political positions of these texts and authors which, in turn, have been used in the construction of a macro-conversion narrative that allows Italian literature to “progress” from fascism to the *Resistenza*—and it is for this reason that I have not structured the dissertation to move from Malaparte to Vittorini to Fenoglio. As case studies, each chapter can be read on its own and, ideally, in grappling with censorship, translation and fascism, each one speaks to the others. At times, I explicitly draw these connections in passing; here, I use the final pages of this introduction as a space in which to map the shared and divergent ways in which censorship and translation are addressed in each case study, starting from the four broad categories of translation that recur—to varying degrees—in each: the authors’ activity as literary translators; instances of translation thematized or operative within the novels; Anglophone translations of the novels; and the rhetoric of translation in the novels and in the criticism.

To elaborate: first, as I review the scholarship, I focus on how scholarly perceptions of the authors’ experience with literary translation has influenced interpretations of their texts: Vittorini is said to have conceived of *Conversazione* through his experience as a translator of Anglophone literature, and Fenoglio, an avid translator of British literature, is said to have written *Partigiano* through a process of self-translation from English to Italian. In fact, some critics consider one of *Partigiano*’s manuscripts to be a self-translation of another, and thus, a key part of that chapter will grapple with the theoretical implications of such a claim.

Second, I understand translation in a broader sense, in terms of a narrative preoccupation with defining and critiquing foreignness and Italianness. This preoccupation manifests itself in several distinct ways, including a focus on “foreign” characters and a consistent use of foreign or “invented” languages. In terms of the thematic interest in the “foreign,” Allied soldiers—American, English and colonial—are prominent in *La pelle* (Moroccan) and also make an appearance in *Partigiano Johnny* (South African), and one of the main characters in *Garofano rosso* is a woman of mysterious, Middle Eastern, origins. Furthermore, this sense of



“foreignness” extends to the protagonists: Johnny is considered “English” for his literary Anglophilia; Silvestro, having traveled away from his hometown in Sicily, is dubbed “American,” and Captain Malaparte’s identity, Italian or otherwise, is contested by everyone. Here, the precariousness of the characters’ national status is attenuated by their linguistic fluidity. Two protagonists are engaged as translators: Johnny translates Anglophone poetry prior to becoming a partisan and is asked to serve as an interpreter between the partisans and the English; Captain Malaparte is a Liaison Officer and interpreter for the Allies. Silvestro has been understood by critics as a translator in two main ways: as an autobiographical projection of Vittorini, himself well-known for his activity as a translator, and as a figurative translator, who performs a translation of a “sealed word” in order to be reintegrated fully into the community.

In terms of the use of foreign or invented languages, English makes a significant appearance in *La pelle*, as do French and Neapolitan dialect; much of *Partigiano* employs an Italian-English hybrid idiolect which birthed a neologism, *fenglese*, in order to describe it; *Conversazione* is “extraordinarily attentive to expressive sounds that are not words, exactly” (Salierno Mason x). The presence of the “non-Italian” in these texts presents a specific challenge to would-be translators, which speaks to Johnson’s apt observation that “the more a text is worked through by the problem of translation, the more untranslatable it becomes” (146). In fact, this difficulty is manifest in the Anglophone translations of these novels, most notably in *Partigiano* where Italian and English fuse together even in a single sentence: “Lo speaker americano aveva una bella voce, affascinante nella sua correttiva vibrazione twang, ma le notizie were under his voice” (395) [“The American *speaker* had a beautiful voice, fascinating in its corrective vibration *twang*, but the news *were under his voice*”]. Indeed, the introductory note to the English edition informs the reader that: “Beppe Fenoglio introduces English words into his text in what appears to be an arbitrary fashion. In many cases the result is bizarre; no attempt has been made to correct his usage. His English insertions are italicized throughout.” In a preface to the second translation of *Conversazione in Sicilia*, *Conversations in Sicily*, Alane Salierno Mason also details the difficulty in translating “the lyricism and incantatory repetitions of Vittorini’s language” (xiv).<sup>57</sup> I will have occasion to analyze the specific significance of the presence of the “non-Italian” in the individual chapters; here, I point to the fact that in each case, the linguistic choice is understood to be political in valence: Salierno Mason had this to say about the politics of *Conversazione*’s language: “Striving both to emulate the opera and to rescue words themselves from the lockstep imposed on them by dictatorship, Vittorini’s language in *Conversazione in Sicilia* is an antidote to propaganda. Full of echoes and extraordinarily attentive to expressive sounds that are not words, exactly...it is language bearing mysteries” (x); Fenoglio scholars generally understand his linguistic experimentation as a rejection of Italian, “la lingua della falsificazione propagandistica della dittatura e dei suoi riti celebrativi” (Isella xvii) [“the language of the falsified propaganda of the dictator and its celebratory rites”]; in *La pelle*, the narrator attributes the failure of Italian to express certain concepts—catalyzing the need to employ foreign languages—to Italy’s political transformation at the Armistice (48).

Finally, I analyze the presence of the rhetoric of translation—the recurrence of various topoi identified by translation scholars—throughout the novels and/or the criticism. For example, in Chapter Two, I look at *Conversazione*, where the statue of an enormous, naked female body becomes the *object* to be translated and then discarded both within the narrative framework and

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<sup>57</sup> There is no translator’s preface for *The Skin*—which was partially censored, as I discuss in Chapter Four—but it is interesting to note that although the French dialogue is left in French, no effort is made to distinguish which lines of English appeared in the Italian version, and any unusual usage is standardized.

in the criticism, as characters and critics seek to “penetrate” the false, external level of meaning and extract the true significance: a subversive, antifascist message.<sup>58</sup> In my reading, I ask why this political “translation” requires and expels the representation of the female form, while at the same time, I offer a close reading of the statue itself to point to the ambivalence of its so-called “message.” In Chapter Four, I point to the use of racialized, sexualized bodies in Malaparte’s *La pelle* as metaphors for “faithful” intercultural translation and consider how both the text and criticism has worked to strip them of their literal significance, by insisting that the integrity of the text lies not in its representation of history but in its status as art. These metaphors certainly warrant critique; nonetheless, I follow Seidman who rightly asserts that they also contain the potential to unsettle precisely that which they are meant to reinforce (38). Thus, I identify this violent, sexualized rhetoric of censorship and translation, not in order to lament it but to ask what interpretive possibilities it at once restricts and suggests. For instance, I claim that *La pelle* actually encourages a literal *and* metaphorical reading of the bodies, which not only facilitates a recontextualization of *La pelle* within post-Liberation Italy, but also points to the way marginalized figures are mobilized in service of “fidelity.”

These polyvalent forms of translation are brought into dialogue with multiple definitions of censorship, starting with a “localizable” instance in Chapter Two: the fascist censor’s partial suppression of the serialized version of Vittorini’s *Garofano* in 1934. Vittorini’s relationship to censorship is immediately complicated, however, by his purported subsequent self-censorship of the novel version of *Garofano* as well as *Conversazione*’s famous—and now contested—status as censored (Bonsaver “Vittorini”). An integral part of the chapter examines how critics’ perception of these instances of censorship subsequently has influenced interpretations, not just of the novels, but of Vittorini’s politics in general. In Chapter Three, as I consider the partially overlapping manuscripts known as *Partigiano Johnny*, the question of self-censorship bleeds into problems of the archive, insofar as critics are left to speculate as to the reason why these manuscripts are incomplete—whether abandoned or destroyed by the author or a subsequent custodian. In Chapter Four, I look at another “localizable” instance of censorship: the United States version of *The Skin*, which had phrases, sentences and entire paragraphs removed in translation.<sup>59</sup>

Here, a word about how I read different versions of the same text, whether the earlier “censored” *Garofano rosso* and the later “self-censored” version, the multiple manuscripts of *Partigiano Johnny*, or *The Skin* and *La pelle*. In contrast to a philological approach, which seeks to “identify specific textual elisions and imposed alterations in the hope of eventually restoring a work to its original, uncensored [or untranslated] form” (Levine 2), I base my reading practice on the deconstruction of the original/derivative hierarchy and thus do not subordinate a censored—or translated—text to an integral original but instead, put them in dialogue with one another, and with the criticism.<sup>60</sup> In fact, when, in Chapter Four, I look at a heavily censored scene in *The Skin*, the moment when the “virgin” is being penetrated by a group of Italian soldiers, I show that

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<sup>58</sup> According to the translation practice theorized by George Steiner, “Only through a courtship that starts with “trust” and leads to “penetration” can a translator transcend “sterility” and achieve “embodiment” and “restitution” (319). For a critique of Steiner’s penetration metaphor, see Chamberlain 320-322.

<sup>59</sup> The British version of *The Skin*, which I do not discuss at length, also had phrases and sentences removed, as well as an entire chapter, “Il figlio di Adamo” [“The Son of Adam”], which represents a homosexual, communist birthing-ritual-turned-orgy.

<sup>60</sup> As Gentzler puts it, “Derrida adds that translation behaves like a ‘child’ which is not just a ‘product’ subject to the law of ‘reproduction,’ but has, in addition, ‘the power to speak on its own in a new and different fashion’” (*Ear* 191 as cited in *Theories* 166).

what was censored in translation is, in effect, already censored from the original: for to read the critical accounts of the scene, there is no mention of the penetration, and, in some cases, no reference to the soldier who penetrates the girl.

As I describe these instances of censorship, it may be apparent that in each one, scholars hold a prominent position—arguably more so than censors. In defining the censor during the fascist era, Ben-Ghiat speaks to the role of critics, calling them “the final class of authorities who shaped the institution of literature under the dictatorship” (48). Extending the historical parameters of her definition, my dissertation insists on analyzing how literary critics continue to guide readers towards predetermined textual interpretations, as they shape the bodies of fascist and antifascist literature. To this end, in Chapter Four, cultural censorship becomes central to my reading of *La pelle*, a text that, after generating a significant scandal, was pushed to the margins of scholarly attention, because—as Malaparte scholars are eager to assert—of the author’s numerous, high-profile political transformations. However, I contend that scholarly efforts to reinstate *La pelle* in the postwar literary canon actually have worked to produce reductive readings that insist the text be read allegorically to the exclusion of any historical relevance. Effectively, I argue that in attempting to “uncensor” *La pelle*, scholars have produced their own, perhaps even more inexorable, “censorship mechanism,” as Felman describes. And, continuing along the lines of Felman’s argument, representations of the female body are one of this mechanism’s primary targets. Felman writes:

An ideological conditioning of literary and critical discourse, a political orientation of reading, thus affirms itself, not so much through the negative treatment of women as through their total neglect, their pure and simple omission. This critical oversight, which appears as a systematic blindness to significant facts, functions as a censorship mechanism, as a symbolic eradication of women from the world of literature. It is therefore essential to examine the theoretical presuppositions that permit and sanction this kind of blindness (29).

When, after having read the novels, I turned to the criticism, I was repeatedly struck by this phenomenon that Felman so eloquently describes in relation to scholarship on 19<sup>th</sup>-century French literature. For instance, in criticism on Vittorini’s novels, the most unanimously disregarded sections of *Garofano* are those with the prostitute, Zobeida, and *Conversazione* is generally lauded, except for the sexually charged middle section, which is categorized as a “spiritual digression” for the protagonist (Bonsaver *Vittorini* 96). In *Partigiano*, the plots involving the female partisans are dismissed as “digressions” even by scholars whose specific task is to address the topic of women in Beppe Fenoglio’s narrative (Soletti 63).<sup>61</sup> However, far from a secondary concern, the sexual is very much intertwined with the political, often, antagonistically: in Vittorini’s novels, Alessio’s political success is threatened by Zobeida, and Silvestro cannot obtain political awakening until he escapes his mother (who is trying to pique his attraction to the local women); in *Partigiano*, becoming a partisan is synonymous with becoming a man, but Johnny is waylaid by Dea, a female partisan who challenges his sense of

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<sup>61</sup> Here, then, throughout the dissertation when I refer to the censorship of the critics, most basically I refer to this consistently selective reading which either ignores or minimalizes key elements of the texts. This, however, is not solely repressive; indeed, one obvious productive dimension of these omissions and marginalizations is the way in which they helped guide my own analyses, leading me to ask what would be unsettled if what had been omitted, were to be interpreted.

identity.<sup>62</sup> Finally, in my reading of Malaparte's *La pelle*, I extend the scope of Felman's "censorship mechanism" as I note that not only are the bodies of women called upon to represent the war metaphorically, but so too are the bodies of colonial soldiers, who threaten interracial commingling. Here, then, the politics of the text cannot be reduced to the fascist/antifascist binary. Instead, by stepping away from it, it becomes possible to explore how marginalized figures are called on in these narratives in order to negotiate boundaries of identity—Italian/foreign, male/female, white/black—thrown into crisis during this historical moment.

As I give space to these often marginalized characters and plotlines, it is important to recognize that there are ways in which both text and critic, paradoxically, not only sideline but concomitantly foreground these "obstacles" by recuperating their bodies metaphorically, showing that, once again, what seems to be censorship in its simple, repressive form offers productive interpretive possibilities: Alessio abandons Zobeida, but the novel ends with a stain of blood representing the deflowering of his idealized woman; Silvestro "escapes" his mother, only to confront the statue of a woman; Johnny must eschew sexual intimacy in order to become a partisan, but is described in relation to the landscape in sexualized terms—penetrating a river, observing the violated countryside, traversing the menstruating land; after witnessing scenes of sexual degradation and mutilation in *La pelle*, Captain Malaparte tells his companions these bodies are simply symbols of war, yet oblique references to an historical mass rape surface nonetheless.<sup>63</sup>

In a similar fashion, by way of return to the rhetoric of censorship and translation, I note that if critics also marginalize these bodies, they, too, recuperate them metalinguistically. As they do so, they employ the conventional, oppositional definition of censorship and translation, which positions censorship as the problem and translation, the solution. This tendency is most apparent in Chapter Two, where the censorship of *Garofano rosso* is represented as castration and rape: Lorenzo Greco refers to the censor's bite and his scissors (106), Vittorini describes his novel as mutilated (*Garofano* 313), and Raffaella Rodondi, amputated (37, 39) and mutilated (20). Philologist Maria Corti's descriptor for *Garofano*, violated (xlix), speaks directly to a claim made by Stephanie Jed: in studying "the preference of modern historians and philologists for obviously contaminated texts" (34), Jed highlights the relevance of the metaphorical use of the lexicon of rape by philologists, starting from Livy's narrative of the rape of Lucretia. Jed writes, "Philologists known for their *integritas* were opposed to the ones who 'violate good books.' An 'integral' reading was designated as an 'unviolated' one" (30). What makes Jed's observations so relevant to *Garofano* is that the novel ends with two allusions to chastity—one preserved through suicide, and the other, lost—overlooked by critics in favor of interpretations of how the novel and its censorship speaks to Vittorini's politics. Thus, I show how sexual plots are tacitly ignored in favor of a more straightforward narrative for the author (one with its own sexual overtones): as philologists narrativize *Garofano*'s "violation," they work to restore its integrity by using it to prove Vittorini's latent antifascism, which eventually leads them to the "outstanding climax" of

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<sup>62</sup> My understanding of the structural position of woman as narrative obstacle comes from Teresa de Lauretis' "Desire in Narrative" from *Alice Doesn't*. Using the work of Vladimir Propp and Jurij Lotman, de Lauretis shows how morphologically, if all narrative can be reduced to two functions—entry into and exit out of a closed space—the journeying hero (who "penetrates" the space) is always male, and the obstacle he encounters is always female. Thus she argues that sexual difference is at the heart of narrative distinction, which means that "he [the male] is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter" (119).

<sup>63</sup> My understanding of this paradoxical logic has been shaped by Chapter Three of Spackman's *Fascist Virilities*, which in turn takes up Alice Kaplan's *Reproductions of Banality*. See also Chapter Three.

his *Conversazione* (Bonsaver *Vittorini* 50)—“a translator’s novel” (Mason xii) whose textual climax is a representation of translation. However, as I mentioned above, this trajectory from censorship to translation, from *Garofano* to *Conversazione* obscures the ways in which these terms and texts are very much in dialogue.

I remain within Jed’s rhetorical family as my focus in Chapter Three shifts from an explicit act of fascist censorship to a case of textual “contamination,” in regards to the incomplete, posthumously published manuscripts known singularly as *Partigiano Johnny*. In working to undo the archival “contamination” of these texts and restore the narrative to its “integral” state, philologists seek to tell the “complete” story of the *Resistenza* and of Fenoglio, and, in so doing, I claim they paradoxically suppress textual “incompatibilities,” which testify to the trauma of writing the *Resistenza*.<sup>64</sup> If translation conventionally has been understood by scholars to have facilitated Vittorini’s antifascist conversion, it also has been given a key role in *Partigiano*’s textual conversion: Corti dates the “contaminated” manuscripts according to her sense of Fenoglio’s process of translation. Asserting that Fenoglio wrote *Partigiano* in English before self-translating into Italian, Corti orders the manuscripts according to the degree of English they contain. Nevertheless, I claim that this English-to-Italian trajectory obscures the understanding of translation represented within the individual manuscripts and between the purportedly “translated” versions: for during a civil war also fought by foreigners, translation is a highly charged, political act, not a simple transfer between two fixed points.

Finally, in Chapter Four, my analysis begins from critical efforts to undo the cultural censorship surrounding *La pelle*, an operation performed through perhaps the central term in translation’s lexicon—fidelity: insofar as the novel has been marginalized due to its author’s so-called betrayals, both political and literary, Malaparte’s proponents advocate his fidelity in life and in art. Rather than make claims about the veracity of author’s political transformations or of his literary creation, I analyze two scenes in *La pelle* in which the verification of fidelity—what I call an intercultural “translation”—is represented through the use of racialized, sexualized bodies which are converted by the narrator and the critics into metaphors for war and for art and, thus, stripped of historical significance. By showing how the text itself insists that these figures be read both literally and metatextually, I show that these “translations” allow *La pelle* to be repositioned within a historical context while demonstrating the way in which the text critiques its own structuring logic.

By considering censorship and translation across a spectrum of definitions, in each case study this dissertation aims to show how they facilitate a cross-contamination of these “conversions,” which ultimately points to their shared preoccupation with negotiating boundaries—political, certainly, but also racial, gender and linguistic—and their shared ambivalent relationship to the conversion narrative structure, which requires such boundaries in order to operate. If my dissertation argues that censorship, translation and fascism can be termed “mysterious objects that flee capture,” it is paired with the intent to demonstrate that it is precisely their polyvalence that allows them to speak to and through one another, offering new insights into the narrativization of all three. Ultimately, while stepping away from the conventional categorization of fascist/antifascist literature, the following case studies locate a textual politics that centers around an ambivalent drive to narrate the rise or fall of fascism as a conversion narrative and a refusal to do so (an absence of the moment of “radical discontinuity”),

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<sup>64</sup> For *Partigiano*’s “contamination” see Isella xi and Caffi 6639. Corti refers to it as “uno stupefacente ibrido testuale” [“a stupefying textual hybrid”] created by its editor, Mondo (*Nuovi* 17).

thus showing how these attempts at narrating political conversion are underwritten and undermined by other categories of identity, including language, gender and race.

## Chapter Two.

### Elio Vittorini: Emblems of Conversion

#### 2.1 Narrating the Break: Turning Away from Fascism and Towards Literature

In 1934, a young fascist intellectual named Elio Vittorini learned that Mussolini's censors had blocked the publication of the sixth episode of his serialized novel *Garofano rosso* in the magazine *Solaria*, sequestering all copies.<sup>65</sup> Breaking the news, Vittorini's editor, Alberto Carrocci, wrote to urge him to complete the final installments but with less provocative language, telling him, "Ormai sei ufficialmente riconosciuto per un pornografo" (*LS* 524) ["By now you are officially recognized as a pornographer"].<sup>66</sup> The text's travails continued, however: a Prefect's decree announced a partial censorship of the seventh installment for its use of "espressioni licenziose" (*Solaria* n.3) ["licentious expressions"], leaving about a tenth of the story covered by rows of dots. Although Vittorini got the eighth and final installment into print, when he tried to republish it as a novel—even after 'rewriting' the licentious parts, "in modo che non dessero più 'noia' alla censura" (*Garofano* 313) ["so that they would no longer 'bother' the censor"]—he was repeatedly denied permission until the Press Office of the Ministry of Popular Culture made an official refusal in 1938.<sup>67</sup>

In 1948, in the preface to the first book edition of *Garofano*, a middle-aged, communist intellectual, also named Elio Vittorini, recounted this conflict with a rather different bent. Looking back at the censorship of his fascist *bildungsroman* after Mussolini's fall, Vittorini cast himself not as a pornographer but as a dissident, citing the incident as proof of his latent antifascism. Instead of the sixth episode—which recounts the protagonist's sexual exploits with a prostitute—he claimed it was the heavily political third episode that had been censored and that, furthermore, all subsequent episodes were published "profondamente mutilate dalla censura preventiva di un funzionario fiorentino" (*Garofano* 313) ["profoundly mutilated by the preemptive censorship of a Florentine functionary"]. As he told it, *Garofano* contained the seeds of his political conversion to antifascism, which took place roughly in 1936, with Mussolini's intervention in the Spanish Civil war (Bonsaver "Fascism" 174). And, at the same time, the encounter with the censor served to preface his literary transformation: at the moment he had to "ritocca[rlo]" ["retouch it"] for the censor (317), his first book was no longer his:

Il mio successivo sviluppo di persona umana e di scrittore può averlo reso inutile, in tal senso. I miei libri successivi possono aver annullato con il loro risultato, tutto quello che il *Garofano* rappresenta come 'mio' libro, 'mia' ricerca della verità, e 'mia' realizzazione letteraria (336)

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<sup>65</sup> Guido Bonsaver contextualizes this episode in terms of the larger censorial trends of the Fascist regime, noting that the sequestering of *Solaria* "took place in the months following Mussolini's circular of April 1934 which had imposed a much stricter regime on book censorship" ("Fascist" 172). I will later have occasion to critique Bonsaver's reading practice; however, his historical accounts of Vittorini's career seem to be quite balanced and, as the most thorough to date in English, I will refer to them frequently throughout the footnotes.

<sup>66</sup> All translations mine, except where noted.

<sup>67</sup> The notes in the *Meridiani Opere Narrative* volume provide an extensive account of the publication of *Garofano*.

[My ensuing development as a human being and as a writer may have rendered it useless, in that sense. What my following books produced may have erased everything that *Carnation* represents as ‘my’ book, ‘my’ pursuit of truth, and ‘my’ literary realization].

However, he had replaced it with a “vero e buono libro” (333) [“true and good book”]—*Conversazione in Sicilia* (1938) [*Conversations in Sicily* (2000)]—a book that was truly ‘his’ (314). With *Garofano* relegated to his distant past, Vittorini allowed it to be salvaged from ‘uselessness’ insofar as it marked his own literary beginning: “Uno è aiutato, fortunatamente, dall’idea che forse riuscirà a fare un libro che sia *Garofano*, da una parte, come volontà di costruzione, e più o meno *Conversazione*, da un’altra, come risultato” (334) [“One is helped, fortunately, by the idea that on the one hand, one can perhaps manage to write a book that is *Carnation*, in terms of a desire for the process, and on the other hand, more or less, *Conversation*, as a result”]. Here, as we will see throughout the chapter, Vittorini plots a double path, making *Garofano* also serve as a record of Italy’s historical past: “Il principale valore documentario del libro è tuttavia nel contributo che può dare a una storia dell’Italia sotto il fascismo” (340) [“The primary documentary value of the book is still in the contribution that it can give to a history of Italy under fascism”].

For the rest of his career, Vittorini developed this narrative, distancing himself from his literary and political past, and embracing *Conversazione* as his true work: “di tutta la propria produzione lo spietato Vittorini dell’ultimo periodo salverà solo *Conversazione*” (Rodondi “Note” 1208) [“of all his works, the pitiless Vittorini in his final years would save only *Conversation*”].<sup>68</sup> After his death, this autobiographical narrative continued to be perpetuated, as his position in the canon was secured.<sup>69</sup> Having spent forty years in the public eye, as a novelist, editor, and translator, Vittorini ‘rightfully’ took his place in an elite minority of intellectuals who—according to Sergio Pautasso—could be considered, “un emblema, quasi, della storia della letteratura stessa” (“Ricerca” 223) [“an emblem, almost, of the history of literature itself”].<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> In 1957, when he published his retrospective *Diario in pubblico*, “Vittorini consistently underplayed his public support for the fascist regime by selecting only passages indirectly suggesting some form of cultural opposition, leaving out the scores of articles for *Il Bargello* in which he openly manifested his pro-fascist sentiments in the years preceding the Spanish Civil war. Various scholars have argued, however, that the apparent cohesive and consistent development of Vittorini’s ideas in *Diario in pubblico* is rather the result of an artificial and debatable selection process than a truthful and genuine picture of the situation. This distortion is particularly misleading with regard to the pre-war years” (Bonsaver *Vittorini* 129-30). See also De Nicola *Vittorini* 5-6 and Burns.

<sup>69</sup> In 1974, he achieved what Felice Rappazzo calls an “assunzione...fra i classici del nostro Novecento” [“assumption among the classics of our Twentieth Century”]—the publication of his narrative works in “I Meridiani.”

<sup>70</sup> Anna Panicali’s *Elio Vittorini: La narrativa, la saggistica, le traduzioni, le riviste, l’attività editoriale* contains a bibliography of Vittorini’s works, broken down by type. Bonsaver’s *Elio Vittorini: The Writer and The Written* has an extensive list of cited works, broken down by year. The Mondadori *Opere Narrative* excludes narrative works from the final bibliography, but gives extensive notes, text by text, in a dedicated section discussing the publication history of each. Gian Carlo Ferretti has worked on Vittorini’s career as an editor in *L’editore Vittorini*, as has Panicali. In *Il presente vince sempre*, Rodondi’s thirty-five page bibliography covers only previously unpublished articles, and she has since published a journalism anthology entitled *Letteratura, Arte e Società*. As for Vittorini’s translations, Bonsaver summarizes, “Between 1933 and 1941, Vittorini translated fifteen novels, seven collections of short stories and one travel book, by either English or American authors” (*Vittorini* 74). Prominent authors translated include D.H. Lawrence, Edgar Allen Poe, William Faulkner, Daniel De Foe, John Steinbeck and William Shakespeare. See also Bonsaver’s “Vittorini’s ‘American Translations,’” Dunnett’s “Foreign Literature” and Valerio Ferme’s *Tradurre è tradire* for more related bibliographic information.



And, to state what, by now, goes without saying, *Conversazione*—“Vittorini’s most famous and widely influential experimental novel” (de Lauretis “Review” 220)—remained the centerpiece of that reputation, effectively *erasing Garofano*.<sup>71</sup>

Among the features shared between Vittorini’s own accounts of his literary production and the critics’ is the rhetoric of conversion, best encapsulated by Oreste Macri: “È con la *Conversazione* che s’inizia un uomo nuovo e la sua nuova prosa” (345-6) [“It is with *Conversations* that the new man and his new prose begins”]. In his introduction to an Italian version annotated in English, Italian, Robert Powell describes the book as “a *turning point* politically and poetically for those readers who were able to recognize, beneath the allusive style, the prophetic nature of Vittorini’s declaration” (3 emphasis mine). In the *Cambridge History of Italian Literature*, Robert Dombroski argues that Vittorini “signposts the route from the writing of the Fascist period... towards a recognizably post-modern stance” (543), and that *Conversazione*, “Vittorini’s most important novel, marks a sharp turn away from the naturalist-inspired realism of the writer’s first two books, as well as from the dominant fictional trends of the time” (526 emphasis mine). And in a prominent Italian anthology, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Giulio Ferroni explains that *Conversazione* was written “dopo la più acuta rottura con il fascismo” (397 emphasis mine) [“after the most acute break with fascism”].

If a brief selection of the criticism above has shown Vittorini’s literary conversion to be clear-cut, the political conversion is murkier. Recently, Jane Dunnnett has asserted the difficulty of dating Vittorini’s “conversion from Fascism to anti-Fascism with any precision” (“Vittorini” 118n.19). And Bonsaver reveals himself split over this issue, as he describes Vittorini’s “political commitment” as a “curve,” “moving from enthusiastic enlistment to the Fascist cause to the years of doubt, disillusion and eventually open reaction before the collapse of the regime” (“Fascism” 166), only to later locate within this curve a geometrically illogical but narratively useful “turning point” (“Fascism” 174). A reason for this difficulty may be found by Felice Rappazzo, who describes the striking importance Alberto Asor Rosa’s *Scrittori e popolo* has had on Vittorini scholarship. In his 1968 study, Asor Rosa called Vittorini “il massimo protagonista della ricerca letteraria antifascista” [“the greatest protagonist of the antifascist literary project”] and crowned *Conversazione*, “il libro in un certo senso più tipico di questo fenomeno di formazione di un’ideologia” [“the book in a certain sense most typical of this phenomenon of an ideological formation”] (144).<sup>72</sup> Yet if *Scrittori e popolo* raised up Vittorini and *Conversazione* for their exemplary antifascism, there was a distinctive downside. As Rappazzo recounts:

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<sup>71</sup> As Bonsaver notes, “[Vittorini’s] own preference for this work has been widely shared among scholars and among the reading public to the point that, to students of Italian literature, *Conversazione in Sicilia* is the traditional starting point in their discovery of Vittorini’s work. It is also the novel that gained Vittorini an international reputation in the early postwar years, since it was translated into all the major European languages, and promoted in Britain and in the USA by the laudatory preface of, respectively, Stephen Spender and Ernest Hemingway” (*Vittorini* 81). Valerio Volpini calls it, “il libro più importante e artisticamente raggiunto” (130) [“the most important and artistically successful book”]. Giovanni Getto describes it as a “capolavoro” (653) [“masterpiece”]. Giorgio Barberi Squarotti considers it “il maggiore romanzo dello scrittore siciliano” (*Narrativa* 29) [“the best novel of the Sicilian writer”]. As Panicali summarizes, *Conversazione* is “considerata dalla critica il capolavoro di Vittorini” (154) [“considered by the critics Vittorini’s masterpiece”]. Rappazzo is less superlative, “Il romanzo, certamente il più noto di Vittorini ed il suo punto più alto, rimane un classico del nostro Novecento: sia pure un ‘piccolo’ classico” (29) [“The book, certainly the most notable of Vittorini’s and his highest achievement, remains a classic of our Twentieth Century, albeit a ‘minor’ classic”].

<sup>72</sup> De Nicola notes that in 1949 Italo Calvino called *Conversazione*, “primo e insuperato testo della letteratura della Resistenza” (*Vittorini* 72) [“the first and insuperable text of Resistance literature”].

Asor Rosa rileva (ed è probabilmente il primo a farlo) che lo scrittore, così come Bilenchi, Pratolini e altri, gioca su un piano di sostanziale continuità ideologica il fascismo e l'antifascismo: 'l'analisi del fascismo di questi scrittori non può servire soltanto ad affermare che già da allora essi erano antifascisti *in pectore*; ma deve servire anche a dimostrare che il loro antifascismo di poi non fu senza rapporti con il loro fascismo di prima' (104)' (120-1)

[Asor Rosa points out (and he is probably the first to do so) that the writer, just like Bilenchi, Pratolini and others, 'plays' fascism and antifascism at a level of a fundamental ideological continuity: 'the analysis of the fascism of these writers cannot only serve to affirm that they were already antifascists *at heart*; but it must also serve to demonstrate that their subsequent antifascism was not without a connection to their former fascism'].

By collapsing the 'after' and the 'before,' Vittorini's antifascism and his fascism, a political conversion becomes narratively impossible. Thus, if the political conversion is contaminated and the literary conversion, clear-cut—resulting in the 'pure' *Conversazione*—we should scrutinize their elision in the criticism.<sup>73</sup> Even in an analysis as early as 1968, Gian Carlo Ferretti says that the view of *Conversazione* as “uno dei più emblematici punti di ‘rottura’ ideale, culturale e letteraria degli anni trenta-quaranta” (“*Garofano*” 232) [“one of the most emblematic points of an ideal cultural and literary ‘break’ of the 1930s-40s”] had already become a critical commonplace.<sup>74</sup> And although the *political* conversion ostensibly “prefaces” the *literary*, it is the latter that has been read in place of the former. Valerio Ferme, relying, in part, on Ettore Catalano's *La forma della coscienza*, describes *Conversazione* as “il simbolo della svolta dell'autore dall'infatuazione fascista alla rivolta contro il regime” (144n.2) [“the symbol of the turning point of the author from the fascist infatuation to his revolt against the regime”]. Leaving behind Vittorini's support of the Ethiopian invasion, he explicitly links Vittorini's disillusionment with Mussolini's intervention in the Spanish Civil War to his writing of *Conversazione*, “la narrazione allegorica e sovversiva di *Conversazione in Sicilia*” (159) [“the allegorical and subversive narrative of *Conversation in Sicily*”].<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Macrì describes *Conversazione* as “il più puro” (345) [“the most pure”] of Vittorini's books.

<sup>74</sup> Ferretti is one of few who finds continuity in the two novels but, much like Vittorini's preface, keeps the question framed in terms of a growing “maturity”: “la ‘rottura’ è già presente nel *Garofano rosso*, sia pure in forme più coperte e confuse, e che *Conversazione in Sicilia* non soltanto ne matura e ne porta in piena evidenza i motivi di fondo, oltre naturalmente ad ampliarla ed approfondirla in varie direzioni, ma rappresenta al tempo stesso un'indicazione di superamento e di prospettiva nuova” (“*Garofano*” 232) [“the ‘break’ is already present in *Red Carnation*, albeit in more covered and confused forms, and which *Conversation in Sicily* not only matures and brings into the foreground, in addition naturally to amplifying it and deepening it in various directions, but at the same time it represents an indication of an overcoming and of a new perspective”]. In his relationship between the fascist and the antifascist text, the latter redeems the former: “La presa di coscienza della vera natura del fascismo, perciò, che maturerà con la guerra di spagna e con *Conversazione in Sicilia*, doveva aver influenzato in qualche modo anche *Il garofano rosso*” (232-3) [“his gaining awareness of the true nature of fascism, however, that will mature with the war in Spain and with *Conversation in Sicily* must have also influenced in some way *Garofano rosso*”].

<sup>75</sup> Powell's formulation goes further, describing the book as “a sort of prologue to the intense activity of the war years,” and effectively, a catalyst for the Resistance. Powell continues, “The time for direct political action came shortly afterwards in the form of the Resistance, but in 1938, when the book first became available to the public, and even in 1941, which saw the first volume editions, more than anything else, there needed to be transmitted the

Certainly, *Conversazione*'s emblematic status has not completely obscured other facets of Vittorini's life and works. With historical distance, scholars have turned a more critical eye towards him, challenging some of his autobiographical claims, as they minimize the extent of his conflict with the fascists, both in terms of further encounters with censorship and time spent in jail.<sup>76</sup> Rappazzo has noticed a lessening in the intensity of the debate in Italian criticism (145); however, in Anglophone studies by Bonsaver, Ruth Ben-Ghiat, Dunnett and Ferme, Vittorini continues to be the centerpiece of efforts to better understand the intellectual trends of the fascist period.<sup>77</sup> As Bonsaver writes,

During the years of the fascist regime, his shift from enthusiastic support for Mussolini's fascist 'revolution,' to disillusionment as a result of the Spanish Civil War and finally to active anti-fascism during the war years, is symbolic of – and to some degree influenced – the choices of an entire generation of young intellectuals (*Vittorini* 1).

At the start of my own analysis of the journeys that converge around—and indeed, create—a single author, I gesture towards the larger implications of his story, as Vittorini—"the greatest protagonist of the antifascist literary project"—has been made to speak for an "entire generation," and to symbolize "the history of literature itself." For this reason, it becomes all the more crucial to examine the way his emblematic conversion has been plotted, what it produces and what it restricts, its blind-spots and its constitutive violences.

Vittorini's emblematic status puts an analysis of his "long voyage" beyond the scope of this chapter.<sup>78</sup> Still, that status is very much at issue to the topic at hand: censorship, translation and fascism. It is no coincidence that Bonsaver, author of the only comprehensive Anglophone monograph on literary censorship and fascism in Italy, found his way to the topic through his work on Vittorini (*Censorship* 4). And as Dunnett gives an overview of regime censorship, her sole example of books "frequently confiscated on the grounds that they contained pornographic

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urgency for united action, and to prepare the way there needed to be generally a new awareness of the human condition" (7).

<sup>76</sup> As Rodondi points out, by claiming in the preface that it was the third rather than the sixth episode of *Garofano* that had been censored, Vittorini gained two obvious advantages: the heavy political content of the third episode, versus the erotic content of the sixth, made the censorship seem political in intent. In addition, by claiming that all subsequent episodes were censored, he was able to distance himself from them as they were "viziate dall'opera della censura preventiva" (17-8) ["spoiled by the work of preemptive censorship"]. Bonsaver corrects the myth that *Solaria* was closed as a direct result of the *Garofano* episode: "*Solaria* continued for another two issues, after which it closed down. The financial pressure under which the journal had been struggling for years, coupled with the delays created by the interference of the censors, proved too much. Postwar critics have often portrayed this episode as an example of the Fascists' suppression of Anti-fascist culture. On the basis of the available documentary evidence, it is difficult to support this view" ("Fascist" 173).

<sup>77</sup> Although Ferme writes in Italian, his formation was at Brown University, Indiana University and the University of California, Berkeley. More to the point, his engagement with translation studies from a cultural studies perspective is in keeping with a North American approach.

<sup>78</sup> Bibliographies on Vittorini criticism are numerous. In addition to the ones mentioned above, Rappazzo's *Vittorini: la scrittura e l'interpretazione* (1996) is useful as it provides an overview of the various trends and excerpts, as well as a critical bibliography usefully broken down by subject, but nearly illegible for its paragraph form. De Nicola's *Introduzione a Vittorini* (1993), also from the mid-nineties, has a somewhat reduced—but by no means brief—bibliography. There is relatively little in-depth work on Vittorini in English; two Anglophone monographs now exist: Bonsaver's *Vittorini* (2000), preceded by J.H. Potter's *Elio Vittorini* (1979). See also Dunnett and Ben-Ghiat.

material,” is *Garofano* (“Foreign Literature” 103n.18).<sup>79</sup> Vittorini also holds a prominent place in scholarship on translation and fascism, specifically, the censorship of translation under fascism.<sup>80</sup> This, in large part, is due to his role as editor of the censored anthology of North American literature, *Americana*—“questa antologia ormai leggendaria per il suo valore emblematico” (Pautasso “Appendice” 1051) [“this anthology by now legendary for its emblematic value”].<sup>81</sup> In her reexamination of the *mito americano* [“myth of America”],<sup>82</sup> Dunnett calls the *Americana* episode “almost certainly the best-known episode of literary censorship under Fascism” (“Foreign Literature” 115-6) and the “climax” of this “highly productive period” (“Anti-Fascism” 109). Vittorini is also a central figure in Ferme’s *Tradurre è tradire*, as his development as a writer, translator and literary critic is described as “emblematica dell’evoluzione e dei cambiamenti traumatici che la cultura e la politica del Fascismo provocò in molti dei suoi seguaci nei circoli intellettuali” (144) [“emblematic of the evolution and of the traumatic changes that the culture and policies of Fascism provoked in many of its followers in intellectual circles”].

If being “un riferimento obbligato” (Pautasso “Ricerca” 223) [“an obligatory point of reference”] in the scholarship of censorship and translation—or indeed, the history of literature—has meant a proliferation of studies, it does not necessarily mean that production has been varied; and here, as we note the recurrence of the word “emblem,” I sustain that precisely the opposite is the case. Recent studies have called attention to—and complicated—the phenomenon of Vittorini-as-emblem, particularly in relation to censorship on the one hand, and translation, on the other. For instance, the notion that *Conversazione in Sicilia* was aggressively and immediately censored by the Regime, has been redressed by Bonsaver.<sup>83</sup> And the direct correlation between translation and antifascism, built on a belief that Vittorini “translated extensively in the 1930s and 40s when, because of his opposition to Fascism, he was not allowed to publish his original works” (Bellesia 257),<sup>84</sup> has been critiqued by Dunnett: “Their promotion

<sup>79</sup> Vittorini is also a recurrent figure in Ben-Ghiat’s *Fascist Modernities*, in terms of his relationship to censorship and self-censorship, and in her discussion of translation and fascism (51-53).

<sup>80</sup> Bonsaver has done more extensive analyses of Vittorini’s translations, specifically in his article “Vittorini’s ‘American Translations’: Parallels, Borrowings, and Betrayals.”

<sup>81</sup> In 1940, the Minister of Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini refused to allow the already-printed volume to be distributed, on the grounds that “‘*Gli Stati Uniti sono potenzialmente nostri nemici*’ [“The United States are potentially our enemy”] (Dunnett “Foreign Literature” 116). The book was eventually published in 1942, but only after Vittorini’s more positive introductory material was replaced by one written by Emilio Cecchi, “which cast American society in a less-than-favourable light” (Dunnett 117). The book had phenomenal success, and a year later, when Pavolini was replaced with the “stricter” Gaetano Polverelli, the volume was sequestered. Dunnett writes, “the book continued to be read clandestinely since anti-Fascists were keen to lay their hands on it, despite the risk of confiscation” (118). In this article, Dunnett also concentrates on translations of the novels of John Steinbeck and analyzes Vittorini’s translation of *Tortilla Flat* (105-108), Montale’s translation of *In Dubious Battle* and Carlo Coardi’s translation of *The Grapes of Wrath*. See also her article “Antifascism.”

<sup>82</sup> Dunnett explains the term: “the expression *mito americano* (or *mito dell’America*) is generally used to refer to the intense interest in the United States that was manifested by a small number of Italian intellectuals between the wars and is “invariably linked with the names of Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini” (“Anti-fascism” 109).

<sup>83</sup> “Vittorini’s most famous novel, *Conversazione in Sicilia*, has constantly been discussed as an example of an Anti-fascist work of fiction which challenged and suffered the wrath of the Fascist regime. The details of the censoring of this book, however, have never been documented in any of the many monographs on Vittorini. A closer look at the archival material reveals a complex situation rather than a straightforward case of censorship. Indeed, there is no proof that the book was ever censored or its circulation ever banned by the Fascist authorities (Bonsaver “Fascist”177).

<sup>84</sup> Obviously, Vittorini was allowed to publish his ‘original’ works in the 30s and 40s, among them, *Garofano* and *Conversazione*. Furthermore, “up until 1942 *Conversazione in Sicilia* received favorable reviews also among the

of American literature during that period has tended to be regarded as a form of literary anti-Fascism, a covert action taken subtly to subvert a regime hostile to foreign influences. This standard view of the *mito americano* is one that is both restrictive and inaccurate” (“Antifascism” 109).<sup>85</sup> Although Dunnett offers no textual analysis of the literary works in question, her formulation about the “legendary” status of the censorship of *Americana* speaks directly to my aims in this project:

The example of *Americana* highlights the way in which commentators have tended to extrapolate from one specific instance of censorship general principles which have then applied retrospectively to the *ventennio*, thereby constructing a monolithic model of the cultural policies and practices that supposedly characterized an entire era (“Antifascism” 116).

Indeed, I argue that as “certamente uno dei maggiori protagonisti delle vicende culturali italiani nei decenni centrali del Novecento” (De Nicola *Vittorini* 3) [“certainly one of the most prominent protagonists of the cultural events in Italy, during the central decades of the twentieth century”], Vittorini has been used as a “monolithic model” for an understanding of censorship and translation under fascism, whereby correlations between censorship and fascism on the one hand, and translation and antifascism on the other are taken for granted. As archival research confirms, censorship was a necessary part of the fascist program; but censorship is not *inherently* fascist (and, by extension, all texts censored by the fascists are not, *de facto*, antifascist).<sup>86</sup> Similarly, translation was touted as a form of antifascist resistance, but translation is not *inherently* antifascist. To wit, while translating North American literature, Vittorini acted as a censor, a practice he continued while editing partisan literature for Einaudi.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, Vittorini’s own translations exhibited the same xenophobic and imperialistic tendencies central to Mussolini’s agenda. Not only did he censor portions of texts that—in his estimation—negatively portrayed Italy,<sup>88</sup> his translation practice was also exploitive, as it was dependent on

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fascist press” (Bonsaver *Vittorini* 83). Bonsaver and Dunnett both underline the economic motive behind Vittorini’s decision to translate: “The main reason for his initial involvement was his dire economic situation rather than a desire to promote contemporary foreign literature” (“Vittorini’s” Bonsaver 70). “The translation activity on which he embarked in the early 1930s, and pursued throughout the decade, has been consistently interpreted as a means of challenging official ideology. Such an interpretation undoubtedly represents a misreading of the (strictly economic) circumstances that led Vittorini to take up translating in the first place” (“Antifascism” 112).

<sup>85</sup> Dunnett argues, “one fundamental point or common assumption: that the translation and publication of American literature under Fascism was politically inspired, reflecting opposition to the Fascist state and the ideological *status quo*. There is, however, scant evidence to support this notion that ‘American books were the antithesis of official Fascist culture,’ at least until the outbreak of the Second World War” (“Antifascism” 112).

<sup>86</sup> Michael Holquist eloquently speaks to this issue: “Despite Freud’s stoic assertions that censorship is unforgoable, all too often it is still treated through a crude axiology, as an absolute choice between prohibition and freedom. This position denies the reality of interdiction and masks the necessity of choosing between the myriad specific conditions that embody censorship’s fatedness. To be for or against censorship as such is to assume a freedom no one has. Censorship *is*. One can only discriminate among its more and less repressive effects” (16).

<sup>87</sup> In Chapters One and Three I address Vittorini’s heavy hand in guiding Fenoglio’s early career.

<sup>88</sup> Among his censored translations were his first translation, D.H. Lawrence’s *St. Mawr* and Steinbeck’s *Tortilla Flat* as Bonsaver recounts (“Fascism” 175), (“Vittorini’s American Translations” 69) and (*Vittorini* 147). Bonsaver comments, “Regional pride may have had a part in this as Vittorini omitted to translate some passages containing the scene of the drunken protagonist shouting abuse at a group of Sicilian Americans” (147). Dunnett notes that while censoring anti-Italian commentary in *Tortilla Flat*, Vittorini translated the anti-Semitic content “Foreign Literature” (108).

an initial ‘literal’ translation by a poorly paid Jewish woman, Lucia Rodocanachi, who remained publicly unacknowledged.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, in my efforts to address the topic of censorship, translation and fascism, I avoid strict political correlations, by working interdisciplinarily. As I argued in Chapter One, censorship and translation are conducive to such approach, as they themselves are studied by scholars across several disciplines. In the Italian context—and specifically in the case of Vittorini—the philological definition prevails, as scholars such as Maria Corti, Raffaella Rodondi, and Lorenzo Greco compare ‘transformed’ manuscripts to ‘originals.’ However, even when a cultural historian such as Bonsaver explicitly seeks to avoid the moralistic binaries intrinsic to conventional understandings of censorship, which “discourage the exploration of the so-called grey zone occupying the vast space between vocal opposition and full collaboration” (*Censorship* 3), he ignores poststructuralist understandings of these phenomena that would, in effect, facilitate his stated aim. Thus, although he argues for the understanding of censorship as a *dynamic*—and, by extension, for reconsidering the historical context of Vittorini’s work—he still adopts the traditional binary understanding of translation (and indeed, of literature), which depends on the recoverability of the text’s spirit through the hermeneutic gesture.<sup>90</sup> Thus, if Bonsaver weakens a key source of Vittorini’s “reputation as a ground-breaking Anti-fascist writer,” by arguing that “control over his literature was as much consensual as it was to some extent coercive” (“Fascist” 172), he still relies on the understanding of translation based on fidelity—and, ultimately, uses this binary to argue for Vittorini’s antifascism.<sup>91</sup> And so, in the end, despite their interest in “dynamics,” “webs,” and “gray zones” where *history* is concerned, these *literary* analyses of *Conversazione* (which hinge on a successful moment of antifascist ‘translation’) conform to the linear conversion narrative charting Vittorini’s journey from fascism to antifascism, whereby *Conversazione* stages the “recovery of the self” (Ben-Ghiat 191).<sup>92</sup>

This chapter will be built around the intersecting, conflicting conversion narratives told about and by Vittorini—specifically the *Solaria* and *Mondadori Garofano*, the 1948 preface, and *Conversazione*. Here, I have distinguished two groups of authors: Vittorini and the critics. It goes

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<sup>89</sup> Only some of the relevant correspondence has been published. See Ferme esp. 164-8, Dunnett “The Lost Voice” and Bonsaver “Vittorini’s American Translations.”

<sup>90</sup> Ferme, although working in the context of cultural studies, still uses the traditional lexicon as he makes pronouncements such as, “le traduzioni...sono abbastanza fedeli all’originale” (183) [“the translations...are faithful enough to the original”]. For a critique of Ferme’s understanding of translation solely in terms of the interlingual, see Chapter One.

<sup>91</sup> The premise of Bonsaver’s article, “Vittorini’s American Translations” is to answer “the simple question: to what extent was Vittorini actually ‘betraying’ the original texts he was translating in order to foster his own prose style?” (67). Later, his terminology is even more scientific, as he sets out of “gauge the degree of originality and ‘infidelity’” (77). When he evaluates Vittorini’s translations of Saroyan’s short stories, Bonsaver notes that Vittorini “attempted to intensify the non-conventional traits of Saroyan’s prose” and “to trim the text of passages that according to the personal choice of Vittorini were perhaps deemed to be redundant or somehow stylistically awkward.” Describing this as “Vittorini’s tendency to ‘edit,’” Bonsaver deems the prose style of the original to be still recognizable (83). Later, he concedes that his translation of Caldwell’s *Tobacco Road* is “to some extent what is traditionally called a ‘bella infedele’” (86). He concludes, “although the original texts suffered slightly from various ‘infedeltà,’ [“infidelities”] it is not possible to support the suggestion that the translations betrayed the original texts to the point of depriving them of their individual identity” (91).

<sup>92</sup> For Ben-Ghiat’s use of these terms, see Chapter One. Bonsaver critiques how an “insistence on episodes of open opposition have tended to produce a rather dualistic vision of the historical picture and to discourage the exploration of the so-called grey zone occupying the vast space between vocal opposition and full collaboration. Italian literary history and, more specifically, the study of censorship are a case in point” (3).

without saying that this latter group will be qualified continuously. But, as an author so entangled with both censorship and translation, the singular Vittorini-author cannot be taken for granted either—indeed, he foregrounds the author’s porousness. In the case of *Garofano*, the Florentine functionary not only contributed to the production of the *Solaria Garofano*—removing entire segments and chapters and potentially conditioning the subsequent episodes—but his censorship also led to the production of the *Mondadori* edition and its preface. Vittorini’s work as a translator has generated even more ambiguity: his poorly documented ‘collaboration’ with Rodocanachi means that “it is very unlikely that... a clear answer regarding the paternity of each of Vittorini’s translations will ever be produced” (Bonsaver “Translations” 74). Yet, the crisis of paternity works both ways, as critics accused Vittorini of being overly influenced by his translation of North American authors, such that those translated authors can be seen, in part, as having *authored* *Conversazione*.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Vittorini felt the need to protest in a letter to Enrico Falqui, “Io non rinnego affatto la loro influenza: so che, traducendoli, ne ho ricevuto grande aiuto nella formazione del mio linguaggio. Ma allo stesso tempo so di averli tradotti in un *mio* linguaggio” (*I libri* 121) [“I do not deny their influence at all: I know that, translating them, I received a great assistance in the formation of my language. But at the same time I know that I translated them in *my* language”].

Ultimately, as the analysis proceeds, the categories of Vittorini and the critics will work to contaminate one another. In Chapter One, I discussed how Ben-Ghiat argues for the critic’s role as “the final class of authorities who shaped the institution of literature under the dictatorship” (48)—effectively, as censor. Although she acknowledges the role of the critics “in many political contexts... as agents of canon formation for high culture and as tastemakers who seek to mediate the public’s contact with Art,” she goes on to write:

Under a dictatorship, where acts of interpretation and contextualization take on heightened importance, the critic’s role is magnified. By editing out ambiguities, or by playing on the polyvalence of language, Italian critics could make texts perform as documents of an emerging fascist literature. Naturally, they could also exploit this same polyvalence to bring out the oppositional message of a work for their readers (48).

Throughout this chapter, Ben-Ghiat’s formulation will come into play—albeit with some key modifications and reversals—as I will argue that, “by editing out ambiguities, or by playing on the polyvalence of language, critics”—Italian and Anglophone—*continue to* “make the texts perform as documents of an emerging [*anti-*]fascist literature.”

## 2.2 From Mutilation to an “Outstanding Climax”

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<sup>93</sup> Ben-Ghiat notes that for early critics, translation was a contaminant: “Speaking for many, an anonymous critic lambasted the Sicilian writer in *Primato* for his ‘contamination’ by American style. ‘When will Vittorini liberate himself from this extraneous weight that continues to impoverish his work?’” (194). Sergio Antonielli’s tone, on the contrary, is far from the accusatory one of the anonymous critic, “Sulla linea Melville-Faulkner-Hemingway, Vittorini ha trovato il suo ambiente positivo, il ciclo delle sue corrispondenze spirituali, la prima metà dei suoi viaggi letterari; e ci ha dato uno dei libri più intensi del nostro Novecento” (176) [“Along the lines of Melville-Faulkner-Hemingway, Vittorini found his positive atmosphere, the cycle of his spiritual harmony, the first half of his literary voyages; and he gave us one of the most intense books of the Twentieth Century”].

In *What Does a Woman Want*, Shoshana Felman has also articulated a theory of critic-as-censor, but one much wider in scope. For Felman, these critics are not specific to a totalitarian context; nor are the edited-out ‘ambiguities’ merely incidental. She writes:

The institution of literary criticism pronounces its expert, professional discourse, without even noticing the conspicuousness of its flagrant misogyny. To the *sociological* sexism of the educational system corresponds, in this case, the naïve, though by no means innocent, sexism of the exegetical system of *literary analysis*, of the academic and pedagogical fabrication of ‘literary’ and critical discourse. By guiding the reader, through the extirpation of ‘explicable’ facts, to the ‘correct’ perception, to the literal ‘proper,’ so-called objective level of textual interpretation, academic criticism conditions the very norms of ‘legibility’ (29).

Indeed, the way Vittorini has been used by critics in their efforts to write the history of censorship and translation *under* fascism, speaks directly to Felman’s argument: the presence of the female body in his novels is overlooked with startling regularity. Agreeing with Felman when she claims that, “this critical oversight, which appears as a systematic blindness to significant facts, functions as a censorship mechanism, as a symbolic eradication of women from the world of literature” (29), in this chapter, in order to “examine the theoretical presuppositions that permit and sanction this kind of blindness” (29), I will problematize not just the interrelation between political and literary conversions but also formulate the foundational role of the female body in these narrativizations. Indeed, the oppositional language of sexual difference recurs in narrativizations of textual conversions, as ‘originals’ are castrated, violated, mutilated, contaminated, and amputated, which supports my claim that the discourses of censorship and translation are structurally inextricable from representations of gender.<sup>94</sup> In addition, I explore how thematic questions of censorship, translation and gender are interwoven into the narrative dynamics of *Garofano* and *Conversazione*, as the protagonists’ conversion is at once dependent upon *and threatened by* the correct interpretation of the female body. In *Garofano*, Alessio’s sexual awakening—his desire for a virgin and a whore—inspires and impedes his political coming-of-age. And Vittorini’s transformative encounter with censorship was, according to the censor’s declaration, motivated by his use of ‘licentious expressions’—specifically, descriptions of Alessio’s sexual involvement with the prostitute, Zobeida. In *Conversazione*, too, Silvestro’s political awakening depends upon his ability to interpret a statue of an enormous, naked woman.

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<sup>94</sup> See Chapter One for the violent, corporeal language used to describe the censorship of *Garofano*. More generally, Lori Chamberlain explores the use of castration narratives in describing translation, specifically analyzing Thomas Drant’s comparison of ‘original’ to a pagan woman, who, in order to be translated/converted, must have its “hair” and “nails” cut: “The sexual violence in Drant’s figuration of translation, then, can be seen as directed not simply against the female material of the text (‘captive women’) but against the sign of male authority as well; for, as we know from the story of Samson and Delilah, Drant’s cutting of hair (‘I have shaved off his hair and pared off his nails, that is, I have wiped away all his vanity and superfluity of matter’) can signify the loss of male power, a symbolic castration. This is what one critic calls the *manqué inévitable*: what the original risks losing, in short, is its phallus, the sign of paternity, authority, and originality” (323). Levine starts his study of censorship by recalling Heinrich Heine’s formulation, whereby the censor held “a pair of scissors that did to the ‘best part’ of his body what they usually did to the choicest passages of his texts” (1). In “The Lost Voice,” Dunnett takes the notion of the translator’s invisibility—put forth by Lawrence Venuti as discussed in Chapter One—“as a starting point to interrogate the hierarchies that exist within literary translation as practiced in Italy, exploring issues of gender and identity in relation to a particular case study” (48n.1). The particular case is the figure of Rodocanachi, mentioned above.



In both cases, as I highlight the ambivalence of the encounters, I argue that the critics manage the female body's threat by pushing it outside the realm of interpretive boundaries, making it an "outcast of the establishment of readability" (Felman 29).

Just as the criticism has censored (and by this, I mean at once repressed and produced) Vittorini, so too has Vittorini helped guide the path of his own criticism.<sup>95</sup> And, undoubtedly, as far as *Garofano* is concerned, a powerful motor of this "censorship mechanism" is Vittorini's 1948 preface with which I began, for as he highlights the text's status as censored, he works to distance himself from its (fascist) letter. In so doing, he "guides" the reader away from the "false," literal level of the text:

Qui la prefazione deve diventare un po' guida. Il lettore va avvertito che il libro voleva essere un romanzo, e ch'egli, dunque, non deve prendere le cose alla lettera. Molto troverà, leggendo, che gli sembrerà falso: ad esempio i rapporti tra il ragazzo protagonista e la donna di malaffare (ma non esattamente prostituta) della casa di tolleranza. In tal caso dovrà cercare di distinguere quanto in effetti è falso (la donna) da quanto non lo è (l'idea che se ne forma il ragazzo e il modo in cui si comporta con lei il ragazzo stesso)

[Here the preface must turn somewhat into a guide. The reader is warned that the book wanted to be a novel, and that he, therefore, should not take things literally. He will find much, reading, that will seem false to him: for example, the relationship between the boy protagonist and the shady woman (but not exactly prostitute) in the brothel. In that case he must try to distinguish what is effectively false (the woman) from what is not (the idea that the boy forms about her and the way the boy himself behaves with her)].

Later he extends this advice to include the entire text and not just the episodes with Zobeida, the "not exactly prostitute," asserting, "Ma in generale può respingere come falso tutto quello che gli suona falso" (*Garofano* 337) ["But in general he can push away as false everything that sounds false to him"]. Still, one should not take Vittorini's choice of "the woman" (and specifically the "not exactly prostitute") merely as an innocent example, picked at random, of that which needs to be *pushed away* in the name of hermeneutics: the boy's *idea* of the woman. In response to the critical move of "discard[ing] the literal in order to concentrate on the figural," one should, as Barbara Spackman has argued, "ask why woman is favored as the vehicle of the metaphor" (*Genealogies* 165). Indeed, my reading of *Garofano*—a text that ends with the sign of the violated female body—seeks to answer that question. And at the same time, I will use *Garofano*'s preface to open up a reading of *Conversazione*, for despite the supposed chasm between them, *Conversazione*, too, ends with a (monumental) sign of a rather unusual female body, one which is, again and again, pushed away by the critics.

I will return to a closer consideration of the preface and the effect it has had on the critics' readings of the representations of women, not only the troublesome Zobeida and the statue, but also more ostensibly reassuring characters, *Garofano*'s virginal Giovanna and *Conversazione*'s maternal Concezione. Here, however, as I outline my trajectory, I remind my

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<sup>95</sup> Symptomatic of this influence is Claudio Toscani's opening section on the critical commentary of *Conversazione*, which begins with Vittorini's self-criticism and punctuates the summary with the conclusion that: "la 'fortuna' del libro cominciò qui" (70) ["the 'success' of the book started here"].

readers of the path the preface has plotted out for Vittorini's own voyage, whereby *Garofano* is the point of departure, and *Conversazione*, arrival, one which is achieved by means of conversion—a break from his literary and political past. This, I claim, is the master narrative of Vittorini's *oeuvre*, which critics, while questioning specific details, effectively reproduce. *Garofano*, like Vittorini's involvement in the Fascist party, is the first stage in the teleological—and unabashedly sexual—writerly journey, “una difficile strada per superare il realismo psicologico in una direzione veramente nuova di sperimentazione” (Fiorillo 83) [“a difficult road to overcome the psychological realism in a direction of truly new experimentation”], which leads him to *Conversazione*, his “outstanding climax” (Bonsaver 50).<sup>96</sup>

My reading, then, works with and against this trajectory, moving between the two editions of *Garofano*, the 1948 preface, *Conversazione* and the relevant criticism. My aim is threefold: to underline how *Garofano* is interpreted in terms of *Conversazione*; to show how the so-called “break” between the two texts—the foundational move in Vittorini's emblematic conversion—can only be maintained by repeatedly enacting that break (or “cut”) through the representation and interpretation of the female body; and finally, to explore that body's resistances to such conversions. This metaphorical evocation of censorship as castration speaks to a central component of the philological agenda: in accounts of the censorship of *Garofano*, philologists attempt to understand what the text was like “prima che il censore ci mettesse le forbici” (Greco 106) [“before the censors put his scissors to it”], and such language, dating back to the Florentine humanists, continues to manifest itself through “the preference of modern historians and philologists for obviously contaminated texts” (34), as Stephanie Jed has argued.<sup>97</sup> However, in their attempts at recovering the uncontaminated text, Zobeida—the contaminated, contaminating woman—comes to the foreground: after provoking the sequestration of episode six, she is covered over with ellipses in episode seven only to be further trimmed from the plot in the years leading up to the *Mondadori* edition. Nonetheless, when critics discuss the ‘original’ *Garofano*, that body is put to the service of Vittorini, as I will show, in support of his own conversion narrative. However, this “censorship mechanism” undoes itself as the female body becomes the meta-language to narrativize textual transformations; in Jed's formulation, as texts are transformed, they are raped; as texts are interpreted, their ‘chastity’ is restored.<sup>98</sup> Although critics interpret the erotic plot only insofar as it speaks to the political, their own language belies

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<sup>96</sup> Throughout my research, the only critic I found to prefer *Garofano* is Luigi Baldacci, who calls it “Il libro (nonostante le sue acerbità) più felice e più inventivo di tutta la lunga carriera dello scrittore” (168) [“the most successful and inventive book (regardless of its immaturities) of the author's long career”].

<sup>97</sup> Examining the language of fourteenth-century Florentine humanist Coluccio Salutati's *Declamatio Lucretiae*, Jed identifies a lexicon of rape/chastity appropriated for the philological project from Livy's narrative of the rape of Lucretia and her subsequent vindication by Brutus. She writes, “Philologists known for their *integritas* were opposed to the ones who ‘violate good books.’ An ‘integral’ reading was designated as an ‘unviolated’ one. The humanists' aspiration to restore *integritas* to the corrupt versions of the texts they received was not merely parallel to Brutus' attitudes in the relationship with Roman texts. In order to distinguish themselves from corruptors and violators who stained and contaminated texts, the humanists invented a language which excised from the representation of their activities the signs of their own relationship of contact with texts. They accomplished this by claiming to restore what they thought were original, ‘untouched’ readings. The fact that Florentines perceived their liberty as ‘immacolata’ and their observance of all treaties as ‘sincere’ depended upon their claims to correct, by ‘castigating,’ the effects of contamination by touching” (30). See also Chapter One.

<sup>98</sup> “One of the primary innovations of the early humanists seems to have been the introduction of textual ethics. The humanists' concern for philological exactness made the establishment of moral and social criteria for the reproduction and transmission of texts an imperative. For the corruption of a text, in the minds of the humanists, was not unlike a rape” (Jed 47).

a patriarchal preoccupation with integrity, one which resonates with the thematic preoccupation in *Garofano* with virginity.

My analysis of the philologists' narrativization of the censorship of *Garofano* will be interwoven with readings of transformation in *Garofano*, in particular in terms of the function of the female body in its textual economy. Here I continue to emphasize a more modern counterpart to the philologist-archeologist restoring the true textual artifact, suggesting that the language evokes that of the psychoanalyst who pieces together the uncensored version of his patient's story.<sup>99</sup> As I show how the philological readings of this "romanzo violentato" (Corti xlix) ["violated novel"], much like Freud in his "Dora" case history, seek to "restore what is missing" (7),<sup>100</sup> I argue that the metaphorical overlap between the philologist who attempts to recover the true textual artifact, and the psychoanalyst who dreams of "excavating" the uncensored version of his patients' story is not coincidental but is symptomatic of Felman's "sexism of the exegetical system" (*Woman* 29).<sup>101</sup> And indeed, Vittorini offers his readers the heightened possibility to complete *Garofano*, precisely by signaling its mutilated status: by demanding that the cuts from episode seven—normally made unobtrusively—be covered with "spazi di sospensione, tracce non equivoche dell'intervento del censore" (Greco 103) ["ellipses, unequivocal traces of the censor's intervention"], and by giving a fictionalized account of the censorship in the 1948 preface.<sup>102</sup> In the words of Michael Holquist,

One of the ironies that define censorship as a paradox is that it predictably creates sophisticated audiences. The reader of a text known to be censored cannot be naïve, if only because the act of interdiction renders a text parabolic... The patent aspect of a censored text is only part of a totality that readers must fill in with their interpretations of what was excluded (14).

Philologists, I think it is fair to say, are the most sophisticated members of this audience: bound by a scholarly duty to "fill in" these excluded portions, they complete the violated text through their penetrative act—regardless of their gender.<sup>103</sup> Although I criticize many of philology's

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<sup>99</sup> In *Mal d'archive*, Derrida shows how "Freud was incessantly tempted to redirect the original interest he had for the psychic archive toward archeology... The scene of excavation, the theatre of archeological digs are the preferred places of this brother to Hanold. Each time he wants to teach the topology of archives, that is to say, of what ought to exclude or forbid the return to the origin, this lover of stone figurines proposes archaeological parables" (92).

<sup>100</sup> I use Toril Moi's reading of "Dora" to show how the psychoanalyst's effort—which paradoxically aims to restore legibility even while dwelling on the incomplete, censored status its object—resonates with the philologist's: "[Freud's] aim is nothing less than the *complete elucidation* of Dora, despite his insistence on the fragmentary nature of his material. The absence of information on this one subject is thus tormenting, since it so obviously ruins the dream of completeness. But such a desire for total, absolute knowledge exposes a fundamental assumption in Freud's epistemology. Knowledge for Freud is a finished, closed whole. Possession of knowledge means possession of power" (69-70).

<sup>101</sup> In regards to *Garofano*, Corti writes, "Ricerche specifiche illustreranno la vera entità degli strati, la geologia del libro" (lv) ["Specific research will illustrate the true entirety of the strata, the geology of the book"].

<sup>102</sup> According to Greco, Vittorini decided to indicate the cuts: "in modo che dagli spazi bianchi risultasse palese la prevaricazione sofferta" (104) ["so that from the white spaces the abuse suffered could be made obvious"]. According to Jed, the philological project as a "restoration of integrity" is underwritten by "the scene of sexual violence which preceded it" (40). The quiet presence of a Lucretia narrative—the precise scene of violence Jed examines—within this violated novel will be considered at the conclusion.

<sup>103</sup> Corti, too, takes up the position of the (male) critic in relation to the (violated) female text whose integrity she purports to restore as she signals that she has privileged it for analysis from amongst the many texts in Vittorini's *oeuvre* precisely because of its "violation" (xlix). In proposing a feminist reading practice, Felman makes an

precepts, my aim is not to use the text to discredit it as a discipline—to the contrary, I am very much indebted to the numerous insights provided by these highly detailed analyses. Thus, as I read “primary” and “secondary” texts through one another, I do not aim to show how the latter has obfuscated the truth of the former that my analysis purports to reveal. Instead, drawing from Felman and Michael Levine after her, I will “generate implications” between the (often contradictory) narrativizations of the conversions.<sup>104</sup>

### 2.3 Conversions in *Conversazione in Sicilia*

Ellipses, decrees and prefaces all serve to announce *Garofano*’s ‘violation,’ and although, as Bonsaver points out, *Conversazione* was not censored in the same way, its elliptic opening announces an act of self-censorship: “Io ero, quell’inverno, in preda ad astratti furori. Non dirò quali, non di questo mi son messo a raccontare” (571) [“I was, that winter, in the grip of abstract furies. I will not say which, it is not of this that I have set about to tell”]. And, as with *Garofano*, Vittorini supported such an interpretation of his text through the lens of self-censorship, writing in 1954, “L’esistenza della censura e le lunghe lotte che si dovevano sostenere con i suoi funzionari per pubblicare qualunque cosa...mi avevano costretto ad essere più reticente di quanto non volessi nelle due ultime parti di *Conversazione*” (as cited in Rodondi “Note” 1206) [“The existence of censorship and of the long fights that had to be withstood with the functionaries to publish anything whatsoever...had forced me to be more reticent than I would have wanted in the last two parts of *Conversation*”]. In the preface to the American edition, Ernest Hemingway concretized this allusion to self-censorship, providing advice for how to defeat it: “If there is any rhetoric or fancy writing that puts you off at the beginning or at the end, just ram through it. Remember he wrote the book in 1937 under Fascism and he had to wrap it in a fancy package. It is necessarily wrapped in cellophane to pass the censor. But there is excellent food once you unwrap it” (vi).<sup>105</sup> Here, these instructions resonate with Vittorini’s preface, as readers are told to “ram through” (or “push away”) the letter, in favor of the spirit—and not only: we also have a colorful iteration of Leo Strauss’s contemporaneous theory from “Persecution and the Art of Writing.” According to Strauss, in a totalitarian society, “all writers who hold heterodox views [are compelled] to develop a peculiar technique of writing...writing between the lines” (24).<sup>106</sup>

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observation that speaks to the paradoxical position of Corti and others: “Is it enough to *be* a woman in order to *speak as* a woman? Is ‘speaking as a woman’ a fact determined by some biological condition or by a strategic, theoretical position, by anatomy or by culture? What if ‘speaking as a woman’ were not a simple ‘natural’ fact, could not be taken for granted?” (*Woman* 24). Keeping in mind Jed’s linkage of philology with the rape of Lucretia, Teresa de Lauretis’ notion of the interrelation between gender and violence helps explain the position of female philologists: “the subject of the violence is always, by definition, masculine; ‘man’ is by definition the subject of culture and of any social act” (*Technologies* 43). This holds not just with discourses whose thematics are violent, but “even when the discourse presents itself as humanistic, benevolent, or well-intentioned” (45).

<sup>104</sup> For more on Levine’s reading practice as related to censored texts, inspired by Felman, see Chapter One.

<sup>105</sup> In his introductory note to *Conversazione*, Powell parrots Hemingway’s preface: “While he now wrote clearly from an anti-Fascist standpoint, in order to ensure publication, an abstract style was inevitable. Hence any post-war judgment on the book should be made in the knowledge that, had the style been less allusive, had the references to the contemporary situation been less oblique, had more factual remedies been proposed, more recognizable political theories been expounded, the novel would certainly never have been published” (7).

<sup>106</sup> Although not as poetic, Hemingway’s “unwrapping the cellophane” belongs to the platonic tradition that privileges spirit over letter, soul over body, man over woman in the same way Strauss’ does: “This hermetic model

Although “writings are naturally accessible to all who can read” (35), Strauss claims that “Persecution, then, gives rise to a peculiar technique of writing, and therewith to a peculiar type of literature, in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines. That literature is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers only” (25).

Bonsaver, indeed, asserts the interpretive challenge presented by *Conversazione*, claiming it possesses a “high degree of ambiguity as regards an interpretation of the content” (*Vittorini* 90-1). Hemingway’s introduction, then, provides a crib sheet for reading between the lines, whereby Strauss’s “peculiar technique of writing” is the off-putting “rhetoric or fancy writing... at the beginning or the end.” Although, as I will discuss, Bonsaver finds the *end* of the book to be crystal clear, the beginning, he agrees, is evasive: “The most striking feature is the passage’s lack of definite realistic details. Every single aspect of the narrative”—he lists the temporal, spatial, human and causal dimensions—“is left unspecified” (*Vittorini* 85). The result of this “high degree of ambiguity as regards an interpretation of the content” and the lack of “clearly signposted messages from which to draw conclusions about the author’s intentions,” is “a plethora of studies aimed at decoding the text” (90). Catalano’s description of the first page is particularly telling in this context, as he claims that “la pagina iniziale di *Conversazione* parla chiaro” (70) [“the first page of *Conversazione* speaks clearly”] and although, “la Spagna non viene mai nominata” [“Spain is never named”]—he, like so many other critics, is able to claim that “è essa il referente storico di quella condizione” (71) [“this is the historical referent of that condition”].<sup>107</sup> Here, then, we see what Levine has described as the downside to interpreting censorship in exclusively—or perhaps better, *reductively*—Straussian terms, as it produces an “overly static” exoteric/esoteric opposition, that leads “critics to search for an encoded, contraband subtext” (179n.4).<sup>108</sup> Strauss himself leaves open the possibility that “reading between the lines will not lead to complete agreement among all scholars” (30), yet as we have seen—and will see—in *Conversazione*, the contraband subtext is rather univocal.

Before moving to a reading of the end of *Conversazione*, where the narrative represents a moment of “translation,” of reading and writing “between-the lines,” enabling me to explore the link between antifascism and translation and its effect on interpretations, I offer a summary, albeit brief, of Silvestro’s journey home to Sicily after a fifteen year absence, to plot the conversion as I understand it within the text.

Plagued by apathy—“non avevo voglia di nulla” (571) [“I did not want anything”]—Silvestro is spurred into action with a letter from his father, who urges his sons to return to Sicily to visit their mother whom he has abandoned. On his train ride, Silvestro talks to other Sicilians, one of whom finds him so foreign he suspects he is American; Silvestro confirms he is, “da quindici anni” (578) [“for fifteen years”]. He also meets two policemen, described as *Coi Baffi* [“With Mustache”] and *Senza Baffi* [“Without Mustache”],<sup>109</sup> but when asked by another traveler, *Il Gran Lombardo* [“The Great Lombard”], if he can smell their stink, Silvestro

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of the text is unsurprisingly compared a little later by Strauss to the Platonic image of the box of Silenus, whose ugly exterior conceals a beautiful interior” (Van den Abbeele 6).

<sup>107</sup> De Nicola writes, “l’allusione al clima politico contemporaneo, dominato da quell’imperialismo militarista che spinge il regime a sostenere Franco in Spagna, è qui sin troppo evidente e pesantemente critica” (*Vittorini* 70) [“the allusion to the contemporary political climate, dominated by that military imperialism that pushes the regime to support Franco in Spain, is even here too evident and heavily critical”].

<sup>108</sup> Here Levine is specifically discussing readings of Heinrich Heine.

<sup>109</sup> Powell emphatically demands we agree with the standard interpretation of the police: “We cannot fail to recognize the evil of the police state they incarnate, the rule of force of Nazi Fascism” (4).

confesses his perplexity. As Il Gran Lombardo shouts his disbelief that Silvestro does not understand, “‘Ma come? È incredibile’ ... ‘Non la sentiva?’” (587) [“‘But how? It’s incredible... You didn’t smell it?’”], we are given a further indication of Silvestro’s foreignness. Upon his arrival, he reunites with his mother Concezione and meets other locals—“a range of emblematic” (there it is again!) “figures who gradually arouse his interest and spur him on to a closer observation of the world around him” (Powell 4)<sup>110</sup>—with whom he discusses the ills of Sicily.<sup>111</sup> In the middle of one such discussion, Silvestro hears a sound, “‘ehm!’” coming from the ghost of a fallen soldier, which he learns is his brother, Liborio. Again, we are made to understand Silvestro’s ignorance—his inability to interpret the “‘ehm,’” that Liborio calls “il parlare figurato” [“figured speech”]. In tears, Silvestro makes his way to a monument to fallen soldiers where he finds everyone he has met on his journey. And finally, looking at the statue of the woman, he understands and begins to explain the statue’s significance: “‘Essi non sono morti comuni, non appartengono al mondo, appartengono ad altro, ed hanno questa donna per loro’” [“‘These are not the common dead, they do not belong to the world, they belong to something else, and they have this woman for them’”]. But the soldier’s “‘ehm!’” continues to be present in his thoughts, until it interrupts his speech: “‘M’interruppi, e il soldato parlò in me, disse forte: ‘Ehm!’” [“‘I interrupted myself and the soldier spoke in me and said strongly: ‘Ehm!’”]. At first the crowd does not understand, and Coi Baffi and Senza Baffi are left asking, “‘Che storia è questa?’” [“‘What is this all about?’”] Silvestro responds enigmatically, “‘È una parola suggellata’” [“‘It is a sealed word’”], at which point a consensus among the group is achieved: “‘ognuno assenti’” [“‘everyone agreed’”]. Still, even as the entire group decodes the “‘sealed word’” that explains the statue, the fascist police are left asking each other “‘Che cosa?’” (708) [“‘What?’”] under the smiling face of the statue. “‘In alto sorrideva, sopra a tutto questo, la donna di bronzo’” (708) [“‘High above, beyond all this, the woman in bronze was smiling’”]. In the brief epilogue, his father returns, but Silvestro says, “‘Lo saluterò un’altra volta’” (710) [“‘I’ll greet him another time’”].

Here, then, I return to the formulation of Vittorini-as-emblem with which I began. Having claimed that *Conversazione* has been made into an emblem of Vittorini and his antifascist conversion—providing a sharp break instead of a contaminating ideological continuity—I read the text specifically in terms of the conversion it narrates, contingent upon Silvestro’s own interpretation of an emblem: a bronze monument of a woman. My analysis of *Conversazione* focuses on this final, triumphant moment of translation, a between-the-lines reading of the statue, which, as Strauss theorized, is only accessible to the proper ‘readers’ and excludes the potentially malevolent totalitarian censor. This moment has been key in the readings of Ben-Ghiat and Bonsaver—as well as Alane Salierno Mason, the translator of *Conversations in Sicily*—who, like the crowd of Sicilians, claim to know exactly what “‘ehm’” and the statue mean. They, like Silvestro, easily translate the mysterious ‘sealed words’ as “‘an antidote to propaganda’” (Salierno

<sup>110</sup> De Nicola calls them “figure emblematiche del *Purgatorio* dantesco (secondo la suggestiva tesi di Peter Kuon, 1990)” (*Vittorini* 69) [“emblematic figures from the dantean *Purgatory* (according to the suggestive thesis of Peter Kuon, 1990)”].

<sup>111</sup> A post-face tells us that Sicily is a universal symbol, chosen “solo perché il nome Sicilia mi suona meglio del nome Persia o Venezuela” (710) [“only because the name Sicily sounds better to me than the name Persia or Venezuela”]. De Nicola explains, “Ma non appena Silvestro mette piede in Sicilia, esso assume una dimensione dichiaratamente simbolica nell’individuazione di alcuni personaggi che acquistano significati universali, suggeriti talora anche dalla loro denominazione o dal loro lavoro” (*Vittorini* 68) [“As soon as Silvestro steps foot in Sicily, it takes on a declaredly symbolic dimension in the individuation of some characters that acquire universal meanings, suggested at times by their name or their job”].

Mason x). Ben-Ghiat and Bonsaver's analyses are very similar: "he finds a place among Italians who communicate through evasive, jumbled stories and hermetic 'sealed words' (*parole suggellate*, such as 'Hmmm' and 'Ah!') that are incomprehensible to the authorities" (Ben-Ghiat 192); Bonsaver describes "'ehm' as a simple interjection with no quantifiable significance. It does not mean anything, yet all the characters, with the notable exception of *Coi Baffi* and *Senza Baffi*, understand its importance and share it as if it were a precious secret, a code word" (Vittorini 102).

That critics ally themselves with the characters and work to fill in the censored meaning is part of *Conversazione*'s agenda, produced by the text's opening lines, Hemingway's preface and Vittorini's subsequent commentary. However, as they "ram through" the "peculiar writing," they—just like Ben-Ghiat's critic-censors who aim to produce a specific political meaning—"edit out" one glaring "ambiguity:" the emblem on which Silvestro's conversion depends.

First I let the statue speak for itself:

Era una bella donna giovane nelle sue dimensioni due volte il naturale e la sua pelle liscia di bronzo; ben fatta, avrebbe dichiarato mia madre; con gambe, con seni, con schiena, con ventre, con braccia...Era fornita di tutto quello che rende donna una donna, come uscita fresca dalla costola dell'uomo, invero. Aveva anche segnato, oscuramente, il sesso; e lunghi capelli le adornavano, con sessuale grazia, il collo; il volto sorrideva per sessuale malizia, per tutto il miele in lei, e per il suo stare ignuda là in mezzo, due volte più grande del necessario, in bronzo...La donna stava eretta, con un braccio levato verso il cielo, e l'altro piegato di sopra al petto come per toccarsi l'ascella del primo. Sorrideva (706-7)

[She was a beautiful young woman in her dimensions twice what is natural and her smooth skin of bronze; well made, my mother would have declared; with legs, breasts, a back, a womb, arms...She was furnished with everything that makes a woman a woman, as if she were just taken from the rib of man, really. Also her genitals were inscribed, darkly; and long hair adorned, with sexual grace, her neck; her face smiled with sexual malice, for all the honey in her, and for her being naked there in the middle, twice the necessary size, in bronze...The woman was erect, with an arm raised towards the sky, and the other bent on her chest as if to touch the armpit of the other. She was smiling].

Although the description opens with an unequivocal assertion that the statue is "a beautiful young woman," the passage continues to discuss its femininity at length. And indeed, the characters too, check off all the requisite anatomical criteria:

Mi alzai, e le girai attorno, ad esaminarla meglio. Le andai dietro, di fianco e poi di nuovo di dietro.

'È proprio una donna,' dissi io.

L'arrotino mi si avvicinò, si piantò accanto a me sul piedistallo e alzò gli occhi anche lui. 'Sicuro,' esclamò, 'È una donna.'

Girammo entrambi sul davanti di lei, con gli occhi sempre alzati. 'Ha il latte, lí, osservò l'arrotino. E rise (706)

[I got up, and I walked around her, to examine her better. I went behind her, to her side, and then again behind her.

‘She is really a woman,’ I said.

The knife sharpener got close to me, he stood next to me on the pedestal and raised his eyes too. ‘Definitely,’ he exclaimed, ‘She’s a woman.’

We both circled to the front of her, keeping our eyes raised. ‘She has milk there,’ observed the knife sharpener. And he laughed].

Still, one might suggest that both text and characters—as they continue their attempt to verify the statue’s femininity—are not so much reassured as unsettled. Consider the portrayal of the genitals, *inscribed* on her body, *darkly*. In the passage, her enormous size is repeated—first, it is “due volte il naturale” [“twice what is natural”] and then “il suo stare ignuda là in mezzo, due volte piú grande del necessario” [“her being naked there in the middle, twice the necessary size, in bronze”], and while the description could refer to her *overall* size (where “là in mezzo” [“there in the middle”] refers to the piazza) it could also refer to the size of the genitals (where “là in mezzo” [“there in the middle”] is a much more disconcerting space, between her legs). To this end, Luce Irigaray makes a relevant argument about the representation of female genitals and size, using as her example, felicitously, statuary: “It is already evident in Greek statuary that this nothing-to-see has to be excluded, rejected, from such a scene of representation. Woman’s genitals are simply absent, masked, sewn back up inside their ‘crack’” (26). As we read a sentence such as “la donna stava eretta” [“the woman was erect”], coupled with the suggestion that there, *in between*, she is twice the necessary size, we do not so much have a woman (whose “genitals are simply absent”) but a site of undecidability—the unsticking of sex and gender.

This woman’s phallic ‘very-much-to-see’ is complicated by a double evocation of Concezione, Silvestro’s mother. First, Silvestro interprets the statue with her gaze, “ben fatta, avrebbe dichiarato mia madre” [“well made, my mother would have declared”], a gaze that becomes intratextually eroticized, as we recall the earlier episode when she brings her son with her on her rounds, giving injections to the locals. When they reach the rich women in particular, Concezione insists—to their dismay—that Silvestro watch, specifically for his sexual enjoyment (and to compensate, potentially, for a lack in his own sexual satisfaction): “L’ho sempre pensato che forse i miei figli non avevano mai visto nulla di simile, quando faccio l’iniezione alla signorina Elvira” (662) [“I always thought that maybe my sons had never seen anything like it, when I give Miss Elvira her injection”]. Second, more subtly, the reference to the woman “come uscita fresca dalla costola dell’uomo” [“as if she were just taken from the rib of man”] evokes the mother; however, Concezione is not only Eve but Adam: “un po’ uomo, costola di uomo” (610) [“a bit man, rib of man”]. Here the text makes a tautological claim that the statue is a woman because it has the things that make a woman a woman, “Era fornita di tutto quello che rende donna una donna, come uscita fresca dalla costola dell’uomo, *invero*” [“She was furnished with everything that makes a woman a woman, as if she were just taken from the rib of man, really”]. However, if Silvestro’s translation of the statue is prefaced by ascertaining that it represents a woman (so that she may be converted into ‘ehm!’ bearing the truth of antifascism), that translation is undermined here both by the reference to Concezione and by “*invero*,” which, in a felicitous (if uncanny) example of Freud’s “antithetical meanings of primal words,” means both really and unlikely/implausible. Here, then, instead of a sharp break of absolute sexual difference, we have a site of contamination.



The importance of the bronze statue is generally recognized by the criticism: the ability to translate “ehm” used to gloss it, distinguishes—as per Strauss’s schema—the fascists from the antifascists. Reading the text through the lens of self-censorship, critics assume it to be an exoteric rendering of an esoteric truth—to use Strauss’s terminology—and thus are in concert as they censor the statue’s suggestive contradictions as they discard it as a “rejection of the rituals, symbols, and language of Mussolini’s Italy” (Ben-Ghiat 192). Despite Bonsaver’s claim that there are no clear “signposts in *Conversazione*, he reads every posted sign with confidence, including the text’s final, literal signpost which he calls “an example of the futility of such aesthetic symbols” (*Vittorini* 102). Bonsaver’s description is effectively the same as Catalano’s: “La statua di bronzo, parlante simulacro dell’inutilità della cultura che consola” (114) [“The statue of bronze, speaking simulacrum of the uselessness of culture that consoles”], which is essentially the same as Toscani’s, who calls it “l’inutile altare” [“the useless altar”], “l’inerte bronzo” [“the inert bronze”] (60) and refers to “l’imponente inutilità della statua” (62) [“the imposing uselessness of the statue”].

Censoring, then, the ambivalence of the statue, characters and critics translate ‘Ehm,’ the sealed word, leaving the fascist characters (and uninitiated readers) unable to “ram through the cellophane.” As Ben-Ghiat rightly notes, these characters are all male; Concezione is excluded from *performing* the final interpretation.<sup>112</sup> And, indeed, as Hemingway, Vittorini and Strauss instruct us to “ram through,” the “peculiar” writing, effectively to *penetrate* the text, we are reminded that this sort of interpretive work belongs to “the young *men* who love to think” (Strauss 24 emphasis mine).<sup>113</sup> But as this analysis has suggested, Concezione is very much an unsettling presence *within* the statue, from her explicit gaze, to her implicit characterization as Adam *and* Eve, a presence that must be censored in order for the interpretation to proceed along its unequivocal antifascist line.<sup>114</sup>

The ambiguity of the statue frustrates interpretation: at first the smile signifies its “sexual malice,” while in the final sentence of the chapter, where her grin is emphasized as she towers above the ignorant fascists, it appears to signify political approval. In fact, in order to allow the translation of “ehm” in the political key, any number of details must be dismissed, from the statue’s description to the entire third (and central) section, in which Silvestro watches his mother penetrate men and women interchangeably with her needle. Bonsaver does just that, by turning that section into a digression from his “spiritual quest” (96) and Concezione, into yet

<sup>112</sup> “Vittorini subverts official rhetorics about the collective remaking of their generation, but he also marks antifascist militancy as a male space, as would many participants of the upcoming Resistance” (192-3).

<sup>113</sup> Both De Nicola and Panicali address the problem of the potential limitation of *Conversazione*’s addressees. De Nicola is critical: “*Conversazione in Sicilia*, per la sua insistita carica simbolica e per il suo non immediato linguaggio allusivo, non poteva rivolgersi che ad un pubblico di iniziati, segnando così un episodio tra i più evidenti della contraddizione che caratterizza l’opera narrativa di Vittorini, suggerita da un forte impegno civile teso al riscatto degli oppressi eppure, di fatto, destinata spesso ad una fruizione limitata e circoscritta ai lettori più acculturati” (*Vittorini* 73) [“*Conversation in Sicily*, for its insistent symbolic charge and its non-immediate allusive language, could address itself only to an initiated public, marking as such one of the most evidently contradictory episodes that characterize Vittorini’s narrative work, invested with a strong civil engagement working to free the oppressed, and yet, in fact, destined to a limited, circumscribed consumption by the most cultured readers”]. Panicali, on the other hand, sees the text as being critical of the *limits* of communication: “Ma se la conversazione unisce, unisce solo coloro che sono già simili e vicini. È questo, a mio avviso, il senso dell’opera: un senso che allude al *limite* della comunicazione” (156) [“But if the conversation unites, it only unites those who are already similar and close. This, in my opinion, is the meaning of the work: a meaning that alludes to the *limits* of communication”].

<sup>114</sup> Powell interprets the mother as solely “Eve” (10).

another symbol to be decoded, a female body to be censored in favor of a coherent political message: “Her name itself suggests the embodiment of femaleness in its most powerful and primeval function... The subtle political meaning is emphasized by Concezione’s final comment about middle-class people having injections even when they do not need any.”<sup>115</sup> Here we recall the treatment of Zobeida in the preface—and anticipate her reading by the critics as a “digressione” (Panicali *Vittorini* 123) [“digression”]: her function (and here, *she* may be Zobeida, Concezione or the statue) is to represent “l’idea che se ne forma il ragazzo” (*Garofano* 337) [“the idea that the boy forms about her”], and *the boy* may be Alessio, Silvestro, or the author-critic-censor.

Earlier, I problematized a correlation between translation and antifascism, specifically in terms of its impact on interpretations of *Conversazione*. However, my use of the term ‘translation’ in the previous discussion has been, effectively, interchangeable with ‘interpretation.’ Indeed, in his reconsideration of Strauss’s essay, Georges Van den Abbeele acknowledges the slippage between the concept of reading and writing between the lines and “a general hermeneutics” (5). Here I want to complicate that understanding of translation, as performed by Silvestro, and layer onto it the traditional, interlingual notion of translation, as performed by Vittorini; for just as Silvestro *becomes* antifascist through translating the statue, Vittorini *becomes* antifascist at the moment of translation of North American literature: “E davvero, *a questo punto*, il tradurre diventò un mezzo di Vittorini per opporsi simbolicamente alle indegnità e alla repressione che il Fascismo e la modernità... infliggevano all’uomo della strada” (Ferme 177 emphasis mine) [“And truly, *at this point*, translation becomes a means for Vittorini to symbolically oppose himself to the indignity and the repression that Fascism and modernity... inflicted on the man of the street”]. In fact, even as critics disagree about the “fidelity” of Vittorini’s translations, they correlate translation with his political conversion as well as his literary one, in overcoming not only the politics of *Garofano* but also its style.<sup>116</sup> As Rappazzo concludes, “il linguaggio letterario di Vittorini uscirà comunque rinnovato da questa esperienza: la scrittura di *Il garofano rosso* viene una volta per tutte abbandonata” (27) [“the literary language of Vittorini will emerge renewed by this experience: the writing of *The Red Carnation* is abandoned once and for all”].<sup>117</sup> Here, then Silvestro’s triumphant translation of the statue into “ehm” carries the force of Vittorini as antifascist translator of North American literature.

However, just as the ‘translation’ by Silvestro and the critics is predicated upon the silencing transformation of the words of the statue, it bears repeating that Vittorini’s translations of North American literature—closely linked with both his political and his literary conversion—were also dependent on a censorial transformation of the ‘literal’ translation provided by

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<sup>115</sup> In her plot summary, Panicali actually writes out the mother, making the conversation be between men: “un viaggio in Sicilia che assume la forma di una conversazione con gli altri uomini” (154) [“a trip to Sicily that assumes the form of a conversation with other men”].

<sup>116</sup> Rappazzo calls the translations, “appartenenti al novero delle ‘belle infedeli’ (27) [“belonging to the category of the ‘beautiful unfaithfuls’”]. Bonsaver bends over backwards to justify them as faithful: “An analysis of the various translations of North American novelists consistently shows that Vittorini was experimenting with the texts of his translations in more than one direction, trying slightly different solutions... Naturally, this is not to suggest that his translations became something so different from the original texts as to become ‘unfaithful translations.’ Even in the translation where Vittorini’s hand is at its heaviest (that of Caldwell’s *God’s Little Acre*, for example), it would be very difficult to prove that Caldwell’s prose style had been modified beyond recognition” (*Vittorini* 74).

<sup>117</sup> In his analysis of Vittorini’s “experiment of translation,” Bonsaver concurs with Rappazzo, and finds its “most mature expression” of the experiment to be in *Conversazione* (*Vittorini* 74).

Rodocanachi. When Rodocanachi's role in these translations was made public—only after her death in 1981—Rosa Quasimodo defended her husband's work, telling journalist Giovanna Giordano, with language that reproduces the male/female, creator/creation dynamic, that:

'La signora Rodocanachi faceva a Elio la traduzione letterale, parola per parola che a leggerla non si capiva niente. Lui, poi, a quelle parole dava forma. Sua era la costruzione, l'invenzione; non si legava a quelle parole fredde. Lui raccomandava sempre a lei di fare la traduzione letterale, precisa, parola per parola, articolo per articolo, frase per frase. E poi lui trasformava in un romanzo. Erano romanzi suoi quelli che traduceva' ("La Stampa-Tuttolibri" as cited in de Nicola *Vittorini* 44)

[Ms. Rodocanachi did the literal translation for Elio, word for word, so that in reading it, you couldn't understand a thing. He, then, gave a form to those words. His was the construction, the invention; he did not attach himself to those cold words. He insisted that she always give him the literal, precise translation, word for word, article for article, sentence for sentence. And he then transformed them into a novel. They were his novels the ones that (he/she) translated].<sup>118</sup>

Indeed, Quasimodo's words—*non si legava a quelle parole fredde* ["he did not attach himself to those cold words"]—again return to Hemingway's preface of *Conversazione* and Vittorini's preface of *Garofano*: as the woman, the literal—the cold, hard, raw material (bronze, perhaps)—is pushed away in favor of the man. Bonsaver laments that "sadly, it is very unlikely that, unless new material is found, a clear answer regarding the paternity of each of Vittorini's translations will ever be produced" ("Vittorini's American Translations" 74), and, according to Ferme, Giuseppe Marcenaro, who holds all ninety-one letters written by Vittorini to Rodocanachi, has refused to publish all of them because, "ci sono elementi in queste lettere che potrebbero risultare deleteri per l'immagine di Vittorini traduttore" (164n.52) ["there are elements in these letters that could prove harmful for the image of Vittorini as translator"]. Having plotted a path from translation to *Conversazione in Sicilia* to Vittorini-antifascist-emblem, one could imagine the deleterious effects if, instead of crediting Vittorini as singular father—the shaper of those "cold words"—the presence of a maternal hand were fully acknowledged. Perhaps, then, the emblem would become, "un po' uomo, costola di uomo" ["a bit man, rib of man"]—or, much like his political transformation, a contaminated conversion.

#### 2.4 "Al di là di quella macchia" ["Beyond That Stain"]: Reading Censorship Beyond Censorship

In my reading of *Conversazione*, I have shown how character and critics converge around the bronze statue, as its interpretation is the final step in Silvestro's political journey and the seal

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<sup>118</sup> Here, the translation into English introduces an interesting ambiguity in Quasimodo's words: as there is no pronoun indicating the subject of translated, it could be either Vittorini or Rodocanachi. Throughout her defense, Quasimodo only uses the verb 'to translate' for Rodocanachi, versus 'to transform,' 'to give form' for Vittorini, which suggests the sentence should read: "they were his novels the ones that she translated." Here, then, even in Quasimodo's assertion of Vittorini's *sole* propriety, Rodocanachi remains present.

in the critics' "monumental" interpretation of *Conversazione*, which, "in the postwar years... was unanimously elevated to the position of a printed monument to Italian anti-fascism" (Bonsaver *Vittorini* 81). Furthermore, as *Conversazione* becomes the requisite moment of radical discontinuity in the author's conversion narrative, I have shown how Vittorini's experience with 'antifascist translation' has provided critics with an interpretive key. I now move back to *Garofano* where I introduce a double *macchia* [stain]: the stain of censorship and the stain of blood, the point of focus for the philologists and the male characters respectively. As we move from the bronze statue to the blood red carnation, it is no longer antifascist translation at issue for critics, but as we will see, fascist censorship.

Although I have alluded to aspects of *Garofano*'s plot and have briefly traced its encounters with censorship, I now give a fuller account of Vittorini's first novel. In her introduction to the *Opere Narrative*, Maria Corti writes, "L'opera di Vittorini sfugge con moto anguillare a chi tenti di immobilizzarla sul proprio tavolo entro un giudizio critico" (xi) ["The work of Vittorini escapes with an eel-like movement from whomever attempts to immobilize it on his own table with a critical judgment"]. Although she characterizes *Garofano* in geological terms, referring to its various "strati" (lv) ["strata"], I find a more apt description for *Garofano* to be her description of Vittorini's evasive *oeuvre*. Not only is its history complex, but it itself is a slippery textual object, a structural hybrid with multiple plot lines: through autobiography, diary, epistolary, a young fascist, Alessio Mainardi, narrates a coming-of-age at once personal and political. The novel—set in 1924, just after the murder of Matteotti—opens with Alessio's declaration of his love for his classmate Giovanna, who has given him a red carnation. This attention from Giovanna catalyzes Alessio's transition into adulthood, as he reflects, watching children play: "Un pezzo era che piú non osavo giocare a quel modo scalpitante. Una signorina della 'seconda' mi aveva guardato; e avevo smesso senz'altro" (SI.1, M32) ["It had been a while since I dared horse around in that way. A girl from the 'second' year had looked at me; and I had stopped immediately"].<sup>119</sup> Despite this promising start to his romantic endeavors, Alessio's political career yields more success; in between failed attempts at courting Giovanna, he acquires a pistol and stages a revolt at his high school. After Giovanna mysteriously disappears, he buys his way into the heart of Zobeida, a near-mythical prostitute in the local brothel, missing out on the political developments of his classmates. Integral to both plots is Alessio's older friend Tarquinio who abandons their antibourgeois ideals over the course of the novel and shifts his own attentions from Zobeida to Giovanna. The novel ends with a series of dramatic events: Zobeida's arrest for drug trafficking, the suicide of an unnamed girl, a political protest, and, finally, Tarquinio's "confession" to Alessio that he has taken Giovanna's virginity.

As I suggested above, critics have marginalized Alessio's plot in order to foreground *Garofano*'s encounters with censorship, a decision coherent with Vittorini's prefatory instructions.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, when Alessio is the subject of analysis, the political elements of the plotline are separated from the erotic, which is then dismissed, following Vittorini's assertion that the book's chief value is as a historical document (340). Rodondi, whose study on *Garofano* is perhaps the most thorough, privileges the political over the erotic by treating these intertwined

<sup>119</sup> SI.1 indicates the volume and page number from the *Solaria* edition and M32, the page number of the Mondadori edition. When a citation is the same in both editions, I will give both page numbers; if only one page number is given, that indicates a difference between the editions which, in most every case, will be discussed explicitly.

<sup>120</sup> Bonsaver subordinates Alessio's transformation to *Garofano*'s, explicitly declaring a causal relationship between the complexities of the plot and the circumstances surrounding its composition (51). Rodondi too, speaks to this issue from a philological standpoint, as the characters make parenthetical appearances in order to verify or contest various hypotheses about Vittorini and the circumstances surrounding the censorship (*Presente*).

threads antagonistically: “il livello ideologico-politico esce praticamente di scena, soppiantato nella sua centralità dal tema dell’incontro con ‘la donna più bella del mondo’” [“the ideological-political level practically leaves the scene, supplanted in its centrality by the theme of the encounter of the ‘most beautiful woman in the world’”]. In her words, if the erotic dominates the seventh episode, by the eighth, the ideological-political is back in control: “Spetterà all’ottava e conclusiva puntata riportarlo saldamente in campo” (44-5) [“Not until the eighth and final episode will it be firmly brought back into the field”].<sup>121</sup> The absurdity of this dichotomy—in general and in the context of fascism—has been argued by many a scholar, but here, one only needs to turn to *Garofano* itself to see how any such neat opposition collapses, as the gifted carnation is at turns a symbol of political and of sentimental commitment, and Alessio re-envisions his personal battles through a political lens: getting into a fight with a classmate vying for Giovanna’s attention, he fantasizes that the bloody body is Matteotti’s (SII.31, M82).

From a brief analysis of the critics’ comparison of the two *Garofanos*, we will see how they effectively continue the work of the fascist censor: for according to a general consensus, the Mondadori edition is ‘better’ than its *Solaria* predecessor precisely because it continues the journey away from the female body.<sup>122</sup> Francesca Fiorillo reads Vittorini’s “passaggio” [“passage”] from *Solaria* to Mondadori as a progression from the sensual to the ideal, as the variants “cercano di liberare la vicenda dalle ristrettezze realistiche per elevarla ad una significazione più vasta e composita, tendente all’evocativo” (73-4) [“try to free the event from the realistic limitations in order to elevate it to a more vast and composite meaning, tending towards the evocative”]. Fiorillo is not alone in associating *Garofano*’s ‘elevation’ with its liberation from the ‘realistic’ female body. According to Rodondi’s notes on the *Meridiani*, the edits resulted in “l’eliminazione di tutta quella zona linguistica di marca strapaesana e selvaggia che connotava in rivista le scene più realistiche e che mal s’innestava sul tessuto prevalentemente lirico e impressionistico della parte precedente” (1183) [“the elimination of that entire lexicon that came from the (literary movements) ‘Super-town’ and ‘Wild’ which, in the magazine version characterized the most realistic scenes and which grafted onto the prevalently lyrical and impressionistic fabric of the preceding part badly”].<sup>123</sup> To hear it from Rodondi, the novel would have been better off without Zobeida: “Nonostante l’assidua rielaborazione [del Mondadori] le pagine [della sesta puntata] restano tra le meno felici del libro e denunciano apertamente la difficoltà della costruzione romanzesca, accentuata dall’improbabilità del personaggio Zobeida” (1183-4) [“Regardless of the assiduous re-elaboration of the (*Mondadori* edition), the pages (of the sixth edition) remain among the least successful of the book and openly denounce the difficulty of the novelesque construction, accentuated by the improbability of the character of Zobeida”]. And Raffaele Crovi echoes that sentiment: *Garofano* is “un riuscitissimo romanzo” [“A very successful novel”], apart from chapter twelve “(quello della ‘prigionia’ nel bordello, che giudico enfatico e ripetitivo)” (179) [“(the one about the ‘imprisonment’ in the bordello, that I judge emphatic and repetitive)”].

<sup>121</sup> Ferroni ‘forgets’ Zobeida and concentrates on Alessio’s chaste love and friendship: “al centro delle vicende ci sono l’amore di Alessio per Giovanna, che nasce all’interno della scuola e ha il suo simbolo nel garofano rosso che egli ha avuto in dono dalla ragazza, e l’amicizia con un ragazzo più grande, Tarquinio Masseo” (*Storia* 396) [“at the center of the plot is the love of Alessio for Giovanna that is born at school and that has as its symbol the red carnation that he had as a gift from the girl, and his friendship with an older boy, Tarquinio Masseo”].

<sup>122</sup> The *Meridiani* edition only includes the Mondadori version, and not the less accessible *Solaria*. In the Notes, however, the *Solaria* version of the *Storia di Zobeida* is included—but only, Rodondi qualifies, as “*exemplum* ‘negativo’” (1184) [“a ‘negative’ exemplum”].

<sup>123</sup> For the link between *Strapaese*, (fascist) realism and Curzio Malaparte, see Chapters One and Four.

Here, as critic after critic privileges the ‘political’ narrative in favor of the “total neglect” of the erotic, we encounter what Felman describes as the “flagrant misogyny” of “the institution of literary criticism,” that makes women “outcasts of the establishment of readability.” This “symbolic eradication of women from the world of literature” (*Woman* 29) is pronounced in Bonsaver, who explicitly supports the censor’s decision, “The sensual scenes, in particular, push eroticism to the border of pornography and certainly indicate that the Florentine censors’ concerns were not wholly unjustified” (56). It is as if, by drawing the line between pornography and literature the censor has aided readers in carrying out Vittorini’s prefatory instructions. And Rodondi applauds Vittorini’s decision to continue the censor’s process by editing much of Zobeida out of the Mondadori version, as her story—modeled “palesemente” [“obviously”] after *1001 Nights*—had worked in *Solaria* “ad accentuare, a livello strutturale, quei tratti di mescolazione e discontinuità tipici dell’opera” (1184) [“to accentuate, at a structural level, those parts of mixing and discontinuity that are typical of the work”]. Despite the qualifier *at a structural level*, it is worthy of note that the *contaminant*—the story of a prostitute, drawn from a classic text of Arabic literature—has a gender and a racial dimension that resonates with the rhetoric of fascism.

Such marginalizing tendencies are at times, too, part of a purportedly feminist agenda. In an article that addresses the censorship of female writers under Fascism, Lucia Re makes a few remarks about *Garofano*, including the footnoted claim that if a text has nothing nice to say about women, it is better that it say nothing at all: “The net positive result of the cuts was to eliminate Vittorini’s own embarrassingly overwrought and misogynistic fantasies about female lust, as well as his stereotyping of the prostitute as at once sexual and maternal, and of the boy as a sexual god” (74n.3). This statement is problematic, particularly considering its purported feminist context: for it is truly a fantasy to assert that the cuts *eliminate* misogynistic fantasies—all they do is drive them farther out of sight. In fact, I argue that the Prefect’s cuts actually serve as an alibi for the “symbolic eradication” of women from *Garofano*. Behind Re’s well-meant remarks one sees the sign of “an ideological conditioning of literary and critical discourse” (Felman *Woman* 29): by guiding readers away from Vittorini’s ‘clichéd’ treatment of women, Re tacitly discourages the possibility of critiquing it.

To this end, a useful point of comparison is to be found in Greco’s philological analysis of the *Solaria Garofano*. Having obtained the manuscript of episode seven, preceding the censor’s cuts, Greco shows how Zobeida’s function was political, as she critiques patriarchal ideals, in particular, virginity.<sup>124</sup> Ultimately Greco puts his analysis in service of “le questioni politiche del giovane Vittorini” [“the political issues of the young Vittorini”] calling the chapter, “forse meno interessante degli altri” (106) [“perhaps less interesting than the others”] from that perspective, and he interprets these passages to support Vittorini’s claim that the censorship was politically motivated.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, he rightly acknowledges that the political and the erotic are

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<sup>124</sup> Asking Alessio about his timidity with Giovanna, Zobeida says, “Io non capisco... se le volevi bene perché non te la sei presa? Hai avuto paura di toglierle la verginità? Ma quella è una storia da sbrigarsi tra ragazzi. Cosa credi che importi a un uomo quando vuole davvero una donna, di trovarla intatta o no? Si può essere una come me e si può salire lo stesso sul cuore di un uomo, più che una fanciulla” (as cited in Greco 108) [“I don’t understand... if you loved her why didn’t you take her? Were you afraid of taking her virginity? But that’s a thing to take care of between kinds. What do you think it matters to a man when he really wants a woman if he finds her in tact or not? You can be like me and you can enter the heart of a man all the same, more than a girl can”].

<sup>125</sup> Greco begins this chapter by claiming, “Ma si sa che *Solaria* era in vista al regime per ragioni ben diverse dalla pornografia” (99) [“But it is known that the regime had its eye on *Solaria* for reasons quite different from pornography”].

not detachable plot threads and are, on the contrary, interdependent, as he recognizes that, “l’iniziazione amorosa e sessuale di un adolescente da parte di una prostituta [è] un argomento così socialmente rilevante” (106) [“the amorous and sexual initiation of an adolescent by a prostitute (is) a topic of great social importance”]. Moreover, Greco’s reading suggests that the first *Solaria* manuscript not only expressed misogynistic fantasies but also allowed the source of those fantasies—Zobeida—to critique them: “Zobeida non solo esce dalla sua marginalità, ma addirittura diventa il cardine di un ribaltamento di valori” (115) [“Zobeida not only comes out of her marginality, but she even becomes the pivot point of the overturning of values”].

If this institutionally sanctioned censoring practice within *Garofano* criticism appears to perpetuate itself *ad nauseam*, Alessio provides an alternative perspective, for although he attempts to pursue the same censorial agenda, his attempts at controlling the *garofano* as object and as symbol are less than successful. To return, then, to the text, the importance of virginity in the narrative dynamics is immediately apparent. Giovanna, first suggestively named in *Solaria* as “Diana e casta diva” (SI.2) [“Diana and chaste diva”],<sup>126</sup> is the classic virgin, with no identity of her own: “Mi pareva bellissima, sebbene portasse un cappellino che le nascondeva metà della faccia” (SI.1,M32) [“She seemed very beautiful to me, even though she was wearing a hat that covered half her face”]. Whether Alessio sees her face is of no import; her subsequent role in the plot literalizes Irigaray’s figuration of “the virginal woman,” in effect, an envelope: “*The virginal woman, on the other hand, is pure exchange value*. She is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men. In and of herself, she does not exist: she is a simple envelope veiling what is really at stake in social exchange. In this sense, her natural body disappears into its representative function” (186).<sup>127</sup> Alessio’s primary interaction with Giovanna-Diana revolves around her sending him “un garofano rosso chiuso dentro una busta” (SI.2,M33) [“a red carnation closed in an envelope”].<sup>128</sup> After her mysterious disappearance, Giovanna remains ‘enveloped,’ as she becomes the subject of the summer vacation epistolary exchange between Alessio and Tarquinio. Returning to school, Alessio exchanges her for Zobeida who, according to Tarquinio’s letters, is potentially worth more than a virgin: “Credo che si può ottenere molto da una come lei. . . Più che da una innocente fanciulla” (M162) [“I think that one can obtain much from someone like her. . . More than from an innocent girl”]. Although later I will have occasion to discuss what Alessio might have *gained* from Zobeida, here I signal what he loses: Giovanna’s red carnation, which she appropriates. Alessio, however, loses more than the physical flower: after Zobeida is arrested and the friends reunite at the unnamed girl’s funeral, *Garofano* ends as Tarquinio shows Alessio a handkerchief with a red stain: “rosso di sangue, ma non recente” (SVIII.75) [“red with blood, but not recent”].<sup>129</sup> And as Tarquinio ‘drowns’ the handkerchief, tying it to a rock and throwing it into the water, Alessio gets the message: “E, legatovi dentro una pietra, lasciò cadere la minuscola cosa rossa nell’acqua. Fu allora che cappi e mi presi il viso dentro le mani” (SVIII.75) [“And, tying it to a rock, he let the miniscule red thing fall in the water. It was then that I understood and I took my face in my hands”]. We are never told what Alessio understands in that moment, as he is rendered

<sup>126</sup> In Mondadori, she is just “Diana” (32).

<sup>127</sup> Ben-Ghiat’s plot summary writes Giovanna out altogether, jumping from Alessio’s political partnership with Tarquinio, to Zobeida “who stands for an illicit and unrepressed realm of life, that, in Vittorini’s eyes, had fallen victim to the dictatorship’s moralizing imperatives” (117). This interpretation sets the stage for Ben-Ghiat’s iteration of Vittorini’s own conversion trajectory (that there is a latent antifascism in *Garofano*), as I discussed.

<sup>128</sup> In the 1948 edition, Giovanna and Alessio exchange a single kiss prior to her disappearance (M35-6); in the *Solaria* version, they never touch, but instead each kiss the red flower (SI.7).

<sup>129</sup> In Mondadori, it reads, “Macchiato di sangue non recente” (M 302) [“stained with not-recent blood”].

speechless by this stain, and *Solaria* ends with Tarquinio's unanswered question: "E dimmi: del garofano rosso che ne hai fatto?" (SVIII.75) ["And tell me: what did you do with the red carnation?"].<sup>130</sup> However, Irigaray's plot continues in the unfinished sequel, *Giochi di ragazzi* [*Child's Play*], where Giovanna is pregnant with Tarquinio's child. As Irigaray predicts, "The ritualized passage from woman to mother is accomplished by the violation of an envelope: the hymen, which has taken on the value of *taboo*, the taboo of virginity" (186).

Here, then, I have focused on the *macchia* in order to establish a connection between the violation in the text, represented by the bloodstain, and the violation of the text, the stain of fascist censorship. While the former is taboo, silencing character, text and critic, the latter is displayed proudly—proof of the antifascist core despite its fascist exoskeleton. To this end, Rodondi's description is rather fitting, as she underlines the suffering of the text, "le vistose mutilazioni inferte dalla censura preventiva al testo della settima puntata, sfigurata ai limiti dell'illeggibilità da file e file di puntini" (20) ["the substantial mutilations inflicted by the preemptive censorship on the seventh episode, disfigured to the limits of illegibility by rows and rows of dots"]. Both stains, however, have a paradoxical effect, in that their narrativization depends on the fetishistic logic of sexual difference: man desires woman based on her status as other (i.e. castrated), yet she also must be whole, virginal in order to guarantee paternity; the censored text, too, becomes desirable for the philologist based on its status as incomplete—as Jed has argued—a status predicated on a prior, equally fantastical, intact state that makes it available for hermeneutical penetration and the obtainment of the truth.<sup>131</sup> In this misogynistic economy, the *macchia* at once serves as the retroactive guarantee of wholeness and threatens castration. With the double *macchia*, then, the 'mutilations' that disfigure the text have created the blind-spot that renders illegible—and at the same time, points to—the mutilations of the female body within the text.<sup>132</sup>

Just as the critics ultimately require the female body they themselves marginalize in order to narrate sexual conversion, so too does Alessio as he tells of his own passage into adulthood. In spite of his attempts at freeing himself from the female body, he cannot escape it. It is a requirement in the hero's quest, an obstacle whose incompleteness offers the promise of satisfaction alongside the threat of castration. Narrative is the space, then, where this battle occurs, as Tarquinio explains: "C'è una macchia di sangue al principio dell'amore di ogni donna, ricordati, e il bene che conta è sempre al di là di quella macchia" (M160 emphasis mine) ["There's a stain of blood at the beginning of love of every woman, remember, and the good that counts is always beyond that stain"]. However, this "beginning" is not solely a localizable event. (Indeed, the timeframe in Tarquinio's sentence-long 'story' about his conquest of Giovanna, which I will cite later, is more mythic than calendric). The red carnation, like the *macchia*, has a material presence. However, the two red items are also abstracted, as the *garofano rosso* becomes "l'originario fiore simbolico" (SVII.78, M272) ["the originary symbolic flower"]. Thus, while operating as a sign of the loss of virginity, Tarquinio's *macchia di sangue al*

<sup>130</sup> I will address the slightly different Mondadori ending later.

<sup>131</sup> "I intend the expression 'chaste thinking' as a figure of thought constituted at the join of two conflicting lexical families of terms, one representing the impulse to touch and the other, the impulse to be cut off from contact. These lexical families include, on the one hand, words related to touching or the absence of touching—*tangible*, *contaminate*, *contact*, *integrity*, *intact*, etc., and on the other hand, words related to cutting—*chastity*, *castigate*, *caste*, and Latin *career* ('to be cut off from, to lack')" (Jed 8).

<sup>132</sup> Rodondi serves as an excellent case in point. In order to compare the variants between the *Solaria* and Mondadori editions—what she terms as Vittorini's "amputazione" (37) ["amputation"]—Rodondi herself amputates both versions, as she extracts strings of sentences from their context.



*principio* can also be read as the fantastical inauguration of sexual difference, a woman's castration. According to Tarquinio, the violation must have taken place (always already), in order for the interpretive work to begin: "Credo che si può ottenere molto da una come lei, se solo si arriva a portare la cosa sul piano delle parole. Più che da una innocente fanciulla" (M162) ["I think that one can obtain much from someone like her, if only one manages to bring the thing to the level of words. More than from an innocent girl"]. To this, he later adds, "Se si riesce a farla parlare ti si trasforma in una vergine divinità sotto le mani, io credo. E ti fa sentire di essere un dio creatore" (M165) ["If you succeed in making her talk, she transforms into a virgin beneath your hands, I believe. And she makes you feel like a god creator"]. By making the violated woman and the censored text speak from their constitutively violated positions, the character and the philologist (not unlike the psychoanalyst) narrate the fantastical origins of their own authority.

As an "educazione sentimentale" ["sentimental education"] that "passa attraverso due donne" ["passes through two women"] (Fiorillo 73), Alessio's journey in *Garofano* is predictably motored by a desire to make woman speak in the name of his self-knowledge: "non cercavo spiegazioni della sua vita ma una fiaba con lei dentro per principessa o per schiava" (SVI.77, M260) ["I was not looking for explanations of her life but a fable with her in it as a princess or as a slave"].<sup>133</sup> The story is set into motion with Giovanna's gifted carnation, whose meaning is interpreted by Alessio as unequivocal: "mi ama, pensai scattando" (SI.2, M33) ["she loves me, I thought, going off"]. And with this promise of the heroine's love, Alessio and the plot, indeed, "go off." Giovanna disappears after a single kiss, leaving Alessio to "rompere il mistero" (SII.30, M81) ["break the mystery"] surrounding this 'chaste' Diana—until a chance encounter with Zobeida, a woman mysterious in theory but accessible by profession, sends him on a different path of conquest. The conquest of a prostitute is, indeed, an oxymoron. However, two particular details justify the full metaphoric weight of this word: that Alessio is the first person in years to give her pleasure: "Me l'hai fatta grossa... Figurati ch'erano anni" (M199 ellipses in original) ["You really did it to me... Imagine, it's been years"]; and, more surprisingly, that he is the only one in the town who has actually had sex with her: "In questa città, per esempio, tutti parlano di me ma domanda loro se mi hanno mai portata a letto" (M270) ["In this city, for example, everyone talks about me, but ask them if they've ever taken me to bed"]. Still, this heroic status is problematic—for both are claims made by Zobeida and neither can be corroborated from within the text.<sup>134</sup> Female sexuality, then, offers itself as a guarantor for Alessio's oedipal position but only as it simultaneously threatens it.

Alessio's journey through adolescence is accompanied by the traditional retrospective search for his origins—neatly figured in his train ride to his home town: "Ma mi pareva di aver fatto quel viaggio soltanto una volta prima d'allora, una volta ch'era al principio della mia esistenza" (SIII.32, M111) ["But I seemed to have taken that trip only once before, a time that was at the start of my existence"]. Zobeida offers him another opportunity to add to his fable when, lying in bed, he asks her to tell him a story, "le chiesi di raccontarmi la sua storia, cioè come un bambino può chiedere che si racconti una fiaba" (SVI.77, M260) ["I asked her to tell

<sup>133</sup> My reading of Alessio's oedipal plot and its dependence on the female obstacle is based on "Desire in Narrative," where, using a wide range of materials (psychoanalytic, mythological, anthropological, from Freud to Felman to Lévi-Strauss), de Lauretis theorizes the inability of Western narrative to tell the story of the female desiring subject and continues certain narratives (specifically the woman's journey through motherhood) beyond the point where they have traditionally ended.

<sup>134</sup> The Preface also seeks to reinforce her ambiguous status, calling her "la donna di malaffare (ma non esattamente prostituta)" (*Garofano* 337).

me her story, that is, like a child might ask for a fable to be told to him”]. However, her coming-of-age story—which follows an oedipal scheme as she is confined to the will of one male figure after the next—is effectively his: “Alla fine disse che era diventata una ‘donna di malaffare’ perché io potessi incontrarla” [“At the end, she said she became a ‘bad woman’ so that I could meet her”] (M256).<sup>135</sup> Regardless, instead of listening to her story, he appropriates her language and mythologizes his own oedipal past:

uno... ch’era vecchio e cieco... profetizzò che all’età di cinque anni io avrei ucciso un uomo dalla barba bianca... Siccome l’uomo dalla barba bianca secondo mio padre non poteva essere altro che il nonno Skander, la mamma mi mandò in un’isola vicina dove regnava la Madonna a cavallo...(SVI.86-7)<sup>136</sup>

[one... who was old and blind... prophesized that at the age of five I would have killed a man with a white beard... Since the man with the white beard, according to my father, could not be anyone... other than Grandpa Skander, my mom sent me to a nearby island where the Madonna on horseback reigned].

Here the silencing of the woman occurs overtly and, not coincidentally, precisely at the moment she is about to narrate her own sexual initiation: “E allora io non ebbi più voglia di sentire il seguito della storia, ma di raccontare, piuttosto, anch’io di me al suo stesso modo” (SVI.86) [“And then I no longer wanted to hear the continuation of her story, but rather to narrate myself as well, in her same way”];<sup>137</sup> but the oedipal logic also works more subtly, by circumscribing the conditions of female legibility within the parameters of heterosexual male desire: Alessio can only describe the proudly obtained “intenso” [“intense”] circumspectly, through repetition that circles around the experience.<sup>138</sup> Derailed by his obsession to possess ‘it’ in its entirety, he trails off into an ellipsis: “Pensavo: è questo l’intenso? E sarebbe cresciuto ancora? Sarebbe stato di più? Sarebbe stato *tutto* l’intenso? Volevo che fosse *tutto*...” (M199 ellipsis and emphases in original) [“I thought: is this the intense? And would it keep growing? Would it be more? Would it be the *whole* intense? I wanted it to be *all*...”].<sup>139</sup> Alessio’s obsession with complete possession of a violated woman evokes the desire at work in the psychoanalyst’s attempt at achieving “the *complete elucidation*” of his patient that I alluded to above, and the philologists’ preoccupation with restoring integrity to a violated text—a violation, I repeat, that Vittorini was only too eager

<sup>135</sup> In the *Solaria* edition, that sentence ends, “che si era fatta puttana” (SVI.74-5) [“that she turned herself into a whore”]. This shift in the language from *puttana* to *donna di malaffare* works to bolster the Preface’s efforts to nobilitate Zobeida.

<sup>136</sup> The shortened Mondadori version reads as follows: “dissi di qualcuno il quale aveva profetizzato che all’età di cinque anni avrei ucciso un uomo dalla barba bianca” (M262) [“I said that someone had prophesied that at the age of five I would have killed a man with a white beard”].

<sup>137</sup> The Mondadori version, slightly briefer, is effectively the same: “E allora io ebbi voglia di raccontare di me, mi misi a raccontare, e, in un modo che fosse un po’ come quello di lei...” (M262) [“And then I had a desire to tell about myself, and I set about telling, and, in a way that was a bit like hers...”].

<sup>138</sup> An adjective that means “intense,” *Garofano* uses “intenso” ambiguously as a noun that seems to mean pleasure, and perhaps orgasm, although it is unclear whether it refers to Alessio’s, Zobeida’s, or both.

<sup>139</sup> As mentioned above, the word “l’intenso” is an adjective used here as a noun; for this reason, I will use “the intense” in my translation. The English translation skirts the ambiguity of the word by using the euphemism “it,” in the first sentence without an apparent linguistic referent. “I thought: will it still increase?” And then by leaving it out all together, translating “Sarebbe stato *tutto* l’intenso” as “Would there be *all*...” (97).

to signal.<sup>140</sup> Alessio, for his own part, is eager to signal that although Zobeida *empties* herself, he remains *intact*: “E ridevo felice di ritirarmi intatto da lei ogni volta che mi ributtava fuori vuotata” (SVI.74) [“And I laughed happy to withdraw myself intact from her, each time she threw me out, emptied”].<sup>141</sup>

After circling around the idea of pleasure from his own perspective, Alessio senses a dynamic in their intimacy, even going so far as to consider Zobeida’s active role in the production of their pleasure, “E intanto diventavo un altro essere e mi pareva di apprendere che anche lei diventava un altro essere. Era nel *suo* diventarlo, l’intenso?” (M199 emphasis in original) [“And in the meantime I was becoming another being and I seemed to understand that she too became another being. Was it in *her* becoming, the intense?”]. However, no sooner does he consider this possibility—surprising enough to merit italics—than his own pleasure takes over, returning to the oedipal realm, notably, with the violence of conquest: “Finii di pensare, credetti che era l’intenso e mi prese una gran gioia, e nella immensità della gioia mi attaccai ai suoi capelli, glieli strappai forte contro il guanciale” (M199) [“I stopped thinking, I thought it was the intense and a great joy seized me, and in the immensity of my joy I clung to her hair and I tore it hard against the pillow”]. The detail of hair pulling at the moment of mutual climax, suggests a castrating gesture, a feeble reassertion of Alessio’s male dominance, precisely at the moment when his pleasure is inextricably linked to a woman’s mysterious expression of her own. Yet if Roland Barthes says that *cutting* the braid is “to sketch the castrating gesture” (160), Alessio fails to participate in the common literary topos of so many of his predecessors and successors.<sup>142</sup> (Indeed, it is not Zobeida who surrenders a representative token to Alessio but Alessio who surrenders his precious *garofano*.)

Female desire exceeds Alessio’s narrative capacity, making his speech ambiguous and repetitive, derailing his academic agenda, and keeping him from the political activity of his friends.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, if we recall Rodondi’s evaluation, it is precisely in this scene where the erotic narrative threatens to supplant the political (44). However, rather than take for granted the itinerary of a particular voyage and follow its domestication back within the fantastical sphere of the ‘purely’ political, it is important to ask why certain scenes characterized as “digressioni artificiose e senza necessità” (Panicali *Vittorini* 123) [“artificial and unnecessary digressions”],

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<sup>140</sup> Moi’s reading of *Dora* has been influential to my own reading of Freud and the importance of completion to his project. Moi explains: “Firstly, because he himself desires total knowledge: his aim is nothing less than the *complete elucidation* of *Dora*, despite his insistence on the fragmentary nature of his material. The absence of information on this one subject is thus tormenting, since it so obviously ruins the dream of completeness. But such a desire for total, absolute knowledge exposes a fundamental assumption in Freud’s epistemology. Knowledge for Freud is a finished, closed whole. Possession of knowledge means possession of power. Freud the doctor is curiously proud of his hermeneutical capacities” (69-70).

<sup>141</sup> “E ridevo felice di restare intatto ogni volta che lei si ritirava” (M 256) [“And I laughed happy to remain intact each time she withdrew herself”].

<sup>142</sup> The topos of braid-cutting is widespread in Italian literature, occurring precisely between beloveds in texts such as Ugo Foscolo’s *Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1817), Niccolò Tommaseo’s *Fede e bellezza* (1840), Ippolito Nievo’s *Confessioni di un italiano* (1867), Igino Ugo Tarchetti’s *Fosca* (1869), Matilde Serao’s *La mano tagliata* (1912), and Elsa Morante’s *Menzogna e sortilegio* (1948).

<sup>143</sup> After failing his exams, Alessio spends the summer being tutored by his sister, in an effort to retake them and be promoted. However, he misses the exams while holed up in the brothel. When he leaves, he finds a new, younger group of boys who are leading a new movement to write “Un codice d’Amore” [a code of Love] which abolishes “prostituzione [in tutti i sensi] e tradimento” [prostitution (in all senses) and betrayal] (which includes “la possibilità di rapporti fisici occasionali, mossi da impulsi frivoli, da leggerzze di desiderio o, comunque, da passeggiere simpatie sessuali” [SVIII.69, M295] [the possibility of casual physical relationships, inspired by frivolous impulses, by insubstantiality of desire, or, however, by transient sexual attractions]). Punishment? Death.

such as Zobeida's story whose reduction in the *Mondadori* edition has been met with enthusiasm.<sup>144</sup> As I mentioned earlier, Alessio cuts off this story, impatient to appropriate her narrative style and replace her coming of age story with his own, Vittorini reduces her story to "brevi cenni" (Panicali *Vittorini* 123) ["brief signs"], and the critics praise his choice while refusing to read the implications of her tale or of its truncation. To this end, Panicali's reading is particularly worthy of note—the censorship does not do enough, in her opinion, to manage Zobeida's disturbing, digressive presence: "Zobeida infatti, nonostante la loro soppressione, resta sempre una donna circondata di mistero. Anzi il suo mondo continua ad essere troppo equivoco; le situazioni in cui si trova troppo strane; i suoi incontri troppo teatrali" (*Vittorini* 123) ["Zobeida, in fact, regardless of their suppression, still remains a woman surrounded by mystery. On the contrary, her world continues to be too equivocal; the situations in which she is found, too strange; her encounters, too theatrical"]. This "troppo," the excess of Zobeida is an obstacle to the criticism, something to be suppressed and surpassed. Taking Vittorini's and Tarquinio's advice, critics have almost entirely moved beyond the body, which means the *macchia di sangue* ["stain of blood"], despite its prominent return at the text's conclusion, falls within their blind spot. Only by moving *al di là*, beyond the erotic letter of the text, can one come to a deeper, political meaning:

In ogni caso, *come si vede*, i due solariani apparivano responsabili di qualcosa che andava *al di là della semplice, innocua pornografia*. Nelle pieghe del loro anticonformismo, *s'intravedeva* una trasgressione ideologica e culturale profonda, che non poteva sfuggire a chi solo leggesse con un minimo di consapevolezza (Greco 101 emphasis mine)<sup>145</sup>

[In any case, *as one can see*, the two Solarians appeared responsible for something that went *beyond simple, innocuous pornography*. In the folds of their anti-conformism, *one could catch a glimpse* of a deep ideological and cultural transgression, that could not escape those who read with even a minimum of awareness].

Greco's comment—with its passive "come si vede" ["as one can see"] and "s'intravedeva" ["one could catch a glimpse"]—seeks to impose a specific analytical frame, with the threat that anyone who does not see the political behind the pornographic lacks even "un minimo di consapevolezza" ["a minimum of awareness"]. There is a violence to Vittorini, Greco, Hemingway and other critics, as they tell readers—with a variety of hostile metaphors—to push out the false woman's body in the name of the true meaning of the text, as Felman, Spackman and Teresa de Lauretis all argue; but an understanding of the full violence of such a hermeneutical gesture can be gleaned from within the text itself, through Tarquinio, and his stain of blood. By way of conclusion, then, I turn to the *macchia*, to read the violence as well as the subversive possibility inscribed within it.

Encountering each other at the impromptu funeral procession for a nameless girl who has committed suicide, Tarquinio shows Alessio a blood-stained handkerchief, silencing Alessio

<sup>144</sup> For example, Bonsaver writes: "a positive exclusion was the 'Storia di Zobeida,' a long story-within-the-story narrated by the prostitute which is little more than a failed attempt at an erotic fable in the style of *Arabian Nights*" (*Vittorini* 56).

<sup>145</sup> The other Solarian is Enrico Terracini, whose story was censored along with *Il garofano rosso*.

with ‘proof’ of Giovanna’s loss of virginity. Having lost the literal flower to Zobeida and the symbolic flower of Giovanna’s devotion, he finally loses control of the narrative that shares its name—as Tarquinio inquires about the lost *garofano*, *Garofano rosso* is silenced by a single mark. Similarly, the mark of the censor, which violates the integrity of Vittorini’s authorship, becomes the sign under which the texts are read and through which that integrity is (re)constituted: with all their complex, contradictory twists and turns, the two versions of *Garofano* are reduced to the coherent, unitary truth of Vittorini, so that nothing else about it can be said.

The *macchia*—like the bronze statue—falls victim to this interpretive bias, as the conclusion is ignored in favor of a reading of “il ragazzo senza nome,” [“the nameless boy”] who puts the political narrative back on track with his ‘revolutionary’ discourse and who represents the eighth installment’s “nucleo centrale e ideologicamente più rilevante” (Rodondi 79) [“central and ideologically most relevant nucleus”]. Crovi, however, in a plot summary does mention the incident, if somewhat incorrectly, “Subito dopo il romanzo si chiude: sulla confidenza di Alessio a Torquato [sic] circa la sua avventura con Zobeida e sulla confidenza di Torquato [sic] ad Alessio circa l’avvio di un suo legame con Giovanna” (179) [“Immediately afterwards the novel ends: with Alessio confiding in Torquato [sic] about his adventure with Zobeida and with Torquato [sic] confiding in Alessio about the start of a bond with Giovanna”].<sup>146</sup> Fiorillo comments on the final description as well, but only in that it reveals information about Vittorini’s editing practices. However, she does draw attention to a textual resonance between the *macchia di sangue* that ends the book “in modo allusivamente crudo e tronco,” [“in an allusively crude and truncated way”] and “l’esplicita anticipazione verbale,” [“the explicit verbal anticipation”] (77) in Tarquinio’s letter, a connection which, if read outside this author-centric framework, unsettles the accepted reading of the ending.

As I mentioned above, to Alessio and to the critics, the bloody *fazzoletto* unequivocally signifies Giovanna’s seduction by Tarquinio—thanks, in part, to her pregnancy in *Giochi di ragazzi*.<sup>147</sup> However, the bloodstain is even less forthcoming than Tarquinio’s commentary, “Perché ti dovrebbe dispiacere se sono stata una sera da Giovanna?” (SVIII.75) [“Why should it bother you if I was at Giovanna’s one evening?”], which only becomes more vague in the 1948 edition: “Non deve dispiacerti se sono così con Giovanna” (M303) [“It shouldn’t bother you if I’m like that with Giovanna”].<sup>148</sup> Both these comments are ambiguous, only barely sketching Tarquinio’s side of the story (to say nothing of Giovanna’s). Even taking for granted that the blood is hers, we know nothing of how it came to be there: with or without her consent. Yet hidden in plain view, we find support for the latter.

Alessio’s “vita di favola” works very much according to the medieval principle *nomina sunt consequentia rerum*. He calls his idealized Giovanna, “Diana,” until his erotic thoughts overwhelm him and he calls her Zobeida. And Zobeida, the Caliph’s wife in *1001 Nights*, keeps her exotic name until Alessio’s domestic fantasies lead him to start calling her Giovanna. Alessio’s conquest of Zobeida earns him the name Abu Hassàn—a merchant from the *1001*

<sup>146</sup> I will return to Crovi’s bizarre lapsus regarding Tarquinio’s name in a moment.

<sup>147</sup> One curious change between *Solaria* and Mondadori makes Alessio himself less sure of his own interpretation of the stain. Whereas in *Solaria* he understands and covers his face (SVIII.75) in Mondadori, he only *thinks* he understands and covers his mouth, physicalizing the silencing gesture imposed upon him by the stain: “Allora io credetti di capire e mi portai una mano alla bocca” (M303) [“Then I thought I understood, and I brought a hand to my mouth”].

<sup>148</sup> Tarquinio’s justification works according to Irigaray’s hom(m)o-sexual economy, as one woman is exchanged for (in his words), “that other one”: “Non hai avuto quell’altra, tu?” [“Didn’t you have that other one?”] (303).

*Nights* who, according to Alessio's friends, is able to sleep with the Caliph's wife for a night (SV66, M209).<sup>149</sup> Interestingly, Tarquinio has no nickname, but instead, has a rather suggestive namesake: Tarquinius Sextus, rapist of Lucretia.<sup>150</sup> In fact, such a connection is reinforced by Tarquinio's explicit endorsement of rape in a 'happy' story of a violated girl:

Io pensavo alla ragazza come a un'assassinata. Pensavo di esser solidale con lei nell'odiare quell'uomo. E invece la sentimmo parlare all'indomani di lui come ogni donna parla di suo marito. Credo che nulla di meglio potrebbe capitare alle ragazze, e anche alle nostre signorine di città, di una cosa così, solo che esse non sarebbero tanto semplici, credo, e si attaccherebbero al furtivo, al segreto (161).

[I thought of the girl as if she had been murdered. I thought I was united with her in hating that man. And instead we heard her talking about him the next day in the way that every woman speaks about her husband. I think that nothing better could happen to girls, and even to the young ladies of our city, than something like this, only that they wouldn't be so simple, I think, and would cling to the furtive, to the secret].<sup>151</sup>

This is the story Tarquinio tells in order to justify his claim about the originary *macchia*. Thus, Fiorillo's 'explicit verbal anticipation' of the concluding physical *macchia* carries a violent charge, one which is intensified by the event preceding Tarquinio's 'confession': the funeral of a girl who, according to the gossip, has committed suicide after her boyfriend abandoned her for her decision to maintain her chastity. Here, then, perhaps, Diana has become Lucretia: within the blood that so 'obviously' signifies Giovanna's broken hymen one can read not just the sign of sexual conquest but of suicide.

However, in Tarquinio's words, rape is the logical extension of the active-passive gender dynamic and, by way of justification, he claims that women, essentially, are asking for it by nature:

Tu credi che riesca loro, dico alle donne, offensivo aspettarsi una cosa così. *Ma io ho letto in un libro che non è vero*. Esse non si aspettano nulla di meglio, e se si chiudono, se non cominciano mai loro è perché in fondo si augurano qualcosa di cruento (160 emphasis mine)

[You think that they, I mean women, find it offensive if you expect something like that. *But I've read in a book that isn't true*. They expect nothing better, and if they close themselves up, if they never begin, it is because, in the end, they want something bloody].

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<sup>149</sup> Other names extracted from a storytelling tradition include Alessio's maid, Maritornes who shares a name with Don Quixote's. Both are waitresses and providers of "favori erotici" (35n.55) ["erotic favors"]. Rodondi confirms through a comment by Eugenio Montale, that Maritornes, in fact, is from Don Quixote (87).

<sup>150</sup> As noted above, Jed's project is to "examine the extent to which the legends of the rape of Lucretia and the vindication of her honor by Brutus are reproduced in the practice of philology" (11).

<sup>151</sup> In the English translation, Tarquinio's assertion is domesticated. Instead of claiming that raped city girls would be secretive about their conquests, the English translation claims that their 'secret' activity would be falling in love: "they would fall in love, furtively and secretly" (76).

Tarquinio's comment about the source of his knowledge is telling: he read in a book that female desire is a function of male desire—a lesson he may have learned thematically from Freud or structurally from any Western narrative: “a story demands sadism,” de Lauretis claims (*Alice Doesn't* 132), and whether a woman's name is Zobeida or Giovanna, Diana or Lucretia, whether she is a princess or a slave or the sphinx, “she *must either consent or be seduced into consenting to femininity*” (134). This seduction, that leaves behind the stain of corporeal and textual violation, is what underwrites the oedipal plot, be it psychoanalytic, philological or literary, operating as each does according to the binary of “castrated/whole,” “violated/pure,” “incomplete/complete.” Yet that scene of violence must be repeatedly performed with each critical gesture. Here, to the long list of attempts to censor Zobeida, I add one more, one that extends into *Conversazione*, as Silvestro reflects (at the urging of his mother) on his own sexual awakening: he, like Tarquinio, claims to have learned about women by *reading*—specifically *1001 Nights*: “*Mille e una notte* in special modo.” Just as Vittorini urges readers in the preface to take Zobeida not as an actual woman but as an *idea* of a woman, Silvestro reminds us that even if a sexual awakening à la *Arabian Nights* appeared to be real, it is only literature: “Uno può ricordare anche quello che ha letto come se lo avesse in qualche modo vissuto” [“One can also remember that which he has read as if he had in some way lived it”]. In this way, by pointing to the fictionality of *Garofano*, *Conversazione* asserts its own status as Vittorini's *vero libro* [“true book”]. But one can also read these repeated attempts at neutralizing Zobeida as a testament to the strength of her threat. In order to arrive at the intact meaning, to tell the story of an antifascist climax (or simply sexual difference), text and woman must be censored and castrated again and again.

A final observation: I suggested that the name Tarquinio offers the possibility for feeling the full weight of the violence of interpretation. In what can only be described as a Freudian slip, Crovi tries to take another step away from the rape narrative that has been thus far hidden in plain sight by converting Tarquinio into Torquato, with a suggestive allusion to Accetto or Tasso, two writers who had their own notable relationship to censorship. However, in one sentence when Crovi directly quotes the text, letting it speak rather than his own fantasy, the effect is jarring: “La battuta allusiva di Torquato al passaggio delle ragazze della Casa del Sofà: ‘Tarquinio ha gridato a loro che qualcuno aveva un garofano rosso per chi di esse si fosse chiamata Giovanna’” (180) [“Torquato's allusive joke as the girls of the *Casa del Sofà* passed by: ‘Tarquinio yelled to them that someone had a red carnation for the one among them who was named Giovanna’]. Tarquinio, then, becomes a source of self-transgression, the political figure whose name carries a violent, erotic subtext: with one hand he obscures the violent conflict that he himself has enacted, ending the narrative as he discards the bloody cloth that silences Alessio and blinds the critics to all but a single interpretive possibility; and on the other hand, he underlines its inescapability, offering the possibility for any number of unauthorized readings. *Garofano* starts with an oppositional logic: between political boundaries of “noi” [us] (Fascists) and “borghesi” [“bourgeois”] (31). But at the end, a different struggle is taking place, one that is less clear-cut but no less violent as texts are completed with the sign of censorship: in the bloody, illegible representation of the encounter between a man and a woman.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have considered emblems of conversion: *Garofano* and the *macchia* as the emblem of censorship under fascism; *Conversazione* and the statue as the emblem of translation as antifascism. These emblems, when selectively plotted together as a macro-conversion, produce Vittorini, emblem of an entire generation's "traumatic" conversion. Panicali claims that *Conversazione* "porta le tracce di un trauma che ha scosso le sue certezze, sia politiche, sia letterarie" (Vittorini 154) ["carries the traces of a trauma that shook his certainties, both political and literary"]. And we recall Ferme's assertion about Vittorini's intellectual growth, which he describes as "emblematica dell'evoluzione e dei cambiamenti traumatici che la cultura e la politica del Fascismo provocò in molti dei suoi seguaci nei circoli intellettuali" (144) ["emblematic of the evolution and of the traumatic changes that the culture and policies of Fascism provoked in many of its followers in intellectual circles"]. In these studies, the un glossed notion of trauma, it would be fair to say, refers to a catastrophic event. However, as will become more explicit in the next chapter, my reading imbues trauma with a psychoanalytic valence, taking advantage of recent trauma theory by Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra, based on the understanding that Freud developed in the later stages of his career, in particular in essays such as "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." Here, then, I argue that as the critics "metonymically blur" Vittorini and his texts in an effort to fashion a linear conversion narrative out of the multiple, contradictory and, at times, discontinuous threads, their motivation goes beyond a generic desire for a coherent story. Instead, I argue that they attempt to mitigate this tension—not just of a single author-*oeuvre*, but of an *entire generation*—in order to 'heal' the trauma, to contain it, as it were, between Crocean parentheses.<sup>152</sup>

The incentive for leaving in place an emblem such as Vittorini is great; however, as I hope my chapter has convincingly argued, the benefits of unsettling them through the lens of censorship and translation are greater. First, by unsettling the traditional syntax of censorship and/of translation *under* fascism, space can be given to contaminated, contaminating narratives that have been reassuringly 'converted'—restored to a state of (political, textual, sexual) integrity. In addition, the transformations of and in *Garofano* and *Conversazione*—and from *Garofano* to *Conversazione*—suggest that the fundamental dependence on a stable notion of absolute sexual difference (male/female, uncastrated/castrated) in underwriting political and textual conversions ultimately works not to reinforce but to contaminate the operative binaries. As (feminist) poststructuralism has shown, and indeed as we have seen, the "plot" of sexual difference is itself unstable, and as such, it contaminates the textual and political transformations it was meant to reinforce. Ultimately, if we hope to be able to narrate any of these transformations, it will not be by constraining them into a traditional linear trajectory, whereby one reciprocally reinforces the other but, instead, by reading their contaminations.

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<sup>152</sup> I discuss David Ward's parallel between the structure of conversion narrative and Croce's formulation of fascism as a parenthesis in Chapter One.



## Chapter Three.

### Beppe Fenoglio: Resistances to Conversion

#### 3.1 Narrating Johnny, Beppe and the “Fractioned Snake Almost as Large as Long”

In the overarching structure of this dissertation, Chapter Three stands apart from a biographical perspective: while Chapters Two and Four consider antifascist ‘converts’—Elio Vittorini and Curzio Malaparte—here I engage with an author who, by all accounts, resisted fascism from childhood, Beppe Fenoglio (1922-1963). According to an anecdote told by his teacher and fellow partisan, Pietro Chiodi, long before Fenoglio’s participation in the armed *Resistenza*, the pen—or rather his refusal to wield it—served as his instrument of resistance; when asked to write a composition in praise of Mussolini’s regime, “La pagina rimase bianca” (as cited in *Lettere* 199) [“The page remained white”].<sup>153</sup> Not all the critics interpret Fenoglio’s biography in terms of a burgeoning antifascist conscience; biographer and critic Francesco De Nicola has argued that Fenoglio’s “aversion” to fascism was apolitical, based on “ragioni individuali e istintive” [“individual, instinctive motives”], and he is not alone (*Come leggere* 17).<sup>154</sup> However, regardless of whether critics locate Fenoglio’s antifascism in specific beliefs or abstract ideals, the question of his political conversion is never at issue, as it is in the scholarship of Vittorini and Malaparte.

Conversion, however, continues to play a central role in this chapter, both as it relates to the themes of *Partigiano Johnny*, and to its textual afterlife. To offer the briefest of summaries, *Partigiano* tells the story of a young man who, having left the Italian army following the September 8<sup>th</sup> armistice, is hidden by his family in a house in the hills. Frustrated by his life of translating English poetry, contemplating the landscape and thinking about women, Johnny disobeys his parents’ order to stay in the house and goes into the city of Alba. He becomes increasingly involved in the local stirrings of unrest, until he ultimately decides to find the mythical partisans who are reportedly hiding in the hills. Johnny joins the first group he meets, a communist brigade but, not feeling *truly* a partisan in their midst, later affiliates himself with a Badoglian group, whose political views and middle class status are more similar to his own. All the while, he feels his true partisan identity can only be fulfilled by joining an English division; yet even after doing so, he still struggles to feel he has been completely transformed. Here, then, I read *Partigiano* as a conversion narrative. Although it lacks what John Freccero defines as that genre’s requisite moment of “radical discontinuity” (265)—a crucial point which I will expound upon at length—Johnny’s political transformation is a primary focus of *Partigiano* and indeed, the motor of the plot.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Chiodi’s article, “Fenoglio scrittore civile,” from which this anecdote is drawn, has served as an important source for subsequent accounts, in particular Maria Antonietta Grignani, Davide Lajolo and Scaglione. See *Lettere* 197-202. All translations mine, except where noted.

<sup>154</sup> According to Philip Cooke, “with a few notable exceptions such as Guagnini (1975), Falaschi (1976) and Bigazzi (1983), the historical interpretation of Fenoglio’s writings is not shared by other literary critics. . . . The majority of critics now see Fenoglio’s achievement in his apparent ability to transcend the reality of his times in his writings” (3).

<sup>155</sup> For more on Freccero’s understanding of conversion as it relates to these narratives of the rise and fall of fascism, see Chapters One and Two.

In addition to my analysis of Johnny's *political* conversion, I argue that *Partigiano* must be discussed in terms of *textual* conversion, that is, censorship (the transformation between a "complete" and "incomplete" narrative) and translation (the transformation between an "original" language and a "foreign" one). For *Partigiano Johnny*, one of Italian literature's most famous stories of the *Resistenza* is not a completed novel but "a series of drafts, different stages of a vast undertaking, an interplay of competing, ultimately incompatible, versions" (Meddemmen "Review" 998). Thus, one of the primary scholarly concerns has been to *convert* these 'incompatible' manuscripts into a coherent whole, to cure the contamination of the archive and restore authorial order. Moreover, this "incompiuto capolavoro" (Beccaria 10) ["unfinished masterpiece"] is written in both Italian and English—at times fused together in an idiolect described by the neologism *fenglese* ["Fenglish"].<sup>156</sup> Here, as the scholars try to order the undated manuscripts—which each contain a varying degree of *fenglese*—a central strategy has been to chart the trajectory of Fenoglio's writing process by hypothesizing which language was *Partigiano*'s "original" and which was the translation, and whether the *fenglese* represents a mid-point between English and Italian, or an endpoint of his linguistic exploration. Interlingual translation, then, becomes part of the strategic effort to convert *Partigiano* from a series of incomplete manuscripts to a coherent text.

*Partigiano* tells the story of Johnny's struggle to forge a new identity in the wake of the armistice. As such, one of the central concerns of the novel is an act of *intralingual* translation—for in order to adopt this new role, one must be able to define it. As Roberto Galaverni aptly states, "Partigiano infatti è una nuova figura ma insieme una 'nuova parola,'" (104) ["Partigiano is, in fact, a new role but also a 'new word'"]. Eduardo Saccone's definition, extrapolated from the pages of *Partigiano*, provides a useful point of entry:

'Partigiano, come poeta, è parola assoluta,' aveva annunciato Cocito all'inizio di *PJI* (410);<sup>157</sup> ed è precisamente all'interpretazione di questa assolutezza che si rivolgono il pensiero e il desiderio di Johnny, la cui cultura fornisce al suo immaginario parametri mitici in arcangeli, puritani, greci, traci, assiri, persiani...ciò che conta comunque in questi significanti è l'aura', la funzione di allontanamento dal presente e contingente, che può determinarsi indifferentemente nel puro, nel grande, nel solenne, nel monumentale, nel sublime (*Fenoglio* 179-180)

['Partisan, like poet, is an absolute word,' Cocito announced at the beginning of *PJI* (410); and it is precisely towards the interpretation of this absoluteness that Johnny's thoughts and desire turns, Johnny whose culture provides his imaginary with mythic parameters of archangels, puritans, Greeks, Thracians, Assyrians, Persians...that which matters however in these meanings is the 'aura,' the function of taking distance from the present and the contingent, which can

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<sup>156</sup> Eduardo Saccone is credited with the coining of the neologism, repeated by others like Isella (1501) and Roberto Galaverni, who describes Fenoglio's language as "né inglese, né italiano, né tanto meno di ibridazione tra le due lingue" (101) ["neither English nor Italian nor a hybridization of the two languages"].

<sup>157</sup> *PJI* is the acronym for what philologist Maria Corti labeled the "first" *Partigiano* manuscript. *PJ2* accordingly refers to the second *Partigiano* manuscript and *UrPJ* refers to what she understood to be the "origin" or the "ur" of the whole *Partigiano* project.

position itself indifferently as the pure, the grand, the solemn, the monumental, the sublime].

Not only is the heroic “aura” the source of the meaning of “partisan,” but it also glosses *Partigiano* as well, as critics draw from a similar lexicon of grandeur. One recent instance is this assertion by Giulio Ferroni: “si rivela sempre più ‘grande’ e assoluta l’opera di Beppe Fenoglio” (“Fenoglio” 9) [“the work of Beppe Fenoglio reveals itself to be ever more ‘grand’ and absolute”].<sup>158</sup> Thus, I argue that just as the author’s fascist stain metonymically infects his text, Barbara Spackman asserts, by eliding the distance between proper name and *oeuvre*, Fenoglio’s “antifascist aura” similarly has produced over-determined textual analyses. These readings are characterized, not by the disparaging “slurring” that Spackman identifies in the case of texts by authors with “fascist connections,” but by a laudatory ‘dizzying.’ This is not to say that scholarly views of *Partigiano* are in concert; yet even in readings that sustain diametrically opposite theses, *Partigiano*’s greatness is a recurrent assumption (Saccone *Fenoglio* 201).

Take then, by way of example, a seemingly straightforward passage in which philologist Maria Corti summarizes one version of *Partigiano*, commonly referred to as *PJI*:

riguarda eventi bellici che iniziano dall’imboscamento di *Johnny* in collina nell’autunno 1943 con la successiva entrata nel raggruppamento comunista della Brigata Garibaldi comandato dal *Biondo* (*tenente Rossi*) nella zona fra Murazzano e Mombarcaro. Il 3 marzo 1944 ha luogo la battaglia di Carrú, dopo la quale *Fenoglio* ritorna a casa. In settembre *risale* la collina, ma questa volta *si unisce* agli azzurri o badogliani sotto il comando di Nord e agli ordini diretti di *Pierre* (*Piero Ghiacci*), capo del presidio di Mango. Terribile l’inverno in isolamento sulle colline a Cascina della Langa (*pagine drammatiche e splendide*). *PJI* si chiude con il reimbandamento e con la battaglia di Valdivilla del 24 febbraio 1945 (*Nuovi* 428-9 emphasis mine)

[It has to do with the wartime events that start with *Johnny* hiding in the hills in the fall of 1943, with his successive entry into the communist grouping of the Garibaldi Brigade, led by *Biondo* (*lieutenant Rossi*) in the area between Murazzano and Mombacaro. On March 3, 1944, the battle of Carrú takes place, after which *Fenoglio* returns home. In September, *he goes back up* into the hills, but this time *he joins* the blues or Badogliani under the command of Nord and the direct orders of *Pierre* (*Piero Ghiacci*), leader of the “presidium” of Mango. Terrible the winter in isolation in the hills of the *Cascina della langa* (*dramatic and splendid pages*). *PJI* concludes with the rejoining of the brigade and with the battle of Valdivilla of February 24, 1945].

Opening with a reference to Johnny (the fictional protagonist), the summary splits parenthetically into two parallel narratives, placing the fictional and (parenthetical) historical

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<sup>158</sup> Gian Luigi Beccaria speaks of Fenoglio’s “grandezza assoluta di scrittore inimitabile” (9) [“absolute greatness as an unimitatable writer”] and later describes Johnny’s commitment to the partisans not as “scelta ‘ideologica’ di valori, ma scelta di libertà come condizione assoluta dell’esistenza” (117) [“an ‘ideological’ choice of values, but a choice of freedom as an absolute condition of existence”]. I will discuss the implications of his ahistoricizing reading subsequently.

leaders side-by-side: “Biondo (tenente Rossi)” [“Biondo (Lieutenant Rossi)”]. In the next sentence, Fenoglio is named as the subject but ambiguity returns in the following one, with the generic third-person, “risale” [“he goes back up”] and “si unisce” [“he joins”]. Then, with the reference to “Pierre (Piero Ghiacci)” literature and history are again side-by-side, and only with the final sentence does “literature” return with the explicit mention of *PJI*. As I follow the shifting subject, the ‘dizzying’—or confusing—effect of Corti’s summary becomes clear. ‘Dizzying,’ it bears noting, also means to instill amazement, which makes it a suitable counterpart to Spackman’s “slurring”—for even in a plot summary, Fenoglio’s literary mastery is reiterated, if parenthetically “(pagine drammatiche e splendide)” [“(dramatic and splendid pages)”]. Nonetheless, in light of the blurring taking place over the course of the paragraph, one can legitimately ask which book is being discussed: are the “dramatic and splendid pages” *Partigiano*’s or history’s? Indeed, if a certain literal logic tends to favor the former, one might point out that parentheses have been reserved for the ‘historical’ thread of Corti’s summary. Built upon the dizzying encounter between the pages of history and the pages of literature, this plot summary typifies the way in which the stories of Fenoglio-*partigiano* and *partigiano* Johnny are entangled, to the point where some critics openly declare their “reciprocità strettissima” (Galaverni 95) [“very close reciprocity”]. In order to begin to analyze how this precarious “reciprocity” between a ‘pure’ author and a ‘contaminated’ text has shaped the body of scholarship on Fenoglio, I will offer a brief outline of Fenoglio’s literary production and his initial, posthumous critical fortunes.

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As a prolific writer who published relatively little during his lifetime, Fenoglio’s literary renown, it is generally agreed, began posthumously:<sup>159</sup> his partisan novel, *Una questione privata* (1963), [*A Private Affair* (2007)] earned high praise from Italo Calvino, and *Partigiano Johnny* catalyzed a decade-long effort to organize his *oeuvre*.<sup>160</sup> As Dante Isella has observed, the resulting *Opere critiche* (1978)—an unparalleled endeavor in modern times—puts Fenoglio in a

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<sup>159</sup> Fenoglio’s first major publication, the short story collection, *I ventitre giorni nella città di Alba (VGA)* (1952) [*The Twenty-Three Days in The City of Alba*], took on many different forms over the two years of negotiations between Fenoglio and his editors at Einaudi, Italo Calvino, Natalia Ginzburg and (their boss) Vittorini. Initially proposed by Fenoglio as seven short stories and a *novella*, *La paga del sabato*, this volume, number eleven in Vittorini’s “Gettoni” series, eventually included twelve short stories. See *Lettere* 22-56 for the epistolary evidence. For a summary, see Isella’s “Schede critiche” in *Fenoglio: romanzi e racconti*. Scaglione includes testimony from Fenoglio’s friends and family (142-156). *La malora* (1954) [*Ruin*], also published in the “Gettoni,” marked the end of Vittorini and Fenoglio’s collaboration. See Chapter One. See also *Lettere* 66-78 for related correspondence. After moving to Garzanti, Fenoglio published the novel *Primavera di bellezza (PdB)* (1959) [*Springtime of beauty*], but not without long negotiations that resulted in the production of two substantially different versions of *Primavera*. See *Lettere* 90-105. The most notable differences are in terms of the beginning and end: the first version starts from the childhood of the protagonist, Johnny, and ends as he is getting ready to join the partisans; the second contains only flashbacks to his childhood and ends with his death on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1943, while fighting the fascists with a Communist/“Red”/Garibaldian partisan formation. Both versions are included in Corti’s *Opere*. These publications attracted media attention, both positive and negative; in the heated political climate of the 1950s, the communists were quick to attack stories that represented the *Resistenza* in less than heroic terms (*Lettere* 59n.2). For the controversy surrounding *VGA*—“an often highly ironic representation of the partisan movement” (Cooke 3)—see Scaglione 161-166, *Lettere* 55, 59-61, 200, Mondo xi, Grignani 120. For the varied responses to *La malora* and *PdB*, see Mondo xi and Maria Grignani 20.

<sup>160</sup> Fenoglio’s collection *Un giorno di fuoco*, which included *Una questione privata*, was published shortly after his death by Garzanti in the same series as *Primavera*.

rarified literary stratum (x).<sup>161</sup> Indeed, the three-volume, four-thousand page *Opere* has, without doubt, provided a wealth of scholarly material, which has, in turn, produced a lengthy critical bibliography. However, it is my contention that the criticism has been effectively shaped by two of the earliest interpretations: Calvino's 1964 preface to his own *Il Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (1947) [*The Path to The Spiders' Nest*] and Corti's "Il partigiano capovolto" (1968). *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum*: Calvino effectively wrote the preface to Fenoglio scholarship; Corti proceeded to turn it upside down.

In his preface, Calvino looks back on his own partisan novel before reflecting on the desolate state of Resistance literature. Lamenting the dispersion of literary energy after the initial postwar frenzy of publications, Calvino exempts Fenoglio from this trend, as he bestows a singular honor on *Una questione privata*:

Il libro che la nostra generazione voleva fare, adesso c'è, e il nostro lavoro ha un coronamento e un senso, e sola ora, grazie a Fenoglio, possiamo dire che una stagione è compiuta, solo ora siamo certi che è veramente esistita: la stagione che va dal *Sentiero dei nidi di ragno* a *Una questione privata* (xxiii)

[The book that our generation wanted to write, now exists, and our work has a coronation and a meaning, and only now, thanks to Fenoglio, we can say that a season is completed, only now we are sure that it truly existed: the season that goes from *The Path to The Spiders' Nest* to *A Private Matter*].

Heaping high praise on the newly published text and its recently deceased author, Calvino casts Fenoglio as a Dantean figure, preserving his memory of the Resistance and committing it, faithfully, to paper: "c'è la Resistenza proprio com'era, di dentro e di fuori, vera come mai era stata scritta, serbata per tanti anni limpidamente dalla memoria fedele... ed è un libro di parole precise e vere" ["It contains the Resistance just how it was, inside and out, true as it never had been written, clearly preserved for so many years by his faithful memory... and it is a book of precise and true words"].<sup>162</sup> Concluding his thoughts on *Questione*, Calvino writes, "È al libro di Fenoglio che volevo fare la prefazione: non al mio" (xxiii) ["It is for Fenoglio's book that I wanted to write the preface: not for mine"], and it seems he got his wish. Mariarosa Bricchi dubs Calvino the "father" of those Fenoglio scholars who concentrate on structural, thematic or cultural concerns in Fenoglio's work (119)—and not without reason: for even today his preface is evoked with regularity.<sup>163</sup>

Then, five years later, interest in Fenoglio surged with the publication of *Partigiano Johnny*, which resurrected Johnny, a partisan who died with a smile on his face in the final sentence of *Primavera di bellezza*. On its heels came a declaration that turned the scholarship upside down, as Corti claimed that the latest addition to Fenoglio's *oeuvre* was neither *true* nor

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<sup>161</sup> Fenoglio's archives were organized under the supervision of Corti. For its contents, organized in twenty folders and ten notebooks, which then became the *Opere*, see *SCN* appendix.

<sup>162</sup> Grignani adds a personal dimension to Calvino's words, attributing them, in part, to "la commozione per la fine prematura dell'amico" (124) ["the emotional feelings about the premature death of his friend"].

<sup>163</sup> For example, Cooke 1, Pedullà "Resistenza" 16, Bricchi 119, Isella ix, Innocenti 66, Grignani 124, Lajolo 175-179. Even Corti, who as we will see, is considered the methodological opposite of Calvino, uses language which resounds with his Dantean rhetoric: "memorie drammatiche che si cingono nel ricordo di un alone visionario" (*Nuovi* 425) ["dramatic memories encircled by the recollection of a visionary halo"]. I will consider Bigazzi's ties to Calvino subsequently.

*absolute*—it was not even *truly* Fenoglio’s. Rather, it was “uno stupefacente ibrido testuale” [“a stupefying textual hybrid”], created by its editor, Lorenzo Mondo (*Nuovi* 17).<sup>164</sup> This declaration inaugurated an impressive philological effort, whose centerpiece was *Partigiano*: with her team’s assistance, Corti proposed a philological ‘cure’ for Mondo’s hybrid, presenting, if not the complete *Partigiano*, then at least the available manuscripts in their ‘proper’ order.<sup>165</sup> Today most philologists outside of Corti’s circle have come to agree on an alternative hypothesis for the manuscripts’ arrangement.<sup>166</sup> Nonetheless, Bricchi’s claim that she is the “mother” of those scholars who focus on linguistic, philological questions (119) is supported by the fact that her diagnosis of *Partigiano*’s “contamination” has become a watchword in the criticism.<sup>167</sup>

Bricchi’s metaphorical division of father-Calvino versus mother-Corti is but one iteration of the fault-lines running through Fenoglio scholarship: yet despite her naturalizing metaphor, she takes pains to justify that “evident” schism, reiterating that the outcome of the scholarly custody battle is “obvious” and “inevitable,” for example that philologists gravitate towards *Partigiano* (120). Later, when an athletic metaphor substitutes the parental one, *Partigiano* and *Questione* score points from their scholar ‘friends.’<sup>168</sup> This switch in metaphor, however, should be taken symptomatically, as it at once speaks to, and defuses, a tension that Fenoglio scholarship has grappled with from the outset: for the ‘child’ produced by these metaphorical ‘parents,’ would be at once “apocryphal” and “pure,” an embodiment of the central paradox that has propelled the criticism since its inception. The game metaphor allows Bricchi to avoid this paradox by maintaining oppositional (but deceptively friendly) terms, in keeping with the general trend of Fenoglio scholarship, which is rather self-conscious of its riven state.<sup>169</sup> To this

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<sup>164</sup> According to Grignani, Mondo’s *Partigiano* was “un testo invero del tutto provvisorio” (125) [“truly a completely provisional text”].

<sup>165</sup> Her theory, which I will discuss at length, never achieved definitive status; in fact, it generated an intense polemic in the 1970s and 80s: “Far from clarifying the course of the writer’s development once and for all, the publication of the *opera omnia* provoked the criticism of a number of scholars, who accused Corti and her colleagues of a biased and inaccurate approach to the arrangement of the texts” (O’Healy 43). The “dating” question effectively divides those who view *Partigiano* as the starting point of Fenoglio’s narrative production or its apex (*Nota* 1207-8), basically Corti and her followers sustaining the former, and Eugenio Corsini, Giovanni Falaschi, Saccone, Bigazzi, Isella and Cooke, the latter. The most accessible summary of this debate—and indeed, the only detailed account available in English—is found in Chapter One of Cooke’s *Fenoglio’s Binoculars, Johnny’s Eyes*. Cooke argues in favor of the late dating thesis. *Partigiano*’s notes in the *Opere* also recount the debate (up through its publication in 1978), and comes down on the side of Corti.

<sup>166</sup> “Despite Corti’s suggestions there is now, it is fair to say, a reasonable consensus amongst scholars that all the texts were written in the 1950s and formed part of a projected narrative which would, in Fenoglio’s original design, have told the story of Johnny’s life from his childhood through to the end of the Resistance (Cooke “Review” 220).

<sup>167</sup> Isella rejects Corti’s hypothesis, yet uses her judgment of Mondo’s contamination as a justification for his own new edition (xi). Claudia Caffi describes Mondo’s edition in the same terms as the notes of the *Opere*, calling it “il risultato della contaminazione fra due diverse e variamente lacunose stesure” (6639) [“the result of the contamination between two different and differently incomplete versions”].

<sup>168</sup> “Se lo schieramento è dunque tra gli amici di Johnny e gli amici di Milton, gioca, da principio, a favore del primo l’eccezionale assetto linguistico, mentre assegna punti al secondo la catturante geometria compositiva” (121) [“If the grouping is therefore between the friends of Johnny and the friends of Milton, the exceptional linguistic equipment plays, from the beginning, in favor of the former, while the captivating compositional geometry scores points for the latter”].

<sup>169</sup> In addition to the “dating question,” another debate that I will address in more depth is the question of whether *Partigiano* and Fenoglio’s texts that thematize the *Resistenza* are to be read historically or transhistorically. According to Cooke, who summarizes the debate somewhat schematically in the introduction to his monograph, this latter thesis, which he seeks to contest, is the generally accepted one. In addition, there is the question of the source of Fenoglio’s genius, and along with it, which is his masterpiece, a choice which is usually between *Partigiano*

end, Gian Luigi Beccaria's description of the violence of the scholarly conflict is more appropriate: "L'avanzata di 'metodi' l'un contro l'altro armati, una collettività 'critica' talvolta aggressiva, le fustigazioni vicendevoli (il filologo al critico, il critico al filologo)" (9) ["The advancing of 'methods,' one armed against the other, a 'critical' collective at times aggressive, the reciprocal flagellations (the philologist of the critic, the critic of the philologist)"].

As scholars attempt to 'cure' Fenoglio's "unfinished masterpiece," the lexicon of censorship is never far: if "Partigiano... is an absolute word," the same cannot be said for *Partigiano*, "un romanzo incredibilmente instabile per costituzione," (Galaverni 87) ["an incredibly unstably constructed novel"]. In the strictest sense, one cannot discuss *Partigiano* at all, insofar as, "Come si sa, non esiste un testo concluso che risponda al titolo di *Partigiano Johnny* e nemmeno esiste nel cantiere fenogliano tale titolo" (Corti *Nuovi* 427-8) ["As it is known, a completed text that goes by the title *Partigiano Johnny* does not exist, nor does the title exist in Fenoglio's warehouse"]. Here Corti's words foreground the constitutive lack on which *Partigiano* scholarship is based: *Partigiano* itself. Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* speaks well to the problems plaguing the *Partigiano* archive: within the word "archive" he locates "two orders of order: *sequential* and *jussive*" (1). As Carolyn Steedman explains, for Derrida this *arkhe* (Greek for archive) is "a place where things begin, where power originates, its workings inextricably bound up with the authority of beginnings" (1159). And indeed, as we will see, the various attempts to order *Partigiano*'s various manuscripts *sequentially* will serve as a site for disciplinary struggles, that is, attempts to bring the text under a certain academic *jurisdiction*. Derrida's considerations on the archive, which he extends to the function performed by the title, are also particularly relevant to these untitled manuscripts referred to as *Partigiano Johnny*: "Let us note this at least on account of the archive: to recall there could be no archiving without titles (hence without names and without the archontic principle of legitimization, without laws, without criteria of classification and of hierarchization, without order and without order, in the double sense of the word)" (40). As such, Corti's passive, impersonal "as it is known," does more than announce the reiteration of a commonplace: it is symptomatic of the scholarly efforts to bring this "double sense" of order ("sequential" and "jussive") to these disorderly—untitled—manuscripts. As we will see, interpellating a group of people 'in the know' is a part of the attempt to discipline this text, to circumscribe it within the reassuring confines of disciplinary boundaries, here, philology.

Published in three rather different editions (Mondo 1968; Corti-Grignani 1978; Isella 1992), *Partigiano* resists unequivocal formulations of the most basic sort: for it is not clear when it was written, in what sequence, or even in which language.<sup>170</sup> What can—or *must*—be said, nonetheless, is that an 'original' *Partigiano* does not exist: "il romanzo piú popolare di Fenoglio

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(favored by those who find Fenoglio's genius to be in his innovative use of language) and *Questione* (favored by those who are interested in his narrative structure). For a summary of this debate see Bricchi (who favors the latter) or Gabriele Pedullà (who favors the former).

<sup>170</sup> Although Corti's interpretation of *Partigiano Johnny*, closely based on her dating of the manuscripts, has been contested by the majority of Fenoglio scholars, the *Opere* remains the authoritative edition, and indeed, offers the *only* published version of texts many texts, such as *UrPJ* and *PdBI*. As such, citations of Fenoglio's texts come from Corti's *Opere*. A further note on citations: pages 1-366 refer to *UrPJ* (the odd numbers refer to Fenoglio's 'English,' and the even numbers to Bruce Merry's facing-page Italian translation, which I will cite where specifically relevant); pages 389-924 to *PJI*; pages 925-1203 to *PJ2*; pages 1257-1426 to *Primavera di bellezza – Prima redazione*; pages 1427-1568 refer to *Primavera di bellezza – seconda redazione*. The notes to *PJI* and *PJ2*, from pages 1207-1226, were written by Grignani. I will have occasion to draw attention to variants between the versions of *PJI* and *PJ2* in particular. Where relevant, I will discuss these in the text. However, even where I do not have specific observations, I will make both versions available (one in the text and one in the footnote).

non esiste nella veste dell'edizione postuma" (*Opere* "Nota" 1207) ["Fenoglio's most popular novel does not exist in the garments of the posthumous edition"]. Indeed, Fenoglio shares authorship with *Partigiano*'s numerous editors, starting with Mondo, "autore del titolo in quanto il dattiloscritto era anepigrafo" (Corti *Nuovi* 420) ["author of the title insofar as the typescript was untitled"]. Mondo not only titled *Partigiano*, he effectively 'created' it by combining the two incomplete manuscripts he was given, "along the temporal axis of the events more or less annalistically related" (Meddemmen "Fenoglio" 93), and as such, critics have maintained that Fenoglio cannot take all the credit for the accolades that followed its publication (De Nicola *Come leggere* 26). Despite the enduring popularity of Mondo's *Partigiano* (or perhaps because of it), the editor generally earned grudging scholarly appreciation at best: "Può sorprendere allora che, dopo un lavoro ultradecennale svolto dagli studiosi, *Il partigiano Johnny* venga ancora proposto ai lettori nell'originale edizione del 1968, certo ricca di suggestioni ma condannata dai filologi per l'arbitrarietà del suo montaggio" (De Nicola *Come leggere* 25) ["It might be surprising then that, after more than ten years of work undertaken by the scholars, *Il partigiano Johnny* is still proposed to the readers in the original edition of 1968, certainly richly suggestive but condemned by the philologists for the arbitrariness of its editing"].<sup>171</sup> However, his enduring presence, as Derrida explains, should not surprise: "the first archivist institutes the archive as it should be, that is to say, not only in exhibiting the document but in *establishing* it. He reads it, interprets it, classes it" (*Archive Fever* 55).

Ironically, by producing *Partigiano* through "una curiosa contaminazione tra le parti di due diverse stesure dattiloscritte giacenti nel Fondo Fenoglio (PJ1 e PJ2) e entrambe in vario modo lacunose" (*Opere* "Nota" 1207) ["a curious contamination between the parts of the two different typescript editions, lying in the Fenoglio Foundation (PJ1 and PJ2) and both of which were incomplete in different ways"], the order instilled by Mondo is that of 'arbitrariness,' a mark which has proved indelible: no definitive *Partigiano* has replaced the only version commercially available for nearly a quarter-century,<sup>172</sup> and Stuart Hood's *Johnny The Partisan* works from the Mondo edition despite being published in 1994.<sup>173</sup> Regardless of how often critics call it "apocryphal," Mondo has established the *Partigiano* archive, with potentially dire consequences: *Partigiano Johnny*—"the text most people associate with Fenoglio, the only text a great many non-professional readers seem to have read" (Meddemmen "Fenoglio" 93)—is synonymous with Fenoglio. According to the blurring biographical approach, a threat to the existence of the text spreads metonymically, contaminating the authentic, proper status of the author.

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<sup>171</sup> Take, for instance, Isella's parenthetical acknowledgment of Mondo's contribution: "L'edizione critica ha documentato la natura contaminatoria del testo vulgato nel 1968 (cui però va riconosciuto il merito di aver saputo conquistare a Fenoglio un vastissimo consenso di lettori)" (xi) ["The critical edition has documented the contaminated nature of the text distributed in 1968 (which, however, must be recognized for having conquered for Fenoglio a wide approval among readers").

<sup>172</sup> In 1992 Isella published a new edition as part of his *Romanzi e racconti*, which was then published by itself under the title *Partigiano Johnny*. Isella's *Partigiano*, like Mondo's, includes parts of *PJ1* and *PJ2*. Although Isella, unlike Mondo, documents his decision, he was not spared a scathing critique from Cooke, seconded by Meddemmen (and echoed by Corti). I will return to this secondary polemic subsequently.

<sup>173</sup> Hood, in his preface, acknowledges that the text he is translating is "an editorial conflation."



Here, then, is my own proposed order: the balance of Part I is devoted to a description of *Partigiano* as it is known today, which will segue into Part II, a presentation and a critique of two well-established philologically underwritten versions of the text, by Corti and Roberto Bigazzi respectively. The over-arching conversion narrative that will inform my reading of the philological criticism will be the attempts to ‘cure’ Fenoglio’s contaminated masterpiece, “to bring order out of chaos” (Meddemmen “Review” 998), in both senses of the word offered by Derrida—to establish a *sequence* and, in so doing, to submit the text to the jurisdiction of a specific discipline. Through the philological approach, a double conversion is, in effect, performed: as the journey of the author or the character provides the sequence in which *Partigiano*’s manuscripts are—and are *not*—to be read, the contaminated text is restored to legibility; thus, it assumes its place as an authentic part of Fenoglio’s corpus, and, therefore, as an exemplary piece of antifascist, Italian literature that, in turn, works to discipline the rest of the field. I will then consider the decontextualizing approach to *Partigiano*, which, when taken to its extreme by Beccaria, strips away the text’s historical, philological context and projects it into the realm of transcendent, literary truth. Here, the specific historical trauma of the *Resistenza* and the material state of Fenoglio’s archive become the outcasts of legibility. As I examine each curative operation, I will continue to put pressure on the ideological work that makes it appear to be an objective, unquestionable standard and will ask what is rendered illegible as a consequence—and to what ends.<sup>174</sup> My review of the criticism will be interspersed with close readings of the text, as suggested by my dual aims: to question the assumptions underwriting these conversions, in order to show how each relies on and reinforces certain hierarchical understandings of interdisciplinary relationships between literature and, in particular, history and philology; and to offer readings of various textual elements that have been rendered ‘illegible.’ As I suggest that these critical conversions, when taken individually, limit our understanding of *Partigiano*—suppressing repetition, filling in discontinuities, rationalizing contradictions—I will neither discard them as “false” nor dismiss their importance. As I argue along with Dominick LaCapra that, “narrativization is closest to fictionalization in the sense of a dubious departure from, or distortion of, historical reality when it conveys relatively unproblematic closure” (15-16), I will read these narrativizations of *Partigiano* symptomatically, in order to consider how their logic participates in, and is contradicted by, the paradoxical textual dynamics.<sup>175</sup> Finally, in Part III, many of these critiques will come together in my reading of one of legibility’s perennial outcasts, as Shoshana Felman has argued: women.<sup>176</sup> As I problematize their constitutive exclusion from the partisan genre, I will perform a close reading of the relationship between Johnny and Dea, a female partisan, not only to show how she destabilizes his political and gender identity, but also to suggest how her role in the narrative dynamics may open up a space to read *Partigiano Johnny* outside the binaries that have thus far conditioned it.

## **Opere: Complete and Incomplete**

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<sup>174</sup> As Shoshana Felman reminds us: “By guiding the reader, through the extirpation of ‘explicable’ facts, to the ‘correct’ perception, to the literal ‘proper,’ so-called objective level of textual interpretation, academic criticism conditions the very norms of ‘legibility’” (*Woman* 29).

<sup>175</sup> Or, to argue with Peter Brooks, “The closure demanded by narrative understanding—the closure without which it can have no coherent plot—is always provisional, as-if, a necessary fiction” (282).

<sup>176</sup> See Chapters One and Two.

Mutilated bodies litter the pages of *Partigiano*, yet the wounds of *Partigiano*'s "tormented" manuscripts (Corti *SCN* 24) have been of central, scholarly concern. Corti describes the first layman attempt at organizing Fenoglio's *oeuvre* as no more than a tourniquet, meant to stave off a hemorrhage (*SCN* 51). Still, even after her decade-long intervention, *Partigiano* was unable to stand on its own. Or, better, it was unable to stand up against Fenoglio's words: according to an often-cited piece of epistolary evidence, Fenoglio had been planning to write "the story of Johnny's life from his childhood through to the end of the Resistance" (Cooke "Review" 220). In a letter dated January, 1957, Fenoglio told Calvino of a work in progress, which would narrate the period from 1940-1945. Although Corti and her team believe such a book may exist, they have only found "ambigue e discontinue tracce" (*Opere* "Nota" 1209) ["ambiguous and discontinuous traces"]. One possibility is that *Primavera di bellezza*, which recounts Johnny's story as a soldier in the Italian army from 1940 to the armistice of 1943, was meant to be the first part of Fenoglio's "big book." However, in regards to the *Resistenza*, the three remaining manuscripts tell at once too little of Johnny's life, and too much, as a brief summary will show.

Spanning from Johnny's return to the Langhe from Rome (September 1943) to the battle of Valdivilla (February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1945), *PJ1* is the longest of the three manuscripts. That narrative arc is less cohesive than might appear; as Saccone extrapolates from the notes of the *Opere*, *PJ1* is "un testo acefalo... mutilo... e forse anche incompiuto" ("Tutto Fenoglio" 166) ["a decapitated text... mutilated... and perhaps also incomplete"]. *PJ2*, which covers much the same ground as *PJ1*—often in the very same words—shares similar health problems: it is decapitated and discontinuous ("*PJ2*, oltre che acefalo, è anche lacunoso" [Isella 1584] [*PJ2*, aside from being decapitated, is also discontinuous"]); and its ending, according to some, is "mutilated" (Corti *Nuovi* 429). Temporally, *PJ2* starts later than *PJ1*—just after Johnny leaves the Garibaldini and joins the Badogliani (Winter 1944)—and also eliminates many characters and episodes (Grignani 37-44, Isella 1587). Although both manuscripts end on the same date, their conclusions differ—in *PJ2* the battle is interrupted by an ellipsis and the text jumps to the end of the war: "Johnny si alzò col fucile di Tarzan ed il semiautomatico... Due mesi dopo la guerra era finita" ["Johnny stood up with Tarzan's rifle and the semiautomatic... Two months later the war was over"].<sup>177</sup> Finally, *Ur Partigiano* (*UrPJ*), the third manuscript in terms of historical coverage, spans from March-April 1945 and describes Johnny's involvement with a division of English soldiers. A definition of this nine-chapter manuscript (numbered II-X)—written in "una forma corrotta e personalissima di inglese" (Bricchi 127) ["a corrupt, extremely personal form of English"]<sup>178</sup>—has proved elusive (Saccone *Fenoglio* 55). Scholars generally agree, however, on *UrPJ*'s

<sup>177</sup> The ellipsis' significance—whether it alludes to Johnny's death or indicates a further textual injury—has been another point of contention. See Isella's summary of the debate, weighted towards his emphatic conclusion that the ending is complete and unequivocally signifies Johnny's death (1588-1591). In a letter to Garzanti from September 1958, Fenoglio outlines the events that will take place in the second part of his project (*PdBI* being the first part), which concludes with Johnny's death (*Lettere* 95). This, however, can only work towards confirming Johnny's death at the end of *PJ2*, if one agrees with the theory that it was, in fact *PJ2*, that Fenoglio was writing in the late 1950s. (Corti argues that he interrupted it in the early 1950s.) I will offer my own interpretation subsequently.

<sup>178</sup> A note in regards to the citations of all three manuscripts, but in particular *UrPJ*: I will not single out grammatical "errors" with the traditional "sic." All "mistakes" in the citations are Fenoglio's own, and, to the best of my ability, not typos.

fragmentary status: “non è un testo autonomo, ma lo spezzone terminale di una narrazione” (Isella 1501) [“it is not an autonomous text, but a final piece of a narration”].<sup>179</sup>

These three decapitated, discontinuous, inconclusive manuscripts are a far cry from the totalizing partisan chronicle Fenoglio claimed to be writing. In fact, it is impossible to follow the story of Johnny through these texts according to any sort of linear, calendrical logic. For example, Saccone, Bigazzi and Isella have argued that *PJI* and *UrPJ* are interdependent at the level of plot, despite numerous incompatibilities—for instance, the fact that *UrPJ* is written in *fenglese* and *PJI* only has the occasional English word or sentence.<sup>180</sup> On the contrary, *PJ2* is considered logically incompatible with *UrPJ*, as it effectively unwrites it by jumping to the end of the war (and possibly to Johnny’s death).<sup>181</sup> As such, each of the three published *Partigiano Johnny*s has had to address the difficulties posed by these manuscripts: for in order to tell Johnny’s story from the armistice to the end of the war, both *PJI* and *PJ2* are necessary; however, a significant portion of the manuscripts covers the same historical period and, thus, in order to obtain calendrical coherence from Johnny’s adventures, parts of each must be omitted.<sup>182</sup> While Mondo and Isella obey Johnny’s calendar, Corti’s *Partigiano* follows an order of a different sort, as she explains: “per necessità di ordine filologico e di servizio ai futuri studiosi, si dovettero tenere separate le varie stesure di ogni opera e quindi anche del *Partigiano Johnny*; il che non favorì certo la lettura da parte del lettore medio” (*Nuovi* 428) [“out of necessity for philological order and for service to future scholars, the various drafts of each work and therefore also of *Partigiano Johnny* had to be kept separate; which certainly did not favor readability on the part of the average reader”]. Here, then, one can argue that the efforts to *order Partigiano* have only resulted in further *disorder*, a proliferation of publications, each of which is called *Partigiano Johnny*. Corti and Isella are both quick to declare the inexistence of the ‘real’ *Partigiano*; yet by maintaining Mondo’s “apocryphal” title, they play a double game, at once taking advantage of *Partigiano*’s established position *and* emphasizing its contaminated status in order to claim superiority for their own. This is, in part, achieved by interpellating a group of authorized readers who are in the same, narrow (or, to use the Althusserian lexicon “obvious”<sup>183</sup>) know, setting them apart from those who are *not*. Lacking the proper “instruments,” the “average reader” accepts Mondo’s “contaminated” text and, in his or her ignorance, cannot help but enjoy

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<sup>179</sup> For other such descriptions, see Bricchi 127, Corti *Nuovi* 425 and *SCN* 62. Merry, one of *UrPJ*’s first readers, and its translator, appears to be alone in his assertion that “it is a novel in its own right” (7).

<sup>180</sup> Saccone maintains that *UrPJ* requires *PJI* for logical continuity (*Fenoglio* 56). Isella is more emphatic: “La giunzione tra l’ultimo capitolo di *PJI* e il primo di *UrPJ* è perfetta, senza soluzione di continuità” (1501) [“The connection between the last chapter of *PJI* and the first of *UrPJ* is perfect, without a need to resolve their continuity”]. Bigazzi’s theory about their continuity is discussed in Part II. One obvious structural incompatibility is the chapter numbers (*PJI* ends with chapter 56 and *UrPJ* starts with chapter 2), which Saccone dismisses, since Fenoglio’s numbering habits have proved to be “fluid” elsewhere (*Fenoglio* 61-2).

<sup>181</sup> Corti describes the dilemma presented by the three manuscripts: “Il lungo frammento, che inizia con la battaglia di Valdivilla e si interrompe alla vigilia della liberazione di Torino, appare per argomento il preciso seguito dell’ultimo capitolo, il 56 di *PJI*, mentre non può collegarsi al finale di *PJ2*, che è diverso” (*SCN* 62) [“The long fragment, that starts with the battle of Valdivilla and cuts off at the vigil of the liberation of Turin, seems the precise continuation of the last chapter—56 of *PJI*—in terms of content, while it cannot be joined to the conclusion of *PJ2* which is different”].

<sup>182</sup> Mondo was not confronted with the problem posed by *UrPJ*, as it was discovered subsequently by Corti; Isella, in his 1992 edition, ignored the text altogether. Although Isella documents his “splicing” operation (and includes the additional chapters in an appendix), Cooke strongly “condemns” the “wretched operation Isella has carried out on Fenoglio’s masterpiece” (“Review” 219) and claims it is no different than Mondo’s approach.

<sup>183</sup> “It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are ‘obviousnesses’) obviousnesses as obviousnesses” (172).

it: “Ovviamente il lettore comune non ha gli strumenti per valutare criticamente un’operazione del genere, soprattutto quando si vede offrire come romanzo godibile un testo invero del tutto provvisorio” (Grignani 125) [“Obviously the average reader does not have the instruments to evaluate critically an operation of the sort, above all when offered as an enjoyable novel a truly completely provisional text”].

Isella, too, institutes a parallel hierarchy in terms of his own edition, with respect to Mondo’s—whereas Mondo’s reader is condemned to ignorance, his is given a choice:

Mentre al lettore interessato dei problemi testuali viene garantito, col sussidio del *Dossier...*, di conoscere la seconda redazione al completo e gran parte della prima, il lettore comune potrà leggere il romanzo nella sua unità progettuale, senza soggiacere all’inganno di un’illusoria omogeneità e finitezza (1583)

[While the reader interested in textual problems is guaranteed, with the help of the *Dossier...*, to have knowledge of the entire second version and a large part of the first, the average reader can read the novel in its projected unity, without being subjected to the fraud of an illusion of homogeneity and completeness].<sup>184</sup>

After the publication of Isella’s *Partigiano*, Corti reasserts the authority of her own, using economic metaphors to equate Isella’s “legibility” with profitability and the “sacrifice” of philological integrity:

A favorire la leggibilità è giunta l’edizione einaudiana della ‘Pléiade’ a cura di Isella e già citata, che *ha pagato anch’essa però uno scotto*, e piuttosto forte, cioè *il sacrificio* di vari blocchi della seconda redazione, relegati in appendice a favore dei venti capitoli della prima; criterio certo discutibile filologicamente, a un dato punto, per offrire un racconto abbastanza organico su del materiale lacunoso e incompiuto, *qualche dazio all’ingresso nel paese della comunicazione evidentemente va pagato* (Nuovi 428 emphasis mine)

[In favor of legibility came the Einaudi edition *Pleiade*, edited by Isella and cited above, which *also paid a price*, a rather hefty one, that is the *sacrifice* of various parts of the second version, relegated to the appendix in favor of the twenty chapters of the first; criteria that is certainly debatable in philological terms, at a certain point, to offer a fairly organic story out of discontinuous and incomplete material, *evidently some tariffs must be paid to gain entrance into the land of communication*].

Here, then, in the face of the disorderly proliferation of *Partigiano Johnnys*, a hierarchy of readers emerges, moving from the serious scholar (humorously coined “un ipotetico Lettor Sotutto” [“a hypothetical know-it-all reader”] by Paolo Valesio),<sup>185</sup> to the interested reader, to the average-but-enlightened reader and, finally, to the ignorance-is-bliss reader. The norms of

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<sup>184</sup> One might add that the opportunity to be an “interested” reader is only granted with the deluxe edition; those willing or able to pay only for a paperback, must content themselves with being “average.”

<sup>185</sup> In his review of the *Opere*, Valesio astutely notes its general inaccessibility, particularly in regards to the absence of footnoting, in such an expensive edition of such a lengthy text (“Le maccheronee”).

legibility vary—and accordingly, which manuscripts are included and excluded—but each *Partigiano* is established according to the same mechanism which converts the incomplete, contaminated text into a coherent, linear narrative.

As I consider three of the most influential critical conversion efforts, I will argue that these conversions share an attempt to manage trauma. In the case of the philological approaches (Corti's translation-conversion and Bigazzi's Dantean-conversion), the trauma is "historical" in a double sense: philologists at once confront the trauma recounted in *Partigiano's* pages—the trauma of the *Resistenza*—and the trauma of its (missing) pages. Yet these interrelated traumas have a single cure. The individual *Partigiano* manuscripts are treated as censored, either by Fenoglio's hand or by the (archivolithic<sup>186</sup> force of the) archive, and thus inflicted with a wound that can (indeed must) be localized and healed by philologists who work—like the psychoanalyst—as a detective "pressing his patients for the symptomatic clues, reaching back to uncover a moment of trauma, a scene of crime that makes sense of all subsequent events" (Brooks 270). By uncovering this traumatic moment, order is restored to the manuscripts and to the story of the *Resistenza* contained within its pages. The third conversion I will consider (Beccaria's decontextualizing conversion) repudiates the problem posed by the philological and historical context and their attendant historical traumas. These critics—uninterested in the history of/in the manuscript—focus on the representation of a metaphysical wound and, as such, privilege a notion of "structural trauma."<sup>187</sup>

My reading will show how *Partigiano* at once demands and refuses narrativization according to these schemas, ultimately in order to suggest that it be read *for* and *through* its resistances to conversion, not in spite of them. However, it bears stating at the outset that as I critique the limits of these strategies, I am not suggesting that *Partigiano's* resistances to conversion render the text or the *Resistenza* unnarrable and thus, unknowable. As such, I take advantage of recent trauma theory, based on the understanding of trauma that Freud developed in the later stages of his career, in particular in essays such as "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," where the wound is not "a simple and healable event" (Caruth 4), but rather an experience which is "not dated or, in a sense, punctual" (LaCapra 81)—but not, for that reason, ahistorical.<sup>188</sup> As I theorize *Partigiano's* resistances to conversion, I will stress that they *do not* foreclose the possibility of narrating the *Resistenza*. Rather, as Caruth has argued:

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<sup>186</sup> Another word for the Freudian death drive, theorized in Derrida's *Archive Fever* from his reading of "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (esp. 9-13).

<sup>187</sup> Here, I use the categories theorized by LaCapra: "One may argue that structural trauma is related to (even correlated with) transhistorical absence (absence of/at the origin) and appears in different ways in all societies and all lives" (76-77); "historical trauma is specific, and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it" (78).

<sup>188</sup> For a concise overview of the two main branches of contemporary trauma studies through the late 1990s, see Herman Rapaport's review of Derrida's *Archive Fever*, entitled "Archive Trauma," esp. 76-77 n.2. An important source for my project, LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, was published subsequently, as was Ruth Leys', *Trauma: A Genealogy*, which offers a foucauldian approach to the history of trauma, from Freud to Caruth. Leys is highly critical of Caruth, calling her selective reading of Freud "a ruse" (288). Caruth's *Unclaimed Narratives* is, in fact, highly influential in trauma studies; it is a main source of Leake's understanding of trauma (along with Derrida) in her study on Silone, and it also has helped shape my own. The implications of Leys' critique of Caruth for my project are important. First, it stresses the importance of considering multiple, at times, conflicting, theorizations of trauma, most importantly, from across various disciplines, for example Caruth's literary emphasis versus LaCapra's historical focus: indeed, LaCapra's *Writing History* provides an important corrective to Caruth's victim-perpetrator conflation, by theorizing the distinction between "structural" and "historical" trauma. Second, it emphasizes the need for vigilance, in one's own writing as in one's reading, to treat sources with both respect and suspicion.

I would propose that it is here, in the equally widespread and bewildering encounter with trauma—both in its occurrence and the attempt to understand it—that we can begin to recognize the possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential (that is, no longer based on simple models of experience and reference). Through the notion of trauma...we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at restituting it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not (11).

In this way, I will argue that these resistances are themselves the testimony of the trauma of the *Resistenza*, and that we, as readers, can participate in the texts' struggles and therefore testify with them. In the words of Felman, "Because trauma cannot be simply remembered, it cannot simply be 'confessed': it must be testified to, in a struggle shared between a speaker and a listener to recover something the speaking subject is not—and cannot be—in possession of" (*Woman* 16). My understanding of reader *participation* does not, however, presume to dictate a psychological response, but instead I suggest that readers take advantage of *Partigiano*'s repetitions and discontinuities, that they read—rather than discipline—its resistances to conversion. Thus, woven into my discussion of three scholarly textual conversions, I offer analyses that seek to treat the text in its own words: "They moved very tiredly, in spite of the freshness and airiness of the morning, like a fractioned snake almost as large as long, through highly cultured patches of land" (145). This oxymoronic metaphor—a snake is, by definition, a long, continuous animal—used to describe a group of English soldiers and Italian partisans, speaks to the way I will treat *Partigiano*'s narrativity: discontinuous and repetitive, yet part of the same beast; moving tiredly, yet nonetheless in motion. Furthermore, the use of snake (albeit a rather unsnake-like snake) as a metaphor for Johnny and his companions reverses the traditional good/evil symbolism that critics have identified in the text, whereby the fascists "sono identificati più delle volte nella metafora maligna del serpente, del rettile" (Beccaria 105) ["are identified most of the time with the evil metaphor of the serpent, the reptile"], and, as such, it serves as a warning against superimposing binaries notions on a text and on a context whose dynamics are more complex.

### 3.2 Converting Beppe, Johnny and the *Partigiani*

#### '*Une petite affaire toute sérieuse:*' Translation and *Resistenza*

Maria Corti's seminal study on Fenoglio, *Storia di un continuum narrativo (SCN)*, begins by likening the scholar who maintains a balance between philology and criticism to a tight-rope walker (9). Metaphoric intentions notwithstanding, the fine line between philology and criticism does not inaugurate a balancing act but announces an opposition whose outcome is predetermined: a philologist by training, Corti clearly privileges the former. Indeed, when the metaphorical thread appears in the title of Chapter Three as "Il filo della cronologia nel labirinto dei manoscritti" (57) ["the thread of chronology in the labyrinth of the manuscripts"], it no longer marks that ambivalent—even dangerous—tightrope that hovers "sul vuoto e sulla morte" (9) ["at the edge of the abyss and of death"]. Instead, it is redeployed as a tool: with the promise of calendric order, it traces a life-saving path (if one culls the allusion to Ariadne, Theseus and

the Minotaur’s labyrinth) through the chaos of Fenoglio’s manuscripts. Along this line, Corti presents the *Opere* as an attempt to unify two apparently disparate bodies of work—Fenoglio’s publications and his manuscripts and typescripts (“Premessa” ix)—and to demonstrate the “arduous” nature of a writer’s task (*Opere* “Nota” 1207); however, as we will see, Fenoglio’s voyage may have been a struggle, but it is recounted as a “conventional narrative” with “a putatively naïve or pure beginning—something construed as a variant of full presence, innocence or intactness—[which] is lost through the ins and outs, trials and tribulations, of the middle only to be recovered, at least on the level of higher insight, at the end” (LaCapra 52). As a result, however, Johnny’s story becomes rather unconventional: according to the order in the *Opere*, it begins at the end (*UrPJ*: March-April 1945), proceeds to the beginning—which, starting with chapter 15, is also a “middle” (*PJI*: September 1943-February 1945)—and, finally, loops back to a later “middle” that concludes with a different end (*PJ2*: Winter 1944-April 25<sup>th</sup> 1945).

As I focus on Corti’s attempt to order the unpublished *Partigiano*, we will see how the author—and, in particular, his self-commentary—is used to explain “the presence of certain events within a text, as well as their transformations, distortions, and their various modifications” (Foucault “Author” 128). According to an oft-cited confession to Calvino, Fenoglio wrote by translating: “Adesso ti dirò una cosa che tu non crederai: io prima scrivo in inglese e poi traduco in italiano” (as cited in Isella xvi) [“Now I will tell you something you will not believe: first I write in English and then I translate into Italian”], and it is precisely this ‘unbelievable’ phenomenon that Corti’s *Partigiano* confirms. As I review the translation-conversion narrative Corti uses to order the *Partigiano* manuscripts, we will see how she is encouraged by Fenoglio and, at least initially, by Johnny, both of whom are Anglophiles and avid translators.<sup>189</sup> Johnny’s definition of translation, articulated in *Primavera*, is rather traditional, pitting “original” writing against translating: “Johnny sospirò. ‘Ho sospeso. Lo scrivere originale, intendo dire. Ora traduco’” (1277) [“Johnny sighed. ‘I stopped. Writing originals, I mean to say. Now I translate’”]. For Johnny, translation does not measure up to “lo scrivere in proprio” (1278) [“proper writing”], and it is this view that Corti relies upon in her premise to the *Opere*, as she justifies her exclusion of Fenoglio’s translations as *non-creative*.<sup>190</sup> However, Corti does not wholly dismiss translation, insofar as she believes that the *Partigiano* project was produced through a series of self-translations, whereby Fenoglio used English “come scala per salire all’atto espressivo” (*SCN* 24) [“as a ladder to climb up to the expressive act”].<sup>191</sup> Thus, even while excluding Fenoglio’s translations of other authors from the *Opere*, Corti uses the stages of his interlingual self-translation to plot a narrative through the archival maze:

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<sup>189</sup> The primary scholarly contributions on Fenoglio’s interlingual translations are Mark Pietralunga’s *Beppe Fenoglio and English Literature: A study of the Writer as Translator*, and articles by Bruce Merry, translator of *UrPJ*, and John Meddemmen, who, in addition to editing *UrPJ* for the *Opere*, edited and wrote an introduction to Fenoglio’s translation of Kenneth Graham’s *The Wind in the Willows*, *Il vento nei salici*.

<sup>190</sup> Corti writes “Si stampa qui *l’intera opera creativa*, edita e inedita, *eschuse quindi* le moltissime traduzioni di testi prosastici e poetici” (ix emphasis mine) [“*The entire creative work*, published and unpublished, is printed here, *therefore excluded* the numerous translations of prose and poetry”]. Meddemmen, one of the more involved scholars in the field of Fenoglio’s activity as a translator, laments this decision, evoking translation’s traditional outcast status, “Shut out of the Edition, unprovided with the regulation wedding garment, should they be thrust utterly into the outer dark?” (88).

<sup>191</sup> Galaverni echoes this description, adding the umph characteristic of his metaphors: “L’inglese gli serve come rampa di lancio per scattar fuori il più energeticamente possibile e non voltarsi più indietro” (100) [“English serves him as a launching pad to jump off as energetically as possible and never turn back”].

Conquistato un discreto grado di bilinguismo, lo utilizza per un'operazione linguistico-stilistica rivolta a due esiti: una scrittura in inglese e una scrittura mista, entrambe concepite come fase privata, lavoro di cantiere in vista del passaggio a una scrittura finale quasi completamente italiana, dove il vocabolo inglese ci sia solo in casi di particolarissima connotazione (SCN 24)

[Having conquered a respectable degree of bilingualism, he uses it for a stylistic-linguistic operation directed towards two ends: an English writing and a mixed writing, both conceived as a private phase, work in the factory with an eye towards the passage to a final writing almost entirely in Italian, where the English word is there only in the case of an extremely specific connotation].

Translation 'proper' is positioned as the first rung in the ladder of Fenoglio's creative journey, but it is relegated to the apprentice phase, soon surpassed: "Tradurre per Fenoglio fu concepito presto come un noviziato allo scrivere" (SCN 23) ["Translating for Fenoglio was soon conceived of as an apprenticeship to writing"]. Indeed, in keeping with her exclusion of non-creative interlingual translation from the *Opere*, Corti casts this phase as "prehistory," claiming that Fenoglio's proper journey as writer begins with his return from the war, "carico di memore drammatiche che si cingono nel ricordo di un alone visionario" (*Nuovi* 425) ["full of dramatic memories that encircle him in a visionary halo"]. His transformation from apprenticeship to mastery, however, is predicated upon a transformation in Corti's discourse, as the word "translation" is, ironically, translated intralingually: whereas Fenoglio uses the word "traduzione" ["translation"] to describe his process, Corti paraphrases it as "stesura successiva in italiano" (Corti SCN 63 as cited in Saccone *Fenoglio* 59) ["successive draft in Italian"]. In fact, whereas Bigazzi and Galaverni use the terms "trascrivere," ["to transcribe"] "tradurre" ["to translate"] and "il trasferimento" ["the transfer"] interchangeably,<sup>192</sup> Corti relegates the word "translation" to the "irrelevant" apprentice phase, describing Fenoglio's move from English to Italian as "generale rifacimento stilistico" ["general stylistic revision"] a revision, and as an act of transference (SCN 63). In contrast to the non-creative, translation 'proper' excluded from the *Opere*, Corti maintains another notion of translation as transformation, closer to the vision articulated by contemporary translation theorists such as André Lefevere, Lawrence Venuti, Barbara Godard and Naomi Seidman.<sup>193</sup> The road thus paved, Fenoglio can travel from the "English" of *UrPJ*, to the "lingua ibrida" ["hybrid language"] of *PJI* (SCN 63), and finally to the Italian of *PJ2*, which is actually even *more* original than 'original' writing, to the extent that, "gli aspetti piú originali della lingua di Fenoglio vengono potenziati" (*Nuovi* 439) ["the most original aspects of Fenoglio's language get stronger"].

Corti's version of Fenoglio's story progresses from foreign to familiar, English to Italian: "c'è notevole calo dell'esuberanza e trasgressione linguistica, soprattutto nei riguardi della presenza di alcuni tipi di anglisimi" (*Nuovi* 439) ["there is a notable decline in the linguistic exuberance and transgression, above all in regards to the presence of some types of

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<sup>192</sup> "Proprio il trasferimento, ossia la traduzione in lingua italiana" (Galaverni 87) ["precisely the transfer, that is the translation into Italian"]; "Sembra proprio che Fenoglio stia trascrivendo (o traducendo)" (Bigazzi 146) ["It seems precisely that Fenoglio is transcribing (or translating)"].

<sup>193</sup> Seidman writes: "The notion of translation as transformation steers clear of the assumption that translation must proceed through a strict equivalence, a fidelity to original sources, if it is not to risk their absolute betrayal; transformation assumes rather that translation, as André Lefevere argues, is one mode of 'rewriting'" (10). See Lefevere, Godard and Venuti. For a reading of Godard and Venuti, see Littau.



Anglicisms”]. After a transgressive departure from Italian, Fenoglio leaves behind English, in order to return home to Italian, explicitly metaphorized as a journey by Galaverni “assieme a Johnny, Fenoglio trova un biglietto di andata e ritorno per l’Inghilterra (lo ripeto: di andata e ritorno, questo è importante)” (95) [“along with Johnny, Fenoglio finds a round trip ticket to England (I repeat: round trip, this is important)”]. However, for Corti and Galaverni this ‘loss’ is effectively registered as a gain: after Fenoglio’s voyage of ‘improper’ translation, he returns home to an improved Italian language.<sup>194</sup>

Thus far, I have shown translation to be the privileged—yet paradoxical—term around which Corti’s conversion of *Partigiano* is constructed. In order to maintain this conversion narrative, Corti must perform an ‘intralingual translation’ on Fenoglio’s practice of ‘interlingual translation,’ a move which gestures towards a significant casualty of her operation: the notion of translation—and of language—represented within the *Partigiano* manuscripts and operating between them. Indeed, translation is not only a thematic concern in *Partigiano*, but it also constitutes the English-Italian relationship that constitutes the narrative fabric, which Beccaria describes in terms of “una dinamica di sovrapposizioni, di influenze strutturali a livello non solo lessicale ma anche sintattico” (22-3) [“a dynamic of juxtapositions, of structural influences is created, not just at the lexical but also at the syntactical level”]. Indeed when we consider how translation functions in *Partigiano*, we see that it is not a stable transfer between equivalents but works in terms of Derridian *différance*: “the very term which signals not the opposition between two terms, be it the opposition between two languages, or two texts, but the shifting relations within each relation, and moreover, within ‘each term’” (Littau 83). Before looking at how translation manifests itself, I will consider a few passages where Johnny himself offers his considerations about translation. Then, following his ambivalent transformation from translator to partisan we can locate a tension which speaks to the contradictory understanding of translation within each manuscript and between them.

As I stated above, Johnny’s vision of interlingual translation is similar to Corti’s, as he subordinates it to “original writing” in *PdBI* and associates it with his marginalized political position in *PJI*. Forbidden by his family from leaving the secluded house where they have hidden him after the armistice for fear of his deportation, translation serves as a temporary distraction from the world beyond the window. However, his constant activity prior to September 8<sup>th</sup> (“Ora traduco: sto traducendo come un pazzo, conducendo tre versioni simultanee”) [1277-8] [“Now I’m translating: I’m translating like a crazy man, working on three simultaneous versions”]), fails to be the “life-saver” he had hoped:

Si trovò in pugno, ma come miracolosamente, il tomo delle tragedie di Marlowe. Si sedette con una forzata, smorfata determinazione, aprì e spianò il libro al principio della Famosa Tragedia del Ricco Ebreo di Malta. L’avrebbe tradotto, consumato la sera a tradurlo: non visivamente, ma con penna, l’avrebbe messo in carta con una scrittura elementare, minuziosa e calcata, la grafia come un ceppo di salvezza.

‘Sebbene il mondo pensi morto il Machiavelli

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<sup>194</sup>“Fenoglio fin dall’inizio aveva certo intenzione di riportare il suo originalissimo *fenglese*... all’interno del sistema linguistico italiano, ma sempre nel mantenimento sostanziale della sua natura espressiva irregolare, tutta tesa all’eccellenza e all’intensità” (Galaverni 87) [“From the beginning, Fenoglio certainly had the intention to bring his extremely original *fenglish* back within the Italian linguistic system, but always substantially maintaining his irregular expressive nature, all focused towards excellence and intensity”]. See also Grignani 44 and Bricchi 127.

L'anima sua è sol migrata oltr'Alpe;  
E, ora che il Guisa è morto...'

Springò in piedi, alto sul fuoco della miseria, dell'impossibilità, serrò il libro con uno schiaffo secco come se volesse schiacciarsi tra i fogli tutti i pidocchi di quella sua miseria (401)

[He found in his fist, but as if by miracle, the volume of Marlowe's tragedies. He sat down with a forced, grimaced determination, he opened and set the book to the beginning of the Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta. He would translate it, consume the evening translating it: not visually, but with a pen, he would have put it on paper with an elementary handwriting, miniscule and compressed, handwriting like a branch of salvation.

'Although the world thinks Machiavelli is dead  
His soul has merely migrated beyond the Alps;  
And now that Guisa is dead...'

He leapt to his feet, high on the fire of misery, of impossibility, he closed his book with a dry slap, as if he had wanted to crush between the pages all the fleas of that misery of his].

Johnny's initial decision to become a partisan is represented as an exchange between the translator's pen and the soldier's gun.<sup>195</sup> When Johnny's partisan captain asks him to serve as a translator, his response is unequivocal: "Johnny shrunk violently. 'Io non farò nulla di simile. La penna l'ho lasciata a casa e non ci penso a sintassi e grammatica. Per tutto il tempo che starò qui non intendo stringere in mano che un fucile'" (454-5) ["*Johnny shrunk violently*. 'I will do nothing of the sort. I left my pen at home and I do not think about syntax and grammar. For the whole time I'm here, I intend to hold nothing in my hand but a gun'"].

Despite the character's initial repudiation, *Partigiano* shows that translation is by no means an abstract literary concern but instead has a specific, historical relevance: the reversal of the German/English, ally/enemy binary that structured wartime relationships—as I will continue to explore in Chapter Four—is only one of many transformations. As the words German and English take on a new, post-armistice meaning, entire languages and nationalities become unstable signifiers, with life and death consequences. For example, the arrival of the Allies, which had been understood to be synonymous with victory, actually means more fighting: "And one of the new escort cried: 'Boys, the war is over!' and as all the others gaped at him, he explained: 'Didn't we ever say that the war was over when the Allied here?'" (53). Moreover, the English language, which Johnny equates with its literary tradition, falls from grace at the very moment Johnny begins his work as an interpreter:

The captain said, 'tis a very remarkable landscape.'  
'Something like Yorkshire,' hazarded Johnny out of very literary reminiscence.  
'Never been there,' dryly said Boxhal. 'You been there, lef?'  
'Where to?' awakened Whitaker. 'Yorkshire, Never.'

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<sup>195</sup> Gian Carlo Ferretti has described Johnny's "conversion" into a partisan precisely according to this movement: "dal libro alla pistola, da traduttore di Marlowe a giustiziere dei fascisti" ("Fenoglio-Johnny" 102) ["from the book to the gun, from the translator of Marlowe to the avenger of the fascists"].

Twas 4,30 and the world was sadness. [...] And in that sadness a nail-thought into the chilled Johnny's mind: 'These are poor Englishman. The poorness of these Englishman!' (9)

In the place of the glory of literature or of liberation, the text foregrounds England's role as a colonizer, as Némega offers Johnny the possibility to practice his English:

'Abbiamo qui fra noi due prigionieri evasi dai campi di concentramento. Sorry, non sono inglesi purosangue. Sono sudafricani. Un surrogato paracoloniaie,' commentò con un twist delle sue labbra magre e molto colorate.

...

Marchando alle cucine, Johnny incrociò Regis. 'Perché non mi hai detto mai che abbiamo due sudafricani?' gli disse rudemente. 'Scusa, ma chi se n'è mai fregato dei due sudafricani' (462)

['We have here among us two prisoners escaped from concentration camps. Sorry, they aren't pure-blooded English. They are South African. A paracolonial surrogate,' he commented with a *twist* of his thin and highly colored lips.

...

Marching to the kitchen, Johnny encountered Regis. 'Why didn't you ever tell me that we have two South Africans,' he said to him briskly. 'Sorry, but who ever gave a damn about two South Africans'.<sup>196</sup>

If 'proper' English serves to distinguish colonizers from colonized, even as both are fighting on the *same* side, it is a traitorous source of distinction between enemy and friend: Johnny warns Boxhall and Whittaker, "'Please abstain from speaking English aloud, for you'll be mistaken for Germans and at once sawed down by raffle'" (27).

As linguistic, geographical, political and interlingual boundaries collapse, a general crisis in signification results. In fact, in *PdBI*—as in *La pelle*—the armistice is described as a Babelic moment (1313), as the ability to interpret one's fellow Italians is put to the test. This need to decode the once-familiar is, in Claudio Pavone's analysis, a material consequence of the armistice:

gli italiani...si trovarono costretti a riqualificarsi reciprocamente, a richiedersi l'un l'altro nuove credenziali, a sforzarsi di capire chi fosse un complice e chi un

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<sup>196</sup> Despite Johnny's indignation that he had not been notified of the presence of the South Africans, he himself is condescending: "'How territorial do they both look!' pensò Johnny, inclinandosi su loro" (463) ["'How territorial do they both look!' thought Johnny, leaning over them"]. In *La pelle*, Captain Malaparte and his friend Jack—both francophiles—similarly lament the unintelligible French of the colonial soldiers: "Ad ogni ora del giorno, sul marciapiede del Caffè Caflisch, sostava una piccola folla di soldati e di marinai algerini, malgasci, marocchini, senegalesi, tahitiani, indocinesi, ma il loro francese non era quello di La Fontaine, e non riuscivamo a capire nemmeno una parola. Certe volte, però, tendendo l'orecchio, ci avveniva di cogliere a volo qualche parola francese pronunciata con l'accento di Parigi o di Marsiglia" (21) ["At every hour of the day, a small crowd of soldiers and sailors from Algeria, Madagascar, Morocco, Senegal, Tahiti and Inodchina would be standing about on the pavement outside the Caffè Caflisch, but their French was not that of La Fontaine, and we could not understand a word they said. Sometimes, however, if we strained our ears, we were lucky enough to catch a few French words pronounced with a Parisian or Marseillais accent" (20)].

perseguitato. Nessuno poteva prevedere più con sicurezza, secondo i vecchi canoni, il comportamento altrui (26)

[the Italians...found themselves forced to reciprocally redefine themselves, to ask one another for new credentials, to force themselves to figure out who was an accomplice and who was being pursued. No one could foresee any longer with any security, according to the old standards, the behavior of others].

In the context of civil war, the Italian language itself becomes a site of contention.<sup>197</sup> In one telling play-on-words, a prostitute in a brothel is singled out as a “whore” because she has a fascist boyfriend: “‘Ha l’amico nella repubblica, questa...’ ‘Puttana,’ disse Johnny con un sorriso liquido, molto graziosamente” (422) [“‘She has a friend in the Republic, this...’ ‘Whore,’ said Johnny with a liquid smile, very elegantly”].<sup>198</sup> Where prostitutes had been described as “‘le donne piú leali del mondo’” (420) [“‘the most loyal women in the world’”], the word “puttana,” here used as a synonym for infidelity, itself becomes “unfaithful.” Here, then, we are faced with the crisis of ‘proper’ Italian: indeed, one of the signs of a traitor is that he speaks Italian. As such, its ‘improper’ counterpart, dialect—rejected by the fascist regime’s *Riforma Gentile* as an impediment to national unity<sup>199</sup>—becomes an invaluable tool in establishing new boundaries, “the proof of proofs” (261) which unifies local groups of partisans. When encountering a stranger, Johnny warns his companion Ettore, “‘soprattutto, parlagli in dialetto e fatti rispondere in dialetto. E al primo dubbio, spara, spara, spara’” (815) [“‘above all, speak to them in dialect and make them respond in dialect. And at the first doubt, shoot, shoot, shoot’”].<sup>200</sup>

In order for Italy to move past the division and destruction of civil war, this shoot-first logic cannot be the ultimate solution. To this end, when a defeated fascist official asks Johnny and Pierre, “‘Ci sarà ancora un’Italia con voi?’” [“‘Will there still be an Italy with you?’”] their response is affirmative: “‘Certamente. Un’altra Italia, un’Italia a modo nostro, ma sempre Italia’” (632) [“‘Certainly. Another Italy, an Italy in our own way, but still Italy’”]. Consider, however, how the same answer is given in *PJ2*:

‘Posso figurarmi che possediate tutta l’Italia. Bene: che farete, ragazzi, dell’Italia?’

‘Une petite affaire toute serieuse,’ disse Johnny, e Pierre assentì con la sua inimitabile earnestness.

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<sup>197</sup> Fenoglio’s view of the *Resistenza* as a civil war was an unpopular perspective in the 1950s. Indeed, it was not until four decades later that Pavone published his history of the *Resistenza*, entitled *Una guerra civile*. See Bigazzi for an analysis of Fenoglio’s position.

<sup>198</sup> Here we foreshadow the crisis in signification in *La pelle* which also manifests itself through the transformation of a “whore” into a “virgin.” See Chapter Four.

<sup>199</sup> Valerio Ferme explains “la decisione di adeguare l’insegnamento della lingua alle politiche autarchiche invocate dalle fazioni nazionaliste e xenofobiche del fascismo; a questo scopo Gentile limitò l’uso dei dialetti nell’insegnamento ai primi cinque anni della scuola d’obbligo (mentre in precedenza esso si poteva usare per l’intera sua durata), e richiese la padronanza dell’italiano a tutti gli studenti per poter così uniformare l’insegnamento e l’apprendimento della lingua in tutta l’Italia” (28-29) [“the decision to adapt the teaching of the language to the autarchic policies invoked by the nationalist and xenophobic factions of fascism; to this end, Gentile limited the use of dialect in teaching in the first five years of school (whereas before it could be used for the entire time), and he required all students to master Italian in order to be able to homogenize the teaching and learning of the language in all of Italy”].

<sup>200</sup> This theory is put into practice in *PJ1* (831) and *PJ2* (1148). See also the spy episode (846/1162).

‘Voglio dire,’ insisté il maggiore, ‘Ci sarà ancora un’Italia con voi?’  
‘Certamente. Per favore, non se ne preoccupi’ (982)

[‘I can imagine that you possess all of Italy. Fine: what will you do, boys, with Italy?’]

‘*Une petite affaire tout serieuse,*’ said Johnny, and Pierre agreed with his inimitable *earnestness*.

‘I mean to say,’ insisted the Major, ‘Will there still be an Italy with you?’  
‘Certainly. Please, don’t worry about it’].

Johnny’s reply in French—a highly unusual occurrence in the text—points to the necessity of the foreign in defining the nation; and indeed, Johnny and Pierre, Italian partisans, have English and French battle names.<sup>201</sup> Moreover, the description following Johnny’s comment—“e Pierre assentí con la sua inimitabile *earnestness*” [“and Pierre agreed with his inimitable *earnestness*”]—introduces an English word into the text. This not only contradicts the basic movement of Corti’s translation-conversion narrative *away* from English in the move from *PJI* to *PJ2*.<sup>202</sup> More to the point, at the precise moment that the borders of the nation are evoked, the texts demonstrates their fictive nature. For even in a fragment as innocuous as “la sua inimitabile *earnestness*,” it is impossible to delineate where Italian ends and English begins: *earnestness* is an English noun, modified according to ‘proper’ English syntax with an Italian adjective, “inimitabile,” and an Italian possessive, which implies a gender and a quantity that English does not express (in this case, feminine singular).

When the Major insists that Johnny respond to his question (in Italian), Johnny is dismissive. In *PJI*, his answer is not an answer at all, but simply the negation of *their* (fascist) Italy in favor of *ours*. In order to fill the placeholder of “modo nostro” [“our way”] one must perform a rather fraught act of intralingual translation: to define *partigiano* in a country and in a language torn by civil war. As a new role and a new word, *partigiano* “esige allora per sé anche una lingua nuova, un italiano adeguato e diverso” (Galaverni 104) [“requires for itself a new language, a fitting, different Italian”]. However, if civil war is betrayal of the worst order, it is fitting, then, that it be Johnny’s teacher, Cocito (whose name evokes the realm of Dantean

<sup>201</sup> As Galaverni emphasizes, “Il grande partigiano italiano non si chiama Beppe o Ettore, ma appunto Johnny. È un italiano travestito da inglese” (87) [“The great Italian partisan is not named Beppe or Ettore (Hector), but precisely Johnny. He is an Italian disguised as an English person”].

<sup>202</sup> To give but a few other examples of the move *to* English from *PJI* to *PJ2* (all emphases mine): “Si sognava vestito in vigogna, passeggiante, fumante, con le Mimme e le Gherit, conversando *al suo meglio*, facendo amore *al suo piú*” (498) versus “Si sognava vestito in vigogna, passeggiante, fumante con le ragazze della vita e della scuola, conversando *at his best*, facendo l’amore *at his mightiest(t)*” (927-8) [“He dreamt of himself, dressed in vicuna, walking, smoking, with the Mimmes and the Gherits, talking at his best, making love at his mightiest” versus “He dreamt of himself, dressed in vicuna, walking, smoking, with the girls of his life and his school, talking *at his best*, making love *at his mightiest*”]; “rossità” (641) versus “redness” (985); “mutinosamente” (654) versus “mutinously” (996); “iniettato” (701) versus “embedded” (1035); “marciò molto fieramente” (711) [“he walked very proudly”] versus “he stalked” (1044); “Basta, basta, oggi ne ho avuto abbastanza... fossero ancora vivi loro due, ma sono morti... basta, basta, I don’t want to be shot at any longer...basta... il bando...no, non mi consegnerò ma mi rifugerò in qualche casa, mi farò mantenere, vestire in borghese...seppellirò lo sten... basta...avrò certamente pazienza fino alla fine...sono solo” (792) versus ““Enough, enough, today I’ve had enough. Maybe they two were alive, but they are dead, they both. Enough, enough, I don’t want to be shot at any longer, I don’t want to have to fly for my life once more. Enough, enough, the proclamation. No, I don’t want to consign, to give me up, but I’ll hide in any house, in a cellar, I’ll have myself maintained, I’ll dress in civvy, I’ll bury my sten. Enough, I’ll surely be patient until the end. I’m alone. Enough” (1115-6).

traitors), who roots the struggle precisely in terms of the need to define this elusive term: “‘Tutto sta nell’intendersi sul vero significato della parola partigiano’” [“‘It all depends on understanding the true meaning of the word partigiano’”]. The only definition he can give, however, is a negation of fascism: “‘Partigiano è, sarà chiunque combatterà i fascisti’” (409) [“‘Partisan is, and will be, whoever fights the fascists’”], a distinction that is collapsed in the encounters with Italian civilians: “‘Di che razza siete?’ Johnny pronunciò lisciamente la parola, e l’altro: ‘Sarete partigiani, ma se foste malfattori?’ Egli intendeva dire ‘fascisti’” (619) [“‘What kind are you?’ Johnny pronounced the word smoothly, and the other: ‘You may be partisans, but what if you are criminals?’ He meant to say ‘fascists’”]. As partisan becomes interchangeable with fascist in Italian, Johnny again makes recourse to dialect to maintain the opposition (619). Here, then, faced with the crisis of intralingual translation, the impossibility of locating *true meaning*, signification as *différance* emerges: “According to Derrida, meaning can never be seized as presence: it is always deferred, constantly displaced on to the next element in the series, in a chain of signification which has no end, no transcendental signified which might provide the final anchor-point for the production of sense” (Moi 64).<sup>203</sup> To this end, Saccone’s gloss on the interminable struggle to define *partigiano* is particularly apt: “nient’altro se non della differenza” (*Fenoglio* 185) [“nothing else if not difference”].

This notion of *différance* also speaks to how translation operates *between PJI and PJ2*. Consider the move from “i nubi vili” (511) [“the cowardly clouds”] in *PJI* to “i nubi cheap” (933) [“the *cheap* clouds”] in the same passage of *PJ2*, which cannot be understood to be a stable exchange between English and Italian, as the former are scared and the latter, stingy. But nor is it a wholesale revision of the image as one can imagine the clouds’ cowardice manifesting itself in a paucity, or cheapness, of the meteorological phenomenon. In the shift from “la misteriosa not-giving pianura” (498) [“The mysterious *not-giving* plain”] in *PJI* into “la indecifrabile pianura” (927) [“The indecipherable plain”] in *PJ2*, two adjectives (the Italian *misteriosa* and the invented English compound *not-giving*) become the Italian *indecifrabile*, producing a similarly complex effect: if the first phrase characterizes the atmosphere of the plain, it avoids specifying what it is that it does not give; the second phrase, instead, makes it clear that it is *meaning* that the plain withholds, but avoids describing its atmosphere. Finally, an “English” phrase in *PJI*, “The square now seemed abruptly crowd-engendering” (583) is rendered into Italian in *PJ2*, “La piazza sembrava generare sempre più folla” (965) [“The square now seemed to produce an increasingly large crowd”], which seems—apart from the exception of the stronger temporal emphases in *PJI* (now, abruptly)—closer to a traditional notion of translation. Still, rather than emphasize the distinct boundaries between English and Italian, the invented compound-adjective *crowd-engendering* and *generare* unearth their shared Latin roots, which would be lost by the grammatically correct “to produce.” Indeed, at every pass *Partigiano* resists a traditional binary notion of translation based on fidelity.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Kathleen Davis explains the relationship between translation and *différance*: “if language has only differences *without positive terms*, then the sign marks the place not of some positive spatial presence, but of a differential relation to other signs in the language system... This play of differences is what commentators on Derrida have in mind when they speak of deconstruction’s argument that signification proceeds through infinite regress, or an endless process of signs differing/ deferring to other signs... In this sense, there are only signifiers, since each signifier refers not to a signified presence outside of language, but to other signifiers” (13).

<sup>204</sup> This comment extends beyond the relationship between *PJI* and *PJ2*. To wit, consider Meddemmen’s critique of Merry’s facing-page translation of *UrPJ* where, once again, the boundaries of original/translation, English/Italian are put into crisis: “The other drawback of the translation (apart from the fact that it exists at all, for the ‘English’ of Fenoglio is as much Italian as it is English) is that it risks, presenting itself as it does alongside a Critical Text, to be

There are compelling reasons to discuss *Partigiano Johnny* in terms of translation, particularly in understanding the negotiations of Italian identity during the *Resistenza*. However, to use it to plot a conversion narrative, to cure Fenoglio's authorial contamination, is a strategic move rife with contradiction: it is precisely for its *instability* that "translation has emerged as a privileged trope for the postmodern," Karin Littau sustains. She continues: "translation is characterized by in-betweenness: caught as it is between the demands of the source system and that of target system, the demand to make familiar that which is other and to do justice to the other as other, to mediate meaning and negotiate the very instability of signification, translation is always a hybrid" (81). Such theorizations alone would be enough to undermine a narrative that progresses from English to 'hybridity' to Italian, and, indeed, to problematize the essentialist link between English and antifascism which Corti gestures towards in order to confirm the text's politics.<sup>205</sup> But going farther, we see how the manuscripts themselves participate in this deconstruction—not only in the plot, but at a lexical level—as they foreground the effacement of traditional boundaries that structure nations, languages, texts and words.

### A 'queer and crooked and angent sense of umpartisanship': Converting *Pellegrino Johnny*

Roberto Bigazzi, like Corti, strives to formulate a relationship between the various *Partigiano* manuscripts in order to recover "la sequenza voluta dall'autore" (89) ["the sequence desired by the author"]. Yet despite maintaining opposite theses about the actual order, Bigazzi too works within the discourse of conversion, positing a relationship between *Partigiano* and the foundational conversion narrative of Italian literature: Dante's *Divina Commedia*.<sup>206</sup> Rehearsing the specifics of the dating debate goes beyond the scope of this chapter, but Bigazzi's philological work is relevant to the extent that it creates a trajectory of Johnny's transformation from soldier in the Italian army (*PBI*) to committed partisan (*PJI*) to interpreter for a division of English soldiers (*UrPJ*) to author of *Partigiano Johnny*. The resultant narrative is not stylistically unified, Bigazzi tells us, but instead, its cohesion comes from the character's "progressiva chiarificazione ideologica" (90) ["progressive ideological clarification"]. Whereas Corti treats *UrPJ* as the alpha, for Bigazzi it is the omega, and although the resultant versions of *Partigiano* are different in terms of which manuscripts are included and in which sequence, their approaches are similar in structure: Corti's *Partigiano* follows a *bildungsroman* for Fenoglio the writer, while Bigazzi's renders Johnny's "complicato viaggio" (90) ["complicated voyage"] legible by plotting it as a political-poetic conversion narrative, a "pellegrinaggio" (42) ["pilgrimage"].<sup>207</sup> Bigazzi writes,

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taken as in some sense a definitive contribution, a rigorous reflection in a one-to-one relationship" (97). The first drawback is that Merry's translation "turns the often problematic language of the original into clarifying gloss, in a kind of hermeneutics; he dilutes the language in favour of paraphrase, often highly perceptive paraphrase" (95).

<sup>205</sup> Her fleeting interest in the text's antifascism typifies the biographically motivated, blurring-dizzying paradigm discussed in Chapter One: Fenoglio's "scelta linguistica" ["linguistic choice"] is taken "chiaramente" ["clearly"] as a "scelta ideologica" (*SCN* 22) ["ideological choice"]. For more on the essentialist link between English and antifascism see Chapter Two.

<sup>206</sup> The pioneer of the late-dating thesis that Bigazzi maintains is Corsini; others who support it include Falaschi, Cooke, Saccone and Isella.

<sup>207</sup> *UrPJ* + *PJI* + *PJ2* for Corti; *PdBI* + *PJI* + *UrPJ* for Bigazzi

dapprima, a Roma, costata il crollo di quelle istituzioni del vecchio regno che aveva creduto di poter opporre o almeno distinguere dal fascismo (PdBI); poi, nelle Langhe, esplorerà i vari aspetti ‘rossi’ e ‘azzurri’ della partigianeria, distaccandosi anche stavolta da ogni gruppo organizzato (PJI); infine, dovrà verificare i modelli stranieri offerti dagli inglesi e dagli americani (90)

[first, in Rome, having verified the collapse of those institutions of the old government that he had thought himself able to oppose or at least distinguish from fascism (*PdBI*); then, in the Langhe, he will explore the various “red” and “blue” aspects of partisanhood, also detaching himself once again from any organized group (*PJI*); finally, he will have to verify the foreign models offered by the English and the Americans].

In Corti’s version, Johnny’s story is effectively rendered illegible by Fenoglio’s; in Bigazzi’s, Johnny’s story is made legible, but only insofar as the protagonist and author unite at the end, as the passage above concludes as such: “solo con questa ultima verifica potrà davvero ricongiungersi al suo autore, che lo ha benevolmente ma anche criticamente seguito nel suo lungo percorso, affidandogli la biografia intellettuale, tra guerra e dopo guerra, di un’intera generazione” (90) [“only with this final verification will he be able to truly rejoin himself with his author, who has benevolently but also critically followed him on his long voyage, entrusting him with the intellectual biography, between the war and postwar, of an entire generation”].<sup>208</sup>

Here, Bigazzi’s approach resonates with Calvino’s praise of *Una questione privata*, as the *biografia intellettuale... di un’intera generazione* [intellectual biography... of an entire generation], specifically its Dantean echo: “C’è la Resistenza proprio com’era... vera come mai era stata scritta, serbata per tanti anni limpidamente dalla memoria fedele” (24) [“It contains the Resistance just how it was... true as it never had been written, clearly preserved for so many years by his faithful memory”]. In fact, this long voyage through which pilgrim becomes poet (112), is described by Bigazzi as “una specie di *Commedia* delle cui tre parti si posseggano tre stesure diverse e in ordine quasi inverso: la terza dell’*Inferno* (PdBI), la seconda del *Purgatorio* (PJI) e la prima del *Paradiso* (UrPJ)” (153) [“a sort of *Comedy* in which we have the three parts in three different stages of revision and in a quasi-inverse order: the third (draft) of the *Inferno* (*PdBI*), the second of *Purgatory*, and the first of *Paradise*”]. Bigazzi’s interest is predominantly in the *Commedia*’s structure, but he bolsters his thesis by noting Dantean echoes, among them, an allusion to Dante’s early conversion narrative, *Vita nuova* [*New Life*], and the presence of the “donna-guida” [“woman-guide”] Dea-Beatrice (108-9, 111-2). However, in framing *Partigiano* in literary terms, Bigazzi’s objective is not to decontextualize it, on the contrary: Johnny-pilgrim is very much connected (albeit in a dizzying blur) to his own times: “Si è parlato di ‘percorso,’ perché il *Partigiano* è un classico romanzo di ‘educazione’ ma anche ‘storico,’ sia perché si muove nella storia, sia perché nella crescita di Johnny si incarnano le varie tappe attraverso le quali è passato l’intellettuale-protagonista nella nostra narrativa” (156) [“We have spoken of a ‘voyage,’ because *Partigiano* is a classic novel of ‘formation’ but also ‘historical,’ both because it takes place in history and because Johnny’s development incarnates the various phases through which the protagonist-intellectual of our literature has passed”]. The theory that *Partigiano* be

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<sup>208</sup> Saccone summarizes the prevailing tendency to read any or all of the texts in terms of a *Bildungsroman*, by critics such as Bigazzi, Grignani and Gina Lagorio. Although he rejects the theory as a whole, as we will see, he finds Bigazzi’s the most convincing and engages with it most fully (*Fenoglio* 163).



read as the *Commedia* of “an entire generation” is supported by the Dantean resonances that Bigazzi identifies as well as by an abundance of evidence suggesting a textual drive to plot a conversion narrative: Johnny desires not only to *become* a partisan but to pinpoint the precise day, even the precise moment of his transformation. In fact, on several occasions he figures his transition topographically:

Lo scottava dentro, e poi lo raggelava, pensare che stasera, la sera del suo panico, fatidico giorno d’ingresso nei partigiani, avrebbe bussato ad una locanda per il pernottamento, non ancora partigiano, ma ancora miserabile viandante qualunque. E se il locandiere, squadrata la sua già diversificata faccia, gli avesse richiusa la porta in faccia...? (439)

[It burned him inside, and then it chilled him, to think that tonight, the evening of his fearful, inevitable day of his entrance into the partisans, he would have knocked at an inn for his nightly stay, not yet a partisan but still an insignificant, average traveler. And if the innkeeper, studying his already diversified face, were to close the door in his face...?].

Johnny’s efforts to locate the moment of his own conversion are rife with tension, starting with the ambivalent burning/freezing sensation in the passage above. Paradoxically, Johnny is “not yet a *partigiano*” but marked by difference on his “already diversified face.” When the moment of his “entry” literally comes—“Johnny passò dalla neve stradale al cemento della rotonda, come se il cemento rappresentasse l’investitura partigiana” [“Johnny passed from the snow of the road to the cement of the rotunda, as if the cement represented the investiture of partisanhood”]—the subjunctive undermines the definitive nature of that passage and, in the next sentence, so does one of the characters: “Il siciliano s’accorse del trapasso e marciò verso di lui, irritato e vendicativo. ‘Chi ti disse d’entrare?’” (441) [“The Sicilian noticed the passage/transformation and marched towards him, irritated and vindictive. ‘Who told you to enter?’”]. It is this ‘failure’ to progress linearly towards this partisan identity that is the basis of Saccone’s critique of Bigazzi’s conversion narrative thesis (*Fenoglio* 213). Instead of a development, Saccone identifies an “oscillation” that allows for the coexistence of paradoxical opposites (*Fenoglio* 175). The methodological corollary to Bigazzi’s conversion narrative approach is the privileged status he affords the ending: “proprio la parte finale (l’*UrPJ*, appunto) può garantire la prospettiva interpretativa” (89) [“precisely the final part (*UrPJ*, in fact) can guarantee the interpretive perspective”], and it is here where the critics’ difference is starkest. What for Bigazzi provides a “culmination” (89), for Saccone emblemizes deferral: “L’andirivieni, il movimento pendolare che meglio di tutti illustra il paradosso di Johnny è quello tra inglesi e partigiani” (*Fenoglio* 84) [“The back and forth, the pendular movement that best illustrates the paradox of Johnny is that between the English and the partisans”]. In this way, Saccone reads *UrPJ*’s lack of an ending as a symptom of the pendulum which does not stop (*Fenoglio* 86). And indeed, one can track the oscillation between a sense of absolute, essential identity and the deferral of his self-definition, what Saccone ominously refers to as Johnny’s “oscura differenza” (*Fenoglio* 182) [“dark difference”]. The “sign” of partisan identity appears to be an intrinsic part of him, “il segno era sempre su lui: partigiano in aeternum” (526) [“the sign was always on him: partigiano *in aeternum*”], the Latin suggesting an immunity from the flux of living languages. Yet it, too, proves mutable: “He was becoming conscious of his new being, yet

a partisan, but addicted to the English mission, therefore a special partisan” (47). Later, he appears to have ‘um’-converted, feeling a “queer and crooked and angent sense of umpartisanship due to his English aggregatedness” (99). From this perspective, Johnny’s transformation more closely resembles the hellish repetition of one of Dante’s damned souls than the divine progress of the voyaging pilgrim. And indeed, when Johnny laments that he must end the war with the English after having so desired to meet them, his companion describes it as a “proper contrapasso” (175).

The textual evidence supports Saccone’s assertion that Bigazzi’s conversion narrative forces the character “con qualche fatica...nei panni dell’intellettuale-protagonista della nostra narrativa” (*Fenoglio* 213) [“with a certain strain...to fit into the clothes of the intellectual-protagonist of our narrative”]. However, I argue that at issue is not whether or not *Partigiano* functions as a *Commedia* of sorts and Johnny-Fenoglio a pilgrim-poet, but rather, the problem lies in the *application* of the metaphor itself. Bigazzi effectively treats the *Commedia* as a model, one that has been filtered through Calvino’s lexicon of fidelity, specifically Fenoglio’s fidelity to a historical moment. However, if positioning *Partigiano* in a metaphorical relationship to the *Commedia* makes these contaminated texts legible by providing a traditional chronological sequence, it also has its drawbacks. For in this way, the *Commedia* is made to function as an authoritative original, and *Partigiano*, its derivative, which, as evinced by Saccone’s critique, can only be unfaithful. In fact, in order to make *Partigiano* fit in the *Commedia*’s tripartite structure, and assure *UrPJ* its privileged interpretive perspective, Bigazzi must perform his own censorial maneuvers, eliminating two of the five manuscripts that tell Johnny’s story. In Bigazzi’s own words, *UrPJ* is “mutilated” by the other manuscripts—namely *PdB2* and *PJ2*, which narrate Johnny’s “premature” death (153)—and thus, he “leaves them out” of his version. Yet even in his own outline, Bigazzi must reiterate that *UrPJ* is, in fact, the conclusion (89), a further symptom of the “need to define” the “unstable” *Partigiano*. Moreover, in attempting to find closure, Bigazzi glosses over the actual end of *UrPJ*, which cuts off mid-chapter. In fact, *UrPJ* can only be privileged as a point of culmination by fantasizing the existence of “further material” that would definitively complete it.<sup>209</sup> Here, the “ambiguous and discontinuous traces” of the archival evidence remain dependent on the fantastical “big book”—both Fenoglio’s projective narrative, and the “big book” of Italian literature, the *Commedia*.

However, if Bigazzi’s methodology is flawed to the extent that he *applies* the *Commedia* to *Partigiano*—smoothing over *Partigiano*’s resistances to conversion (to say nothing of his schematic treatment of the *Commedia*)—the intertextual relationship is no doubt potentially fruitful. The *Commedia*, in telling the story of how the pilgrim becomes poet, can be read as an extended mediation on the survivor’s responsibility of narrating the ‘truth’ of what he has witnessed—and on the limits of narrative’s capabilities. Yet *Partigiano* never reaches that requisite moment of “radical discontinuity” (Freccero 265); nor, as we saw in the description of the manuscripts (and symptomatically in Bigazzi’s own maneuvers), does it offer “unproblematic closure” (LaCapra). As such, rather than use the *Commedia* to heal *Partigiano*’s wounds, I use the Dantean intertext as a way of addressing *Partigiano*’s resistances to conversion, starting from perhaps the most explicit discussion in *Partigiano* of how to represent the *Resistenza*, a discussion, not coincidentally, prefaced by a Dantean metaphor: “From upstairs came the

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<sup>209</sup> To this end, Cooke’s analysis of the ending is telling: “Unfortunately, however, *UrPJ* breaks off in mid-sentence. Upon inspection the manuscript evidence would suggest that there did once exist further material, but we can only guess as to what such material contained. Bigazzi has suggested that Johnny is accidentally killed at the end of *UrPJ*, his English officer’s uniform being mistaken for that of an enemy officer” (145).

jerking and croakings of a much nervously operated-radioset. And Marino explained that their host was feeding as always on Radio London, as Ugolino on the skull of Bishop.” This metaphor, which likens Rossi avidly listening to the radio to Ugolino eternally gnawing on his nemesis’s skull, is itself rhetorically inappropriate (insofar as it substitutes one sensory organ’s role for another), and—were we to follow Bigazzi’s model whereby *UrPJ* is *Paradiso*—is made all the more so by the fact that this preface to Johnny’s prophecy evokes one of *Inferno*’s most heinous acts of betrayal (*Inf.* XXXIII.1-3). The scene continues:

Then a thick-relegated, rainbow-costured blocknotes appeared into the fidgeting, feminine hands of Marino. And: ‘May I draw a portrait of you,’ he asked.

‘A pencilled or a written one?’

‘A written one. I’m jottling a book on us and our things. That does strike you?’

‘Not at all. I personally know dozens of us picking up such flowers – voyaging with a block just like yours in their knapsacks’

‘Really? Marino gasped, at a loss for the first time.

‘I can quote you at least ten of them only in North’s army. As soon as the war ends, there will be no other concern for them than editors.’

‘And...and who will emport the laurel? Who will have written the book of books on us?’

Johnny sighed: ‘Nobody of you, nobody of us. The book of books on us will be written by a man is yet unborn, the woman will bear him in womb is not yet more than a baby now, growing in the midst of our reports...’

Marino flapped a puzzled, disheartened hand upon the rich cover of his secret book. ‘That’s sad.’ He ceased flapping and fixed on the book a desperate but contained look. ‘And say, Johnny...won’t our work aid him to his aim?’

‘Quite not, in my naked opinion. The man will simply see and transfer’ (243).

Philip Cooke—who ignores the Ugolino reference and the Dantean allusions altogether—reads this passage as a metatextual victory lap: “as Fengolio is here close to finishing the final part of the first draft of a work, in which he appears to be Johnny, it is not unreasonable to assume that the work which will carry off the laurel wreath, the work in which its author ‘sees’ and ‘transfers’ is precisely this one” (22). Cooke, like Bigazzi, makes an assumption about *Partigiano*’s “end,” characterizing it is the moment when the “unborn potential writer” becomes the “recently born *de facto* writer” (23), which effectively contradicts both the way the “end” is conceived of by Johnny and his “Beatrice,” and the way it is presented by the ‘mutilated’ *Partigiano* manuscripts, individually and as group, as they simply cannot be read as a ‘conventional’ narrative. To wit, none of the texts provides a culminating birth-of-an-author moment, as Dea, a female partisan, reminds us: after the war, each partisan will be “inevitably decayed, the moment itself, it sorted from the war.” Nor is Johnny any exception—““You too, you Johnny, will be as diminished, as opacized”” (293)—a claim which would, effectively, run counter to the Dantean notion of leaving the “war” (*Inf.* II.3-6), purified and ready to write from his flawless memory.

Rather than pursue this *via negativa*, I focus on how *Partigiano* “picks,” or, better, *struggles* to “pick” its own narrative “flowers,” in a passage analyzed both by Bigazzi (91) and

Saccone (*Fenoglio* 193). Johnny has spent the winter alone, after his group has temporarily disbanded. He rejoins those companions who have survived the winter, on the day appointed by their leader, and, despite their reunion, Johnny continues to feel isolated:

Dai nuovi ranghi Johnny lo seguí con gli occhi affrettarsi sulle breve gambe volonterose verso il di lui regno invernale e si sforzò di amarlo come prima, ma il PATCH non sarebbe mai stato cancellato né sommerso.

Johnny non si trovava piú: e, peggio, il patch si ampliava, si ampliava (912)

[From his new ranks Johnny followed him with his eyes, hurrying on his short, willing legs, towards his winter realm, and he forced himself to love him as before, but the *PATCH* would never be erased nor submerged.

Johnny no longer could find himself: and, worse, the *patch*, expanded, expanded].<sup>210</sup>

The PATCH, which stands out here both linguistically and typographically, carries contradictory meanings in *Partigiano*, which I will consider in order to suggest that it be read neither as an obstacle to be overcome as part of a Dantean narrative, as Bigazzi suggests (96), nor a sign of its failure. Instead I argue that it be read as an inscription in the text that marks the struggle of testifying to the *Resistenza*.

In the introduction to this chapter, I cited a passage also marked by the patch, a description of the Italian partisans and English soldiers moving together towards battle: “They moved very tiredly, in spite of the freshness and airiness of the morning, like a fractioned snake almost as large as long, through highly cultured patches of land” (145). These *highly cultured patches of land* represent an obstacle, restricting—but not prohibiting—the partisans’ passage; however, it is not a sign of lack (as in *PJ1* and *PJ2*) but of bountiful presence. Merry’s normativizing Italian version renders these *patches* as “terreni coltivati” (144) [“cultivated lands”]. However, recalling the earlier metaphor which associates writing and flowers—and in keeping with my earlier metatextual reading of this passage—I take license to consider these *cultured patches* as *patches of culture*. In this way, we can start to see the paradoxical workings of the “patch” in the text, at once productive and destructive, a site of culture/growth and the threat of its erasure. In fact, in another occurrence of the patch, in a description of Johnny’s companion Hector/Ettore, finally freed from capture, this paradox is articulated: “And Hector smiled as warmly and openly and widely as the others all did, but he too had a blank patch in his inner soul: the place where he had lived in death, amongst the men, himself one of them, whom other men treated and reduced, on the threshold of death, as morva treated and reduced the canides...” (175 ellipsis in the text). Despite being “blank,” this patch does not simply demarcate the site of a loss but paradoxically is “the place where he had *lived* in death.” Here, a word on the metaphor used to describe this liminal space: “morva,” or glanders, is defined by the *Enciclopedia Italiana di scienze, lettere ed arte* [*Italian Encyclopedia of Sciences, Letters and*

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<sup>210</sup> In *PJ2*, the passage reads: “Dai nuovi ranghi Johnny lo seguí con gli occhi affrettarsi sulle gambe brevi e strenue verso il suo regno invernale e si sforzò di amarlo quanto prima. Ma quel patch non sarebbe stato cancellato né sommerso mai. Johnny non si trovava piú; quel patch, lungi dal cancellarsi, si ampliava” (1196) [“From his new ranks, Johnny followed him with his eyes, hurrying on his short, tireless legs, and he forced himself to love him as before. But that *patch* would never be erased or submerged. Johnny could no longer find himself; that patch, far from erasing itself, expanded”].

*Art*] as a “malattia infettiva e contagiosa, in modo speciale dei solipedi (ma anche di altri animali e dell’uomo) a decorso ordinariamente cronico” (902) [“contagious disease, particularly in solipeds (but also for other animals and for man), usually chronic in its course”]. Thus, what Hector witnessed, participated in, and ultimately survived—and what the patch signals—is, in effect, a contaminating conversion, as the fascist captors infect their partisan captives, the way glanders infects dogs, turning them into agents of deadly contagion. The *Lessico universale Italiano di lingua, lettere, arte, scienze e tecnica* [*Universal Italian Dictionary of Letters, Arts, Sciences and Technology*] adds that, “Il contagio avviene per lo più attraverso soluzioni di continuo della cute o della mucosa” (282) [“The infection generally takes place through contact of the skin or mucous”]. If contact means contagion, isolation is the only cure: “L’infezione morosa non lascia immunità postuma, quindi l’immunizzazione preventiva non ha carattere pratico” (283) [“The delayed infection does not leave belated immunity therefore preventative immunization has no practical use”].

The patch, however, does not simply mark isolation: we recall from *PJI/PJ2* that it, in fact, spreads like a disease of its own: “quel patch, lungi dal scancellarsi, si ampliava” (1196) [“that *patch*, far from erasing itself, expanded”]. Framing the Hector passage, we can detect a palpable preoccupation among the characters about the implications of isolation. Prior, Johnny laments his isolation from his Italian companions, precisely as the war draws to a close:

Johnny circulated his beaming face. ‘Beseems a dream, and we all together again?’

‘Never to part?’ fluted Franco.

‘Gosh,’ jerked Johnny: ‘I’ve got an engagement sine die with the british mission. These goddams spoiling me the final feast, I fear.’

And Ghiacci said this was proper contrappasso, and they all laughed (175).

And immediately following the passage, this *contrappasso* is compounded by a moment of “hellish” miscommunication: taking the word ‘north’ to be a cardinal direction and not “the name of the greatest chief here,” the American soldier Temple laments, “Pity I lost my bussola...” (177). Here, in addition to signaling the rhetorical confusion between noun and proper name, and the literal disorientation caused by the loss of the navigational instrument, the sole Italian word (“bussola,” that is, compass)—attributed to an Anglophone amidst the largely English prose—signals linguistic disorientation. His companion’s response, “What the devil have you understood?” incommensurate with the mistake, belies a textual anxiety about the failure of communication that recalls the work of the ever-spreading *patch* in *PJI/PJ2*. However, keeping in mind the patch’s ambivalence as “place where he had *lived* in death” and also its productivity as the *highly cultured patches of land*, we remember that it is not a univocal, deleterious force. Instead, I argue that within it coexist the double-edged (or ambidextrous) relationship between writing and repression that I theorized in Chapter One through Freud, Derrida and Foucault: that is, that texts (or archives) are structured by the simultaneous work of oppositional hands (or drives), one that preserves and one that deletes.

With these considerations in mind, I offer a reading of the final paragraph of *UrPJ*, not in terms of the wound of the text, and thus, one that is not localizable nor curable, but rather in terms of *Partigiano*’s struggle to testify to the trauma of the *Resistenza*. As the partisans fight the Germans with the English beside them, the manuscript ends. Yet it ends with a road, indeed, a road marked with patches—both the word “patches” and the patch as lack of words:

They all were putting coups, raging and methodical at the very verge of the ditch-lid, at the lilliput patches of wermacht-green popping up and down. Johnny felt a grand rush behind him and felt as descavalcated, it were Ghio, Mark and Trasco and the Hibernian running to the extreme left and from there raffling sharp and diagonal to the output of the ditch. The short raffles caused explosive-jets of gravel...a white kerchief, stone-weighted, flew shortly in the middle-air and crashed on the road (365 ellipsis in text).

Like the *highly cultured patches of land*, here the “patches” provide a source of conflict; they represent the active—if trivialized—enemy, “lilliput patches of wermacht-green popping up and down,” yet at the same time they evoke the passive corpse in the previous passage: “And all the deutsch plunged headlong in the shallow ditch, elders and youngsters, with the same desperate nimbleness, safe one, stark dead upon the lievitant powder. Bullets were sinking in his unanswering flesh, giving it some lilliput impulse, as vain priorscontated efforts to overhaul him” (364-5). The white kerchief, too, is marked with ambivalence, as it could be interpreted as a gesture of peace, a truce that ends the battle and, with it, the narrative; yet its arrival is violent, crashing down unexpectedly on the road and on the narrative path.

From this perspective, the ending of *UrPJ* corresponds rather well to Johnny’s own reflection:

‘What the use of splitting your head about the end. First, the end will come quite unexpected. Yes, believe me, quite unexpected. You know, you feel it will come before the end of April, anyone of the remaining days to April 30<sup>th</sup>. But, believe me, it will be anyway so unexpected that remembering the very vigil you’ll find it miraculous. You’ll find yerself out and over it quite unconsciously, credimi. Then, don’t worry about the end, for you have no remedy against it. You will go into it, as you have ever gone into all from the beginning. So, seeing you will certainly go into it, cease splitting your head’ (333).

If, on the one hand, we read according to the linear chronology of the war, or according to a (Dantean) conversion narrative, the ending of *UrPJ* comes sooner than expected: for we want the closure provided by April 25<sup>th</sup>; when we arrive at the conclusion, we feel, like Johnny prior to his final battle: “‘I...I feel...unprepared,’ stammered Johnny” (341). Thus, when Cooke says *UrPJ* cuts off “unfortunately” he means unfortunately for *us*, the reader who wants traditional narrative closure (145). Thus, scholars like Cooke and Bigazzi treat this precipitous ending as a sign of the trauma of the text/author, a deleterious patch in his coherent narrative design, and seek to cure it, and, in so doing, insist on the incompatibility of the manuscripts that disturb that order (*PB2* and *PJ2*). If, on the other hand, we read according to the dislocated, belated temporality of trauma as expressed by Johnny in the passage above—we can read *UrPJ* and *PJ2* together in terms of “a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (Caruth 7). Through the paradoxical patch—at once a “highly cultured” space and “a blank patch in his inner soul”; at once “unanswering flesh” and “lilliput patches of wermacht-green popping up and down”—we can participate in the texts’ struggles and therefore testify with them to the trauma of the *Resistenza*.

That said, rather than privilege one ending, I will suggest that the paradox of the patch allows for the coexistence of apparently incompatible texts, such as *PJ2* and *UrPJ*. *PJI* and *PJ2* both end with the partisan defeat at Valdivilla, but whereas in *PJI* the battle is concluded, in *PJ2* it is interrupted, as the “semiautomatic” is about to make his move: “Johnny si alzò col fucile di Tarzan ed il semiautomatico...Due mesi dopo la guerra era finita” (ellipsis in text) [“Johnny stood up with Tarzan’s rifle and the semiautomatic...Two months later the war was over”].<sup>211</sup> The prevailing critical attitude towards this ellipsis is that it signifies Johnny’s death, and Fenoglio’s haste to conclude the text (*Opere* “Nota” 1221).<sup>212</sup> Instead, I consider it another ambivalent ‘patch’ in the narrative fabric, at once evoking and erasing *UrPJ*. On the one hand, *UrPJ* starts with the story of Tarzan’s death: “Tarzan and Set did never come back.” And in this sense, the ellipsis/patch becomes a space that *UrPJ* can fill, by recounting those two decisive months (with, of course, its own ellipsis at the end, perpetually deferring that possibility for “complete elucidation” [Moi 69]). On the other hand, if we read the ellipsis as a *presence*, then paradoxically, it erases *UrPJ*. In this sense, the text censors itself from within, producing and destroying its own testimony. The implications here are dramatic because, if *Partigiano* cannot be uncensored, the *Resistenza* cannot be narrativized in terms of a conventional structure. As such, it cannot serve as the reassuring “after” that heals the wound of the fascist “before.” Nonetheless, with its readers, it can, instead, struggle to testify to the trauma of fascism and its fall.

### Johnny Beyond History

The third part of this critique of the literature marks, in a sense, a critical turning point: whereas the philological approaches seek to locate and cure the wounds of *Partigiano Johnny*, restoring to it a sense of order, in these “literary” approaches, the text’s historical and philological context holds minor importance, when it is not repudiated altogether. Indeed, this decontextualizing-conversion operates through a move from the literal to the figurative, as the truth of the text is located “al di là delle vicende militari vissute da Johnny” (De Nicola *Come leggere* 74) [“beyond the military events lived by Johnny”], and beyond the “macchia” [“stain”] of philological proliferation which has worked to “offuscare” [“obfuscate”] *Partigiano*’s literary splendors (Beccaria 9-10).<sup>213</sup> The same voyage metaphors are operative here, as in the philological conversions, but in this case, Fenoglio goes *beyond* history and literality, a decontextualizing move which, in certain ways, *Partigiano* encourages—for instance, its deconstruction of the term *partigiano*—showing that “what it ‘is’ and what it ‘is not’ – only emerges as an effect of its relations in a larger system” (Davis 14), or its occasional collapse of

<sup>211</sup> *PJI* ends as such: “Poi Pierre lo guardò e lo gli sorrise, tristemente ma a cuore pieno. E nell’inizio della marcia gli viene a fianco e a fianco gli marciò, e Johnny si sentì bene come non più da secoli, e la gioia era doppia per sapere che anche Pierre stava bene come non più da secoli. Ma, più avanti, Pierre s’aggrottò e disse a Johnny che era stato un pasticcio. ‘Ma andava fatto,’ disse Johnny, guardando il cupo, ma non ostile cielo” (924) [“Then Pierre looked at him and smiled, sadly but with a full heart. And at the beginning of the march, he went beside him and at his side, he marched, and Johnny felt better than he had in centuries, the joy was doubled by his knowing that Pierre, too, was better than he had been in centuries. But further on, Pierre scowled and said to Johnny that it has been a mess. ‘But it needed to be done,’ said Johnny, looking at the dark, but not hostile, sky”].

<sup>212</sup> See Note 175.

<sup>213</sup> For more on the rhetoric of the “stain,” see Chapter Two.

the partisan/fascist distinction.<sup>214</sup> Take, for instance, a description of newly arrived partisan recruits, arriving just in time for combat: “And they did come, the fifty of them, in the very nick of time, for their disgrace and death, for their glory and boast. For in the morning after, THEY came” (111). Here, Merry’s translation of the last sentence is suggestive, as it introduces a distinction between the two “theys” distinguished by Fenoglio’s text only typographically: “La mattina seguente vennero i fascisti” (110) [“The next morning, the fascists came”]. The fact that both the fascists and the newly arrived partisans are “*they*” intimates their shared structural role in Johnny’s fraught attempt at shoring up his own identity: *they* are simply the constitutive other that underwrites the self. However, as I point to the ways in which the text and the character encourage this conversion, I will again call attention to how they resist it as well.

Johnny is engaged in a fraught hermeneutic effort, as he tries to find intrinsic meaning in the signifiers around him. The crisis of signification is writ large on the body, as uniforms—traded and manipulated at will after the armistice—fail to guarantee the identity of the person underneath. As Felman describes it, “transvestism is indeed an arbitrary sign whose signifier is displaced onto a signified not ‘its own,’ an exiled signifier that no longer has, in fact, a ‘proper’ signified, a ‘proper’ meaning, a claim to literality” (*Woman* 51). For example, the American soldier, Temple, is a hybrid figure, crossing lines of nationality and class, “From waist up he was an american flier, from waist down an italian young peasant” (167). And during the final days of the war, civilians interpret nationality not based on the symbols inscribed *on* the uniform, but simply in terms of the uniform’s presence or absence. As a result, the newly arrived Englishmen are taken for Germans: Johnny explains to them, ““For they, till now, the fully and compactly uniformed people can be only Germans, you see”” (47).<sup>215</sup> The fascists, at the same time, disguise themselves as partisans.<sup>216</sup> And the rampant transvestitism comes full circle as the partisans dress as English, one of whom even manages to fool the Anglophile Johnny with “il pieno successo del suo travestimento” (574/959) [“the complete success of his transvestitism”]. As these cloth signifiers literally slide from person to person, Johnny himself is reluctant to undress: ““Non mi spoglio per dormire da quando son partigiano”” (734) [“I haven’t gotten undressed to go to sleep since I’ve become a partisan””].<sup>217</sup> His uniform protects him, not when he is in battle but alone in bed, as if the “seal” of the uniform could keep his subjectivity intact, allowing it to serve as an “anchor-point” (Moi 69) for the “arbitrary sign” of transvestism: “He undressed the very least... Then he drew over himself his english coat, one button just upon his mouth like a seal, and slept” (227).<sup>218</sup>

Johnny’s attempts at stabilizing his partisan identity rarely involve the fascist/antifascist opposition, but rather than concluding that his struggles thus lie beyond the contingencies of history, we might consider the oppositions he does, in fact, evoke: racial, social and gender

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<sup>214</sup> Maria Di Paolo describes the *Resistenza* as *no more than* “un punto di partenza” (75) [“point of departure”]; and Galaverni treats Fenoglio’s English in just the same way, as a starting point which looks “oltre l’Italia” (100) [“beyond Italy”].

<sup>215</sup> See also 261.

<sup>216</sup> Bigazzi notes several instances of fascists dressing as partisans: 189-91; 197 and 257 cited above.

<sup>217</sup> In *PJ2* the same line reads: ““Non mi spoglio da quando son partigiano” (1067) [“I haven’t gotten undressed since I became a partisan”]. Also: “He sat on the bed and got on totally undressing himself, but with an invincible inquietude and unease” (79).

<sup>218</sup> See also an earlier scene in *UrPJ*, “And then fear wildly distracted his countenance for a clear voice of a Cassandra in his inside told him quite distinctly: ‘You shall die over those hills,’ and Franco premurously asked him of whether he was suffering from the driving. Johnny smiled the shadow of a smile and enclosed more tightly in his new, precious, gold-buttoned english coat presented him by North” (199, 201).



hierarchies. For instance, Johnny tempers his initial rejection from the world of the partisans as he “reads” someone else in the position of the racialized other:

E allora un partigiano, un piccolo scuro ragazzo, così magro che gli accentuava la magrezza lo spropositato imbottimento di un full-sized pelliccione invernale, si voltò sospirando, e come si voltò regalò a Johnny tutta la sua faccia, un testo integrale di sintomatologia criminale lombrosiana, e con un cenno pressoché irato accennò a Johnny di join them (441)

[And then a partisan, a little dark boy, so thin that his thinness was accentuated by the disproportionate stuffing-into a *full-sized* winter fur, turned around sighing, and as he turned he gave to Johnny his entire face, a complete text of Lombrosian criminology, and with an almost irate gesture, he signaled to Johnny to *join them*].

As the “other,” Tito serves a double function, facilitating Johnny’s admission into the partisans in a practical sense but also shoring up Johnny’s position as subject. Moreover, the introduction of English at the very unifying moment—“join them”—can be considered a linguistic iteration of that compulsive need for othering, as Saccone calls it, “un’affermazione della proprio diversità ed eccezionalità” (*Fenoglio* 72n.21) [“an affirmation of his very diversity and exceptionality”]. Yet upon ‘rereading,’ Johnny recognizes—to his great surprise—that Tito resists simple decoding by means of a lombrosian rosetta stone.<sup>219</sup> Nonetheless, despite Johnny’s admission that beneath his repugnant physiognomy, might lie “una direttezza, una dryness e cordialità paradossali” [“a directness, a *dryness* and a paradoxical cordialness”], the references continue, “la preoccupazione conferiva alla sua faccia lombrosiana una concentrazione, una serratezza precrimine” (477) [“the worry conferred on his Lombrosian face a focusedness, a precriminal clenchedness”].<sup>220</sup>

After the first violent encounter with the fascist enemy, Johnny’s need to maintain distinctions within the partisans subsides (*De Nicola Come leggere* 35). Soon, however, it resurges as he laments the inferior social status of his companions: “Dove rimangono, che fanno

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<sup>219</sup> “Il piccolo dalla fisonomia lombrosiana, dopo l’esame circolare, era ancora il favorito, l’unico con cui Johnny potesse sentirsi *matey*. E la constatazione brivida di stupore ora che Tito era tutto chiaro visibile nella spietata luce del carburo, la testa libera dal mefisto.

Aveva un naso esageratamente minuscolo, ma malignamente piantato nella esagerata infossatura delle occhiaie, la fronte irregolare e bozzosa e come divorata dalla piantatura fitta e volgare dei capelli neri e senza lustro, con qualche striscia già innaturalmente bianca, repellente come bisce morte dissanguate e imprigionate nel catrame. La bocca era torta ed il mento sfuggente. Tutto il corpo era di una nevrotica picciolità, e doveva essere anormalmente villosa. Eppure da lui fluiva una direttezza, una dryness e cordialità paradossali, da stropicciarsene gli occhi” (444-5) [“The little man with the Lombrosian physiognomy, after examining all around, was still his favorite, the only person with whom Johnny could feel *matey*. And the observation made him shiver with surprise now that Tito was completely visible in the unforgiving light of the lantern, his head free of the beret.

“He had an exaggeratedly minuscule nose, badly positioned in the exaggerated hollows of his eyes, an irregular, lumpy forehead that seemed devoured by the embedded, vulgar line of his black, dull hair, with its occasional streaks of premature gray, repellent like dead snakes, bloodless and imprisoned in tar. His mouth was twisted and his chin, fleeting. His entire body was of a neurotic smallness, and it must have been abnormally hairy. And yet, from him flowed a directness, a paradoxical *dryness* and cordiality, to rub one’s eyes”].

<sup>220</sup> Later, an anti-Semitic element is introduced, as Tito is described as having, “una cert’aria d’ebreuccio di ghetto polacco per via del cappotto d’agnello invernale che botolava il suo corpo minuto” (485) [“a certain air of a little Polish ghetto Jew, thanks to the winter lamb’s coat that enveloped his minuscule body”].

quelli che mi somigliano?’ chiedeva Johnny” (497) [“‘Where are they, what are they doing, those who resemble me?’ Johnny asked”]. Saccone, here, comments,

La natura di questa differenza comincia così, anche se faticosamente e sempre solo in maniera negativa, a chiarirsi. È evidente infatti...che non sono sufficienti, per renderne conto, motivazioni ideologiche o addirittura strategiche, che pure son certamente all’opera e debitamente enunciate nel caso presente (*Fenoglio* 181).

[The nature of this difference starts, even if tiredly and always only in a negative way, to clarify itself. It is evident in fact...that to explain this ideological or even strategic motives are insufficient, even though they are certainly in the work and duly stated in the present case].

However, Saccone breaks off his analysis at a key moment, for just as Johnny locates a certain affinity with the group of Badoglian partisans, “almeno un comune linguaggio *esteriore*” (540) [“at least a common *exterior* language”], difference is reasserted through the presence of female partisans:

le donne non erano piuttosto scarse nelle file azzurre, con ciò aumentando quella generale impressione di anacronismo che quei ranghi ispiravano, un’abbondanza femminile concepibile soltanto in un esercito del tardo seicento, ancora fuori della scopa di Cromwell. Il latente anelito di Johnny al puritanesimo militare, appunto gli fece scuoter la testa a quella vista, ma in effetti, sul momento appunto, le donne stavano lavorando sodo, facendo pulizia, bucato, una dattilografando (541)

[women were not at all lacking among the ranks of the Blues, increasing as such that general sense of anachronism that those ranks inspired, a female abundance conceivable only in an army of the late 1600s, still outside Cromwell’s broom. Johnny’s latent yearning for military Puritanism in fact made him shake his head at that sight, but in effect, in that very moment, the women were working hard, cleaning, washing, one typing].

Johnny’s meager acceptance of the female partisans gives way to misogynistic commonplaces about female infidelity and, in so doing, belies an anxiety about his own perpetually transforming identity.<sup>221</sup> Alongside Johnny’s decision to exchange his red uniform for the blue, a moralizing gaze deflects attention from Johnny to the shifting amorous allegiances of the women:

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<sup>221</sup> The uniform’s significance—whether it carries intrinsic meaning or whether it can simply be exchanged—is addressed frequently. Consider Johnny’s flight from Rome in the aftermath of the armistice, as he tries to free himself from his identity as soldier: “Della divisa fece un fagotto che ora si mimetizzava nell’erba, egli lo guardò come un tumore di cui si fosse liberato appena in tempo. Si sentiva leggerissimo e deliziosamente aerato, ma non poteva illudersi che l’uniforme non gli avesse lasciato addosso un odore persistente, una incancellabile concia sufficiente al più ottuso dei ricercatori tedeschi per smascherarlo con irrisoria facilità” (1413-4/1528-9) [“He made a bundle with his uniform that now blended into the grass. He looked at (the uniform) as if it were a tumor from which he had freed himself just in time. He felt incredibly free and deliciously airy, but he could not fool himself that the uniform had not left a persistent odor on him, an uncancelable tanning, enough for even the most obtuse German searcher to unmask him with derisive facility”]. Later, in dealing with a fascist deserter, he attempts to sustain the same principle: “In qualche maniera sei ben dentro a quella sporca divisa, essa significa disgrazia e tu sopportala

Le ragazze ci avevano il loro bravo zampino, accoglievano e puntualizzavano e aguzzavano la divisione, portando nei capelli o alle asole nastri azzurri se preferivano e si accompagnavano con partigiani azzurri, o viceversa se con partigiani garibaldini fiammei nastri rossi. Ma spesso mutavan nastro col repentino mutar di simpatia e succedeva a un ansioso partigiano azzurro di individuare nella crostosa piazza la sua ragazza con un nuovissimo nastro rosso nei capelli (551)

[The girls had their helpful role, they defined and sharpened up the division, wearing in their hair or in their buttonholes blue ribbons if they preferred and if they went out with blue partisans, or viceversa if with Garibaldini partisans, flaming red ribbons. But often they changed ribbon with a sudden change of attraction and it would happen that an anxious blue partisan would pick out in the icy piazza his girlfriend with a brand new red ribbon in her hair].

Similarly, within the practice of adopting a battle name, Johnny distinguishes between heroic male conversion and whorish female transformation: “Il solo fatto che portassero un nome di battaglia, come gli uomini, poteva suggerire a un povero malizioso un’associazione con altre donne portanti uno pseudonimo” [“The simple fact that they had a battle name, like the men, could suggest to some poor malicious person an association with other women who use a pseudonym”].<sup>222</sup> In the following sentence, that potential suggestion is made: “Esse in effetti praticavano il libero amore, ma erano giovani donne, nella loro esatta stagione d’amore coincidente con una stagione di morte, amavano uomini doomed e l’amore fu molto spesso il penultimo gesto della loro destinata esistenza” [“These, in effect, practiced free love, but they were young women, in their exact season of love, coinciding with a season of death, they loved *doomed* men and love was very often the penultimate gesture of their destined existence”]. Martyrdom thus redeems whorish behavior, as the female partisans are afforded equal status, although again, concomitant with the introduction of linguistic difference: “Si resero utili, combatterono, fuggirono per la loro vita, conobbero strazi e orrori e terrori sopportandoli quanto gli uomini. Qualcuna cadde, e il suo corpo disteso *worked up the men to salute them militarily*” (542 emphasis mine) [“They made themselves useful, they fought, they fled for their lives, they faced torments and horrors and terrors, tolerating them as well as the men. Someone fell, and her outstretched body *worked up the men to salute them militarily*”].

Saccone, like Bigazzi, is attentive to Johnny’s classist tendencies, following Fenoglio’s own description of Johnny as a “snob” in a letter to Garzanti (as cited in *Lettere* 104). However he tends to gloss over the racist, colonialist, anti-Semitic, misogynist moments that are not only part of Johnny’s journey but are, effectively, constitutive of it. This effacement of the other’s specificity is symptomatic of the critical tendency to read *Partigiano* not in terms of an historical conflict but to abstract it to a metaphysical struggle, dependent on the interminable defense of the

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ora questa disgrazia” (832/1149) [“In some way you are well inside that dirty uniform which means disgrace and now you have to put up with this disgrace”].

<sup>222</sup> Johnny himself is exempt from this problem, as his change of name, like so many aspects, does not correspond to his transformation into a *partigiano*: “fu la mia professoressa d’inglese a chiamarmi Johnny, in terza ginnasio. Entrò nell’uso dei miei compagni di scuola, poi dei miei a casa e infine di tutti in città” (1263) [“It was my English professor who called me Johnny, in third grade. My classmates started using it, then my parents at home, and finally, throughout the city”].

subject's borders (Saccone *Fenoglio* 71-2). We might ask, then, what the “evident lack” of “ideological or strategic motives” (Saccone *Fenoglio* 181) in Johnny's struggle works to obscure. I offer, by way of example, a moment when Johnny staves off the “sickening” thought of having to temporarily “bury” his pistol—and thus defer his transformation into partisan—by eagerly turning to childhood memories:

con travolgente facilità s'immaginava, s'immedesimava in un difensore (la sua congenita, Ettorica preferenza per la difensiva) che respingeva da luogo vantaggioso un molteplice assalto. Poteva, in fondo pensare di sparare ed uccidere uomini bianchi, ma la cosa gli costava un tremito di coscienza che finiva con influire negativamente sulla mira; allora passava ai pellirosse ed ai negri d'Africa, ma la cosa non era ancora perfetta e heart-setting quite, si metteva a posto soltanto con l'applicare ai rossi ed ai neri assaltanti i piú vistosi ed atroci war-paints (424)

[with violent easiness he imagined himself, he identified himself with a defender (his congenital, Hectoral preference for defense) who drove back from an advantageous position a multiple assault. He could, fundamentally, think about shooting and killing white men, but the thing cost him a quivering of his conscience that ended up influencing his aim negatively; so then he switched to the red-skins and the blacks of Africa, but the thing still wasn't perfect and *heart-setting quite*, he was able to make it okay only by applying to the reds and the blacks the gaudiest and most atrocious *war-paints*].

In a move typical of the metahistorical branch of criticism, Galaverni reads this passage for its heroic, epic resonances, including “il grande archetipo dell'Ettore omerico, nell'*Iliade* designato appunto con l'epiteto di ‘difensore,’ e allora la tensione epica fenogliana” (98-9) [“the great archetype of Homer's Hector, in the *Iliad* designated in fact with the epithet of ‘defensor,’ and thus the epic Fenoglian tension”]. Here, by focusing attention on Johnny as Homeric defender, Galaverni defends his hero from the threat of fascist contamination, that is, the implication that his childhood fantasies—likely taking place in the early 1930s, given Johnny's age—participated in, and were informed by, fascist, colonialist rhetoric, exiling Italy's (not so distant, not so heroic) colonial past to a distant, heroic epic. Here, I am not suggesting that either text or character (or author!) is fascist; rather I argue that by repudiating the historical specificity, critics can avoid the potential for discursive overlap between this ‘true’ literary work and the vulgarity of the regime's rhetoric.

Much of my dissertation has aimed to problematize the general structure of conversion narratives; however here I let *Partigiano* itself critique the metahistorical approach, for Johnny, as we have seen, is an interpreter in his own right. Take, for instance, his treatment of Tito. Once describing him as a “testo integrale di sintomatologia criminale lombrosiana” [“a complete text of Lombrosian criminology”], after his death, Johnny reads Tito like an epic poem:

He sailed on front of Johnny: ci vide un sigillo di eternità, come fosse un greco ucciso dai Persiani due millenni avanti. Profonda era l'occhiaia, la pelle già ridotta a pura fremente cartilagine, sentente la brezza e la bocca lamentava l'assenza di baci millenari. I suoi capelli assolutamente immobili e gravi, i capelli d'una statua (492)

[*He sailed on front of Johnny*: he saw in him a seal of eternity, as if he were a Greek killed by the Persians, two millennia prior. Deep were the eye-sockets, the skin already reduced to pure trembling cartilage, feeling the breeze and his mouth lamented the absence of millennial kisses. His hair completely immobile and heavy, the hair of a statue].

This textual transformation, as it were, from Lombroso to the ancient Greeks, seems more dignified than the crass politicized treatment on the part of the leaders of the brigade, who use the decidedly not-Communist Tito for a Communist photo-op: “Per l’archivio, si mosse il maresciallo Mario e, unobtrusively ma efficiently, fotografò Tito con una kodakina da bancarella” (493) [“For the archive, Marshal Mario went into action and, *unobtrusively* but *efficiently*, he photographed Tito with a little Kodak from a street vendor”].<sup>223</sup> However, when Johnny returns to Tito’s grave, he has already become critical about the way he has preserved Tito in his own memory:

Tito andò una volta a trovarlo al camposanto, una volta che non supportò piú, ad un pitch morboso, quella comunità pigra e crogiolantesi, grim e sbavona. Ma sul tumulo proprio non gli riuscì di stabilire un benché minimo dialogo con Tito underlying, l’afferrò anzi, e per tutti quei minuti, un *giro* letterario, certo frivolo, forse sacrilego, sicuramente odiosissimo: ‘...watched the moths fluttering among the heath and harebells: listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass...’ Corse via, in precipite vergogna (498).

[Tito, he went to visit him once in the cemetery, once he no longer could no longer take, at an abnormal *pitch*, that lazy and simmering community, *grim* and drooling. But on the mound he simply could not manage to establish even a minimal dialogue with Tito, *underlying*, he was seized by, rather, and for all those minutes, a literary *loop*, certainly frivolous, perhaps sacrilegious, certainly hateful: ‘...watched the moths fluttering among the heath and harebells: listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass...’ He ran away in sudden shame].

Johnny’s shame is caused by his failure to establish a dialogue with *Tito underlying*, instead getting caught up in a literary circle that effectively excludes the interlocutor. Thus, the text provides a critique of those who would wrap it up in a political flag or encircle it with abstract discourses: for in both cases, even a “minimal dialogue” is precluded. This effacement of the other’s specificity—“un suo avversario che di volta in volta muta nome e aspetto” (De Nicola *Come leggere* 75) [“an adversary who each time changes name and face”]—has particularly dangerous consequences, as Johnny asserts:

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<sup>223</sup> ““Tu sei comunista, Tito?” ‘Io no,’ sbottò lui: ‘Io sono niente e sono tutto. Io sono soltanto contro i fascisti. Sono nella Stella Rossa perché la formazione che ho incocciata era rossa, il merito è loro d’averla organizzata e d’avermela presentata a me che tanto la cercavo, come finora non ho cercato niente altrettanto intensamente. Ma a cose finite, se sarò vivo, vengano a dirmi che sono comunista!’” (446) [““Are you a Communist, Tito?” ‘Not me,’ he burst out: ‘I’m nothing and I’m everything. I’m only against the fascists. I was in the Red Star because the group I encountered was red. It was their merit to have organized it and presented it to me, after I had been searching so long—with more intensity than I had ever searched for anything. But when things are over, if I’m alive, let them just try to say I’m Communist!’”].

meglio, però, sarebbe stato non conoscerli mai di presenza, nelle loro caratteristiche carnee e umane, meglio lasciarli annidati nella faceless monoliticità della odiosa idea avversa, da atterrarsi tutta d'un colpo al massimo sforzo. E i cadaveri a giacer proni, la faccia nella polvere, per l'eternità (671)

[it would have been, however, better to never know them in terms of their presence, in their corporeal and human characteristics, better to leave them nested in the *faceless* monolithicity of the hateful, opposing idea, to knock down all at once with a maximum effort. And the bodies to lie prone, face in the dust, for eternity].

Evacuating the particulars of intersubjective relationships is fundamental in maintaining this oppositional logic (a logic, it should be recalled, which underwrites fascist, colonial endeavors): Johnny cannot imagine shooting someone in his own image, so he fantasizes that his opponent is a savage; when he finally kills a man, face to face, his war—and in a sense, his life—is effectively over: “Sai, è il primo uomo che uccido guardandolo in faccia.’...E Johnny si rivolse a vegliare *quel suo proprio cadavere*. Faceva molto freddo, ma gli pareva che l’inverno (e forse anche la sua guerra) fosse passato e finito” (1191 emphasis mine) [“You know, he’s the first man that I’ve killed while looking at his face.’... And Johnny turned back to look on *that own corpse of his*. It was very cold, but it seemed to him that winter (and maybe also his war) was over and finished”].

The violence of this critical position, taken to the extreme, is evinced in the work of Beccaria, who rejects a literal interpretation of the character’s journey, “I personaggi difatti non evolvono” (109) [“The characters, in fact, do not evolve”], and of the *Resistenza*, “L’antinomia fascismo-antifascismo non gli è sufficiente a misurare il mondo” (114) [“The antinomy fascism-antifascism is not sufficient for him to measure the world”], in order to transfer them into an abstract, transhistorical dimension: “La lotta è un qualcosa di eterno, di autonomo, come una delle lotte da millenni combattute dagli uomini” (117) [“The battle is something eternal, autonomous, like one of the battles fought by men for millennia”].<sup>224</sup> As Beccaria announces in the preface, his approach struggles to shift the tides in the disciplinary war, from philology to literature, as readers have seen “problemi (sacrosanti) di date, inchiostri, varianti, note in margine e varia testimonianza prendere il sopravvento e dilagare a macchia sulla sua pagina al punto da farne dimenticare ed offuscarne anche gli splendori” [“(sacrosanct) problems of dates, inks, variants, notes in the margins and various testimony take the upper hand and spread like a stain on the page, to the point where it causes them to forget and to obfuscate even the splendors”]. Beccaria’s approach, then, is effectively a corrective—to free literature from the stain of philology—as he invites the reader to return to Fenoglio with “mente sgombra” (9-10) [“a free mind”]. However, even a cursory glance at the disposition of his argument on the page, long lists of isolated parts of speech interspersed with sentence fragments, shows how in order to prove the “monumental” status of this classic—“Il classico crede sempre nella perennità e nella continuità, non nell’eversione e nella frattura” (41) [“the classic always believes in the perennity and in the continuity, not in the subversion and in the fracture”]—he must paradoxically tear Johnny’s story limb from limb. In other words, to correct the philological attempts to cure the

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<sup>224</sup> Although Saccone has his own decontextualizing tendencies, he does criticize Beccaria for going too far (*Fenoglio* 206).

textual body, he dismembers it.<sup>225</sup> As we have seen in Chapter Two, this attempt to *move beyond a stain* itself works by means of obfuscation, as it privileges the integral spirit over the fragmentary letter. Here, then, rather than “establish a dialogue” with *Partigiano Johnny*—for its specific, historical, philological and literary dimensions—these critics get caught in a *giro letterario* that renders the text a *faceless monolith*.

### 3.3 “*Non erano posti né tempi da donne*” [“It was neither the place nor time for women”]: “A proper girl” and “The partisan genre”

In the final section of this chapter, I focus on one of legibility’s fundamental outcasts, women. Throughout this dissertation, I critique the “sexism of the exegetical system” (Felman *Woman* 29), both at a structural and a thematic level, by pointing to the misogynistic, fetishistic logic that organizes the transformation between a phallic whole and a castrated fragment, whether the subject of that narrative be an author, a character or a text. The thematic censorship of women from this specific body of scholarship is all but a given: the idea that “non erano posti né tempi da donne” (498) [“it was neither the place nor time for women”] is repeated by various characters throughout *Partigiano*, and critics are happy to take them at their word. As such, in the arguments of the critics discussed above, women are only addressed to the extent that they aid the journey being plotted.<sup>226</sup> Even when the topic of women in Fenoglio’s *oeuvre* is given its own forum, “episodi femminili” [“female episodes”] are defined by Elisabetta Soletti as “indugi” [“delays”], “digressioni” [“digressions”], and “episodi secondari” [“secondary episodes”] (62-3). Many of these episodes were eliminated as Fenoglio revised *PJI* into *PJ2*, a move Soletti justifies, calling them obstacles to “una narrazione di straordinaria energia espressiva” (63) [“a narrative of extraordinary expressive energy”]. Referring to these female episodes as a “parentesi della genere,” a “parenthesis of the genre”—which, owing to the double meaning of “genere” in Italian, also turns them into a “parenthesis of gender”—she, herself, treats them accordingly, interrupting her remarks on two of the better defined female characters—“the girl of the hill” and Elda—as discursive digressions.<sup>227</sup>

Certainly, in Johnny’s struggle to stabilize his identity, women can rightly be termed a formidable obstacle. Even in his childhood games, the possibility of combat necessitates their absence: “l’assenza e addirittura l’impensabilità delle femmine tutto contribuiva, allora a fargli pensare e vedere la soffitta come un congeniale teatro d’avventura, o almeno come un qualsiasi posto al mondo dove non si avesse a far altro che vigilare e combattere” (424) [“the absence and even the unthinkable of women, all of it contributed, then, to make him think and to see the attic like a congenial theatre of adventure, or at least like whatever place in the world where one had nothing else to do but stand vigil and fight”]. Later, women are excluded from the war synecdochically by one of the unnamed girls frequented by Johnny and his friends (note that in the lopsided substitution, vulva replaces woman whereas man remains the absolute term): “Voglia il cielo che la strage sia solamente degli uomini, e le vulve possano impunemente,

<sup>225</sup> By dismembering the text, Beccaria parallels the philological approach he critiques. See Chapter Two.

<sup>226</sup> Corti mentions a reference to Mimma in *UrPJ*, a romantic interest from Fenoglio’s past, to support her thesis that this manuscript is the most heavily autobiographical. Amongst his many criticisms of Corti’s autobiographical reading of *UrPJ*, Saccone observes that her description of the centrality of Mimma—who appears only once—is categorically incorrect (*Fenoglio* 54). Bigazzi reads Dea as a Beatrice to Johnny’s Dante.

<sup>227</sup> “Non voglio dilungarmi su questo punto” (65) [“I do not want to go further on this point”]; “Ma non mi dilungo oltre su queste parentesi” [“But I do not go any further with these parentheses”] (68).

senza discriminazione, fortificare i combattenti, confortare i morituri, ed essere infine premio totale ai vincitori!” (422) [“If only the heavens might make the massacre only for the men, and allowing the vulvas, with impunity, without discrimination, to fortify the combatants, comfort the dying, and, in conclusion, be the total prize for the victors!”]. However, for critics to treat them as a *narrative* obstacle, a generic parenthesis—a rather loaded term in a post-Crocean context—is simply to repeat the misogynist logic that propels Johnny’s journey. It is also to ignore the rather substantial threat women pose to Johnny’s conversion and the absolute difference required to sustain it.

The elimination of literal women in *Partigiano* is a constitutive step in the formation of partisan identity, solidified through male bonding. If action requires difference, stasis requires similitude. Here, among the Badogliani, Johnny finds, “un poterci stare insieme non soltanto nella non necessitante battaglia, ma più e principalmente nei lunghi periodi di attesa e di riposo” (540-1) [“an ability to be together not only during the not-called-for battle, but more and principally in the long periods of waiting and of rest”]. However, these homosocial bonds, forged in the absence of women, take a homoerotic tone, for instance, in this description of Johnny’s first impression of the commander, Nord:

L’aurea proporzione del suo fisico si manifestava fin sotto la splendida uniforme, nella perfezione strutturale rivestita di giusta carne e muscolo. I suoi occhi erano azzurri (incredibile compimento di tutti i requisiti!), penetranti ma anche leggeri, svelanti come mai Nord prevaricasse col suo intenzionale fisico, la sua bocca pronta al più disarmato e meno ermetico dei sorrisi e risi; parlava con una piacevole voce decisamente maschile, mai sforzata (542)

[The golden proportion of his physique manifested itself from under the splendid uniform, in the structural perfection dressed in proper flesh and muscle. His eyes were blue (incredible completion of all the requirements!), penetrating but also light, revealing how it was that Nord transgressed with his willful physique, his mouth ready for the most disarming and least hermetic of smiles and laughs; he spoke with a pleasing, decidedly masculine voice, that was never forced].

In Ettore Canepa’s analysis, Nord is “avvolto da sentimenti di erotica dedizione e venerazione... Verso di lui l’innamoramento a prima vista è cosa comune” (138) [“wrapped in feelings of erotic devotion... Towards him, love at first sight is a common thing”], and Johnny’s companions suggest that his feelings are reciprocated (577). Much in the same way Galaverni reads Johnny’s racist, colonialist fantasy metaphorically in terms of his pure, heroic “quiddità” [“quiddity”], here Canepa disciplines the homoerotic by reading it as a metaphor for Johnny’s search for origins, configured as a conquest, a penetration of otherness: “Nel loro linguaggio figurale, le cose si fanno apparizioni ed annunci di un’origine di senso in cui egli vuole penetrare; che vuole, all’inizio della sua vicenda, conquistare” (139-40) [“In their figural language, things become apparitions and announcements of an origin of meaning which he wants to penetrate; which he wants, at the beginning of his story, to conquer”].

Just as critics avoid the possibility of homoerotic discourse by reading the text metaphorically, the text deploys metaphor as a strategy to avoid being caught in what Eve Sedgwick defines as the double bonds of “homosexual panic”—“the product of the prescription of homosocial behavior (male bonding) and equally strong proscription of homosexual behavior



that characterize all patriarchal, heterosexual culture” (Spackman 55). Battle, the text tells us, is exactly like sex: “esattamente come nell’atto sessuale” (558) [“exactly like in the sexual act”]. However, woman (the literal vulva) is excluded from that battle. Thus we see the manifestations of this “panic,” similar—if less outrageous—to those theorized by Spackman in her reading of F.T. Marinetti’s *Mafarka le futuriste*.<sup>228</sup> For despite the literal marginalization of the female body, its exclusion from the partisan project, it does not disappear: “The ‘vulva’ must be not only everywhere present but also everywhere and always open to violence: the relation to matter is almost always figured as heterosexual rape, as sexual violence against feminized matter or against female characters” (Spackman 56). For example, the partisans’ collective gaze is described as a rapist’s: “si fissarono con occhi di stupratori alla misteriosa, femminile platitude dirimpetto” (695/1029) [“They stared with rapists’ eyes at the mysterious, feminine, platitude/plain opposite them”], and Johnny sees his town of Alba as: “felicamente e consensualmente violata, nuzialmente, ma violata” (634/984) [“happily and consensually violated, nuptially, but violated”]. In both instances the metaphors are present almost identically in both *PJ1* and *PJ2*, which is suggestive if we keep in mind the characterization of the translation/revision from *PJ1* to *PJ2* in which “episodi e figure secondari, che inquinano e rallentano il ritmo della vicenda principale” [“secondary figures and episodes, that poison and slow the rhythm of the main story”] are eliminated (Grignani 37). For it implies that if, for instance, the female partisan Sonia—who may have been violated by her fascist captors (858-861)—*poisons* the narrative rhythm and, thus, is eliminated, the violation of the metaphoric female body is a narrative requirement that remains in spite of revisions.

The metaphorical, dismembered female body indeed works to stave off “homosexual panic.” However, as I turn my attention to one of the few named female characters, Dea, I will show how she is, on the contrary, a rather destabilizing textual presence. Initially, the passage that marks the arrival of Johnny’s “leader and escort” in *UrPJ* appears to reinforce what we know about women in the partisan context:

Here and there upon the face of the lofty gradient he discovered many a partisan, all khakhi clad and briskly going on corvées. And a girl, now, a proper girl, was pacing his own road, approaching the river as much as Johnny was luntaning from it. She was blonde and strong, with civvy and very feminine dress, with a dark skirt and a white, beaming chemise swollen by her florid breasts. Surely, she had nothing to share with the partisan genre, most probably she was a rural schoolmiss. And Johnny’s heart and senses flew to her (231).

The procession of khaki-clad partisans is interrupted by “a girl now, a proper girl,” and Johnny responds to her in heterosexual kind. And just in case we remain unconvinced as to her womanly status, or Johnny’s attraction, “And then a tiny, sudden gust of wind invested her skirt and discovered her tall, slender, naked, candy-white legs and she paused to set it down like appeasing a dear dog in vein of affectuous riotousness. And the swoon of springtime fell upon Johnny, and he closed his eyes and elevated his chin to that all-contriving heaven” (231). Here, with “florid breasts,” the “swoon of springtime” and heavenly invocations, we are in the realm of literature, not war: for a “proper girl,” we are told, “surely had nothing to share with the partisan genre.” First, to open up a discussion on this rather emphatic phrase, I note that the word “genre” suggests a calque of the Italian word “genere,” a word which at once indicates categorical

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<sup>228</sup> Here Spackman builds on Alice Kaplan’s argument in *Reproductions of Banality*.

distinction, and itself belongs to multiple categories. One can speak of a *genere biologico*, a *genere letterario*, a *genere linguistico*. In his normalizing translation, Merry treats the word as one of Fenoglio's idiosyncratic uses of English—a mistranslation from the Italian—and renders the phrase “la razza dei partigiani” meaning, this girl is not a partisan. The text will shortly reveal, however, that despite the fact that the wind so unequivocally shows Dea to be an object of poetic desire, and therefore *not* a bellicose combatant, the two are not mutually exclusive.

Taking, then, permission from the text to doubt the validity of the hermeneutic gesture, the ambiguity of the term “genere” in this initial description of Dea will serve as a point of entry into an analysis of her role in the narrative dynamics. First, I take the sentence as it is stated in English: “she had nothing to share with the partisan genre,” a statement which critics endorse, explicitly or tacitly. However, returning to the very first description of Dea, as “a proper girl,” I complicate that assertion. “Proper” girls, as we have seen, have nothing to share with the partisan “type,” (as female partisans are “improper,” in that they are sexually available). Nor do they belong to the partisan genre (as they are a narrative parenthesis). However, the rhetorical dimension of “proper/improper,” allows the phrase to be read metatextually to suggest the way in which “improper” (i.e. metaphorical) girls, are, in fact, essential to the genre: for once literal/proper women are expelled as a constitutive step in the formation of the partisan identity, their bodies are reintroduced metaphorically (improperly) by means of the sexually available city and landscape (for example, the river in which Johnny immerses himself: “verticalmente, monoliticamente in quell’immobile vortice, fino alle spalle, con un lungo e filato fremito, equivalente perfetto, piú perfetto, di una scarica sessuale (602-3) [“vertically, monolithically, in that immobile vortex, up to his shoulders, with a long and spun shudder, equivalently perfect, more perfect, than a sexual discharge”]).<sup>229</sup> Finally, translating the word *genere* as gender, we can suggest another meaning: as a girl, Dea has nothing to share with the partisan *gender*, an assertion coherent with the repeated association between partisan and manhood. Again, however, that qualifier “proper” proves important, for as we discover Dea is not, in fact, a “proper” girl, as her commander tells Johnny: “‘Dea? She is one of my best men. She has all gifts will render a man, a true, crowned man: simpleness, courage, loyalty, directness’” (249). Dea, then, *does* belong to the partisan gender: as a “convert,” her literal female body can be transcended in favor of her true, masculine spirit (and, in this way, she can be brought within the confines of the partisan genre).

Dea’s impropriety, however, acquires a moral dimension when she evades the watchful eyes of her brother and an elderly “she-chemist” (293) and asks Johnny to take her virginity: “‘I’d said myself i was not positively going to make stories, but I’m aware I’m doing a lot of them. Johnny, I’m going to sleep with you.’ ‘All right.’” However, in so doing, she introduces further ambivalence into the text, threatening not only to be a deviation from the narrative progression but from normative heterosexuality. The scene continues as such:

She began undressing, very slowly and carefully, and the progressive denudament of her was marked, measured by the keener puffs of the healthy, dear scent of her naked flesh. ‘Are you willing to receive me? And ready now?’ ‘Yes,’ and as her glossy and hard-sound body flowed upon him he gasped: ‘Why?’ And they stretched strainedly as to measure one another their bodies (289, 291).

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<sup>229</sup> To wit, two discussions of Dea are prefaced by a description of the “mestruated land” (231) and “mestruated earth” (249).

Far from offering the measurement of their individual bodies, the dialogue here blurs the distinctions between them, making it unclear who is giving and who, receiving. The Merry translation, attempting to clear up the ambiguity, keeps Dea in the active role (after all, she is the one *making stories*): “Allora mi vuoi adesso, sei pronto per me?” E Johnny disse di sí” (290) [“Then do you want me now, are you ready for me?” And Johnny said yes”]. However, by phrasing the question in terms of Johnny’s desire, it thus attenuates his passivity. Furthermore, the Italian shows an overzealousness in explicitly attributing the dialogue, since the masculine-gendered adjective, *pronto*, already indicates that the question is being directed to *him*. However, recalling that Dea is the “best man” in the unit, the Italian version, perhaps, does not want to take any chances. Nor does the English text, for in the next sentence, her status as a woman is explicitly stated: “She was a marvelous woman, marvelously aware of the grandness and prizeness and significance of it.” And here, the word “prizeness” recalls the unnamed girl’s invocation about the proper gender, genital roles in war, where the men are the victors, and the vulvas, the “premio totale” (422) [“total prize”]. Still, keeping in mind Dea’s ambivalence as a “proper girl” and the “best man,” the other partisans’ teasing comments to Dea about the relationship take on a different tone: “This is the one you are like and apt to like, eh?” (233). Indeed, Merry’s Italian version works to reintroduce difference within this threat of sameness, by reasserting Johnny’s status as a man, rather than maintaining the simile: “L’hai trovato, l’uomo che fa per te, neh?” (232) [“You found him, the man for you, didn’t you?”].

Dea, on the one hand, in the active, desiring role, casts the war in terms of her own sexual odyssey: “She wanted not to come through and out of the grand boucle a girl yet, and she was months-since searching in amidsty a crowd of partisans her man”; yet on the other hand, in de Lauretis’ terms, she “consents to femininity”—according to the woman’s role in the oedipal plot, by ceding to the partisan-hero the prize that awaits him after battle.<sup>230</sup> However, her specifications about how she wants to lose her virginity are worthy of note: “she wanted to be deflorated keeping her head upon a pillow under which lay the weapons of her pre-selected man” (291).<sup>231</sup> Dea’s requirements for her ‘defloration’ put *her* in the fetishist’s subject position: she wants Johnny’s weapon—the source of his partisan/manhood—hidden by the pillow (here, the Italian renders the passive “under which lay” with the more active verb *nascondere*, to hide).<sup>232</sup> The fetishistic oscillation between castrated/uncastrated applies, then, to both of them, making their sex deviant indeed.

My intent here is not to psychoanalyze the characters; rather, I want to point to a fetishistic split in the text with regards to Dea which requires that she be at once like Johnny and unlike him, male and female, proper and improper, partisan and fascist. War, I have argued,

<sup>230</sup> De Lauretis’ critique of the oedipal plot in “Desire in Narrative” was discussed in Chapters One and Two.

<sup>231</sup> Without turning to pop-Freudianism, I locate the phallic symbolism of the gun, present throughout the text, in this analogy: “La porta di casa si spalancò e lo sten di Johnny sorse in normale ad essa come un pene ad una vulva” [“The door of the house opened wide, and at that, Johnny’s sten rose to its normal position like a penis towards a vulva”]. However, there is a certain anxiety surrounding this metaphor as the text hastens to qualify it: “Ma era la vecchia padrona, il di lei selvatico lezzo svolazzando sino a lui” (795/1118) [“But it was the old owner, her savage smell swirling all the way to him”]. If it were simply rhetoric, why would it matter that the vulva/door is substituted for an undesirable object?

<sup>232</sup> “In very subtle cases the fetish itself has become the vehicle both of denying and of asseverating the fact of castration. This was exemplified in the case of a man whose fetish was a suspensory belt which can also be worn as bathing drawers; this piece of clothing covers the genitals and altogether conceals the difference between them. The analysis showed that it could mean that a woman is castrated, or that she is not castrated, and it even allows of a supposition that man maybe be castrated, for all these possibilities could be equally well hidden beneath the belt” (Freud *S.E.* 21: 157).

requires sexual sameness (the exclusion of the vulva from battle) and political difference, and as such, Dea must be male. Heteronormative sex, then, stands in a chiasmic relationship to war, as it depends on political sameness (after all, only whores sleep with the enemy)<sup>233</sup> and sexual difference, and thus, Dea must be female. This oscillation, which allows these contradictory beliefs to be maintained, is threatened by the sex-combat analogy (for example when Johnny describes battle as “contatto” [“contact”] which unfolds “esattamente come nell’atto sessuale” [557-8] [“exactly like in the sexual act”]). To this end, Dea prefaces their sexual encounter by describing herself, if only hypothetically, as Johnny’s political adversary: “If I were a fascist, I would have surprised you” (289). And, at its conclusion, Johnny tells Dea he feels as though the war is over—a feeling which, we recall, he also felt upon killing a fascist and looking at him in the face (1191): “You know, Dea, I’ve a strange feeling...’ ‘Which one...?’ ‘...to be out of the war...’” (293 ellipses in original). As the difference between sexual and political combat is elided, Dea’s role in the plot takes on a dangerous ambivalence: as a “proper girl” who “surely had nothing to share with the partisan genre” and as the “best man” who is Johnny’s guide, she is at once a source of *genere* normativity and of deviation, in all three senses of the word. On the one hand, Dea is like Johnny, and, indeed, their well-matched pace is emphasized: “She was equalling easily Johnny’s step, which was the usual stride of his own, and that what Johnny noted with pleasure” (233).<sup>234</sup> In this way, she does not slow Johnny from his literal path, nor his narrative journey, for the majority of their time together is spent as fellow partisans, not battling lovers. However, on the other hand, she chastises him for his predictable movements: “she explained she only got at him just because he was something like a monster and so very much followed and anyone, from baby to centenarians were able to tell her the road he had taken” (275). Perhaps the most predictable move of them all is the one which renders Dea Johnny’s sexual other, for the hero deflowering the girl is, as we have seen repeatedly throughout this dissertation, a familiar end to a well trodden narrative path. Thus, it is no surprise when, at the end of the episode, the text signals that it is, in fact, dispensing with her: Dea “disparved, in the hoary dawn” (293).<sup>235</sup>

By way of conclusion, I return to Johnny’s “strange feeling” about the end of the war and cite Dea’s response, in which she is described as *suspended*: “and she stood suspended as engrossed to catch a sound or a smell just as verifying the assertion, and then sighed and said: ‘You, you all, and I self, are not at all out of the war’” (293). In terms of traditional narrative—the narrative in which she is Johnny’s obstacle, the virgin that serves to underwrite his phallic authority—she is wrong, for the end (as Peter Brooks has written) is already promised by the beginning: “Tuttavia, Johnny s’augurava che il contatto non avvenisse subito: la cosa era particolarmente eccitante appunto mentre il contatto era ancora in divenire: poi esattamente come nell’atto sessuale, tutto diventava meccanicità, fatica tautologica, esercizio muscolare” (557-8) [“Still, Johnny hoped that the contact did not occur immediately: the thing was particularly exciting precisely while the contact was still to come: then exactly like in the sexual act, everything became mechanicalness, tautological exhaustion, muscular exercise”]. And in the final pages of *UrPJ*, Johnny has similar thoughts about the inevitability of the end of the war:

<sup>233</sup> One of Dea’s specifications is that “She wanted to be deflorated by a man in the air of the war and by a man of war, on her side, of course” (291).

<sup>234</sup> Also: “She was an excellent pacer, the greatest she-pacer Johnny had ever met with” (257).

<sup>235</sup> Dea makes a last, fleeting appearance as part of a battle, in name only. The ‘disappearance’ of Sonia, the other female partisan, is also explicitly signaled by the text: “sparì nella tenebra giù verso la città” (803-4) [“she disappeared in the shadows down near the city”].

“Then, don’t worry about the end, for you have no remedy against it. You will go into it, as you have ever gone into all from the beginning” (333). In fact, although the character of Dea does not appear in the other manuscripts, her remarks aptly speak to *Partigiano*’s narrativity, offering multiple, contradictory journeys, that neither begin nor end, and thus refuse to guarantee a ‘proper’ order. For to “come out of the war,” to arrive at that transcendent moment of “complete elucidation,” to define a narrative journey within the reassuring parameters of a disciplinary “home,” means rendering illegible all the competing *resistances*, each of which contributes to *Partigiano Johnny*.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, as I presented and critiqued attempts to order the *Partigiano* archive, I showed how the manuscripts at once demand and refuse these narrativizations according to a conversion schema. My aim, however, was not to emphasize the ‘failures’: Johnny’s ‘failure’ to obtain a transcendent perspective, Fenoglio’s ‘failure’ to complete his “libro grosso” [“big book”] or, more to the point, the critics’ ‘failure’ to recover its truth. In my understanding, those ‘failures’—or *Partigiano*’s resistances to conversion—are what make *Partigiano* such a compelling textual object. For *Partigiano*’s resistances threaten not only the integrity of Fenoglio’s *oeuvre* as such, and the notion of antifascist literature which it is called on to define; but it also challenges the capacity of individual disciplines to order this piece of the cultural archive, and thus, my hope is that it speaks to the importance of—indeed, imperative for—interdisciplinary reading practices. For as a philologically vexed literary text about an historical event, *Partigiano* resists the confines of a single discipline. Indeed, I believe that by struggling to read these conflicting yet interdependent narratives *for* and *through* their tensions and not in spite of them, it becomes possible to locate the contribution of *Partigiano* to postwar literature, in terms of the Italian tradition, as well as in a comparative sense.

By way of conclusion, I offer these prefatory comments by Isella to his own edition of Fenoglio’s *Romanzi e racconti*:

Le stesse incertezze hanno potuto alimentar, per lui scrittore d’oggi, e per la datazione di un romanzo nato da un’esperienza di cui siamo stati testimoni diretti, una discussione ingegnosa e vivacissima, con decisive implicazioni critiche, simile a quelle dibattute solo per autori o per opere circonfuse dal mistero del caso o dalle tenebre della lontananza (x)

[The same uncertainties have been able to nourish, for him as a writer of today, and for the dating of a novel born from an experience for which we were direct witnesses, an ingenious and vivacious discussion, with decisive critical implications, similar to those debated only for authors or for works enveloped by the mystery of chance or by the shadows of distance.]

Isella identifies the threat posed by *Partigiano*, the reason it has generated such an “ingenious and vivacious discussion” among a specific group, a group of readers of an untitled book who were *direct witnesses* of an unnamed experience: the uncertainties surrounding this unnamed, undisciplined book, threaten to dislocate their status as witness, by pushing the (his)story

contained therein into the “shadowy distance.” One of the recurrent issues in this chapter, and indeed, in this dissertation, is the relationship between the critic, the reader and the text, the way traditional literary exegesis—by trying to clear up the mysteries surrounding a text—can work as a censorship mechanism, normativizing the texts we read, blind-sighting us to contradictory tensions; it also has sought to demonstrate that censorship is, in fact, a double-edged sword, at once productive and repressive, and that by locating critical repudiation or critical desire, one may learn about the text thus disciplined, and also about its context and be able, then, to problematize the assumptions underwriting their relationship.

Here, then, I am compelled to reread Isella’s words in terms of my own critical position. For when Isella refers to *Partigiano* as, “un romanzo nato da un’esperienza di cui siamo stati testimoni diretti” [“a novel born from an experience for which we were direct witnesses”], he is explicitly excluding me, as a scholar, born and educated in the United States in the postwar period. Thus, if on the one hand this project seeks to critique the way this context has effectively *produced* and *restricted* the *Partigiano* that is read today, on the other hand it suggests a way in which we—and here I mean the “voi” excluded by Isella’s “noi,” those of us who witness fascism and the *Resistenza* indirectly, through the cultural archive—may read the relationship between *Partigiano* and the critical debate *otherwise*: that is, as symptomatic of a concession to and a refusal of the irrevocable loss of traumatic experience, a manifestation of the “archive desire” that comes from “the possibility of forgetfulness.” “there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive” (Derrida *Archive Fever* 19). By reading these multiple, multifaceted, contradictory manuscripts known to us as *Partigiano*, my project foregrounds this struggle to narrate, to preserve, to transmit in the face of the inexorability of sleep, forgetfulness, death and, in this way, to participate in this testimony. I give, then, the final word to Johnny’s companion Pierre and to *Partigiano Johnny*:

E Pierre implorò. ‘Per favore, non ci addormentiamo subito! Resistiamo, e raccontiamoci l’un l’altro com’è andata...facciamo in modo di dormire il più tardi possibile,’ e certamente era grande tenersi desti e godere scientemente di ogni attimo di quel riposo, d’ogni atomo di quel beneficio, d’ogni fibra di quella sorridente, ridente sensazione di pace e sicurezza, ma il sonno in un minuto li schiacciò sotto il suo nero tallone (776)

[And Pierre implored. ‘Please, let’s not fall asleep immediately! Let’s resist and tell each other how it went...we’ll try to go to sleep as late as possible,’ and certainly it was great to stay awake and intentionally enjoy every moment of that rest, every atom of that benefit, every fiber of that smiling, laughing sensation of peace and security, but in a minute sleep crushed them beneath its black heel].

## Chapter Four.

### Curzio Malaparte: Converting the Chameleon

#### 4.1 Out of One Skin and into Another: Censorship, Canonization, and *La pelle*

As the son of a German immigrant growing up in Tuscany, Kurt Erich Suckert's name was in perpetual flux: he was Kurt, Curt, Curzio, Corrado and Curtino, Erich and Erisch, Suckert and Suchert (Biondi 40). In the early 1920s, however, as Suckert was establishing himself on the Florentine literary scene and in the local chapter of the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* [*National Fascist Party*], he formally became Curzio, a translation which, in the moment's nationalist climate, was decidedly political in valence.<sup>236</sup> In the words of Piero Gobetti, renowned antifascist (and Suckert's sometime editor), C. Erich Suckert, the man who was once "il dilettante di bolscevismo" ["the dilettante of bolshevism"] turned into Curzio Suckert, "fascista longobardo italianissimo" ["the most Italian Lombardian fascist"] (564).<sup>237</sup> Suckert also changed his last name to Malaparte in 1925, explaining a year later in *L'Italiano*, "Voglio essere italiano non soltanto nel cervello, nel fisico, come sono, ma anche nella desinenza del nome. Malaparte è il mio gagliardetto" (as cited in Guerri *Arcitaliano* 69) ["I want to be Italian, not just in my brain, in my body, as I am, but also in the ending of my name. Malaparte is my banner"].<sup>238</sup> Such a desire for a 'complete' Italian identity was in keeping with the agenda of the fascist literary movement he founded, *Strapaese* [*Super-country*], whose underlying belief was in the need to restore traditional Italian values (Pardini 183). However, the incongruity between Malaparte's foreign roots and *Strapaese's* nationalism was not lost on his critics, including Antonio Gramsci who noted in his *Quaderni di carcere* that, "lo strano è che a sostenere il razzismo oggi...sia Kurt Erich Suckert, nome evidentemente razzista e strapaesano" (710-11) ["what's strange is that today's proponent of racism is Kurt Erich Suckert, with his evidently racist, and super-nationalist name"], a belief that gained a foothold in popular opinion (Martellini *Invito* 132).

The transformation from Suckert to Malaparte also has elicited similar criticism, cast as a self-interested attempt at Italianization during a period of heightened nationalism.<sup>239</sup> However, some have viewed the specific choice of Malaparte (literally meaning "bad part")—which trumped other illustrious contenders including Borgia and Farnese (Guerri *Arcitaliano* 70)—as a critique of Mussolini as a kind of Napoleon Bonaparte (literally meaning "good part") (Luzzatto 80). In fact, as Alessandro Campi has documented, the Napoleon-Mussolini comparison was common from the earliest years of the regime, which Malaparte exploited in order to critique both.<sup>240</sup> Through this double negative, as the 'bad' *counterpart* to Mussolini's bonapartismo, Malaparte would have been positioning himself on the side of good, a hero to his villain. Along these lines, Giuseppe Pardini notes that Suckert first became Malaparte when he signed Giovanni Gentile's 1925 *Manifesto degli intellettuali di adesione al fascismo* [*Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals*], and he did so, "dichiarando al gruppo degli amici più vicini (Gobetti, Maccari e

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<sup>236</sup> Suckert joined the *PNF* on September 20, 1922. See Pardini 69-80.

<sup>237</sup> All translations mine, except where noted.

<sup>238</sup> The name change assumed legal status in 1929 (Pardini 169).

<sup>239</sup> See Isnenghi 5, Cannella vi and Adamson 233.

<sup>240</sup> For a summary of Malaparte's writings on the Napoleon-Mussolini connection see Campi 54-7.

Soffici) la necessità di andare oltre l'azione politica diretta, per dedicarsi ad un impegno più propriamente culturale" (169) ["declaring to a group of his closest friends (Gobetti, Maccari e Soffici), the need to go beyond direct political action, in order to dedicate themselves to a more specifically cultural commitment"]. From this perspective, any ostensible commitment to a fascist identity is attenuated insofar as it was pledged with a *pseudonym*.

Only six years later, Malaparte was, in fact, to abandon fascism, one of his many "metamorfosi, evoluzioni, conversioni" ["metamorphoses, evolutions, conversions"] described by Marino Biondi as, "una giostra estenuante e senza fine" (11) ["and exhausting, never-ending joust"]. Giordano Bruno Guerri's dizzying one-sentence biography of Malaparte bolsters Biondi's characterization:

esordisce come garibaldino-repubblicano, poi diventa fascista, poi antifascista (il regime lo manda addirittura la confino), poi diventa comunista, ma il comunismo lo respinge e allora diventa anticomunista, torna ad essere repubblicano, muore forse comunista e forse addirittura convertito" ("Muro" 16)

[He starts as a Garibaldine-Republican, then he becomes fascist, then antifascist (the regime even sends him into confinement), then he becomes communist, but communism rejects him so then he becomes anticommunist, he goes back to being a Republican, he dies perhaps a communist and maybe even a convert (to Catholicism)].<sup>241</sup>

Malaparte's myriad transformations were not limited to the political sphere, as American film director Walter Murch observes: "The contradictions and collisions of his life seem like a sped-up film of the first half of the twentieth century: German-Italian, Protestant-Catholic, soldier-pacifist, Fascist-Communist, journalist-novelist, editor-architect, film director-composer, diplomat-prisoner." However, throughout his life, it was his Italian identity that continued to vex him, as he lamented publicly in the journal *Tesoretto* in 1941: "tutto nasce da fatto che io mi sforzo continuamente d'essere (non di parere) un italiano come tutti gli altri, e non ci riesco" (66) ["everything stems from the fact that I continuously try to be (not to seem) an Italian like all the others, and I cannot do it"]. This declaration, however, did not shore up belief in the sincerity of Malaparte's efforts to 'be' Italian; indeed, it appears to have had an opposite effect, as Giampaolo Martelli remarks: "Ma quasi nessuno gli credette, si fu propensi a ritenere che il machiavellico Malaparte ancora una volta avesse recitato la sua parte, cioè avesse mentito" (17) ["But almost no one believed him, it was generally accepted that the Machiavellian Malaparte, once again, was playing his part, that is, that he lied"].<sup>242</sup>

Without a doubt, a schematic biographical account like Guerri's lends credence to such a conclusion—a conclusion widely diffused in the years following Malaparte's death.<sup>243</sup> During his

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<sup>241</sup> For the only thorough political biography, see Pardini. Guerri's *Arcitaliano* is a more traditional biography. In terms of English material, the best general introduction to Malaparte is from Gary Indiana's essay collection *Utopia's Debris*. William Hope's *Curzio Malaparte*, the only Anglophone monograph on Malaparte, approaches his *oeuvre* through reader response theory, and provides some introductory material.

<sup>242</sup> For an example of a *rejection* of the sincerity of the letter, see Guerri *Arcitaliano* 115. Years later, Giancarlo Vigorelli himself reiterated the sincerity of Malaparte's intention (xxx).

<sup>243</sup> In his 1989 *London Times* review of *The Skin*, Austin Maccurtain describes Malaparte in terms similar to Guerri's: "Having committed himself to political activism, Malaparte was unable to settle upon any firm convictions



lifetime, Malaparte was “perhaps the century’s most visible cultural figure” after D’Annunzio (di Palma 17), and Gianni Grana sustains that he was perhaps the most discussed Italian writer of the 20th century (*Malaparte* 7). However, according to Francesco Perfetti, after his death, Malaparte was taken prisoner by his own legend, and thus, moved from the center of attention to the margins of scholarly interest (7): in the introduction to the only political biography on Malaparte, Pardini summarizes the criticism up to 1997, underscoring “il perdurante silenzio che circonda Malaparte” (15n.4) [“the enduring silence that surrounds Malaparte”]. Along these lines, Perfetti and Pardini—with others including Biondi, Luigi Martellini and Giancarlo Vigorelli—are part of a critical trend, started in 1961 by Grana to “free” Malaparte, as such, from the grips of his legend, a legend they attribute, in part, to widely disseminated, decontextualized sound-bites from renowned antifascist sources (Grana “La critica”). Foremost among them is Gobetti’s superlative claim that Malaparte was “la più forte penna del fascismo” [“fascism’s most powerful pen”],<sup>244</sup> second only to Gramsci’s charge that Malaparte’s character was marked by “uno sfrenato arrivismo, una smisurata vanità e uno snobismo camaleontesco” (*Letteratura* 205) [“unbridled social climbing, unmeasured vanity, and a chameleonic snobbery”].

The chameleon, as Guerri and Pardini lament, has symbolized—and justified—decades of dismissive readings of Malaparte.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, in keeping with the metaphoric associations of this skin-changing animal come frequent accusations of *trasformismo* [transformism], “a synonym for corruption and degradation,” originating at the turn of the century in Agostino Depretis’s liberal state and still used today (Seton-Watson 91 and n.2).<sup>246</sup> Indeed, as Pardini shows, Malaparte’s association with *trasformismo* stems from the widely held belief in the “reversibilità, se non addirittura di assenza, di un pensiero politico-culturale malapartiano sostanzialmente coerente” (17-18) [“reversibility, if not complete absence of a substantially coherent political-cultural Malapartian thought”],<sup>247</sup> a belief which has not been quelled in the intervening years. To wit, the perceived instability of Malaparte’s identity is evinced in the string of hyphens stitching together Eugenio Scalfari’s 2009 condemnation of Malaparte, as “quel giornalista-dandy-artistasciupafemmine-comunista-fascista-avventuriero” (44) [“that journalist-dandy-artist-womanizer-comunist-fascist-adventurer”].

Moreover, this very sort of characterization outlines the challenge faced by Malaparte’s proponents, as they seek to “reverse” or “counterbalance” these widely held views (Vigorelli xvi), to neutralize—as Perfetti does—questions like, “Dal fascismo all’antifascismo. Un camaleonte, dunque, Curzio Malaparte?” [“From fascism to antifascism. A chameleon, therefore, Curzio Malaparte?”], with an emphatic: “No” (9). Accordingly, as these scholars work to piece together from “il faticoso itinerario ideologico e letterario di Malaparte...le linee di sostanziale coerenza” (Grana *Malaparte* 7) [“Malaparte’s tiring literary and ideological itinerary...lines of

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and in the course of a career that oscillated violently from right-wing to left-wing attitudes, he contrived to offend everybody, fascists, anti-fascists and many in between.”

<sup>244</sup> Gobetti’s declaration seems much less inflammatory when considering that it comes from the 1926 preface to Malaparte’s *Italia barbara*, published by Gobetti himself. The quotation alone is repeated by Adamson 233, Dogliani 24 and Luzzatto 78. Cannella (v) and Hope (x) also refer to the remarks, but explain the relevant context. Pardini describes Gobetti’s relationship with Malaparte as one of sincere friendship (63).

<sup>245</sup> Pardini notes the recurrence of the term “chameleon” in newspaper headlines on the occasion of 1997 and 1998 conferences on Malaparte (16n5). See also Guerri *Arcitaliano* 97 and Perfetti 9.

<sup>246</sup> *Trasformismo* was “coined to describe the *Sinistra*’s ambition to absorb into the capacious bosom of its majority all deputies, regardless of origins or ideology, willing to be thus ‘transformed’” (Knox 83). One of the principles of Malaparte’s movement, *Strapaese*, was to repudiate *trasformismo* (Pardini 183).

<sup>247</sup> See Biondi 9-10. Specifically, Pardini cites Mario Isnenghi as holding and perpetuating this belief (17n.9).

substantial coherence”], the rhetoric of integrity abounds.<sup>248</sup> Other major scholars, including Pardini, Martellini, Guerri and Vigorelli, offer similar theses, as they work to locate “l’organicità” [“the organic unity”] of Malaparte’s political biography (Pardini 13) and argue for his “sincerità letteraria” (Martellini “Introduzione” xlv) [“literary sincerity”].<sup>249</sup> Vigorelli’s approach is overtly religious, as he claims that although Malaparte is a ‘labyrinth’ (xx) whose ‘double nature’ almost predates his birth, he is nothing if not an organic whole. For those Italians who believe that “un uomo e uno scrittore debba ad ogni costo essere... ‘tutto d’un pezzo’” [“a man and a writer must be... ‘a single whole’”] Vigorelli offers a Catholic solution, suggestively, “una assoluzione” [“an absolution”]: Malaparte is one, and he is many (xxxv).

The Catholic overtones in Vigorelli’s analysis are symptomatic of the larger trend in literary criticism identified by Michel Foucault in “What is an Author?": “Modern criticism, in its desire to ‘recover’ the author from a work, employs devices strongly reminiscent of Christian exegesis when it wished to prove the value of a text by ascertaining the holiness of its author” (127). Considering the platform from which Vigorelli was writing in 1997, Malaparte criticism had already made significant progress along those lines: Malaparte’s *Opere* was about to take its place in the prestigious, costly Meridiani series, where authority would spread to it metonymically, bringing his contentious name onto the same shelf as Dante and Manzoni. In his review of the publication, Ermanno Paccagnini describes the strange impact of seeing Malaparte’s texts dressed in Meridiani’s “elegante veste” [“elegant garments”] at odds with their “taboo” status (33). Nonetheless, despite the respectability this elegant new clothing may have afforded Malaparte’s texts, Vigorelli insists that in order to “interrupt the counterproductive game” of intellectual exclusion, the texts have to be *read*: “Dunque, prima si legga, dopo si passi al giudizio e allora si dovrà concludere che, in meno di 60 anni di vita e quaranta ed oltre di creatività e attività letteraria, Malaparte è e resta un irregolare – non eliminabile – protagonista del ’900” (xix-xx) [“Therefore, first one reads, and afterwards one goes on to judge, and it will have to be concluded that, in less than sixty years of life and forty-plus of creativity and literary activity, Malaparte is and remains an unusual – inerasable – protagonist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”].

This pithy set of instructions demands that we read, judge and canonize. Yet despite this rather linear process, I agree with James Hulbert that the relationship between canonization and reading is *not* straightforward but instead, “inimical... whatever their inevitable intertwinement and whatever the claims of the propounders of canon.” Hulbert’s logical qualification, that “some movement of canonization may be necessary simply to interest the potential reader in a text, or to remind the reader that the text exists,” certainly applies to Malaparte. Indeed, my own scholarship is indebted to these efforts to reframe interpretations of his oeuvre; if Giulio Ferroni—who dismisses Malaparte’s texts as being marked by an unsurpassable “volgarità e cattivo gusto” (*Storia* 209) [“vulgarity and bad taste”]—held the final word, the terms of my analysis would be severely impoverished. Regardless, I maintain that the (now rather substantial) branch of Malaparte scholarship that argues for his canonization actually works to substantiate Hulbert’s cautionary words that:

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<sup>248</sup> Decades later, Grana praises himself for having written “uno dei pochi studi critici che si sono occupati *organicamente* dell’opera di Malaparte” (“Critica” 161 emphasis mine) [“one of the few critical studies that were interested in the organic whole of Malaparte’s *oeuvre*”].

<sup>249</sup> Guerri, too, finds integrity in Malaparte’s supposed *trasformismo*, claiming that his ideological metamorphoses were inspired by a rejection of the totalitarian underpinnings of *all* ideologies (“Muri” 17).

the moments in critical texts in which arguments are made for or against specific canonizations are moments of intense pathos that almost always elicit from their readers not analytical readings of those moments but rather new moments of pathos in the form of echoes or contestations. And all these moments, old and new, urge the embracing acceptance or the consignment to oblivion of the texts whose canonization is an issue, not the analysis of those texts as such (121-2).<sup>250</sup>

At the heart of the debate either to embrace or forget Malaparte's texts is an either/or proposition: did he deform reality for his own self-interest or transform it in the name of literature? Is he a false chameleon or a true artist? Those who argue for the former deploy the rhetoric of betrayal and those who argue for the latter attempt to counterbalance these accusations with the language of fidelity (coherence, sincerity, integrity). The possible responses, then, are two—the possible readings lost in between, many.

Nowhere is this debate more patent—or vivacious—than in criticism on *La pelle* [*The Skin*], Malaparte's 1949 novel set primarily in post-Liberation Naples which, upon publication was placed on the Church's Index of Forbidden Books and was banned from Naples (along with its author). Describing the book as “aspramente polemico e provocatorio” [“bitterly polemical and provocative”], Martelli recounts what has been considered the biggest literary and political scandal of the post-war period. From the moment it hit the shelves,

si occuparono della *Pelle*, assieme ai critici, anche uomini politici, distolti bruscamente dalle loro occupazioni ministeriali e parlamentari, e persino religiosi impensieriti dall'influenza negativa che la pubblicazione, giudicata 'antipatriotica' e 'immorale,' avrebbe potuto avere sull'opinione pubblica (141-2)

[*La pelle* was taken up not just by the critics, but also by politicians, brusquely pulled away from their ministerial and parliamentary professions, and even by clergymen, preoccupied with the negative influence that the publication, judged 'unpatriotic' and 'immoral,' could have had on public opinion].

With its graphic representations of prostitution, homosexual orgies and the disemboweled, crucified, degraded casualties of war, *La pelle* solicited a torrent of moral judgment. However, there was no consensus among those who read it as to what *it* was: from the outset, *La pelle* resisted classification. In his struggle to publish *La pelle* on satisfactory terms, Malaparte insisted to potential editor Valentino Bompiani that it be published as a work of fiction (Martellini “La pelle” 1555). However, *La pelle*'s fictional status is slippery, insofar as its first-person narrator is, like its author, Curzio Malaparte, Liaison officer and author of *Kaputt* [1944], and the horrors he recounts have concrete historical referents: the Allies' arrival in Naples and in Rome, the eruption of Vesuvius on March 22, 1944, and the battle of Monte Cassino in May of the same year.<sup>251</sup> Milan Kundera stresses that *La pelle*'s ambivalence offers its

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<sup>250</sup> Hulbert's discussion is based on the current status of scholarship on Marquis de Sade, insofar as “the implicit task of most twentieth-century treatments of Sade is to undo the injustice of centuries of repression and neglect” (123). Malaparte has been compared to Sade—and his work, more generally, described as sadistic—most famously by Cecchi.

<sup>251</sup> In an attempt to avoid confusion, I will refer to the character and narrator as Captain Malaparte, and the historical figure as Malaparte.

readers a choice of two very different readings: “le cose cambiano radicalmente a seconda che il lettore gli si avvicini come un reportage capace di ampliare le sue conoscenze storiche, o invece come un’opera letteraria in grado di arricchirlo con la sua bellezza e la sua conoscenza dell’uomo” (176) [“things change radically depending on whether the reader approaches it as journalism, capable of expanding historical knowledge, or instead as a literary work, able to enrich with its beauty and knowledge of man”]. However, regardless of what a reader’s expectations might be, Merle Rubin is right in pointing out that in *La pelle*, “The line between fact and fiction, perception and imagination, is not always easy to draw” (20), a confusion in part attributable to the fact that “Malaparte is Malaparte. He lives among real persons, witnesses real events. More complicating still, Malaparte sometimes was where he says he was, though quite often he wasn’t, and his version of what happened makes florid use of his imagination” (Indiana 178).

The effects of this narrative ambivalence can be gleaned from early reviews, as critics on both sides of the Atlantic were divided in their approach to *La pelle*. The *Gazzetta del popolo* and the *Times Literary Supplement* both viewed it as fiction (and expressed amazement that it be read otherwise): “Stupisce che tanta brava gente le abbia prese tremendamente sul serio, consideri le pagine de *La pelle* come un contributo spregiudicato al quadro degli orrori della guerra” (*Gazzetta* 60) [“It is stupefying that so many well-intentioned people took it tremendously seriously, treating the pages of *La pelle* as an open-minded contribution to the representations of the horrors of war”]. Indeed, owing perhaps to Malaparte’s renown as a journalist, the bulk of the critics took *La pelle*’s non-fiction status for granted, and sought to gauge its success or failure as such.<sup>252</sup> None, however, did so with as much thoroughness and determination as Edmondo Cione’s 1950 *Napoli e Malaparte*, a brief book whose main objective is to prove that *La pelle* not only “falsa la verità storica” [“falsifies the historical truth”] (73) but it is not even “opera d’arte” [“a work of art”] (21). It may have been this blurring between fact and fiction, author and protagonist, that led critics to condemn both in a single breath. However, this kind of approach to literature points to a larger problem concerning authors with “‘fascist’ connections” that Barbara Spackman has critiqued in *Fascist Virilities*: in their efforts to perpetuate this cultural censorship of *La pelle*, Cione, Ferroni, Scalfari, Emilio Cecchi and others represent a typical example of the kind of approach to literature whereby “biography glosses the text” (50).<sup>253</sup> In the case of *La pelle*, this phenomenon was further encouraged by Gramsci’s ‘chameleon’ metaphor which, first published in *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (1950), had a particularly profound impact on *La pelle*, not only because of the timing of the publications, but also, Sergio Campailla explains, because of the metaphorical overlap between the chameleon and the *skin*: “l’accenno al camaleontismo si attaglia bene alla ‘pellaccia’ o alla ‘pelliccia’ di

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<sup>252</sup> Among those who found *La pelle* to be (accurate) non-fiction were the *British Review* which declared, “*The Skin* is no story of fiction; on the contrary it is too true, too cruelly uncompromisingly true, too factually and degradingly correct to a detail” (296), and *Oggi*. Giovanni Spadolini in *Il messaggero* sustained that if certain details were “deformati” [“deformed”] they were “veri nell’essenziale” (50) [“true in their essence”]. William Barrett’s *New York Times* review couched its judgment in *La pelle*’s veracity in a certain suspicion, as did Giulio Vallese in *Italica*, who perceived the *goal* of *La pelle* to be the production of a “resoconto più genuino” [“a more genuine account”], only to declare it a failure: “vi risulta solo un insieme di quadri staccati e assurdi su una falsa vita di Napoli” (191) [“the result is only an assembly of unlinked and absurd tableaux of a false life of Naples”].

<sup>253</sup> In *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Cecchi calls Malaparte, “un fabbricante di bolle di sapone terroristiche” [“a producer of terroristic soap bubbles”] and condemns *La pelle* for its degrading portrayal of the Italian people (688). For Spackman’s definition and critique of this “blurring/slurring” approach to literature as it relates to authors with “‘fascist’ connections,” see Chapter One.

Malaparte, prefigura la sorte di disprezzo per contrappasso che gli spetta in quanto animale o intellettuale versipelle” (137-138) [“the mention of chameleonic behavior goes well with Malaparte’s “bad skin” or “pelt,” representing the sort of retaliatory scorn due to him as a skin-changing animal or intellectual”].

To “reverse” or “counterbalance” these accusations of *La pelle*’s infidelity, scholars have mounted claims of fidelity: Perfetti suggests that Malaparte’s texts, “sempre smaglianti, sono da leggere in controluce, hanno significati celati che bisogna scoprire come in una caccia al tesoro” (8) [“always dazzling, are to be read up against the light. They have hidden meanings needing to be discovered like in a treasure hunt”].<sup>254</sup> Here, Cione’s condemnation makes a particularly useful counterpoint, as he describes *La pelle* in these terms: “quei gioielli sfarzosamente e sfacciatamente messi in mostra sono tutti falsi, l’oro ne è a mala pena placato, le perle sono delle semplici scaramazze ed i brillanti alla fine ti si rivelano niente altro che dei culi di bicchiere” (21) [“those splendid and brazen jewels put on display are all false, the gold is barely plated, the pearls are simply seed pearls, and the diamonds in the end reveal themselves to be no more than the bottoms of glasses”]. Regardless of whether Malaparte’s texts are held to be fool’s gold or 14-carat, these rhetorical overlaps belie a common methodological approach, sending readers on a hermeneutic treasure hunt whose outcome can only be the verification of the text’s integrity or falsity. As such, I maintain that the struggle to reverse the cultural censorship of *La pelle* has yielded paradoxical effects: by eliciting ‘pathological’ readings, whose goal is to confirm *La pelle*’s value, they threaten to censor the very text they tout.<sup>255</sup> Hulbert explains,

we might feel safe in saying that every text will survive whatever readings befall it, but in speaking of canon formation we are considering questions of the *institutional* and *social* survival and afterlife of the text, in all its complexity. The *terms* under which a text or author is canonized or recanonized, become themselves canonical, and those terms are a function not solely of the specificity of text or author but more importantly of the both diachronic and synchronic polemics into which canonizing texts enter (129 emphasis in original).

In the broadest of senses, Malaparte and *La pelle* are caught in the polemic of how to write the history of the (increasingly numerous) “gray-zone” intellectuals and, indeed, how to read the texts they produced. If Alberto Asor Rosa’s *Scrittori e popolo* worked to blur the distinction between fascism and antifascism, by demonstrating their ideological continuity, Malaparte has been used to reconstitute these boundaries by scholars like Ferroni, who, in a single breath speeds from a characterization of Malaparte as a “typical” fascist, into a condemnation of his “vulgar” texts (209). But from another critical perspective, he has been used to transcend them, as scholars like Kundera and Luigi Baldacci claim that *La pelle* is poetic not political: “Ma non c’è dunque una politicità, una valenza politica della *Pelle*? Io credo di no. O se c’è, è allo stato di mero pretesto esterno” (Baldacci “Introduzione” xi) [“But then is there a political nature, a political valence to *The Skin*? I think not. Or if there is, it functions as mere external pretext”]. As I have argued throughout my dissertation, these approaches either make the text reflect its

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<sup>254</sup> Enzo Girardi sustains that *La pelle* is, “il documento fedele di un mondo senza virilità” (126) [“a faithful document of a world without virility”], and Indiana, uninterested in Malaparte’s ostensible falsification of “historical truth,” lists some of the tallest of Malaparte’s tales to conclude that “These are, to paraphrase Picasso, lies that show us the truth” (179).

<sup>255</sup> For my definition of “critical censorship” as both repressive and productive, see Chapter One.

context or free the one from the other, and, in so doing, produce *emblems* of fascist or antifascist literature—as, indeed, has happened to the chameleonic *Skin*.

Thus, keeping in mind the “chameleon’s” centrality to *La pelle*, my reading does not seek to free *La pelle* from these associations of *trasformismo*—but instead uses transformation to different ends, starting from the text’s own thematization of transformations of the moral, political and corporeal variety. The precipitating cause of this transformation is a “moral plague,” spread unknowingly from the Allies to the Italians, a plague which impedes the ability to distinguish good from bad, victor from vanquished. As these boundaries collapse, so too does the narrative interweave history into fiction, blurring their borders, which leads to my initial critique of the prevailing critical approach to *La pelle*: its very terms—good/bad, true/false, history/literature—are undermined by the text itself.<sup>256</sup> Not only does *La pelle* upset this and other conventional binaries in terms of its content, as I will show, but its publication history also destabilizes the original/translation, writer/translator hierarchy. The French translation was published *prior* to the Italian ‘original’—and indeed, Malaparte asked his translator, Rene Novella, to collaborate in the editing process, explicitly verbalizing the porosity of the boundaries between writer and translator (based on a relationship of “fidelity”) that translation scholars have theorized in the past few decades: “Se, mentre traduce, lei trova materia da criticare, dei pezzi da tagliare, delle ripetizioni da sopprimere ecc. vuol essere così gentile di dirmelo a mano a mano? Ho una grandissima fiducia nel suo senso critico, e nel suo gusto artistico” (Malaparte and Novella 49) [“If, while you translate, you find material to criticize, passages to cut, repetitions to suppress etc., could you be so kind as to tell me, bit by bit? I have great faith in your critical sensibility, and in your artistic taste”]. Furthermore, while negotiating the publication of *La pelle* in Italy, Malaparte used the French edition as the standard, demanding of his editor, Bompiani, that the Italian version be faithful to it.<sup>257</sup>

In reframing the relationship between *La pelle* and transformation, what I seek to underline is not how *La pelle*’s critics err, but instead, how their interpretations are, in fact, solicited by *La pelle*. In this way, the criticism aids in the location of a textual contradiction, insofar as the very same binaries *collapsed* by these discussions of the war and liberation are reconstituted in a number of metatextual moments when *La pelle* seeks to validate its own status as *true art*, urging its readers to consider its metaphorical rather than literal significance. Taking this textual contradiction as a point of departure, I analyze how claims of fidelity are constructed and maintained in *La pelle* and its criticism.

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Starting from the direct citation of Boccaccio’s description of the plague in the *Decameron* (29), Captain Malaparte’s account of post-Liberation Italy explicitly signals its

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<sup>256</sup> This collapse has been recognized—and praised—but not theorized. Martelli finds this ambivalence to be the source of *La pelle*’s critical troubles—insofar as it was impossible to discern whether it was a farce or a drama—and at the same time, its merit (146). For Gatt-Rutter, “a large part of Malaparte’s talent lies in his ability to make the invented seem real and the real invented” (61). See also Indiana.

<sup>257</sup> “Mi pare, caro Bompiani, che non si possa ammettere di pubblicare in Italia un’edizione purgata di un libro che in Francia, in Svizzera, in Inghilterra, in America, esce integralmente. Quel che ti chiedo, è che il mio libro, nell’edizione italiana, sia conforme all’edizione francese” (as cited in Martellini 1553) [“It seems to me, dear Bompiani, that it is unacceptable to publish in Italy a purged edition of a book that in France, in Switzerland, in England, in America, comes out integrally. I ask you that my book, in the Italian edition, conforms to the French edition”].

rooting in the Western literary tradition, and his descriptions of the myriad social transformations following the Armistice combine concrete historical events with literary allusions from the epic to the surreal (Baldacci “Introduzione”).<sup>258</sup> For instance, the announcement of the Armistice, which marks the Germans’ transformation from friend to enemy, is marked by an Ovidian metamorphosis, as two German women “become” men while dancing with Italians at the embassy:

Lanza e il suo compagno stavano di fronte a quelle giovani donne con lo stesso sbalordito spavento di Apollo davanti a Dafne, da giovinetta trasformatesi in alloro. Quelle ragazze così bionde e soavi mutarono in pochi istanti in uomini. Erano uomini (106)

[As Lanza and Ridomi stood face to face with the young women they were conscious of the same bewilderment and terror as had seized Apollo when Daphne was transformed from a young girl into a laurel before his eyes. In the space of a few seconds those fair-haired, gentle girls turned into men. They *were* men (110)].<sup>259</sup>

Without question, *La pelle* deserves its characterization as a generic hybrid, as critics from *Il monumento*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *The Times Literary Supplement* recognized. However, the episode above represents a particular problem, insofar as its protagonists, Michele Lanza and Cristiano Ridomi, were real historical characters who were, in fact, present at the embassy that night. In Ridomi’s subsequent account, he explains that the woman who turned into a man was actually an officer disguised in drag, as part of an attempt to blend in at a party where only German women had been invited (122),<sup>260</sup> and then goes on to critique Malaparte’s version: “citando nomi e cognomi lo trasformò in un’orgia ambigua” (123) [“citing first and last names, he transformed it into an ambiguous orgy”]. Here, as Malaparte transforms a literal transformation (the act of transvestitism), into an Ovidian metamorphosis, the line between fiction and truth zig-zags, and indeed, one can extend a similar characterization to *La pelle* in general, as it represents this moment of political transformation through repeated metamorphoses, where humans become animals and a dog becomes Christ, virgins become whores and a whore becomes a virgin. It is no surprise then, that Malaparte, when confronted by Ridomi about the inaccuracies, dismissed him, saying: ““Va’ là, molto più bello come l’ho scritto io”” (124) [““Get out of here, it’s much better the way I wrote it””].

Indeed, throughout *La pelle*, this moment of political transformation is represented through metamorphoses that evoke—and revise—major moments of the Western literary tradition. In one provocative scene from “Il vento nero,” which has attracted words of intense praise and of unequivocal condemnation, Captain Malaparte enters a forest that does not seem quite “right”:

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<sup>258</sup> The various rhetorical registers Baldacci identifies in his introduction to *La pelle* include the mythic-aesthetic, the D’Annunzian, the surrealist, the “counterfeit” serialized novel, and the “Neapolitan thread” (for instance, as practiced by Matilde Serao).

<sup>259</sup> Translations of *The Skin* are by David Moore, except where indicated.

<sup>260</sup> Ridomi’s memoir was brought to my attention by Guerri *Arcitaliano* 18.

Alzai gli occhi: e mi parve che una doppia fila di alberi fiancheggiassero in quel punto la strada, curvando i rami sulla mia testa. Ma non vedevo i tronchi, né i rami, né le foglie, avvertivo soltanto la presenza di alberi intorno a me, una presenza strana, qualcosa di forte nella nera notte, qualcosa di vivo murato nel nero muro della notte (148-9)

[I raised my eyes, and it seemed to me that a double row of trees flanked the road at that point, bending their boughs above my head. But I did not see their trunks, or their boughs, or their leaves. I was conscious only of being surrounded by trees, of a strange presence, of an element of strength pervading the black night, of something living that was immured in the black wall of the night (153)].

These branchless, leafless trees soon transform themselves before Captain Malaparte's eyes: "Un grido di orrore mi si ruppe nella gola. Erano uomini crocifissi" (150) ["I stifled a cry of horror. They were crucified men" (155)]. Here, then, while critics debate whether the chapter is the height of the novel's poetic brilliance or its nadir, it bears noting that this scene of "talking trees" participates in an epic tradition of authorial one-upmanship that includes Virgil, Dante, Pulci, Ariosto and Tasso.<sup>261</sup>

This evocation of the epic tradition speaks to Malaparte's recurrent insistence that his critics focus on aesthetics over content. Timothy Parks observes: "Responding to his many critics, Malaparte challenged them to leave aside issues of morality and fact, his political record, his personality, and just answer the question 'Is the book art or not?'" (4),<sup>262</sup> and proponents of *La pelle*—most recently, Kundera—have been only too happy to reply in the affirmative. For Kundera, whereas the earlier *Kaputt* was a political work, written by "uno scrittore impegnato" ["an engaged writer"], *La pelle*, instead, was authored by "un poeta" (172-3) ["a poet"]. Shifting the question away from the truth of the text's *letter*, Kundera affirms the truth of its poetic spirit, and, in so doing, shows the relevance of Hulbert's argument, that "the *terms* under which a text or author is canonized or recanonized, become themselves canonical." Seeking to counter accusations of infidelity, Baldacci, Kundera, Gary Indiana and others claim that *La pelle* represents "lies that show us the truth" (Indiana 179), but what remains at stake is still *truth*, a point aptly evinced through Baldacci's declaration, "Prima del *vero*, per Malaparte scrittore, c'è la *verità poetica*" ("Verifiche" 182 emphasis mine) ["Before the *truth*, for Malaparte the writer, there is poetic *truth*"]. However, no sooner than these truth claims are made, than they are, in turn, reversed by denunciations of *La pelle*'s falsity, as attested by the flurry of reviews in Italian newspapers following Kundera's recent support of the text, for instance Rafaele La Capria's article in *Corriere della Sera*, whose drop-head proclaims: "Le cose che racconta Malaparte sono inverosimili perché sembrano false, ed è il modo come sono raccontate a falsificarle" (37)

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<sup>261</sup> Baldacci, in fact compares Malaparte to Ariosto: "Non dissimile era la posizione dell'Ariosto di fronte alla propria materia. Prima del vero, per Malaparte scrittore, c'è la verità poetica" ("Verifiche" 182). For a negative take on the scene, see Grana, who disparages its "dialoghi assurdi e involontariamente grotteschi" ["involuntarily grotesque and absurd dialogues"] and casts it as "è una delle pagine più sgradevole e insolute del libro, e qui si cita proprio come indice di uno stato d'animo aggressivo, sfogato in una moralistica eloquenza di gesti e di parole" (*Malaparte* 105) ["one of the most unpleasant and unsolved pages of the book, cited here precisely as an indication of an aggressive state of being, which vents itself in a moralistic eloquence of gestures and words"]. Kundera praises the scene as "particolarmente affascinante" (174) ["particularly fascinating"].

<sup>262</sup> In fact, as Baldacci notes, in an appendix to the 1959 Vallecchi edition, editor Enrico Falqui published a letter Malaparte wrote to a critic in which he made a similar request ("Introduzione" vi).



[“The things that Malaparte narrates are improbable because they seem false, and it is the way that they are narrated that falsifies them”].

In pointing out that it was Malaparte who asked his readers, “Is the book art or not?” Parks astutely warns that to agree to his terms and *answer* would be to “rise to this bait” (4), bait which critics have often taken—regardless of whether they strive to end the “cultural censorship” (Gatt-Rutter 62) of *La pelle* or to perpetuate it. However if, in Malaparte scholarship, *transformation* is the condemnable act of the chameleon and the laudable process of the creative writer, it also is the basic task of the translator who shares with Malaparte this rather vexed relationship with fidelity. As such, it is translation scholarship that will help me move *La pelle* away from readings that “urge [its] embracing acceptance or [its] consignment to oblivion,” without, however, disregarding the preoccupations so central to its reception, and, as I will show, to the text itself. After centuries “obsess[ed]” with the categories of “the faithful and the unfaithful, freedom and slavery, loyalty and betrayal” (Niranjana 50), translation studies has turned a critical eye on its past. Notably, poststructuralist translation scholars have worked, in Barbara Johnson’s formulation, to *take fidelity philosophically*. Here, I refer to the title of Johnson’s article in which she argues that “Derrida’s entire philosophic enterprise, indeed, can be seen as an analysis of the translation process at work in every text. Derrida follows the misfires, losses, and infelicities that prevent any given language from being *one*. Language, in fact, can only exist in the space of its own foreignness to itself” (145). From this poststructuralist perspective, language is always already translated and thus, the original/derivative hierarchy is shown to be a fiction, since the “original” does not precede the “translation” but only assumes that privileged position through the act of translation itself.<sup>263</sup> Another valuable tenet of this approach comes from Naomi Seidman, who advocates for an understanding of “translation as transformation,” insofar as it “steers clear of the assumption that translation must proceed through a strict equivalence, a fidelity to original sources, if it is not to risk their absolute betrayal” (10), and instead allows other questions to be posed about how translation constructs and obstructs relations of power.<sup>264</sup> Informed, then, by this branch of poststructuralist and post-colonialist translation theory, instead of making claims about *La pelle*’s fidelity, I will examine how questions of fidelity are constructed in and around *La pelle*, and moreover, what—or who—is sacrificed in answering them.

Translation scholarship, however, is relevant to my discourse not only because of this shared theoretical preoccupation with fidelity. It also is thematically germane to *La pelle*, inasmuch as its first-person protagonist, Captain Malaparte, is himself an interpreter. Confronting the “babele di lingue creatasi con l’occupazione” [“the Babel of languages created with the occupation”], Captain Malaparte’s job is to “tradurre e di agevolare i rapporti, spesso tutt’altro che facili, tra gli stranieri e i napoletani” (Hochkofler 145) [“translate and to facilitate the relationships, often anything but simple, between the foreigners and the Neapolitans”].<sup>265</sup> In the political climate, signification in general is in crisis: as the term ‘Allies’ flips from enemy to

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<sup>263</sup> Questions being posed by deconstructionist translation scholars include the following: “What if one theoretically reversed the direction of thought and posited the hypothesis that the original text is dependent upon the translation? What if one suggested that, without translation, the original text ceased to exist, that the very survival of the original depends not on any particular quality it contains, but upon those qualities that its translation contains? What if the very definition of a text’s meaning was determined not by the original, but by the translation?” (Gentzler 144-5).

<sup>264</sup> See Tymoczko and Gentzler, and Bassnett and Trivedi for anthologies containing recent contributions to post-colonialist translation studies.

<sup>265</sup> Matilde Hochkofler’s comments refer to Liliana Cavani’s 1981 film *La pelle*, but the description of the protagonist’s duties still hold.

friend, signifiers are paired with new signifieds, a transformation recounted in “Il pranzo del Generale Cork” [“General Cork’s Banquet”]. At a dinner party with a group of American officials and their wives, Captain Malaparte recounts a visit of a German General to his house in Capri only to be rebuked by Mrs. Flat for having shown hospitality to the enemy. Defending Malaparte, General Cork explains that the Germans were the Italians’ allies, but Mrs. Flat dismisses this logic, responding, “Può darsi... ma eran tedesco” (196) [“That may be... but they were Germans”] (205). Mrs. Flat gestures to the intrinsic (negative) value of the Germans, by refusing to engage with the ever-shifting categories of military allegiance, and Captain Malaparte’s tautological reply plays on her refusal: “Sono diventati tedeschi dopo il vostro sbarco a Salerno... allora erano semplicemente nostri alleati” (196) [“They became Germans after you landed at Salerno... then they were simply our allies”] (205). For his dinner guests, Captain Malaparte humorously plots the Allies’ arrival as the revelatory moment when name and thing correspond, as the Germans become what, for Mrs. Flat, they truly are, *Germans* (i.e. enemies). However, as narrator, he relentlessly describes the Armistice in diametrically opposite terms. As the Italians ally themselves with the Allies, the Germans become Germans; yet at the same time, the Italians also become their own (former) enemy, as Captain Malaparte later shouts while parodying Mussolini, “La guerra che abbiamo gloriosamente perduta, è finalmente vinta. I nostri amati nemici, esaudendo il voto di tutto il popolo italiano, sono finalmente sbarcati in Italia per aiutarci a combattere i nostri odiati alleati tedeschi. Camicie Nere di tutta Italia, Viva l’America!” (173) [“The war in which we have been gloriously defeated is at last won. Our beloved enemies, in fulfillment of the prayers of the whole Italian nation, have at last landed in Italy to help us fight our hated German allies. Blackshirts of Italy – long live America!”] (181).

This destabilization of signification also impacts the possibility of interlingual translation—a vital task in post-Liberation Naples and, indeed, a major theme in the novel. For even as the Armistice transforms the Allies into *allies*, translation fails to bridge these peoples, despite their common military cause. Linguistic boundaries are erected throughout the text, as certain phrases are only stated in English. In one early scene, the Allied officers attempt to protect their soldiers from the Neapolitans by cordoning off an area of the city as “*Off-limits, Out of bounds* [sic]” (26). Other phrases recur as leitmotifs: the Neapolitan women’s ubiquitous English cry, “*Five dollars! Five dollars!*” is a reminder that they are for sale only because the Allies are buying; Captain Malaparte is insulted as, “*you bastard, you son of a bitch, you dirty Italian officer,*” not because a lack of linguistic equivalent, but because of Italy’s political transformation on September 8<sup>th</sup>, seen by some as a betrayal of Germany: “Ridevo pensando che tutte le lingue della terra, perfino il bantù e il cinese, perfino il tedesco, erano lingue di popoli vincitori, e che noi soltanto, noi italiani soltanto, in Via Chiaia a Napoli, e in tutte le vie di tutte le città d’Italia, parlavamo una lingua che non era un popolo vincitore” (48) [“I laughed as I thought that all of the languages of the earth, even Bantu and Chinese even German, were the languages of victorious peoples, and that we alone, we Italians alone, in Via Chiaia, Naples, and in all the streets of all the cities of Italy, spoke a language which was not that of a victorious people” (48-9)].

None of these untranslated phrases presents specific linguistic difficulties *per se*, and for this initial reason I argue that *La pelle* does not represent a *failure* of translation—or rather, it does so only in its conventional sense. To this end, I consider Tejaswini Niranjana’s premise in Chapter Two of *Siting Translation*, that, “Translation—in the narrowest sense of the word, that is, to turn something from one language into another, or interlingual translation—has traditionally been viewed by literary critics in the West (at least since the Renaissance) as the

noble task of bridging the gap between peoples, as the quintessential humanistic enterprise” (48).<sup>266</sup> However, through her survey of writings on translation, she concludes that “The ‘empirical science’ of translation comes into being through the repression of the asymmetrical relations of power that inform the relations between languages” (60). In its representation of translation at the fall of fascism, I argue that *La pelle* does not repress but, instead, insists on these asymmetries where English and Italian are concerned. Take, for instance, a case of translation from Italian into English, when, as Captain Malaparte and the Fifth division march towards Rome, they encounter an osteria named, “Qui non si muore mai.” The phrase—“here we never die”—is translated without problem; yet General Cork hears, “Here we never dine.” Whether due to the roar of the tank or the rumble of Cork’s stomach (“I will dine, I’m hungry!”) the fortifying proclamation *transforms* into an improbable and horrific proposition for the General who expects elaborate meals from the Italians in exchange for their liberation (279).

By way of introduction these scenes of “failed” interlingual translation clearly illustrate what I mean when I suggest that a reading of *La pelle* may be informed by, and contribute to, a postcolonial approach to translation, whose precepts are articulated by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi:

Translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems (2).

In this way, my reading of translation in *La pelle* understands the attempts at linguistic mediation as part of a broader intercultural preoccupation. As such, other scenes I analyze subsequently are more generally about attempts at mediating the gap between peoples—be it through words, gestures, or bodily contact—and the power relationships there evinced and obscured. And instead of evaluating the fidelity of these translations, my reading of these scenes is informed by Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler’s claim that “The study of translation in charged political contexts illustrates the relationship between discourse and power, and shows that, as a site where discourses meet and compete, translation negotiates power relations” (xix). Indeed, central throughout *La pelle* is the vexed relationship between the Allies and the Italians (specifically, the Neapolitans)—at once one of liberator-liberated *and* conqueror-conquered (4). *La pelle*, however, does not simply lament the victor-vanquished dynamic, and while it does occasionally reverse it, by showing how the ‘ancient’ laws of Naples work to confound the logic of the Allies, it ultimately exceeds a binary model through its representation of two liminal groups: French colonial soldiers, Moroccan *goumiers*, an elite fighting division whose original function was as “paramilitary police whose primary assignment was to maintain order among the fiercely independent tribes of their own region” (Bimberg 4), and American *soldati negri*, from “the 92<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Buffalo) Division, the only so-called ‘black’ infantry division to see combat in Europe”

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<sup>266</sup> For more on Niranjana, see Chapter One.

(Hargrove vii).<sup>267</sup> From the perspective of the French colonial imaginary, Karl Britto notes that the colonial soldier “occupies a particularly fraught position . . . with respect to the production of hierarchies of difference” (145), a position whose complexity is intensified in the context of the liberation of Italy, as Keala Jewell explores with regards to Tommaso Landolfi’s *Racconto d’autunno*, where conventional racial hierarchies collide with the political reality.<sup>268</sup> In *La pelle*, too, the *goumiers* and the *soldati negri* are in a subaltern role with respect to the Allied army and the Italians—one dinnertime anecdote suggests that “negro” is not a racial but a relational term, indicative of the lowest social ranking (232). However, according to the military situation, the *goumiers* and the *soldati negri* occupy the superior ‘conqueror’ position with respect to the Italians, who compete for the chance to shine their shoes or to engage in sex.

*La pelle* also calls upon the *goumier* and the *soldato negro* to participate in translations—which I understand as moments when a gap is to be bridged between the Allies and the Italians through the verification of some form of truth: in Chapter Two, “La vergine di Napoli” [“The Virgin of Naples”] a girl’s virginity is tested, penetrated by a *soldato negro*’s finger; in Chapter ten, “La bandiera” [“The Flag”], Malaparte’s literary authority—challenged by French officers—rests in the (severed) hand of a *goumier*, which he “proves” he has cannibalized, by artfully arranging a series of animal bones on his plate. Anuradha Dingwaney has claimed that “The processes of translation involved in making another culture comprehensible entail varying degrees of violence, especially when the culture being translated is constituted as that of the ‘other’” (4) and, here, my characterization of these episodes as translations is bolstered by the fact that penetration and cannibalism are two common metaphors for translation, metaphors which represent the idea of making the ‘other’ culture comprehensible in a rather intrusive manner—indeed, each implies a literal, corporeal fusion, via the reproductive and digestive systems respectively.<sup>269</sup> Earlier I claimed that *La pelle*, in its representation of translation at the fall of fascism, does not repress but, instead, insists on “the asymmetrical relations of power that inform the relations between languages” (Niranjana 60), an assertion which I now qualify: for although *La pelle* exposes the asymmetry between English and Italian and, thus, asserts the impossibility of faithful interlingual translation, it nonetheless attempts to make truth claims about itself by employing the bodies of a *goumier*, a *soldato negro* and a virgin-whore. To wit, unlike the failed acts of interlingual translation, these “translations” end with a confirmation of the questioned integrity, as we are given proof of the girl’s virginity and of Malaparte’s act of cannibalism. However, in order to make these claims of fidelity, the text encourages the marginalization of the very bodies it deploys, by converting them into metaphors: as Captain Malaparte tells us, the penetration of the virgin is meant to be understood as a metaphor for victory—where she represents Italy and the soldier, the Allies; and the false “cannibalization” is

<sup>267</sup> Hargrove goes on to comment on the group’s controversial position from a historical perspective: “Created in a season when complete segregation was prevalent in America, it was beset continuously by controversy because of the same rigid policy of segregation in the Army” (vii).

<sup>268</sup> Jewell explains this complex position, “These colonial soldiers are, of course, Allies, yet in the narrative they also despise a powerful part of their own group: their European colonizers. The Allied nations had not only colonized North Africa but now their generals order the North Africans to undertake the most dangerous missions: to crack fortified German defenses in remote mountain areas. As part of his critique of the Allied coalition, the author highlights the point that not all the nations and peoples that comprised the Allied formation had joined it freely” (16).

<sup>269</sup> For penetration as a metaphor for translation, see Seidman. See also Chapters One and Two. For cannibalism, see Bassnett and Trivedi. Later, I will discuss how these metaphors, on the one hand, represent gender and racial hierarchies, and on the other, suggest how these dynamics may be threatened by the very notion of corporeal fusion on which the metaphor depends.

to be read as a metaphor for art—where the animal bones, artfully displayed to resemble a hand, represent Malaparte’s texts, true in the spirit once stripped of their flesh. By reading these two “translations” to examine how questions of fidelity are constructed, I argue that they require and obfuscate hierarchies of racial and sexual difference.

#### 4.2 Sleights of Hand (I) – “La vergine di Napoli”

Throughout this chapter, my treatment of censorship has dealt with the “cultural censorship” of *La pelle*—its marginalization by critics and subsequent attempts to canonize it. However, Malaparte experienced a more conventional form of censorship in his negotiations with editors as to which parts of *La pelle* were acceptable for publication. One particularly problematic chapter was “La vergine di Napoli,” in which Captain Malaparte and his friend Jimmy join a group of Allied soldiers who line up and pay a dollar to watch a *soldato negro* verify a girl’s virginity with his finger. Indeed, while working on the French translation, *La peau*, René Novella presented the chapter “La vergine di Napoli,” to a group of his colleagues, at Malaparte’s request. Novella describes its reception:

Erano stati quasi unanimi nel dichiarare che Malaparte pronunciava contro il proprio Paese una requisitoria di un’esagerata violenza e di un inaccettabile cinismo. Certe scene venivano considerate addirittura come meramente sadiche e ognuno si chiedeva quale sarebbe stata l’accoglienza del pubblico a queste descrizioni, il cui realismo oltrepassava i limiti della decenza (Malaparte and Novella 50)

[They were nearly unanimous in declaring that Malaparte had pronounced an indictment against his own country, exaggerated in its violence and unacceptable in its cynicism. Some scenes were even considered purely sadistic, and everyone asked himself how the public would respond to these descriptions, whose realism went beyond the limits of decency].

Although Malaparte dismissed the reaction, he was forced to confront similar objections on a number of occasions, even prior to *La pelle*’s publication. In his negotiations with Italian publishers, squeamish about some of the book’s cruder passages, Malaparte bragged that the book would appear “whole” not just in France, but also in England and America (Martellini “La pelle” 1553). However, in order to get an Anglophone translation published, he had to accept cuts proposed to him by American publisher Houghton Mifflin—including a substantial portion of “The Virgin of Naples.”<sup>270</sup> As such, here and subsequently, when quoting the English

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<sup>270</sup> In accepting Houghton Mifflin’s cuts, Malaparte expressed—in vain—his hopes that the same cuts would be “suitable also for the British public” (as cited in Suckert Ronchi Vol. x 347). Although both English language versions of *The Skin* share a single translator, the translations differ on a number of counts, including phrasing, proverbs, etc., a detailed study of which will be completed elsewhere. The most obvious difference between them is that the British version is missing an entire chapter, “The Sons of Adam” (“I figli d’Adamo”). Upon receiving the published text, Malaparte’s complaints are folded into a thank you note to British publisher Alvin Redman: “I have just received the package with the six copies of *The Skin*, and I wish to thank you for your kindness. Apart from

translation, the underlined portions indicate the censored lines, and therefore those translations are mine.

Here, then, is the central moment of the scene—the verification of virginity:

‘She is a virgin. You can touch. Put your finger inside. Only one finger. Try a bit. Don’t be afraid. She doesn’t bite. She is a virgin. A real virgin,’ disse l’uomo spingendo la testa dentro la stanza per lo spacco della tenda.

Un negro allungò la mano, e provò col dito. Qualcuno risse, e pareva si lamentasse. La ‘vergine’ non si mosse, ma fissò il negro con uno sguardo pieno di paura e di odio. Mi guardai intorno: tutti erano pallidi, tutti erano pallidi di paura e di odio.

‘Yes, she is like a child’ disse il negro con voce rauca, facendo roteare lentamente il dito.’

‘Get out the finger,’ disse la testa dell’uomo infilata nello spacco della tenda rossa.

‘Really, she is a virgin’ disse il negro ritraendo il dito (43-44)

[‘She is a virgin. You can touch. Put your finger inside. Only one finger. Try a bit. Don’t be afraid. She doesn’t bite. She is a virgin. A real virgin,’ said the man, thrusting his head into the room through the gap in the curtain.

A Negro stretched out his hand and tried with his finger. Someone laughed and seemed to repent of it. The ‘virgin’ did not move, but stared at the Negro with eyes full of fear and loathing. I looked about me. Everyone was pale – pale with fear and loathing.

‘Yes, she is like a child,’ said the Negro with a raucous voice, slowly making his finger rotate.

‘Get out the finger,’ said the head of the man stuck through the tear in the red tent.

‘Really, she is a virgin’ said the Negro, retracting his finger (44)].

Throughout this dissertation, as part of efforts to reformulate the relationship between censorship and translation, I have worked to problematize the conventional formulation of translation-as-censorship—the age-old platitude that something is lost in translation. Although this passage would seem instead to support such a claim, in this final chapter I aim to further my ongoing attempts at complicating these conventional definitions by showing that what is, in fact, lost in translation—the act of penetration—already holds a rather tenuous place in the scholarship of the ‘original.’ Among the scholars who address the chapter, Martelli describes the scene as “l’esibizione della ‘vergine’ in un misero tugurio davanti a un pubblico di militari i quali per *one dollar*, cioè per cento lire, possono prendere visione della ‘rarietà” (154) [“the exhibition of the ‘virgin’ in a miserable shack in front of an audience of soldiers who, for one dollar, that is, for one hundred lire, can take a look at the ‘rarity”]. Gatt-Rutter’s characterization of the girl also remains squarely in the realm of the visual: “the virgin whose father displays her hymen for inspection” (61). Grana refers to “la vista rarissima di una vergine” (*Malaparte* 108) [“the extremely rare sight of a virgin”]. Finally, William Hope describes the episode as

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some observations about the text of the translation, I am quite satisfied with the simplicity and elegance of the edition” (Vol. x 202).

involving an “American soldier who steps up to ascertain whether the girl lives up to her billing” (92). This emphasis on the visual is coherent with the question Jimmy asks Captain Malaparte at the start of the chapter, ““Non hai mai visto una vergine?”” (37) [““Have you ever seen a virgin?”” (37)]. However, as the scene unfolds, sight is not the requisite sense for establishing virginity—but rather, touch. Thus in their word choice—exhibition, look, sight, display, ascertain—these critics themselves perform an act of censorship similar to the one enacted in the American version, truncated at the moment the soldier sticks out his hand. Despite the Italian text’s insistence that “il negro provò col dito” [“the Negro tried with his finger”], the critics shift from black finger to disembodied gaze, and, in so doing, skirt the vexed question of how virginity—not a scientific reality but a cultural construct—is actually to be verified.<sup>271</sup> Moreover, each of these critics ‘whitewashes,’ as it were, the racial implications of the episode, as the *soldato negro* becomes soldiers in general, for Martelli and an American soldier, for Hope. In Grana’s and Gatt-Rutter’s accounts, he vanishes altogether, as the hymen is displayed to no one in particular.

This censoring move—performed by critics and translator alike—is not, however, simply imposed upon the text; instead, I note that it is actually encouraged by *La pelle*. From the first pages, liberation, more than a conquest of Italy’s land, is represented as a penetration of its secrets, hitherto inviolable (15). In “La vergine di Napoli,” however, the Allies are not attempting to discover the abstract secrets of Naples, but the most intimate secret of a Neapolitan girl, writ small, through the literal act of penetration. Despite having been established in the preceding chapter, the conquest-as-penetration metaphor is analyzed for two full pages by Jimmy and Captain Malaparte upon leaving the room, and if the resonance between the metaphorical, military penetration of Italy and the literal penetration of the ‘virgin’ is too faint, Captain Malaparte spells out the connection to Jimmy’s dismay: “quando tornerai in America...ti piacerà raccontare che il vostro dito di vincitori è passato l’arco di trionfo delle gambe delle povere ragazze italiane” (45) [“when you go back to America...it will give you pleasure to recount that your victor’s finger passed through the Arch de Triomphe of the poor Italian girls”].<sup>272</sup> However, although penetration-conquest is meant to stabilize the relationship between Allies and Italians—to produce a narrative of victory to be brought back home—this attempt at verifying virginity and victory has quite the opposite result. Jimmy’s response is neither triumphant nor loquacious. Instead, he begs Captain Malaparte to stop speaking (45). After witnessing the virgin’s penetration, the soldiers, similarly stunned, leave “impacciati e vergognosi” (44) [“overcome with shame and embarrassment” (44)].

This, then, is the ‘virgin’s’ paradox—as a site of translation, she exists in order to confirm the men’s role as conqueror, to offer them knowledge, narrative and power. Yet she ultimately emasculates and silences; her splayed legs, compared to lobster claws, have an apotropaic effect. The allegorical reading of this scene, articulated by Captain Malaparte, suggests the ambivalence of victory and, indeed, suggests that this translation, too, has failed—

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<sup>271</sup> As Seidman questions, “Within what regime does virginity function and by whose testimony is it established? Does it signify a presence—an intact hymen—or the absence of a husband or lover?” (117). For Derrida, hymen is a contradiction that at once signifies “the veil of virginity where nothing has yet taken place” and “consummation, release” (215). Thus, “what holds for ‘hymen’ also holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for all other signs which, like *pharmakon*, *supplement*, *différance*, and others, have a double, contradictory, undecidable value that always derives from their syntax” (221). Seidman, drawing on Johnson’s reading of the untranslatability of Derrida’s *pharmakon*, comes to this conclusion, “The concept of virginity, then, disorders meaning *within* a language as well as destabilizing the fixed relations between languages” (117).

<sup>272</sup> The Moore version reads, “it will give you pleasure to tell about that poor Italian girl” (46).

and not only because, in paying to penetrate the virgin, she has already been turned into a whore. However, the “truth” of the virgin is only an incidental concern; it is a translation, meant to cross linguistic and geographical borders, with the specific political goal of confirming American superiority. This is the precise strategy Captain Malaparte employs with the blonde pubic wigs—introduced in the following chapter—meant to facilitate couplings between the *soldati negri* and the Neapolitan women, because, as a salesman explains to Jimmy, “‘Ai vostri negri piacciono le bionde, e le napoletane sono brune’” (70) [“‘Your Negroes like blondes, and Neapolitan girls are dark’” (72)]. At the conclusion of the episode, the wigs are converted into symbols for war: “‘Tutta l’Europa non è che un ciuffo di peli biondi. Una corona di peli biondi per la vostra fronte di vincitore’” (78) [“‘The whole of Europe is nothing but a tuft of fair hairs. A crown of fair hairs for your victorious brows’” (80)]. However, as I have advocated throughout this dissertation, this insistence on “discard[ing] the literal in order to concentrate on the figural” (Spackman *Genealogies* 165), should be read with suspicion, leading us to ask why the virgin-whore and *soldato negro* are made the privileged site of translation, only to be censored.

In the economy of *La pelle*, the *soldato negro*’s role in the translation-penetration is not incidental. Instead, it allows for racial difference to re-establish the collapsed us/them, victor/vanquished distinction, replete with moral implications, insofar as the *black* Allies are the ones guilty of debasing the *white* Italians (a motif continued in “La bandiera”). However, if racial difference allows for the reassuring reestablishment of boundaries effaced with fascism’s collapse, the superimposition of racial *and* sexual difference is more problematic: the “virgin” and the “wigs” represent not simply an interracial encounter, but a sexual one as well, and moreover, one which is taking place with frequency on the streets of Naples. Converted into metaphor, however, this contact is denied: the wigs, the literal *covering figure* of the whore’s genitals, are thus made to *stand in* for military conquest, with the racialized soldiers again representing generic conquerors, as per Captain Malaparte’s assertion, “‘Per i popoli vinti...tutti i vincitori sono uomini di colore’” (206) [“‘To conquered peoples...all conquerors are men of color’” (215)]. Thus, the virgin and the *soldato negro* are called upon to produce an allegory for conquest, figured not as a struggle between American and Italian but instead, between black and white, male and female.

Much is at stake in formulating and reiterating this allegory: were these interracial sexual encounters to remain literalized, the result would be the contamination of the one boundary the text defends—the boundaries between race. As I stated above, *La pelle* represents transformations of every sort, between classes, genders, even species. However, of all the transformations represented in *La pelle*, race remains unconvertible. In fact, in a text that describes fantastical conversions of every sort, including a man who turns into a woman giving birth (“I figli di Adamo” [“The Sons of Adam”]) and a crucified dog who turns into a Christ-figure (“Il vento nero” [“The Black Wind”]), the idea that a black soldier can turn white is no more than a ridiculous dinnertime anecdote:

‘I soldati negri’ disse Consuelo ‘per convincere le ragazze napoletane a fidanzarsi con loro, raccontano di esser bianchi come gli altri, ma che in America, prima di imbarcarsi per l’Europa, sono stati tinti di nero, per poter combattere di notte senza esser visti dal nemico. Quando dopo la guerra, torneranno in America, si raschieranno via dalla pelle la tintura nera, e torneranno bianchi.’ ‘Ah, que c’est amusant!’ esclamò Jack, ridendo così di cuore, che gli occhi gli s’empiron di lacrime (223)



[‘In order to persuade the Neapolitan girls to become engaged to them,’ said Consuelo, ‘the Negro soldiers say that they are white like the others, but that in America, before sailing for Europe, they were dyed black so that they could fight at nighttime without being seen by the enemy. When they go back to America after the war they will scrape the black dye from their skins and become white again.’ ‘Ah, que c’est amusant!’ exclaimed Jack, laughing so heartily that his eyes filled with tears’ (232)].

If race is not convertible, it is, however, ‘contaminable.’ Indeed, Brackette F. Williams, in her introduction to *Women Out of Place*, offers a brief, insightful reading of Malaparte’s “virgin” episode in order to assert the importance of the womb as a repository for cultural ideals—and the attendant preoccupation with its defense. Calling the scene “an enactment of ritual humiliation,” Williams uses it along with the “wigs” to argue that “the metaphysics that informed nationalism may have, as Malaparte intoned, created a history of tradition to be stored in male genitals and retrieved through wombs, but it still had to confront the problematic of how to keep the womb symbolically static in a world of moving, real women.”<sup>273</sup> In the case of the virgin and the wigs, this metaphoric conversion appears sufficient in neutralizing the threat of miscegenation.<sup>274</sup> Indeed, the criticism surveyed above testifies to this success, repeating this censoring move, by ignoring the penetration and its interracial dimension.

To this end, Williams’ reading is doubly interesting, for in addition to its own merits in identifying *La pelle*’s preoccupation with managing female sexuality, when juxtaposed against other interpretations of the “virgin” episode, it evinces another problem, one which has been developed throughout this dissertation: that it is only in the context of an explicitly feminist project that this scene of penetration is actually read as such—despite the fact that Williams is working from the Anglophone version that does not include the moment of penetration. Here, then, I return to Felman’s claim, discussed in Chapters One and Two:

An ideological conditioning of literary and critical discourse, a political orientation of reading, thus affirms itself, not so much through the negative treatment of women as through their total neglect, their pure and simple omission. This critical oversight, which appears as a systematic blindness to significant facts, functions as a censorship mechanism, as a symbolic eradication of women from the world of literature (*Woman* 29).

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<sup>273</sup> The first epigraph of Williams’ chapter comes from the *Skin*’s third chapter, “The Wigs,”: “The genitals have always played a very important part in the lives of the Latin peoples, especially in the history of Italy. The true emblem of Italy is not the tricolor but the sexual organs, the male sexual organs. The patriotism of the Italian people is all there, in the pubis. Honour, morals, and the Catholic religion, the cult of the family—all are there, between our legs, all are there, in our sexual organs, which in Italy are beautiful, worthy of our ancient and glorious traditions of civilizations” (Malaparte 72 as cited in Williams). Williams cites from the 1965 Vintage edition of the text—which cuts out a few lines with respect to the Italian, as indicated by the underlining. Also, instead of “Latin peoples,” the Italian specifies “il popolo italiano” (54) [“the Italian people”]. Several additional words and phrases from this passage are not included in the 1988 Northwestern U. Press version, including the specifications of the “male sexual organs” and the “Catholic” religion. The passage ends right before “between our legs” with the second “all are there.”

<sup>274</sup> For a discussion of the fear of miscegenation in a similar historical context, see Nelson Moe’s discussion of a Neapolitan song, “Tammurriata nera,” which “chronicles the birth of a black baby to a Neapolitan mother which took place some nine months after the arrival of the Allied troops” (433).

In this context, I modify Felman's argument, for what is censored by Captain Malaparte and by the critics is not simply the virgin but what she facilitates—a translation, which can only be “faithful” if converted into metaphor—and what she and the *soldato negro*, read literally, threaten—a contamination of the racial boundaries the text requires.

### 4.3 Sleights of Hand (II) – “La bandiera”

To further explore the use of racial and sexual difference in the construction of these “translations,” I turn to the other racialized figure in *La pelle*, the *goumier*. In one sense, the *goumier* and the *soldato negro* can be read as one of the many pairs of polar opposites represented in *La pelle*: the *goumiers* are shadowy figures, afforded only slivers of narrative attention; the *soldati negri* are a spectacle, placed at the center of a number of key episodes. As a counterpart to the garrulous, naïve, woman-hungry *soldati negri*, the *goumiers* are mysterious pederasts. Described only in terms of their devious eyes, probing fingers and pock-marked skin, their primary activity is to ‘shop’ for Neapolitan boys: “Gruppi di soldati marocchini stavano accovacciati lungo i muri, avvolti nei loro scuri mantelli, il viso butterato dal vaiolo, i gialli occhi lucenti in fondo alle cupe orbite e grinzose” (9) [“Groups of Moroccan soldiers squatted along the walls, enveloped in their dark robes, their faces riddled with pockmarks, their yellow deep-set eyes shining from dark, wrinkled sockets (8)”.<sup>275</sup> Furthermore, while *La pelle* delights in extensive descriptions of the body of the *soldati negri*, the *goumiers* are series of discrete, menacing body parts—face, eyes, and significantly, fingers; in ‘purchasing’ the Neapolitan boys, it is their fingers that judge the merchandise and contract the price: “Li tastavano, alzavano loro le vesti, ficcavano le loro lunghe, esperte dita nere fra i bottoni dei calzoncini, contrattavano il prezzo mostrando il dito della mano” (112) [“They touched them, they lifted up their clothes, they stuck their long, expert fingers between the buttons of their shorts, they contracted the price by showing the fingers of their hand”].<sup>276</sup> Despite these apparent contrasts, my reading will argue for the analogous position of the *soldato nero* and the *goumier* in the narrative dynamics—specifically in terms of their role in the establishment of truth claims. Is the virgin a virgin?—in “La vergine di Napoli” a black finger is deployed to answer, only to be converted by Captain Malaparte into an allegory for American victory. However, when a similar conversion is repeated in “La bandiera” the stakes are raised, as Captain Malaparte seeks to verify the “truth” of his previous wartime novel, *Kaputt* and, once again, black fingers provide the answer.

I start with a more detailed account of the episode. Having temporarily left the American troops of the Fifth division with whom they are stationed, Captain Malaparte and his friend, American soldier Jack Hamilton, meet up with the Moroccan division led by French General Guillaume and Lieutenant Pierre Lyautey on the outskirts of Rome. Whereas previously the *goumiers* have been depicted as pederasts, here they pose a threat to the local women: “i *goumiers* miravano con occhi avidi la folla femminile che passeggiava tra gli alberi nel parco

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<sup>275</sup> See also 111-2 and 117-8.

<sup>276</sup> The most elaborate description of the *soldati negri* spans from page 17 to 20. To give a representative excerpt, “camminava innocente e felice, tutto fiero delle sue scarpe d’oro lucente, della sua uniforme attillata, dei suoi guanti gialli, dei suoi anelli e dei suoi denti d’oro, dei suoi grandi occhi bianchi, viscosi e trasparenti come occhi di polpo” (17) [“he walks about innocently and happily, very proud of his shoes, which glitter as though made of gold, his smart uniform, his yellow gloves, his rings and gold teeth, his great white eyes, viscous and translucent like the eyes of an octopus” (17)].

della villa papale” (261) [“the goumiers gazed with avid eyes at the crowd of women promenading among the trees in the park of the papal villa” (276)]. At lunch, General Guillaume tells his guests that he has received an order from the Vatican to keep the Moroccan Division out of the Eternal City, and, by way of an off-color joke, he intimates that the reason for their exclusion from Rome is not their *religion*, per se, but their sexual voracity (265-6).<sup>277</sup> While dining, an explosion is heard, and the news reaches the table that the third Moroccan soldier of the day has set off a mine, but whereas the earlier explosions resulted in death, this ‘lucky’ soldier only loses his hand; the General adds, “Non sono ancora riusciti a ritrovar la mano...chi sa dove sarà andata a finire!” (267-8) [“They haven’t yet succeeded in finding the hand...Who knows what will become of it?” (283)].

After glibly dismissing these frequent occurrences with another joke about the Moroccans’ barbarity, the subject switches to their current, modest meal—and how Captain Malaparte might transform it in his next book. Guillaume speculates that, based on what he has read in *Kaputt*, “nel suo prossimo libro, la nostra povera mensa da campo diventerà un banchetto regale, e io diventerò una specie di Sultano del Marocco” (268) [“In his next book you will find our humble camp meal transformed into a regal banquet, while I shall become a kind of Sultan of Morocco” (284)]. Lyautey then inquires, “cosa c’è di vero in tutto quel che raccontate in *Kaputt*” (268) [“How much truth is there in all that you related in *Kaputt*?” (284)] opening what has become a “famous” exchange:

Famosa è la risposta che nel romanzo il colonnello Jack Hamilton... fornisce all’interrogativo garbatamente ironico posto dal collega francese Pierre Lyautey sulla veridicità degli episodi riferiti in *Kaputt*, ‘Non ha alcuna importanza se quel che Malaparte racconta è vero o falso. La questione da porsi è un’altra: se quel ch’egli fa è arte o no’ (Covino 217)

[Famous is the answer in the novel that Colonel Jack Hamilton... gives to the amicably ironic question posed by his French colleague, Pierre Lyautey, about the truthfulness of the episodes recounted in *Kaputt*, ‘It does not matter at all if what Malaparte recounts is true or false. The question to pose is another: if what he does is art or not’].

The French officers, however, refuse to pose the proper question and are punished with a rather gruesome sleight of hand as Captain Malaparte recounts an event that has just taken place before their very eyes. Describing the meal course by course, it takes two full pages to get to the climax of his story, the couscous, which contains a rather unusual piece of meat:

‘Era una mano d’uomo. Certamente era la mano del disgraziato *goumier*, che lo scoppio della mina aveva recisa di netto, e scagliata dentro la grande marmitta di rame, dove cuoceva il nostro *kouskous*. Che potevo fare? Sono stato educato nel Collegio Cicognini, che è il migliore collegio d’Italia, e fin da ragazzo mi hanno

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<sup>277</sup> According to historians Robert G. Weisbord and Michael W. Honhart, this order by the Vatican—which has since been recovered in the archives—was likely motivated by this commonly held perception, of “the Moroccan soldiers who formed part of the French expeditionary force attached to General Mark Clark’s 5th Army...[as] sexually out of control” based on a preponderance of “complaints of murder, looting, armed robbery, rape, and homosexual sodomy” (405-6).

insegnato che non bisogna mai, per nessuna ragione, turbare una gioia comune, un ballo, una festa, un pranzo. Mi son fatto forza per non impallidire, per non gridare, e mi son messo tranquillamente a mangiar la mano. La carne era un po' dura, non aveva avuto il tempo di cuocere'

...

'Se non mi credete... guardate qui, nel mio piatto. Vedete questi ossicini? Sono le falangi. E queste, allineate sull'orlo del piatto, sono le cinque unghie' (271-272)

[‘It was a man’s hand. It was undoubtedly the hand of the unfortunate goumier, which the exploding mine had neatly severed and hurled into the great copper pot in which our kouskous was cooking. What could I do? I was educated at the Collegio Cicognini, which is the best college in Italy, and from boyhood I have been taught that one should never, for any reason, interrupt the general gaiety, whether at a dance, or a party or a dinner. I forced myself not to turn pale or cry out, and calmly began eating the hand. The flesh was a little tough. It had not had time to cook.

...

‘If you don’t believe me... look here, on my plate. Do you see all these little bones? They are the knuckles. And these, ranged along the edge of the plate, are the five nails’ (287-8)].

In response to Captain Malaparte’s cannibalistic declaration, Lyautey is left “verde in viso, premendosi una mano sulla bocca dello stomaco” (272) [“green in the face, and he pressed his hand to his stomach” (288)] as Guillaume gulps down a glass of wine. However, if his declaration surprises Guillaume and Lyautey, it merely confirms the suspicions about barbaric Italians expressed in “Il pranzo del Generale Cork,” when Mrs. Flat, refuses to eat a ‘siren fish’ who bears an uncanny resemblance to a boiled girl. As she does so, she switches from Italian into English, adding a linguistic dimension to the moral distance she seeks to install between them: “lasciamo a questo [“lets leave this”] barbarous Italian people to eat children at dinner. I refuse. I am an honest American woman. I don’t eat Italian children!” (214). In “La bandiera,” Captain Malaparte attributes his act of cannibalism not to barbarism but to his extreme cultivation. Regardless, if this move at once confirms suspicions about the Italians (insofar as they are cannibals) *and* unsettles them (insofar as they are cultivated cannibals), to those ‘in-the-know’ (the reader and Jack), Captain Malaparte has not so much *eaten* a hand but gained the upper one. After they leave the group, the two discuss the event, congratulating Malaparte on the impact of his artistry: “Hai visto che faccia hanno fatto? Credevo che stessero per vomitare!” (273) [“Did you see their expressions? I thought they were all going to be sick!” (289)]. This exchange represents a marked departure from previous scenes, where the line between truth and fiction is often elusive: for instance, in “Il pranzo del Generale Cork,” it is never explicitly stated that the uncannily human-looking siren fish is not, in fact, a little girl. However, here, that line is clearly drawn, as Captain Malaparte brags at having made sheep bones appear human: “Hai visto con che arte avevo disposto nel piatto quegli ossicini di montone? Parevan proprio le ossa di una mano!” (273) [“Did you see how skillfully I arranged those little ram’s bones on my plate? They looked just like the bones of a hand!” (289).] Thus, he shows that the French are utterly lacking in their ability to distinguish: after all, they confuse sheep bones with human bones, a moment of artistry with an act of cannibalism. Read in isolation, the episode iterates

Captain Malaparte's literary mastery. However, this "lesson" has unexpected consequences in the overall economy of the text: in ridiculing the French officers for translating animal bones into a *goumier's* hand, "La bandiera" illustrates that barbarism is not a question of objective truth but instead of perception and representation. Indeed, it shows how the *goumiers*, never uttering a single word, are translated—perhaps more often than not *mistranslated*—by their colonizers and commanding officers, according to a representation of their hands, a representation the text itself signals as fictitious. Here, then, "La bandiera" allows for a critical rereading of the other dismembered *dita nere*—not only the *goumiers'* long, expert fingers, but the *soldato negro's* as well.

This potential self-critique is, however, dampened, as critics, taking their cue from Jack, read the episode as an artistic manifesto—as Baldacci calls it, "un caso molto singolare – e anche molto rivelatore – nel quadro dell'esperienza retorica di Malaparte" ("Introduzione" vii) ["a singular—and also very revelatory—instance in the general picture of the rhetorical experience of Malaparte"]. Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti provides an excellent example, parsing the episode into several levels—first, a literal 'joke' at the expense of the skeptical French officers, and then, a metaphor of the horrors of war. Despite the fact that the bones on Captain Malaparte's plate refer to a fictional hand, Bàrberi Squarotti maintains,

Il fatto che Malaparte abbia o no, per ironica cortesia di uomo ben educato, taciuto e abbia mangiato la mano capitatagli nel piatto come se fosse un pezzo di montone non inficia affatto l'orrore della guerra, l'atrocità della mutilazione, il dolore del ferito ("Allegoria" 287)

[The fact that Malaparte, out of ironic manners of a well-educated man, stayed silent and ate the hand that ended up in his plate as if it were a piece of mutton, does not in any way invalidate the horror of war, the atrocity of mutilation, the pain of the wounded].

In his reading of the episode's literal significance, the colonial implications are of central importance, and indeed, Bàrberi Squarotti notes that the episode is all the more horrific when considering the context—the "pleasant" conversations of the officers, who are dismissing the "backwards" way of life of North Africans. However, he also argues for a deeper level of meaning, whereby the episode can be interpreted metatextually as "la spiegazione della natura profonda della letteratura, di dover essere verosimile, non necessariamente vera" ("Allegoria" 287) ["the explanation of literature's profound nature, its need to be verisimilar not necessarily true"]. Here, the *goumier* is surpassed in favor of abstract concerns about the nature of literature, specifically a confirmation of Malaparte's artistry. As Baldacci puts it: "Il poeta, insomma, ci persuade che è vero il suo linguaggio, non la favola che di quel linguaggio è il pretesto" ("Introduzione" v) ["The poet, in short, persuades us that his language is true, not the fable which is that language's pretext"].

However, as we have seen before, one critic's treasure is another's false gold. After summarizing the episode, La Capria concludes, "Malaparte vuol dire che ciò che conta è disporre con arte le parti di un racconto in modo da dare l'impressione della verità. È questo quello che conta, secondo lui. Secondo me qui l'arte non è quella vera, ma è l'arte del prestigiatore" (37) ["Malaparte wants to say that what is important is to arrange the parts of a story with artistry in such a way as to give the impression of truth. This is what counts, in his opinion. In my opinion,

here this art is not true, but the art of a prestidigitator”]. The author’s metaphorical hand—with its falsifying *prestidigitations*—recurs in condemnations: Cecchi criticizes his “mani profane” (689) [“profane hands”], and Tahar Ben Jelloun, as he laments Malaparte’s false representation of the *goumiers* as sexual maniacs, notes that “ha lavorato da scrittore, ha forzato la mano, come si fa in letteratura” [“he worked as a writer, he forced his hand, as is done in literature”].<sup>278</sup> In light of all this insistence on the hand of the artist, to the exclusion of the (fictional) hand on the plate, I return to Hulbert’s claim about the project of canonization and its inimical relationship to *reading*: some critics claim *La pelle* is true (art) and some claim it is false, but *on both sides* of this fidelity debate as it plays out in “La bandiera,” the casualty is the fiction itself and what—or who—is underwriting its construction. La Capria’s summary of the episode—in its haste to refute Kundera’s contention that *La pelle* is one of the great novels of the last century—leaves out any number of details, including the hand’s ostensible ‘origin,’ and although Bärberi Squarotti addresses the *goumier* in his discussion of the episode’s historical significance, he erases him when shifting to questions of the ‘true’ nature of literature, much in the same way that Captain Malaparte insists the ‘virgin’s’ open legs and the *soldato negro*’s finger represent conquest in general.

Here, then, the stakes of my approach to reading these “translations”—these attempts at verifying ‘truth’ across cultural and linguistic borders—becomes clear. Rather than read them for the truth they produce, about war or about literature, I show how this truth-seeking operation censors the very actors on which it depends: stripped of their literal skin, the *goumier*’s fingers are used to ‘bridge the gap’ between Captain Malaparte and the French officers (as proof of the Captain’s narrative authority); stripped of their historical skin, they serve as a point of contact between the critics and the text (as a measure of *La pelle*’s literary value), for instance when Biondi converts Captain Malaparte’s plate into Curzio Malaparte’s canvas: “Si tratta in quel caso di uno scherzo...di un’invenzione, ma non importa. Lo effetto è lo stesso della verità. Anche la guerra è un piatto forte, e raro. E Malaparte lo condisce con tutte le spezie della sua arte” (75) [“In that case it is a joke...an invention, but it doesn’t matter. The effect is the same one of truth. War, too, is a strong, strange dish. And Malaparte seasons it with all the spices of his artistry”].<sup>279</sup> However, were this translation to be read metatextually, not with an eye on *verifying* truth, but towards showing how that truth is *constructed*, it can be seen as evincing a basic precept of postcolonial discourse, whereby the construction, phalanges by phalanges, of the (non-Western) other underwrites the construction of the self and—as Captain Malaparte congratulates himself for his *unfaithful* but *beautiful* translation—*signals its fictionality*.

As I argued in the case of the “La vergine di Napoli,” converting the *goumier* into an ahistorical metaphor for artistic “truth” functions as a censorship mechanism, by obscuring the text’s reliance on racial difference in order to represent Italy’s conquest/liberation and its collapse of political, moral and social boundaries. Along the same lines, I argue that the conversion of the *goumier* into a symbol of “the explanation of literature’s profound nature” is not innocent—indeed, I maintain that this conversion neutralizes specific anxieties (both textual and critical), in terms of the threat he poses to the established hierarchies, by being at once colonized (with respect to the French) and colonizer (with respect to the Italians). However, despite the episode’s apparent metatextuality, there is a certain textual ambivalence, insofar as it

<sup>278</sup> This article was brought to my attention by Keala Jewell.

<sup>279</sup> Baldacci makes a similar claim about the *kouskous*: “quell’episodio è vero: l’eccezionalità, e quindi la verità, non stanno nell’episodio ma nel modo di dirlo” ( “Introduzione” vii) [“that episode is true: the exceptionality, and therefore the truth, are not in the episode but in the way of telling it”].

is one of few chapters that depict historical characters with their actual names. Kundera has noted that whereas *Kaputt* is replete with historical characters, they are absent from *La pelle*, a remark which, while generally correct, does not apply to “La bandiera” (172). To wit, *La pelle*’s representations of Guillaume’s impressions of the *goumiers* are in keeping with opinions expressed by the historical figure, Augustin-Léon Guillaume, who “from the early 1920s on...had become particularly associated with the Goums” (Bimberg 19).<sup>280</sup> Pierre Lyautey, too, is a historical character—“the Goumier liaison officer whose duties took him all over the front lines among the Goumiers and the 3<sup>rd</sup> DIA [Division d’Infanterie Algérienne] (Bimberg 123)—who also wrote about his experience, alluding in his diary to a nocturnal “crisis” brought on by the proximity of some beautiful Italian women, curious to see the “color” of the *goumiers* (85).

Taking our cue from the text, I advocate reading the episode both metatextually and in its broader historical context—a context provided, if obliquely, by *La pelle* itself. Indeed, the importance of a double reading of this scene becomes more apparent when it is underlined that although the *goumier’s dita nere* are a sign of Captain Malaparte’s narrative authority, they, like the finger of the *soldato negro*, also point to a sexual encounter, this one on a vast scale, with a concrete referent in the Italian postwar imaginary: the alleged assault committed by the *goumiers* “on Italian women in Southern Lazio during World War II” (Jewell 18). Recently, accounts of these events, including *La pelle*’s, have been met with questioning: Ben Jelloun singles out *La pelle* as an example of this “specialità italiana” [“Italian specialty”], the tendency to stereotype Moroccans as rapists, and his characterization of *La pelle*’s portrayal of the *goumiers* is not off base. However, if we read the course-by-course description of the meal that precedes Captain Malaparte’s famous *prestidigitazione*, a more ambivalent account of the *goumiers*’ position emerges. Indeed, more than a menu, the passage offers a complex portrayal of the relationships between the *goumiers*, their French commanders, their German enemies and the Italian civilians. With the first course, prosciutto from the Frondi mountains, Captain Malaparte recalls the battle sites the French officers have just traveled in Lazio, specifically in the area known as Ciociaria: “Avete combattuto su quelle montagne, che sorgono alle spalle di Gaeta, fra Cassino e i Castelli Romani, e saprete perciò che sulle montagne di Fondi si allevano i migliori maiali di tutto il Lazio e di tutta la Ciociara” (269-270) [“You have fought over those mountains—they rise behind Gaeta, between Cassino and the Castelli Romani – and you will therefore know that in the Fondi mountains they breed the finest pigs in the whole of Latium and the whole of Ciociaria” (285)]. The idyllic mountains give way, in the second course, to a river, the Liri, and as the suggestion of battle becomes a reality, its green banks are dotted with the corpses of the *goumiers*: “Sulle sue verdi rive molti dei vostri *goumiers* sono caduti col viso nell’erba, sotto il fuoco delle mitragliatrici tedesche” (270) [“On its green banks many of your *goumiers* have fallen before the fire of the German machine guns—fallen face downward in the grass” (285)]. In this account, the battle is being fought between *your goumiers* and the Germans—with the French present not as engaged soldiers, but as a possessive pronoun.

With the third course—the (in)famous couscous—the mountains of Itri in Ciociaria return:

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<sup>280</sup> According to John Ellis, “At one time Guillaume himself reported to Juin: ‘The goums...have retained intact the qualities and the weaknesses of their race; indisputable valour in war, but unreliability under stress; an offensive spirit exalted by success, but soon dissipated by failure; an innate courage in infantry combat, but a tendency to become unsettled in the face of modern weapons; a peasant hardness and an innate sense of ground, but an aversion to hard work and discipline’” (115).

‘è un’erba con la quale le donne incinte fanno una bevanda propiziatrice dei parti, un’erba ciprigna, di cui i montoni di Itri sono ghiottissimi. È appunto quell’erba, la *kallimeria*, che dà ai montoni di Itri quell’adipe ricco di donna incinta, e quella pigrizia muliebre, quella voce grassa, quello sguardo stanco, e languido, che hanno le donne incinte e gli ermafroditi’ (271)

[‘From it pregnant women make a potion that facilitates childbirth. It is a pungent herb, and the rams of Itri devour it greedily. It is, indeed, to this herb, *kallimeria*, that the rams of Itri owe their rich fat, so suggestive of pregnant women; because of it they have the weary, languid eyes of pregnant women and hermaphrodites’ (286)].

More than a lesson on local flora, this insistence on pregnant women in *Ciociarìa* resonates with the earlier suggestion that the Vatican’s interest in keeping the *goumiers* out of Rome was due to concern about their sexual voracity.<sup>281</sup> Although *rape* per se is never discussed, the insistence on the fear of the locals and the Vatican, makes it a credible—but inarguably oblique—referent. From this perspective, a truly ambivalent scenario is painted: the *goumiers* rape the women of *Ciociarìa* who, impregnated, eat the *erba*, an *erba* fertilized by the dead bodies of the *goumiers*. Subsequently, the French officers eat the mutton which, having gorged itself on that same plant, actually *tastes* like pregnant women. Thus, they are given a taste, as it were, of their responsibility for their colonized subjects, for their sacrifice on behalf of the Italian people, and their transgression against them. This reading, then, points to the cost of dismissing any political valence of *La pelle* as a “pretesto esterno” (Baldacci “Introduzione” xi) [“external pretext”]. For in reading this episode only metatextually in order to verify the artistic integrity of the author, complex power dynamics are obfuscated: between Italians, French, Moroccans, Americans and Germans, between men and women, black and white. Indeed, in a narrative that flaunts the collapse of boundaries, their metaphorical deployment speaks to the centrality of racial and sexual difference yet testifies to the fear of their superimposition: if “*La vergine di Napoli*” insists on figuring interracial penetrations *as* conquest, it is no surprise that “*La bandiera*” refuses to narrate the literal interracial penetrations *of* conquest, leaving the pregnant women of *Ciociarìa* as part of Italy’s war-torn landscape—alongside the hermaphrodites.<sup>282</sup>

This pairing of figures also contributes to a de-emphasis of the historical referent, pointing back to an earlier scene chapter, “*I figli d’Adamo*” which represents a homosexual, communist birthing ritual. At its center is a figure—“*uomo o donna*” (136) [“a man or a woman”

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<sup>281</sup> Several scholars have addressed the historical basis of this fear, including Edward Bimberg who writes that “[the *goumiers*] were not popular with the Italians. This was the result of the off-duty conduct of some of them in the mountain villages and isolated valley farms they passed through along the way. In truth, certain elements among the Moroccans had engaged in a wild spree of rape and pillage across the Italian countryside when they were not busy killing Germans” (63). On the subject of rape, Weisbord and Honhart relate the following: “Fairly typical of the allegations is the following, which originated in the town of Ceccano, where 150 civilians gathered to ask the Americans to protect them. They claimed that Moroccan troops, units unknown, violated approximately seventy-five women ranging in age from seventeen to seventy-five... Nine of the women were well advanced in pregnancy” (406). Moshe Gershovich singles out Bimberg for criticism, when he argues that, “Authentic and reliable as some of these anecdotes may be, they smack of an anachronistic and distinctly paternalistic colonial attitude that ought to be treated with a degree of skepticism” (142).

<sup>282</sup> Moe locates a similar refusal in his analysis of the text of the song “*Tammurriata nera*”: “This narrative amounts at some level to a denial that a real, and specifically sexual, encounter between two different peoples and cultures has taken place, leaving indelible traces among Neapolitans” (438).



(141)]—repeatedly described in ambivalent terms as he goes into “labor”: “il bel viso maschio e baffuto illuminato da un dolcissimo sorriso materno, apriva le muscolose braccia al frutto delle sue viscere” (138) [“his handsome, virile, moustached face lit up by the sweetest of maternal smiles, and opened his muscular arms to receive the fruit of his womb” (144)]. Here, the result of the crossing of gender boundaries is a symbol; the fruit of his womb is a wooden statue: “Il capo aveva piccolissimo e informe, le braccia corte e scheletriche, il ventre gonfio enorme, e dal basso del ventre sporgeva un fallo di grossezza e di forma mai viste, quasi la testa di un fungo velenoso, rossa e sparsa di macchioline bianche” (139) [“Its head was little and shapeless, the arms short and skeletal, the swollen belly enormous, and from the lower part protruded a phallus unmatched in size and shape, its head almost a poisonous mushroom, red and speckled with white spots”]. Through this intratextual connection—the pairing of the pregnant women with the hermaphrodites in “La bandiera”—the women’s *symbolic* reproductive status is emphasized. However, in “La bandiera,” the conversion into symbol *precedes*—or even, *preempts*—any actual birth, whereas in “I figli d’Adamo” the birth is graphically represented and then neatly discarded as Jack “castrates” the “baby” and throws its phallus out the window: “Jack aprì il pugno: e sul palmo della mano aperta apparve l’enorme, mostruoso fallo del neonato... Scagli[ò] fuori del finestrino la cosa orribile che stringeva in pugno” (144) [“Jack opened his hand: and in the palm of his opened hand the enormous, monstrous phallus of the newborn appeared... [he flung] the horrible thing he was clutching through the window” (148)]. The product of this crossing of gender boundaries is manageable; the baby can be “born” and discarded. The products of interracial couplings, instead, would threaten to alter *La pelle*’s Edenic vision of Italy’s rebirth, which, in “La pioggia del fuoco” [“The Holocaust”], is represented in terms of Adam and Eve, “appena partoriti dal caos, appena risaliti dall’inferno, appena risorti dal sepolcro” [“just...born out of the chaos...just returned from hell...just risen from the grave” (273)]. However, it stands to note that whereas the text has long emphasized “dark” coloring of the Neapolitan women (specifically in terms of their pubic hair in “Le parrucche” [“The Wigs”], this reborn “Eve” is *bianchissimo* [*very white*): “Una donna vestita di rosso, seduta sotto un albero, allattava il suo bambino. E il seno, sporgente fuor del corpetto rosso, era bianchissimo, splendeva come il primo frutto di un albero appena sorto dalla terra, come il seno della prima donna della creazione” (259) [“A woman dressed in red sat beneath a tree suckling her child. Her snow-white breast protruded from her red blouse, splendid as the breast of the first woman in creation, or the first fruit from a tree that has but lately emerged from the earth” (272)]. Leaving history aside and following this symbolic thread, then, the violated, shadowy “virgin” of “La Vergine di Napoli”—also dressed in red (*La pelle* 42, *The Skin* 43)—can be restored to her pristine, snow-white, Edenic state.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter and, indeed, this dissertation, I have shown how narratives of political transformation rely upon—and censor—the female body: it is her virginity that *stands in for* the integrity of some larger entity—be it the author, the text or the nation—and her violation, in turn, that threatens their contamination. The preceding chapters on Elio Vittorini’s *Garofano rosso* and *Conversazione in Sicilia* [*Conversation in Sicily*] and Beppe Fenoglio’s *Partigiano Johnny* [*Johnny The Partisan*], have explored this paradoxical interrelationship—both in their own narrative dynamics and in subsequent scholarship—to show how it has worked

to make texts and authors into emblems of postwar Italian literature. However, to return to this chapter's initial question of Malaparte's Italian identity, it stands to note that if *La pelle* and its critics censor the female body, they censor Italy along with it, dislocating text and context through the rhetoric of (in)fidelity: for either the text is a vulgar deformation or a poetic transcendence of—but not in dialogue *with*—this moment in Italian history.<sup>283</sup> As such, this chapter sought to relocate *La pelle*'s translations in the context of post-armistice Italy by exploring their paradoxical dependence on and refusal of representations of racialized, sexualized bodies. Converted into metaphor, these bodies guarantee the poetic integrity of author and text. Taken literally, they threaten to contaminate the single boundary *La pelle* defends from the plague of Liberation—race. However, by exploring some of the ways in which the text undermines or critiques its own metaphorical conversions, my reading put the literal and metatextual implications of these translations into dialogue to show that the choice of vehicles—the virgin-whore, the colonial soldier and the Buffalo soldier—is not incidental. Indeed, moving beyond these parameters of fidelity, we are able to recognize on whose body fidelity is grounded.

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<sup>283</sup> For a notable exception, see Gatt-Rutter.

## Conclusion

In examining these emblems of fascist and antifascist literature, I have pointed to the role played by censorship and translation in their construction and, at the same time, demonstrated the way in which censorship and translation may be used interdisciplinarily in order to reformulate such oppositional definitions. In terms of translation, I considered instances that included: representations of translation in Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia* (Chapter Two), Fenoglio's *Partigiano Johnny* (Chapter Three) and Malaparte's *La pelle* (Chapter Four); the figure of Vittorini-as-translator; the (self)-translation of *Partigiano*; and David Moore's English language translation of *La pelle*. At the same time, interwoven into the discussions was an exploration of the rhetoric of translation, both in the novels and the criticism: translation as penetration in Chapter Two, translation as conversion in Chapter Three, and translation and (in)fidelity in Chapter Four. In terms of censorship, I looked at: the Prefect's censorship and the subsequent self-censorship of Vittorini's *Garofano rosso*, the archive censorship of Fenoglio's *Partigiano Johnny*, the cultural censorship of Malaparte and *La pelle*, as well as censorship through metaphorization—the dismissal within texts and criticism of the vehicle of a metaphor in favor of a true figurative meaning hidden beneath. In each case, I also examined the effects of critical efforts to “undo” this censorship, to “convert” the text and author, whether they be mutilated/violated (Chapter Two), contaminated (Chapter Three), or imprisoned by legend (Chapter Four). Ultimately, I found that these critical “conversions” paradoxically work to censor—that is, to produce and to repress—the texts and authors, by marshalling narratives of textual, linguistic, sexual and racial difference in the construction of narrowly politicized interpretations. Yet at the same time, my critique the uni- or bilateral interpretations of these texts and authors was not an end in itself, but rather, these readings became a point of departure for my own.

In short, the case studies demonstrate that the elision of an author's politics and his texts has worked to obscure any number of tensions which belong as part of a conversation on how the rise and fall of fascism has been narrativized: and as we consider how this transitional historical moment has been represented as a struggle between black and white, male and female, integral and incomplete, we would do well to notice that that struggle has been relegated to the status of a digression away from, or a metaphor for, the neat political plotline, regardless of whether the text is considered “fascist” or “antifascist.” Indeed, in showing how narratives of political difference are underwritten and undermined by narratives of racial, sexual, textual and linguistic difference, I have found shared preoccupations: in Chapter Two, I located the same misogynistic logic structuring Alessio's “conversion” to fascism in *Garofano rosso*, Silvestro's “conversion” to antifascism in *Conversazione in Sicilia*, and in critical interpretations of Vittorini's literary-political “conversion” from fascist realism to antifascist lyrical symbolism; in Chapter Three, I showed how Johnny's transformation into a partisan is dependent upon a process of racial, sexual and linguistic othering that resonates with the rhetoric of fascism; in Chapter Four, I identified race as the one boundary *La pelle* defends in the aftermath of the Armistice and argued that, in evoking the “black” Buffalo soldier and the Moroccan *goumier*, the issue of Italy's own colonial past is displaced onto the United States and France. At the same time, however, each one of these conversions is ultimately contaminated by the very categories of identity on which it depends and, thus, my readings show how these texts also provide sites of resistance.

To categorize, then, these texts as “fascist” or “antifascist” literature is to miss the point—or rather, with all the polemics such labels mobilize, it is to obscure it. Understanding literature in oppositional political terms has long reinforced hierarchical divisions which keep “antifascist” texts such as Fenoglio’s *Partigiano* and Vittorini’s *Conversazione* away from “fascist” texts such as Malaparte’s *La pelle* and Vittorini’s *Garofano* as if the latter might contaminate the former. At the same time, however, this dissertation by no means advocates stripping texts of their politics—to the contrary, by moving away from the binary of fascist/antifascist literature and the understandings of censorship and translation that went along with that opposition, I located a textual politics that is neither synonymous with the author’s nor ahistorical—to the contrary, inasmuch as the struggle to achieve political conversion in each text proves to be dependent upon other categories of identity destabilized by fascism’s rise and fall. Moreover, the *structural* similarities of the texts—the drive to narrate a conversion and the resistance to such narrativization—allows them to be put into dialogue with historiography of the period, insofar as these texts, too, are forced to confront fascism’s slippery narrativity. If it was essential for historians to step away from Croce’s “contention that fascism was a parenthetical experience out of which Italy emerged unscathed”—structurally, as a “narrative of conversion” (Ward 84)<sup>284</sup>—it is just as important to recognize the recurrent attempts to adhere to such a narrative in literary texts *and* in literary criticism. And while I believe that the maintenance of these conversions (both in the individual cases and in the macro-conversion discussed in Chapter One) precludes a more nuanced understanding of postwar Italian literary identity, it is also my contention that the conversion drive itself is very much a part of that identity: recounting Vittorini’s transformation from fascist to antifascist provides an emblematic conversion for an “entire generation” which grew up under fascism; converting Fenoglio’s narrative of *Resistenza* from a contaminated series of manuscripts into a conventionally structured (chronologically linear) masterpiece narratively heals the trauma of civil war; converting *La pelle*’s racialized, sexualized characters into metaphors for art keeps the collective trauma of mass rape in the text’s margins.

Together, these case studies are meant to be taken as a contribution to an analysis of “contaminating conversions:” narrativizations of (the rise and fall of) fascism, censorship and translation. In regards to the general applicability of my findings to a larger set of material, I return to the theoretical premise with which I began, as articulated by Shoshana Felman and, after her, Michael Levine. Each case brought together a nexus of material surrounding a given author, as I read multiple versions of one or more of his texts (published and unpublished, censored and translated, self-censored and self-translated) in dialogue with literary criticism, theory and history. In forming each nexus, my aim was to *generate implications* between texts rather than hierarchically *applying* one to another. Much in the same way, it is my intention for my reading practice—which draws from multifaceted, interdisciplinary definitions of censorship and translation—to provide tools and suggestions for further explorations of narrativizations of political and textual transformation and their interrelationships. Although in critiquing the way the categories of fascist and antifascist literature have been *constructed*, my dissertation does not presume to *erase* them, I do hope it has offered a compelling alternative by bringing together censorship, translation and fascism in such a way as to complicate understandings of all three.

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<sup>284</sup> See Chapter One.

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