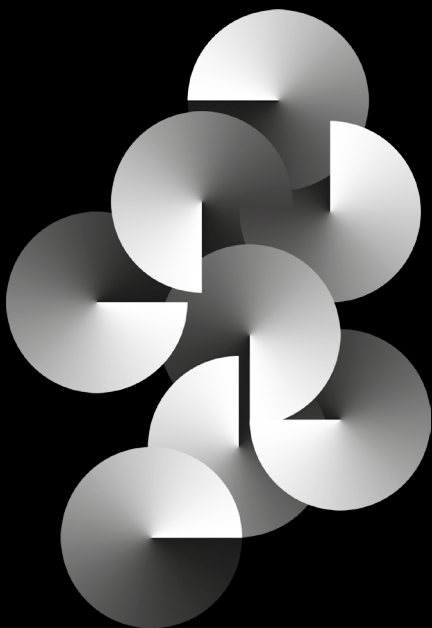GIULIO GIOVANNONI
SILVIA ROSS

Cross-Disciplinary
Approaches
to Italian
Urban Space

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INTRODUCTION: CROSSDISCIPLINARY ITALIAN URBAN SPACES

Urban Space and Cross-Disciplinarity

Urban space is the physical continuum on which human existence and social life unfold, with their complexities and contradictions, conflicts and fights, passions and needs. However, urban space is not simply a container for human and social life, neutral like an empty theatre stage which waits to be used by actors and performers. Although inert and difficult to transform, urban space has a natural tendency to form an indistinguishable whole with the society which inhabits and shapes it. Social structures, as well as power relations, resident cultures, and modes of production are differently encoded within it. Spatial transformations signify social dynamics and changes which are often conflicting and contradictory. Urban planners and designers tend to ignore their controversial and problematic role, hiding themselves behind the supposed neutrality of technical expertise. This is one of the reasons why it is important to reconsider critically the notion of urban space from diverse disciplinary perspectives, in order to gain a better awareness of the many implications of urban design and the representation of the built

environment in cultural production. At the same time, the use of spatial theory, along with architectural and geographical thought, for instance, can unlock innovative and thought-provoking interpretations of cultural production such as novels, short stories, film, art or photography, providing thus a new window not only on our views of these texts but also contributing to a deepening of understanding within the Humanities of pressing urban and environmental issues.

We are convinced, therefore, of the benefits of a cross-disciplinary study of the topic of urban space, and maintain that the different points of view represented here enable original insights into timely questions concerning urban life, society and space. This collection brings together scholars from a range of disciplines including urban design, literary studies, film studies, photography, and urban and architectural history. Drawing on case studies predominantly from modern and contemporary Italy, the collection of essays serves to juxtapose these diverse perspectives on the theme of urban space in novel and stimulating ways, ranging from a reconsideration of classic spatial theory (Lefebvre), to representations of urban spaces across Italy (Florence, Milan, Turin, Naples, Marghera), and consideration of the environmental implications of climate change on the built environment.

Cross-disciplinarity/Interdisciplinarity/Transdisciplinarity and Originality of Thought

Much has been published on the concept of Interdisciplinarity, especially as many higher education institutions have in recent years been extolling the practice (although,

admittedly, not always for entirely convincing pedagogical or epistemological reasons)[1]. That said, as a research practice, cross-disciplinary investigations yield, in our experience, original insights and have served to foster creative synergies, leading to thought processes that might otherwise remain obscure or inaccessible.

Our intent here is not to disparage a discipline-based formation, in fact, precisely the opposite: we are firmly convinced of the need for individual disciplines and the value in disciplines defining themselves and forming scholars within their recognized and commonly-defined spheres. As researchers, we credit our deep engagement with our respective disciplines as having given us the key instruments with which to interpret our fields and, in turn, as having furnished us with the tools with which to teach our discipline to undergraduate and graduate students. At the same time, we wish to underscore that it is precisely when different disciplines come into contact with each other that a sparking-off of critical thought often takes place, allowing us to pay attention to some neglected aspect of our subject and enabling a cross-polli-

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[1] We have opted for the term 'cross-disciplinarity' but, for all intents and purposes, are using it interchangeably with 'interdisciplinarity' or 'transdisciplinarity'. We have not made a distinction here, but others have sought to do so: "Some scholars draw clear distinctions between research that is cross-disciplinary or multidisciplinary (contributions from two or more fields to a research problem), interdisciplinary or pluridisciplinary (integration of knowledge originating in two or more fields), or trans-disciplinary (knowledge produced jointly by disciplinary experts and social practitioners) […]. Others are more comfortable with looser distinctions. We count ourselves among the latter group and in this article use interdisciplinary and interdisciplinarity as general terms for describing interrelationships among academic disciplines" (Jacobs and Frickel 45).

nation of concepts that would otherwise not occur[2]. Furthermore, certain over-arching themes, ideas or theories often cut across disciplinary borders; that said, there is a clear usefulness to attempting to understand just how differently interpreted such meta-themes are, according to subject area.

Critics have regularly indicated the advantages of inderdisciplinarity with respect to generating new thought and creativity. Patrick Dunleavy, for instance, states that:

> being original in the modern social sciences and humanities is rarely about coming up with an entirely new way of looking at things. Instead, it is mostly a more modest activity. Here originality involves encountering an established idea or viewpoint or method in one part of your discipline (or in a neighbouring discipline) and then taking that idea for a walk and putting it down somewhere else, applying it in a different context or for a different purpose. This characteristic also explains why the fringes of disciplines are often the most productive areas for new approaches. It is here that scholars are often most actively borrowing or adapting ideas developed in one discipline to do work in another (p. 40).

Dunleavy's comments on working on the margins of disciplines and the advantages of slippage across subject borders constitute a form of advice to doctoral candidates who are seeking to articulate their research project's contribution to existing knowledge.

Carol Becker, on the other hand, in her article 'Interdisciplinarity', reflects on her own work across disciplinary

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[2] Interdisciplinarity is not without its sceptics: sociologists Jacobs and Frickel, for example, critically examine the concept and remain unconvinced of the superiority of interdisciplinary knowledge over disciplinary knowledge (p. 60).

boundaries. The critic explains that she received a 'vertical' training in her subject (English Literature) but that when she started teaching in an Art Institute she realized how much creativity was in fact linked to reflection on the creative process and to working across different areas (drawing, sculpture, video, etc.). Thus, she also advocates thinking that is 'horizontal', that is, across disciplines, since subject boundaries can be too restrictive:

> Fields have expanded and exploded as thoughts have changed. Such movement could be understood as a revolution in thinking or similar to that which occurs in the development of language, simply a natural evolution. Ideas locked into a disciplinary structure too prescriptive and constrictive to contain all the thinking and doing that emanates from them, eventually move on to create new manifestations, to break free of the restrictions that once defined them and limited their growth. (pp. 197-98)[3]

Significantly, Becker stresses the necessity for opening our boundaries by discussing our situatedness in the world, leading her to articulate the importance of crossing boundaries in spatial terms:

> The world we now stand in requires us to be able to move both vertically and horizontally, in a way both deep and wide. We need to understand the dynamics of our immediate situation; the place we call home in the physical and intellectual sense But we must also come to know the world we live in globally, the places that are Other, the not-home.

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[3] Becker thoughtfully concludes her piece, saying "borders are crossed and disciplines merge and intertwine daily. Our job as cultural producers is to embrace these changes with the right mix of interrogation, rigor, and enthusiasm. At the same time, we must recognize that at the core of creativity is a blend of the new, the revised, the rethought, and the reimagined, all attempting to manifest the what through endless permutations of, and debates around, the how" (pp. 207-08).

> We need to be able to understand where we are in relation-
> ship to the totality, since our daily lives are so directly relat-
> ed to this totality—from the food we eat, the products we
> buy, the books we read and the films we see, to the people
> down the block and to the wars being fought in our name.
> We no longer live in cultural isolation: all is interrelated.
> In this sense we have become tourists, pilgrims, nomads
> and travellers in our daily lives, even if we never leave
> home and simply—or not so simply—cohabitate in urban
> life with people who have immigrated from various oth-
> er nations. What is now our cultural touchstone, or point
> of reference, if not this strange amalgam of familiar and
> foreign—the terrain we negotiate between? (pp. 203-04)

Interestingly, Becker anchors her discourse of interdis-
ciplinarity within the lived environment, comparing an
openness to Otherness facilitated by intellectual cross-fer-
tilization to abiding in an urban environment which in-
cludes ethnic and cultural diversity.

Cross-disciplinarity and Literary Studies: the Impact of Spatial Theory on Literary Criticism

Literary criticism is no stranger to engagement with di-
verse disciplines: continental philosophy, for example, has
furnished the building bricks of critical theory such as De-
construction or Postmodernism. Social movements, too,
such as Feminism, have exerted an enormous and even
revolutionary influence on textual criticism and have giv-
en rise to ground-breaking work on Gender and Sexual-
ity Studies, both in literary studies and beyond. Further-
more, Environmentalism's intersection with literary anal-
ysis has led to the birth of approaches such as Ecocriticism
and Ecofeminism and, more recently, the literary and
philosophical current of Post-humanism or Environmen-

tal Humanities. These developments have spawned many publications which apply these philosophical currents to a wide variety of national literatures and which have given rise to journals such as *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*[4], and *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Art*[5].

Given the scope of this volume, it seems particularly pertinent to explore the area of influence of Geographical thought on literary studies, and its profound impact on how we read aspects of the text, canonical features such as setting or descriptive passages, and the interplay between character and background, for example. Such synergies have given rise to the approach now known as Geocriticism, or similar, related disciplinary convergences such as Spatial Humanities and Urban Humanities, new modes of approaching textual interpretation which have inspired the founding of journals such as *Literary Geographies*[6]. For instance, the related area of literary urban studies has been gaining increasing interest, as witnessed by such publications as Intellect's *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*, which embraces scholarship that crosses the humanities/social science divide, or the new dedicated series on literary urban studies published by Palgrave, which also envisions an intersection between literary studies and cultural geography, urban planning, and urban history. Related edited collections by Palgrave include *Literary Second Cities* (2017), co-edited by Finch,

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[4] https://academic.oup.com/isle, consulted 2/2/2018.
[5] http://www.ecozona.eu, consulted 2/2/2018.
[6] http://literarygeographies.net, consulted 2/2/2018. See also Westphal (2007), as well as Ryan, Foote and Azaryahu (2016).

Ameel and Salmela, as well as *Literature and the Peripheral City* (2015), edited by Ameel. The monumental *Palgrave Handbook of Literature and the City*, edited by Jeremy Tambling, also provides a wide range of essays addressing the city across a span of national literatures and diverse cities. While the aforementioned volumes provide a global overview of urban space and literature, there are few references to Italian cities or literature.

It is these interdisciplinary cross-pollinations that are responsible for burgeoning new areas and innovative research that is capable of transcending conventional boundaries, such as those between the humanities, social sciences and the spatial. And while this tendency towards cross-pollination between disciplines has affected literary scholarship more generally, it also has exerted a profound effect on Italian Studies, as Brook, Mussgnug and Pieri have noted:

> Cultural Studies and transnational perspectives have opened up the scholarly field and encouraged a move away from mono-disciplinary, nation-bound modes of enquiry towards a stronger interest in studying patterns of connectivity. Moving between disciplinary, artistic and medial boundaries is now common and has strong institutional backing (2017, p. 381).

The intersection between the spatial and the literary has resulted in a blossoming of publications produced by Italianists which address the city and Italian culture, reflecting the tendency to put different subject areas in dialogue with each other[7].

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[7] A couple of examples of this current include John Foot and Robert Lumley's edited collection on the Italian city (2004), as well as work by

Cross-disciplinarity, Urban Studies and Urban Planning
Urban studies is in itself a field of research in which diverse disciplinary perspectives are employed to interpret complex socio-spatial phenomena, the understanding of which implies the use of multiple interpretive lenses. In urban planning, the combination of the technical approaches typical of the engineering tradition with humanistic and literary approaches appears to be particularly fertile and relevant. The main theoretical justification for this type of disciplinary contamination is given by Henri Lefebvre's theory of space production. According to the French philosopher, the production of space takes place on three levels: the symbolic/cultural level, the physical/designed level, and the social/lived-space level. These three dimensions of space production intertwine in complex and not immediately recognizable ways. It is important to focus briefly on the relationship between cultural production and physical production of space, as this is what really links and justifies the use of literary and cultural representations in the urban planning domain.

Urban and planning policies are built through discursive practices, i.e. through a process of interaction between different actors and stakeholders. Pier Luigi Crosta rightly defines planning as a process of multiple interactions. In this process, urban and territorial representations play an important role. By transferring a concept of Freudian psychoanalysis to urban policy-making, one might say that

Monica Seger (2015), Serenella Iovino (2016), Enrico Cesaretti and Elena Past in the burgeoning area of Ecocriticism and Italian culture. For more on Italian literature and spatial studies, see also S. Ross (2013).

representations of places contribute to building the 'setting' that delimits the field of admissible discursive and argumentative practices, as well as to define legitimate policy options. By 'setting', psychoanalysts mean the physical and functional environment within which the psychoanalytic relationship takes place, the organizational rules of the 'analytical contract', and the relational rules that regulate the analyst-analyzing relationship. Each discursive practice aimed at building a policy agenda is based on its own setting, made of representations and rules, mostly implicit and shared.

Diverse cultural products – e.g. literary, filmic, journalistic, photographic and pictorial – contribute to create the shared representations of places on which policies are based. These representations enter the political decision-making process almost unconsciously. They define how a place 'should be' and thus contribute to clearly distinguishing between eligible and non-eligible policy options. However, the cultural production of places is never uniform nor homogeneous. Underneath the thick media patina of places as stereotypes there are minority representations that can do justice to the complexity of reality. Therefore, the use that an urban planner – and more generally an urban policy-maker – can make of literary, filmic, and journalistic sources is always complex and diversified. For example, it can consist of deconstructing stereotypical images that are far from reality but can produce unequal and unjust outputs. Or it can aim to discover and bring to light minority and hidden representations with the aim of subverting hegemonically constructed

'settings'. By so doing, alternative policy-making scenarios can be constructed, that would be otherwise unimaginable. In any case, the cultural production of space and its physical construction inevitably go hand in hand, so a fully responsible planner can only move simultaneously on these two levels. Interdisciplinarity, therefore, is not an option but an essential condition for constructing effective and socially just policies.

Urban Space: Why the City?

Everything happens in space! In the course of the twentieth century all disciplines, from philosophy to sociology, from economics to literature, made this discovery, which apparently should not appear as an intellectual bombshell. In fact, all these disciplines have been featured by a real 'spatial shift', i.e. they have placed space at the centre of their reflection. Henri Lefebvre opened his masterly work, *The Production of Space*, published for the first time in French in 1974, with the following words:

> Not so many years ago, the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area. In scholarly use it was generally accompanied by some such epithet as 'Euclidean', 'isotropic', or 'infinite', and the general feeling was that the concept of space was ultimately a mathematical one. To speak of 'social space', therefore, would have sounded strange.

The French philosopher pointed out the substantial absence of space from sociological reflection and its progressive expulsion from philosophy towards the physical and mathematical sciences. Before Lefebvre, the analysis of social conflict was basically de-spatialized and most-

ly focused on the notion of 'class'. The political and soci-
ological debates on social justice were once again based
on the a-spatial concepts of alienation and exploitation. It
is mainly thanks to Lefebvre that space was placed at the
forefront of the analysis of social conflict and power dy-
namics.

A similar transformation occurred in the field of Econom-
ics. In Italy, starting from the 1960s, the research of some
important economists and socio-economists placed space
and local territorial systems at the centre of their investi-
gations into the development of small and medium en-
terprise systems. The works of Giacomo Becattini, Arnal-
do Bagnasco, Carlo Trigilia, went beyond the basically
a-spatial economic models of neo-classical economics, to
study the dynamics of economic development within very
specific social, spatial and historical contexts. In 1966,
the fundamental work of the German economist Johann
Heinrich Von Thunen was translated into English for the
first time, his 1826 *Theory of the Isolated State*, consid-
ered the first spatial economic theory. This was perhaps
the most obvious sign of the occurrence of a fundamental
spatial shift in the field of economic studies.

The discovery of space within literary studies is a more re-
cent phenomenon and dates back to the late 1980s. The
fact that any story, real or imaginary, is inherently spatial
has justified and given strength to the use of spatial the-
ories developed in different disciplinary fields for the in-
terpretation of literary texts. Even mnemonic studies
have an intrinsically spatial dimension, as demonstrated
by the fascinating mnemonic/spatial constructions devel-
oped throughout history, and magnificently described by

Frances A. Yates in her famous book *The Art of Memory*. While different disciplines converge in placing space at the centre of their reflection, there is no doubt that spatial and urban studies can only be a field of interdisciplinary research. But why 'urban space' and not 'geographical space'? Because just as the different disciplines reorganized their theoretical and empirical investigations in the rediscovery of the the centrality of physical space, cities grew in size and importance. In 1950 the urban population of the planet was estimated at 746 million, or 30% of the world's population. Sixty-four years later, in 2014, the world urban population was 3.9 billion, corresponding to 54% of the total. In 2050, according to UN estimates, the percentage of the planet's urban population will be 66% of the total, so the world will be a predominantly urban world.

This massive urbanization of the planet poses a number of challenges of enormous magnitude: environmental and ecological, social and economic. These challenges can only be addressed by equipping ourselves with adequate interpretative and conceptual tools. An interdisciplinary reflection on urban space, therefore, can only be at the centre of the investigative agenda of all those scholars who attribute to their research work a social function for the whole community.

Description of Contributions

The diverse essays included in this collection explore space and the built environment in the modern and contemporary period and encompass a range of primarily Italian urban spheres. The volume is structured in two parts: an initial, more theoretical section on urban space (cov-

ering Lefebvre; the concept of heteropia; non-places and urban peripheries; urban heritage and the impact of climate change on the urban sphere); and a second section which highlights the literary and visual representation of Italian cities, including Florence, Naples, Milan, and Turin, across genres (novels, travel writing, detective fiction) and media (cinema; photography).

Part I. Theorizing Space(s) and the Environment

The starting point of Teresa Sa's 'Henri Lefebvre, urban society and everyday life' is the work of Lefebvre – a key thinker whose theories resurface throughout many of the contributions in this volume – looking, specifically, at his critique of urban practice and urban planning as it was practiced in France in the aftermath of World War II, under the aegis of the state and of the government. The essay focuses on Lefebvre's criticisms of post-war urban planning, and on his proposals towards what he called a 'new urbanism'. One of the central aspects of his critique, as developed in *Right to the City* (*Le Droit à la ville*, 1968), has to do with the way in which urbanism emerges as a scientific and positive theory that would solve all the problems of the city. Viewing urban planning as a technique that can solve planning problems as well as social problems, without questioning their underlying causes in the capitalist system, amounts to covering up urbanism's ideological basis, which is the capitalist ideology in its technocratic version. For Lefebvre, space is a social product, the result of a particular social, economic, and political setup. Sa maintains that you cannot think of urban space as something external to society, to its prevailing values, the

dominant culture, and the existing power relations. Thus proposals presented by urban planners are not merely applied techniques, but also expressions of ideology. Urbanism is not a value-neutral technique that can transform the territory: every urban plan assumes a set of values connected with a particular conception the city, and such values ought to be explicitly stated in planning proposals. In his proposals for a 'New Urbanism', Lefebvre refers planners to the old city, in which 'habiter' (dwelling) was more important than 'habitat'. As well as using 'transduction,' a method in which practice and theory are intertwined, planners should also take into account the inhabitants' systems of meaning. Based that knowledge, urban planning will be the product, not of the strategies and restrictions of power, but of the strategies and acts of those who inhabit the territory.

In 'Franco Arminio and the Heterotopia of *comunità provvisoria*', Luca Pocci maintains that Arminio is arguably one of the most original and controversial voices in contemporary Italy. An interesting aspect of Arminio's anti-systematic style of thought is the concept of '*comunità provvisoria,*' which is intimately linked to his sustained meditation on a marginal and neglected Italy, the Italy of the thousands and thousands of ordinary '*paesi*', more often than not located off the beaten track of the *Belpaese* and, consequently, of mass tourism. In this essay, Pocci discusses the heterotopic implications of Arminio's '*comunità provvisoria*' and its resistance to the dominant discourses of globalism and glocalism. He argues that the *raison d'être* of the '*comunità provvisoria*' is neither a defensive and/or nostalgic return to the sup-

posed virtue(s) of country life, nor the expression of a cli-
chéd anti-modernism fueled by an unconditional rejec-
tion of the space of the city and city life in general. Rath-
er, Arminio's '*comunità provvisoria*' can be seen as an at-
tempt at thinking community outside the box of the cur-
rent hegemonic *doxa* of city-based communal living and
urban modes of being. This (re)thinking takes place with-
in the context of the *paesi* of Southern Italy, a geograph-
ical and cultural context whose marginality assumes the
characteristics and function of an overall heterotopia of
civil deviation. In discussing the heterotopic community
envisaged by Arminio, Pocci's analysis relies, in particu-
lar, on Foucault's theory, on Agamben's idea of 'comunità
inessenziale', and on the concept of 'becoming minori-
tarian' proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. Pocci's goal
is to show that Arminio's model of community implies a
form of identity that brings together Agamben's idea of
'singolarità qualunque' and Deleuze and Guattari's radi-
cal call to embrace a minoritarian ethos of deviation from
the norm.

Richard Ingersoll's contribution, 'Public Space in the
Age of Climate Change', confronts us with the two main
contemporary transformations of environment and socie-
ty and with how these affect – and will increasingly affect
in the near future – the way we relate ourselves to public
spaces. The first of these transformations is the widespread
diffusion of Wi-Fi connectivity and the fact that our social
life is increasingly based on the use of web-connected dig-
ital devices. The importance of the square and the street
has progressively decreased and the use of space is increas-
ingly mediated by digital technologies. The second trans-

formation, on which the author's contribution is mainly focused, is the rapid and progressive climate change. Seventy percent of the world's large cities will see their spaces threatened by the increase in water levels, which is estimated at between 0.2 and 2 metres during the 21st Century. This will strongly impact the way public spaces are designed. Ingersoll assesses this impact against five criteria that, according to William H. Whyte, determine the quality of public spaces: access, comfort, the fact of having a balanced density of political and commercial functions that provide some points of attraction, access to democratic attractions such as water, arts and sports, the fact of achieving what Whyte defines as 'triangulation', a concept that is reinterpreted by Ingersoll as 'biographical diversity'. The author then reviews some spatial solutions conceived by different cities from Venice to Rotterdam, from New York to Freiburg, which together demonstrate that adaptation to climate change will become one of the main factors in the reorganization of cities and of their public spaces, which will have to both perform ecologically while offering a sense of place for the Wi-Fi generation.

In 'The Social Life of Non-Places: Lessons from Florence's Peripheries', Giulio Giovannoni argues that the concept of non-place used by Marc Augé to define some of the main spaces of the contemporary city is an ideological device, a harbinger of negative effects on urban planning and policy-making. A non-place is essentially defined as a space without identity and history in which no social life is possible. Augé's book is dominated by a clear nostalgic accent, which can also be discerned in works by many of the great critics of contemporary urbanization, in-

cluding Henri Lefebvre. Giovannoni's basic thesis is that
Augé's non-places are in fact the main social spaces in the
suburbs and that their dystopian representation prevents
policy-makers from adequately understanding, regulating
and designing them. His thesis is supported by an empir-
ical social life analysis of two petrol stations and of a large
shopping centre – i.e. two typical non-places, according
to Augé's criteria – on the outskirts of Florence and Prato,
in Tuscany. The result of this analysis confirms that these
spaces are rich in social life and have all the potential to
be designed as fully successful social spaces. Giovannoni
contends that for this to happen, however, we need to get
rid of the negative label with which they are usually iden-
tified. Such a label in fact prevents us from recognising
their potential and from investing the necessary resourc-
es in them. Dystopian narrations of non-places, therefore,
contribute to further exacerbating the existing centre-pe-
riphery dualism, where the centre is well equipped and
continuously improved, whereas the peripheries are sub-
stantially neglected.

In 'Is There Space for Heritage in Marghera?' Remi
Wacogne contends that recent studies in the field of herit-
age have been characterised by a more comprehensive ap-
proach, based on a revision of the concepts of 'landscape'
and 'value'. Urban heritage has, in turn, received much
attention by researchers and professionals, as well as by lo-
cal and international organisations, as exemplified by the
UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Land-
scape*. The 'historic urban landscape approach' it endors-
es offers a substantial contribution to cross-disciplinary
perspectives on urban space by emphasising the 'organi-

city' of historic urban cores and their articulation with surrounding areas, as well as by introducing the intangible dimension of their heritage. Although it does not appear to correspond to the usual definition – at least in Italy – of historic urban cores, the *città giardino* or 'garden city' in Marghera has undergone a remarkable conservation process. As such, what does its heritage consist of, Wacogne asks. Furthermore: who defines it as such and how? And what are the implications of such conservation process for Marghera's urban space? The *città giardino* provides an interesting limit case study, in that it allows us to inquire into the very 'making' of urban heritage, the opportunities it offers, as well as the critical issues it presents.

Part II. Representing Urban Space: Literature, Film, Photography

This second section focuses on Italian cities and their representation in modern and contemporary cultural production, in particular in literature, film and photography. The section opens with Francesca Mugnai and Serena Acciai's 'The literary image of Brunelleschi's Dome'. The authors explain that from the time of Leon Battista Alberti until today, travellers, writers, artists and architects have meditated upon Brunelleschi's Dome. Along with its architectural value as a product of a highly technical genius, they have seen the close connection of the Dome with the city of Florence and its surrounding hills. This indissoluble bond has determined the shape and proportions of the Dome, but has also inspired the very structure of Florence itself. Nevertheless, recent writings suggest that during the second half of the twentieth century this bond

has gradually loosened, transforming what was the physical and visual fulcrum of the city, from being a unique majestic landmark of the valley, into an isolated element with no relation to the magma of the new city. Today, maintain Mugnai and Acciai, it is reduced to a holographic icon for rushed tourists and a trivial idol for nostalgic Florentines. Tracing the evolution of the iconography of the Dome in literature through writers such as Charles Dickens, Stendhal, Herman Hesse, Vasco Pratolini, Aldo Palazzeschi, Giorgio Manganelli – (to mention a few), or through architects – Leon Battista Alberti, Le Corbusier, Giovanni Michelucci and Edoardo Detti (among others) –, offers an unusual perspective from which to observe the transformation of the city. This view considers such detail as key to understanding the general; in other words, it considers architecture as a prime element of the city along with the complex interweaving of the mutual relationships between buildings, as well as between buildings and the surrounding landscape. In newly-built areas such connections seem to be weak and incapable of generating specific urban spaces: the paradigm of Brunelleschi's Dome and its current isolation can offer an opportunity to reflect on how to intervene in the contemporary city. The Tuscan capital also features in the subsequent contribution, 'Florence Overexposed: Early Photography and the Production of the Cinematic City'. The author, Donata Panizza, explains how, in 1852 Florence, as the city's resonance as 'Italian Athens' was blooming internationally, the Alinari brothers took on the burgeoning photographic medium and in a few decades produced a vast archive of photographs of the urban locale's Me-

dieval and Renaissance heritage, which circulated widely throughout Europe and the United States. However deliberate the Alinari's attempts to frame historic monuments and areas were, their photos contained traces of mid-to late-nineteenth-century urban upheaval, as Florence changed its medieval structure to become a modern city and the capital of newly unified Italy from 1865 to 1871. The Alinari photographs' tension between the establishment of the myth of Florence as the cradle of the Renaissance and an uneasy attitude towards modernization, at once cherished and feared, produced a complex and multi-layered city portrait, where notions of memory and progress, heritage and industry coexist in an unstable balance. The visual and conceptual power of such a portrait still affects the ways in which Florence is represented today, as is revealed by the analysis of three films partially set in the city – Brian De Palma's *Obsession* (1976), James Ivory's *A Room with a View* (1986), and Dario Argento's *The Stendhal Syndrome* (1996). By drawing upon the vast repository of urban issues embodied in the Alinari photographs, these films establish Florence as the place where something crucial happens, which sets the plot in motion. The reference to renowned photographic views of Florence enables the films to address issues still relevant for today's urban space such as, respectively, the conflicting needs of a speculative and an affective approach to architecture, the possibility of an emotional interaction with the city, and the mediated nature of the relationship with the urban environment.

In another essay on literature and the city, gender figures predominantly. In 'Natalia Ginzburg and Gendered

Space: Country, City and House between Fascist Womanhood and Feminist Liberation', Silvia Ross argues that the rural/urban dynamic and the domestic sphere constitute key spatial and textual tropes in two novels by the renowned Italian writer. In her first novel, *La strada che va in città* (*The Road to the City*, 1942), Ginzburg presents characters who live in the provinces and view urban space as dynamic centres of life. This is the attitude of the protagonist, Delia, who functions as a flâneuse, as she walks to and through urban streets in her youth, only to be relegated to the rural sphere when she becomes pregnant outside of marriage. The book rejects (but at the same time upholds) Fascist rhetoric on motherhood and women's domestic roles, portraying characters who have bourgeois aspirations to a home, while at the same time problematizing the role of the mother and the stereotypical family. Published over four decades later, the novel *La città e la casa* (The City and the House, 1984), reveals an even greater obsession with the domestic sphere, and sets up a contrast between an idealized country villa outside Perugia, and Roman apartments and real estate. At the same time, Ginzburg's last novel revolves around characters who explore alternative living arrangements, and thus dismantles the canonical notion of the family, reflecting a changing Italian society in the wake of second-wave feminism. Clearly both texts, while appearing at polar opposite ends of Ginzburg's long literary career, reflect but also largely undermine women's (subordinate) role in Italian society, while exploring the rural-urban dynamic and the importance of domestic space of the home. The following chapter concerns the relationship between

literature and the Northern Italian urban sphere in the mid-twentieth century. Giulia Brecciaroli's 'Uncanny City: An Exploration of Milan and Turin in the work of Giorgio Scerbanenco and Fruttero & Lucentini' investigates how Milan and Turin have been portrayed in a series of crime stories and novels, written by Giorgio Scerbanenco and Fruttero & Lucentini between the late 1950s and the 1970s. The texts are analyzed as a response to accelerated urbanization, following Italy's post-war economic 'boom' (traditionally dated 1958-62), which is commonly read as a landmark in the country's recent history. Milan and Turin were radically reshaped by industrialization: they were flooded with masses of newcomers arriving from the Northern provinces and the poorer areas of the South, and spread outwards at the expense of the surrounding countryside. In particular, Brecciaroli's essay examines how the work of Scerbanenco and Fruttero & Lucentini articulates the city as a mental framework in which urban spaces are often sites for the emergence of feelings of estrangement, and, in so doing, aims to shed light on the type of modernity that was promoted in the boom years in Italy. Literary analysis draws on psychoanalytic approaches to the study of urban space. Central to the discussion are the Freudian concept of the uncanny, of which is provided a historical interpretation in relation to the Italian case, and Henri Lefebvre's idea of urban unconscious as the re-emergence of aspects that ought to have remained concealed and excluded from the dominant organization of space.

In 'Urban Space as Cognitive Metaphor? Suggestions from Alessandro Baricco's *City*', Beltrami opines that

in the novel *City* (1999) Baricco encourages his readers to rely on their experience of urban space as a template to make sense of the narrative. Beltrami offers an alternative interpretation of *City* based on the assumption that the 'city' evoked by the title does not actually indicate the theme of the novel but rather works as a cognitive metaphor. The urban metaphor, in other words, indicates how readers should make sense of the narrative as a whole, rather than what the narrative represents. By arguing this, Beltrami accounts for the presence in Baricco's novel of several of what Marc Augé (2008) has described as 'non-places'; and yet claims that addressing them by adopting Michel Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia offers a better alignment with the overall reading of the novel, as it endorses the interpretive shift from 'city' as a theme to 'city' as a cognitive metaphor. This contribution opens up an innovative interpretive path in geocriticism by incorporating a cognitive perspective and thus suggesting that more abstract narrative elements, such as plot, might also be understood and explored as spaces.

Meris Nicoletto's essay "Turin: 'narrating architecture'", focuses on the role of Turin as a character in the three films directed by Davide Ferrario: *Tutti giù per terra* (1997), *Dopo mezzanotte* (2003), *La luna su Torino* (2013). According to Nicoletto, with *Tutti giù per terra*, Ferrario makes Turin a city which narrates the endless wanderings of an anti-hero, a new *flâneur* lacking all certainties. The result is a hostile territory where encounters happen by chance and human relationships are doomed to failure. The film *Dopo mezzanotte* fully realizes Ferrario's imaginative experience of the urban landscape as

a 'narrating architecture'. The Mole Antonelliana is the magical centre of gravity from which the characters' stories originate and where they end. At the same time, it is also the space of sight, as the Mole has recently become the seat of the National Museum of Cinema. In *La luna su Torino*, the post-industrial urban landscape is still a mute character yet capable of expressing that sense of instability typical of those who live on the 45° parallel, the metaphor for the existential pain and loneliness in the urban environment.

Moving to a Southern Italian urban space, in 'Naples in Antonella Cilento's Narrative: "un corpo di animale antico" ("an ancient animal's body"), Assunta De Crescenzo uses the following quote from the writer to illustrate the representation of her native city:

> Can you imagine a body without inhabitants? It is impossible. Naples is a crowded and confused body, tormented by beings. It is in the rare moments of silence and rest that beauty is stronger, stronger than anything else.

These words, states De Crescenzo, best illustrate Antonella Cilento's image of Naples, where she was born and now lives and works as a renowned, award-winning journalist and writer. In *Napoli sul mare luccica* (*Naples over the sea it shines*, Laterza, 2006), the protagonist, that is, the writer herself, wanders the streets of her city, reflecting on its history, tradition, and current state – her childhood memories mixing with today's busy urban life. Her agile, direct prose is stimulating, the texture of her page rich and wittily thought-provoking. The city's different areas, each with their own set of social and linguistic codes, are absorbed by the global metropolis, without ever losing their essen-

tial characteristics. Therefore, to the reader's eye, Naples is the real protagonist, with its geomorphic configuration and urban structure, with its peculiarities, limits, and huge potential. Thus, literary space is urban space, and urban space is life space, a sort of mirror which reflects people's thoughts and feelings from a millenary tradition, with its industrious efforts, its problems, struggles, defeats and successful results. The present essay aims at analyzing the city's main traits which emerge from the author's pages. Like Fabrizia Ramondino's beautiful narrative, or Luciano De Crescenzo's humorously urbane writings, Antonella Cilento's work elicits not only solid, rational considerations, but also an emotional response, by deconstructing Naples' oleographic images and, at the same time, revealing a new symbology, made up of perseverance, creativity and strength of will.

Vincenzo Binetti's "'We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us': narrating transnational urban spaces as fluid forms of resistance and conflict" investigates how specific literary texts characterizing 'migrant literature' today in Italy may indeed problematize and (re)negotiate the ways in which urban spaces and communities are commonly perceived and 'imagined.' These 'micro-stories' narrated by decentralized and nomadic subjects end up, in fact, provocatively and effectively deconstructing and fragmenting preconceived and categorical representations of public spaces, borders, and monumental landscapes – which often constitute 'iconic' and symbolic points of references necessary to propagandize an official, collective and homogeneous 'mapping' of Italian

national identity and its territoriality – giving voice, at the same time, to more fluid, potentially destabilizing and subversive cultural-political discourses of resistance and antagonism.

The cities concerned in the various essays reflect in many cases the historical context of Italian society from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, reacting to changes in settlement patterns, changing ideas of the nation, industrial development, social movements, environmental transformations and migratory patterns. At the same time, they illustrate innovations in representative devices, moving from literature to photography to cinema. Grounded in spatial theories, the contributions in this volume constitute a rich palette of approaches to urban space, showcasing the potential of juxtaposing diverse methods of analysis and highlighting crucial issues in urban life. In sum, the diversity of disciplines and areas addressed by this collection reflects the potential of transdisciplinary methods which revolve around the spatial, and how these can intersect and shed new light on the cities we inhabit, represent, research, theorize and plan.

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